MEMORY, POSTMEMORY, AND BEYOND: TRACING TRANS-GENERATIONAL TRAUMA IN THE LITERARY WORKS OF SAROYAN, BALAKIAN, AND BOHJALIAN

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INTRODUCTION

"I have given orders to my Death Units to exterminate without mercy or pity men, women, and children belonging to the Polish-speaking race. It is only in this manner that we can acquire the vital territory which we need. After all, who remembers today the extermination of the Armenians?"

Adolf Hitler, August 22, 1939
qtd. in *Forgotten Bread*

In the aftermath of the Armenian genocide, Armenians have pieced together a response to what Hitler assumed was a rhetorical question, for the Armenian race, Armenian history, Armenian culture, Armenian art, and Armenian American literature all confirm that the annihilation of the Armenians is a topic of ample discussion and is not to be forgotten even after the lapse of, to date, 100 years. Starting with an overview of Armenian literature and zooming in on Armenian American literature, this study traces the post-genocidal response of Armenian Americans of different generations, delving into literary space and tracing how the literature of renowned authors, belonging to different generations, reflects the response of the generation to the Armenian genocide, respectively.

In his article "Armenian Literature, Past and Present" written in 1935, Armen Kalfayan discusses the reasons why Armenian literature has not gained worldwide acclaim. He notes that literature written in the Armenian language has lacked individuality that marks other national literatures; furthermore, he adds that the Armenian language was a language too distant for American scholars to analyze. Although there have been renowned Armenian writers over the years, Kalfayan makes note of a reality that can be the starting point of this study: "if a literature needs a soil in which to grow normally, then the growth of Armenian literature must be a strange phenomenon [since] Armenians live on too many soils".[1] In the brink of their literary prosperity, an entire generation of writers was silenced in 1915, and "with the destruction of the Armenians in Anatolia, Western Armenian literature was strangled. Diasporan Armenian writers would continue to write in the Western Armenian dialects; but once snuffed out on its native soil it was ostensibly extinguished".[2] Kalfayan

adds that the political turmoil that Armenians have lived through in the past century has "not only scattered their literary energy and decimated the ranks of their writers but also, in a certain degree, produced racial and linguistic estrangement," for many Armenians have used foreign languages in order to express themselves in writing (Kalfayan 13).

In order to understand the reason why Armenians have been scattered, a brief overview of their history is necessary, for it has played a major role in shaping their literature.

Between 1908 and 1915, the Young Turks aimed to eliminate all that stood in the way of establishing a "Turkish nation based on racial purity" (*Black Dog* 163) including the Armenians. Thus, the regime started to demonize the Armenians, launching their plan of race extermination which officially started on April 24, 1915 with the execution of 250 renowned Armenian leaders and intellectuals. Armenians in different areas were "rounded up, arrested, and either shot outright or put on deportation marches." The deportations quickly became either scenes of mass killing for the men, or death marches for the women, children, and elderly who were whipped, raped, tortured and shot in an ongoing procession".[3] In the years between 1915 and 1922, the Armenian death tolls ranged "from over a million to a million and a half" (180). Those who survived the death march were scattered into different parts of the world.

Since the content of this study deals with Armenian-American literature, it is primarily concerned with the survivors who settled in the United States. According to Khatchig Tololyan, ethnics face the struggle of maintaining individuality while seeking assimilation, for "the self-representations they create are haunted by the paradoxes of simultaneously seeking sameness and difference, [in addition to] inclusion and exclusion".[4] This was the case with children of Armenian genocide survivors who needed to maintain their Armenian identity while becoming Americans; they also had to deal with the inaccessible, traumatic past that haunted their parents. As a result, "many talented young Armenian Americans found writing to be their salvation in their struggle for dignity, identity, and meaning, while creating a niche for themselves in [the] country that their parents called the Diaspora, but for them was home".[5] Here, it is noteworthy to mention the important question that Lorne Shirinian raises in relation to Armenian American literature written in English, for she asks how and whether "Armenianness can be communicated in a non-Armenian language".[6] The analysis of Armenian American literature, written in English, in this study portrays how the afore-mentioned is accomplished and Armenianness is, in fact, maintained irrespective of the language used.

Tracing Armenian American writing since the 1890s, Tololyan notes that most of the content appeared as "essays, columns, polemical articles of

great passion and rhetorical eloquence, patriotic verse, sentimental poetry, short stories (a few of them very good), autobiographies and memoirs that make no pretense of narrative sophistication" (Tololyan 20). He adds that prior to World War I, most of the immigrants wrote in the Armenian language and Armenian American literature in English started to appear in the 1920s; however, it accomplished prominence only after the 1960s. Much of the earlier literature written in Armenian depicts "diasporan dislocation, the contradictory yearning for a home in the homeland and at-homeness in the host land, [and] the fear and fascination of the encounter with the *odar* (the Other, the Alien)." In general, it is agreed that the Armenian genocide and its trauma has been the "the central formative experience of diasporized Armenians and of Armenian ethnic literatures." The genocide's constant denial by the Turks has placed the healing process in perpetual postponement; thus, "other experiences of pain and loss are routinely, if symbolically, assimilated and even subordinated" within the larger context of genocide (Tololyan 24). Shirinian states that Armenian-North American literature has become a means of facing the fear of disappearance, for through literature, the Armenian story continues to be exposed (Shirinian 61). Furthermore, she states that:

The genocide has become a field of knowledge called discourse; that is, the Armenian genocide has become a discursive event. Collective symbols such as the genocide have their origin in a specialized discourse as their field of origin. "Pain" and "confusion" and associated lexical and semantic items connote, for example, the loss inflicted by the tragedy of the genocide and the difficulty in coping with life in the transplanted world of the Diaspora (Shirinian 97).

Most second and third generations of ethnics have had access to their atrocious Armenian past through stories narrated orally since their lack of knowledge of the Armenian language has prevented them from reading the earlier works about the genocide written in Armenian. However, the Middle Eastern diaspora has depended on genocidal narratives in Armenian produced in the United States between the 1920s and 1970s by "authors like Hamasdegh, Benjamin Noorigian, Aram Haigaz, Vahe Haig-Dinjian, and Hagop Asadoorian" (Tololyan 26). On the other hand, some of the works of famous, ethnic Armenian American authors has been translated into Armenian and is widely read. Among these authors is William Saroyan, a first-generation, Anglophone, Armenian-American writer who has been awarded a Pulitzer Prize since his literary work has, to a certain extent, received worldwide acclaim. Saroyan was born in America in 1908 unlike his three siblings who had arrived there a year before. He received instant fame with his first book, *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* (Kherdian). Through his literary work, he has been able to

successfully create a realm that echoes the psychological reality of the Armenians in the initial macrocosm of diaspora. Throughout its history, Armenian American literature has, to some extent, reflected the social state of the ethnics which is a central point of discussion in this study. "However, literary representation does not simply reflect; it refracts, mediates, and displaces experience, recoding it." The immigrants who arrived to the United States between 1880 and 1925 were exposed to prejudice, discrimination, and negativity which resulted in creating feelings of seclusion. The Armenian characters Saroyan has created in his fiction defy the stereotypical, negative image of the Armenian immigrants, yet, at the same time, possess a dark, melancholic nature which is the consequence of their haunting past and alienated present (Tololyan 27- 28).

Since through the collective symbol of genocide, "the past is contained in the present and is liable to intrude or impose upon it at any moment" (Shirinian 263), the major themes in Armenian American writing stem from this collective symbol. The themes include: the search for identity, alienation, loss, and recovery (Kherdian). In addition, the family and the role it plays on an intergenerational level is also a crucial theme that appears in various Armenian-American literature. The search for the Father in order to unravel the silence of the past, and the image of the mother and grandmother as providers of information becomes central from the 1930s till the 1970s. Three of the most prominent novels that revolve around this theme are: Saroyan's *Rock Wagram*, Peter Sourian's *The Gate,* and Peter Najarian's *Voyages*. Sourian's *The Gate* traces the attempt of a young man, named Paul, to unravel his grandfather's Armenian history through reading his witness accounts of the genocide. Since the notes are written in Armenian, he asks his father to mediate; however, because the memory is too painful, the father refuses to translate and remains in silence. Paul seeks to defy "the silent resistance of the father and imposed silence of the grandfather" claiming that, if all else fails, he will regain his ancestor's past through imagination (Tololyan 32). It is interesting to note, that what Paul, a fictitious Armenian character created by a first generation Armenian American writer, seeks to accomplish in earlier literary work is paralleled later on in reality through Peter Balakian's, a third generation Armenian American's, lifelong attempt to reconnect with the past in all means possible.

Another renowned Armenian American author is Michael J. Arlen whose *Passage to Ararat* won the National Book Award for Contemporary Affairs in 1976. Arlen's father after having silenced the past and provided conditions of complete assimilation to his son, fails to keep the history hidden, for the only way Arlen can put his father to rest is through a journey of discovery he takes to Armenia which gives him insight into an

important aspect of his identity. Furthermore, a prominent female Armenian-American author is Carol Edgarian whose *Rise the Euphrates*, published in 1994, reached commercial success. Her work focuses on the "matrilineal" representation of genocidal reaction; once again, "translation, transmission, and transfer" appear as issues of immense importance in her work (Tololyan 35-37).

Other than novelists, some important Armenian American poets that emerged from the 1960s and on are Michael Akillian, Harold Bond, Peter Balakian, Diana Der Hivanessian, and David Kherdian (Tololyan 37). Peter Balakian, a third generation Armenian-American poet, is highly esteemed for his active role in social justice. His works have won many important awards. His memoir Black Dog of Fate won the PEN/Albrand Prize and was a New York Times notable book. "The condensation of references and their reworking into a poem that stands by itself yet is richly intertwined with Armenian history are masterful and characteristic of the best of Balakian's work" (Tololyan 38). Furthermore, his poetry, through unraveling his family's past, "weaves strands of history-familial, ethnic, national, and planetary-into a design that reflects deeper levels of integration, fragments not only tell stories, but seed new life-forms.[7]

Shirinian summarizes the purpose that Armenian American literature has come to serve by claiming that:

Much of Armenian literature throughout the ages is a response and a witness to barbarity. The Armenian genocide has rewritten the discourse of the Armenian nation, and Armenian-North American literature is a response to this tragedy which force the Diaspora of the previous generations from the Armenian homeland; at the same time, it is also a witness to the difficulties of living in a diaspora situation always compromised by the amenities of life in North America (Shirinian 58).

Margaret Bedrosian has noted that in spite of the fact that there exists ample detailed historical information about the Armenian genocide, what remains "missing after three-quarters of a century is a full accounting of the psychological damage wrought on the Armenian people." She then asks what role the Armenian myth, the story of their origin, has played in their responses to near annihilation. She traces the ongoing effect the genocide has on Armenian-American writing. She highlights the fact that numbness was the initial response of most survivors of the genocide, which was accompanied by silence. However, "the saving grace for the survivors was the shared will to cherish the fragments; they were bound to one another by a scarring so profound that it knit them into singular new wholes. Each piece kept the image of the lost nation alive; each bore the collective longing for home (Shirinian 19).

Zooming in on the works of three major Armenian-American authors, Hoogasian, in her MA dissertation, focuses on how the perception of the genocide differs based on the respective generations' up-bringing and time of writing.[8] She uses Saroyan's play, *The Human Comedy*, Arlen's *A Passage to Ararat*, and Balakian's *Black Dog of Fate*, to achieve this purpose. She highlights how Saroyan's work instigates hope at a time when the survivors are dealing with the genocide as a recent event. She then discusses how Arlen's journey shows that the genocide remains at the center of the Armenian identity, and finally focuses on Balakian's vigorous attempt to fight for the Armenian Cause as he demands worldwide recognition of the 1915 Armenian genocide.

Armenian American literature then can be seen as "a series of binary oppositions" fused by the collective symbol of the Armenian genocide. The major binary oppositions revolve around: "Armenian-American, diaspora-homeland, past-present, the Armenian-the odar, the American-the Armenian 'other'" (Shirinian 272).

Building on previous analytical works related to Armenian-American literature, this study aims to further demonstrate how the trauma resultant of the Armenian genocide lives on at a trans-generational level and is reflected in the literary works of Armenian-American writers, both first and third generations; this undying trauma is fed by the fact that, up to date, it remains unrecognized by the Turks and most of the international community. Therefore, by tracing the psychological reception of the trans-generational trauma of the Armenian genocide, this study aims to give further exposure to the first genocide of the 20th century since most of the genocidal theoretical findings focus on the Holocaust without giving the much-deserved attention to the genocide that preceded the Holocaust, and to some extent, through its denial, made the Holocaust inevitable. In order to achieve this purpose, it has been necessary to fill in the gaps, and at points, to shift the focus from the trauma itself to the contextualization of the trauma within literary framework. Although there is a certain amount of analysis already written about Armenian American literature, most of the content does not provide enough critical material to bring the issue to the forefront. Hence, this study attempts to accomplish the afore-mentioned by revolving around the topics of: memory vs. Postmemory, the feelings of diaspora vs. exile, and the use of communal vs. personal writing genres.

The first part briefly discusses Saroyan's work in order to set the proper background for comparison to what constitutes the heart of this study, namely, Peter Balakian's poetry. This initial section aims to highlight Saroyan's inability, in spite of his literary work, to establish a clear notion of identity and belonging which are the results of the time he was writing. In addition, most of the critical material about Saroyan

focuses on his plays, bringing to light how his short stories reflect the genocidal and diasporan reality that the Armenians faced in the first years of arrival to the United States. Furthermore, this section focuses on Saroyan's use of communal literary genres, mainly fiction such as plays and short stories, as opposed to Balakian who writes through personal genres such as memoir and poetry. The communal genre was necessary at the earlier point of Armenian-American literature because the genocide was still a fresh memory for the diasporan Armenians.

Section two moves to the third generation, to Peter Balakian's work, to portray how his poetry and his life reflect postmemorial experience. Through this study, it is revealed that Balakian has had firsthand experience with Postmemory which is a term that was developed years later by Marianne Hirsch in order to explain the connection that later generations have to the trauma of genocide survivors. Her work is based on Holocaust studies and mainly focuses on photography as a space of postmemorial expression; this study, on the other hand, extensively traces Postmemory in Balakian's poetry by dividing them into major themes. Within this section, a comparison is drawn to a renowned form of writing mostly adopted by Latin-American authors, namely, Magical Realism, in order to reveal how Balakian's poetry aims to defy historical narrative through creating a literary realm that challenges the supposed "truth" that the Turks claim in relation to the genocide. Then, a series of poems are discussed that use food in order to evoke postmemorial expressions. Here, I use some well-known anthropological theories to back up my arguments referring to the findings of Roland Barthes and Claude Levi-Strauss. The final part of this section then moves to a detailed discussion of trauma and fragmentation as reflected in Balakian's poetry by using Caruth's and Laub's theories of traumatic experiences. Once again, the focus is on using acclaimed theories that are relevant to Armenian-American literature but are only partially and rarely used.

Section three continues with the analysis of Balakian's poetry tracing how his work blurs the lines between exile and diaspora, for Balakian, although completely assimilated, displays an exilic message in his works. Then, from Postmemory back to memory, the study compares Balakian's poetic voice in relation to his Armenian past and American present in light of the events of September 11.

The conclusion focuses on a very contemporary, popular culture, novel, namely, Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls*,[9] in order to address third generation literary reaction beyond Postmemory. It explores how the idea of detachment through the creation of fictitious narratives can be central to establishing a reconnection with the past. Furthermore, it briefly

discusses the importance of fictitious narratives at such a generational remove and the cathartic function they serve.

Finally, I pave the way for further discussion by referring to fourth generation Armenian-American literature that fervently deals with the Armenian genocide, suggesting if a space for Post-Postmemory is imminent within such literature.

FIRST GENERATION GENOCIDE RESPONSE REFLECTED IN WILLIAM SAROYAN'S FICTION

Margaret Bedrosian believes that Saroyan's literary work revolves around one main story, the Saroyan myth that tells the Armenian story in America (Shirinian 163). Unlike the next two sections that discuss Peter Balakian's literature which constantly evokes the Armenian past and the lost homeland, this part briefly focuses on how the immediate and initial reaction of post-genocide literary production has dealt with the question of diaspora and assimilation as it attempted to cope with the memory and trauma of the Armenian genocide. Shirinian notes that "for Armenians, there is a homeland, and there is the Diaspora. There is nothing in between. From the margin or periphery, one looks back to a place which has taken on the proportions of a myth and is viscerally real though tangibly non-existent" (Shirinian 61). In Saroyan's case, his first generation writing is preoccupied with diaspora rather than homeland. Furthermore, unlike third generation writers who, having assimilated in the American community, look back to the genocide in its aftermath and demand its recognition, Saroyan's works reflect how, in its initial state, it is difficult to demand justice and express anger since the trauma is still not fully grasped by the survivors of the genocide; consequently, the literature of that period reflects the psychological state of confusion and, to some extent, denial. As Caruth explains, "Trauma is suffered in the psyche precisely, it would seem, because it is not directly available to experience".[10] Trauma requires a period of latency before it appears, and if taken on a trans-generational level, it seems that only by later generations can the rage and fight for the Armenian cause appear and commence fully; this is reflected through the literature of the different generations. Furthermore, "Traumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness" (*Unclaimed Experience* 91). This explains why within a "belated" timeframe, Balakian's literature perceives the trauma in a clearer manner.

Saroyan chooses fiction, plays and short stories mostly, to express his views, for the use of communal genres allows him to address a larger

audience who is in dire need of assurance and hope to emerge from their dreadful reality. His most profound message is that "love is superior to hate;" he promotes "human brotherhood" which is more important to him than seeking revenge for what the Turks have committed against his nation. "He could not "forgive," he did not forget, but neither did he ever give way to hate. That, perhaps, was always his ultimate message as man and artist".[11] Balakian on the other hand, uses poetry and memoir as means of expression since his is a personal reflection in the aftermath of the trans-historical trauma that he inherits. It is interesting to note that in comparing these two authors of different generations, a similarity can be drawn between their reaction to the genocide portrayed in their literature and a typological analysis done on a selected number of Armenian genocide survivors; this analysis aimed to record the psychological responses these survivors underwent after having witnessed the genocide. The study summed the responses into mainly six: "Repression, rationalization, resignation, reconciliation, rage, and revenge".[12] While Saroyan's literature seems to address the first four, it is only in the works of later generation authors that the feelings of rage and revenge surface. Thus, on a trans-generational level, the literature seems to echo the psychological reaction of immediate survivors of the Armenian genocide.

In order to establish the difference between these two generations, it is necessary to highlight in what manner Saroyan's work revolves around the new home versus the original homeland. In one of his most famous quotes in his short story "The Armenian & the Armenian," Saroyan voices his view through the narrator who states:

I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, literature is unread, music is unheard, and prayers are no more answered.

Go ahead, destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them into the desert without bread or water. Burn their homes and churches. Then see if they will not laugh, sing and pray again. For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia."[13]

Indeed, much of Saroyan's focus is on the state of assimilating in the new home versus eliciting a return to the homeland. He does not evoke feelings of exile, but rather suggests means of maintaining the Armenian identity within new borders. Unlike Balakian who has established a clear notion of identity and can hence elicit exilic feelings in his literary work as is discussed in section three, Saroyan, because of not being able to establish a clear notion of belonging, does not have the luxury to involve any implications of a homeland that has only recently been destroyed along with its nation. As Tololyan notes, "In Saroyan's work, as in his life, the

drama of ethnic ambivalence is never resolved. It is stated, depicted, and then evaded" (Tololyan 28). This explains the focus on diaspora which is "always collective" and which "suggests real or imagined relationships among scattered fellows, whose sense of community is sustained by forms of communication and contact such as kinship, pilgrimage, trade, travel, and shared culture (language, ritual, scripture [...])".[14] His lack of comfort with hyphenated identity leads him to a preoccupation with larger issues related to the essence of humanity; he is mainly concerned with displaying how "all people are the same, in that they experience, at bottom, dualities that can be mapped upon, and assimilated to, the original duality of the mad/sad Armenian" (Tololyan 28). This reaction of course is due to the immediacy of the Armenian genocidal experience within the diaspora community that the first generation was exposed to.

Taking Gustavo Perez Firmat's theory about the three stages of immigrant adaptation to a new homeland, Jendian appropriates Saroyan's view to stage three. The first stage is "substitution" whereby the immigrant tries to recreate replicas of the original in the new area; the second stage is "destitution" where the immigrant feels detached from both the original and new home. Finally, the third stage, "institution" has the implication of permanence. Jendian notes that Saroyan, in the above quote, uses the verb "create" rather than "recreate" which indicates the difference he draws between the homeland and the new home. "The establishment of Armenians anywhere in the world will not re-create Armenia. Armenia is Armenia. Anywhere else will be a "New Armenia" (3).

Furthermore, another quote in "The Armenian & the Armenian" clearly expresses Saroyan's view on the existence of Armenia, for according to him, the Armenia of his parents is destroyed and can never reemerge; thus, he does not evoke the lost homeland, but rather focuses on the idea that Armenians exist only in individuals irrespective of location (Shirinian 170). Saroyan has gone beyond the need to reestablish a sense of homeland and has been able to shift the original homeland with the idea of Armenia or Armenianness.

There is a small area of land in Asia Minor that is called Armenia, but it is not so. It is not Armenia. It is a place. There are plains and mountains and rivers and lakes and cities in this place, and it is all fine, it is all no less fine than all the other places of the world, but it is not Armenia. There are only Armenians, and these inhabit the earth, not Armenia, since there is no Armenia, gentlemen, there is no America and there is no England, and no France, and no Italy, there is only the earth, gentlemen.[15]

Contextualizing the concept of the old home within new territory, the narrator's uncle in Saroyan's short story "The Pomegranate Trees" at best captures the emphasis on recreating an Armenia in America rather than

instigating any hope of a return to the homeland. The pomegranate is one of the most famous symbols of the Armenian nation as explained in section two. In this short story, the narrator's uncle embarks on a mission to plant pomegranate trees in a desert in the United States. Uncle Melik possesses an aesthetic and somehow unrealistic dream as he states, "here in this awful desolation a garden shall flower, fountains of cold water shall bubble out of the earth, and all things of beauty shall come into being".[16] Melik is obsessed with the land he buys and wishes to turn the land into a botanical museum of his lost home. Blinded by his passion of recreating the past in the present, Melik dreams of turning the desert into a farm and planting different kinds of trees, peach, apricot, fig, and mulberry, that are reminiscent of the old home, namely, Armenia (*My Name is Aram* 64). What Melik does not realize is the impossibility of creating a replica of the old home in the new area he resides in; he firmly pursues his unrealistic goal, investing all his money and energy in the project. Of course, the mere fact that the land is a desert symbolizes the absurdity of the attempt of searching for an old home within new surroundings. In fact, the narrator, upon viewing the 700 pomegranate trees planted in the desert, claims that "it was the loveliest-looking absurdity imaginable and [his] uncle was crazy about it" (*My Name is Aram* 70). After the passage of three years, the trees produce a few "sad looking pomegranates" which no one shows interest in, for the locals "don't want them [since] they don't know what they are." The uncle gets infuriated by the statement and asserts that "there is no other fruit in the world like the pomegranate" (*My Name is Aram* 74). Obviously, what he does not understand is that assimilation comes with the cost of letting go of old habits and culture, for what was appreciated in his homeland seems to be of no value in the new home. A few years later, the uncle is obliged to sell the land, yet asks the new owner to allow him to take care of the trees; when asked what is the significance of such an act, Melik tries to explain, but is at a loss for words, "it [is] too much to try to explain to a man who [isn't] sympathetic" (*My Name is Aram* 75).

Visiting the site with his uncle years after the incident, the land still possesses the haunting barrenness, still making its strong statement about the impossibility of finding pieces of the homeland to stitch together within the new home. There is a silence between the two characters in the end of the story, for they choose not to say anything "because there [is] such an awful lot to say, and no language to say it in" (*My Name is Aram* 76). Here language seems to have multiple connotations, for it could literally imply the Armenian language that, for the initial generation, was the only genuine means of communication. Obviously, any attempt to transform emotions into another language fails, as is the case with Melik who could not express his feeling and explain the significance of his project to a culture that had

not witnessed his original home and lacked insight into the trauma of having lost his homeland. Another meaning of language could be the impossibility of expressing deep trauma through words because of the immense shock that remains within the collective unconscious of the Armenian community; the communal pain of the loss of the original identity.

Another major element that influenced Saroyan's attitude and triggered his insistence on focusing on the essence of humanity rather than issues of identity and home, is the initial negative reception of Armenians in the United States. "The immigrants who arrived in the period between 1880 and 1925 experienced widespread prejudice as "Asians" whose legal status as "Caucasian" was called into question until the end of this period" (Tololyan 27).

Facing such negative reception perhaps clarifies Saroyan's focus on themes of brotherhood. Minh-ha, in his "Other Than Myself/My Other Self," discusses exile and its implications, stating that "great generosity and extreme gratitude within sharp hostility; profound disturbance for both newcomers and old-timers: the experience of exile is never simply binary. If it's hard to be a stranger, it is even more so to stop being one".[17] This clarifies the confusion of the first generation as they attempted to move from being the other to assimilating.

In his short story "Seventy Thousand Assyrians," the main character, an Armenian writer, strikes up a conversation with an Assyrian barber as he gets a haircut; upon conversing with the barber, he comes to understand that they share a common history, for they both come from a nation that is disappearing. The narrator expresses his need to transcend so called "civilization, hatred, fear, [and] desire for strength," hoping to delve into a more "universal language" to communicate "the heart of man, the unwritten part of man, that which is eternal and common to all races".[18] In later discussion, the contrast of such a statement to the vehement insistence on the necessity of identifying with the original Armenian history is revealed in light of Balakian's work, which further displays the role temporal delay plays in changing perspectives. The narrator is preoccupied with being alive and detaches himself from all titles related to ethnicity (*The Daring Young* 33). The narrator devalues the importance of being an Armenian in a world beyond Armenia where one should really seek to define what it means to be alive rather than seek to define oneself in terms of racial differences. The speaker fails to understand the significance of maintaining the Armenian language and seeks to dissolve in a world of brotherhood. He even goes as far as claiming that he loves all of humanity, including the enemy of Armenia; he claims to "have nothing against any of them because [he looks at them] as one man living one life at a time [...]

one man at a time is incapable of the monstrosities performed by mobs" (*The Daring Young* 36). This ideal vision of oneness was perhaps one coping strategy used to deal with a past that no one wanted to remember or reveal because it was a trauma too immediate and painful to bear. Later generations fervently voice the fact that they surely have a lot to say and demand against the injustice of the Turks and that they cannot simply let go of the atrocious past under the claim of oneness and love of humanity.

Minh-ha explores the notion of home for immigrant writers and asserts that it is crucial to assimilate first and then emphasize individuality. He notes that only when one feels at home in the new environment can one revisit the old home. This is highly applicable to first and third generation writers, for in its primary stages, there was the need for assimilation and thus the resultant literary themes had to cater for that lifestyle, but later generations, having accomplished full assimilation, have the liberty of looking back to the homeland without any fear of rejection. As Minh-ha describes it, it is important to "First assimilate, then be different within permitted boundaries" (Minh-ha 13). She further notes that "as you come to love your new home, it is thus implied, you will immediately be sent back to your old home where you are bound to undergo again another form of estrangement" (Minh-ha 13); this is exactly what Balakian experiences as he delves into his postmemorial exploration of the lost homeland. In a personal interview, when asked about his view on Saroyan's literature and its relation to the Armenian genocide, Balakian stated that Saroyan belongs to a different "cultural time when there was more anxiety about traumatic histories and cultural identity."[19] He further pointed that Saroyan "has very little realistic representation of the Armenian genocide" and the reason, he believes, is because the genocide is "not a realized event in Saroyan's imagination, for it was too complicated a reality to write about for a writer of his era." Balakian explained that writing about the Armenian genocide became fully possible by the late 1960's because prior to that date, there was no human rights culture in America. He notes that "a culture of sophisticated psycho-historical understanding, human rights values, and political agency to pursue those values" is essential to deal with traumatic pasts.

The personal encounter with Saroyan that Balakian discusses in his memoir, *Black Dog of Fate,* further clarifies the difference in point of view and overall attitude between generations of Armenian American writers. Due to their different approach to the aftermath of genocide, their writing styles and content vary substantially. They can't even seem to share common views in relation to the kind of typewriter to use when creating literature, for Saroyan frowns upon the electric, and Balakian finds the manual typewriter useless. In fact, Balakian summarizes the overall

difference by claiming that he believes Saroyan accomplished "a great thing, in his day;" however, they don't "have a lot to say to each other about writing. He likes a different thing" (*Black Dog* 140). Balakian's aunt Nona, in contrast, highly admires Saroyan and better appreciates his work since she is a genocide survivor herself and better understands the state of mind of the first generation amid the trauma of genocide. "William Saroyan define[s] [his] aunt's notion of the hybridization of literature and her feeling about the meaning of exile" (*Black Dog* 144). Nona believes that Saroyan "like all Armenians, was a natural utopian." She notes that Armenians "have a dream instead of a country. Because territory has eluded [them], [they] have a freedom to invent that most people don't. The more [their] geography shrinks, the more [their] imaginations expand, the more [they are] like owls flying in the dark" (*Black Dog* 145).

To conclude, it is obvious that the themes Saroyan deals with do not fully address the genocide and the homeland because of the circumstances of the Armenian Americans at the time; however, the later generation displays a completely different reaction to the trauma of genocide.

II. TRACING POSTMEMORIAL EXPRESSION IN PETER BALAKIAN'S LITERARY WORK

Living in a realm that is haunted by the echoes of an unknown past and being an audience to a web of stories that shed light on layers of repressed trauma, Peter Balakian, a third generation Armenian-American, struggles to make sense of a life that is the combination of hallucinations, illusions, imagination, and reality. Balakian was exposed, at an early age, to disjointed fragments of his grandmother's quasi-unconscious through the stories that she narrated; the stories that "didn't seem to belong to any time or place" (*Black Dog* 9); the stories that started with a language so foreign to Balakian, yet so inseparable from his essence. Stories that seemed to enchant him with their ambiguity and perplex his mind, awakening within him a transhistorical experience which was to resurface only after he became a poet.

"Djamanageen gar oo chgar," which translates to "A long time ago there was and there wasn't" (*Black Dog* 9), marked the beginning of various threads of stories narrated by Balakian's grandmother, Nafina. The mere fact that these stories start with the traditional opening words of Armenian tales perhaps highlight the Armenian case; for although the Armenian genocide did actually happen in 1915, it "was," , there has been an attempt to wipe its memory with its great trauma by Turkey and its allies who still, to this day, claim that it "wasn't." Playing the role of the *hakawati,*[20] Nafina would weave multiple layers of tales, beguiling Balakian, her sole listener, who was her "companion, her captive audience,

[and] her beloved witness" (*Black Dog* 301); these tales seemed fictitious but conveyed a deeper meaning which was, at the time, incomprehensible for Balakian. The content of these yarns ranged from folktales to history, blurring the lines between dream and reality. However, no matter what form these stories emerged as, they all originated from Nafina's repressed experiences of having been a survivor of one of the most brutal genocides of the 20th century, the Armenian genocide: "her bits of memory and encoded stories were tips of ice spiles from the frozen sea within, a sea that thawed a bit at the end of her life" (*Black Dog* 301).

Nafina's stories were remnants of a past that was no longer a tangible reality when Balakian was growing up, for he was not only unaware of the occurrence of the Armenian genocide, but also oblivious of the existence of a historical homeland far from his place of birth. Furthermore, Balakian neither spoke nor understood the Armenian language, except for some words that blended with English, for "in Tenafly, New Jersey, in 1960, who would want to know Armenian, a language spoken by an ancient Near Eastern people who lived half a globe away and were [at that time] part of the Soviet Union" (*Black Dog* 5)? Within his family circle, Armenian was a language used by the adults when they needed to discuss an issue in private (*Black Dog* 5); thus, early on, Balakian associated Armenian with secrecy and mystery, a concept that was beyond reach and did not pose enough significance to interest a young boy growing up in a fully assimilated Armenian-American family, for as his mother often stated 'it [was] an ancient place, it [was not] really around anymore' (*Black Dog* 16). Armenia was referred to as "the old country" the expression that "seemed to have a lock on it" as Balakian notes. Thus, "since there was no picture of the old country in [their] house and since [Balakian] didn't have one etched in his mind, the old country came to mean [his] grandmother. Whatever it was, she was. Whatever she was, it was" (*Black Dog* 17); this is a crucial statement to highlight since it sheds light on the bond between Nafina and Armenia and opens a gateway to understanding its significance in creating, however unconsciously, a bridge between Balakian's assimilated present and his silenced, transhistorical past. Through Nafina and her narratives, Balakian felt that he was exposed to "some other world, some evocative place of dark and light, some kind of energy that ran like an invisible force from [the] old country called Armenia to [his] world in New Jersey" (*Black Dog* 18).

It was only when Balakian first expressed himself through poetry, years after his grandmother had passed away, that he came to unveil the significance of Nafina's stories of the past, for "the journey into history, into the Armenian genocide, was for [Balakian] inseparable from poetry. Poetry was part of [his] journey and [his] excavation" (*Black Dog* 146). On

Nafina's tenth commemoration, Balakian wrote a poem in her memory in which he unconsciously made statements about the Armenian genocide; a gruesome reality that he had not heard of until that point in his life. Thus, as Balakian later reflects, his words express an understanding of Nafina's "half-confessed past" without any awareness; accordingly, in the poem, "Words for My Grandmother," he writes, "I stared as always / at the skin of your hands / still discolored by / the arid Turkish plain." Balakian considered the poem "a tremor from the unconscious-the historical unconscious, the deep, shared place of ancestral pain, the place in the soul where we commune with those who have come before us" (*Black Dog* 149).

Balakian has first-hand experience with what Marianne Hirsch would years later term Postmemory. Through her studies on the Holocaust, Hirsch has come to believe that the memory of trauma can outlive its immediate victim and exist as another form of memory through second and third generations. Although she has done her own studies on the works of children of Holocaust survivors, she believes that this theory is applicable to other nations who have experienced a traumatic past.[21] The aforementioned statement is proven to be true upon an in-depth study of Balakian's works, for his works are postmemorial creations that reflect the first genocide of the twentieth century: the Armenian genocide referred to as "'the forgotten genocide', 'the unremembered genocide', 'the hidden holocaust', or 'the secret genocide'" (*The Burning Tigris*). What is interesting is the fact that Balakian had already encountered Postmemory and had voiced it through his literary work before the term was coined and prior to its emergence as a theory in the early 1990's.

When Balakian wrote his first poem to his grandmother at the age of twenty three, he did not have any ulterior motives to write about a people with whom he did not associate or a genocide of which he was in ignorance, "but somehow out of collision of language with personal memory [had come] something larger" (*Black Dog* 150). Through his own experience, Balakian has come to identify two types of memory; one he refers to as a "personal web of sensations" that constitute memories created through immediate experience, and the other that transcends the individual's life. He was not able to explain this second type of memory early on, but he linked it to his grandmother who "imploded [his] present at the strangest moments, without conscious provocation" (*Black Dog* 30-31). He constantly felt that there was a deeper message related to his ancestral history that he was supposed to unveil through her. This second type of memory that Balakian refers to is, in fact, Postmemory. According to Hirsch, Postmemory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences

of those who came before, experiences that they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.

Postmemory's connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation.[22]

Indeed, Balakian gains access to his ancestral past through poetry; thus, the moment his memories of his grandmother's fragmented stories merge with the fluidity of language, a deeper transhistorical truth emerges, and Balakian comes to explore a traumatic past that had been long silenced. Through the creation of poetry, Balakian gains access to the world of the past, to a historical Armenia that has ceased to exist, and to an ancestral nation that has faced the atrocity of genocide by the Turkish government. This experience is allowed through that second type of memory that Balakian refers to which according to Hirsch has "a temporal and qualitative difference than survivor memory" ("Past Lives" 662). In an interview Balakian is quoted saying "the receiving and transmission of trauma across generations is powerful and important and gives a poet imaginative ranges that he might not otherwise have"). It is this specific memory that the post-generation depends on in order to break the silence of the directly traumatized victims of the genocide whose trauma is usually partly revealed within the family circle after a period of latency and is rarely exposed on the communal level. Indeed, Balakian's grandmother portrayed clear symptoms of trauma after having survived the Armenian genocide. Trauma, as defined briefly by Caruth, is "an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" ("Unclaimed Experience"182). Nafina allowed Balakian to be a part of her recollections by sharing excerpts of stories of her past that haunted her unconscious; stories about scenes from the Armenian genocide that she had witnessed and lived back in the homeland, yet never revealed as complete stories.

The descendants however, due to the distance from the immediate experience, are able to revive the reality and demand its acknowledgement. According to Caruth, "The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all" ("Unclaimed Experience" 187). In relation to the Armenian genocide, this inherent forgetting by the immediate victims allows the post-generations to experience the trauma, through broken narratives, and give history a presence after a significant lapse of time through creating the absent in the form of art; in other words, by the use of Postmemory which "is a

consequence of traumatic recall but (unlike post traumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove" ("The Generation" 106).

Hirsch has done most of her analyses on photography since she considers it an excellent medium for Postmemory; she believes that a photograph transcends time and outlives the immediate survivors of trauma, acting as a strong connection to the past ("Past Lives" 660). She uses Roland Barthes's view on photography to instigate her point, for according to Barthes "the photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here" (qtd. in "Past lives" 669). To highlight photography's capability to induce absence and presence, Hirsch discusses the works of Shimon Attie who, concerned with questions of what had become of the Jewish culture that was once in Berlin, merges the past and the present by using old images from that period of time and projects them onto the exact sites in the present; in this way, he is able to literally reconstruct "the ruined world on the very site of its ruin." Furthermore, by rephotographing his projections, he creates memorial sites for the generations of survivors of the Holocaust to revisit their past ("Past Lives" 682).

The need to "re-member, to re-build, to re-incarnate, to replace and to repair" becomes a leading drive for the children of transhistorical traumatic pasts who need to understand a heritage that no longer exists ("Past lives" 661). In reference to the Holocaust, Hirsch points out that

The children of exiled survivors, although they have not themselves lived through the trauma of banishment and the destruction of home, remain always marginal and exiled, always in the diaspora. "Home" is always elsewhere, even for those who return to Vienna, Berlin, Paris, or Cracow, because the cities to which they can return are no longer those in which their parents had lived as Jews before the genocide, but are instead the cities where the genocide *happened* and from which they and their memory have been expelled. ("Past Lives" 662)

In the case of Armenia, this attempt becomes even more challenging since not only is the "home" altered but also nonexistent, for the original homeland, historical Armenia, no longer exists in its initial form and is now part of Turkey. Thus, the place where the Armenian genocide actually took place is not a tangible reality that the children of Armenian survivors can literally return to; accordingly, the "old country," as Balakian puts it, implies a "lost world, a place left to smolder in its ashes" (*Black Dog* 300). Thus, the only way to reignite these ashes is through Postmemory that transcends the literal and allows the post-generations, only through imagination and creation, to revisit the trauma of the preceding generation and, in turn, get a sense of the original home.

Just like photography can be considered an excellent medium to link memory and Postmemory, poetry can also serve the same purpose. Balakian does not rely on photographs to recall the trauma of the past, but uses poetry to construct a realm evocative of the Armenian genocide. Hirsch notes that the works of post-generation artists aim to "represent the long-term effects of living in close-proximity to the pain, depression, and disassociation of persons who have witnessed and survived massive historical trauma" ("The Generation" 112). Upon comparing Balakian's works to Attie's, it is revealed that Balakian recreates the past in the present but through the use of words and language rather than photography. This recreation may be noted in his poem, "The History of Armenia." As the critic Kalaidjian states, "history in this poem, does not belong solely to the past; rather, the force of its referent lives on-haunting the present in the figure of Nafina's revenant".[23] By recalling Nafina's fragmented stories and imagining the gaps that exist through recreating them in familiar territory, Balakian creates Postmemory through the art of language and poetry, gaining insight into a deeper unconscious and collective reality which allows him to voice the trauma of the past in the world of the present; this act becomes a necessity since "amidst the wears and tears of postmodernism, the reigning discourses of the state, the media, and the academy have served arguably to repress, deny, and normalize the extreme experiences of total war and industrial mass murder" (Kalaidjian 15).

A. Magical Realism as means of Postmemorial Connection

In fact, Balakian seems to use elements of magical realism in some of his poetry to accomplish the aforementioned; an approach that "fuses the two opposing aspects of the oxymoron (the magical and the realist) together to form one new perspective".[24] Although it has been mostly applied in fiction and less consciously in poetry, several characteristics of magical realist fiction can actually be traced in Balakian's poetry, making it possible to adopt a magical realist analysis while discussing some of his work. In fact, Balakian's aunt Anna, an expert in surrealism, considers Balakian's poetry not "surrealistic enough" since it has "too many realistic images [, and] too much logical syntax" (*Black Dog* 136); on the other hand, Balakian believes that poetry "need[s] to encompass the harsh realities of the century" (*Black Dog* 135). Thus, Balakian's poetry does unite the magical and the real.

Magical realism is often used in order to "question already existing historical assumptions" (Bowers 77). In the case of the Armenian genocide, the assumption is related to Turkey's constant denial of committing genocide against the Armenian race. Thus, in order to oppose the official

history of the Turks which has silenced the atrocious realities of the massacre, Balakian uses magical realism "[…] to disrupt fixed categories of truth, reality and history," presenting "[…] a space beyond authoritative discourse where the unrepresentable can be expressed" (Bowers 82). Although magical realism is explored through different angles, there is a consensus that it "is a mode suited to exploring-and transgressing-boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic".[25]

In "The History of Armenia," a poem from his book *Sad Days of Light*,[26] Balakian places scenes of the Armenian genocide in New Jersey, transcending temporal and spatial limitations, for "there, [he] could bring the two of [them] together again and create what [Nafina] had in her encoded way told [him]" (*Black Dog* 195). There is a clear juxtaposition between the title of the poem that evokes a setting related to Armenia, and the geographical references in the poem that are found in New Jersey. The poem takes place "last night"(Line 1) but obviously goes all the way back to Balakian's childhood, for he pictures himself with his grandmother on Oraton Parkway where they used to take walks and look at construction works on the highway. Furthermore, Nafina's image seems to be present on a literal level, but the fact that "the wind [is] blowing / through her eyes" (13-14) gives the implication that she is a ghostly figure who is not really present at the scene. Thus from the first stanza, the dichotomies of reality vs. illusion, presence vs. absence, and present vs. past exist and overlap. Balakian is quoted saying that the poem has "a surrealistic kind of displacement to it";[27] however, it could be said that the poem extends surrealism and touches upon magical realism since it uses these juxtapositions in order to highlight a historical reality rather than mere impossibility. This view parallels what magical realist texts accomplish by allowing "mind and body, spirit and matter, life and death, real and imaginary, self and other […] [to become] boundaries to be erased, transgressed, blurred, brought together, or otherwise fundamentally refashioned […]" (Zamora and Faris 6).

In the second stanza, the poet runs to his grandmother telling her that he is hungry; according to Kalaidjian his hunger symbolizes his thirst for his grandmother's untold stories that cannot be located in the morning paper that he holds; Nafina replies:

In the grocery store
a man is standing
to his ankles in blood,
the babies in East Orange
have disappeared
maybe eaten by the machinery

on this long road." (21-28)

From last night to his childhood in the States, Balakian now moves further back in time and space: back to the homeland, to 1915, to the Armenian genocide where Armenian babies did disappear, and men were murdered and covered in blood. The long road perhaps

symbolizes the road that the Armenians were forced to take through Der Zor during their deportation from their homeland; the road on which they were tortured and killed. Once again, the past of the Armenian genocide emerges in East Orange; in response to the poem, Balakian says that he "had to bring the pain of the past into the landscape of the present" (*Black Dog* 195).

Indeed, magical realism aims to create through "realistic descriptions [...], a fictional world that resembles the one we live in" (Faris 169). Balakian creates a fictional world within familiar territory in order to highlight the brutal reality of the past. Just like Attie's photography which places the historical in the current, Balakian places the scenes of the Armenian genocide in the United States, specifically, in the area where he grew up and called home. Another characteristic of magical realism is "the closeness or near-merging of two realms, two worlds" (Faris 172). The world represented in this poem unites the present and the past; it creates a nonexistent reality to shed light on a real historical event. The poem allows the Armenian genocide, no matter how distant both in time and place, to revisit the new "home" and to reappear through the words of Nafina; the original homeland invades the new home, reenacting the trauma of the Armenian genocide through the act of Postmemory. Thus as Kalaidjian states, "as a discourse of phantoms, poetry nevertheless offers a redemptive supplement to the dead letter of historical narrative" (32).

The fact that, to date, many still question whether the term genocide is applicable to the gruesome, violent slaughter of the Armenian people makes it necessary for second and third generation Armenians not only to commemorate the genocide, but also attempt to, as Hirsch puts it, "rememorate" it in order to demand its acknowledgement. Many Armenian American writers use their written words to accomplish that purpose just like many other writers who use their literary works to highlight the trauma or injustice of their own people. One style of writing that serves this purpose is magical realism; it is important to note that in his comparison of two works of magical realism, namely Toni Morrison's *The Song of Solomon* and Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, P. Gabrielle Foreman argues that these works "use magic to recuperate the real, that is, to reconstruct histories that have been obscured or erased by political and social injustice" (Zamora and Faris 9). Thus, poetry, Balakian's "The History of Armenia" specifically, aims to accomplish a similar goal: to

revive a reality through the dichotomy of magical realism in order to refuse the injustice of the genocide and, in turn, demand the cessation of historical denial, for "as Charrey and Lipstadt have written, the denial of genocide is the final stage of genocide; the first killing followed by a killing of the memory of the killing" (*Black Dog* 290). Thus, Balakian experiences Postmemory through the act of writing poetry which, as Hirsch notes, is created through "imaginative investment;" in some of his poems, the "imaginative investment" is accomplished through the use of magical realism which, as mentioned, aims to retell histories that have been unjustly presented.

Andreas Huyssen poses the question: "what good is the memory archive? How can it deliver what history alone no longer seems to be able to offer?" (qtd. in "The Generation" 105). Are the fragmented stories of the trauma of the past strong enough to evoke what history and documents have failed to accomplish? Could Postmemory help in reviving the genocide to an extent that it strengthens the call for redemption and forces the Turkish government to admit that they indeed committed genocide against the Armenian nation?

Stanzas three and four in "The History of Armenia" continue to describe destruction and murder, for the speaker is told that his "mother," "the girls," and "grandpa" are all taken away; they are "all gone" (31). Not only does Balakian recreate the realm of the Armenian genocide in the present, but also becomes a persona in that genocide, experiencing the immediate loss of family members, an experience that Nafina had during the actual genocide. Here Balakian is no longer a third-generation Armenian American, but an Armenian amidst the genocide. Even identity seems to trespass time, space, and fixedness which is what magical realist works aim to accomplish: to "question received ideas about time, space, and identity" (Faris 173). This verifies Hirsch's argument that "Postmemory seeks connection. It creates where it cannot recover. It imagines where it cannot recall. It mourns a loss that cannot be repaired" ("Past Lives" 664).

Furthermore, Balakian brings modern concepts and applies them to the past to make the lines between past and present even more unclear and to further challenge linear time; he writes, "the girls went for soda, / maybe the Coke was bad, / the candy sour" (32-34). He uses soda, which, then as now, was a very commercial product as he was growing up, and relates it to the girls who had disappeared during the genocide. Moreover, the setting in New Jersey reflects the horror of mass murder of the Armenian genocide and portrays the cessation of life: "This morning the beds / are empty, water off, / the toilets dry" (35-37). It is not the Armenian cities that are

burning, but rather "West Orange [is] burning / Montclair [is] burning / Bloomfield and Newark [are] gone" (55-58).

The shocking images of the genocide continue to appear in yet the fifth, sixth, and seventh stanzas whereby "one woman [carries] / the arms of her child" (59-60), and "[…] two boys [come] / with the skin / of their legs / in their pockets" (63-66). Balakian writes, "I wanted the language of the poem to be bare-boned. I wanted the lines to convey fragmentation and shock, and also the broken rhythms of immigrant speech" (*Black Dog* 195). Of course, these scenes continue to take place in "East Orange" and not in Armenia since although Balakian cannot go back in time to relive the exact experience, he has the liberty of revisiting the scene and imagining it in a place that he can visualize better than a homeland he has never seen and that no longer exists. This confirms Hirsch's belief that Postmemory's link to the past is established not by "recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation" ("The Generation" 108).

The sixth stanza shifts from the communal to the personal, for it refers to an actual story that Nafina had told her daughter about the inability of Armenian mothers, including herself, to fall asleep at night while escaping the genocide. These women were afraid that "the ceiling [would] open/ and bodies [would] fall/ from clouds […]" (73-75). It is in this stanza that Nafina addresses her grandson with the Armenian adjective "yavrey" which means beloved; an adjective she often used before she passed away. The final stanza continues to narrate her story; Nafina like many other women woke up to an empty home, with her husband and family taken away to be murdered.

> Grandpa is pressing
> pants, they came for him
> before the birds were up –
> He left without shoes
> or tie, without shirt
> or suspenders.
> It was quiet
> the birds, the birds
> were still sleeping. (88-96)

"The final stanza presents a world where only a breath marks the shift from normality into dissolution; and time, like every other natural force, reverses on itself, moving from present to past tense" (Bedrosian 193). By recreating the genocide in East Orange, Balakian turns this poem into a memorial site and "the poem [becomes] a headstone in a world of unmarked graves" (*Black dog* 195). This headstone is created by the grandchild of a survivor of the genocide who believes that the past had to rest for a while before it could reemerge to claim truth and justice.

"The Rise In The Night" is another poem from Balakian's book *Sad Days of Light* that reveals his experience with Postmemory; the poem is set in the serenity of the night, where all is dark, yet there is an underlying truth that creeps and rises from that darkness to stir the calm. The speaker represents a second or third generation Armenian who is made to reveal a transhistorical truth by listening to the dead who have apparently failed to rest in peace because they have a story to tell: the story of the Armenian genocide.

In the first stanza, nothing seems to be as it should, for although the speaker expects to feel warm on that specific evening, he feels "a chill" in his body and his "hands are like dead flowers/ with the last color leaving" (Lines 4-5). Instead of enjoying the warmth of life, the speaker is made to feel like the dead which allows him to associate with those who are no longer around. Deeper into the poem, in the fourth stanza, the speaker establishes a more profound level of communication with the deceased who tell him that when it rains, the ground cracks "and everything crawls out" (21). It is not the dead who crawl out, but rather the stories that have supposedly been buried with them which rise and reach the post-generation who live.

After four stanzas of establishing a clear link between the dead and the living, the fifth stanza breaks the bond by pointing out that the rain has stopped and the field is getting dry "and everything is dying back" (23); just like the Armenian case, all the stories seem to be going astray because the Armenians' attempt to demand acknowledgement has failed over the past 97 years. Nevertheless, the speaker can still hear them and feel their presence since he is supposedly a grandchild of a genocide survivor. After all, had Balakian not written poetry and had he not studied the Armenian history, he would still be oblivious to the massacre his ancestors were subjected to. However, by voicing the narratives of the past, he becomes an active participant of the genocide; he gives life to his inherited past in the present.

Furthermore, the sound the speaker hears in the eighth stanza "[…] rises up inside [his] legs and through/ [his] stomach, raising its head into [his chest]" (39-40). The sound is no longer a detached element from the outside, but it seems to have metamorphosed into a deep ancestral consciousness that resides in the speaker in the form of a collective unconscious, for he feels it internally; he "can hear [his] own ears breathing" (43) which means the sound of the dead and the beat of his ears have become one. This unity allows the Armenian to commemorate the genocide which according to Balakian is crucial in order to raise a cultural issue beyond its circle into the public sphere where it can be addressed, for

"only then can redemption, hope, and community be achieved" (*Black Dog* 291).

The speaker then attains another level of awareness, for he seems to have a strong link with the "Beast" that rises in the ninth stanza, and he knows the sound it makes. The reason the speaker is actually familiar with this sound is because it is his own voice which is the combination of the voices of his ancestors. The sound of the dead and the living unite to address the Armenian cause. This creature that breathes, unlike the dead, will have the strength to "find its two legs" (47) and stand up once again in order to give justice to the Armenian cause. This Beast which represents the Armenian cause will

> [...] carry the legs of [the speaker's] cousins
> And [his] grandmother's shoes –
> It will rise with [his] father's crawling
> veins and with iridescent stones,
> with the eyes of animals still clear
> like water –
> and [his] breathing self will spread
> and open like this night. (50-57)

In the last two lines of the stanza, it becomes clear that the beast is the speaker himself because he no longer refers to the beast with the pronoun "it" but rather becomes one with it and says that it is his breathing self, the fact that he is alive, that will allow the story to be told. It is the living post-generations of genocide survivors who will demand justice for the victims by forbidding the passage of time from destroying the trauma of the past.

B. Balakian's Use of Food Imagery to Evoke Postmemorial Genocide Consciousness:

In a series of poems in his collection *Sad Days of Light,* Balakian uses several patterns related to food in order to conjure the Armenian genocide. By reminiscing his childhood experiences of cooking with his grandmother, he develops a deeper understanding of the significance of cooking and the symbolic value it entails, for it instigates deep cultural bonds and raises a consciousness of ethnic identity. Food then, in Balakian's poetry, becomes another means of postmemorial expression since he focuses on culinary images in order to evoke the transhistorical trauma of a genocide that he could only bear witness to through fragmented narratives. By relating food to the Armenian genocide, Balakian implies that commemorating the transhistorical Armenian experience is as indispensable as the consumption of food, for both aim to ensure survival; on a literal level, the consumption of food maintains biological survival, yet on a metaphorical level, the image evoked by food

keeps the Armenian identity alive beyond time and space. Levi-Strauss believes that "food must not only be good to eat, but also good to think"[28] and that is the exact effect that Balakian's poetry accomplishes since it uses Armenian food to provoke thought about the true essence of Armenian identity.

"Granny, Making Soup" begins with the image of a pot that holds "what is left of time" (Line 3). The soup that will be prepared will serve more than just short-term appetite, for it encompasses ethnic history which includes narratives too horrendous to be transferred through direct words but nevertheless necessary to be engulfed. This parallels Barthes's view that "food is an organic system, organically integrated into its specific type of civilization".[29] Perhaps one of the reasons that Balakian considers food central to his identity is the fact that it defies spatial and temporal limitations by recreating identical experiences through taste buds. In other words, although it is impossible to recollect an ancestral past of which he was never a part of, eating the food that his race once consumed creates a strong bond to help bridge the generational gap: in spite of the lapse of time, the exact same ingredients are used in order to create food that was consumed by previous Armenian generations in the homeland. Certainly, his grandmother once again emerges as the link between the world of the past and the present, for it is through her that the recipe of the heritage is transferred. Furthermore, Balakian moves one step further by writing about food so that he creates the metaphorical effect even at the absence of the tangible ingredients of the Armenian cuisine.

The herbs
early mint, dill, walnut-roots,
the dust of the rusty stick of cinnamon
that we pass from generation
to generation." (1-5)

These ingredients come to serve as timeless indicators of Armenian identity as they blend in grandma's soup. Moreover, the tendon of the lamb which is considered the essence of the soup symbolizes unity since, in the words of the grandmother in the poem:

the socket
from which it is pulled
is the empty round
where we join." (20-24)

"We" refers to the Armenians who no matter how distant from the homeland maintain their ethnic identity upon consuming the soup and maintaining culinary traditions. According to Fischler, "not only does the eater incorporate the properties of food, but, symmetrically, it can be said that the absorption of a food incorporates the eater into a culinary system

and therefore into the group which practices it, unless it irremediably excludes him" (280-281).

In the tenth stanza, Balakian gives a detailed description of the transformation the water of the soup goes through as it boils; in the eleventh stanza, Nafina claims to have watched the exact same scene ample times back in her homeland and the scene brings up memories of life before the genocide. Thus, by sharing the common scene of the boiling pot, Balakian seems to get access to the memories Nafina once possessed in Armenia and gets the chance to grasp a small aspect of the real, the authentic. When one's history remains ambiguous, one holds on to constants, and the soup in this scene serves the point of intersection that Balakian and his grandmother get to share over the lapse of time.

An additional point about this scene is the method of cooking that Balakian has decided to discuss in this poem. Anthropologist Levi- Strauss, who has founded the concept of the Culinary Triangle, focuses on methods of cooking and the symbolic meanings they entail from a structuralist point of view. In his essay, "The Culinary Triangle," Levi-Strauss believes that boiling food represents culture, for it uses a "receptacle" which is a cultural object, and it preserves the content of each ingredient unlike roasting which basically destroys the major component of the food. Furthermore, he states that "in as much as culture is a mediation of the relations between man and the world, [...] boiling demands a mediation (by water) of the relation between food and fire which is absent in roasting".[30] He also notes that boiled food is considered 'endo-cuisine' since it is usually prepared for a "small closed group" (30). By reflecting upon the traditions of how different societies cook their meals, he concludes that boiling food aims to preserve culture since it takes place "without loss of substance, and within a complete enclosure" as opposed to roasting which could connote loss and damage (31). These points are applicable to this specific pot Balakian refers to, for as already mentioned, its symbolic meaning aims to preserve the essence of the Armenian culture by holding on to each and every memory/ingredient that comprises the Armenian identity. Thus, this confirms Strauss's attempt to consider the "cooking of a society as a language in which it unconsciously translates its structure-or else resigns itself, still unconsciously, to revealing its contradictions" (35).

In the next few stanzas, there is great emphasis on the importance of leaving the pot aside for a period of time before consuming the soup so that "the water [takes]/ from the bones/ what the lamb takes from the earth" (97-99). The water will take from the marrow all that the lamb has consumed in its days of serenity; in addition, the water will take in the brutal experience of the attack the lamb was exposed to by the wildcat. The point is that the water absorbs all the elements of the bone, and the bone

here symbolizes the Armenian experience: both the horror and the beautiful memories of the homeland.

And when we return
in the evening
the water will be full
of the stone
and like a voice
it will moan
with its tendon, fat, and bone,
and with the little meat
we've left for our own teeth,
and then, Peter,
we'll have broth –
and when you
take it to your lips,
you will take it
all in. (143-157)

Indeed, it is important to allow the soup to rest before its consumption in order to allow its ingredients to fully dissolve into the water so that by the time it is devoured, it possesses all the minor nutrients of each ingredient involved. On a symbolic level, the water represents the Armenian experience that has needed time to rest for a few decades because of the need of the survivors to assimilate in new areas. However, this rest does not necessarily have a negative impact, for it will allow the post-generations to benefit from the passage of time in order to establish stronger ties to the Armenian case. Second and third generation Armenians, by the time they "consume" this issue, will take it all in and allow it to sink into their own essence. Food then in this poem serves as means to maintain and transmit trans-generational experiences and serves as a firm symbol of ethnic identity reinforcing Fischler's view that considers food vital for establishing a sense of "collective belonging" (280); moreover, it confirms Barthes's belief that eating "is a behavior that develops beyond its own ends, replacing, summing up, and signalizing other behaviors, and it is precisely for these reasons that it is a sign (*Food and Culture* 25).

In his memoir, Balakian states that food for his family, in specific, and the Armenians, in general, is a "complex cultural emblem, an encoded script that embodie[s] the long history and collective memory of [the] Near Eastern culture" (52). Armenian food not only maintains the Armenian tradition which is crucial for assimilated people who have lost their homeland, but also serves to commemorate the genocide, for each meal within an Armenian family is considered a blessing and symbolizes empowerment. It reminds the Armenian race that they have emerged from

the atrocity of the past. The term "starving Armenians" was coined to describe the millions of Armenians who died of starvation during their deportation after attempting to "[pick] the seeds out of feces or [suck] the blood on their own clothes" (53). The brutality of the situation was further highlighted in the movie *Ararat*, a movie dedicated to the Armenian Genocide, in which a character eats a single seed of pomegranate per day in order to remind himself of his mother's agony as she fled from her homeland; she had to survive on a single seed and suck its juice throughout the day in order to maintain the energy to continue her struggle of survival. It is therefore quite comprehensible why a single pot of soup or any other Armenian meal can symbolize deep national realities that should not be lost but serve as means to quench the starvation of post-generations who seek connection to their original homeland. Balakian's mother's culinary habits confirm the afore mentioned, for "at certain moments [,] her unacknowledged cultural past became an irrepressible force, a statement of beauty and sometimes rage that asserted itself in the name of things culinary, in the name of the kitchen, the inviolable sanctuary of a culture that had barely escaped extinction" (*Black Dog* 56).

In his analysis of food in Balakian's memoir, Delassio discusses the crucial role food plays in Balakian's childhood, and how it acts as a means to cope with his hyphenated identity. Furthermore, he highlights how the process of cooking in the Balakian family is an attempt to maintain Armenian roots in the midst of America, for unlike American food which can be prepared in a short time, the food his mother and grandmother prepared took hours symbolizing the Armenian culture's extended history.[31] Thus, "food is central to our sense of identity" (Fischler 275). Since food is a crucial concept for Armenians, it also becomes a way of dealing with assimilation and accepting it whilst holding on to ethnic traditions. Most of the meals Balakian had while growing up in an Armenian-American family were mixtures of both the Armenian and American cuisine, so food definitely became synonymous with synthesized identity. "Hamburgers with fresh mint and scallions, eggplants stuffed with collard greens and black-eyed peas, red lentils cooked into baked macaroni and cheese [...]" (*Black Dog* 54) are just samples that highlight the link between identity and food, for if identity is hyphenated, it finds its way into the culinary tradition, creating, in turn, a hybrid cuisine.

Even the scent of food might act as a reminder of ethnic identity; Balakian notes that because of the overuse of onion in Armenian food, the mere scent of onion reminds him of his mother's kitchen which is automatically associated to his Armenian background (*Black Dog* 57). In his essay "Towards a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," anthropologist Roland Barthes expands the concept of food

from merely “a collection of products that can be used for statistical and nutritional studies” to “a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situation, and behavior.” Thus, every "item of food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies" and becomes a "real sign" or "a metaphor" in "a veritable grammar of foods" (21-22). Onion in this case becomes another sign of Armenian identity, for in his poem, “The Stuffing: East Orange, New Jersey, 1942,” Balakian describes yet another scene of food preparation in order to revive his ancestral roots. There is an interesting juxtaposition in the title of the poem, for it refers to a culinary tradition being performed within an Armenian family as an ethnic ritual taking place in New Jersey. The pronoun “she” throughout the poem refers to Nafina who asks young Peter to crush the garlic in his palm while helping her stuff the stomach of a goat (Lines 17-23), and to “slit” the olive, take its pit, and “place it in [his] cheek/ and suck” (29-30). She then explains that:

> when [they] press the juice
> from the walnut
> and mince the husk
> a light dust
> will rise from
> [their] ankles. (31-36)

The fact that each and every process included in the making of the meal is given weight through the use of strong and active verbs such as “crush” (19), “slit” (24), “press” (31), and “mince” (33) creates a meaning that trespasses the literal process of food preparation, for the dust Nafina refers to is the dust of Armenian history that has to be crushed, pressed, and pealed in order to reach deeper layers of revelation.

In the final stanza, Nafina tells young Peter that only after the transformation will he be able to recognize his “father’s scent” by smelling the oil that “run the tips of [his] fingers” and recognizing “the light perfume in [his] palm” (37-44) which remains after the food has gone through destruction which will be followed by transformation. The whole scene represents the Armenian genocide and all the mutation that is a necessary part of the Armenian identity; its understanding is central in order to grasp the true essence of being Armenian; that is why when Nafina allows Balakian to be a part of the process of cooking an Armenian meal, she gives him access to the world of the past which allows him to reconnect to his ancestors and smell their presence in his hand. It is interesting to note that although these poems were written years after Nafina had passed away, Balakian manages to successfully return to his childhood and envision a typical scene in his grandmother’s kitchen. Just as in real life, Nafina’s presence in the poems implies a message: a lesson

to be learned, as Balakian seems to use his immediate memory in order to envision a postmemorial experience through the creative realm poetry provides.

Delassio believes that Arax's culinary habits, mentioned in the memoir, act as means "to reclaim the Armenian culture that the Turks tried to obliterate and that the dominant American culture continues to marginalize" (105). Balakian's poem serves the exact same purpose by raising the dusts that were supposed to have settled due to the lapse of time. Although, as Delassio mentions, young Balakian at times resisted the Armenian cuisine because of his inability to comprehend its complicated system of underlying symbols (108), he is able to grasp its essence later on in life by writing about the literal process of cooking through words in his poetry.

It is also important to note that the reason why Balakian gives weight to the process of cooking Armenian food is because those scenes constituted the passage of most of the fragmented stories that Nafina told Balakian about the Armenian genocide; thus, they serve a major role in his postmemorial understanding of the trauma of the past. Delassio concludes that Balakian draws commonalities "between the creative acts of food preparation and storytelling, demonstrating how both acts allow the participants to take visceral and imaginative journeys to their ancestral homelands and thus nurture their cultural memory" (109). Just like the goddess Fate feeds the starving woman in Nafina's story "The Black Dog of Fate," Nafina's stories feed Balakian's desire to bond with his Armenian culture (110).

In "My Aunt Gladys Who Carries the Kitchen," Balakian refers to his aunt as "the carrier of the kitchen" (Line 45) once again giving weight to culinary tradition by using the word "carrier" since it implies the act of transmission of something valuable. The image of his aunt in front of the sink filled with water is one of empowerment since it represents and encompasses generations of Armenians. In this water:

[…] the cold potato float and open,
[…] the radish and the headless celery swell,
and the liver and the veins
and the tissue of the stomach
soak for the night." (55-59)

In this water the remnants of Armenian food give life to a generational bond, for by immersing her hands in this water, Aunt Gladys feels:

the hands of dust,
the hands of vinegar and oil
the hands of the wet mouth
of the dogs of Van,

the hands of [her] mother
full of lips and saliva
full of urine and dirt
full of the silent eyes of the cows
and the boys who will no more speak. (61-70)

The kitchen sink unites the hands of Armenians over generations ranging between survivors of genocide and assimilated post-generations of Armenians. The repetition of "the hands" emphasizes the union of those alive with those who emerge from the dust; those who have passed away but can still be felt. Aunt Gladys will feel the hands of her mother which have remnants of urine and dirt from the brutal conditions of deportation that she had to survive. This same water holds the deceased who are felt by aunt Gladys's ritual of washing what is left of the Armenian food that has been devoured. This is what she experiences as she:

[…] let[s] [her] arms sink
into the rinsings of the food –
into the beet-deep cold
[they] eat and gnaw
and chatter on." (77-81)

What is it that the post-generations "chatter on" about? As they sit to share the Armenian cuisine, they chatter about those who had suffered, those who had survived, and those who still live and owe the past the duty to chatter on about a genocide that has long been sought to be silenced. Food once more serves cultural preservation in this poem, confirming Barthes's view that "substances, techniques of preparation, habits, all become part of a system of differences in signification; and as soon as this happens, [there is a] communication by way of food" (*Food and Culture* 22). Thus, "like his female family members whose culinary creations not only signify their ethnic identity, but also suggest their pride in that identity," Balakian's writing "depicts acts of cooking and eating" in order to cultivate physical and emotional ethnic hunger (Delassio 115).

To conclude, Balakian's use of an extended food-related metaphor to explain postmemorial experience can shed light on the important points discussed in this section. In his memoir, he writes:

Now I realize that my grandmother's stories hibernated in me until I was ready to understand them fully. Or maybe marinated is a better word, since we are a people so steeped in food, yes marinated. Or is it cured? Like grape leaves in brine; or lamb cooked in apricots, walnuts, and pomegranate juice and left to soften in hardened fat in an earthenware jug; or long slabs of filet mignons packed in garlic and cumin and left to hang in the dark air of a basement. (18)

C. The Significance of Fragmentation, Trauma, and Imagination in Balakian's Poetry

Hirsch stresses the role creative investment and imagination play in postmemorial experience; indeed, imagination comprises a great part of Balakian's poems, for it creates means of trans-generational connection, allowing, in turn, the possibility of understanding a trauma that exists in the past. In his book, Kalaidjian notes that

Although literature's fictive grounding in figurative language would hardly seem fitted to disclosures of referential truth, [...] poetry of generational witness- precisely as a linguistic event- manifests its force in revolutionary ways.

What is properly an unspeakable or "buried" trauma in the ancestor, no matter how distant, appears like a ghost haunting the symptomatic actions, phobias, "puppet emotions," hallucinations, and-most tellingly- the "staged words" or cryptonyms of the descendant. (26)

Balakian's poem "Road to Aleppo, 1915," starts with the expression "there must have/ been [...]" (Lines 1-2) which shows possibility rather than actuality, for although Balakian was never on the road to Aleppo in 1915, he gives his pen the right to create what must have been. Indeed, this imagined presence in scenes from the genocide becomes recurrent in Balakian's poems, for he attempts to take an active role in the trauma so that he can visualize the reality. Although at a temporal delay, Balakian tries not just to imagine the genocide as a tragic event, but rather personalizes it enough to be Nafina and to access her thoughts and feelings during such tragedy. This allows him to get closer to the experience which is revealed in the second stanza where the tone becomes more assertive and moves from "must have been" to "there was" (16). This transition shows how the experience is now personalized and seems to constitute a memory of his own. The poem uses sensory elements which are considered extremely personal and immediate, yet are created by the grandchild who looks back and tries to recapture what once was. Delving into the experience, Balakian evokes the immediate agony that Nafina underwent as the heat "like the ground/ of needles stir[ed]/ up [her] legs (16-19), and the "droning" of the "throats of boys" "kept ringing/ in [her] ears" through the "[...] light/ and dying wind" (20-26). Thus, this attempt to revive traumatic memories that were never personally his can be traced in several poems and can be considered a common theme that Balakian adopts. The poem actually confirms the role Hirsch believes Postmemory plays, for although it is "not identical to memory; it is 'post,' [...] it approximates memory in its affective force" ("The Generation" 109).

On another note, the choice of diction in the poem recreates the atrocity of the deportation, for Balakian uses traumatic figurative language

in order to recapture the trauma which is reflected through elements of nature. There is a "[…] flame/ like a leaf/ eaten in the sun" (2-4), "[…] the screaming/ trees [are] dissolving/ to the plain" (12-14). The wind is "dying" (21), the ground is "silent" (27) and it fills the "empty sky" (30); all the imagery evokes death and destruction. Nafina's psychological state is reflected in nature, for [her] breath "like horizon/ settle[s] into black" (31-33) and "the moaning air/ almost gone/ fill[s] inside/ [her] dress" (38-41). The short and abrupt lines in the poem capture the grim and gruesome reality of slaughter and genocide. In reference to the poem, Kalaidjian asserts that this work captures the "nonlinguistic event of trauma's 'speechless terror'" that even accurate historical accounts would fail to present (Kalaidjian 41). By recalling memories that are not authentically his, Balakian gains access to the genocide by exploring a postmemorial realm which is made possible only through Nafina's fragmented narratives that he heard as a child. Thus, as he tries to patch the trauma together, Balakian, himself, adopts a fragmented language in the poem paralleling the fragmented narratives that made the recreation of the trauma possible.

Through her extensive studies of the trauma of the Holocaust, Dori Laub, in her essay "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle," writes about the importance of witnessing and the significance it has on the experience of trauma itself. It is important to note that extensive study and research has been applied to the Holocaust, but there is not much written about the trauma of the Armenian genocide in terms of theory and analysis in spite of the fact that the Armenian genocide preceded the Holocaust. Thus, it is necessary to build on theories applied to Holocaust studies in order to analyze the trauma that the survivors of the Armenian genocide experienced after having emerged from the massacres, for although physically they were obliged to build new lives and assimilate in the diaspora, psychologically they were subjected to the painful after-effects of bearing witness to the first massive killings of the century.

As she highlights the need for survivors to recount their trauma to listeners who, at a temporal delay, become witnesses to the horror of the past, Laub establishes that "the listener […] becomes the Holocaust witness before the narrator does".[32] This statement agrees with Caruth's explanation of trauma which "does not simply serve as record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned".[33] Since trauma is not fully grasped by victims, the listeners come to have immense importance because they mark the first attempt to make sense of an experience that cannot be comprehended by the victims themselves. Although Nafina refrained from sharing her trauma with her family members in general, she indirectly allowed Balakian to be her listener by sharing fragmented flashbacks, giving Balakian the role of the

witness, and through him, enabling a "reliving" and "reoccurrence" of the traumatic event (Laub 69). Since the listener, namely Balakian, is not an interviewer or a psychoanalyst, but rather a family member, the witnessing becomes more than an act of an attempt to heal, and is assigned a greater role which is commemoration and demand of making the Turkish government admit to have committed a mass extermination of the Armenian race. Nafina did not share her narratives to heal her trauma, but rather allowed his grandson to inherit the trauma, so that at a temporal delay, there can be hope of giving justice to the Armenian case.

At this point, Caruth's and Laub's theories seem to merge with Hirsch's, for Caruth believes that the flashback which the victim of the trauma experiences is "not simply an overwhelming experience that has been obstructed by a later repression or amnesia, but an event that is itself constituted, in part, by its lack of integration into consciousness" (152). Laub emphasizes the need for a witness who then can repossess the traumatic experience and attempt to resurface the truth. As already stated, Hirsch believes that this witnessing can be practiced on a trans-generational level since Postmemory is "a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a *consequence* of traumatic recall but (unlike post-traumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove" ("The Generation" 106).

Balakian's poetry then can be analyzed in light of the combination of the afore- mentioned trauma theories, for it actually verifies the findings that are mostly based on Holocaust studies. By being a witness to Nafina's traumatic experiences that could not reach conscious perception during her lifetime, Balakian becomes a witness who, at a generational remove, recreates the traumatic experiences in order to attempt to heal the trauma of the ancestors by giving voice to the Armenian cause. The difference between Balakian and others who take an active role in the Armenian case is that he has personalized the trauma of the massacre because of being a chosen witness to Nafina's trauma. Although as he was growing up, Balakian was not able to understand the trauma that he was inheriting because of his lack of knowledge about the genocide and also because of the vague and fragmented narratives that he was exposed to, he, at a later point in his life, is able to bring the experience into consciousness because he is distant from the immediate trauma, yet at the same time, possesses it within his Postmemory.

Upon receiving news about Pearl Harbor, Nafina starts to panic and starts to imagine that the trauma of the genocide is catching up in her new home and that it is, once again, going to take away her family. Caruth explains that because the traumatic event is not fully comprehended as it happens, it appears in relation to another location and another time at a

later point (*Trauma* 8). That is why the news causes Nafina to become paranoid and she exists beyond reach. For the first time, she uses the word "Turk" consciously, and she constantly cries, believing that 'they are coming again' (*Black Dog* 186-187). During that period of time, she repeatedly gets flashbacks of scenes from the genocide, going through, what Caruth terms as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which is when "the overwhelming events of the past repeatedly possess, in intrusive images and thoughts, the one who has lived through them" (151). She then undergoes treatment and overcomes her relapse; however, the trauma is never brought up again, neither by her, nor by her family members. At this stage, the pain is too immense to deal with and that is why the moment it reaches partial consciousness, it is eliminated in order to ensure the maintenance of a somehow "normal" life. As Balakian mentions in his memoir, his family seems to follow a famous Armenian saying which states that "when the past is behind you, [you should] keep it there" (180). That is what Nafina's family does through the remaining years of her life. However, since this trauma is not the result of a single tragedy, but rather the aftereffect of mass extermination, it becomes impossible to leave it all behind and move on with life as if it never happened. If the survivor cannot deal with the immensity of pain, and if, out of concern, the second generation turns a blind eye to the past in order to fit in the new homeland, it becomes the duty of the third generation to raise the ghost of the Armenian genocide that, although silent, lurks in the unconscious of all post-generations who need to gain some sort of justice for the pain their ancestors underwent. Such justice is necessary because such trauma extends physical existence and resides in future generations; the fact that after 97 years, the Armenians still demand justice acts as proof to the aforementioned.

In his poem "First Nervous Breakdown, Newark 1941," Balakian verbalizes Nafina's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder by attempting to recreate her feelings of loss and confusion since he, at one point, was a witness to her trauma. By doing so, Balakian seems to experience what Laub discusses in relation to her interviews with Holocaust survivors; she states that by taking part in the reliving of the trauma, she faces the challenge of surpassing the Holocaust itself and refraining from being immersed and lost in it (62). By writing poetry, Balakian attempts the exact same purpose, for he wishes to rise beyond the loss and confusion of trauma, in order to shed light on the event itself. The poem is written in short lines, in an attempt to reflect the state of mind of a traumatized person. The short lines create anxiety, recapturing the experience of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Once again, there is a narrator who is giving voice to Nafina's thoughts and words, for the whole poem is based on what

"she said" (Line 1). Although in real life, no one could access Nafina's internal state of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder because she herself could not comprehend her situation, Balakian, years after Nafina's nervous breakdown, attempts to access that specific state of mind; he delves into the "traumatic space" (Mosby 53). The title, of course, refers to Nafina's actual breakdown during Pearl Harbor; thus, once contextualized, it becomes clear that by writing about the experience, Balakian seeks to voice Nafina's inexpressible and incomprehensible trauma since "[…] the inherent departure, within trauma, from the moment of its first occurrence, is also means of passing out of the isolation imposed by the event: that the history of a trauma, in its inherent belatedness, can only take place through the listening of another" (*Trauma* 11).

Throughout the five stanzas of the poem, there are shocking images that aim to grasp the mindset of a person suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Scenes and memories of the genocide catch up with Nafina in the poem, for everything she lays eyes on is transformed into a reality from the past, from the massacre. Nafina is depicted muttering to the mannequins in the shops which are "hanging without heads/ in the window" (5-6). Within the store, "[she] kick[s] the empty/ pants and ask[s] for legs" (9-10). "Kicking a pair of pants performs the repressed signifier of the missing 'leg' that, incorporated as a phantom limb, haunts the poem's psychic topography as a loss denied conscious acknowledgement" (Kalaidjian 37). Obviously, she is searching for the deceased among the mannequins and does not understand why they have become lifeless. As she moves further along the street and passes by the butcher's, she holds the "cow's eyes" to her chest "as if to say without/ a word, they were alive/ and beckoning for care (16-18). She searches for all signs of death in order to seek life through them. Of course, what is significant about this poem is that Nafina did not literally have what is presented in the poem, for the imagery is created by Balakian in his attempt to imagine and create what Nafina was going through; he expresses it all from her view since the whole poem is the reported information of what "she said." In the fourth stanza, Nafina wants to hit "the hanging ribs/ fresh and red" (19-20) "until it scream[s]" (26). Kalaidjian notes that this act might allude to "bastinadoing: beating human limbs into pulp with sticks" recapturing the torture that the Turks practiced on the Armenians (38). The color of the raw meat and the display of the hanging corpse complete the image of death, and Nafina's attempt to beat it into a sound, shows her level of psychological disturbance, her denial, and her need to revive the corpses of the massacre.

The final scene in the poem places Nafina "by the bridge" where she "sit[s] looking down / by the water" (34-36). This scene captures Nafina's

internal state in real life since she used to drift from the real world while suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and her gazing into the water could refer to the recollection of memories related to the Euphrates River, back in 1915, when it was filled with the dead bodies of the victims of the massacre. In contrast to the entire content of the poem, the word that ends the poem is "water" which symbolizes the antistudy of death, for it usually represents life and continuation. However, in Nafina's mind, it flows towards her trauma, towards the past, and towards the genocide in her homeland in 1915. Perhaps towards the al-Raqqah river along Der Zor which, as Balakian notes, was "red with blood" and "clogged with the corpses of thousands of Armenian bodies as was recorded by eyewitnesses during the worst killing sprees in 1915 and 1916" (*Black Dog* 335). This poem "explores the complex psychosocial phenomenon of trauma and its possessing claim to reference persisting beyond the latency of its event" (Kalaidjian 38).

It is also interesting to note the type of narration used in the poem, for although the speaker is recounting what Nafina has said, the incidents that she discusses actually use the second person pronoun "you." Thus, the multilayered narration gives a certain extent of fluidity to the voice in the poem because it encompasses the traumatized person, the narrator who is trying to envision the state of mind of the traumatized person, and the reader who is made to recreate whatever it is that Nafina is narrating. In other words, the use of the second person pronoun forces the reader to momentarily visualize and experience the trauma. For instance, in the second stanza, it is not just Nafina who enters the shop and asks for the legs, but it is the reader as well, for the lines read as "you kicked the empty/ pants and asked for legs" (9-10). It is no longer a personal trauma, but rather a trauma imposed on a communal level in order to increase the witnesses of such reality and bring the trauma closer to the current generation of readers. Here, Balakian's poem seems to accomplish the purpose Hirsch believes the Tower of Faces serves, for these series of familial images situated in the Holocaust Memorial Museum aim to create a space to form a community that merges the families of the past with the descendants who view the photographs ("Postmemories" 672). In Balakian's case, the poem becomes the space where the Armenians of the past and present unite in order to embrace a collective experience since in reality such a site is nonexistent in the States, for other than the memorial site in Armenia, Der Zor, and Beirut, there is no collective space that Armenians and non-Armenians can visit in order to recollect and "rememorate" the genocide. Balakian acts as what Hirsch terms an agent of Postmemory, giving "narrative shape to the surviving fragments of an irretrievable past" ("Postmemories" 666).

The significance of such an attempt is perhaps clarified by Laub who, in reference to the victim's inability to comprehend trauma, writes that the "loss of the capacity to be a witness to oneself and thus to witness from the inside is perhaps the true meaning of annihilation, for when one's history is abolished, one's identity ceases to exist as well" (67). The Turks were unable to annihilate the Armenian race physically since the Armenian race continues to exist today; however, beyond the physical, there remains the demand to forbid the Turks from denying and destroying the truth and memory of the Armenian genocide; thus, it becomes necessary to hold on to history and revive it so as not to lose the Armenian identity. Similar to Laub's perspective of the Holocaust based on her interviews with survivors, Balakian knows that being a post-generational witness to the Armenian genocide cannot eradicate the historical reality; furthermore,

It cannot bring back the dead, undo the horror, or reestablish the safety, authenticity, and the harmony of what was home. But neither does it succumb to death, nostalgia, memorializing, ongoing repetitious embattlements with the past, or flight to superficiality or to the seductive temptation of the illusion of substitutions. It is a dialogical process of exploration and reconciliation of two worlds-the one that was brutally destroyed and the one that is- that are different and will always remain so.

The testimony is inherently a process of facing loss-of going through the pain of the act of witnessing, and the ending of the act of witnessing-which entails yet another repetition of the experience of separation and loss. It reenacts passage through difference in such a way, however, that it allows perhaps a certain repossession of it. (Laub 73-74)

Nafina, along with the survivors of the Armenian genocide, underwent trauma before it existed as an advanced and well-known psychological concept, and she was a victim of genocide before the word "genocide" was coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1943 (*Black Dog* 299). Silence marked her sole method of survival, and when attempting to express her trauma, she ended up with non-linear and non-chronological narratives which were heard by her listener, Balakian. Her "stories, dreams, [and] flashbacks" were "the only way she knew to speak to [him] about something she wanted to say, but couldn't say in any other language to a young boy, her eldest grandson" (*Black Dog* 301). It is crucial to add that the reason she couldn't use any other language is because trauma does not offer the victim the ability to express in full narratives, but only through fragmentations after a period of latency. Since the victims lack the ability in themselves to completely possess the history of their trauma, a new type of listening emerges; one that includes "the witnessing, precisely, of impossibility" (*Trauma* 10). Postmemory acts as a gateway for Balakian to attempt this witnessing of impossibility. By building on historical facts and Nafina's

fragmented narratives of trauma which he has come to internalize, he uses poetry to narrate the unnarrated stories of Nafina, in specific, and Armenians in general, who have passed away without being allowed to voice the trauma they had concealed because 'it was a pill too bitter to swallow, a pain too bad to feel' (Black Dog 300). In a 2001 interview, Balakian is quoted saying that "the sacred horror that the victims and survivors [of the genocide] went through can never be known by somebody who wasn't there" (Mosby 48). In light of Caruth's theory, it is believed that even the victims themselves, who were there and experienced the trauma, are not able to fully grasp the reality. However, Balakian believes that "we carry [the trauma] on psychologically, symbolically, with language, with consciousness, with scholarship, with art. In [his] case, [he] certainly [considers himself] a legacy to this century's first genocide" (Mosby 48).

In his memoir, Balakian uses a beautiful metaphor in order to express his view of poetry; he tells about a Japenese Violin maker who is offered a huge amount of money in order to sell a violin he had worked on for fifty years claiming that he was saving it for his great-grandchild because it could only be played after fifty years. Balakian concludes that "perhaps the past had to settle for a while before music could be made of it" (*Black Dog* 275). That is exactly what Balakian attempts when he writes poetry about the Armenian genocide; he creates music out of history to make it heard over the lapse of time. Although the music is sorrowful, it nevertheless is beautiful because it commemorates one and a half million souls who were massacred during the Armenian genocide. Thus, linking the metaphor to psychology, it can be said that the trauma has to have a latency period in order to emerge, on a transhistorical level in this case, and find a voice, defying the impossibility of expression.

III. POSTMEMORIAL EXPRESSION IN LIGHT OF THE PRESENT AND THE PAST IN PETER BALAKIAN'S LITERARY WORK

A. Balakian's Poetry: Blurring the Boundaries between Diaspora and Exile

Dealing with the responses of different generations to the Armenian genocide deems it necessary to closely study the concepts of exile, diaspora, and assimilation and how each portrays a certain generational mindset which is reflected in the literary works of the period, respectively. As already discussed, William Saroyan's literary work tends to focus on diaspora and assimilation since it is written at a point when the genocide was still a very fresh reality and Armenian-Americans were preoccupied with assimilation. At that point, they needed to fill the psychological void they suffered from by reestablishing themselves in a home away from the

homeland which had ceased to be. Indeed, even the literary genres Saroyan utilized as a first generation Armenian American writer were less personal and more publicly communal.

Writing two generations after the initial shock of the Armenian genocide, Peter Balakian uses more personal genres of literature, poetry and creative nonfiction, memoir, in order to, at times, go beyond diaspora to touch upon feelings of exile as he commemorates the genocide and vigorously demands justice. In order to establish a more clear understanding of the main difference between exile and diaspora, it is important to mention the main characteristics that set them apart. According to Peters, exile suggests "a painful or punitive banishment from one's homeland" and a "pining for home." He also notes that "it invokes a home or homeland" and is characterized by a longing towards the original homeland (19-20). On the other hand, diaspora focuses on the collective presence, teaching "the perpetual postponement of homecoming and the necessity, in the meanwhile, of living among strange lands and peoples" (Peters 39). Thus, the focus of the latter seems to revolve around the new home, whereas in exile greater attention is directed towards the original home. At this point, it is inevitable to highlight that Balakian is surely considered diasporic since he is the grandson of immigrants who settled in the United States; his mother was born there and her father had arrived in the USA in 1903; furthermore, his father had arrived in New York City in 1925 at the age of five (Balakian).He was born in America and up until the age of twenty-three had a vague notion of Armenia and what it meant to be an Armenian. In an interview, Balakian is quoted saying,

I think for a poet like me, exile may be better translated into the word diaspora since I was born and raised in the United States and am as American as apple pie in many ways. I do think exile—well, I won't disavow it since exile and diaspora overlap—but I really think diaspora suggests one's inheritance of the condition of dispersion, of dispersal, of people of who have been sent out of their homeland and native place through catastrophic events, in this case, the Armenian genocide. And so to inherit the diasporan condition has a potentially rich effect on the imagination. It allows one to live in the domain of two cultures, sometimes simultaneously. (Jones)

Thus, the question is not whether Balakian is considered a diasporan or an exilic Armenian-American since it is obvious that he is in fact comfortable with his hyphenated identity. In a personal interview, Balakian furthermore notes that he considers America his home since it provides him with "both Anglo-American dimensions and Armenian dimensions, so [he] feel[s] [he] belong[s] in this multicultural USA;" he sees himself "as diasporan rather than exilic" (Balakian).

Going back in time, it can be concluded that the survivors who arrived to the United States were exiled from their homeland since they were forced to leave their lives and were subjected to severe circumstances of deportation. Once the survivors reached the United States, their focus shifted from returning to the homeland to reestablishing themselves in the new home since looking back, all they could envision was the demise of a place they once called their own. Balakian discusses the difficulty of describing "psychological motivation to displaced people," for he believes that his grandparents did not feel they were in exile since they never wanted to see the space of trauma once again (Balakian); it was too painful a reality. As a result, the second generation continued the silence, being preoccupied with affirming an American identity. Balakian writes, "My parents had done their best to put an end to exile" (*Black Dog* 300). What happens when the third generation steps in? This is where the major shift is viewed since the third generation, writing from a secure, diasporic space, has the luxury of looking back in anger and demanding justice for the ancestors. Thus, the third generation moves the focus from the "new" home to the "original" home, eliciting exilic callings and moving a step further than diaspora. By allowing the "frustration" and "rage" to explode in words, Balakian's literature calls for action.

> Once on safe ground, the old mind [...] reemerge[s] with new vitality. The old mind [...] reclaim[s] the facts and circumstances of its civilization of three millennia. And now Armenian Americans might even see the old world in ways that would be dynamic and ground-breaking, in the ways that Arshile Gorky, William Saroyan, Alan Hovannes, Marjorie Housepian Dobkin, Michael Arlen, Ruben Nakian, and many other artists in the diaspora already had – and in ways that would astonish their oppressors, who may have believed that after 1915 no one would hear from Armenians again. (*Black Dog* 300-301)

Henceforth, any reference to Balakian's work as exilic is based on the analysis of his voice in some of his poems and his memoir and the message these works seem to convey. It is here that the cycle seems to return to the initial point of commencement, back to the state of exile, for in spite of the comfort of the new home, the longing, the pain, and the pining for the original home openly reappear. This yearning is not necessarily meant in a physical sense, for Balakian does not imply the necessity of physically moving back to western Armenia that in reality cannot be restored because it is occupied; rather his work invokes emotional exile which looks back to the trauma of the massacres with a mission. Because of his parents' effort to erase exile, Balakian can recreate it through his art and imagination, using literary space in order to attempt to rectify the pain of the past in the present. Minh-ha believes that "for a number of writers in exile, the true

home is to be found not in houses, but in writing (16). As Hirsch notes, "[The] condition of exile from the space of identity, [the] diasporic experience, is characteristic of Postmemory" ("Postmemories" 662).

In his poem "After the Survivors Are Gone" from his book *Dyer's Thistle*,[34] Balakian vigorously calls for cessation of passivity, "pledg[ing] himself to an activism whose politics is lodged against forgetting" (Kalaidjian 43). He inquires, "Have we settled for just wine and bread, / for candles lit and snuffed?" (Lines 7-8). Is it enough after the mass extermination of one and a half million ancestors in the original homeland to remember their souls in church by lighting a candle and watching it get consumed by its own flames? Just because the survivors are no longer present, does it mean the genocide has passed away with them and has become a distant memory? The answer follows in the next stanza:

Let us remember how the law has failed us.
Let us remember the child naked,
Waiting to be shot on a bright day
With tulips blooming around the ditch. (9-12)

These lines affirm the dedication he has to the Armenian cause and his refusal to let go: "because [his] own tree had been hacked, / [he] trie[s] to kiss the lips of Armenia" (3-4). The tone of anger and resentment prevails in the poem and clarifies the message and mission that the poem aims to deliver.

In "The Oriental Rug," Balakian zooms in on a recollection he has of himself as an eight year old taking a nap on the Persian rug in his childhood home. He then allows his imagination to take flight by weaving a tale of a ride on what seems to be a magical, flying carpet that transports the young lad back to the past: to the land of his ancestors. Bedrosian notes that the poet's experience is similar to "a deepening lifelong meditation on a damaged mandala that nevertheless bears family and cultural mysteries" (202). The carpet sets off from the living room of his house in America and lands in the mysterious world of the past that is revived by delving into every single feature of the rug. The "vegetable dyes" come to life, as the boy finds himself in the world of his grandparents, on the soil of "eastern Turkey, once Armenia" amid the "roots and berries, / tubers, shafts, [and] dry leaves" (Lines 5-10). Witnessing his grandfather's land in his mind's eye, he concludes that "outside [his] house the grass/ never [had] such color" (45-46). As he untangles "the loops of yarn" he unravels parcels of history and personalizes the history by associating with it, for he could feel "six centuries of Turkish heels/ on [his] spine-dyed back" (55-56). The images on the rug come to symbolize "the poet's historical self as an Armenian" (Bedrosian 202). The experience continues to feel more authentic as he "hear[s] wind running, /through heart strings" (73-74) and

delves further into the texture of the rug which, in turn, represents the features of his lost homeland. He follows lines

from [his] palms
to the dark balm
of the marshy hillsides
of [his] far away land –
the poppied acres
of Adoian's hands. (96-101)

According to Bedrosian, the mysteries related to the "far away land" buried in this rug can only be accessed through an "imaginative journey that descends to the living source" (203). The speaker flies to it by lying on the rug and traveling through his imagination, whereas Adoian, a prominent Armenian painter known as Arshile Gorky who lived in exile in America, restores it through his paintings, "the poppied acres."

The boy then dives into a rose on the rug and moves through its insides, brushing upon the sepals that kept it alive "in blighted April/ when Adana and Van were lopped/ off the map" (123-127). The boy is situated on the carpet which sits on safe grounds in the new home, for the dust that the knots emit, become "fine spume" in "the peaceful new world sun" (135-138). However, this distance does not brush off the dust completely, for although it changes form, it still lurks in the arms of a third generation young Armenian-American who as "a sick herbalist/ wander[s] in a century/ mapped by nations wandering" (139-141) and tries to grasp as much of history as possible. "From sense and texture to history and pain. The rug echo[es] with emblems of the past".[35] The speaker wishes to hear the passion from the past gurgled by the Tyrian purple used on the rug; he wishes to be carried by the Safflower to feel "dry gusts" on his neck. The madder root "makes the red of Karabagh/ bleed along one long hallway" (153-155) and he seems to unite with the tragedy of the past through these different types of dye that color the rug; since it possesses a "consciousness of the past," the rug, just like the speaker's grandparents, becomes a tragic witness (Bedrosian 201). However, Bedrosian notes that in spite of the tragedy, the ending of the poem instigates rebirth, for the disintegration of the rug and what it represents "releases vegetable matter that might seed a future, especially if it falls into the 'skin' of the exile psyche" (205). Balakian wants "the source of color, those substances of organic matter to be vehicles for memory. The dyes, and the images they make, can open up the possibilities of hearing the dead so that history and its meanings may spill out in new ways" ("Falling Into"). Postmemory allows the third generation to explore these new ways, for creative investment in this poetry, allows the speaker to revisit the home, enabling him to transcend exile.

Indeed it is this "exile psyche" that reappears in Balakian's poem "August Diary" which attempts to make sense of the Armenian word "garud," - nostalgia - which means zooming in on both the feeling itself and the multiple connotations it entails. Each stanza represents an entry in the diary within the month of August. When placed together, the stanzas seem to be the end product of the speaker's stream of consciousness which attempts to make sense of a word that it longs to grasp; garud when translated into English actually means yearning, and how is a third generation Armenian American to explain a word that resides in him and instigates a feeling towards a home that he has never lived in, and a nation that, although marks an essential part of himself, remains a mystery to a certain extent. What perhaps makes the task even more challenging is the fact that the word is in Armenian, a language that is quite mysterious to the speaker in spite of his identity.

The entry written on "8/3" launches the attempt to define garud, for the speaker asks, "Should I tell you what garud means" (Line 13)? The confusion and multiple attempts in the following stanzas display the difficulty the speaker faces in answering the question, for it takes him an entire month to formulate ideas about the connotation of the word. The initial entry comes to an abrupt end, leaving the question lurking until "8/11" with two entries in the middle that do not directly address the question; this further confirms the challenge involved in defining the word because of its multilayered emotional implications. In this entry, the speaker asks, "How does an image stay? Or is it always aftermath?" (30). In the case of the genocide, the image continues to stay through the pining the current generations possess towards the homeland; thus, it actually is the aftermath of the event that maintains the image because the image itself might fade away if not captured and possessed. To elaborate his point, the speaker refers to "Talbot's first calotypes" in which the "deep black reflected the most light" (31-32). Is the dark necessary to acquire the light? Does the trauma of the previous generation allow the current generation to shed light on the haunting past? Following this question is an attempt to answer what garud means; "but garud: tongue of a snake, / mean[s] exile, longing for home" (33-34). Does this longing for home represent the light? The speaker then moves on to discuss Thomas Wedgwood's attempt to create images by allowing sunlight to penetrate the papers covered with silver nitrite; as a result, the paper turns black because of his inability to stop the sun. This invites the question: do we "stop the light before it goes too far" (35-40)? If garud, as longing for home, is the light that emerges in the darkness, how far can it go for a person who experiences it in exile? Do the feelings of the person in exile, represented as the tongue of snake because of its bitterness, burn with time, if exposed too much? What

happens to the new homeland that the new generations have assimilated in? The speaker then provides another definition for garud: "or is desire what garud means? / longing for a native place" (41-42). Although the speaker attempts to present an alternative definition, it is obvious that the second and the first overlap, for they both describe garud as a longing and desire for a home; a native place.

The entry written on "8/21" reads:

After digging scallions one day Dickinson defined freedom:
captivity's consciousness, so's liberty.
Maybe garud is about the longing for the native place
between two selves. (50-54)

The two selves that the speaker refers to are the two identities that he finds himself thorn between: the American and the Armenian. The latter felt consciousness in captivity, and the first in liberty, yet between these two states lies the speaker with a longing for the original home expressed through the word garud. In entry "8/22," he claims that garud means "yearning." Then, in entry "8/25," the speaker concludes that garud is "the grain chute that spills/ into a dark barn which is endless, / like the self when it's out of reach" (62-64). He seems to imply that garud can not be identified within the constraints of a single definition, for it entails intense feelings; it represents the craving an exilic person has towards a home he wishes to experience once more. According to Edward Said, "exile is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home".[36]

The poem ends with the entry on "8/31:"

Salzman said about new glass plate pictures:
they're as transparent as air, like windows
with the fragmentary, scruffy particularity
of real living behind them – (70-74)

The glass plate tries to capture the original image to maintain it behind a glass that can withstand time; today, the third generation lives on the other side of the glass plate, trying to recapture "the real living" that is part of their history. Looking back with a feeling of exile and garud, the fragments of a vague past come to life and both the image and reality of the homeland are revived. Thus, "Exile is an experience to be endured so as to restore identity, or even life itself, to fuller, more meaningful status" (Said 51).

As already mentioned, the exilic connotations these poems evoke aim to restore the gaze at the original homeland to establish a more complete understanding of the hyphenated self and to demand a closure to the horror of the genocide. Said believes that "Exile is predicated on the existence of, love for, and bond with one's native place; what is true of all exile is not

that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both" (55). The feeling of loss, which has been passed on to the third generation, reignites the love for the homeland in a more vigorous manner, defying silence and demanding rectification. It does not, in case of Balakian's poetry, crave to move back to the homeland, but to make it a conscious reality in the present to accomplish what has been denied for the past 97 years. Although Balakian's parents had tried to put an end to exile by embracing the diasporic state of living, Balakian attempts to reignite it, for "no sooner does one get accustomed to [exile] that its unsettling force erupts anew" (Said 55); in case of Armenian-Americans, that happens at a generational remove. The generations who were physically exiled from Armenia are long gone, yet those who have inherited the transhistorical feeling of exile remain in 'a mind of winter' which is an expression used by Wallace Stevens to define exile, for in it, "the pathos of summer and autumn as much as the potential of spring are nearby but unobtainable" (Said 55). Balakian notes that his "imaginative investment [tries] to create a mythopoetics from an imagined lost place and that fascinate[s] [him] because it [is] so powerful" (Balakian).His work tries to create a glimpse of spring that, to date, remains elusive. Thus, "The aesthetics of Postmemory is a diasporic aesthetics of temporal and spatial exile that needs simultaneously to rebuild and to mourn" ("Postmemories" 664).

The poem "Flame-Vine" from *Reply From Wilderness Island*[37] highlights another type of imagery Balakian uses to connect to his homeland; that of flora. The poem is set in Florida, yet the speaker is able to move, throughout the poem, to Armenia; this spatial transition is made possible through flowers, namely, Pyrostegia. The speaker zooms in on the flowers and notices how "the five points of each flower/ curl back to the mouth/ so the pistils hang out like scorched tongues" (Lines 2-4). The image of the open mouth allows him to associate the flowers with a deeper meaning. By focusing on the denotation of its name in Greek which is fire and roof, the speaker continues to make links:

> because fire burns the roof,
> of the mouth
> because fire grows over
> the roof of a house
> the way these dangling orange mouths
> annihilate trees, shrubs, fences,
> even the squat water oak. (6-13)

These flowers that have covered the surroundings with their orange color seem to remind the speaker of real fire that spread over areas in Armenia, burning down houses and the Armenians who resided in them. It is important to highlight the word chosen to describe what the flowers have

subjected the trees, the shrubs, and the fences to, for the speaker does not merely say that these flowers have covered those areas, but rather uses the word "annihilate" which is what the Turks set out to accomplish in Armenia in 1915; their aim was to wipe out the Armenian race.

In the fourth stanza, the speaker notes that in spite of physically being present in America, he keeps gazing at the mouths that surround the pistils which move him to another place at another time.

> [he] see[s] the pistils
> almost fall to the ground
> as if they were dangling by one
> nerve thread at the base of each flower's neck
> necks of orange, mouths of fire
> spilling from green leaflets
> as if they have been screaming for centuries. (19-25)

The pistils emerge from the fire, holding on and emerging from the "neck of orange" because they have a statement to make; these mouths echo the screams of the Armenians who although were murdered brutally during the genocide, have been screaming for centuries in order to ensure that their story is told and that the Armenians have emerged from the fire; ironically enough, it has been a silent scream for decades. What is it that these mouths scream? "goat-lung, lamb-nuts, pomegranate-" (25) symbols of Armenia; "mouth Armenia spill/ like afterbirth out of me" (26- 27). The mouth that represents the Armenians and the sound it emits come to reside within the speaker, spilling out of him. Once again, this poem does not merely look back upon the lost home with nostalgia and admiration as is the case with first generation Armenian American writing, but rather

[6]*Reply From Wilderness Island* (1988) is a collection of poems written based on observations of nature which offer insights to the past.

recaptures the brutality of the genocide within the native home, triggering reaction after decades of silence.

Another common flower that Balakian uses in some of his poems is the poppy, the flower that is considered one of the botanical symbols of Armenia[7]. In his mind's eye, he can envision the Armenian race through these flowers; thus, he uses this image in order to reconnect with the land of a vague past. In his "Some Flowers – Poppies," the speaker notes that the poppies are "all [his] aunt remembered of Armenia" (Line 4). The speaker has planted some poppies in his small garden perhaps to replant a piece of the past in the new home. As he looks inside "the flower's dark pit/ the base of the pistil's missing" (12-13); the poppies seem to be in an incomplete form. He then "see[s] into their eyes" (17), personifying these flowers and understanding the truth that lies behind the eyes:

Men and women who bore [his] name
have gone from face to bone
with the quickness that night
has made [his] poppies
into nothing. (18-22)

Situated far from Armenia, the speaker views "off long stems/ black eyes sway[ing]/ in the morning wind" (26-28); these eyes seem to follow the speaker in the new homeland in order to remind him of the past. The image of the eyes of his ancestors staring at him through the window is quite strong since it gives life to the ghosts of the past who stare at the surviving generation of Armenians. Then, "the anther sacs are busted – /filaments rise past [his window] / into nothing" (29-31). The poppies are temporarily present to remind the speaker of the importance of reconnecting with the homeland. Although they end up fading into nothing, they leave their imprint on the speaker.

Furthermore, Balakian's poem "Talking Over Chekov, Montauk Point," successfully delivers the exilic reality that the third generation resides in and sums up the role this feeling plays, for the first stanza voices the speaker's attempt to explain how he views the lost world. Although it is referred to as "a time that's lost, / a world of figs and gold leaf/ where [his] father as a boy stood" (Lines 2-4), he and his fellow Armenians "are drawn back to [that] place/ like sea gulls to the scene of bait,/ a hollow dune that catches/ all the cast-up shells" (6-9). The current generation craves the homeland over the distance; like magnet it draws them towards the home they have originated from. He refers to the quote of a "doctor of Crimea's shore," who states, "Know why you live or everything/ is wild grass" (13-14). If once in diaspora, Armenian Americans lose focus of what is really important and forget what they live for, they will lose an immense part of themselves, and will forever remain in chaos, for the Armenian self can only find peace when it finds comfort in its hyphenated identity. If once on safe territory, Armenians close the section of the genocide, they lose the core essence of their existence, for they need to remember that they are living proof of a race that once resided in Armenia, a race that against all odds, survived and continued to prosper on new territory. The speaker can feel his father working through his veins as he takes the spade that has been passed down to him "and write[s] for

[7] Botanical symbols of Armenia are symbols related to fruits and flowers that highlight a certain feature of the Armenian culture.

[his] own race/ what of the world [they] can replace" (33-34). Writing then becomes a tool of maintaining the Armenian race; a tool that allows

the third generation to reconnect with the Armenians who once inhabited the land of the past.

To conclude, Balakian uses his Postmemory in order to recapture a history that remains partially untold because of the brutality of genocide. He allows his writing to fill in the gap that would otherwise remain void. Holding a letter that was written by Nafina herself in 1920, Balakian writes,

The past is ruptured, but one excavates the shards, brushes them off, handles them, finds a way to see the broken picture, to navigate the lacunae between a solid image that leads to another solid image. And the solid images begin to add up. Images of the place then and now. Words, the texture of paper, the hand that wrote the words on the paper. The sensory densities becoming parts of a memory" (*Black Dog* 331).

His poetry, through the use of food, flora, fauna, imagination, and different symbols that relate to Armenia, navigates the land that no matter how unintelligible, feels like home. Balakian writes that his grandmother's life has cast a shadow over his throughout his life and through writing parts and parcels of her story, he has attempted to imagine her in Armenia and in Syria as a refuge before the discovery of the letter years later (331). After his visit to Syria and Der Zor, which for Armenians "has come to have a meaning approximate to Auschwitz" (334), in an attempt to better comprehend what his ancestors, and specifically his grandmother, underwent during the genocide and the deportation, Balakian added a section about the experience in his memoir. However, what is most striking is the fact that he had written all the poetry discussed throughout this study and much more prior to witnessing any trace of his grandmother in Syria and before he could visualize the deportation in its physical dimensions. The ability to create literary work that captures the essence of a past through creative investment and no immediate trauma verifies the existence of Hirsch's term Postmemory, for although not experienced first-hand, there lies a trans-historical memory that resides in the collective unconscious of a nation that once triggered can repossess a lost world, acting as a Pandora's box that reveals, in this case, the ghastly history of Armenia. Balakian has internalized the genocidal past to an extent that upon passing by the Euphrates, he finds himself caught in confusion upon the view of the "fresh and flowing and teal green" water since he had expected to see the river covered in blood, for the Euphrates had engulfed the corpses of his ancestors during the genocide (335). Once again, this highlights the fact that the memory of the genocide is so powerful for Balakian that it almost feels as if he were the one who had seen the bloody river in 1915. Walking in Der Zor, Balakian finds remnants of his ancestors in the dirt, and without any conscious behavior, he fills his

pockets with their bones. Upon returning to the States, he wonders whether or not to report the presence of the bones in his pockets to the authorities; he ponders how he would explain the source of these 90 year old bones, for they could belong to his "grandmother's first husband," "a farmer from Sivas," "a journalist from Aintab," or "a mother from Adana." He decides to keep them undisclosed, for only he, an Armenian-American, can understand the significance of what he holds in his pockets. Once he reaches the States, he watches baseball clips on ESPN, which marks his blending back into the reality of his new home, yet he notes that he could feel "the bones jostling in the plastic bags in [his] pockets" (348).

B. From Postmemory to Immediate Memory: Balakian's Reaction to 9/11 and *Ziggurat*[38]

After a lifelong attempt to make sense of the trauma of his Armenian ancestors through postmemorial means, Balakian experiences immediate trauma in light of the attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. This traumatic reality brings forth a rush of memories for Balakian since he had worked as a mail runner in New York in the 1960's and had watched the twin towers rising. It had become a part of his reality and its absence triggered a feeling of loss that he had partially experienced through Nafina's stories of the Armenian traumatic past. Almost ten years after 9/11, Balakian published a series of poems in *Ziggurat*[8] that, unlike his previous work that tries to make sense of trans-generational memory, zooms in on personal memory and trauma. As an Armenian American who up until then had come to associate trauma with his Armenian part of identity, Balakian at that point faced the challenge of dealing with the aftermath of trauma that hit his current home. The question then is what happens when Postmemory of trauma of the lost home merges with the trauma and memory in the present home? It is interesting to trace what role Balakian's postmemorial work of a past reality plays in shedding light on a tragic event in the present. How much of Balakian's poetic voice in reference to the Armenian genocide can be traced in this book of poems that mainly revolves around 9/11 and the United States? In a personal interview Balakian noted that his "interest in violence, memory, and Postmemory have all helped [him] further [his] engagement with the work [he] did in *Ziggurat"* (Balakian). Thus, there is a link between memory and Postmemory when their converging point is traumatic experience. Although most of what Balakian writes about in relation to the Armenian genocide is not based on first-hand traumatic experience, as already discussed, it has been personalized through Nafina to an extent that Balakian could almost claim the experiences as his own on a certain trans-generational level. After years of studying and reconnecting

with the trauma of the past, he had to deal with trauma that hit what he had come to acknowledge as home; the haven where his ancestors took refuge in order to escape terror and feel safe.

For Balakian, poetry plays a major role in the aftermath of catastrophe: whether it delves into the catastrophe of present or past. During a lecture he gave in 2010 at the National September 11 Memorial and Museum preview site, Balakian noted that poetry "captures the aftermath of an event from a myriad of angles in [...] speech, tongue, syntax" allowing a "distinctive kind of music" to emerge from that specific event which is heard as long as the poem remains. Thus, "the poem becomes its own kind of form of memory" (Balakian). This clarifies perhaps why Balakian chooses poetry as means of expression whenever he refers to events of immense personal significance.

As he explains in the lecture, his choice of the title Ziggurat places the tragedy of September 11 in the larger context of history, for it is the Aramaic reference to the grand

[7]*Ziggurat* (2011)is a collection of poetry that explores history, self, imagination, catastrophe, and trauma whilst struggling with the after effects of 9/11.

skyscraper the Sumerians built in Ur four millennia ago. The title already brings together a macrocosm of history which encompasses more than September 11 since the only way Balakian can zoom in on such a personal reality is through reference to an extended history of humanity. His thorough research of the Armenian history and his need to go all the way back to ancient history marks his entry into the recent because that is how he has come to deal with trauma. His work consistently evokes interconnectedness between past and present, defying the confinement of time and space. Highlighting this connection, he writes, "in the world after September 11, 2001, Americans and U.S. leaders may find that the Armenian lesson has much to teach about the moral accountability of bystanders, trauma and survivor experience, and the immediate and far-reaching impact of mass violence committed against innocent civilians" (*The Burning Tigris*).

"Going to Zero" draws a picture of a series of images the speaker lays his eyes on as he sits back in a train headed towards New York. Behind the glass window, the speaker seems to possess the ability to detach from his native perspective of the United States as he describes the scenes from the viewpoint of an outsider. As the poem unfolds, Balakian's previous attempt of describing and imagining a nonexistent land of the past plays a crucial role in allowing his speaker to watch the United States in the aftermath of 9/11 as he tries to take it all in. Traces of patriotism strike out amid the green background as he picks up upon the words "God Bless

America" on pick up trucks and "United We Stand" on billboards; in addition to the flags displayed all over the terrain (Lines 10-11). In the second part of the poem, the speaker roams around the old mail route that he used to take in the past as an excavator trying to recapture the images of what once was. This image parallels that of Balakian in his "excavation" in Der Zor where he picked up pieces of his ancestors' bones which, in turn, echoes Sir Leonard Woolley's excavation of the Ziggurat that once stood in Ur. What these attempts share is the recapturing of a reality that once stood, for "the monument reverberates in the imagination after it disappears" (Balakian). Balakian notes that the destruction of the towers "haunted [him] as mental spaces; as spaces of memory, as places of aesthetic play and experience; as modes and spaces of self exploration" (Balakian). The immensity of the shock the speaker feels is captured as he moves around "like a drunk knocking into people, almost hit by a cab" (27). In contrast to the vivacious image of the past, the site is packed with "cranes and bulldozers" (30). It is noteworthy to mention that earlier in his poem "The History of Armenia," he had used the bulldozers as symbols of destruction to refer to the Armenia of his grandmother, and now the same image lurks in the States, once again signifying destruction, both external and internal. The intensity of the experience grows as the speaker is "sweating in [his] sweatshirt [...], the hood filling with soot/ as [he] watch[es] with others drinking Cokes and eating their pizza of disbelief" (32-33). This is quite a haunting image itself since it captures the state of denial that many Americans probably underwent as they watched their monuments being picked up in pieces. Just like the survivors of the genocide who had to move beyond the trauma, these witnesses seem to face the challenge of what it means to survive a tragedy of such great immensity. In a personal interview, where I asked Dr. Balakian if what he experienced can be termed trauma, he replied:

There are many layers of traumatized Americans from the 9/11 terrorist attacks; it's complicated because people experienced the attacks through the media thousands of miles away on the West Coast and they felt different kinds of trauma; people living on the ground in Manhattan and Brooklyn felt a different kind of trauma; those of us who spent many years in lower Manhattan felt a different kind of trauma, so yes trauma is an accurate word. I agree with my friend, the psychiatrist and historian,

Robert Jay Lifton who sees many Americans as survivors in the aftermath of 9/11.

As if back in the elevator in the tower, the speaker seems to be going to ground zero as the title suggests, for all the shops that once were, are "stripped clean in the graffiti of dust-coated windows" (38). Furthermore, going to zero might also imply a return to history, for "Zero began with the

Sumerians who made circles with hollow reeds/ in wet clay and baked them for posterity" (30-31). All events seem to be connected, for the Ziggurat the Sumerians had built had also dispersed like the twin towers. Once again, it is the personal attachment and involvement that triggers Balakian to express his reaction through poetry. Balakian confirms that his constant interest in "survivor experience, trauma, and the imagination's peculiar ways of angling in" major historical events, has played an important role in creating this response to 9/11 (Balakian). He uses language and words to deal with what he terms "open wound[s] with a lot of nerve endings" whether in relation to Armenia or the United States. The intimate relationship he had with his grandmother and what she represented of the Armenian past, in addition to the strong bond he felt with the towers that constituted a great part of his earlier memory, are used as means to capture what otherwise would remain ambiguous.

In "9/11, Emily Dickinson," Balakian tries to capture the traumatic reception of 9/11 by using fragments of accounts given by survivors who were present in the immediate space of the tragedy. These fragments were recorded by his friend, Dr. Charles B. Strozier, a historian and a psychoanalyst who, as Balakian mentions in his lecture, closely worked with these survivors in light of the traumatic experience. Another similarity can be drawn between this poem and Balakian's previous poems, those related to the Armenian genocide, since the latter is excessively dependent on Nafina's, a survivor's, disjointed narratives, and this poem too is based on fragmented accounts of a person who directly witnessed 9/11 and the trauma that resulted. Exploring trauma from different angles, he sets aside his personal feelings of shock and attempts to use survivor accounts in order to gain a deeper understanding of the tragedy. Written in the form of a Villanelle, the poem merges the account of the 9/11 survivor with Dickinson's "Dare You See a Soul at the White Heat?" To understand the significance of this unity, it is necessary to discuss the message behind Dickinson's poem. According to Leiter, this poem uses the extended metaphor of a blacksmith's forge in order to focus on transformation, for it is in the forge that flame is made into light. Leiter believes the poem deals with a purifying process where the red flames that symbolize blood and flesh turn into white which is associated with redemption and purity. This apocalyptic poem highlights how in spite of the difficulty the soul undergoes as it is shaped, it nevertheless transcends into something stronger. Leiter further notes that if the poem were to be linked to Dickinson's art, then her "conscious craft" which is represented by the forge "shapes painful experience and [...] the light that the poem 'designate[s]' results in the distancing of the pain and the circumstances that caused it".[39] Upon witnessing an apocalypse himself, the speaker in

"9/11, Emily Dickinson" describes what he sees as the explosion takes place: "a piece of lamp post [flies] onto Rector Street,/ everything [falls] out, beams, pieces/ *without a color but the light*" (Lines 1-3). As the speaker recounts the scene, Dickinson's poem is present in the background, either through references to certain lines or by mentioning "the cover of [her] book pink and worn as skin-" (8). The question that seems to unite both is the line *"dare you see a Soul at the White Heat"* (9)? Amid the overwhelming terror that strikes as the "sidewalk disappear[s] beneath/ pink fiberglass and white wings" (16-17), could the survivors and witnesses rise beyond this atrocious reality? Perhaps the poem implies that by voicing the trauma, the survivors can distance themselves from the pain and rise above it. Furthermore, Balakian's attempt to write about the trauma could also imply his own endeavor to give his trauma a literary shape so that it can be transformed from fire to light, from disaster to memorial. What is clear though is that Balakian's voice, in these poems, is not as firm and as lucid as the voice he adopts in his earlier works since the trauma he deals with in *Ziggurat* is too closely associated with personal and recent memory. It might be even assumed that it parallels the initial reaction Armenian American writers had to the Armenian genocide whereby their focus was healing rather than demanding, for in light of such trauma it is necessary to come to terms with reality first. Several other poems in the book possess a tone of nostalgia, for they represent a trip through memory lane where Balakian highlights his deep attachment to the towers as he remembers the years he worked as a mail runner in the area. In fact, in his memoir, Balakian mentions that it was during those years that he came to unravel the history of the Armenian genocide, using his free time to read ample literature that explained the haunting past. Perhaps, this link makes the connection to the towers even more valuable. Thus, the purpose behind these poems seems to be commemoration, for they honor the personal memory of the monuments especially since the absence of the towers is a more vivid experience for Balakian than the absence of a homeland that he only came to know in his imagination. In addition, this work provides a literary space that links history and gives an overview of how it is interrelated. In his lecture, Balakian notes that the longest poem in the book "A-Train/ Ziggurat/ Elegy" merges Iraq, the Ziggurat, Woolly's excavation, war, and terrorist attacks; the poem starts with reference to Sir Woolly's excavation of the Ziggurat in Iraq where a character, mentioned in the poem, is exposed to the recent war in Iraq that, in turn, can be linked to terrorist attacks which relate to the calamity of 9/11. Furthermore, his work perhaps also aims to instigate hope in the aftermath of trauma. Overall, his approach to this catastrophe is not as clear and organized as that of the Armenian genocide, for Balakian is caught in medias res and

ventures to tell a personal story of an open wound as he deals with the multiple perspectives of witnessing 9/11.

CONCLUSION

A. Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls*

As already extensively discussed, Balakian's ability to gain access to his ancestral past and trans-historical trauma is made possible through his experience of Postmemory which results from the detached narratives his grandmother allowed him to bear witness to. However, not all third generation Armenian American authors have had the privilege of living in such close proximity to narratives, no matter how broken, that aid to bridge the gap between generations and act as means of excavating the Armenian past. What means then do other Armenian American authors use in order to connect with that major aspect of their identity? Chris Bohjalian, a third generation Armenian American, uses fiction in order to reconnect with the haunting reality of his Armenian past. Specifically, he creates a narrative in his novel *The Sandcastle Girls,* a *New York Times* Bestseller, in order to tell an excerpt of a story that revolves around the Armenian genocide. In the Author's Note, Bohjalian admits to have used historical context in order to convey a realistic setting for his fiction, yet he notes that "the novel is a work of imagination." Having gained insight into the important role imagination plays in filling the space that memory cannot provide, it can be assumed that the imagination Bohjalian uses is the only possible gateway to reconnect with the life and the stories that his grandparents brought to their graves. As an author of popular culture, Bohjalian uses fiction to reconnect with the past which is a mode less personal than poetry and memoir, both utilized by Balakian because of his immediate attachment to his grandmother's trauma. Detachment becomes a key element in Bohjalian's writing, for only through the creation of fiction can he establish a bond with the Armenian genocide. Ernst Van Alphen views Hirsch's Postmemory from a different perspective, arguing that instead of focusing on the intergenerational continuity in terms of trauma, what perhaps must be stressed is the "disconnection [in children-survivor relationships] not in an emotional, personal sense but in terms of intelligibility." He further notes that the leading drive of the need to connect is itself based on the disconnectedness and the inability of grasping the past.[40] In Bohjalian's case, the Armenian genocide was never a topic of discussion in his household and it was rarely alluded to in his grandparents' house. However, there was an aura of mystery related to a hidden Armenian past that overtook Bohjalian his entire life. This unknown triggered Bohjalian to put into words a historical reality that, as he terms it, "you know next to nothing about" (*Sandcastle* 6). On the cover

page of his novel, it is written that "this book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead events, or locales is entirely coincidental." Upon delving into the novel, one finds more than a mere coincidental resemblance between the narrator, Laura Petrosian, and Chris Bohjalian. In fact, in an interview with Tom Vartabedian,[41] Bohjalian admits that Laura represents a fictional version of himself and that her grandparents' house is a replica of his grandparents' house. Furthermore, Laura is a novelist who attempts to unravel the history of her grandparents in the same way that Bohjalian, through his historical research and fictitious literary work, attempts to understand the faded truth. Laura, like Bohjalian, notes that she had attempted to put into words the trauma of her Armenian ancestors in the past, yet had failed to create a successful product since "it was too cold, too distant" (6) which is actually what Bohjalian had experienced prior to writing this novel, for he has previously written fifteen other novels that do not deal with his Armenian past. In the presentation Bohjalian gave about his novel upon his visit to Beirut, he accentuated the role his grandparents' "exotic" home has played in his own memory. Thus, at least an immediate link can be made between the introductory pages in the novel and Bohjalian's own childhood, for the "aura of sadness, secrets, and wistfulness," the "oriental" setting of the home, and the Armenian "cooked lamb and meat" were all a very real part of Bohjalian's own life (4-5). Hence, it can be concluded that a real connection, one etched in his personal memory, is what Bohjalian uses as a gateway into the Armenian world of his grandparents. What then is the significance of highlighting this commonality? Why would a novelist who shares the past of the character he creates make the conscious choice of establishing a clear detachment between himself and the narrator that, to some extent, echoes him? Unlike Balakian who vividly displays his biographical links to his literary work, Bohjalian chooses to do the exact opposite. The lack of insight into his grandparents' past does not allow him to make a personal appearance in the novel, for with fictitious characters he is allowed to create a complete plot that in reality can never be possibly achieved in his own life. Although his grandparents were survivors of the Armenian genocide, the only stories he came to know about them was through his father, years after they had passed away through bits and pieces of information and photography which was surely not enough to retrace and rebuild a complete family history. On the other hand, by creating Laura, Bohjalian is allowed to voice his own struggle and opinion through her, allowing his imaginative investment to fill in all the gaps that he strives to unravel. Furthermore, the character he chooses to "represent" him

in the novel is a female which ascertains further detachment and hence more insight.

In his article about the cathartic role narratives play in dealing with the pain of traumatic events, Kearney discusses the Armenian genocide, among other genocides, and notes that "in witnessing to past pain, narratives imitate the life of suffering and action in such a way as to refigure events absent, unbearable and otherwise forgotten".[42] In this novel, Laura is given the opportunity, through a photograph, to trace her grandparents' history, and in the plot of that history, the readers explore life in the Syrian desert in 1915 during the time of deportation and genocide; furthermore, they witness the barbaric treatment of the Armenians and the trauma Armenian men, women, and children experienced. By being engaged in this plot, the readers experience "a certain cathartic release from deep [ancestral] trauma in having their histories (personal or communal) recounted and acknowledged" (53). In his presentation, Bohjalian noted the communal response the novel has received from non-Armenians who knew "next to nothing" about the first genocide of the 20th century; he also noted how it awakened the need among Armenian Americans to reconnect with their distant past and attempt to understand the trauma of their ancestors. "The act of testimony involves both an affective empathy with the victims and a cognitive knowledge of the event which actually occurred" (Kearney 65) and that is what Bohjalian's novel seems to accomplish. Moreover, this also explains his use of popular culture as means to reach a larger audience.

Perhaps the most haunting image in the novel is that of Hatoun, an eight year old girl who is first introduced by her guardian, Nevart, a genocide survivor, as being "unkillable" (17). Having witnessed the death of her mother and sister, Hatoun is too traumatized to have conversations and cannot really understand the point behind discourse since she had witnessed the useless echoes of pleas that remained unanswered. What perhaps captures her traumatized state of mind most is the way she handles a doll that she is given in order to play with. Hatoun tears the china head from the doll's body and carries the head with her since the world she has emerged from was filled with decapitation and execution (110). Furthermore, the reason Hatoun prefers silence is because she knows that if she does start talking she will not be able to stop sobbing (172); thus, silence becomes her way of holding back. This recounting of traumatic experience through a fictitious character and plot accomplishes a type of release and gives "a future to the past" (51); furthermore, Kearney notes how various modes of Holocaust narrative testimonies: "cinematic, theatrical, literary, documentary," engage future generations to recall the events of the Holocaust and reconnect with that part of history as if they were experiencing it for themselves. He notes that these narratives cannot

fully recapture the horror, yet allow remembrance and commemoration (64). *The Sandcastle Girls* seems to convey the same effect, for by understanding the pain of the past, the actual event becomes a more immediate experience.

The novel shifts between 1915 Syria and 2012 New York capturing how the past and present become simultaneous realities because of the collective symbol of Armenian genocide that constantly appears in the present. There are no clear distributions between the past and the present, for they seem to overlap within sections. In the end Laura accomplishes what Bohjalian can only accomplish through his fictitious narrative. Indeed, "narrative catharsis [becomes] a way of making absent things present in a unique balancing of compassion and dispassion, of identification and contemplation, of particular emotion and universal understanding. It is a task which, if finely and delicately achieved, may proffer some measure of healing" (Kearney 66).

B. Fourth Generation Armenian American Literature

It is interesting to note whether the cathartic function of narrativizing the trauma of the Armenian past can go further and delve into fourth generation Armenian American literature. If so, that might open a gateway to yet another mode of memory that transcends immediate memory and Postmemory, perhaps touching upon a phase of post Postmemory where the fourth generation descendants of Armenian genocide survivors voice their psychological reception of the genocide, continuing the demand for justice and vigorously fighting for the Armenian cause. In such cases, it is interesting to trace what narrative strategies this literature would employ in order to discuss the gap in time and experience; would the trauma of almost a century withstand the passage of time and leave its imprint in later generations? Garin Hovannisian is one example of a fourth generation Armenian American writer who has published a memoir, *Family of Shadows: A Century of Murder, Memory, and the Armenian American Dream*, which reflects upon the history of Armenia, its witnessing and reception through three generations of the Hovannisian family. Hovannisian has noted that writing the book "wasn't a matter of choice – but a matter of courage".[43] This statement shows the inherent presence of the need for expressing the Armenian traumatic past irrespective of generational gap. Indeed, the denial of the genocide continues to trigger a trans-generational reaction to the atrocities of the Armenian past. It remains yet to be explored how the literature will continue to deal with this collective symbol as it becomes a further memory. Furthermore, if the genocide ceases to be denied in the near future, it would be interesting to trace the changes that Armenian-American literature will witness in the

future, and how it will compare to the literature of the previous generations.

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ՄԻՋ-ՍԵՐՈՒՆԴԱՅԻՆ *ԹՐՈՒՄԲ*ԻՆ ՀԵՏՔԵՐԸ
ՈՒԻԼԻԸՄ ՍԱՐՈՅԵԱՆԻ, ՓԻԹԸՐ ՊԱԼԱԳԵԱՆԻ ԵՒ ՔՐԻՍ ՊՈՀՃԱԼԵԱՆԻ
ԳՐԱԿԱՆ ԵՐԿԵՐՈՒՆ ՄԷՋ
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Ուսումնասիրութիւնը լուսարձակի տակ կ'առնէ Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան ընկալումը՝ ամերիկահայ առաջին եւ երրորդ սերունդի հեղինակներու գրական ստեղծագործութիւններուն մէջ:

Հեղինակը նախ կ'ընդգծէ Ուիլիըմ Սարոյեանի (1908-1981) հակադարձութիւնը Ցեղասպանութեան հանդէպ: Ժամանակի առումով մօտ ըլլալով Ցեղասպանութեան դէպքերուն, ինչպէս նաեւ գլխաւորաբար կլանուած ըլլալով սփիւռքացումի եւ ձուլումի երեւոյթներով, Սարոյեան անկարող եղած է ամբողջութեամբ ըմբռնելու Ցեղասպանութեան պատճառած հոգեխոցը:

Ուսումնասիրութիւնը ապա կը սերտէ երրորդ սերունդի հեղինակ Փիթըր Պալագեանի (ծն. 1951) գրական երկերը, շեշտելու համար Հայոց Ցեղասպանութեան միջ-սերունդային ընկալման տարբերութիւնները: Հիմնուելով Մարիան Հիրշի վերյուշի տեսութեան վրայ, աշխատութիւնը կը խորանայ Պալագեանի բանաստեղծութիւններուն վերլուծութեան մէջ, օգտագործելով գիտական տեսութիւններ, որոնք գլխաւորաբար կը կիրարկուին Ողջակիզումի եւ այլ ազգերու Ցեղասպանութեան գրականութեանց սերտողութեան համար: Կախարդական իրապաշտութեան տարրերու, ճաշի պատկերումներու, տարանջատումի, հոգեխոցի, երեւակայութեան, եւ աքսորի ենթաշերտեր յայտնաբերելով Պալագեանի բանաստեղծութեան մէջ, սոյն ուսումնասիրութիւնը կը միտի վերհանել թէ ինչպէս Ցեղասպանութեան վերյուշի գիտակցականութիւնը վերականգնուած է անոր երկերուն մէջ:

Ուսումնասիրութիւնը նաեւ կ'օղակէ Պալագեանի սոյն անդրպատմական (Ցեղասպանութեան վերյուշի) հոգեխոցը անոր անմիջական հոգեխոցին՝ Սեպտեմբեր 11ի ողբերգութեան:

Վերլուծութիւնը քայլ մը եւս յառաջանալով կ'անցնի վերյուշի ոլորտը եւ լոյս կը սփռէ պատմողական արձակի ունեցած լիցքաթափային դերին վրայ՝ Քրիս Պոհճալեանի (ծն. 1962) վէպին ընդմէջէն:

Հուսկ, ուսումնասիրութիւնը ճամփայ կը հարթէ ամերիկահայ չորրորդ սերունդի գրականակութեան մէջ Ցեղասպանութեան հոգեխոցին ընկալման վերլուծութեան ու կը հարցադրէ թէ արդեօ՞ք այնտեղ անդրյուշը արդէն սկսած է դրսեւորուիլ: