

# AN ARMENIAN MALE DEPORTEE'S VISION OF WOMEN: YERVANT ODIAN'S MEMORIES

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*Anidzial Dariner (1914-1919) [Accursed Years (1914-1919)]* is Yervant Odian's narrative about his own ordeal as an exile to the Syrian deserts. It was serialized in *Jamanak* in Constantinople after the Great War.<sup>1</sup> He reported in a journalistic form, hence in a quick and accumulative way, about the various ill-treatments he witnessed and sometimes experienced on his deportation road but also some of his remembered inner thoughts and some of his feelings. For various reasons, he remained most of the time a relatively privileged deportee and could observe his fellow Armenian deportees, men and women.

His text is a valuable testimony, from inside, about the destruction of Ottoman Armenians. Its recent publication as a volume in independent Armenia is no random event.<sup>2</sup> Whatever its documentary worth may be, this is also a complex text despite or maybe because of the acknowledged casualness of style. Its complexity is at best illustrated by the many, more or less intentional, self-critical elements it contains and some slight contradictions in his appraisal of the situation. These concern especially his status as a man, a Constantinopolitan, and even as an Armenian. In the following paragraphs, I reflect on Odian's rendered perception of women in his autobiographical text, and more generally about the gender articulation within the Ottoman Armenian population during his deportation, for the fundamental<sup>3</sup> social arrangement between masculinity and femininity was both enacted and also endangered by the genocidal deportation.

## LITERATURE AND HISTORY

I use here a literary, autobiographical text as a source for thoughts pertaining to social sciences. My main focus is how a famous man perceived the condition of women (and more generally the gender issue) during those crucial years for Ottoman Armenians and how he, explicitly or implicitly, rendered this in his text. Relations between literature and social sciences have been under scrutiny lately. The all too clear-cut divisions between works of fiction and texts produced after scientific procedures are worth questioning. Social sciences and history may silence whole areas of human experience if they ignore literary works as traces and expressions of subjective individual elaborations and also of collective cultural phenomena.<sup>4</sup> Moreover autobiographical writings have a special status within literature. Autobiography does pretend to special links with

"reality". Odian formulates, in the epilogue of *The Accursed Years*, the autobiographical pact that Philippe Lejeune has theorized.<sup>5</sup> Though not a complete autobiography, Odian's text invites to a referential pact: "[Such texts] pretend to deliver information about a 'reality' outside of the text, and to sustain a test of verification. Their aim is not the mere likelihood but the resemblance to the true."<sup>6</sup>

In this endeavor, I aim at re-introducing subjectivity in the realm of historians. Their objects are not only figures, dates, and great names but also emotional persons, individuals with their own plans, feelings, thoughts, behaviors and body.<sup>7</sup> Gender is a subtle and omnipresent dimension of human existence. It is often regulated by non-articulated habits and conventions that naturalize the issue, conferring on gendered social articulations the obviousness of biological sexual differences. Scrutinizing an autobiographical text about gender, in this case the deportation memoirs of Odian, enables the reader to seize the norms the author used to evaluate the situations he describes and to take into account the dissonances between what he saw and what he expected to see. The author is himself a gendered instance and has to integrate with the gendered social grammar of his time in this critical era. Odian is discreet but not neutral. Some people and some cases interested him more than others. As a successful Western Armenian writer, he offered us, as far as we can decipher, his writings from his point of view, a then socially acceptable way to take a position in gender articulation. His personal status of unmarried man is of heuristic value, since he often had to deal with the question. Thus, the text offers an intimate view into the anthropological history of the late Ottoman Empire, especially into the history of gender articulation, as far as norms and norm transgressions were concerned.

#### ODIAN'S SOCIAL AND NARRATIVE STANCE

In order to define the relevance of Odian's remarks, especially about women he encountered, related with or simply observed on his deportation road, one has to bear in mind precisely how Odian was located in late Ottoman society and how he defined himself in his text. Before concentrating on Odian proper, some traits of the pluralistic Ottoman society are to be recalled.

It is still taboo among most Armenians (Greeks would stand in no contrast) to discuss the former proximity between Ottoman Armenians and their Muslim surroundings, their integration at most levels of society and certainly not only as rural producers exploited by Kurdish tribesmen or Turkish pashas,<sup>8</sup> but also as the most acclaimed and officially revered architects (the Balian family)<sup>9</sup>, major statesmen (Krikor Odian, Noradounghian), men of letters (GÜLLÜ Agop's paternity of the first Turkish theater plays, Vartan Paşa's authorship of the first novel in Turkish, *Akabi Hikayesi*),<sup>10</sup>. However, this proximity could not but have



deep consequences on a general anthropological level for what is to be expected from an adult male and an adult female. Photographs of Armenian urban notables, of Ottoman Armenian peasants and even, cruelly enough, of Armenian deportees – and that, too, is the case of Ottoman Christian Orthodox, as a quick look at the photographs of Elia Kazan's extended family on Ottoman soil that are included in his autobiography amply prove<sup>11</sup> – bewilder contemporary Westerners, have they an Armenian background or not, by the obvious familiarity they display with the Muslim neighbors.

My own observations of family life within an Aleppo Armenian family have convinced me of the anthropological continuum in many, and possibly most, moral, social, cultural and political representations among most Aleppo inhabitants, despite the emphatically marked boundaries between groups.<sup>12</sup> In fact these boundaries must be elaborated and constantly emphasized, given the perception of proximity as a threat to the perpetuation of one's group, which is considered the core of humanity. Religion, certainly causing certain differences, is loaded with an overwhelming meaning that everyday life stealthily but steadily contests, for who wants to perceive that. Oppositions, potential conflicts are certainly present but Near Eastern pluralistic society does or did function too, implying the sharing of a minimal – possibly rather large – social syntax. These similarities, this uncomfortable closeness, is from time to time acknowledged even by Armenian nationalists if they cannot control their words. For instance, it is generally thought impossible, for an *odar* (the word for any outsider) and a word with a heavily negative connotation, to be fluent in Armenian. At times when the group feels on its own, away from unwelcome foreign eyes and ears, such language is used.

Ayşe Saraçgil's book on masculinity in the late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic is legitimately surprising for the reader familiar with the history of Western Armenians and/or the remnants of the Anatolian Armenian society to be found mostly in Syria and Lebanon.<sup>13</sup> Although explicit Quranic references are not relevant in the Armenian context, tacit social common sense and, at a more explicit level, a highly ideologized conception of human nature may function the same compelling way in order to justify practices similar to those of Muslim neighbors. Ottoman Christian masculinity may have had more traits in common with Muslim standards than usually acknowledged. I would extend Bernard Heyberger's conceptions about a common culture on the Arab Lands to the inhabitants of the Ottoman heartlands. Putting the emphasis on the religious fragmentation only prevents us from understanding the very possibility of such societies, at least until the abolition of the legal status of the *zimmi*,<sup>14</sup> that is, in the Ottoman case starting from the 1839 Gülhane Edict and ending in 1908 with the restoration of the Constitution.

In this framework of references, I place Odian's status as a male deportee, fortunately enough a belated one. The fact that he was not a married man contradicts the Ottoman common social syntax. An accomplished adult male has to have his own family.<sup>15</sup> His older age provides him, though, with a higher status in this society.<sup>16</sup> Odian makes remarks about the beauty of a Greek adolescent while he hardly mentions anything comparable about women.<sup>17</sup> Odian's stance towards Armenian women, or rather that of his fellow-Armenian males, who consider them as their national belonging to be protected from the outside world as soon as possible, reflects on the shift in the meaning of gender relations. This shift in female status took place everywhere in the region since motherhood made women crucial to the construction of the nation in that part of the world.<sup>18</sup>

Odian was a member of an influential and highly educated Ottoman Armenian family. His father was an Ottoman consul, and Odian would experience at an early age life in foreign countries. His family's library and cultural standards made him a perfect speaker of French and a fine connoisseur of Armenian written culture.<sup>19</sup> He, according to his own avowal, never mastered written Ottoman Turkish, while, of course, fluently speaking that language.<sup>20</sup> Odian was a journalist at one of the most read Armenian-language newspaper of Constantinople, *Jamanak* – which is still published today – and belonged, therefore, to the intellectual élite of his community, particularly targeted from April 1915 onward. The newspaper had, at that time, some connections with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, a party allied to the Committee of Union and Progress from 1908 onward. The ARF is especially renowned for its nationalist orientations, despite its proclaimed socialist color. However, *Jamanak* was independent and no revolutionary newspaper. Moreover, despite the fact that Odian was not a personality openly involved in politics, he already had in 1915 a past as an Armenian exile (between 1896 and 1908) under Abdülhamit. For some Armenians even, he never took clear enough political stances,<sup>21</sup> but for a repressive Ottoman regime, he was all too involved in satirical criticism.

Odian was arrested in late August 1915 (old style)<sup>22</sup> after a period of hiding in the capital city. The possibility of going undercover and being deported with some delay was a major privilege largely due to his social standing and professional connections. This increased his chances of survival and, besides, his chances to write his text and bear testimony. After his arrest he was deported at first by train from Haydar Paşa Station to Ereğli and then by carriage and eventually had to walk until his last destinations, Der Zor and even further El Boussera in the Syrian Desert. The text Odian wrote on his return to the Ottoman capital at the end of 1918 offers us a panorama of what an inside observer could perceive of the genocidal process with, however, a slight but necessary distance from the main events. This distance was a *sine qua non* for writing this

text. Had he been deported with the first groups from Constantinople on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1915, most probably he would not have survived.<sup>23</sup> The reader has most of the time the impression that Odian arrived slightly after the main scenes of violence took place. The simultaneity with his fellow Armenians' fate was reestablished only in Der Zor in 1917, where he himself came close to death by exhaustion and ill-treatment. His manifold distance maintained towards most of the deportees was of an ambivalent nature.

Odian painstakingly insisted on his status as a political exile from Constantinople, in order to maintain a distinction between himself and the mass of deportees from the provinces, at least before entering Syria.<sup>24</sup> There was certainly snobism in this behavior as a Constantinopolitan, a quality he identifies on many occasions in his text with higher civilization *per se*.<sup>25</sup> There were major divides among Ottoman subjects: to be or not to be from Constantinople was certainly an important one. It was able to abolish ethno-religious barriers and erect some within supposedly homogeneous *millet*. But Odian's almost childish insistence also illustrates that this status fostered the hope that the exile would not end the same way as most deportations, which led inescapably towards some form of death. Perhaps a new decision about his personal case was still possible, and he could go back to Constantinople. Odian never mentioned another long-term perspective in his narrative. His acquaintance with foreign countries, which is a recurrent theme in the text, never incites him to envisage anything different from a return to his home city. The declaration of independence of Caucasian Armenia is no exception,<sup>26</sup> although Odian and his unfortunate companions certainly were happy about that late development, after most Ottoman Armenians had already died.

Odian's distance from other deportees was established too by his status as a renowned intellectual among Armenians. Wherever he had to go, he could rely on the sympathy of fellow Armenians. As a satirical writer and a renowned journalist, he was esteemed by many people, especially among the élite and youth. He could benefit from respect and spontaneous help during his journey.<sup>27</sup> His political dedication was not such that he would be immediately associated with a political party and thus rejected by sympathizers of the other. But on the other hand, Odian could not expect to remain anonymous, which could turn dangerous. His former position though, as a journalist at *Jamanak*, often aroused suspicion on the part of local Ottoman agents on the deportation road.<sup>28</sup> He could also be easily denounced by the many Armenians ready to collaborate with Ottoman officials in their destructive task.<sup>29</sup>

## ARTICULATING GENDER

Gender is a major theme in Odian's text, whether as the focus of some passages about the virtue of women, a favorite topic from the beginning to the



end of the text that the author developed in many contexts, about women of various ethno-religious backgrounds, or as an implicit, possibly silenced, category of narration. When Odian writes about men, the category is mostly taken for granted, as if men's life and behavior were not determined by their gender but were of general, universal interest. In late Ottoman society, distinct spheres were assigned to the two main groups: men and women.<sup>30</sup> Even if these spheres were being partially questioned and changing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>31</sup> especially because of collective concern about the education of women, who were supposed to become mothers of good Armenian youth, segregation, in different degrees, between genders was a major fact for all human groups in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>32</sup> But still, the war itself and the genocidal deportation of the Ottoman Armenians disturbed the social arrangement between men and women in the Empire. With Odian's narrative, one can argue that the two categories are deeply jeopardized in that crucial time. Not only was the physical integrity of the group threatened, but the anthropological system of meanings and values was crushed by daily life in those extreme situations.<sup>33</sup>

Odian himself had also a slightly ambivalent status, as far as his own gender, or at least the gender of his autobiographical narrative instance, was concerned. As an Armenian male, who belonged to a famous Ottoman Armenian family, it should have been his role to marry and have children once an adult, which he never did. His status excluded him from men's, if not outright, social normality, at least from the classical masculine fulfillment pattern. He was aware of that and even tried to conceal his bachelorhood in order to gain some credit with an Ottoman official.<sup>34</sup> His being alone could be an unexpected asset, though, because he had to care for other people on the road and also knew he would be more mobile and, therefore, able to escape if need be.<sup>35</sup>

His profession and his social life inserted him into a highly homo-social environment, where the presence of women was exceptional. This was a usual Ottoman pattern, where politics, trade, army and, though to a lesser degree, formal education were exclusively masculine domains even at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is also an environment that Odian was prompt in recreating when possible, that is, as soon as he benefited from a period of relative calm like in Hama, in Der Zor, or in Sultaniye.<sup>36</sup> The point is that for an unmarried man, the chance of socializing with women was then minimal. As a matter of fact, the women who appear to be the closest to him in this text are his mother and their maid in Constantinople. His situation was therefore similar to that of higher Armenian clergymen, who were not allowed to marry in accordance with their ecclesiastical regulations.<sup>37</sup> Some Armenian Archbishops he met during his exile were deported with their mother or sister, at least at the beginning of their ordeal.<sup>38</sup> Odian's mother managed to visit him when he was imprisoned in the old city, Istanbul, before being deported to the Syrian

lands.<sup>39</sup> Although they were no equal partners in ordinary life, Armenian women quite a few times take on the aura of beings of the utmost courageous under extreme circumstances.

In the first pages of his narrative, Odian describes the end of normal times in embattled Constantinople under the aegis of the CUP. The capital city he reminded his readers of was mostly his all-male professional milieu: Krikor Zohrab, Aram Andonian, Hrand Samouel, Teotig, Puzant Qetchian, Dr. Torkomian, his colleague, Nerses Tchaqerian and his boss at *Jamanak*, Sarkis Efendi Kotchunian, just to name a few who are recurrent figures in his text. On the other hand, in his narrative there are no women whom he considers or addresses as equals, while a careful reader can establish a long list of males evoked with sympathy, respect and even deference. This list of personal likings would cross ethno-religious barriers: Arabs, Turks, Greeks, et al. are evoked, even if as a minority, with the main group of reference being Armenians. The brutalized life in the Ottoman Empire was of concern first to all young men. At the beginning of the text, young males of any ethno-religious group are afraid of being drafted on the street and stay at home. The anguish is shared by all Ottoman subjects in the same age category.<sup>40</sup> What soon happened specifically for the Armenians in Constantinople was that bachelors who originally had come from the provinces were to immediately leave the capital. Gender and marital status made a difference in survival chances.<sup>41</sup> (It is a half-truth then to maintain that people in the capital city were not concerned by the genocide.)

The harshness of the treatment imposed on Ottoman Armenians was soon to deprive targeted men of some characteristics of their male status. Some family heads were reduced to crying in the open, which was against the social norm in the Ottoman domains.<sup>42</sup>

There is in the whole text no trace of deep personal, special interest towards any feminine figure on the part of Odian. Ethics, a clear dislike of exposing very personal matters, and the format in which the piece was published, that is, a serial in a widely read newspaper, may have prevented Odian from statements considered indecent, though one can hardly imagine that the three and a half years of his ordeal were without moments of closeness, desire of being close or outright sexual desire. One of the few mentions that resemble some special liking between Odian and a woman is that relating to Dirouhi Djighilian, who visited him in the prison in Aleppo where he was detained, while no one else would dare to pay him a visit.<sup>43</sup> However, she acquires in the text the dimension of national, though discreet, resistance and nothing emphasizes her womanhood. Quite to the contrary, Odian felt no restraint in expressing his admiration of some men's faces or physiques, even if by doing so he meant to underline the contrast between the good-looking face of an Ottoman officer and the latter's terrible schemes.<sup>44</sup> Despite this narrative coolness towards women, which

may have been motivated by deep psychological reasons or simply social conventions, Odian often evoked the situation of women, most of them Armenians but not always, on his odyssey through Ottoman territory.

It would be difficult to find in Odian's book many traces of an awareness of a change of relation between genders. Since his main partners of social, intellectual, and, possibly, affectionate interactions are men, one can hardly infer from the text what Victoria Rowe describes and analyses. She finds the emergence of Armenian women as active partners in Armenian script culture and also in the very ideological life of the group that had been exclusively dominated by male voices until the emergence of nationalism, which provided some women with the opportunity to enter the arena of public exchange of thoughts. Odian seems to have remained indifferent to "*debates about women's place in modern society*", prior to his deportation.<sup>45</sup> Rowe's evocation of literary salons and other spaces of intellectual contacts between men and women does not fit with Odian's text, underlining his avoiding such experiences or the irrelevance of such a context for him when writing, back in Istanbul, about his deportation, which, in turn, emphasizes his lack of interest. He writes about deported and other women, considering them from an external point of view, and there are no hints either to previous intellectual companionship or private affection with women in Constantinople in times of peace.

Odian's many remarks about women on his deportation road do not herald any voluntary change in his own or in his community's stance towards women after the war. He concludes his long talk with the young Armenian lady on the train back to Constantinople, and shortly gives way to doubts and some challenging questions about the legitimate means of survival Armenian women had to use. He writes classical negative judgmental sentences that uncompromisingly posit Armenian women as pure and purely national beings or exclude them from the community of Armenians, that is, in the last analysis, of relevant people. One would search in vain in Odian's text for lines about the dedication of women to the collective survival, such as those written by Zabel Yessayan: "*One must recognize the simple dedication of educated women, most of whom abandoned a life of well-being and pleasure, and who did not hesitate to stay months and years in forsaken corners of the world, deprived of everything, sharing the misery of their charges and doing all of this with patience and cheerful simplicity.*"<sup>46</sup>

#### GENDERED DESTRUCTION OF THE OTTOMAN ARMENIANS

The fate of Ottoman Armenians was a gendered issue. The Ottoman elimination of the Armenians was strikingly efficient; it made the distinction between



men and women instrumental in destroying the group. Male and female Armenians were indeed likely to live or die in a different manner during those *Accursed Years*.

Men were, most of the time, slaughtered right away. The conscription that was established after the Young Turks' revolution in 1908, ironically enough a step towards legal equality between Muslim and non-Muslim Ottoman subjects, helped weaken Armenian families. Deprived of males, that is of their main source of income, but also of their representatives in the outside world, women and children were unlikely to pose any significant resistance to the state's authority, even though it was murderous towards its own "nationals".<sup>47</sup> Local Armenian grandees: schoolmasters, priests, main traders, everyone who could have had some authority over the group, were usually murdered before deportation started. However, it would be a mistake to see the treatment of Ottoman Armenians as a process identical to the Shoah. The Ottoman Empire was not as rigorous as the Third Reich would be a few decades later. Odian reported about an all-male caravan of deportees from Caesaria that arrived in Hama, which he singled out as a unique case.<sup>48</sup> Even if common patterns are noticeable, it is always possible to find occurrences that do not fit in with that most common pattern.

Odian's conclusive remark on the topic, made on his way back to Constantinople in late 1918, was: "*Where were the young men? Where had they remained? They had been either martyred in the amele taburu or massacred in the deserts.*"<sup>49</sup> During the whole narrative, Odian regularly underlines the feminine demographic surplus at his different stopovers on his deportation road. Armenian survivors, if adult, were likely to be women. It was a striking fact he remarked very early on his deportation road. On his way to the Syrian lands, as soon as Eskişehir, where he saw his first camp of deportees, he noticed that: "*the majority [of the deportees] were women, children and old people*".<sup>50</sup> Yet Armenian women, like women of other ethno-religious groups in the Ottoman context, were not supposed to live isolated. One should consider that survival took place in an abnormal context, where individuals were likely to be cut off from relatives and acquaintances of normal times.

## ISOLATED WOMEN

Women were all of a sudden responsible for the remaining members of the family: small children and elderly people depended on them. After their departure they were compelled to manage the few assets taken with them, and then beg, or work, if offered the possibility, in order to survive. This was certainly not ideal in Ottoman society, in which women would stay at home and take care

of domestic chores. On the other hand, as subordinate beings, Armenian women could from time to time escape the custody of their Muslim masters, if the opportunity was offered. Nobody really cared about them.<sup>51</sup>

During the genocidal deportation, Armenian women could no more rely on the solidarity of their group nor on that of their surviving kin. If she was endangering the whole group, an individual, woman or not, would be expelled from a collective tent and abandoned to her fate, which would mean inescapable death. Odian's text resembles Andonian's short stories in *In those Dark Days*. But, unlike the latter, the former did not focus on each scene he evoked. He wrote a longer journalistic report accumulating many quick scenes which Andonian did not intend to do. In Sebil, Odian saw a young woman agonizing in a dirty hole dug in the mud close to the tents. Sacrificing the ill young woman could save the other five persons in the tent, while keeping her in the group without medicine would endanger the whole party, exposing it to contamination. Odian, who first had a judgmental attitude towards what he was witnessing: "*What a disgusting thing!*", simply ran away when he was informed of the necessary calculation of the woman's brother-in-law, making an apology: "*Forgive me for what I told you before.*"<sup>52</sup>

In general, no special treatment was to be expected by the weak, neither from the targeted group nor from the perpetrators. Odian repeatedly testifies that Ottoman officials completely lacked mercy towards elderly people, even elderly Armenian women. About his deportation road from Aleppo to Der Zor, he would say: "*The caravan was going forth very slowly; there were old women and men, like children, who could not walk. We walked hardly an hour, and it was necessary to gather the late ones.*"<sup>53</sup> The deportation could simply not be justified for military reasons. It was perpetrated at no risk because it targeted inoffensive people. No one would intervene on behalf of Armenian women deprived of male protectors. In Syria, the Armenian women's food would consist of herbs and tree leaves, if any were to be found.<sup>54</sup> Witnessing the ill-treatment of the defenseless, Odian, the rather sociable and accommodating Constantinopolitan, became clearly aware that the procedure had no other purpose but the destruction of the displaced people: "*Why were they pushing these pitiable people that far to Der Zor, towards inhospitable deserts? Simply in order to exterminate them completely.*"

No one nurtured strong hopes for an individual or collective survival, and it was common knowledge that the official deportation, *sevkiyat*, had no other aim but the complete annihilation of the whole group. This was coldly and repeatedly asserted by local officials to Odian but also a well-known truth among Ottoman civilians of all creeds. People belonging to all population groups in Sebil (close to Aleppo) who were looking for children to be bought or adopted would

use this as an argument in order to convince destitute Armenian women to give up their children so that the latter would have a chance to survive.<sup>55</sup>

Death was not the only way to destroy Armenian women. As social and, possibly, political beings, they had to disappear, but their abilities and reproductive potential could be gained by the dominant groups. Armenian women were welcomed and absorbed into Muslim households. This is another major difference from the logics of the *Shoah*. There was no concept of *Rassenschändung* in the late Ottoman Empire. Armenian girls and women were coveted by Muslim males: this could take the form of rapes, forced marriages, acceptance of the concubine status or marriages. The presence of women in Arab households is a major given during his time in Syria.<sup>56</sup> Odian estimated that some 2,000 to 3,000 Armenian children, mostly girls, were among Arab families around Hama INCOMPLETE. Odian even thought that these children were happier than those remaining with their parents on the deportation track. There were also many young women who had been included as concubines in Arab families at Der Zor, and Odian, compelled to work as a street cleaner, could approach them.<sup>57</sup> Marrying a local Muslim man had been the only way to survive the great massacres in Der Zor. These Armenian women would curse their new husbands when Armenian deportees showed up working on the streets. Odian provides his readers with details of disgusting situations, emphasizing the moral distance between his former situation, which he perceived as normalcy, and what he witnessed during his years of deportation. Teenage girls, closer to 10 than 20, were potential sexual and possibly marital partners for mature Muslim men.<sup>58</sup> There seemed to be no hope of a milder tone towards the targeted group thanks to those adoptions and forced marriages, for even some of the victims turned into Armenian-haters and reinforced the murderous attitude of the dominant group.<sup>59</sup>

Compulsory conversion to Islam, as Odian experienced it in Hama in 1916, was made a serious issue for family heads, men or women, with daughters.<sup>60</sup> While Odian and other bachelors, especially, worried about the possibility of compulsory circumcision, fathers had more serious sorrows, for potential non-Armenian suiters could not be easily turned down. Conversion was forced on Armenians by the Ottoman Turkish authorities, though no one would take the procedure seriously.<sup>61</sup> New names were never checked nor used by the authorities. The Muslim greeting formula, *Aleküm Selam*, was never used to greet converts of Armenian origin. According to Odian, local Arabs would show contempt for Muslims compelling other people to convert to Islam and regard the process as sinful. Odian indulged in describing the long-lasting resistance to conversion on the part of Armenian women deported from Samsun on the Black Sea. They were even ready to be deported to the desert rather than become renegades. Sticking to their faith seemed to be the last bastion of their



integrity, shedding light on how they defined themselves in normal times: "*They murdered our husbands, they killed our children, they kidnapped our daughters, let them murder us too.*" Once again, Odian turned women into discreet heroic figures, though they surrendered to the pressure of the surviving group in Hama, in order to survive that abnormal time, hoping to be able to reverse the procedure as soon as some normalcy returned.

#### NON-ARMENIAN WOMEN

Generally speaking, conscription and genocidal massacres provided non-Armenian women in Ottoman society with new tasks, new roles and, possibly, with an autonomy they hardly experienced in usual times. Historians gained earlier awareness of this phenomenon in Western societies at war, and there were no reasons why Ottoman women would not experience similar changes. Many non-Armenian women, too, were isolated in the embattled Ottoman domains. Since vigorous men had been drafted, women had to earn money on their own. For this reason, they had the opportunity to get closer to the deportees. For instance, they were likely to look for renters that would bring them some cash. When Armenians were allowed to stay in cities on their deportation road southward, these women would benefit from the sudden influx of Armenians. Such details of the deportation make the *Mets Yeghern* (*Great Crime*) very different from the *Shoah*. There are phases of lesser murderous intensity, when short-term pieces of everyday life can be restored, which was hardly the case in Hitler's Europe.

Non-Armenian women thus gained some power over the Armenian deportees. They were able to grant the deportees special favors in price, in housing conditions and to help in other matters too, but they also could withdraw their support and possibly denounce them to the authorities under any pretext. Non-Armenian Ottoman women gained a superior status to Armenian men.<sup>62</sup> Isolated women in a village also defended themselves against intruders, even in the absence of men.<sup>63</sup> Deportation was partly reversing the hierarchy of (Armenian) males and (Muslim) females, while the ethno-religious divide was drawn more clearly and maintained over the years, as probably never before in the previous decades, especially in advanced urban centers, where a rather liberal Ottoman *modus vivendi* made living side-by-side more comfortable for non-Muslims than in the inner provinces. No doubt this radicalization of inter-group relations was resented by deportees from Constantinople or Smyrna. A small scene illustrates this. In Der Zor, Arab women would make fun of Armenian deportees, especially Odian who, with his urban air, had to sweep the streets and was mocked by locals as "*çöpçü efendi*". He was compelled by Arab women to clean the floor of the court of their private houses. Getting such orders was a sour experience for him.<sup>64</sup>

The climax of Odian's destitution takes place in the desert away from El Boussera, when, in an attempt to escape his relegated place, he was robbed of everything by Arab Bedouins and ended up "*as naked as a newborn*". His nudity turned dramatic when he approached the tents of some Bedouins. He even entered an Arab tent, covering his genitals with a handkerchief that had been covering his head. On that occasion, he was considered as outright insane, which saved his life although his apparition had terrified a group of women in the tent.<sup>65</sup> Though seldom, Odian mentions that some local women could also be discreet benefactors, ensuring some contacts and even the transfer of small sums of money between deportees having to stay at different places. Women took advantage of their lower status to accomplish such illegal actions.<sup>66</sup>

Odian mentions Western people and women in his narrative. After the abolition of the Capitulations, numerous French and British nationals lost their higher positions in the Ottoman Empire. After the declaration of war, they were even considered *personæ non gratae*. The most powerful and potentially helpful women were the Westerners remaining in the Ottoman Empire at war. Odian evoked German and other Protestant missionaries as willing to help Armenian survivors. Armenian women, possibly hidden, married to Westerners could also play an important role. Odian suspected that the wife of Gustav Edwald, the Scandinavian officer serving the German Army in the Ottoman Empire who employed him as an interpreter, was an Armenian, and that this marriage influenced in a favorable way Edwald's feelings towards Odian's group in general and towards his own person in particular.<sup>67</sup>

In Aleppo, Odian met Reverend Krouzian, who was working together with a German lady, Frau Keuys (Odian did not remember her name correctly), running an orphanage with the special permission of Cemal Paşa, who was a personal acquaintance of hers.<sup>68</sup> Odian estimated that some one hundred orphans were taken care of. The connections between the Germans and the Muslim Ottoman élite were crucial to such rare initiatives.<sup>69</sup> When Odian had to move from Aleppo to Sultaniye, he received some money from an American lady, at least this much he surmised, to alleviate his sufferings on the road, where he would have had to walk otherwise.<sup>70</sup> Odian writes her name was Mrs. Kushman, though his memory and the Armenian spelling make it difficult to identify people with certainty. The point is that Western women, if anyone, could help Ottoman Armenians as a group or at least in individual cases.

#### LATE OTTOMAN ARMENIAN SEXUAL ETHICS

The sexuality of surviving women was a major concern for Odian and most probably for his readers, in the aftermath of the conflict. Women, from the point of view of the rehabilitation of the Armenian group and the constitution of an Armenian state on territories still part of the defeated Ottoman Empire,

would have to perform a major role. The demographic weakness of the Ottoman Armenian group achieved by the Ottoman state was creating a new argument against the building of an Armenian state in international politics, instead of a human disaster to be compensated for. The demographic argument was included by liberal President Wilson in his Fourteen Points as one of the main justifications for changing boundaries. Armenian women's reproductive potential was hence central for Armenian readers in 1918-1919. That this potential remained in the Armenian group or was regained was crucial for the demographic perpetuation of the group and its political future. Odian's tone and ideas in this matter do not necessarily differ from those of politicians of that time. People were simply deprived of any claim to individuality. Women's bodies were considered the property of the Armenian group, an asset not to liquidate. From time to time, though, Odian's profession as a journalist enabled him to consider individual cases and to introduce the subjectivity of other Armenians in his narrative.

Prostitution was a normal phenomenon in Ottoman society too. Odian is quite open about the issue. It is mentioned very early in the narrative, when he became aware that Turkish women of "*bad morals*" were imprisoned at the same place as he was.<sup>71</sup> Prostitution was closely associated with garrisons, as in most countries of the world. Odian adopted conventional judgmental tones when writing about such topics, but as he happened to be in charge of providing women to work at a brothel in Der Zor, he managed to perform his task.<sup>72</sup> He pretended not to be able to do the work himself, but he knew someone, a man, who was able to find "*women of that kind*", showing that an adult Ottoman male, even the most unlikely one as he liked to portray himself, could relate to this milieu, in one way or another. His text does not mention the group to which these women belonged, although it is easy to make a reasonable guess under such circumstances.

The surviving group, as soon as it could reorganize a semblance of normalcy, established processes of control over the women's morals. This is exemplified after the periods of intense massacres by the painstaking diligence of the Head of the Public Workshop working for the Ottoman army, *dokumhane*, to lock up Armenian women at night, in order to protect them from possible assailants but also to remove them from any temptation.<sup>73</sup> Women's uncontrolled sexuality could have threatened national existence in such circumstances.

Odian may have echoed the prejudice of middle class Armenians in Constantinople. Some of his comments on the voluntary marriages to prominent Muslim figures in order to survive, on the kidnappings followed by forced marriages in Muslim households in the Turkish or Arab lands, or on the compelled



prostitution have a derogatory tinge, expressing his disapproval and even disgust. From time to time, though, especially when Odian quotes individuals, one can perceive more nuanced tones. This is the case in *Der Zor*, when he focuses on an Armenian lady married to a man he described as "an Arab gypsy".<sup>74</sup>

Later in his text, another case functions as an echo of this first one. A longer conversation with a young "*lady from Bandirma*" (on the Marmara Sea) "*quite nice looking and educated*" on the train back to Constantinople offered him the opportunity to significantly mellow his tone. She was accompanying, like other Armenian women, a group of Turkish policemen who were drinking a lot and in low spirits in those days of defeat. Despite the setting, sympathy emerges as longer quotes of the young lady are inserted in the text.<sup>75</sup> Odian, the quite self-complacent know-it-all from Constantinople, was about to lecture her on her morals.<sup>76</sup> But the young woman was not ready to accept any negative judgment on her behavior. She even countered the respected author, very bravely, adopting almost biblical tones: "*Am I the only one, did she reply, to live this life? All the Armenian women deported to Konya, whose husbands are lost, massacred or dead, are reduced to the same situation. Either they went to a brothel (հանրապոն) or took a lover (սիրահար) to remain alive. How did you want us to live in another way?*"<sup>77</sup> Odian as a mature man would never have experienced such dilemmas. He was too intelligent not to be aware of that, after being lectured himself. Odian did not give up immediately: "*But now that you are free, and do not have to fear further exile, you can save your life from his grasp.*"<sup>78</sup> But the young lady also had no illusion as far as the possibilities of getting back to her former group, Armenians, were concerned: "*It is too late now. [...] After three years of such a life, who is going to pay attention to me? [...] I don't dare now to go back to my place. [...] I would feel shame looking in my relatives' and friends' faces.*"

The dialog on the train is emblematic of what happened to many other Armenian women. Odian's text is replete with such cases, though they are less expanded on. Their marriage or carnal connections to Muslim men did mean a demographic loss for the Armenian group, endangering its perpetuation demographically and culturally. The young Armenian lady who is reported to have spoken was excellent. Her defection, forced as it might have been, to the other group was a loss in many ways. Such thoughts were not exclusively Ottoman Armenian but can be traced in many other groups, since females' education and status had already become a political issue in the rise of various nationalisms.<sup>79</sup> The sudden activation of Muslim men's right to possess or marry non-Muslim women, if they abandoned any ambition to pass on their own religious affiliation to their children, was a soft annihilation of a non-Muslim group, without bloodshed and delayed in time, impeding the birth of descendants within the non-Muslim group. Odian, quoting the young woman at large, implied some

legitimacy in her decisions. But he puts an end to doubts, reestablishing norms in his final sentence on the topic: "*And how many of them were there still who were in the brothels of Aleppo, Damascus, Konya and who did not want to enjoy their new freedom and go back to their places, because they had rotted (փճացած էին) in vice (մոլորեաւս մէջ).*"<sup>80</sup> Still, one may wonder exactly what Odian's intention was, back in Constantinople, openly mentioning this aspect of survival to his readers.

The dialog would not have taken place as easily in a normal situation: that is between a seductive young woman and a mature man, especially on such a topic. Armenian women defecting to the Muslim group were no longer regarded as related to their former fellow Armenians.<sup>81</sup> The trip on the train exemplifies the breaking of former norms. There would be no way back to the Ottoman Armenian normalcy for most people, though the idea is not welcome, especially in Syria-Lebanon, where Armenians survived *as if* some collective reparation were possible.<sup>82</sup> Only Constantinople was still a possibility in the immediate aftermath of the Great War, but even this possibility disappeared for most of the politically and culturally involved in 1922.

## CONCLUSION

Women and, more generally, the gender question constitute a major dimension of Odian's text, *Accursed Years (1914-1919)*. On the author's road to what should have been death, he had several chances (both personal assets and simply good luck) that enabled him to survive and bear testimony after his return to Constantinople at the end of 1918. From both a literary and a political point of view, it is not always certain that Odian perceived that the demographic destruction of Ottoman Armenians and the moral destitution of the survivors meant the end of a whole world. There are pages or a narrative rhythm, only partly due to the serial form that some readers would call shallow, especially when Odian reestablished some social life for a while. The fate of others simply vanishes from his text.<sup>83</sup> However, Odian wrote an informed report from inside the world of Armenian deportees. He could not but notice that women, unlike in his own professional milieu in Constantinople, had gained a centrality in Ottoman Armenian history because of their demographic advantage among survivors. Odian, therefore, kept writing about women he encountered on his road to Der Zor and back to Constantinople without, though, establishing any special relationship with any one of them, at least according to his narrative. Young men had most of the time been murdered and most of them would, therefore, not contribute to the reconstruction of some form of Armenian continuity. It is questionable, though, whether the temporary focus on Armenian women's ordeals, feats, adaptations, temptations and sufferings during those years, which

Odian's text portrays, radically changed women's place in the Western Armenian anthropological *habitus*. Surviving Armenian women in Syria or Lebanon and also in France or the US did not bring up a generation of Western Armenians eager to question the ascription to both genders of stable national and social roles. Has the sense of collective mutual belonging among Western Armenians been changed by the numerous marriages, forced or not, to Muslim men? Haven't widows and orphans successfully participated in the re-establishment of Armenian males' domination in the following decades?

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Yervant Odian, *Anidzial Dariner (The Accursed Years)*, as a serial in *Jamanak*, Constantinople-based Armenian-language daily, 1918-1919. Edition consulted: text serialized in *Haratch*, Paris-based Armenian-language daily, from Thursday, February 24, 2005 to Tuesday, December 13, 2005. All quotations are from this edition as well as all translations into English are mine, if no other is mentioned.
- <sup>2</sup> Yervant Odian, *Anidzial Dariner 1914-1919, (Antsnagan Hlshadagner) [The Accursed Years, 1914-1919 (Personal memories)]*, Yerevan, Na'ri Press, 2004.
- <sup>3</sup> The plethora production about "gender" in the Anglo-Saxon but also the French-speaking spheres always reasserts the centrality of "gender" as a main anthropological factor ("Le genre comme principe omniprésent d'intelligence du monde social" and f. (Christine Guionnet, Erik Neveu, *Féminins/Masculins. Sociologie du Genre*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2004, p. 6).
- <sup>4</sup> Jean-Marie Schaeffer, « Quelles vérités pour quelles fictions? », pp. 19-36, in *L'Homme* n° 175-176, 2005. « Il se pourrait d'ailleurs fort bien que les thèses à propos du snobisme social exposées par le narrateur de la Recherche soient vraies et que les thèses de Margaret Mead concernant la sexualité à Samoa soient fausses. », p. 29.
- <sup>5</sup> Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte Autobiographique*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1975, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1996; Ph. Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, trans. Katherine Leary, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- <sup>6</sup> Lejeune, p. 36.
- <sup>7</sup> "Historical anthropology takes as centre of historical analysis concrete people with their actions and thoughts, feelings and sufferings. [...] Historical anthropology stresses the partaking of all human beings in history." (Richard Van Dülmen, *Historische Anthropologie*, Cologne, Böhlau, 2000, p. 5).
- <sup>8</sup> Raymond Kévorkian and Paul Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire Ottoman à la Veille du Génocide*, Paris, Éditions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1992.
- <sup>9</sup> Pars, Tuglaci, *The Role of the Balian Family in Ottoman Architecture*, Istanbul, Yeni Çigir Bookstore, 1990.
- <sup>10</sup> [http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/yayinlar/yayin1/2-Goyunc\(23-42\).pdf](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/yayinlar/yayin1/2-Goyunc(23-42).pdf) .
- <sup>11</sup> Elia Kazan, *A Life*, London, Andre Deutsch, 1998.
- <sup>12</sup> Hervé Georgelin (2007), "Illiteracy, Ill-literacy and Literacy among Western Armenians: En Route from the Near East to the West, from the 1950s until Today", *European*



- 13 Ayşe Saraçgil, *Il Maschio Camaleonte, Strutture Patriarcali nell'Impero Ottomano e nella Turchia Moderna*, Milan, Bruno Mondadori, 2001.
- 14 Bernard Heyberger (ed.), *Chrétiens du Monde Arabe, Un Archipel en Terre d'Islam*, Paris, Autrement, 2003, pp. 19-22.
- 15 "La maturità di un uomo è [...] definitivamente associata al suo diventare capo di una famiglia che elimina qualsiasi ambiguità riguardo la sua identità sessuale." (Saraçgil, p. 30).
- 16 "L'anziano possiede maggiore sapere ed esperienza, gli uomini anziani godono di uno status particolarmente prestigioso [...]" (Saraçgil, p. 30).
- 17 " [...] nell'età adolescenziale i maschi sono considerati, al pari delle femmine, carnalmente desiderabili; potenziali oggetti dell'appetito sessuale del maschio adulto." (Saraçgil, p. 28).
- 18 "the notion of the Armenian woman as mother of the nation posited that women's roles as mothers had a political component by raising children to be Armenian and patriotic members of the nation." (Victoria Rowe, *A History of Armenian Women's Writing: 1880 - 1922*, London, Cambridge Scholars Press Ltd. 2003, p. 13. Similar phenomena occurred in the Greek-Orthodox, Bulgarian, Turkish, and Arab spheres though without complete synchrony.
- 19 M. Manoukian, "Ođian Yervant Khachig", *Հայկական Սովետական Հանրագիտարան* (Soviet Armenian Encyclopædia), Volume 12, Yerevan, Academy of Sciences of the Armenian Socialist Soviet Republic, 1986, pp. 578-9.
- 20 Installment 101: Ođian is questioned about his abilities. He is partly lying about his competence in French but not about Turkish: "– And what about Turkish? Do you know how to write and read? – No. I only speak and understand it. But I don't know the very difficult words."
- 21 "Ođian preferred to remain on the margins of public life without clarifying his positions." (Haroutioun Kurkdjian, *Hay Gıanık Yev Kraganutiun* (Armenian Life and Literature), secondary section, 1<sup>st</sup> year, Athens, H. Hampartsoumian, 2003, p. 206).
- 22 Dates given by Ođian are following the Julian calendar, which was 13 days late compared to the Gregorian calendar, which was in use in Western countries at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has since been adopted by most countries in the world. Installment 39: Ođian refers to the mass arrest of April 11, 1915 in Constantinople, which sounds ironic given the almost sacredness of April 24<sup>th</sup> for most Armenians, meeting on his deportation road the former head of the psychiatric section of the National Hospital, Dr. Boghossian, who had survived until then but was beyond all recognition. It may happen that Ođian indicates dates in his text using both calendars.
- 23 To my knowledge, Aram Andonian is the author of one of the rare narratives about the deportation of this very first deported group. It remained a fragmentary text: *Ak-sori Djampun Vera* (On the Road to Exile), which Andonian serialized in the Armenian-language journal, *Veradzenunt* (Rebirth) July 1919-April 1920, in Paris, as Ođian did in Constantinople.
- 24 Installment 27: "we are political exiles"; installment 31: "But we are not deportees, we are exiles and we'll stay here." etc.

- <sup>25</sup> Installment 26: one of the guards escorting exiles from Constantinople would all of a sudden turn friendlier and socialize with Odian and his companions in their special compartment. Constantinopolitan Aziz Bey is compared to his unsociable, rough Macedonian colleague. Installment 36: "*On this mountainous road, I met a deportee who had no belongings with him, was walking alone. He was a cleanly clad person and resembled a Cosmopolitan.*"
- <sup>26</sup> Installment 164: There was great enthusiasm among surviving deportees in Sultaniye. But no one uttered the wish to go to Caucasia. The independence of the remote republic took them by surprise because no one knew about the developments in that area.
- <sup>27</sup> Installment 148: At the train station in Haçkir, in the Taurus Mountains, Armenian workers at the train station wanted to do something for him: "*When they understood who I was and that I was to be sent under police surveillance to Konya, they offered to help me escape.*"
- <sup>28</sup> Installment 68: In Hama, he was clearly identified by locals as the nephew of Krikor Odian: "*[who] was a significant person; he was the one who together with Midhat Paşa drafted the Ottoman Constitution.*" This identification inspired in Odian some complacent optimism but to no avail, for he was locked (installment 69) in jail with criminals, thieves, and deserters who were filthy and stinking.
- <sup>29</sup> Installments 132 & 133: In Aleppo, he was immediately jailed because of spies after the Swedish-German officer's protection became insufficient. Installment 134: The police officer, Cemil Bey, found out the identity of this suspicious, educated Armenian.
- <sup>30</sup> For a stimulating presentation of that topic: see Ayşe Saraçgil, *Il maschio camaleonte. Strutture patriarcali nell'impero ottomano e nella Turchia moderna* (Bruno Mondadori, 2001). The book may convince readers that Ottoman men, whatever their ethno-religious ascription, did share a common social and anthropological grammar, as far as their perception of gender was concerned.
- <sup>31</sup> The lasting duration of gender relations is remarkable. Such fundamental anthropological arrangements do not change quickly, neither in the former Ottoman sphere nor elsewhere. Cf. Henri Corbin, "Préface", p. 10 in *Hommes et Masculinités de 1789 à nos jours. Contributions à l'histoire du genre et de la sexualité en France* (Paris: Autrement, 2007).
- <sup>32</sup> For insights into the reshaping process of the Armenian women's social sphere, see Rowe.
- <sup>33</sup> One of the most honest texts on the moral decay of the crushed Ottoman Armenian population is Aram Andonian's, *Ayn Sev Orerun* (During Those Black Days), Boston, Hayrenik, 1919, published as *En Ces Sombres Jours* (translated by H. Georgelin), Geneva, Métis Presses, 2007. Interestingly enough Oshagan finds it relevant to compare Andonian's short stories with Odian's deportation memories: "*In 1915... [he went until] Der Zor, where from his production with Aram Andonian's 'In Those Dark Days' constitute an achievement seldom performed in world literature.*" (H. Oshagan, *Hamabadger Arevmedahay Kraganutian [A Panorama of the Western Armenian Literature]*, 5<sup>th</sup> Volume, Antelias, Armenian Catholicossate of The Great House of Cilicia, 1980, p. 365).
- <sup>34</sup> Installment 100: "*I knew by experience that being family head always made a better impression than being a bachelor, and therefore I did not hesitate to lie.*"

- <sup>35</sup> Installment 40: "*We, a few bachelors, who had no tent, no family, nothing, we fled away each time we heard the whistle [of the deportation train].*" [in order not to be deported further than Tarsus].
- <sup>36</sup> Installment 160: On his way back to Constantinople, Odian had to remain in Sultaniye where some 5 to 6,000 Armenian deportees, mostly women and children, were staying too. His everyday life would bring him close to Avramidis, a Greek Orthodox from Constantinople who was a journalist too. Gender, social class and cultural standards brought people together and could bridge, to an extent, the ethno-religious barriers. Women did not play a major role in this passage of the narrative though they were numerically predominant in the vicinity.
- <sup>37</sup> Krikor Beledian, *Les Arméniens*, Maredsous, Brepols, 1994, p. 137.
- <sup>38</sup> The Bishop of Ikonion/Konya, Karekin Khachadourian, had been deported with his elderly mother and his sister, when Odian encountered him close to Tarsus, in Cilicia.
- <sup>39</sup> Installments 17 and 19.
- <sup>40</sup> Installment 12: "*Young men: Armenians, Greeks, Jews and Turks would stay locked in at their places.*"
- <sup>41</sup> Installment 16: "*These were generally provincial bachelors: older, young, adolescent, workers and shop owners who all of a sudden were arrested in their shops or on the street and put in prison with no interrogation, and then they were sent to be slain.*"
- <sup>42</sup> Installment 36.
- <sup>43</sup> Installment 138.
- <sup>44</sup> Installment 32: Odian described Faik Bey, Kaymakam of Ereğli, as "*a handsome faced young man, fervent member of the İttihat, and Armenian-hater*". Installment 77: Ayntabli Mustafa Bey, *Ser Komiser* at Der Zor, had "*external manners [that] did not reflect the monster inside; quite the contrary, one could consider him a handsome man.*" Installment 141: In Aleppo, at the jail, a 17-18-year-old inmate, a Greek citizen from Alexandria, Anton[is] Savva[s], appeared to Odian to be a "*chic teenager*". Installment 152: a man's pretty Persian face, etc.
- <sup>45</sup> Rowe, p. 32.
- <sup>46</sup> Zabel Yessayan, "*Le Rôle de la Femme Arménienne Pendant la Guerre,*" *Revue des Études Arméniennes* (Tome II, 1922), pp. 134-35, quoted by Rowe, p. 225.
- <sup>47</sup> Raymond Kévorkian, *Le Génocide des Arméniens*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 2006, is the only survey aiming to be exhaustive. The gender aspect is not central in the author's approach.
- <sup>48</sup> Installment 57: "*The arrival at Hama from Caesaria of an all-male caravan, still alive, was surprising. Of course, this must have been the result of a mistake or of a misunderstanding. They were about 25-30, small traders for the most part; some were craftsmen and dentists. The wives of some of them had stayed in Caesaria and had converted there to Islam as they too now did in Hama.*"
- <sup>49</sup> Installment 172.
- <sup>50</sup> Installment 26. Odian did not perceive the nature of what he was seeing though. The thousands of tents made a rather lively, almost picturesque impression on him. Compared to what he would experience later, the aspect of deportees was still acceptable.
- <sup>51</sup> Installment 150: Women could escape more easily; less attention was paid to them.
- <sup>52</sup> Installment 52.



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- <sup>53</sup> In the same installment 83, Odian says that he even had as fellow deportee an eighty-year-old woman.
- <sup>54</sup> Installment 83.
- <sup>55</sup> Installment 53: "*Arab, Turkish and Jewish women were coming from Aleppo and touring the tents: 'Satilik çocuk var mı?' ['Are there children to sell?'] and 'You are going to die anyway, save at least this child!'*"
- <sup>56</sup> Installment 65.
- <sup>57</sup> Installment 81: "*[These were] Armenian women, generally from Bursa or Kharpert, all of them young, choice, beautiful.*"
- <sup>58</sup> Installment 116: In Der Zor, Odian encountered an Armenian teenage girl: "*She was 13-14 years old at most, with silk-like blond hair, delicate features, a white soft skin. [...] [She was married] to a forty-year-old Arab, who in a moment of anger had given her such a stroke with his fist that she fell on the floor losing consciousness. One week later her eyes had stopped seeing.*" The Muslim man is described as close to a ped-erast.
- <sup>59</sup> Installment 160: In May 1918, while in Sultaniye, Odian encountered the local *posta müdürü*, Hüsnî effendi, who had kidnapped and adopted a 12-13 year-old girl who in one or two years had turned hostile to the Armenians.
- <sup>60</sup> Installment 61: Converting and having daughters to marry opened the way to mixed marriages, which horrified them".
- <sup>61</sup> Episode 62: "*After four or five days, the five thousand Armenian deportees who were in Hama were Islamized that way.*" Installment 62.
- <sup>62</sup> Installment 45: In Osmaniye, an older Muslim woman owning a house was afraid of hosting Armenian deportees and would first try to chase them away: "*Gâvurs, Kafirs, get out of my house!*" She calmed down when offered a silver *mecit* as rent for one night.
- <sup>63</sup> Installment 45: "*The women next door, already alarmed by the sound of her voice, had come around us and were addressing us with threatening words.*"
- <sup>64</sup> Installment 81: "*...if we refused [to take care of their garbage], [the women] would start insulting us.*"
- <sup>65</sup> Installment 90:
- <sup>66</sup> Installment 97: An Arab woman helped Odian and other deportees to communicate between El Boussera and Der Zor.
- <sup>67</sup> Installment 101: Gustav Edwal, a Swedish officer, serving in the German army, probably married to an Armenian woman.
- <sup>68</sup> Installment 49.
- <sup>69</sup> For more information and focus on similar situations, cf. Hilmar Kaiser, Luther and Nancy Eskijian, *At the Crossroads of Der Zor. Death, Survival, and Humanitarian Resistance in Aleppo, 1915-1917*, Princeton & London, Gomidas Institute Books, 2002.
- <sup>70</sup> Installment 154.
- <sup>71</sup> Installment 20.
- <sup>72</sup> Installment 115.
- <sup>73</sup> Installment 108: The brothels were considered as temptations for Armenian women by Odian and other males in charge.
- <sup>74</sup> Installment 117: The Armenian woman is relatively happy to be the wife of an Arab gypsy (whatever that meant for Odian). She acknowledges the affection he felt for her.

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<sup>75</sup> Installment 173.

<sup>76</sup> Installment 173.

<sup>77</sup> Matthew 7, 1: "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

<sup>78</sup> Installment 173.

<sup>79</sup> Anastassia Falierou, "Controverses Autour de l'émancipation de la Femme Grecque Orthodoxe Ottomane: Le Cas de la Revue *Vosporis*", *Histoire Tardive des Grecs Orthodoxes d'Anatolie*, *Aperçus*, Athens, École française d'Athènes, (to be published).

<sup>80</sup> Installment 174.

<sup>81</sup> The remaining Christian groups in the former imperial capital were closed to outsiders until the 1970s. Marrying a Christian of another denomination was not a choice and was not welcome. There are not many testimonies openly addressing the stiffness of these victimized groups, as if criticism were to be silenced. See the radical writer: Petros Markaris, *Κατ'εξακολούθηση* (Athens: Pataki, 2005), edition used: *Wiederholungstäter. Ein Leben zwischen Istanbul, Wien und Athen*, Zurich, Diogenes, 2008, and Evangelos Alexandridis, *Als Bürger unerwünscht*, Heidelberg, Manutius, 2003.

<sup>82</sup> Vahé Tachjian, "Une Reconstruction Nationale: [la] Réinsertion des Filles et des Femmes Arméniennes Après 1918", *Trames d'Arménie. Tapis et Broderies sur les Chemins de l'exil (1900-1940)*, Marseille, Images en Manceuvres, 2007, pp. 107-15.

<sup>83</sup> Oshagan, p. 430: "This was an unheard-of, terrible, unimaginable thing that was being committed. Odian was not able to conceive the extent of the catastrophe, and he continued still not to understand what the name of that thing palpitating in people's chest was." Oshagan's judgment (as harsh as usual) harmonizes, to a certain degree, with Odian's acknowledged own incredulity at the beginning of 1915: "At that time, though, we could not conceive the magnitude of the evil." (Installment 12) For Oshagan, Odian never got rid of his naivety. His position on getting back to Constantinople, where a semblance of normalcy had been preserved, prevented him from correctly assessing the situation.

**ՀԱՅ ԱՔՍՈՐԱԿԱՆԻ ՄԸ ՀԱՅԵԱՑՔԸ ԿԻՆԵՐՈՒՆ.  
ԵՐՈՒԱՆԴ ՕՏԵԱՆԻ ՅՈՒՇԵՐԸ  
(Ամփոփում)**

**ՀԵՐՎԷ ԺՈՐԺԸԼԷՆ**

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Հայ երգիծագիր Երուանդ Օտեան, իր գրչակիցներէն շատերուն նման ենթարկուեցաւ աքսորի՝ Հայոց Յեղասպանութեան տարիներուն: Աքսորէն վերադարձին, սրատես Օտեան թուղթին դրաւ իր ականատեսի վկայութիւնները, որոշ գեղարուեստականութեամբ, «Անիծեալ Տարիներ (1914-1919)» վերնագրով:

Յօդուածին հեղինակը կը ջանայ առանձնացնել Օտեանի հայեացքը՝ տեղահանութեան եւ աքսորի, կոտորածի ու ճգնաժամային այդ օրերուն հայ կնոջ կերպարին շուրջ: Գաղթական հայ կնոջ կենցաղը, մտածումները, վարուելակերպը, փորձութիւնները, վճռական դերակատարութիւնը՝ անապատի տարիներուն լուսարձակի տակ կ'առնուին այստեղ:

Յիրափ, վճռական էր հայ կնոջ դերը Եղեռնի տարիներուն եւ այնուհետեւ, մանաւանդ որ հայ այրը անլի ենթարկուած էր ոչնչացումի, եւ հայ կնոջ կը մնար ընտանիքի գոյատեւումն ու նոր սերունդի յառաջացումը:

Հեղինակը կը հարցադրէ Օտեանի (իբրեւ պոլսեցի բարձրախաւ ընտանիքի զաւակ) հայեացքին վերատեսումը հայ կնոջ՝ իտես նոր իրավիճակին: Հռակ, հեղինակը կը հարցադրէ եթէ Եղեռնի տարիներուն նոր ու առաւել վճռական դերեր ստանձնած հայ կինը պահպանեց իր դերն ու տեղը յետեղեռնեան եւ Սփիւղքի հայ ընտանիքին մէջ:





