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The arts of memory : the remembrance of the Armenians in Turkey

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The Arts of Memory

The Remembrance of the Armenians in Turkey

Alaettin Çarıkcı

Cover image: Thomas Azuelos, image from the animation film *Chienne d'histoire*

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The Remembrance of the Armenians in Turkey

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Introduction

One Hundred Years of Silence

The atrocity committed by the Ottoman Empire against the Armenians in 1915 is perhaps the most controversial episode in Turkish history. In fact, in modern Turkey, there is not even agreement as to what term should be used to refer to the destruction of the Armenians. In the Turkish historiography, *deportation* [tehcir] or *civil war* [iç savaş] are the predominant concepts adopted to refer to the events of 1915. Yet, Armenians claim that these terms trivialize and downgrade the crimes committed by the Ottoman Empire.[1] Thus, they demand that the mass extermination of the Ottoman Armenians be recognized as genocide.[2] In fact, since 1915, there is an ongoing struggle in Turkey about how to narrate the story about the country's past. As I was writing this in 2015, centennial commemorative events were being

1 The same pattern can also be observed in US politics and Washington consistently uses other terminologies such as Great Catastrophe to evoke the Armenian language phrase *Meds Yeghern*. In his election campaign speech in 2008 Barack Obama promised to call the 1915 events genocide. Since becoming president Obama has been referring to the atrocities committed by the Ottomans in 1915 as the Great Catastrophe. The USA has heeded the warnings of its ally Turkey and has yielded to the Turkish government's diplomatic threats to recall its ambassador. The use of the term genocide could jeopardize the existence of the US İncirlik air base on Turkish territory, which is also a key supply point for US military operations in the Middle East.

2 In *Between Genocide and Catastrophe* David Kazanjian and Marc Nichanian exchange e-mails on a regular basis and debate the term Catastrophe. Nichanian asserts that the word Aghed [Catastrophe] in Armenian, like Shoah in Hebrew, properly refers to the calamity of 1915. Nichanian emphasizes the singularity of the experience shared by the Armenians and insists on adopting the term Catastrophe while historicizing the event. He believes that only this term expresses the trauma of the Armenians in a collective way. For instance, the genocide recognition initiatives, led by the Armenians scattered around the world, are framed within the terminology of genocide. Nichanian asserts that this identification ignores the fact that the term genocide has gained importance after the Holocaust to refer to the Final Solution of the Nazis. Thus, the term has grown to be strongly associated with the extermination of the Jews. Nichanian states that if the Armenians persist in adopting the term genocide, the unique suffering of the Armenians is fractured; thus the need arises to authenticate and re-authenticate the victimization of the Armenians by emphasizing the word genocide. He points out that the perpetual re-victimization of the Armenians, through the term genocide, does not historically refer to the loss and trauma of the Armenians.

organized by NGOs in Istanbul, Diyarbakır and other Turkish cities for the victims of the genocide.[3] On the other hand, the state censorship, intimidation, obfuscation of historical realities and the re-writing of history are still predominant elements of the Turkish government. Hence, there is a conflict between the official version of history and several competing historical narratives.[4]

Let me give an example of this tension. In the first week of August 2014, Turkish newspapers informed their readers that the Turkish pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015 would feature a new work by Sarkis Zabunyan, a Turkish artist of Armenian descent.[5] The artist created an installation called *Respiro*, which means breath/I breathe in Italian. It is an installation of mirrors, stained-glass panes, neon-works, and is complemented by a composition of Jacopo Baboni Schilingi. The work of this Istanbul-born, Paris-based contemporary artist was on display in the Turkish pavilion at the Arsenale, one of the two main venues of the Biennale, from 9 May to 22 November 2015. The pavilion of Turkey at the Venice Biennale was organized by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV) and realized with the contribution of the Promotion Fund of the Turkish Prime Ministry, under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey. Defne Ayas, the director of the Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam, curated the pavilion.[6]

At first sight this selection might seem like a decision made purely on artistic grounds for representing Turkey. However, there are three things that raise questions about the selection of Sarkis for the Turkish pavilion. These relate to the year chosen for this assignment, the venue of the Biennale and the artist's ethnic identity. First, the 56th Venice Biennale started on the 9 May and will continue until the third

3 For the Armenian genocide centennial commemoration organized by Project 2015, a US-based NGO, DurDe initiative and leading Turkish human rights organizations in Istanbul see: <http://www.armenianproject2015.org> [accessed 25 April 2015]. For the commemoration of the Gomidas Institute see: <http://www.gomidas.org/projects-and-studies/show/15> [accessed 26 April 2015].

4 In this context the term "history" does not refer to the academic study of the past. I use it to refer to a collective consciousness or the "remembered past".

5 Born in 1938 in Istanbul, Sarkis studied painting at a prestigious Istanbul art school, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, before moving to Paris in the early 1960s. Sarkis has presented his works at first-rate galleries and museums including the Louvre, the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Guggenheim Museum.

6 Together with Neery Melkonian, Defne Ayas was the co-curator of the *Blind Dates Project,* developed upon the invitation of Dr. Ani Kalayjian in late 2005. Ayas and Melkonian submitted a proposal for an exhibition by Armenian and Turkish contemporary artists to "envision a better future" that would help foster dialogue towards overcoming historical barriers between the Armenians and the Turks. This project included exhibitions of artists such as Karen Andreassian, Elif Uras, Ahmet Öğüt, Nina Katchadourian, Karina Matsakian, etc.

week of November 2015. 24 April 2015 marked the centennial commemoration of the Armenian genocide. In the USA, Canada and Europe, many local and Armenian organizations organized seminars, conferences, demonstrations and public commemorations. In addition to commemorating the victims liquidated by the Ottoman Empire, these initiatives also addressed Turkey's refusal to acknowledge the Armenian genocide for a century. Thus, the Armenian genocide gained more public visibility in the Western and American mass media in 2015. Is the choice of Sarkis, an artist of Armenian descent, to represent Turkey at the Venice Biennale in 2015, the year that coincides with the centennial Armenian genocide commemoration, a pure coincidence? Or does the Foreign Office of the Turkish Republic aim to bolster the image of Turkey with this selection?

Since its creation in 1895, the Venice Biennale has been one of the most prestigious cultural events in the world. In contrast to other international art events such as Documenta in Kassel, the Venice Biennale is organized along *national* lines. Many countries have secured permanent national pavilions in the Giardini gardens and some of them are represented in other venues across the city. Taking part in the Biennale soon became a question of national prestige for the participating countries.[7] The increasing popularity of the Biennale, the extensive media coverage and the involvement of prominent curators and artists in the execution of national pavilions have transformed the Biennale into a multinational setting where countries promote their artistic productions, thereby projecting an image of the nation itself. Therefore, choosing a new work by Sarkis, given his background, has allowed Turkey to portray itself as a country that values its cultural diversity. This seems to contrast with the cultural policy of the current pro-Islamist Turkish government that favours the homogeneity of the Turkish society. Moreover, the current government discourages projects that promote cultural diversity, criticize prevailing norms in Turkish society or question Turkish taboos.[8] For instance, İz Öztat, a Turkish

7 Prominent architects, designers and curators have designed certain national pavilions. For instance, in 1934 Josef Hoffmann built the Austrian pavilion, in 1954 Gerrit Thomas Rietveld designed the Dutch pavilion and Alvar Aalto designed the Finnish pavilion in 1956.

8 As part of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government's family values push, officials at Turkish state theaters are obliged to submit plot synopses for government approval. Late 2014, the Presidential Symphony Orchestra of Turkey dropped compositions by the classical pianist Fazıl Say after he had been charged with insulting Islam with his Twitter message that mocked an imam. Again in 2014 several jury members of the Antalya International Film Festival quit in protest after festival officials cancelled a film about the Gezi Park uprisings in Istanbul. CNN Turk, a private broadcaster, recently pixilated the private parts in Rubens's seventeenth-century painting *The Three Graces* in a programme about beauty to avoid fines for indecency. Moreover, public school teachers were investigated for using books by John Steinbeck, Amin Maalouf and José Mauro de Vasconcelos as educational materi-

contemporary artist, was asked to remove a mention of the Armenian genocide in a booklet she wrote for an exhibition in Madrid in 2013. Since she had received funding from the Turkish government she had to comply. She said, "These are the invisible boundaries. You do not know they are there until you cross them".[9] Another example of this policy occurred during the cultural season of Turkey in France [La Saison de la Turquie en France] when the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized cultural activities around France to promote Turkish culture and history. In March 2010, as a part of the cultural programme, an exhibition was held at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts de Paris, entitled *États d'âmes: une génération hors d'elle*. Along with prominent contemporary Turkish artists such as Nevin Aladağ, Şener Özmen and Nilbar Güreş, Tayfun Serttaş also contributed to the exhibition. His catalogue, printed in four languages (French, Turkish, Armenian and English), was censored. The Turkish government made him remove any mention of the word "genocide". Serttaş integrated this state intervention and censorship into his work. The artist printed the censored text as his exhibition catalogue, which clearly shows how the word genocide had been blacked out in four languages.[10]

In the light of this censorship, one might ask the question: What does the choice of an Armenian artist, in this significant year, imply? Will the participation of Sarkis in the Venice Biennale be used to showcase a multinational image of Turkey? The Republic of Armenia has dedicated its pavilion to the artists of the Armenian diaspora in the Venice Biennale in 2015. One of the artists selected to represent these Armenian artists from the diaspora is Sarkis. The curatorial concept of the Armenia pavilion is entitled *Armenity/Hayoutioun*. It derives from the French word *arménité*, a notion, which expresses the particular characteristics of the grandchildren of the genocide survivors. The website of the Armenian pavilion informs the visitors about what *arménité* suggests.[11]

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als, after parents complained that they were not appropriate for Turkish children. Again in 2014, the newspaper Agos revealed that the Turkish Higher Education Association (YÖK) demanded that all Turkish universities share the contact details of the researchers working on the Armenian genocide in order to trace them.

9 Donadio, Rachel. "In Turkey, the arts flourish, but warily". *New York Times* 18 November 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/19/arts/in-turkey-the-arts-flourish-but-warily-.html?_r=0> [accessed 10 December 2014].

10 To check out the censored catalogue of the artist, Tayfun Serttaş see: <http://tayfunserttas.blogspot.com.tr/2010/04/abstract-allegory-book.html> [accessed 11 February 2012].

11 For the national pavilion of the Republic of Armenia at the 56th Biennale di Venezia 2015 see: <http://www.armenity.net> [accessed 05 August 2015].

> The curatorial concept of armenity implies the notion of displacement and territory, justice and reconciliation, ethos and resilience. Regardless of their place of birth, the selected artists carry within their identity the memory of their origins. Through their talent and willpower, these grandchildren of survivors of the Armenian Genocide – the first genocide of the 20th century – rebuilt a "transnational assembly" from the remnants of a shattered identity. Their ingrained concern for memory, justice and reconciliation skilfully transcends notions of territory, borders and geography. Whether they were born in Beirut, Lyon, Los Angeles, or Cairo and wherever they may reside, these global citizens constantly question and reinvent their armenity.

It is clear that the Armenian pavilion highlights the transnational memory of the genocide through the selection of international artists. Besides, the location of the pavilion itself is also a political stance about the deep roots of Armenian history and culture. The island of San Lazarro degli Armeni, where the Armenian monk Mekhitar established the Mekhitarist order in 1717, hosts the pavilion. Lord Byron studied the Armenian language here in the nineteenth century. The monks who settled on this island disseminated the Western Armenian literary, linguistic and historical tradition throughout the world.

Choosing Sarkis to represent Turkey at the Venice Biennale in the year of the centennial commemoration raises all sorts of complicated questions about cultural policy. Is this an implicit acknowledgment of the history of genocide? Should this be seen as a denial of the situation of cultural censorship? Is Turkey seeking to project itself to the outside world as a multicultural and tolerant nation in order to efface or hide its repressive policies towards minorities? Should we understand the Turkish pavilion as a pre-emptive response to the Armenian pavilion whose curatorial concept has been devoted to the genocide?

This example shows that culture cannot be isolated from the politics of memory and commemoration. The very selection of an artist to represent Turkey in Venice needs to be understood against the background of the disputes over the meaning of Turkish history. In fact, the cultural field itself, with the two "competing" pavilions of Armenia and Turkey, is the very ground on which the battle between competing versions of history is fought. This unspoken "competition" becomes clearer when we consider the pavilion in light of other events taking place inside Turkey, which often have the character of an implicit competition. For instance, early 2015 Serzh Sargsyan, the president of the Republic of Armenia, invited world leaders to attend on 24th of April 2015 the centennial commemoration of the Armenian genocide in Yerevan. Just after this invitation became public, the president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, sent out invitations to the leaders of 102 countries, including Sargsyan, to attend the ceremonies in Turkey to mark the centenary of another event,

the Battle of Gallipoli, on 24 April 2015, the *exact* same date as the commemoration of the Armenian genocide events. The Battle of Gallipoli refers to the fighting that took place on the Gallipoli peninsula of the Ottoman Empire and which started on 25 April 1916. This battle was one of the greatest victories of the Ottoman Empire but a major defeat for the allied forces.

There are three puzzling elements about the diplomatic manoeuvre of the Turkish government. Each indicates that the Gallipoli event should be understood as a calculated "counter-event" against the commemoration event in Yerevan.[12] First of all, the choice of date is rather curious. The international Remembrance Day, also known as *Anzac Day*, which refers to the landing of Australian and the New Zealand troops in Gallipoli, takes place on 25 April.[13] However, Erdoğan's government *chose* not to organize a commemoration on this date. Instead Erdoğan fixed the date of the commemoration day for the world leaders to meet in Turkey on 24 April, the very day of the international Armenian genocide centennial commemorations in Yerevan. Country leaders who did not want to antagonize the president of Turkey as the leader of a country with a booming economy chose Turkey over Armenia. As a result the Turkish government succeeded in diverting world attention from Armenia and to obfuscate global media coverage. This helped the Turkish government efface the commemoration event, by replacing it with another historical narrative, by celebrating the heroic victories of the nation. Finally, inviting Sargsyan to attend a commemoration of the military success of the Ottoman Empire, which coincided with the centennial commemoration of the Armenian genocide would be seen as a Turkish diplomatic success by the current AKP government. However, this invitation not only disregarded the memory of the Armenian victims but also ridiculed the importance of the centennial commemoration in Yerevan.

These two examples illustrate the fact that there is a tension between the official version of history promoted by Turkey and the various competing memories such as the memory of the Armenians within and outside Turkey. It furthermore shows

12 Another "counter-event" of the Turkish Republic was applying to the Europalia Festival in Brussels to be the guest country in 2015. Europalia is an international arts festival held every two years to promote one country's cultural heritage. In 2015 Turkey will be the guest country in the European capital. In his article titled "Mauvaise année pour la Turquie" François Janne d'Othée analyzes how the Turkish government intensifies the lobbying activities in 2015 to divert the world attention from Armenian genocide. See Janne d'Othée, François. "Mauvaise année pour la Turquie". *Le Vif/L'Express* 05 October 2015 <http://www.levif.be/actualite/international/mauvaise-annee-pour-la-turquie/article-normal-426163.html> [accessed 21 October 2015].

13 The word *Anzac* is the acronym of "Australian and New Zealand Army Corps", which was founded in 1915 and disbanded in 1916. Anzac Day is a national holiday in the Cook Islands, Niue, Pitcain Islands and Toga, as well as in Australia and New Zealand.

that culture, whether in the narrow sense of "high art" (as in the Venice Biennale example) or culture in the larger sense (as in the example of the commemoration) is the battleground where this struggle over memory is fought.

In recent decades the relation between culture, memory, commemoration and history has been at the centre of a series of academic debates in a burgeoning field that goes by the name of "memory studies". The discipline of memory studies reflects on the following questions: How does an individual develop memory? What social frameworks affect the memorialization process of the members of a society? What is the role of the governments when we discuss the concept of collective memory? Key theoreticians such as Maurice Halbwachs, Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann have contributed to this discussion.

In the 1920s Maurice Halbwachs developed his concept *mémoire collective*, which was elaborated in three works: *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925), *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en terre sainte - Étude de mémoire collective* (1941) and *La mémoire collective* (published posthumously in 1950). Halbwachs argues that there is always a social dimension to memory. He states, "No memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society" (1992, 43). Halbwachs believes that an individual memory cannot form or sustain itself without social frames of reference. An individual is the one who has the memory however it was created collectively. Thus, while the group does not have a memory, social frames determine the memory of its group members. In the light of this discussion, it can be said that an individual's participation in communicative processes is a tool through which s/he forms a memory. Participation and involvement in social groups such as family, religion and nation result in specific memories for individuals. Halbwachs asserts that "the greatest number of memories come back to us when our parents, our friends or other persons recall them to us" (1992, 38). Therefore, according to Halbwachs, one of the ways of developing memory happens during social processes. In his above-mentioned works Halbwachs questions the social conditioning of memory. He believes that individuals recall, recognize or localize their memories within a society and this socialization generates memories for them.

Halbwachs suggests that memories also originate from different groups and societies that individuals belong to. Thus, when we attempt to localize older memories, we transfigure the past to the present or the present to the past through the societies that we are members of. Since societies oblige its members to reproduce, retrieve or reconstruct memories, the mind of an individual executes these tasks under the pressure of society. In addition to the role of social processes in memory formation, Halbwachs also takes the authoritarian role of the nation states into consideration. He portrays governments in modern societies as responsible agents of memory making. Hence the pressure and authority exercised by governments impose many

constraints on their citizens and subject the individuals to certain way of thinking. Therefore, for Halbwachs, "what we remember depends on the contexts in which we find ourselves and the groups to which we happen to relate" (Hutton 1993, 79).

Applying Halbwachs' idea to the Turkish situation, it is evident that the Turkish government seeks to impose a certain official history on its citizens. As long as the Turkish citizens perform their duties by adhering to this officially sanctioned memory they do not stand out in the society. However, social processes are never that smooth and a society's collective memory is never monolithic. At times individuals present memories that breach the frameworks of a socially accepted memory and tell stories that compete and collide with the official one. The public presentation of such counter-memories can sometimes lead to real "battles" over memory. An instance of this took place after the release of *The Cut*, a film by the Turkish-German filmmaker Fatih Akın, which is set in 1915 and depicts scenes from the Armenian genocide. The film features the French-Algerian actor Tahar Rahim, in the role of an Armenian blacksmith from Mardin who travels around the world to find his two daughters, whom he has lost contact with after the genocide. With a budget of 15 million euros, *The Cut* is Akın's most ambitious film and was premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2014. Even though the topic of the genocide is, of course, politically sensitive, Akın claims that his work did not seek to have an impact on politics per se. In August 2014, Evrim Kaya, a journalist of the weekly *Agos*, interviewed Akın. He stated, "Turkey, of which I am part of, is ready for this film".[14] He further added, "I have no political motives in making the film and I hope that it will 'receive due respect in Turkey and be shown in large, modern theatres". However, after the interview was published, the ultra-nationalist Pan-Turkist Turanist Association [Türkçü Turancılar Derneği] tweeted that Akın was being too optimistic. Posting tweets from the official account of the association, members of the far-right group announced that they would not allow Fatih Akın to bring the story of the Armenian genocide to big screens in Turkey. Their message read:

> Turkish-German filmmaker Fatih Akın, affiliated with the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), is working with the *Agos* weekly in order to release his latest film *The Cut*. We, the members of the Turkish Turan Association, are not going to let them to bring this so-called genocide story to the big screen. This film is the first attempt of a plot to make Turkey acknowledge the Armenian genocide lies. We explicitly threaten the *Agos* weekly, Armenian fascists and so-

14 Kaya, Evrim. "Turkey, of which I am part of, is ready for this film". *Agos* 2 August 2014, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/7724/turkey-of-which-i-am-a-part-of-is-ready-for-this-film> [accessed 11 September 2014].

> called intellectuals. This film will not be released in Turkey. We are following the developments with our white berets on and our Azeri-flagged glider. Let's see if you can![15]

The mention of "white berets" in the last sentence carries a sinister message as it brings to mind the violent ending of another "memory war" that took place in Turkey. On 19 January 2007, the former editor-in-chief of the Agos newspaper, Hrant Dink, was shot in broad daylight outside his newspaper's office in Istanbul. Ogün Samast, Dink's suspected assassin, was wearing a white beret when he shot Dink in the neck. The white beret has since become a symbol displayed frequently at anti-Armenian racist and nationalist demonstrations, with connotations not only of violence, nationalism and repression, but also the power to suppress alternative histories and to enforce a certain version of the memory of the past.[16] This death threat seeks to convey the message to Akın that if talks openly about the genocide he will be silenced by the ultranationalist groups the way Dink was assassinated. It furthermore suggests that the screening of the film itself is to be understood as the continuation of a series of battles over memory.

To sum up, these three examples – a film screening, a public commemoration, an international art exhibition – may at first sight seem unrelated. Yet they show how cultural texts are not simply representations of Turkish history, but that they should be understood as active forces that participate in a political battle over memory. They highlight the tension between two aspects of cultural memory outlined by Halbwachs. The first one is generated through the social frameworks and governments that put pressure on members of society by imposing a certain official history create the latter. The current situation in Turkey can be explained in the light of the political pressure exercised by the Turkish government on its citizens. However, within Turkey there have always been some individuals who have opposed this state imposition of what citizens should remember or forget. The death threats that Fatih Akın received after releasing his latest film perfectly illustrate the fate of Turkish individuals should they fail to obey the state-imposed amnesia about the Armenian genocide.

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15 Translations from Turkish are my own.

16 During the seventh anniversary commemoration of the assassination of Hrant Dink in January 2014, Turkish police officers wore white berets in spite of the fact that it was 18 degrees Celsius. It was quite remarkable to see that the police officers of Turkey who are supposed to protect every Turkish citizen regardless of ethnicity, sex or religious belief were openly wearing these white berets. No disciplinary action was taken against these officers and the leftist *Radikal* newspaper was the only media that brought up the issue.

The aim of this study is to understand the specific role of culture in this dynamic process. In this introductory chapter I will give an outline of the specific cultural cases that I will study. Furthermore, I will give an overview of the theoretical debate about memory to which this study aims to contribute. Next, I will introduce my main theoretical concepts. However I will start by briefly looking at the question as to *why* the Turkish government seeks to silence Armenian memory. What does the state aim to achieve by censoring other historiographies about Turkey's past? Why is this silence so important for the Turkish nation?

Before one attempts to answer these questions, I suggest we first look at *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Arts of Memory* by Aleida Assmann in which she addresses why it matters for individuals and nations to define themselves through that which they collectively remember or forget. Assmann's starting point is the situation of a recently reunited Germany in the 1990s, which found itself completely surrounded by a problem of identity and memory after the fall of the Berlin Wall (2013, 54). The question that haunted the nation was: which kind of memories should be discarded or retained? This dilemma led to conflicts and discussions between those who wanted to forget and those who wanted to remember. Assmann asserts that this situation is far from new. In fact she suggests that we can see a structurally similar situation in the period in which Shakespeare wrote his historical plays *Richard III* (1592-1593) and *Henry V (*1599). In order to analyze the links between memory and nationhood, memory and identity, history and memory, Assmann examines the plays of Shakespeare to determine under which circumstances a nation needs a history.

Assmann claims that Shakespeare's historical plays could be understood as dramatizations of memory wars in which the real actors represent memories, which are the defining element of personal and collective identities (2013, 55). For instance, in the final scene of *Richard III*, the reader listens to the unhappy Edward IV. This scene showcases the clash between forgetting and remembering. Edward becomes aware of the fact that he has forgotten to do most things, for example showing his gratitude to his brother Clarence who saved his life at the Battle of Tewksbury. Assmann believes that Shakespeare's play shows that political conflicts are often conflicts over memory and that "anger and fear make people forget as is evident from the example of Edward" (2013, 57). This also illustrates the fact that hatred and revenge sharpen memory; however "settling disputes and establishing peace" can be achieved by "taming, containing and eventually transforming collective memories" (2013, 61).

Assmann also analyzes *Henry V* to gauge the connection between memory and history. She asserts that the beginning of the play clearly shows how history is made out of memories. For instance, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely were quite concerned about the fact that the crown might confiscate the treasures of

the church. In order to avoid this, they called on the ambitious king to remember Salic Law.[17] Moreover, they hired legal advisers, archivists and philologists to act as the authoritative guardians of the historical heritage that belonged to the church. Considering the fact that their interpretations of the legal documents would bolster the claims of the church to retain the treasures, they had to work meticulously. Since a reconstruction of identity always goes hand in hand with the reconstruction of history, in the case of the church rewriting history this happened through books and by rearranging official documents and framing the history in the service of the church. That is why Assmann believes that "the truthfulness of historical research is still entirely dependent on the interpreter" (2013, 65).

Hence, Assmann's analysis of the Shakespeare plays shows how memory was utilized as a sort of defining element for the relationship between personal identity and history. It also proves the fact that historical memories are always prone to political exploitations by the rulers for the sake of creating a nationhood or national identity. Assmann shows that the plays are not only *about* the question of memory, they also participate, as actors, in the memory wars that took place in the period in which they were performed. Assmann claims that the historical plays were written for a new addressee, which were the English people (2013, 69). They need to be understood against the background of a fundamental change in the use that was made of history, and the way in which memory and identity were connected. Assmann argues that in the period before Shakespeare, "works of history were commissioned by kings and written for the benefit of the kings" (2013, 68). However, from the seventeenth century onwards, the nation itself became the new subject of history. This meant that history no longer aimed to instruct or justify the king to his subjects. People became the bearers of their own history and this new phenomenon facilitated to fashion a collective identity for the citizens. The study of Assmann uncovers the fact that after this shift the interconnection between historical memories and nation-building became crucial. Thus, we can say that the process of nation-building started to be evaluated as a wider phenomenon that included different agents such as poets, dramatists, antiquarians, philologists and artists. Shakespeare's plays also exemplify how the reconstruction of identity also entails the reconstruction of memory.

The examples that I cited before suggest that in contemporary Turkey, culture plays a role that is in many ways similar to that in Shakespeare's time. For instance, in modern Turkey certain memories such as the Armenian genocide are discarded

17 Salic Law was an ancient Germanic law code and was the major body of the Frankish law in the early Middle Ages. It provided written codification of both civil law, such as the statues governing inheritance and criminal law.

whereas others – such as the victory of the Ottoman army during the Battle of Gallipoli – are retained. The presentation of history is carried out in line with creating a noble and proud Turkish identity. Inappropriate memories, which would challenge the notion of officially imposed Turkish identity, are omitted from the historiography. This process is carried out by writing books, destructing Armenian churches and monasteries, pulping archives that challenge the claims of Turkey and renaming squares and schools in the honour of the Ottoman pashas such as Talaat Pasha boulevard in İzmir, Cemal Pasha street in Adana and Enver Pasha street in Kahramanmaraş. History is reconstructed with a view to bolstering national identity and validating these projected identities. Yet, the memory conundrum in Turkey is more complex than the one in Shakespeare's time. On the one hand, the Turkish government projects itself as a country that values its ethnic diversity; on the other hand, however, any pluralistic view is censored. That is why the memory question is utilized for the sake of creating a national identity within Turkey.

Whereas Assmann argues that the link between memory and nationhood has been crucially important from the early modern period onwards, other theoreticians have suggested that its importance in recent years has only grown. In his article "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia", Andreas Huyssen focuses on the emergence of memory as a key concern in Western societies. Huyssen states that memory discourses emerged in the West after the 1960s as a result of decolonization, new social movements and the search for revisionist histories (2000, 22). However, he believes that the memory discourses gained momentum in Europe and the United States in the 1980s with the debates about the Holocaust (2000, 22). Assmann focuses on the importance of why and how certain memories are utilized in the service of creating a history. Conversely, Huyssen concentrates on the key role of traumatic memories in the construction of collective memory. He argues that currently debates about memory are often debates about the memory of traumatic events, frequently the memory of genocide. Huyssen suggests that this can be understood as the effect of what could be called the "globalization" of the Holocaust discourse that took place in the 1990s. During that period, which saw genocidal politics in Rwanda, Bosnia and Kosovo, the Holocaust began to function as a metaphor for traumatic histories and memories (2000, 23). Huyssen asserts that this phenomenon has centred Holocaust as a prism through which other examples of genocides have started to be analyzed (2000, 24).

Another historical event that contributed to the growing importance of memory, according to Huyssen, was the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Since then, issues of memory and forgetting have gained momentum in post-communist countries in Eastern Europe. Something similar happened after certain historical events in different parts of the world such as the post-apartheid period in South Africa,

the genocide in Rwanda, and following situations in which repressed or "forgotten" historical episodes were revived, as happened with the "stolen generation" in Australia, the conflict about "comfort women" between Korea and Japan and the issue of *desaparecidos* [the disappeared] in Argentina (2000, 25-6).

Assmann therefore suggests that the link between memory and nationhood has very deep roots and that this relationship can be traced back to the emergence of the idea of the nation. Huyssen, on the other hand, claims that there are reasons to assume that the specific function of memory has undergone changes in the post-WWII period after which questions of trauma and genocide became crucial. What is interesting about the Armenian case is that, on the one hand, its history is inscribed in a story of the emergence of Turkey as a modern nation. In this way it seems to follow the logic outlined by Assmann. Yet, on the other hand, it is a story of genocide. It is perhaps not a coincidence that memory discourses relating to the Armenians first emerged in North America where important numbers of diasporic Armenians live in cities such as Los Angeles, Toronto and Montreal. The memory discourses among the Armenians started emerging at the same time as the discussion about the commemoration of the 40th year since the Holocaust was being discussed in the United States and Israel. In 1983 the Toronto-based Zoryan Institute undertook a major oral history programme that aimed to document the memoirs of Armenian survivors. Interviews were conducted in the United States, Canada and Armenia. Currently the institute houses about 780 interviews in their archival collection. The Armenian Library and Museum of America in Boston also has oral history tapes based on interview records of 287 survivors. In addition to this specific collection, the museum has 1,091 oral history tapes recorded by the Armenian Assembly of America. The University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation has started integrating the archives of the Armenian survivors into its collection as well. Thus, the interest in the Armenian genocide arose as part of the wave of the "globalization" of the Holocaust discourse described by Huyssen.

In addition, 1999 saw the publication of *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* by Donald E. Miller and Lourna Touryan Miller, an oral history project conducted with more than one hundred Armenian genocide survivors. In 1979, Laurel Vlock and Dori Laub had undertaken a similar project documenting the personal memories of Holocaust victims in the USA. This initiative resulted in the initial collection of two hundred videotaped testimonies. In 1981 these tapes were deposited at Yale University. In 1987 Alan M. Fortunoff made a major gift to the endowment of the archive fund. Currently the archive is called *Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies* at Yale University.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century there has been an ongoing surge in the quantity of literature on the subject of memory studies in Turkey. The 1960,

1971 and 1980 military coups in the country left deep scars on Turkish society. And the events that followed these coups d'état fuelled society's interest in what happened in the past and how it was communicated to the citizens. The interest of Turkish society and scholars in the discipline of memory studies was further intensified by the silenced parts of Turkish historiography such as the Armenian genocide (1915), the compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkey (1923), the Dersim massacre (1937-1938), the *Varlık Vergisi* [Wealth Tax] levied on non-Muslim Turkish citizens (1942), the 6-7 September pogroms (1955), the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish army since 1984 and the murder of Hrant Dink (2007). This development also created a clash between the private and the public narratives.

Scholars concentrated on different parts of memory studies in Turkey: gender and memory (Ayşe Gül Altınay), ethnic minorities (Rıfat Bali), trauma and oral history (Leyla Neyzi), ways of remembrance (Arzu Öztürkmen), literature (Erol Köroğlu), autobiography (Hülya Adak), film studies (Asuman Suner), city and landscape (Amy Mills), monuments (Aylin Tekiner), cultural heritage (Lucienne Thys-Şenocak), history and memory (Biray Kolluoğlu), nationalism and memory (Umut Özkırımlı and Spyros A. Sofos), Atatürk and Turkish memory (Yael Navaro Yashin). These Turkish memory scholars discussed various subjects from national identity to monumentalization, from oral history to ethnic minorities. Moreover, in 2006 *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey,* edited by Esra Özyürek, came out.

Inside Turkey, interest for versions of history other than the "official" one came mostly from scholars working on oral history. Oral history workshops and research conducted by Leyla Neyzi and Arzu Öztürkmen since the late 1990s have contributed significantly to the development of memory studies in Turkey. Although these academics worked inside Turkey, the universities they taught at, such as the Bosphorus University or Sabancı University, gave them academic freedom. Oral history workshops have also been supported by the private sector and frequently by organisations such as the Open Society, the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Anadolu Kültür in Istanbul. For example, as part of a cultural initiative of the Garanti Bank, Osmanlı Bankası Müzesi [now SALT Galata], oral history workshops led by Leyla Neyzi were held. In addition, the Bozcaada Centre for the Research of Local History, founded by Hakan Gürüney in 2005, has been promoting the silenced Greek history of the region. In 2013 the museum received a UNESCO award for "introducing Greek culture in the best way possible outside Greece and helping to spread the culture of peace among Turks and Greeks".

Collective Memory and the Remembrance of Armenians in Turkey

Thus the discipline of memory studies in Turkey takes place in a highly politicized context. This is no coincidence considering the fact that re-writing history has played a key role in the very formation of the Turkish nation. Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, one of the goals of the founding leader Atatürk has been to disassociate the new republic from the former Ottoman Empire legacies. This meant introducing the Latin alphabet, extending rights to women and establishing a new capital, Ankara. This transformation not only created a new democratic and secular state but also facilitated the collective amnesia of the Ottoman Empire's multi-cultural past. It emphasized the homogenous character of the new republic. As a result of the introduction of the Latin alphabet following generations were no longer able to understand Ottoman Turkish. A notable exception to the silence about the Ottoman Empire's multi-cultural past was Taner Akçam. He was the first Turkish academic to acknowledge the Armenian genocide and openly discuss it. He published his *Türk Ulusal Kimliği ve Ermeni Sorunu* [Turkish National Identity and the Armenian Question] in 1992 and in 1996 *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu: İttihat ve Terakki'den Kurtuluş Savaşı'na* [Human Rights and the Armenian Question: From Ittihat and Terakki to the War of Independence].

This attack on memory coincided with the spread of what could be called a "foundation mythology", which sought to depict the Turkish nation as a homogenous entity. As a consequence non-ethnic Turks were marginalized in this history. Certain non-Muslim groups, for instance the Armenians, were depicted as Russian collaborators and as non-patriotic citizens of the Ottoman Empire. They are portrayed as communities that stabbed the Turks in the back and aimed to disintegrate the country for irredentist purposes. Therefore, the foundation of the country is based on the exclusion of certain populations as members of the nation. This is in sharp contrast with an earlier period. In the Ottoman Empire, Armenians were referred to as the trustworthy subjects [*Millet-i Sadıka*] in the millet system of the empire. Millet is a term for confessional groups in the Ottoman Empire (Greeks, Armenians and Jews) and refers to the separate legal courts pertaining to the religious affiliations of those communities. These legal courts allowed these subjects of the Ottoman Empire to rule themselves under their own system. However, after the establishment of modern Turkey in 1923, the official state narrative started to portray the Armenians as enemies and traitors. First of all, Armenians were labelled as individuals who falsify the "realities" of 1915. Therefore, they have been depicted as people with anti-Turkey sentiments both in the mass media and the state curriculum

at public schools.[18] Besides, they have at all times been associated with the ASALA [the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia]. The terrorist attacks of this army on Turkish diplomats in Europe from 1975 to 1986 have encouraged the ostracizing of Armenians living in Turkey. The territorial claims of the Republic of Armenia about "the Historic Western Armenia" within the borders of Turkey and the invasion of Nagorno-Karabakh by the Armenian troops in Azerbaijan have resulted in the emergence of anti-Armenian feelings within Turkish society.

While official histories continue to tell this heroic story of the Turkish nation, the repressed history of minority groups is addressed in the domain of literature, with the emergence of autobiographies and books that deal with the memory of the genocide in Turkey. The first years of the twenty-first century saw a wave of novels written by Turks who had discovered that their grandfathers and grandmothers were Islamized Armenians.[19] Prominent authors such as Orhan Pamuk (2002), Elif Şafak (2006) and Ece Temelkuran (2008) have also written about the same subject.[20] Despite the fact that these publications have to some extent resulted in shifting the ossified Turkish historiography, it is difficult to say whether they have reached a mass readership or not. However, they have succeeded in unravelling historical silencing and have resulted in many academic research projects conducted within Turkey such as the conference titled *Islamized Armenians* in 2013. Modern Turkey started to come to terms with its haunting past in the early twenty-first century as a result of the efforts made by authors, journalists, academics and intellectuals.

Historical Background of This Project

A "memory war" has been taking place in Turkey over the Armenian genocide since the beginning of the twenty-first century. To give an impression of this occasionally violent memory conundrum, I will cite a few episodes in Turkish history starting

18 For the latest report published by the International Hrant Dink Association regarding the hate speech towards the non-Muslim minorities in Turkey check the report see: <http://nefretsoylemi.org/rapor/HDV_ocak-nisan2014_rapor.pdf> [accessed 01 June 2014].

19 The works mentioned here are: Fethiye Çetin, *Anneannem* [My Grandmother] (2004), Baskın Oran, *M. K Adlı Çocuğun Tehcir Anıları* [Deportation Stories of a Child Named M.K] (2005), İrfan Palalı, *Tehcir Çocukları "Nenem bir Ermeniymiş"* [Deportation Children "My Grandmother was an Armenian"] (2005), Yusuf Bağı, *Ermeni Kızı Ağçik* [Armenian Girl Aghcik] (2007), Filiz Özdem, *Korku Benim Sahibim* [Fear is My Master] (2007), Gülçicek Günel Tekin, *Kara Kefen Müslümanlaştırılan Ermeni Kadınların Dramı* [Black Shroud - The Tragedy of the Islamized Armenian Women] (2008).

20 Orhan Pamuk, *Kar* [The Snow] (2002), Elif Şafak, *Baba ve Piç* [The Bastard of Istanbul] (2006), Ece Temelkuran, *Ağrı'nın Derinliği* [Deep Mountain Across the Turkish Armenian Divide] (2008).

from the creation of the newspaper *Agos*. In 1996 the Armenian weekly newspaper *Agos* was established in Istanbul. It increased the visibility of the Armenian community in Turkey thanks to the efforts of the editor-in-chief, Hrant Dink. The Turkish government officially launched investigations against Dink and the historian Akçam for using the term "genocide" when referring to 1915 and denigrating Turkish identity in accordance with Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code.[21]

In 2000, Ronald Grigor Suny and Fatma Müge Göçek founded the Workshop on Armenian and Turkish Scholarship (WATS). Alongside active scholars preparing research papers WATS also involved hundreds of people and academics interested in Armenian-Turkish history through its e-mail group. Seminars of WATS were organized at the University of Michigan (2002), University of Minnesota (2003), Salzburg (2004), NYU (2005), The University of Geneva (2008), The University of Berkeley (2010), NIOD and the IISH in Amsterdam (2011) and Sabancı University in Istanbul (2015). *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* emerged from the research findings and discussions of two groups of scholars: WATS and the Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar on Mass Killing.

In 2005, a conference entitled *Ottoman Armenians During the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy* was held at Istanbul Bilgi University. With over 267 participants, it was the first time since 1915 that the Armenian genocide was ever discussed so openly in Turkey. The police guarded the university building and strict security measures were taken in view of threats by nationalist protesters. Hundreds of nationalists gathered in front of the university building, throwing eggs and tomatoes at the participants and calling them "traitors". The Turkish Judicial Officials filed a complaint against seventeen organizing committee members.

As *Agos*' editor-in-chief, Hrant Dink was one of the most prominent Armenian voices in Turkey. He was prosecuted several times for the crime of "insulting Turkish identity" and was sentenced to six months in jail in 2005. He had received numerous death threats and had appealed to the Turkish authorities to be taken seriously. On

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21 Article 301 of Turkish Penal Code, that took effect on 1 June 2005, provides as follows:
A person who publicly denigrates Turkishness, the Republic or the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, shall be punished by imprisonment for six months and up to three years.
A person who publicly denigrates the Government of the Republic of Turkey, the judicial institutions of the State, the military or any security organizations shall be punished by imprisonment for six months and up to two years.
If a Turkish citizen commits the offence of denigration of Turkishness whilst in another country the punishment shall be increased by one third.
Expressions of thought intended to criticize shall not constitute an offence.
On 30 April 2008, the article was amended and "Turkishness" became "the Turkish nation".

19 January 2007, he stepped out of his office and was shot in the head three times by a boy wearing a white beret. When the 17-year-old assassin Ogün Samast was caught twenty hours later in the northern city of Samsun, he was still carrying the gun, and still wearing the white beret that had also been recorded by the surveillance cameras. Samast confessed his crime quite proudly by saying, "I shot the Armenian because he had insulted Turkishness". Since he was under age and only eligible for a light sentence, many people though that Samast had been chosen to carry out the murder by the state. Shortly after Dink's murder, thousands of people gathered in front of his office to protest against the assassination. Dink's funeral turned into an unprecedented rally against discrimination towards the Armenians in Turkey. About one hundred thousand people from all walks of life and faiths marched in the wide avenues of Istanbul shouting, "We are all Armenians." Dink's murder was an attempt to intimidate those who wanted to create openness, transparency and historical responsibility in Turkey.

In 2007 the International Hrant Dink Foundation (IHDF) was established in Istanbul. Its mission is to work for equal opportunity, ensure the recognition of cultural diversity, contribute to the democratization of Turkey and develop closer ties between Turkey and Armenia. Since 2007 the foundation has organized many conferences, seminars and workshops. These activities included an exhibition (*Armenian Architects of Istanbul in the Era of Westernization),* conferences *(Adana 1909: History, Memory, Identity from a 100 Year Perspective, Cultural Interactions in the Ottoman Empire)* and workshops about the social and economic history of the Diyarbakır and Mardin regions. In 2011, with financial support from the Swedish NGO Olof Palme International Centre, IHDF initiated an oral history project, which aimed to trace the vanished cultural life of the Armenians in a number of Turkish cities. The interviews conducted for this project were published in three books by Ferda Balancar: *The Sounds of Silence I - Turkey's Armenians Speak*, *The Sounds of Silence II - Diyarbakır's Armenians Speak* and *The Sounds of Silence III - Ankara's Armenians Speak*. This project, together with these publications, was of vital importance for Turkish society to be able to understand the suppressed lives of the Anatolian Armenians since the genocide.

Another example is a campaign called *I Apologize* [Özür Diliyorum], launched by numerous Turkish professors, journalists, human rights activists and politicians in December 2008. It was an Internet signature campaign calling for an apology to the Armenians for the genocide. Within a couple of months 30,837 signatures had been collected. The statement of the campaign reads in English:

> My conscience does not accept the insensitivity shown to and the denial of the Great Catastrophe, which Armenians were subjected to in 1915. I reject this in-

> justice and I, for my part, empathize with the feelings and pain of my Armenian brothers and sisters. I apologize to them.

Turkish nationalists were quick to respond to the campaign, condemning the project and offering counter anti-apology campaigns online. A new campaign called *I do not Apologize* obtained even more signatures. President Abdullah Gül was very positive when the campaign was initiated in 2008. He said that this campaign illustrated the fact that democracy was thriving in Turkey. The opposition parties criticized his statement and one Turkish MP "accused" Gül of having an Armenian mother. By taking the accusation as an insult, the President denied the claims and started legal actions against this MP.

Meanwhile, not only in journalism but also in the cultural sphere, debates and exhibitions about the memory of the Armenian genocide started to take place. For instance, DEPO, a space for critical debate and cultural exchange located in the heart of Istanbul in Tophane, has held innumerable exhibitions and eye-opening debates since 2009. *Burning Eyes: Memories of the Armenians,* Antoine Agoudjian's exhibition, was also organized at DEPO in 2011. It displayed the photographs that Agoudjian had taken since 1988 whilst travelling to countries such as Armenia, Georgia, Lebanon and Turkey, to document the conditions of the Armenian communities. In 2013 DEPO hosted another exhibition, *Never Again! Apology and Coming to Terms with the Past*. It aimed to explore the strategies of coming to terms with the past and the act of apologizing as the first step of reconciliation. In April 2014 the exhibition of Silvina Der-Meguerditchian, *Memory without a Place,* opened at DEPO. By taking inspiration from her ancestors who migrated from Anatolia to Argentina, Der-Meguerditchian highlighted the cultural heritage of the diasporic Armenian communities.

Other cultural institutions such as Anadolu Kültür, a cultural NGO, also contributed to the remembrance of the Armenians in Turkey. In 2009 it initiated an oral history project named *Speaking to One Another*. The main aim of the project was to use oral history projects as a bridge between Turkish and Armenian society. Led by Leyla Neyzi and Hranush Kharatyan-Araqelyan, the outcome of the research was published in Turkish, Armenian and English. Oral history projects were carried out in Istanbul, Yerevan, Tbilisi, Nicosia, Berlin, Paris, Antakya and Batumi for the book *Speaking to One Another: Personal Memories of the Past in Armenia and Turkey.* This research shed light on the perceptions of the two communities about each other and presented the challenges on the way to reconciliation.

In addition to these developments, the works published by publishing houses Aras, Belge and İletişim sparked debates about the Armenians and about events in the Ottoman Empire in 1915. A personal initiative from Osman Köker also

resulted in book projects by the publishing house Bir Zamanlar Yayıncılık, which printed highly acclaimed books such as *Armenians in Turkey One Hundred Years Ago with Post-Cards from the Collection of Orlando Carlo Calumeno, Armenians in the Diyarbakır Province* and *Once Upon a Time Izmir.*

The work of historian Uğur Ümit Üngör, published in 2011, has greatly contributed to the academic debates in Turkey. His book co-authored with Mehmet Polatel entitled *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* (2011) and *Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950* (2011) examine the relationship between nation-building, genocidal campaigns and the creation of an amnesiac Turkish Republic with the benefit of confiscated Armenian properties.

In 2011 the Truth Justice Memory Centre [Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Merkezi] was set up in Istanbul. It aims to uncover the truth concerning past violations of human rights, strengthen the collective memory about those violations and support survivors in their pursuit of justice. In collaboration with the World Policy Institute in New York and the Fetzer Institute in Michigan, the Truth Justice Memory Centre created a website project entitled www.memorializeturkey.com in 2011. The website lists a number of Turkish memorialization projects, such as the restoration of the Surp Khach church in Van, the renovation of the Surp Giragos church in Diyarbakır and the Dersim massacre memorial.

In 2004 Fethiye Çetin's *Anneannem* [My Grandmother] started a debate in Turkey about Islamized Armenians. *Torunlar* [The Grandchildren: The Legacy of "Lost" Armenians in Turkey], edited by Fethiye Çetin and Ayşe Gül Altınay, moved the discussion one step further by collecting testimonies from grand-children and great-grandchildren of Turkey's forgotten Armenians. *Kılıç Artıkları* [The Remnants of the Sword], published by Laurence Ritter and Max Sivaslian, is another oral history project about the surviving Islamized grandchildren of those exterminated by the Ottoman Empire. The latest contribution to the discussion about the Islamized Armenians will be the forthcoming book of Avedis Hadjian, *A Secret Nation: The Hidden Armenians of Turkey*.

For nearly a decade now Armenian genocide commemorations have been taking place in the Taksim Square of Istanbul. In 2013 the Turkish Human Rights Association [IHD] organized a full-scale commemoration in different parts of the city. Demonstrators carrying the pictures of the 236 Armenian elites in front of the Turkish Islamic Art Museum, former main prison [Merkez Cezaevi], commemorated the Armenians. For the first time, members of the Syriac community also attended the commemoration. The Assyrian intellectual Şabo Boyacı explained how the Assyrian Christian communities of Anatolia had also been massacred during the genocide in 1915. On this special day an exhibition, *Before 1915: Assyrian Life in the Ottoman*

Empire, opened at the IHD head office. In addition to Istanbul, commemorations organized by human rights associations took place in İzmir, Diyarbakır, Adana, Batman, Ankara and Bodrum. Moreover, Ara Sarafian, director of the Gomidas Institute in London, and members of the IHD visited the grave of Faik Ali Ozansoy in Zincirlikuyu to pay homage to his altruistic deeds throughout the genocide. During World War I, Ozansoy served as governor of Kütahya and saved the lives of thousands of Armenians by refusing to deport them.

In 2014, Fatma Müge Göçek's book entitled *Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present and Collective Violence against the Armenians* came out. In this study Göçek has analysed 315 memoirs published in Turkey from 1789 to 2009 in addition to numerous secondary sources, journals and newspapers. It is an important book, which looks at the denial of collective violence committed against the Armenians and demonstrates the historical process of that phenomenon.

On 23 April 2014, the day before the international Armenian genocide commemoration, the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan offered condolences to the victims of the Armenian genocide. This unprecedented action came one day before the 99th anniversary of the massacres that wiped out the Armenian communities of Turkey. Erdoğan refrained from using the word "genocide" and he repeated calls to set up a joint historical commission by Armenia and Turkey to conduct a credible research about what happened in 1915. Erdoğan's message was published in many languages on the website of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[22] During his speech he said: "It is a duty of humanity to acknowledge that Armenians remember the suffering experienced in that period, just like every other citizen of the Ottoman Empire". In 2011 Erdoğan also offered his condolences for the Dersim massacres that took place in the 1930s and resulted in the killing of more than 14,000 Kurds. Since Erdoğan equated the Dersim massacre and the Armenian genocide with secularist government killings, he did not link it to his current government. In both cases the Prime Minister merely repeated the already adopted discourses of the Turkish state regarding the Kurds and the Armenians. It was perceived as a political gesture and as a sign of willingness to open up the debate around the genocide. However his message did not offer an apology nor did it acknowledge the 1915 events as genocide.

22 For the message of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan about the events of 1915 see: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkish-prime-minister-mr_-recep-tayyip-erdogan-published-a-message-on-the-events-of-1915.en.mfa> [accessed 24 April 2014].

Objectives and Structure of the Thesis

Despite the continuing silence and censorship, there is a plethora of initiatives that commemorate the Armenian genocide in Turkey. None however has remained unchallenged. As I outlined it is often outside the sphere of "official" history that most breakthroughs take place. In this study, I want to focus on one particular sphere, i.e. the cultural sphere. My question is: how do cultural texts, which broach the question of memory, function within this specific political and social setting? What aspects of history can they make visible?

By raising this question I situate myself squarely in the tradition of the project of memory studies, which analyzes interdisciplinary media that helped to refashion a new collective remembrance about the Armenians in modern Turkey in the twenty-first century. However, since it cannot offer a comprehensive survey of all texts, films, and exhibitions that engage with the Armenian memory in Turkey, I have chosen certain cultural texts and left out many others. Thus for this thesis I have chosen the novel of Markar Esayan titled *Karşılaşma* [Encounter], the art works of four contemporary artists Ayşe Erkmen, Hrair Sarkissian, Tayfun Serttaş and Kutluğ Ataman, the musealization of the Surp Khach church and the animation film *Chienne d'histoire*. Rather than providing a generalizing overview, I seek to understand the specific textual dynamics of a small body of works.

Two motives have lurked into the selection process while I was choosing these corpuses. First of all, since I want to figure out how these corpuses function in the context of modern Turkey, I chose works, which were publicly available to the Turkish public. Due to state censorship not all cultural products are broadcast, screened or published in Turkey. However, these media were the ones that reached a large of number of Turkish citizens between 2000 and 2014. That is why they were important cultural texts to analyze the memory conundrum of Turkey regarding the Armenians and the Armenian genocide. Secondly, these interdisciplinary works represent different media such as novels, visual arts, commemorative architecture and films in order to widen the question of collective memory about the Armenians to the larger question of cultural production. I want to see how different types of media and different genres of texts allow for an exploration of the past. Thirdly, the artists that I have chosen for this thesis have hyphenated identities and diasporic lives, which resemble the transnational character of the politics of memory regarding the Armenian genocide. For instance, Ayşe Erkmen lives in Berlin and Istanbul and Syria-born Armenian Hrair Sarkissian now lives in London after a few years spent in Amsterdam. That is why I have chosen these works to scrutinize the relationship between memory, history, national identity and collective remembrance.

This thesis revolves around the question of how the Armenian genocide is being represented in literature, the visual arts, commemorative architecture and films. I am specifically interested in the way in which memory is constructed under the conditions of censorship and state pressure. For a century, Turkish governments have successfully silenced the country's Armenians. Moreover, those who wished to make statements about their existence were marginalized, criminalized or declared *persona non grata*. Even though I want to focus on the unique and singular case of the Armenian genocide, I also believe that my interdisciplinary approach to the question of memory in Turkey regarding the Armenians will provide lessons applicable beyond the Armenian genocide. Hence, this research speaks to the theoretical questions surrounding the full spectrum of historical circumstances where memory, history, violence, remembrance and cultural productions intersect.

Finally, my research also has a moral and political motivation. It seeks an alternative way for memory studies to create hope for coming to terms with the haunting past and provide new road maps between Armenia and Turkey for reconciliation. For Elazar Barkan, "memory and the narrating of memory shape the politics of countries, the ability to reconcile with enemies or deteriorate into war" (Barkan 2007, 389). Hence, it is of vital importance to bring back to the surface the omitted memories of the Armenians in Turkish society, in the first instance to generate awareness and provide lessons for future generations and subsequently to pave the way for reconciliation between Armenia and Turkey. This thesis is an attempt to reconstruct the muted violent past by breaking the monopoly of the Turkish state over the memory of the genocide.

Overview of the Chapters

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, this thesis is organized in four chapters.

Chapter I, *Exploring Postmemory in Markar Esayan's Novel Karşılaşma,* attempts to offer a survey of experiencing the history of remembrance of the Armenian genocide as a memorial practice in Turkey. In this chapter I analyze *Karşılaşma* [Encounter], a novel by the Istanbulite-Armenian author Markar Esayan, to explore the repercussions of the remembrance of the genocide on later generations. In doing so I take advantage of the concept of postmemory, which emphasizes the survivors' transmission of memory to the following generations. However, what the following generations bear witness to is nothing but a vague connection to a subject they have not experienced: learnt memory is treated as a witnessed memory. This chapter is an attempt to shed light on the postmemory of following generations in Turkey. Markar Esayan's book *Karşılaşma* does not shy away from adopting explicit references to the

Armenian genocide in his narrative. The plot of the novel revolves around the question of memory in two ways: by means of dedication and through the modes of narration. Chapter 1 aims to examine the difficulty of transgenerational memory and trauma manifestations through an analysis of terrains of dedication and the politics of remembrance of the Armenians. I elaborate on the concept of postmemory by examining the theoretical approaches developed by Marianne Hirsch, Ernst van Alphen, Dori Laub and Gary Weissman. Readers come across two dedications in the narrative: one to late Hrant Dink and the other to anyone who lost their life in Anatolia in the name of the Gomitas Vartabed. In this chapter I also elaborate on the reasons of these dedications and examine their meanings. In addition to these dedications, the novel's characters play an important role in terms of portraying the historical amnesia and transmitting the unknown part of the Turkish-Armenian history to the following generations. That is why, I first of all describe the plot of the novel, and then proceed to I analyze the modes of narration to delineate the manifestations of memory. Ultimately, this chapter asks several questions about the multiplicity of narrators and their relationship vis-à-vis memory.

Chapter 2, *Art Projects as Counter-Monuments in Istanbul*, is an analysis of the work of four contemporary artists whose works were exhibited in Turkey. This chapter outlines the artistic commemorations produced outside the negationist official memory, which seek to commemorate the genocide. In this chapter I analyze the works of Ayşe Erkmen, Tayfun Serttaş, Kutluğ Ataman and Hrair Sarkissian. They are four of the few contemporary artists whose work has dealt with the Armenian genocide in modern Turkey. These artists do not represent the memory of the genocide; rather their work represents the absence of this meaning. They address their vicarious knowledge of the genocide as it has been passed down to them. In this chapter I examine their works of art to see whether we could classify them as "counter-monuments" in the light of the concept developed by James E. Young. In Young's definition, counter-monuments allude to an artistic criticism of monuments, which is a conscious departure from the traditional iconography of monuments through which the past is rigidified in monumental forms. They then produce a new discourse of representation by enhancing an active relationship between spectator and object. Counter-monuments posit the visitor's role in the memorial space so that visitors invest them with new meanings. These projects provide an important window into questioning the official war narratives. *Two Siblings* [İki Kardeş] by Ayşe Erkmen, *Foto Galatasaray* by Tayfun Serttaş, *Testimony* [Tanıklık] by Kutluğ Ataman and *Istory* [Benim Hikayem] by Hrair Sarkissian are the works that I examine. Chapter 2 traces the shifting role these artists played with their projects. I examine how these works contest the celebratory record offered by the Turkish government through its denialist policies. In what way do these projects

complement, undermine or criticize the official history of Turkey is an important question that I ask. In addition, I analyze how these projects unveiled in Istanbul challenge, extend or apply Young's counter-monument concept. With the role of these works in mind, I also scrutinize the specificity of these projects. Since some of these projects have been unveiled in the vicinity of militaristic sites or close to Atatürk statues, I also explore the meanings generated by the conscious choice of specific settings. Positioning these personal artefacts nearby official monuments intervenes in the urban setting of Istanbul. I address how this memory of past times shapes the understanding of the present moment and reflect on the contributions of these works to the way Turkey deals with its controversial past.

Chapter 3, titled *Transformation of the Church of Surp Khach into Akdamar Museum* takes a close look at the reopening of a religious site as a museum. The Armenian church of Surp Khach is situated on an island in Lake Van in the eastern part of Turkey. In 2005 the renovation of the 1,100-year old Surp Khach church began and lasted for two years. Since 2007 the church has been functioning as a museum. The ultimate transformation of the church from a sacred place into a museum is an emblematic example of creating a *lieu de mémoire* (site of memory) as Pierre Nora calls it. This concept, developed by Nora, analyzes certain "site of memory" places in France invested with symbolical significance for ideological and political purposes. In October 2012 I conducted fieldwork in the region to analyze the current situation of the church. I claim that the inauguration of the church, the transformation of a religious terrain into a museum and the memories belonging to different ethnic groups in relation to the church can be analyzed to decipher different conflicting narratives attached to the site. In this chapter I discuss the fetishization of Turkish flags placed on the island, the question of ownership and what the appropriation of the site by the Turks means for the Armenian memory. I also highlight what musealization involves and what "dark tourism", "trauma tourism", "memory tourism" or "roots-seeking-trips" mean for the Armenians coming to this island from all over the world.

Chapter 4, *Visualizing Genocide in the Animation Film Chienne d'histoire,* offers a reading of an animation film, shot by the Armenian-French director Serge Avédikian in 2010, entitled *Chienne d'histoire.* The animation film is set five years before the Armenian genocide, in 1910, when the streets of Constantinople were overrun with stray dogs. These dogs roamed freely in the city until the newly established Ottoman government decided to get rid of them. They proposed the deportation of the dogs to Oxia, a deserted island of barren and steep cliffs, located in the Marmara Sea. All dogs were rounded up and transported to the island, which turned out to be an open-air dog pound. In the end approximately 80,000 dogs were exterminated. In this chapter, I broadly examine "how" Avédikian constructs

the story of Constantinople's stray dogs. I elaborate on the concept of allegory by examining the theoretical approach developed by Angus Fletcher. I analyze which elements in the film make this allegorical reading possible. As a rhetorical trope, allegory is able to portray complex concepts and ideas by establishing a narrative that has another meaning under the surface. It conveys a hidden message through actions, figures, symbolic events and representations. As an extended metaphor it also gives a new interpretation of the phenomenon. I then scrutinize the role of the three Ottoman pashas in *Chienne d'histoire* followed by an analysis of the way the dogs are exterminated in the film and the Armenians were deported during the genocide. During my analysis, I offer responses to the questions: What does the allegory bring out? What does it tell us about the genocide? What does it mean to compare the plight of the Armenians to that of the dogs? And finally, why is allegory such a helpful strategy in the case of modern Turkey?

Although 24 April 2015 marked the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, the Armenian question still remains as a highly contested topic in Turkey. In the light of these developments it seems that my thesis is rather timely. It is important therefore to remind the reader that this dissertation covers events up to the third quarter of 2015.

Chapter 1

Exploring Postmemory in Markar Esayan's Novel *Karşılaşma*

The transmission of traumatic memories to second generations, who have not witnessed the ordeals that their parents went through, has been a central topic in memory studies. This phenomenon concerns the second generations and how they appropriate their parent's stories that preceded their births. To further explore the particular relationship of the second generations to their parental past, various scholars such as Ellen Fine, Ernst van Alphen, Gabriele Schwab, Celia Lury, Alison Landsberg, Nadine Fresco, Henri Raczymow, Froma Zeitlin, James Young and Marianne Hirsch have examined this subject. Their works have been motivated by the question whether the traumatic recollections of the second generations should be viewed as memory. This relationship has variously been described as an "absent memory" (Ellen Fine), "haunting legacy" (Gabriele Schwab), "inherited memory", "belated memory" or "prosthetic memory" (Celia Lury, Alison Landsberg), "mémoire des cendres" (Nadine Fresco), "mémoire trouée" (Henri Raczymow), "vicarious witnessing" (Froma Zeitlin), "received history" (James Young) and "postmemory" (Marianne Hirsch).[23]

The concept of postmemory, developed by Marianne Hirsch, is based on the readings of autobiographical works written by post-Holocaust second generation authors. Hirsch invites us to rethink our relation to literature to explore the effect of traumatic experiences on the second generations. The concept of postmemory provides a new lens to scrutinize the intergenerational memory after the Holocaust. Yet, the particular historical context of this examination is the Armenian genocide,

23 See Ellen Fine, "The Absent Memory: The Post-Holocaust Genration in the Diaspora"; Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*; Celia Lury, *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory and Identity*; Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*; Nadine Fresco, "Remembering the Unknown"; Henri Raczymow, "Memory Shot through with Holes"; Froma Zeitlin, "The Vicarious Witness: Belated Memory and Authorial Presence in Recent Holocaust Literature"; James E. Young, "Toward a Received History of the Holocaust"; Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*.

which has not been acknowledged by the Turkish government for a century. In this chapter I will analyze the novel of Markar Esayan, *Karşılaşma* [Encounter].[24] The novel written in Turkish in 2007 seems to reflect on the issues of memory, trauma and transgenerational memory. In the light of the ongoing denialist policies of Turkey, one might ask the question: How is it possible that the novel is able to deliver a story that goes against the grain of the official state narrative? Prior to attempting to answer this question I will first briefly look at the narrative of *Karşılaşma* in order to understand how the novel delineates the clash between the official public narrative and individual memory.

Next I will introduce the foundational concepts that I will use in this study such as trauma and memory. In doing so, I will discuss the differences between trauma and memory in the light of the theory developed by Cathy Caruth in *Trauma Explorations in Memory* (1995). Additionally, I will provide an analysis of the concept of "postmemory" by examining the arguments of Ernst van Alphen and Marianne Hirsch.[25] Hirsch defines postmemory as the relationship of the second generations to traumatic experiences that preceded their births but somehow transmitted to them so deeply that they constitute memories in their own right. Thirdly, I will analyze the novel in order to understand in what terms it captures the way memory is preserved and communicated from one generation to the next. My analysis will focus on the dedication, the multiplicity of narrators and the representations of intergenerational memory in the novel. Finally, I will conclude by explaining how *Karşılaşma* delineates the question of memory and the effects of traumatic events on the second generations.

At the beginning of the novel readers come across two dedications: one to Hrant Dink and the other to everyone, in the name of Gomitas Vartabed, whose life, hope and effort have been stolen from him in Anatolia.[26] Dink was an Armenian journalist

24 Markar Esayan is an author and journalist born in 1969 in Istanbul. His first novel titled *Şimdinin Dar Odası* was published in 2004. It was followed by *Karşılaşma* (2007) and *Jerusalem* (2011). Esayan started his journalism career at *Agos* newspaper. Since 2013 he has been a columnist for the Turkish daily *Yeni Şafak*, a conservative paper known for its support of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his ruling AK party. During the parliamentary elections in Turkey in June 2015, the AK party nominated Esayan as an MP candidate for Istanbul. Along with other Armenian candidates Garo Paylan, from the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), and Selina Özuzun Doğan, from the Republican People's Party (CHP), Esayan was also elected as an MP in the Turkish Parliament.

25 See Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*; Ernst van Alphen, Ernst, "Second-Testimony, Transmission of Trauma, and Postmemory" and Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory".

26 Born in 1869 in Kütahya, Soghomon Soghomonian was twenty-five years old when he was given the name of the seventeenth-century poet and musician Catholicos Komitas. In February 1895 he was

who was assassinated in 2007 in Istanbul. Soghomon Soghomonian, commonly known as Gomitas Vartabed, was an Armenian priest, musicologist and composer. By juxtaposing the name of Gomitas to that of Dink, the dedication makes a link between the present and the past, and the first and the second generations.

The preface and a note to the preface follow the dedications to Gomitas and Dink. In these parts of the novel, the reader comes across multiple narrators. All the individuals involved in the process of delivering, safeguarding or publishing the text provide the reader with a publication history of *Karşılaşma*.

After these introductory parts, Zayrmayr tells the story of the shop owner Pehlivan Usta, who does not want to be known by his real name. Because everyone associates him with his profession he is known by the moniker *kalaycı*: the tin-plater. His store is located in Istanbul's Dolapdere area on the European side of the city. A shy and quiet man, *kalaycı* rarely talks to other people. The novel charts his relationship with his conservative and narrow-minded neighbour Mr Rakım.

***Karşılaşma* [Encounter]**

The novel begins in a hospital room with a vivid description of a liquid going through the narrator's chest. All of a sudden he realizes that it is blood. However this does not scare him because he is aware that he is dying. In the following pages, while he introduces himself, he points at his nose and says "this is an Armenian nose" (22). In addition to this reference to his ethnic identity, the narrator provides as much information as possible about his hospital to the reader. He states:

> Kaldığım yer Aylazk'ların Yedikule Ermeni Hastanesi adıyla bildiği Surp Pırgiç Azkayin Hivantanots'tur. (23)
>
> [The place where I am staying is Surp Pırgiç Azkayin Hivantanots, known as Yedikule Armenian Hospital by the Aylazks.][27]

As can be seen from the English translation, the narrator also explains his hospital in Western Armenian using the Latin alphabet. In Western Armenian, *Surp Pırgiç Az-*

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appointed as a *vardapet* (celibate priest) and, thereafter became known as Gomitas Vartabed. There are two usages of his name due to the difference in pronunciation between Eastern and Western Armenian. In Western Armenian he is referred to as Gomitas Vartabed whereas in Eastern Armenian it is Komitas Vardapet. I have adopted the Western Armenian *Gomitas*.

27 Translations from Turkish are my own.

kayin Hivantanots (Սուրբ Փրկիչ հայոց հիվանդանոց) means The Holy Saviour Community Hospital. The Armenians generally refer to Turks as *Aylazks*. He is staying at The Holy Saviour Community Hospital that is known as Yedikule Armenian Hospital by the Turks. The footnote explains that these are Armenian sentences and it provides a Turkish translation. The narrator makes it clear to the reader that he is Armenian by pointing out his Armenian nose and giving the name of the hospital in two languages. He thinks that it is time for the readers to get to know him.

> Hülasa, artık tanışmanın vaktidir. Bendeniz Zayrmayr Parsoğlu. Ermenicesiyle Զայրմայր Բարսէղեան. Soyadımın aslı Parseğyan'dır, lakin Soyadı Kanunu esnasında yan'ı düşmüş oğlu olmuştur. (29)

> [Briefly, it is time we met. I am Zayrmayr Parsoğlu. In Armenian: Զայրմայր Բարսէղեան. The original version of my surname is Parseğyan. However, following the Surname Law, -yan was dropped and has become -oğlu.]

We learn from this introduction that the narrator is called Zayrmayr. Tatyos, Zayrmayr's father, was always a very difficult man and drunk most of the time (30). Most importantly he has never shown any interest in doing anything with Zayrmayr. To compensate for the lack of a father figure in his life, Zayrmayr spent most of his time with their neighbor Şirag (31).[28] Due to their age difference Zayrmayr always addressed him as Uncle Şirag. Zayrmayr had such a bond with him that, as a child, he always dreamt of Uncle Şirag replacing his father (30). Şirag owned a printing house called Arev. Most of the books he published were written in Armenian, Turkish and in foreign languages (32). It was Uncle Şirag who introduced many Armenian authors to Zayrmayr when he was a child.

In the next chapter Zayrmayr announces that he will describe a miracle to the reader. We learn that he will talk in detail about a man who had many names, including *Kalaycı* [tin-plater], *Pehlivan Usta* [Master Pehlivan] or just *Usta* [Master] (67). In general, the way he referred to his real name was just S. Zayrmayr was one of the few people who knew his full name. Most of the time Pehlivan Usta avoided contact with other people. To find an answer to his recluse behavior Zayrmayr asks himself: why is he so proud, even though he is a poor Armenian man? (70). This questioning informs us that Pehlivan Usta is also of Armenian origin.

So far the reader has come across three characters of Armenian origin: Zayrmayr, Uncle Şirag and Pehlivan Usta. Zayrmayr is the youngest of the three. In the following section of the novel, we are introduced to Mr Rakım. He is a man who

28 Şirag (Shirag) is an Armenian male name.

dislikes Armenians but also people who have contact with Armenians (80). He is a conservative man who cannot tolerate non-Muslims and always refers to them as *gavur* [infidel]. He owns the house and the property that used to belong to his Armenian neighbor Haçik (80). The setting of the novel is the Dolapdere district of Istanbul where Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, Jews, Roma people, Sunnite and Alawite Moslems, Albanians, the Laz, Circassians and Kurds lived together (105). The multinational character of the neighbourhood has not always allowed these communities to peacefully coexist. Occasional conflicts did happen; yet, they still lived right next to each other.

One day Pehlivan Usta walks to his store when he comes across a huge crowd gathered in a circle, watching a young boy suffering from a seizure and foaming at the mouth. Pehlivan Usta goes to the child and holds him. All of a sudden the boy recovers and walks away. Referring to Pehlivan Usta's healing powers, Zayrmayr informs the reader about "the fame of Pehlivan Usta started to spread around all the districts within a short time" (141).

The boy healed by Pehlivan Usta is Yusuf, Mr Rakım's son. Shortly after recovering from his sickness, he is subject to seizures again. Pehlivan tells his other neighbours that Yusuf's family should pay him a visit if they want Yusuf to recover completely. The mere idea of visiting an "infidel" incenses Mr Rakım and he turns the offer down. However, Mr. Rakım's wife Mrs Emine cannot bear seeing her son suffer and plans a secret visit to Pehlivan Usta's store. During their conversation Usta tells Mrs Emine that a curse is the cause of Yusuf's illness and that he will not get better unless the curse is lifted.

Mrs Emine is distressed at not finding a satisfactory answer to all the questions she asks herself and is overcome by the desire to find out the truth about Haçik, a member of the Armenian Demircigiller family, who left his house to Mr Rakım in 1915 (137). Mrs Emine uses the verb "to leave", suggesting that he left of his own accord.

During a conversation with her husband Mrs Emine asks him what really happened to them. According to Rakım, "they had committed a crime against our land and our Sultan. What a crime! They were traitors and mutineers to their country and they also cursed Islam" (137).

Pehlivan Usta tells Zayrmayr that Rakım's family has a secret, which is the reason for their son's illness (345). At the climax of the narrative, Mr Rakım, Pehlivan Usta and various religious figures congregate in the Dolapdere district to resolve the situation. Mr Rakım tries to win the support of the imam to malign Pehlivan Usta. When the imam does not give him his support, Mr Rakım panics. He feels the urge to testify in front of everyone in the street and confesses that he has deceived his neighbour Haçik, a member of the Demircigiller family, and confiscated his proper-

ties. After this admission Yusuf mysteriously recovers and starts to walk. Coming to terms with the past brings a catharsis to the neighbourhood. The Dolapdere residents enjoy the newly-established fraternity in the district.

Karşılaşma raises questions about the relationship between different generations and the transmission of accountability to second generations. Similarly, the concept of "postmemory" explores the transfer of traumatic experiences to second generations. In the following section I will highlight how the concept of "postmemory" explains the puzzling relationship between different generations. In doing so, I will also examine what the notion of "postmemory" can offer to broaden my analysis.

The Concept of Postmemory

In a discussion on the role of concepts in the humanities, Mieke Bal states that concepts "raise the underlying issues of instrumentalism, realism and nominalism and the possibility of interaction between the analyst and the object" (Bal 2002, 29). Concepts are key interlocutors between the object and the analyst and to a large extent they shape analytic practice. They have a significant influence on the way cultural objects are "read" and "analyzed". The "meanings" of cultural objects do not lie dormant within the objects themselves, but they are generated through the processes of analysis in a dialogue between analyst, concept and object.

The key concepts in this chapter are trauma and memory, with a special focus on intergenerational memory. Recently the concept of trauma has become the fashionable term to refer to a wide variety of phenomena. This recent usage of trauma has prompted Bal to say that:

> 'Trauma' for example, is used casually to refer to all sad experiences, whereas the concept in fact theorizes a distinctive psychic effect caused by happenings so life shattering that the subject assaulted by them is, precisely, unable to process them *qua* experience. (33)

In *Trauma Explorations in Memory* Cathy Caruth argues that a traumatic event is not simply a sad or painful experience, but rather an event that is intense and shocking. It is so unexpected that the subject undergoing it lacks the cognitive framework to fully process it when it happens. One can say that the victim did not fully "experience" the event when it occurred. The "missed" event is somehow registered as a psychic wound or trauma that marks the subject, and returns to haunt him in the form of nightmares or flashbacks. "To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event" (Caruth 1995, 4). This image or event, precisely insofar as it

is traumatic, resists integration into a "memory" that the subject "owns" to narrate it as a story.

Caruth gives the example of a car crash to explain this phenomenon. Often the victim does not really "experience" the crash, nor does s/he remember it consciously. The event itself may return, unexpectedly, in nightmares and sudden flashbacks or in repetitions, when it returns in all its shocking intensity. "Working through" this traumatic memory means translating it into "narrative" memories. Yet, as Caruth points out, the paradox is that as soon the traumatic encounter is integrated into a series of narrative memories, its "traumatic", shocking and violent nature is effaced. Traumatized people face a double bind: on the one hand narrating their trauma is impossible since if they choose to tell people what they experienced, it will be distorted. On the other hand, if they do not testify, they will continue to be hit by the terror of this event. The concept of trauma will play a key role in this chapter. However, it will not be my main focus. The central issue in *Encounter* is not concerned with a trauma like a car accident, but with the *transmission* of the memory of an event, i.e. transmitting the memory of genocide to the next generations.

In the chapter "Mourning and Postmemory" of her book *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Memory*, Hirsch raises the issue of the *transmission* of the memory to the second generations. Hirsch opens her chapter with a personal anecdote. She tells her readers about the first apartment that her family had rented from the Jakubowiczs when they had immigrated to the United States (Hirsch 1997, 17-18). She mentions their Orthodox Jewish neighbours that kept kosher and had a daughter called Chana. Hirsch remembers visiting their apartment and staring at the family pictures of Mr and Mrs Jakubowicz. Although something made her uncomfortable when looking at the pictures, she wanted both to keep staring and look away. Another visual image that struck her at that time was the photo of Frieda Wolfinger her husband Leo's aunt, a survivor of the Riga ghetto and a concentration camp. The images did not directly indicate anything about the Holocaust, rather they conveyed the message of "having survived" or "being alive" (19). In Hirsch's view, the connection of postmemory to its object is not maintained "through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation" (22). She argues that the grandchildren of the survivors carry the mark of a traumatic memory that they have themselves neither experienced nor witnessed.

In a response to Hirsch's study, Ernst van Alphen questions whether we should use the word "memory" to characterize those phenomena. He analyzes the problems of survivors' children in two literary works, *Nightfather* by Carl Friedman and *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History and the Legacy of the Holocaust* by Eva Hoffman. Van Alphen argues that the traumas of the children in *Nightfather* do not derive directly from the Shoah, but rather that "their trauma is caused by being raised by

a traumatized Holocaust survivor" (Van Alphen 2006, 482). The radically different nature of this trauma is obscured by Hirsch's term "postmemory", which suggests continuity between these two experiences. Van Alphen concedes that the "postmemory" concept implies an intergenerational transmission, and does not "help to understand the specificity of the problems of children of survivors and of the special dynamics between survivor parents and children" (487-88).

Van Alphen does not refute the idea that children have knowledge about the past of their families but "that knowledge is, however, the result of a process of conveying, of combining historical knowledge and the memories of others" (486). Since Hirsch focuses on the prefix *post*, Van Alphen declares that to her the term *memory* is more or less self-evident. The prefix *post* in Hirsch's postmemory concept does not imply that later generations are "beyond memory". For Van Alphen, however, "post" indicates a very particular kind of memory, one that connects to its object not through recollection but through an imaginative investment. On the other hand, Hirsch claims that there is an indexical connectedness between the survivors and the later generations.

Since disconnection is replaced by a term that indicates a fundamental continuity, he names this intergenerational transmission process "wishful thinking". By disconnection he does not mean discontinuity in terms of the emotional level but in terms of the intelligibility of a traumatic experience.

In her article *The Generation of Postmemory* Hirsch responds to Van Alphen's statements by partly taking up some of his suggestions. She states that:

> The "post" in "postmemory" signals more than a temporal delay and more than a location in an aftermath. [I]t reflects an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture. (106)

She conceives of postmemory as a consequence of traumatic recall not at a generational remove, which implies both continuity and rupture. Hirsch admits that the events that influence survivors' children "happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present" (Hirsch 2008, 107). With reference to memory's indexical nature invoked by Van Alphen, Hirsch states that "postmemory is not identical to memory: it is 'post' but at the same time, it *approximates* memory in its affective force" (109).

Yet, despite this acknowledgement her precise wording implies continuity. Hirsch argues that the children of the victims "directly affected by collective trauma inherit a horrific, unknown and unknowable past" (113). She adopts the verb *inherit*, suggesting that the memory of the first generations automatically passes to the survivors' grandchildren. This assumption takes the intergenerational transmission of trauma for granted.

A question therefore remains about how memory scholars should approach the transmission of trauma to the second generations when most survivors fail to admit their horrific experience as knowledge. Dori Laub's notion of "empty circle" attempts to provide an answer to this puzzling question. It addresses the gap that results from the survivor's inability to possess the experience as knowledge. The concept of "empty circle" derives from a dream of one of his patients. He writes:

> The empty circle, a dream element of my patient, Mrs. A, whose case I will discuss in detail, is a term that symbolizes the absence of representation, the rupture of the self, the erasure of memory, and the accompanying sense of void that are the core legacy of massive psychic trauma. The empty circle is unleashed by the breakdown of the empathic dyad that occurs during the traumatic experience (Auerhahn and Laub 1989) and is perpetuated through the inherent resistance of the experience to integration into the survivor's cognitive and affective framework – that is, through the survivor's inability to possess the experience as knowledge. (Laub and Auerhahn 1993, 508)

The failure of the survivor to integrate the traumatic experience to his/her cognitive and affective framework results in an empty circle. It points to the trauma as something that cannot be fully remembered. Yet, as Laub clearly states, the empty circle not only haunts survivors but also "comes to exert a dominating and mysterious force on the identities and lives not only of survivors but of their children as well" (Laub 1998, 508). Laub's concept addresses what the concept of postmemory ignores. The empty circle is something that is shared by first and second generations, precisely because they are *both* haunted by something that they have not properly experienced. Ultimately, as Laub writes, "at the centre remains a 'hole', an emptiness caused by an event that defies representation and is experienced as a profound absence" (Laub and Auerhahn 1993, 289).

One can conclude that the identification of second generations with the trauma of their family members, which is not based on any intelligible knowledge, results in blankness. To make his argument more concrete Laub shares examples from his patients who were the children of Holocaust survivors. Laub's patients, with an inarticulated, inexperienced and absent knowledge about their family's traumas,, were caught "in a paralyzing identification process that precluded historicization of an intergenerational trauma" (Laub 1998, 512). Laub speaks of the "tyrannical intrusion of a history" as the intrusion of the "real", of "an objective, historical event unconsciously known and transmitted across generations" (512).

The difference between the "memories" of first generations and the "postmemories" of second generations becomes even more crucial when we speak about the way traumatic histories are conveyed to the public at large. In his book *Fantasies of Wit-*

nessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust (2004) Gary Weissman explores the lacuna that comes to the surface when second generations treat the experiences of their families as an inherited lived memory. Weissman argues that non-witnesses endeavour to experience the Holocaust vicariously. They do so through sites or texts designated to make it "real" for them. Weissman states "this desire can be satisfied only in fantasy, in fantasies of witnessing the Holocaust for oneself" (Weissman 2004, 4). In this way, he believes that non-witnesses can "bear witness" only in the most nebulous way. He considers that the prevailing rhetoric of "secondary" memory and trauma are responses to an encroaching sense of unreality that results in absence, estrangement, distortion and disassociation. Weissman argues that the distinctions between the children of survivors and non-survivors are blurred when learnt history is treated as an inherited lived memory. Let me analyze *Encounter* in the light of this theoretical discussion and sketch how memory formation is constructed throughout the novel. How does *Encounter* position itself with regard to these debates about trauma, memory and postmemory? In order to do this, I first have to briefly look at a crucial paratextual feature: the dedication of the novel.

Dedication, Remembrance and the Multiplicity of Narrators

In order to understand the reflection of the novel on the transmission of memory, first we have to understand the way it positions itself within contemporary Turkish memory wars. The dedications raise this issue of Turkey's memory conundrum. At the beginning of *Encounter*, the reader finds one dedication to Hrant Dink and another one to everyone in the name of Gomitas Vartabed.

> Korkunun kadim lisanı sükûneti alt etmek, maziyle karşılaşmak, ve bize, içinde hepimizin onur ve kardeşlikle var olacağı bir dil vermek üzere yaşamını feda eden sevgili dostum *Hrant Dink*'e adanmıştır.
>
> Gomidas Vartabed'in şahsında Anadolu topraklarında ümitleri, emekleri ve hayatları çalınmış tüm insanların anısına.
>
> [This is dedicated to my dear friend *Hrant Dink* who sacrificed his life to conquer silence, which is the ancient language of fear, to confront the past and to provide us a space in which we all can exist in honour and fraternity.]
>
> [To everyone, in the name of Gomidas Vartabed, whose hopes, efforts and lives have been stolen in the territories of Anatolia.]

By mentioning Dink's name, the novel imbeds itself into a tense history. Dink was the editor-in-chief of the weekly Armenian paper *Agos.* On 19 January 2007 he was assassinated outside the *Agos* office. In articles prior to his assassination, Dink described the increasing death threats against him. "I do not know how real these threats are", he wrote, "but what's really unbearable is the psychological torture that I'm living in, like a pigeon, turning my head up and down, left and right, my head quickly rotating".[29] Dink's assassination had a deep impact on the Armenian community in Turkey but also on those Turks who were fighting for justice and human rights. Thus, by dedicating *Encounter* to Dink, the author tries to convey very specific messages to the reader.

Dink's name can be read as an indication of two different purposes for the reader. On the one hand it stands for hope. Although Dink's death brought pain to many people, to his family and to the Armenian community, his assassination generated a degree of mutual understanding in Turkey. For the first time in Turkey's history and regardless of their ethnicity and religion, thousands of people united for justice. During his funeral, protesters carried placards saying "We are all Hrant; We are all Armenians". This identification with Dink and the sympathy with his family's loss convey the hope for co-habitation and mutual respect among Turkey's different ethnic groups. The dedication of the novel to Dink means that the author expresses his condolences but also shares his optimism and hope for the Armenian-Turkish reconciliation. Yet Dink's name not only stands for solidarity, it also indicates a conflict. The placards saying "We are all Hrant; We are all Armenians" triggered debates within Turkish society. For instance, shortly after Dink's funeral, football fans in Trabzon, a city in Turkey's Black Sea region, were seen holding up banners saying "We are all Turks".[30]

The name "Dink" is understandably a complex signifier. It stands for the hope for reconciliation *and* for a history of repression. Many Armenians perceive Dink's assassination as the continuation of the Turkish government's anti-Armenian policies and as a direct link to the genocide. For this reason, the Armenians commonly acknowledge Dink as one of the last victims of the genocide.[31]

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29 Arsu, Şebnem. "Armenian Editor is Slain In Turkey".*NYTimes* 20 January 2007. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/20/world/europe/20turkey.html?_r=0> [accessed 13 July 2013].

30 Rainsford, Sarah. "Turkey's Nationalist Hotbed". *BBCNews* 01 March 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6403813.stm> [accessed 11 October 2011].

31 For some Armenians, the arbitrary "death" of Sevag Şahin Balıkçı, a Turkish citizen of Armenian descent, on 24 April 2011 while he was fulfilling his military service in Batman, is the latest example showing the ongoing institutionalized hatred towards the Armenians in Turkey. The military reports tried to sweep the case under the carpet by classifying him as a "martyr" but subsequently it was discovered that

In addition the novel is dedicated, in the name of Gomitas, to those whose lives have been uprooted in Anatolia. Gomitas was an Armenian priest, composer, musicologist and singer. By juxtaposing the names of Dink and Gomitas an explicit link is made between the present and the past. In his article "Komitas Vardapet and His Contribution to Ethnomusicology" (1972), Sirvart Poladian provides invaluable information about the personal biography of Gomitas. Soghomon Soghomonian (Gomitas' real name) was born on 26 September 1869 in Kütahya, Turkey, to Armenian parents. Unfortunately, at the age of eleven he lost both his parents. Poladian believes that this personal misfortune proved crucial in shaping his identity because he was sent to Etchmiadzin, the seat of the Armenian Apostolic Church, to study at the seminary of the Holy See as a music student. He eventually entered the celibate order of the priesthood in the Armenian Church, adopting the name Gomitas after the famous seventh-century poet and musician Catholicos. He is generally known as Gomitas Vartabed since "Vartabed" is the title given to a scholastic celibate group of Armenian priests.

After studying in Etchmiadzin and Berlin he moved to Constantinople in 1910. Then the genocide started and Gomitas was part of the first group of Armenian intellectuals rounded up in Istanbul and sent to a prison camp in Çankırı.[32] Although he was quickly released, he developed severe post-traumatic stress disorder. He was later transferred to a psychiatric hospital in Paris where he died in 1935. The central square in Etchmiadzin, the Yerevan State Musical Conservatory and an avenue in Yerevan are some of the landmarks named after him. Statues of Gomitas, which commemorate the victims of the genocide, can be seen in Québec, Detroit and Paris.

In his dedication, the author does not use the term "victims of the Armenian genocide" when he refers to the ones who lost their lives in Anatolia. Using the name of Gomitas implies that the ones who lost their lives shared his destiny: they were also victims of the genocide. The relationship between dedication and remembrance can be examined on many levels. Two reasons will suffice to illustrate the role of dedicating the novel to Dink, Gomitas and those whose lives and hopes have been taken away in Anatolia.

In the first place, Gomitas ranks among the first Armenian victims of the genocide and many Armenians think that Dink is one of the last victims. Referring to

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he was shot by one of his comrades on the first day of Easter, which fell on the day when Armenians commemorate the genocide.

32 See Rita Soulahian Kuyumjian. *Archaeology of Madness: Komitas, Portrait of an Armenian Icon*. London: Gomidas Institute, 2010.

these two men alludes to the Armenians' ongoing mourning since the genocide. Both men of letters had important roles in the Armenian community and worked hard throughout their lives. Gomitas collected and transcribed folk songs written in Armenian, Turkish and Kurdish. Dink defended the importance of dialogue and reconciliation between the Turks and the Armenians. Including the names of Dink and Gomitas in the dedication highlights the importance of creating mutual understanding amongst Turks and Armenians in order to live together after having to come to terms with the haunting constraints of the past.

Secondly, the dedication of the novel to the memories of "those individuals whose hopes, efforts and lives have been taken away in Anatolia" points out the obliteration of the past in Turkey. The author conveys the message that his novel will generate remembrance as a new genre of memorial practice in a country where coming to terms with the past is blocked. The dedication of the novel to "those individuals" emphasizes the role of the novel in awakening the memory of those who perished during the genocide. The novel places itself in a long tradition of literary texts that testify about the genocide, implicitly suggesting that in this difficult history, literature has a specific role. By dedicating the novel to Gomitas and to Dink, the novel states its ambitions and aspirations. It wants to testify and is, perhaps, even a call for justice.

Karşılaşma stresses the importance of conveying the obscured and overlooked histories to the second generations. Interestingly, the form of the novel itself also raises this thematic reflection on storytelling. At the beginning of the book, a narrator states that he has compiled all the information presented in this book, about his next-door neighbour Zayrmayr Parseğyan, in his hospital room. After Zayrmayr's death, the narrator is the first one to enter the room of the deceased where he finds Zayrmayr's personal belongings on his bedside table. He says:

> Daha sonra odayı şöyle bir gözden geçirdim. Basılırken kitaba eklenmesi için gazeteci dostum Mösyö Hagop'a verdiğim fotoğraf, çizim ve resimleri, sanki hususi olarak oraya bırakılmış gibi, komodinin üzerinde buldum. (12-3)
>
> [Later on I inspected the room. I found the photographs, sketches and pictures that I had given to my journalist friend Monsieur Hagop to be added to the book for the publication on the bedside table, as if they were left there on purpose.]

This narrator, named Mardiros Bakırcıyan, informs the reader that he is staying in the same hospital as Zayrmayr. One night he overhears Zayrmayr talking to himself. He feels the urge to write down his story and hands in the draft of the book to a notable character in the Istanbul Armenian community named Hagop Sepasdatsi. Mardiros assures the readers that throughout the narrative they will come across

the first person narrative of Zayrmayr; therefore, they will listen to the story as if Zayrmayr himself were telling it. The story of Zayrmayr itself is overheard, written down and transmitted.

Mardiros says that chapter seven has been written down in italics since he made this part up. He legitimizes his role as a narrator by explaining that there was a discontinuity in Zayrmayr's narration because the narrator had to go to the bathroom. The novel suggests that listening to the testimony of Zayrmayr is not merely a passive act. It requires the listener to fill in the gaps. With regard to the act of assigning the narrator role to himself, Mardiros states:

> Dostum hikâyesini anlattığı esnada -prostat kanseri olduğum için- bir ara ayakyoluna gitmem lüzum etti. O kısa süre zarfında anlatımda tabii bir boşluk oluştu. Bu kısmı boş bırakmak yerine, hikâyenin genel mizacina münasip olacak şekilde tamamladım. Yedinci bölümün hemen başında yer alan bu ilaveyi italik karakterle belirtmeyi, olur da hatırınızdan çıkar diye münasip buldum. (13)
>
> [During the time when my friend was narrating his story, because I have prostate cancer, I had to go to the bathroom. Certainly there arose a gap in the narration during this short period of time. Instead of leaving this part blank, I completed it in compliance with the general flow of the story. I found it appropriate to emphasize this addition at the beginning of the seventh chapter in italics, just in case you forget.]

Yet, this situation is even more complex: following the agreement between Mardiros and the reader, a note to the preface is included. B. Sepasdatsi, Hagop Sepasdatsi's son, informs the reader that Mardiros passed away in 1947 and that his father Hagop has done his best to get this book published. He adds in so many words that the political climate in Turkey had not been suitable for the publication of this work until 1995 when the political reforms initiated by the PPP party extended the freedom of speech and thought. B. Sepasdatsi only succeeded in having this work published as a result of the substantial improvement of human rights in Turkey thanks to the PPP party. He states:

> Şansa bakınız ki, babam vefat ettikten kısa bir süre sonra Türkiye önemli bir demokratikleşme dönemine girdi. Avrupa Birliği'ne katılım sürecinin zorlamasıyla da olsa PPP Hükümeti iktidarında yapılan reformlar, uzun yıllar baskı altında tutulmuş düşünce ve ifade özgürlüğünün önünü bir nebze de olsun açtı. (16)
>
> [Luckily, shortly after my father's death, Turkey entered a democratization era. Although this happened to pave the way for accession to the European Union,

> the reforms made during the PPP government have somewhat smoothed the path for the freedom of thought and speech, which have been coerced for many years.]

The novel's narrative has embedded narrators. The reader first comes across Mardiros Bakırcıyan, who shares his destiny with Zayrmayr as an old man on his deathbed. He assigns to himself the role of narrator and writes down Zayrmayr's story. Moreover, his legacy as an author allows him to invent chapter seven since he believes that his reception of the story was distorted as a result of his visit to the bathroom.

B. Sepasdatsi is another narrator who adds a note to Mardiros' preface. He states that his role is of vital importance to the publication of the book, which Mardiros entrusted to his father. By the same token, Mardiros informs the reader that throughout the narrative, Zayrmayr's first-person narrative will prevail; he will be the phantom of the novel. This complex narrative situation highlights three phenomena.

Firstly, by emphasizing the complexities of telling about the past, and listening to it, the book underlines that history writing and cultural memory are always framed by the historical situation in which they take place. Memories do not only disclose something about the past, they tell us about the present in which the remembering takes place. B. Sepasdatsi's quote highlights the fact that "the reforms made during the PPP government" enabled publication of the novel. The insertion of such historical information aims to show the reader that the political regimes determine to what extent nations can talk about their past in the present.

Secondly, the multiplicity of narrators, representing different generations, illustrates that "coming to terms" with the past is an intergenerational phenomenon. The act of finding a cure and liberating oneself from the spell of the past involves an intergenerational process. The names Mardiros, Zayrmayr, Hagop Sepasdatsi and B. Sepasdatsi exemplify the importance of intergenerational collaboration to come to terms with the past.

Thirdly, there are multiple narrators in the novel. There are gaps between the stories collected and shared by different narrators. Therefore, the stories shared by different narrators do not convey a unified narrative. This complex narrative situation can be compared to second generations who have not experienced their parents' memory. The experiences of children who have not witnessed certain events are different from their parents. If second generations treat their learnt memories as the experience *par excellence,* the emergence of "empty circles" is inevitable. A similar trajectory is also observed among the characters of the novel representing different generations. Every single character asserts that he will tell the real story as it is, trying to convince the reader of the authenticity of their storytelling. Ironically

Mardiros even invents chapter seven to establish *consistency* in the storytelling act. None of the characters fully experienced the narrated event. What they share with the reader is the result of a transmission from one generation to another. The novel was completed by different generations by listening to Zayrmayr, transmitting the story from one generation to another one and by filling in the gaps in the narrative.

Testifying and Unearthing the Silence

The issue of memory is raised both in the story and in the mode of narration. After a preface and a note to the preface, the novel starts with the character-bound narrator Zayrmayr Parseğyan. He is on his deathbed, telling about the pain he is enduring in his hospital room. The narrative commences on 23 April 1946, the day before 24 April, which is commemorated by Armenians as "Genocide Memorial Day". On 24 April 1915, the Armenian elites of Constantinople were rounded up. These operations started with arrests at home or at workplaces by the State Security Office. These elites were held for 24 hours or more in the central prison of Constantinople and then taken to Haydarpaşa railway station under police escort. From there, they were transferred to two internment locations: Ayaş and Çankırı. Since Constantinople was the centre of the empire's Armenian community, arresting prominent figures from political and intellectual life was the first step to neutralize the Ottoman Armenians. Razmik Panossian states that "this decapitated the nation and it was the opening act of the genocide" (2006, 237). The starting date of the narrative has a symbolical meaning. It establishes a link between the personal pain felt by Zayrmayr while vomiting blood and that of the Armenian nation, as well as that between his body and the collective body of the Armenians.

The opening chapter acts like a frame. It can be inferred from the passage that the whole narrative structure of the novel will be narrated through Zayrmayr testifying on his deathbed. This dramatic opening situation raises the question of transgenerational transmission. The efforts of Zayrmayr, Mardiros, Hagop and B., as characters representing different generations trying to get the manuscript published, also imply the transgenerational transmission of a story to the next generation. The date at which the novel is set furthermore invites another reading.

Zayrmayr explains that he feels the need and the urge to share his experiences with the second generation. His wish to share his story with the reader is not just an arbitrary assessment. It is a keen commitment by an old man who wants to bear witness and transmit all his knowledge before he passes away. His ruminations indicate that the telling of the story is an urgent need for him, as he feels pressed by time. He further explains:

> Hikâyemi tamamlamaya kalan vakit kâfi gelecek mi bilmiyorum. Bu müthiş hikâyeyi tüm tafsilatlarıyla size anlatmak istiyorum çünkü. Tek endişem bu! Ama söz vermiyorum bakın. Nefesimin ne zaman kesileceğini nasıl bilebilirim? Ama kararlıyım; takatim tükenene kadar devam edeceğim anlatmaya. (132)
>
> [I am not sure if the remaining time is long enough to complete my story. I want to tell this amazing story with all its details to you. This is my only concern. But I do not promise. How can I know when I will breathe my last breath? I am determined and I will continue telling until I run out of energy.]

Furthermore Zayrmayr promises that the story he narrates is true. His act of storytelling should be understood as a testimony. Zayrmayr directly addresses the reader by saying:

> Ah, şunu biliniz ki, anlatacağım ne hayali bir öykü, ne de bir masaldır hiç yaşanmamış. Bu hikayedeki her şey doğrudur…o derece doğrudur ki, bunun kanıtlarını hikâyenin kendisinden çok, kendi yüreğinde, kendi mazisinde kolaylıkla bulabilir herkes. (22)
>
> [You should know that what I will tell right now is neither a fictive story nor a fairy tale, which is not true. Everything in this story is true…It is so true that everyone can find easily the evidence of it in their heart and their own past rather than in the story itself.]

Zayrmayr claims that the story he will tell is a real one. He urges his readers to listen to it in a specific way, i.e. by looking at the same time as they are listening, inside their own hearts. The past is not just made up of a series of historical events, it is also something that is shared between people. Zayrmayr believes that:

> Düşündüm ki, mutluluk, sevgi, keder ve yalnızlık gibi, mazi de paylaşılmalıdır dostlarla: Her ne kadar orada yüzleşmek istemediğimiz pek çok şey olsa da. (25-26)
>
> [L]ike happiness, love, despair and solitude, the past should also be shared with friends even if there are many things there that we do not want to be confronted with.]

In other words, the past is something that should be transmitted, told, shared and narrated. The past should be "encountered". Yet this "encounter" is complex. It is not an encounter with something the reader already knows. This is indicated by a pun in the title. The title of the book also refers to the confrontation with the genocide because the title has a double meaning in Turkish. The verb "*karşılaşmak*" means "to

encounter". However, as the '*ş*' in the title has been written in an unconventional way, the author implies "*karşıl(aşma)*", meaning both to encounter and to exceed, transcend or confront. It suggests that the encounter will be with something that may lie beyond the reader's established knowledge and frames of reference.

The pun in the title may be read as programmatic, as a promise to the reader. We may understand it as a contract, as if the author signed an agreement with the reader that s/he will transcend his/her horizons to be confronted with an unknown part of Turkish history. In other words, the author intimates that this book will reflect what has not been uttered hitherto. A specific role is attached to the narrative, which urges the reader to question his/her dogmatic perceptions. Later on Zayrmayr states that:

> Anlattım ya, hep kaçarak yaşadım ben...en çok da kendimden kaçtım. Yine de gelin, haksızlık etmeyin bana.. Kaçınmadım çünkü karşılaşmaktan, kendimle... sizlerle...son nefesimde olsa bile...Sükûnete teslim olmadım. Bildiklerimle gömülüp gitmeye razı olmadım işte.. Korkmadım korktuğumu söylemekten... (63)
>
> [As I have told you, I have always lived by avoiding the things… mostly I avoided myself. Still, do not be unfair to me. I did not refrain from being confronted with myself and with you, even though I am breathing my last breath. I did not give in to silence. I could not accept dying with the things I know. I was not afraid to say that I was scared.]

Zayrmayr defines the limits of his narrator's role and highlights the importance of testifying. He includes the reader as the narratee who is addressed in his narrative. The "confrontation" or the "encounter" is not just an encounter with the past, but also between the narrator and the reader. Zayrmayr, who is dying, shares his story with the reader, who inherits his story. The relationship between the narrator and the reader suggests that Zayrmayr does not wish to die with the things he knows before sharing his story with others. The desire to narrate is driven by the desire to convey.

Early on in the novel, the reader understands that Zayrmayr is in need of sharing a story with us to find inner peace. From the above quotes it becomes clear that he has experienced a disturbing event, which still haunts him even on his deathbed. The daunting nature of the event makes Zayrmayr uneasy and urges him to give testimony. It is not only for his own sake that an "encounter" with his story is necessary. He also hopes that what he will share with the reader will also transform the "you" whom he addresses. Zayrmayr thinks that the role of the book is highly important in terms of "transforming" his readers. That is why he says:

> Bu bir tezatlar, karşılaşmalar, yüzleşmeler kitabı…Bunları yaptıkça da değişiyoruz hep beraber. Ne ben, ne de siz, şu sohbetin başladığı andaki kişiler değiliz artık. (324)
>
> [This is a book of contrasts, confrontations and encounters. The more we have all of these, the more we change all together. Neither me, nor you are the same people since the beginning of this chat.]

Zayrmayr contends that once the reader hears his testimony s/he will be confronted with an unknown story. He believes that exposure to the story, which the novel reveals, has the capacity of transforming the reader. The belief of Zayrmayr about the potential power of his story to transform the reader is reiterated many times in the novel. Zayrmayr claims that first we have to "heal the wound, and then forgive each other and finally start all over again" (36).[33] To remind the readers of the importance of their role while reading the novel, he claims that forgiving or settling the dispute will not be possible without the contribution of "you" (210). Through the dedication, the multiplicity of narrators and the framing of the opening chapter, the reader is given an idea about the novel's central theme, namely the narrative's power and ability to transmit "excessive" or "unspeakable" stories to the second generations. These stories are the ones, which are explicitly linked to the Armenian genocide.

Confessing, Healing and Reconciliation

Despite the clues that the novel is about the Armenian genocide, the link to this history is not immediately clear to a non-suspecting reader. In the first chapter Zayrmayr provides information about his life. The readers learn that he used to live with his mother, since his father was an alcoholic who passed away when he was a small child. He falls in love with a poor but very beautiful Armenian girl named Mari. Zayrmayr does his best to marry her and he even begs a fortune-teller for help. They eventually get married and Mari gives birth to a baby boy, Kalust. Although he did marry the girl of his choice, he cannot say that it was a happy marriage.

At a later stage, Zayrmayr meets Pehlivan Usta, who heals Yusuf, Rakım's son. This intervention is the central point of the narrative that gives the readers a clue about the divine character attributed to Pehlivan Usta throughout the novel. So far

33 "Önce yaraları sarmak, sonra helalleşmek ve nihayet yeniden başlayabilmek".

the story reads, perhaps quite unexpectedly after the introduction, as something that resembles a folk tale or a fairy-tale. It tells of curses, magic and healing powers. However, it does give the attentive reader clues to a possible alternative reading.

On the one hand, this story reads as a fairly traditional episode about a haunted house confiscated by Mr Rakım. On the other hand, the haunted-house motif has specific connotations in light of the history of the Armenian genocide. During the genocide, Armenian properties were seized and confiscated.[34] In Islamic law "halal" refers to the permissible things that can be practised, consumed or possessed by Muslims. One of the things that is not considered halal is to possess something that does not belong to the holder. This general belief in Islam suggests that an individual who has something haram [the opposite of halal] will sooner or later be punished by God.

As soon as the genocide is activated as an "intertext" that is present in the reader's mind, other textual details become significant. For example, Mrs Emine, Mr Rakım's wife, does her best to remember their Armenian neighbours:

> Ağrik'ten o eve gelin geldiydim biliyorsun. Lakin hep merak ettim, nasıl gittiler, nereye gittiler, diye. Bir daha memlekete ne döndüler, ne de bir haber aldık onlardan. (136)
>
> [It was the house in which I settled from Ağrik after our marriage. However, I have always been curious about how they left and where they headed. They neither returned to their hometown nor informed us.]

If we read Mrs Emine's remark about the house allegorically, it signifies genocide as a haunting phenomenon, curse or illness from which the perpetrators and the victims need to be cured and released. The effect of the genocide on individuals becomes clearer later on, when Pehlivan shares his intention to discuss Yusuf's medical situation with Mr Rakım in two days' time.

> Zayrmayr: "İki gün sonra mı?"
> Pehlivan Usta: "Papağan gibi tekrarlamasan her dediğimi. Kulağın bende değilmidir nedir!"
> Zayrmayr: "Kızma Usta. Tabii ki dinliyorum seni. Hem de dört kulak kesilmiş halde dinliyorum. İki gün sonra yirmi dört Nisan da, şaşırmam ondan."
> Pehlivan Usta: "Biliyorum, sakin ol. Yas gününü bayram günü edeceğiz. Hastalandığımız gün şifa bulacağız, hep beraber." (326)

34 Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel. *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property*. London / New York: Continuum, 2011.

> [Zayrmayr: "In two days?"
> Pehlivan Usta: "Do not repeat everything I am saying like a parrot. Are you not following me?
> Zayrmayr: "Do not be angry. Of course I am listening to you. In fact I am listening to you very carefully. In two days it will be the 24th of April, that is why I was taken aback."
> Pehlivan Usta: "I know. Calm down! We will turn the mourning day into a festival. We will find the cure all together on the day we became ill."]

The expressions "the mourning day" and "the day we became ill", as well as the date, again, seem to refer to the annihilation of the Armenians. Furthermore, it suggests that the cure is not something individual, but that it is something collective. Moreover, this cure is found *precisely* when the day that they became 'ill' is remembered. "Curing" is presented as something that lifts a spell and is linked to collective commemoration.

Apart from a spell, an illness and a curse, something can also be read allegorically. Pehlivan Usta claims that Rakım's family has a secret, which is the reason of their son's ongoing sickness (345). As the narrative climaxes, Mr Rakım feels the urge to testify in front of everyone in the street. He suddenly opens up:

> Elim kanlıdır efendiler. Komşumun, Haçik Usta'nın kanına girdim. Mal hırsı gözümüzü bürümüştü. Kıskançlık aklımızı almıştı. Kanun yoktu, kargaşa vardı. Haçik Usta Tehcir'e gitmeden evvel babama gelmiş, bütün malını mülkünü bize emanet edeceğini söylemişti. "Dönsem bile tüm mallarımın yarısı sizin olsun" dedi. "Yok, şayet dönemezsem zaten her şey sizin hakkınızdır." Ama şeytan girdi içimize. Haçik Usta dönmesin, malların hepsi bizim olsun diye babamla pusu kurduk. Ah dostlar! Haçik Usta'nın o şaşkın yüzü hâlâ gözlerimin önündedir. O günden beridir içim hep huzursuz, uykularım hep karabasanlıdır. Allah affetsin beni! Bir günahkârım ben!. (346)

> [Gentlemen, I am a murderer. I deceived my neighbour Haçik Usta. Thirst for property and money made me blind towards my neighbour. I was affected by jealousy. There was no law and chaos was prevailing. Before their forced deportation, Haçik Usta came to our house and told my father that he would entrust all his properties to us. He also added, "If we do not return, all of it will naturally belong to you." We were deceived by the devil. My father and I were intrigued to possess his properties. Therefore we made a plan not to see his return. Oh friends! The perplexed face of Haçik Usta is still fresh in my memory. Since then I have been feeling restless and having nightmares. God forgive me! I am sinful!]

The confession of Rakım can be read as an almost religious allegory, indicating the liberating role of forgiveness and confession. What sets the story apart is that it is not so much the perpetrator who suffers from the curse of the past, nor the victim who is still under the spell of the past, but rather the perpetrator's child, the second generation. Yusuf suffers from a cursed history that he himself does not know, but which has been transferred to him by his family. As long as this story is not brought out in an open way and truly confessed, a cure is impossible.

Spectres of Memory

In the novel Yusuf represents a second-generation child whose parental past has led to his pathologization. The secret past of his family is transmitted to him. He also becomes a victim. In this section, I will analyze how different kinds of haunting memories form the character of Pehlivan Usta [first generation] and Zayrmayr [second generation].

In the novel Zayrmayr is depicted as a "reader" and a "listener". Throughout his youth, he enjoyed spending his time in the printing house of Mr Şirag, whom he calls *Uncle Şirag* [Dayday Şirag in Armenian]. During each visit at the printing house, the books delight Zayrmayr. Uncle Şirag lends him books by certain Armenian authors such as Zohrab, Zabel Asadur, Zabel Esayan, Yeghise Charents, Hagop Baronian, Bedros Turyan and Krikor Zohrab. Zayrmayr recalls, "He used to tell me that he was a good friend of Krikor Zohrab and that they used to see each other until Zohrab's untimely death" (32). Uncle Şirag did not choose these Armenian authors or poets randomly. The Armenian intellectuals that Uncle Şirag introduces to Zayrmayr were targeted by the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the genocide. On 24 April 1915 these authors were arrested along with Gomitas in Constantinople. From there they were sent to internment camps in central Anatolia. The arrest of these intellectuals marks the beginning of the genocide.

Different explanations offer different explanations to Uncle Şirag's motivation to introduce these books to Zayrmayr. By lending him certain books Uncle Şirag sought in first instance to enlighten the boy about a suppressed history. When Zayrmayr asks Şirag about the importance of these books Uncle Şirag replies: "You can never know what kind of secrets and stories are hidden in those books *dığa*" (34).[35] Uncle Şirag makes an effort to relativize the importance of the authors to the Armenian people but Zayrmayr, a young boy, fails to understand what he is talking about: "As I told you, I never understood anything from his sentences" (34). Zayrmayr "receives"

35 "Dığa" means young boy in Western Armenian.

the stories of the genocide, not as something that he can "understand", but rather as a "secret" that remains inaccessible to him. As a child Zayrmayr was unable to grasp the importance of the stories hidden in these books. Uncle Şirag frequently gives clues about what happened in 1915 and explains: "I lived a lot, more than enough to experience things which should never be seen and experienced *dığa*" (34).

Uncle Şirag is passionate about his printing house to publish and therefore about transmitting more knowledge about a forgotten episode in Turkish history. Interestingly in this part of the novel someone again "receives" the story, but not *completely*. In the other (embedded) story, there is something that needs to be "filled in" by the person who transcribes. Similarly, in the relationship between Zayrmayr and Uncle Şirag, we understand that there is a "secret", which Zayrmayr cannot understand. As a second-generation child who has not witnessed the genocide, Zayrmayr's memory is empty. From his conversation with Pehlivan Usta about the importance of the 24th of April, we are made aware that he knows what happened in 1915. However, in the novel he is depicted as a character devoid of memory.

On the other hand, S., commonly known as Pehlivan Usta, is portrayed as someone whose memory and character have been fundamentally shaped by the genocide. At the beginning of the novel he is introduced as S. to the reader. Later on, when Pehlivan Usta goes to the police station, Zayrmayr informs us that there he introduces himself as "S. Soğomonyan" (159). Pehlivan Usta has a cousin who is also referred to as S. (177). As indicated at the outset of this chapter, Gomitas' real name is Soghomon Soghomonian. At this point the reader infers from the passage that both Pehlivan Usta and Gomitas carry the same official name: Soghomon Soghomonyan. Thus, the novel establishes a historical link between the narrative and the historical figure of Gomitas, both through the textual element of the dedication of the novel.

The title of the novel's next chapter is *Medz Yeghern,* which means Great Catastrophe in Western Armenian. It is used to refer to the annihilation of the Ottoman Armenians. This chapter clearly outlines what the genocide means for Pehlivan Usta. The dialogues between Zayrmayr and Pehlivan explicitly inform the reader about how the genocide started the eradication of the Anatolian Armenians. Pehlivan Usta remembers that his cousin Gomitas was arrested in Constantinople on the 24 April 1915. Devastated by this news, Pehlivan Usta rushed to the Armenian Patriarchate to find a solution. There he met hundreds of other Armenians whose family members had also been arrested (187).

Along with many other Armenian intellectuals, Gomitas was sent to an internment camp in Çankırı. Meanwhile, the illustrious Turkish author and intellectual Halide Edip Adıvar, following a plea by Pehlivan Usta, asked the American ambassador Henry Morgenthau for the American government's support. Eventually Gomitas returned from exile, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (187).

By weaving a historical fact about Gomitas's victimization into the narrative through Pehlivan Usta, the novel highlights intergenerational memory. For instance, Pehlivan Usta himself has not witnessed the genocide. Yet as a member of the first generation he has produced a postmemory, which makes him believe that the genocide pathologized every single Armenian. That is why, during his conversation with Zayrmayr, he expressed the wish to visit Mr Rakım on 24 April to induce both a personal and collective recovery from the ongoing effects of the genocide. He says, "I am aware of the fact that I am ill. I came back to my city to encounter and be confronted with the reason of my illness" (151). The psychological effects of the genocide on his character cause his ailment, which gets worse day by day due to the absence of acknowledgement. In a conversation with Zayrmayr, Pehlivan Usta said that he would transform "the mourning day" and "the day they became ill" into a celebration (326). This also confirms the fact that Pehlivan Usta sees all second generations after the genocide as the carriers of this intergenerational memory. They suffer not only because of the genocide itself but also because of the Turkish government's denialist policies, thus obstructing the way to bereavement. I believe that, for Pehlivan Usta, the Turkish government's refusal to acknowledge the mass extermination of the Armenians as genocide is the reason of the intergenerational "illness". This is illustrated by Yusuf's instantaneous recovery following the confession of Mr Rakım. The narrative thus brings the link between acknowledgement and recovery out.

So far the narrative has equated Armenian characters with victimhood and Turkish characters with accountability for the genocide. However, this dichotomy is broken with the introduction of the Armenian character Armine. One day Pehlivan Usta meets a girl named Armine in an Armenian church (189). She witnessed the death of her parents during the genocide. A Kurdish man called Bekiroğlu Reşit felt sorry for her and took her in. She was saved by the altruism of a Kurdish man. Armine asks Pehlivan Usta, "How can I come to terms with this? I have the same nightmare ever since in which I see the tragic end of my family" (190). The answer of Pehlivan marks a shift in the narrative about the way the second generations approach the Turks. Pehlivan replies:

> Unutma. Bu memlekete senin ananı babanı katledenler olduğu kadar, işte Reşit gibi hayatı pahasına Ermeni komşularına sahip çıkanlar da var. Şimdi sen kime nefret besleyecek, kime lanet edeceksin? Türk'ü, Kürt'ü, Çerkes'i Müslüman'ı hepsi bir kişi mi? Hepsi kötü mü? Hepsi suçlu mu?. (190)
>
> [Do not forget. In this country, apart from those who murdered your mother and father, there are also people like Reşit who saved their Armenian neighbors

> at the risk of their own lives. Now, who will you hold a grudge against? Who will you curse? Are Turks, Kurds, Circassians and Muslims just one person? Are they all bad? Are they all guilty?]

The advice of Pehlivan Usta also contains a message to the reader. No matter what happened during the genocide the second generations should firmly resist holding grudges against each other. Armine has been haunted by the tragic death of her family. Her memory is so heavily loaded with nightmares that she seeks a solution to her problem. However, she lives in Istanbul, a city where a large majority of the residents are Turks. At this point, of Pehlivan Usta also impresses on her the need for Armenians and Turks to learn to live together. They should not let the genocide antagonize them.

One can argue that through Pehlivan Usta, the novel offers another voice from the Armenian community. He clings to his past so strongly that he generalizes and makes all Armenians the bearers of a common pathos. At the same time, he presents the recognition of the genocide as a vital step towards Armenian-Turkish reconciliation. Zayrmayr agrees with Pehlivan Usta about the importance of acknowledgement for recovery, using the word *şifa* [cure] in Turkish. Zayrmayr comments on the importance of acknowledgement:

> Ben siyaset bilmem, kimseyi de incitmek istemem. Lakin hakikat, bir yaranın mecburen dağlanması gibi ilkin acı verir. Ancak şifa bulmak için de bu şarttır. (184)
>
> [I do not know anything about politics and I would not like to hurt anyone. However, like the bleeding of a wound, at first reality hurts. But it is essential in order to find a cure.]

Zayrmayr also creates an analogy between coming to terms with reality and finding a cure for an illness. Acknowledgment of the genocide is considered as the tool to pave the way for a collective recovery.

The concept of postmemory, as defined by Hirsch, is the transmission of memories belonging to the survivors to the second generations. She presents it as an comprehensive term that can illuminate transgenerational trauma. However, what the second generations bear witness to is only a vague attachment to a subject they have not experienced themselves. The concept of postmemory stages all second-generation children as individuals affected by a learnt memory. The way that second generations treat their learnt memory as a lived memory becomes clear when we look how Pehlivan Usta is psychologically burdened by the genocide. The exile of his cousin Gomitas has definitely played an important role in the way Pehlivan Usta

centralizes the genocide in his identity. Yet over-identifying with the experiences of the victims and survivors is nothing but a psychological investment.

Zayrmayr's traumatic memory has not been shaped by the genocide but by the socio-political measures taken by the Turkish governments against the Armenians. Let me further develop my argument by giving concrete examples from the novel. After explaining Pehlivan Usta's many nicknames, Zayrmayr informs the reader about the importance of names to Armenians. To show the relationship between Armenian identity and names, he uses the examples of three Armenian names: Bedros (Peter), Boghos (Paul) and Krikor (Gregory). The fact that there are many festivals and name days associated with these names make them widely familiar. To further illustrate what names mean for the Armenian identity Zayrmayr asserts:

> İsimlerimize bu kadar itina gösteriyor olmak, mevcudiyetimizi sürdürme, "Hay yev Krisdonya" kalabilme çabamızın billurlaşmış vaziyetidir. İsimlerimiz ruhlarımızı mühürlemiş, onun muadili olmuşlardır. Herşeyimiz tehlikede olsa da kimse haysiyetli bir insanın ismini ondan alamaz. Yağma malı olacak son şey insanın ismidir ki, böyle bir şey olursa, o kişi mevcudiyetini kaybetmiş lanetli bir ruhtan başka bir şey olmaz artık. (66)
>
> [Paying that much attention to our names is the crystallized reason of our effort to remain in existence and to survive as "Armenian and Christian". Our names have sealed off our souls and they have become alike. Even if all we have is endangered, no one can take away the name of a proud person. The last thing to be ransacked is a person's name. If such a thing happens, that person is nothing but a cursed soul, which has lost its existence.]

For Zayrmayr, names are one of the elements that keep the Armenians together and help them to retain their identity. His explanation makes it very clear that names attribute certain identities to people and that without names people do not exist anymore. Zayrmayr believes that although a person may lose everything s/he has, no one should be forced to change his name. On the following page, he demonstrates in detail why names are so important for Armenians. He takes the view that although Armenians have enormously suffered, they have always done their best to retain their names (66).

At the beginning of the novel Zayrmayr introduces himself to the reader and explains that his surname has been changed as a result of the Surname Law (29). At first sight this regulation might seem like a minor legal measure, but it has led to the neutralization and the Turkification of religious minorities, as demonstrated by the case of Zayrmayr. In chapter two, Zayrmayr further elaborates on the effect of the Surname Law on his memory. He states that:

> Ben Soyadı Nizamnamesi yürürlüğe konduktan birkaç sene daha eski soyadımı muhafaza ettim. Lakin bindokuzyüzotuzaltı yılında polis -ben onlara isim avcıları- diyordum evlere kadar dayanmaya başladığında, çaresiz nüfus müdürlüğüne müracat ederek soyadımı değiştirmek mecburiyetinde kaldım. (66)
>
> [After the adoption of the Surname Law, I continued to use my real surname for a couple of years. However, when in 1936 the police – I call them name hunters – started to knock on our doors, I was forced to change my surname.]

The recurrent mention of this law throughout the narrative emphasizes the effect of this policy on the psychological condition and memory of Zayrmayr. Adopting Turkish surnames not only sustains a public invisibility of non-Muslims but also contributes to the assimilation of minorities.

Zayrmayr does not take in the realities pertinent to the genocide through his own imagination since he lacks the direct experience. He is aware of the fact that the Young Turks carried out such a racially motivated annihilation and that the outcome was horrible. Yet this is all he can say. Since Zayrmayr cannot easily "access" his past, he is alienated from his Armenian heritage. The histories found in books are therefore like secrets to him. In the case of Pehlivan Usta, Yusuf and Zayrmayr, the characters suffer from a past that is "unknown" to them, which resembles the "empty circle" mentioned by Laub.

Conclusion

The novel *Karşılaşma* [Encounter] focuses on the repercussions of the remembrance of the genocide on the second generations. The dedication of the novel to the first and the last Armenian martyr in Turkey indicates that the novel will focus on an intergenerational transmission of the genocidal memory. Uncle Şirag and Pehlivan Usta represent first generation Armenians who are dedicated to find the "cure" for their illness. Uncle Şirag devotes himself to printing books written by the first victims of the genocide: the Armenian men of letters from Constantinople. On the other hand, as a recluse and shy man, Pehlivan Usta leads an anonymous life. Rather than identifying himself as Soghomon, he adopts a nickname to disguise his real identity. During a conversation with Zayrmayr, he claims that the Armenians will recover on the day they became ill. The statement of Pehlivan Usta not only pathologizes all Armenians as the bearers of a common pathos but also entrusts them with a new mission to find the "cure".

As opposed to the two characters with a vivid postmemory about the genocide, Zayrmayr does not grasp the meaning of books written by massacred authors. In the novel he is presented as a failure, with an unhappy marriage and an unsuccessful business. Portraying Zayrmayr as a man who lacks a distinctive character can be read as the result of his failure to be a memory character.

The novel suggests that healing takes place through listening, but also by using the imagination to fill in the gaps. Usually a reader can distinguish between official history and private memories. The standard idea is that "history" is objective and in the third person, while memories are subjective and in the first person. The novel suggests a third category, memories that are "inherited" and that need to be completed, shared, filled in, taken possession of by using the imagination. Therefore, *Karşılaşma* assigns a specific role to the imaginative reader to fill in the gaps, to complete the missing parts of the puzzle and to reach their own conclusion. There are gaps between the stories collected and shared by different narrators. That is why these stories do not convey a unified narrative. The complex narrative situation of the novel can be compared to second generations who have not experienced the ordeals their parents have gone through. The experiences of children are different from their parents'. This accounts for the gap between the generations. Similarly, the same phenomenon can be seen among the characters of the novel representing different generations. Every single character asserts that he will provide the real story as it is. The characters try to convince the reader of the authenticity of their storytelling. At this point I believe that the novel assigns a role to the imaginative reader who will invest in the story narrated by Zayrmayr. It is only then that the gaps between the stories by different narrators will become meaningful. This will allow the reader to understand the conflict between the official public narrative and private memory. Ultimately this will result in filling the gaps and creating a structured and unified narrative.

Chapter 2

Art Projects as Counter-Monuments in Istanbul

Monuments traditionally commemorate heroic events, victories or losses that play an important role in the history of a nation. For instance, Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square in London was built to commemorate Admiral Horatio Nelson, who died at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Monuments play a key role in the construction of a national identity. By establishing a link between past and present, they help nations to create "imagined communities" as Benedict Anderson calls it.[36] Thus, monuments are more than just a concretization of a particular historical moment. They are established by nation states as significant media around which national identity is shaped. After the Second World War, a different type of monuments emerged besides the traditional ones. These monuments did not serve to glorify the national past; on the contrary, they accommodated new ways of remembering the extermination of the European Jewry. The Aschrott Fountain project of Horst Hoheisel, unveiled in 1985 in Kassel's Town Hall Square, is an example of the new monument style. One might ask the question: What differentiates the "new" monuments from the traditional ones? In order to make these points more concrete, I will elaborate the differences in the next part of this chapter.

In contrast to Germany's attempts to confront its past, collective amnesia about the Armenian genocide and the Armenians has been a lingering issue in modern Turkey. Instead of memorializing the genocide as the German government has done, in the last century successive Turkish governments have pursued an active policy of muting the debates about it. Given the negationist policies of the Turkish state, it should come as no surprise that the memorialization in Turkey has focused on the

36 "Imagined communities" is a concept developed by Benedict Anderson. Anderson argues that a nation is a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group. Anderson's concept initiates the theoretical discussion about nationalism with a basic question: what makes people live and die for nations, as well as hate and kill in their name? For his research the author examines the creation and the spread of "imagined communities", the processes that generate these communities, religious faiths and the development of secular languages-of-state. See Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities* (2006).

glorification of the modern Turkish state and its founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. All around the country Atatürk monuments have been unveiled both to emplot the story of national triumphs and to honour fallen comrades. These monuments have been constructed with the intention of dictating to modern Turkish citizens what to remember, whom to admire and what to forget. While traditional monuments were used for identity-building, the monuments belonging to Armenians have been destroyed. The Armenian heritage concentrated in the eastern part of Turkey has been eradicated, the names of the villages have been changed and the churches have been dilapidated.[37] Moreover, in Iğdır, in the eastern province of Turkey, the *Iğdır Genocide Monument and Museum* [Iğdır Soykırım Anıt Müzesi] was created in 1999 to commemorate the "genocide" committed by the Armenians against the Turks. This monument not only intends to offer a counter-argument to the Armenian claims but also aims to reverse the historical facts pertinent to genocide.[38]

Recently there have been artistic commemorations, produced outside the sphere of what is officially sanctioned in Turkish society, which seek to commemorate the Armenian genocide. For instance, Ayşe Erkmen, Tayfun Serttaş, Kutluğ Ataman and Hrair Sarkissian are four contemporary artists whose work deals with the genocide in modern Turkey. The question that I want to discuss in this chapter is: is it possible to understand various projects of these artists as attempts to construct "counter-monuments" in the sense of James E. Young? In Young's view, "counter-monuments" offer criticism of monuments. They are a conscious departure from the traditional iconography of monuments through which the past is rigidified in monumental forms. Young believes that "by creating common spaces for memory, monuments propagate the illusion of common memory" (1993, 6). Counter-monuments break down the hierarchical relationship between an art object and its audience. They challenge the very idea of monumentality and foster new ways of remembrance by creating a tension between viewer and work. Thus, they produce a new discourse

37 See Dickran Kouymjian. "The Destruction of Armenian Historical Monuments as a Continuation of the Turkish Policy of Genocide" (1985) and Robert Bevan. *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (2007).

38 Iğdır is a city in Turkey bordering Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iran. The border between Armenia and Iğdır is formed by the Arax river. Mount Ararat, which symbolizes the lost homeland for the Armenians, is also located in Iğdır. *Iğdır Soykırım Anıt Müzesi* [Iğdır Genocide Monument and Museum] was opened on 5 October 1999. Speaking at the opening, Mirzaoglu claimed that between 1915 and 1920 the Armenians in Iğdır massacred nearly 80,000 people. The location chosen for the museum is at the eastern entrance of the city, which lies where the roads from Azerbaijan and Armenia meet. The area selected to unveil the monument has a surface of 1.3 hectares and the monument is 43.5 metres high. It displays nationalist motifs that commemorate the Turkish victims of the so-called "genocide" committed by the Armenians.

of representation by enhancing an active relationship between spectator and object. Young argues that counter-monuments do not remember the past in accordance with a variety of national myths, ideals or conventions as opposed to the official monuments. That is why counter-monuments posit the visitor's role in the memorial space so that visitors invest them with new meanings.

In this chapter I will explore how four contemporary art works *Two Siblings* [İki Kardeş] by Ayşe Erkmen, *Foto Galatasaray* by Tayfun Serttaş, *Testimony* [Tanıklık] by Kutluğ Ataman and *Istory* [Benim Hikayem] by Hrair Sarkissian contest the celebratory record of the past offered by the Turkish government through its policies. I will address the following questions: what kind of representational strategies do these artists adopt to challenge the official narrative about the past? In what way do these works complement, undermine or criticize the official narrative of Turkish history? How effective are these works in terms of generating a new remembrance against Turkey's amnesiac relationship with the genocide? In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the concept of counter-monument by giving concrete examples from the memorial projects of Germany. Next, I will examine the specificity of the contemporary art projects that I have chosen for this chapter. Finally, I will analyze how these artworks, all unveiled in Istanbul, invite us to extend or rethink Young's concept of the counter-monument.

Counter-Memorial Projects in Germany

In his book *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, Young introduces the notion of counter-monument and explores the memorial problem of post-Holocaust Germany. Young states that conventional monuments mostly recall war deaths, resistance or mass murder by remembering the past according to a variety of national myths or political ideologies. One recurring strategy is to commemorate past deaths by turning them into ennobling events to create a sense of shared values out of them. Traditional monuments offer what Young calls "redemptive narratives" and therefore tend to suppress the painful episodes of history. In contrast counter-monuments are works that seek to subvert the conventional pathos inherent in public monuments. Young argues, "counter-monuments would be memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premise of the monument" (2000, 96). He emphasizes the ephemeral, deconstructive and anti-redemptive nature of counter-monuments in contrast to the permanent, hierarchical and redemptive character of conventional monuments. Through the interaction of the private individual with the public monument, two types of memory, private and public, collide. The visitor is challenged to explore the memory that the monument offers and relates them

to his/her own memories. The role played by counter-monuments in the present therefore depends on their capacity to generate human reactions. By being interactive they invite spectators to question their personal memory and oppose them to the public ones. In contrast to traditional monuments, which dictate officially sanctioned narratives about the past without establishing a connection to private sorrow, counter-monuments force viewers into taking an active role. As a consequence, counter-monuments desanctify, demystify and deconstruct the traditional functions of the monument. Young asserts that counter-monuments create an obligation for the passers-by to "enter" into the monument. By inciting viewers, they not only penetrate the consciousness of the citizens but also invite them to interact.

The word counter-monument derives from a work by the conceptual artists Jochen and Esther Gerz, which they entitled *Gegen-denkmal* [counter-monument]. This monument was unveiled in 1986 in Harburg, a district in Hamburg, following the city's invitation to create a *Monument against Fascism, War and Violence-and for Peace and Human Rights*. It was initially a pillar, twelve metres high and one meter wide, made of hollow aluminium and covered with a layer of dark lead. A steel stylus was attached to each corner so that people could sign their names onto the pillar. The temporary inscription near its base reads in German, Turkish, French, English, Russian, Hebrew and Arabic:

> We invite the citizens of Harburg, and visitors to the town, to add their names here to ours. In doing so, we commit ourselves to remain vigilant. As more and more names cover this 12-meter tall lead column, it will gradually be lowered into the ground. One day it will have disappeared completely, and the site of the Harburg monument against fascism will be empty. In the end, it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice. (1993, 30)

Unveiled in 1986, the memorial was lowered six times before sinking completely in 1993, with over 70,000 signatures inscribed onto its surface. Today a framed board at the site shows the evolution of the memorial at its various sinking stages. Visitors can see a portion of the sunken column from a glass door underneath the elevated terrace where it once stood. The monument did not only challenge the very idea of monumentality but also it also refrained from pointing a finger to the citizens about what to remember and what to forget. Young considers that:

> Their monument against fascism, therefore, would amount to a monument against itself: against the traditionally didactic function of monuments, against their tendency to displace the past they would have us contemplate – and finally, against the authoritarian propensity in all art that reduces viewers to passive spectators. (1993, 28)

The foundational idea of the counter-monument is based on transforming the viewers into participants by awakening something in their minds and persuading them to engage in a dialogue between with their pasts. Therefore, monuments are no longer sites where personal memory is repressed and an official rigid version of history is promoted. Young argues:

> With audacious simplicity, the counter-monument thus flouts any number of cherished memorial conventions; its aim not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by passers-by but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and desanctification; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town's feet. (1993, 30)

The *Monument against Fascism, War and Violence-and for Peace and Human Rights* ended up collecting 70,000 signatures from Hamburg residents. The act of signing on the monument invited people to establish a personal relation with the monument. This also triggered individual memories of the Holocaust and invited people to invest them with new meanings. Counter-monuments encourage the passers-by to participate in the discovery of memory. Contrary to self-contained sites of memories detached from the daily lives of the citizens, counter-monuments infiltrate the daily lives of the viewers. Active role-taking and participation by writing on the column transform the viewers into memorial agencies. Viewers not only become participants or new agents of this memorialization process but they are also stimulated to imagine the brutalities committed by the Nazi regime.

Another project that exemplifies Young's notion of the counter-monument is Hoheisel's *Negative Form* monument. A different city, this time Kassel, invited artists to consider ways to conserve one of its destroyed historical monuments: the Aschrott-Brunnen [Aschrott Fountain] in Town Hall Square. In his book, Young informs his readers that the fountain was condemned and demolished by the Nazis on 8-9 April 1939 because it had been funded and given to the city as a gift by a Jewish entrepreneur. Local artist Horst Hoheisel decided, "neither a preservation of its remnants nor its mere reconstruction would do" (1993, 43). Hoheisel proposed a "negative-form" monument in the town hall to forge new ways of remembering the city's eradicated Jews. In Hoheisel's design, a hole in the shape of the old fountain would sink into the new foundation on its old place, in order to represent historical events as a "wound" and an "open question". According to Young, "the very absence of the monument will now be preserved in its precisely duplicated negative space" (1993, 45). The new design of the fountain aims to transform the distracted passers-by into engaged viewers who realize the absence of monuments. They are invited to look inward for

memory and are thus assigned an active role. To summarize, three things characterize counter-monuments: 1) they challenge the monumentalizing characteristics of the conventional monuments because they are ephemeral or temporary; 2) the stories they tell about the past are anti-redemptive, and 3) they emphasize the relationship between the private (the spectator) and the public (monument).

In addition to the concept of counter-monument, Young also developed the notion of "counter-art" to refer to the works of post-Holocaust generation of American artists such as Art Spiegelman, David Levinthal and Shimon Attie (2000, 7). Young argues that these artists are aware of the "great gulf of time between themselves and the Holocaust" (1993, 27). That is why, rather than depicting the Holocaust directly, they create works, which explicitly distinguish their experiences from the experiences of the survivors. Their vicarious knowledge of the Holocaust results in establishing a distance between themselves and the survivors. The breach between the un-experienced past and their works generates a unique representation of the Holocaust, Young argues. Although I will use Young's concept of counter-art towards the end of this chapter, I have some reservations with regard to this term, and I do not find it as productive as his concept of the "counter-monument". The concept of counter-monument derives its meaning from the fact that certain monuments challenge and counter certain established historical narratives. They do so by reversing the stylistic codes adopted by traditional monuments, which glorify nations through redemptive narratives. Their functioning relies on the existence of a fairly established genre, i.e. "the monument". For this reason the concept of counter-monument makes sense.

The concept of counter-art fails to address what these post-Holocaust artists seek to achieve. The concept of "counter-monument" problematizes the monument as a medium. Conversely, the notion of "counter-art" does not problematize or counter art. Since there is not "the" representation as such, "counter-art" projects intervene differently in the memorial processes. The counter-art projects of the post-Holocaust generation of American artists such as Art Spiegelman, David Levinthal and Shimon Attie use alternative ways while sharing their vicarious knowledge about the Holocaust. For instance, in 1991 Shimon Attie projected portions of pre-World War I photographs of Jewish life onto the same or nearby addresses where they were originally taken. The project of Attie entitled 'The Writing on the Wall', sets a good example to the concept of "counter-art" thanks to the specific way the artist chose to (re)present the absence of the Jews in modern Berlin.[39] In sum, the

39 For Shimon Attie's "The Writing on the Wall" project see:
<http://shimonattie.net/portfolio/the-writing-on-the-wall/> [accessed 02 January 2013].

notion of "counter-art" refers to above-mentioned artists who reinvent the media of storytelling.

Nevertheless, there is a link between Young's "counter-artists" and the artists whose work I will analyze in this chapter. Like these post-Holocaust artists mentioned in Young's book, the contemporary artists that I will discuss in this chapter do not attempt to portray the Armenian genocide. They represent their hyper-mediated experiences of the Armenians and the genocide by representing the vicariousness of their knowledge.

The first work I will examine, Ayşe Erkmen's *Two Siblings* [İki Kardeş], consists of two posters shown on advertising boards at two different locations in Istanbul – Taksim Square and Harbiye – which were illuminated at night. The two persons depicted are relatives of Erkmen, her grandmother, of Armenian descent, and her uncle. The second work that I will analyze is the project of Tayfun Serttaş entitled *Foto Galatasaray*. The project is based on the complete professional archive belonging to Maryam Şahinyan, an Istanbulite female professional photographer who worked in her studio in Pera uninterruptedly from 1935 until 1985. The third work, Kutluğ Ataman's *Testimony* [Tanıklık], is a video installation with footage of his nanny Kevser. She was an Armenian infant when she was brought into Ataman's family and from that time on, both her true identity and her past have been kept secret by her and others: her real identity was a taboo. The fourth work that I will explore is the Hrair Sarkissian's, *Istory* [Benim Hikayem], which consists of photographs of various libraries and archives in Istanbul. In 2010 Sarkissian spent two months in Istanbul documenting the history sections of various semi-private and public libraries and archives in the city, from the Archaeological Museum and Topkapı Palace Libraries to the Atatürk Library in Taksim, the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry General Directorate of State, and the Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre. The personal history of Sarkissian is closely linked to these books and files, as his grandparents were deported from eastern Anatolia to Syria during the genocide. I will study these works to see in which sense they are counter-monuments in the light of the theoretical discussion developed by Young. Finally, I will seek answers to the questions: what do these four works add to Young's concept of counter-monument? Do they challenge or qualify his notion of the representation of a vicarious knowledge?

Contested Narratives in the Public Space of Istanbul

The tension between the private sphere and the public realm is at the heart of the works of Ayşe Erkmen. She typically proceeds by intervening in public space and



Fig. 1. *Shipped Ships*, Frankfurt am Main, 2001. Courtesy of Ayşe Erkmen & Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin.

adding new meanings to that environment.[40] Erkmen gained an international reputation with site-specific sculptures installed at unconventional settings that alter the experience of time and space. Her intervention often consists of inserting "strange" elements into everyday environments. In *Sculptures on the Air* (1997), for example, Erkmen recreated the iconic scene from Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* in which sculptures fly around a town suspended from a helicopter and then land on the roof of a museum in Munster. For her *Shipped Ships* (2001) project Erkmen had three ships brought to Frankfurt am Main for the duration of summer to be used as public transport on the city's waterway. These were ships that used to be passenger ferries

40 Erkmen was born in 1949 in Istanbul and studied art, majoring in sculpture, between 1969 and 1977 at Istanbul's Fine Arts Academy. As part of its Berlin Artists-in-Residence programme, the German Academic Exchange Service invited her to spend a year in the city, starting in April 1993. In 1998-1999 she worked as the Arnold Bode Professor at the Kassel Art Academy. In 2002 she was awarded the Maria Sibylla Merian Prize by the Ministry of Science and Art in the state of Hessen. From 2002 to 2007 she worked at the Frankfurt Städelschule as a lecturer. Among the many international exhibitions Erkmen has participated in, are the 2nd and the 4th Istanbul Biennials, the Münster Sculpture Project, the Shanghai, Berlin, Guangzhou, Sharjah, Venice and SCAPE Biennials, as well as the Folkestone and Echigo Tsumari Triennials.

in Istanbul, Venice and Shingu (see figure 1). They were purchased, with their local crews, from the public transport administrations in Turkey, Italy and Japan to be shipped to Germany. The Frankfurt residents could use these ferries by paying the same amount of money a ticket costs in Istanbul, Venice and Shingu. Ferries are not used for transportation in Frankfurt. The project of Erkmen created a new way to enjoy Frankfurt since its residents could now experience their city from a different perspective. The Frankfurters were not aware that they were travelling in a sculpture, conceived by an artist. This project provided them with an opportunity to enjoy a new experience. The art critic Friedrich Meschede wrote about the project:

> However it was the Istanbul ferry service that provided the conceptual trigger for this action, because Ayşe Erkmen had noticed that there was no such service on the River Main. This observation reveals two basic features of Ayşe Erkmen's work, which are to be seen as leitmotifs. She first reacts to something that she notices is missing, indeed was never present, but yet appears so obvious as ferries on a river. The second leitmotif of her work is the borrowing of images for her artistic purposes. For the action in Frankfurt the ferry service and busy traffic on the Bosphorus was borrowed as an image to be transferred to Main. (2008, 20)

Although Erkmen spends most of her time in Berlin, Istanbul is still a source of inspiration to her. *Shipped Ships* is another project inspired by the Bosphorus, the strait that divides her hometown Istanbul into two parts: Asia and Europe. The realization of this project not only made the inhabitants of Frankfurt aware of their city but also made them question the closeness/remoteness of cities such as Venice, Istanbul and Shingu. The experience of travelling with the local crew, who used these ferries in their hometowns, enhances this possibility in particular.

Am Haus (1994) is a project which Erkmen realized in Berlin's Kreuzberg district. Erkmen affixed some Turkish past tense suffixes in their singular and plural forms on the façade of a building in Kreuzberg, an area highly populated by Turkish immigrants. These suffixes did not mean anything to Germans at first (see figure 2). Thus, this was an installation that was open to various readings. Again, Erkmen took advantage of a neighbourhood, in which most of the inhabitants were of Turkish descent, by addressing a specific group of people. The ephemeral intervention in the public space of a German metropolis has not only shown the linguistic characteristics of this district by using different versions of Turkish suffixes but also offered a puzzle to the passers-by about the relationship between her art, space and time. Although, like most of her other works, *Am Haus* was planned to be a temporary installation, the Oranienstrasse 18 residents were so delighted to have it there that it became a permanent fixture in Kreuzberg.



Fig. 2. Am Haus, Berlin, Oranienstrasse 18, 1994. Courtesy of Ayşe Erkmen & Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin.

Erkmen was born in her grandmother Hermine Sedat's Simpatyan Apartment next to the Lycée de Galatasaray in 1949 in Istanbul. Hermine was an haute-couture designer whose atelier was visited by the most stylish women of Istanbul. Erkmen not only spent a happy childhood with her grandmother but was also deeply influenced by the experiences of Hermine as an Istanbulite of Armenian origin. The politically fragile identity of her grandmother was the central issue in *Two Siblings* [İki Kardeş] in 2007. It was part of a group exhibition named *Art Takes to the Streets* [Sanat Sokağa Taştı]. Four posters, each 171x115 cm, were put up at two locations in Istanbul, Taksim Square and Harbiye, in double-sided advertising boards. One features a woman, the other a man (see figures 3 and 4). Incorrectly described as untitled in the Turkish text under the photos, the work in fact bears the title *Two Siblings* [İki Kardeş]. Both posters carried an inscription with place names attached on the left top of the posters. *Istanbul* was written on the light-grey poster portraying a woman in her late forties in half-profile. On the other hand, *Khartoum* [Hartum] was the title of the green-lighted poster of a smoking man with a moustache. The people depicted are close relatives of Erkmen: her grandmother Hermine and the brother of Hermine.

As I have mentioned earlier, Hermine was a famous haute-couture designer and her brother was a Kodak representative in Istanbul. At the age of sixteen the brother



Fig. 3. Two Siblings, Taksim Square, Istanbul, 2007. Courtesy of Ayşe Erkmen & Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin.



Fig. 4. Two Siblings, Taksim Square, Istanbul, 2007. Courtesy of Ayşe Erkmen & Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin.

of Hermine was sent into exile to Khartoum, in Sudan, to save him from the genocide. The father of the siblings was executed during the genocide. As a result of this forced migration, the siblings were torn away from each other. When Erkmen's work was installed, the newspaper *Radikal* interviewed Erkmen about the background of the depicted person. That is how the story behind the photographs was made known to the public. However, for a large number of passers-by, *Two Siblings* was difficult to understand at first glance. They could not recognize the depicted persons as Hermine and her brother; however, the clothes, the hairstyle and the postures of the people in the picture feel slightly out-dated. The images can be read as "old" pictures, perhaps even dated by most passers-by to the years before the Second World War. Yet, I would argue, very much like the works *Am Haus* and *Shipped Ships*, these photographs acquire their specific meaning only when understood in relation to the particular space in which they are shown. The locations chosen for the realization of these works were Taksim Republic Square and Harbiye. But why did Erkmen choose these public spaces for her works? I will discuss in more depth the meaning of these specific spaces to the Turkish nation, in order to read the intervention of Erkmen to these locations accurately.

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the Kemalist regime sought to discredit the legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire. The new government continued the efforts of the Committee of Union of Progress (CUP) to silence certain memories, such as those of Armenians (Üngör 2014, 5). The Kemalist dictatorship imposed a new identity on the country. This meant the beginning of a new "memory engineering" in Turkey. The first tantamount example of this monopoly over memory was crystallized by the selection of Ankara as a new capital. Contrary to Istanbul, which had served as the capital of the Empire for almost five centuries, Ankara did not bear any significant marks of Islam or Ottoman times (Çınar 2005, 111). Since Kemal aimed to sanitize the Ottoman past of the country, he became the architect of organizing this "memory engineering", as the author and authority of the new republic.

Nationalizing the public spheres continued with the centralization of Istanbul around the Taksim Republic Square. The new Turkish Republic chose Taksim as a new venue because it was "a place that was on a hill, sufficiently far from Sultanahmet yet still within the city limits, from which the grand mosques of the 'old city' were not visible" (Çınar 2005, 111). This new centre was necessary, because the old one, Sultanahmet Square, was laden with Islamic and Ottoman landmarks such as palaces, grand mosques and mansions, which would testify to the imperial authority of the Ottoman state (Çınar 2005, 111). Thus, Taksim became the new location for the Kemalist dictatorship to give a material form to a nationalist project that would obliterate the Ottoman past and canonize the brand new Turkish Republic.

One of the important ways of creating a new memory is the rearrangement of city spaces. The Italian sculptor Pietro Canonica was commissioned to make a sculpture of Atatürk to be unveiled at the heart of Taksim Square in 1928 (see figure 5 and 6). Canonica was a well-known artist in fascist Italy as a sculptor who was always asked by Mussolini to create monuments, which were imbued with nationalist meanings (Tekiner 2010, 103). By confining the Ottoman past to a demarcated land around the Sultanahmet Square, the Kemalist ideology initiated visual propaganda of the Turkish state in the public space. Since "nationhood is not only about the collective imagination of a national community, but also the imagination of national space" (Çınar 2005, 99), the cultural tyranny of the new republic started to erect Atatürk monuments around the country. The Atatürk monument unveiled at the Taksim Square is the perpetuation of iconic images of him, which portray the founding father "as a cult hero personifying the nation" (Bozdoğan 2001, 283). The production of Atatürk imagery delineates the nation, as the title of one publication suggested, as *La Turquie Kemaliste* (Migdal 1997, 258).



Fig. 5. Atatürk statue in Taksim Republic Square, Istanbul.



Fig. 6. Taksim Republic Square, Istanbul

Taksim Square, as one of the locations where Erkmen installed her *Two Siblings* project, is therefore a highly significant place. It is not only central to the re-imagination of the nation, but the Atatürk monument also serves to construct a traditional "monumental" version of history. By placing photographs of her Armenian grandmother and uncle right in front of the Atatürk monument, the artist juxtaposes the glorious "heroic" vision of history and a personal memory that is entirely different. This effect is even stronger once we examine the second location where Erkmen unveiled *Two Siblings*.

Just five metres separate the work of Erkmen from the Harbiye Military Museum [Harbiye Askeri Müzesi]. It is a military complex that has been operating as a museum since 1959, with 55,000 objects on display. Previously, the building was a military academy of the Ottoman Empire [harp okulu] where Atatürk studied from 1899 to 1905. The exhibition halls of the museum dedicated to the First World War are decorated with pictures of Enver and Cemal Pasha. The museum also displays the bloodstained shirt of Talaat Pasha, which was brought here after his assassination by Soghomon Tehlirian, an Armenian genocide survivor, in 1921 in Berlin. Inside the museum the Janissary Band [Mehter Takımı] gives concerts of traditional marching music in military uniforms. The band sings every day in the concert hall in Turkish: "Forward, forward, forward. The Turkish soldier never draws back. From right to left and from left to right, pick up your flags and march towards your enemy".[41] On

41 The lyrics of the Janissary Band marching music in Turkish are: "Arş arş arş ileri ileri arş ileri dönmez geri Türkün askeri. Sağdan sola soldan sağa salla bayrağı düşman üstüne".



Fig. 7. Inside the concert hall of the Harbiye Military Museum, the quotation is located between an Atatürk poster and the Turkish flag.

the ceiling of this concert hall is a quotation of Atatürk in Turkish and in English. It reads, "Nations who are unaware of their history are obliged to die out" (see figure 7).[42] The museum explicitly establishes a link between national identity and history.

Although never explicitly mentioned, the Armenian genocide seems to play a key role in this monumental history, albeit in a negative way. Its traces can be detected in a special exhibition hall designated for the Turks who were murdered by the Armenians in the Eastern Anatolia. This exhibition includes gruesome pictures of women and children killed during this episode. This room, I claim, should be understood as an attempt to "counter" the history of the Armenian genocide, by positing the Turks as the victims and the Armenians as the perpetrators. The museum serves as a memory space that disseminates the claims of the Turkish state about the genocide. It venerates the *dictatorial triumvirate*, the three Ottoman pashas who where the architects of the genocide: Enver, Cemal and Talaat.

The second place that Erkmen chose to show her work was Taksim Square. By chosing this square, *Two Siblings* was centrally located in a highly trafficked area of Istanbul filled with screeching cars and buses. These posters were not secluded in a park or on a promontory. The fact that they were situated on Taksim Square can be taken as a violation of decorum because they stand where the heart of the city beats. With these posters Erkmen intervenes in public space, to the most crowded

42 In Turkish it reads "Tarihini bilmeyen milletler, yok olmaya mahkumdur".

square of Istanbul where every day thousands of people walk by or pass through to use public transportation on the way to their works or home. It is an important transportation location for the residents of the city because many connection lines are situated at this square.

The word *taksim* in Turkish means division/partition. The water used for the city is distributed in this part of Istanbul. That is why it is called Taksim. Yet *Two Siblings* is about "division" and "partition" in two additional senses: the first one is about the separation of the two siblings as outlined by Brigitte Kölle in *Ayşe Erkmen, Weggefahrten* (2008). Considering the brother of Hermine was sent to Khartoum, his forced migration separated the two siblings from each other. She stayed in Istanbul whereas her brother had to move to Sudan to escape from the genocidal campaign of the Young Turks. Like the name of the square, which means "division", the work of Erkmen points to the fundamental "separation" that the creation of the modern Turkish nation is based on. It concerns the republican past of Turkey and its attempts to eradicate the brutal chapters of the Ottoman Empire from the collective memory of the Turks. Placing *Two Siblings* close to this heroic monument not only juxtaposes two different historiographies of the genocide but also provides a contested terrain against this dualism. It taunts the public by unveiling a counter-narrative against the authoritarian propensity of Atatürk and the expunction of the memories regarding the Armenians.

The clash of the narratives rigidified in the official monuments and the personal project of Erkmen not only question the undisputable nature of Turkey's taboo but also juxtapose the two contradictory narratives: Armenian cultural memory versus official Turkish memory. The tension created by the deliberate choice of certain settings and the realization of her projects against these monuments stem from the role that Erkmen assigns to space in her works. Since the military museum remembers the past of Turkey according to a variety of national myths, political ideologies and silencing of certain eras, positioning the posters of family members deeply affected by the genocide in front of the museum creates curiosity for the passers-by. Friedrich Meschede states that:

> To bring nothing into the space, to analyze what is given and to use the potential of what is present is such a way that a total re-interpretation is possible, that is the artistic goal of the sculptor, Ayşe Erkmen. (2008, 73)

This also holds true for *Two Siblings.* Erkmen re-interprets the space and shows the potentialities of the setting in terms of achieving her artistic goal. *Two Siblings* therefore has the capacity of breaking the indifference of Turkish society towards one of the vanished communities of the city: the Armenians.

Two Siblings posits an alternative history to that offered by the traditional monuments. Erkmen makes this suggestion by inserting *private* images into the public sphere. Her project intervenes into the urban space of Istanbul by outlining the tension between the personal and the public. Since the links between the photographs and the official histories remain implicit, *Two Siblings* asks the passer-by to establish a relationship between themselves and the work. In this sense, it could be understood as a project that is very much similar to the counter-monument: its history is non-redemptive, non-monumental, and it relies on the participation of spectators in order to do its memory work. The tension between the personal and the collective memories regarding the remembrance of the Armenians has also inspired the second artist I will analyze for this chapter, Tayfun Serttaş.

Conflicting Memories: Personal versus Collective Remembrance

Tayfun Serttaş also employs photography and especially portraits for his projects.[43] Serttaş's project *Foto Galatasaray* at SALT Galata [a non-profit cultural institution] was opened in November 2011 in Istanbul.[44] It is a project based on the re-visualization of the complete professional archive of Maryam Şahinyan, who worked as a photographer in Galatasaray, Pera, uninterruptedly from 1935 until 1985. The archive is an inventory of the demographic transformations taking place in Istanbul after the declaration of the republic in 1923. Consisting entirely of black-and-white glass negatives, the archive of *Foto Galatasaray* is a rare surviving example of one of the classical photography studios of Istanbul's recent past (see figures 8 and 9). After Şahinyan left her studio in 1985, the archive was transferred to Yetvart Tomasyan, owner of the Aras Publishing house in Istanbul. Twenty-five years later, approximately 200,000 negatives were sorted, cleaned, and digitized by a team under the direction of Serttaş over the course of two years. *Foto Galatasaray* was never as visible

43 Serttaş completed his master degree at Yıldız Technical University in 2007 with a thesis titled *Photography and Minorities in Istanbul in the Context Of Modernism and Cultural Representation*. His first project pertinent to the memory of the Armenians of Istanbul was titled *Studio Osep* (2009). It focused on the life story and career of Osep Minasoğlu, one of Istanbul's oldest living studio and set photographers of Armenian descent. The exhibition was made up of three parts: biography, retrospective and video-installation. *Studio Osep* presented systematic comparisons of Osep Minasoğlu and the transforming functions of photography. Based on an eighty-year long life years and a career as a photographer spanning sixty years, the Osep Minasoğlu archive offers not only the past of Minasoğlu but also a micro history of Istanbul.

44 *Foto Galatasaray* was exhibited at the Photography Museum of Amsterdam (FOAM) between 22 March and 12 May 2013.



Fig. 8. Foto Galatasaray, Photo by Maryam Şahinyan, Open Archive Images from Photo Galatasaray, Courtesy of Tayfun Serttaş.



Fig. 9. Foto Galatasaray, Photo by Maryam Şahinyan, Open Archive Images from Photo Galatasaray, Courtesy of Tayfun Serttaş.

as some of the other elite photography studios in Istanbul, like Phebus, Andriomenos, Sabah or Abdullah Frères [Abdullah Brothers].[45] Nevertheless, it played an important role in terms of representing the middle and lower classes, which ensured the continuity of the studio.

Maryam Şahinyan was born in 1911 at Şahinyan Konağı [Şahinyan Mansion], one of the most impressive civil structures in Sivas, in the east-central part of Turkey. Her grandfather, Agop Şahinyan Pasha, was an MP representing Sivas in the first Ottoman Parliament [Meclis-i Mebusan]. Although she was born privileged as the grandchild of a member of parliament, her life greatly changed after the genocide. Her family moved to Istanbul from Sivas, leaving a considerable number of real estate properties behind, including thirty villages, five flour mills and the family's residence. This forced migration altered their lifestyles and the family moved to a modest apartment in the Harbiye region close to Taksim Square in Istanbul. In 1933 Maryam's father, Mihran Şahinyan, became a partner of the Foto Galatasaray studio in Pera – at that time owned by two Yugoslavian brothers. This studio was effectively turned into their only source of income and after Maryam's mother death in 1936, the Şahinyan family's financial situation deteriorated. Şahinyan completed primary school at Esayan Armenian school in Istanbul but dropped out of the Lycée Sainte-Pulchérie during secondary school to help her father at the studio. In contrast to her siblings, the young woman developed a passion for her father's work. In 1937 she decided to shoulder the family's financial burden and managed the studio independently. Şahinyan was a devout Armenian woman and her identity created a closely-knit circle that determined the sociological basis of *Foto Galatasaray*'s clientele. Throughout her life Şahinyan has preferred to remain behind the camera. This explains why, except for four passport photos, no photographs of Şahinyan exist today.

Spanning half a century, her work impartially traces the ethnic, social, cultural, religious and economic transformations that took place in the heart of Istanbul. The archive covers various political periods, from the 1942 imposition of Turkey's Capital Tax [Varlık Vergisi] on non-Muslims to the invasion of Northern Cyprus by Turkish troops in 1974, as well as the demographic and socio-cultural transformations that occurred in Istanbul over the course of five decades. As a female studio photographer, most of the clients of Şahinyan were female. The decision to take over the studio proved to be advantageous for the business considering the

45 Abdullah Frères or *Abdullah Biraderler* in Turkish was the brand name of three Armenian brothers, Vicen, Hovsep and Kevork Abdullahian who were the founders of the art of photography in Turkey. Sultan Abdülaziz and Abdülhamit II awarded them with 'The Photographers of the Sultan' title. Abdullah Frères took pictures of many famous people such as the King of Britain, Germany and Austro-Hungarian Empires.

conservative climate of the time. Şahinyan never married and did not have children, and she worked uninterruptedly in her studio, which moved across three locations in Galatasaray. She was a multi-lingual woman with a good command of French, Italian, Turkish and Armenian. As a friend of nuns, Italian clergymen as well as the sisters [kuyrs] of the Kalfayan Orphanage, she provided her services to these circles throughout her life. After retiring in 1985, Şahinyan left behind a unique visual archive consisting of approximately 200,000 images.

Foto Galatasaray documents the daily lives of the Armenians in Turkey. We see pictures of nuns with crosses, or pictures of children taken after their baptism ceremonies. Their clothes (occasionally embroidered with some Armenian letters) also convey the fact that these photos belong to a Christian group: the Armenians. Viewers not only watch these images in a passive way, they invest their imagination in these photos. For instance, a visitor examining *Foto Galatasaray* images not only watches these photographs as artefacts claiming reality to a micro history of Istanbul. The visitors are confronted with the pictures of unknown individuals. This encounter creates a curiosity for the viewer. What I mean is that in modern Turkey the public visibility of the remaining Christian communities has tremendously decreased. In general most of Turkish people do not have access to the daily lives of these minority groups. Pictures of nuns, for instance, or Armenian elementary school pupils exhibited at the *Foto Galatasaray* exhibition, are not what most of the people in Turkey see anymore. These images offer them another Turkey where Armenians and other Christian communities could easily sustain their daily lives in the public sphere. Hence, the photographs taken by Şahinyan provide visibility to the shrinking non-Muslim communities of Turkey, in particular the Armenians.

Foto Galatasaray is mainly concerned with questions of official Turkish memory versus private memory. The project brings the memory of the vanished communities of Istanbul back to life by creating a curiosity for the viewers to carefully examine the images. One might argue that a large majority of the images that form the exhibition are random snapshots from the daily lives of the residents of Istanbul. *Foto Galatasaray* offers new perspectives to the viewers and gives them a chance to take up the role of becoming belated witnesses to the daily life practises of a community with pictures depicting baptism ceremonies, weddings and other festivities. The project deepens the impression of the viewers regarding the recent history of Turkey by conveying the vanished cultural practices of the photographed individuals to the present time. Since Foto Galatasaray was a commercial studio with innumerable clients from different backgrounds, the archival images of the project neither dramatize nor emphasize the pathos pertinent to the absence of these individuals in present time. They speak for themselves and invite the visitors to ascribe their own meanings and interpretations to the exhibition.

One of the most essential parts of *Foto Galatasaray* project is the opening of the archive to the public access through a website and the launching of tagging days for the public. As part of the exhibition, SALT Galata organized tagging days to identify the individuals photographed between 1935 and 1985 at Foto Galatasaray. It should come as no surprise that the great majority of the individuals photographed by Şahinyan are anonymous. That is the reason why the whole archive has been transferred online so that anyone can tag the photographs of the unknown subjects of Şahinyan and provide their biographies. Since the archive consists of photographs that belong to approximately one million people, it not only stimulates the visitors to identify these individuals but also attracts curious individuals to the project. Interested visitors are invited to add comments and provide information about the anonymous characters of this project if they are familiar with them. In this sense *Foto Galatasaray* turns out to be a cyber memorial site that interacts with the visitors rather than being a self-contained site of memory. The transformation of the exhibition into a digital site disseminates the images to a greater audience and enhances more interactivity between the exhibition and the potential viewers.

The digitalization of the archive reflects back to people and challenges the commodification of the archive. This contributes to the large-scale reception of the project through the viewers who are ready to establish a dialogue between themselves and the images. The cyber-tagging campaign invites spectators to take a role in discovering the vanished memories of the Turkish society. Viewers do not merely "watch" or "contemplate" the images they see. Very much like the counter-monuments in Germany, the viewers are asked to identify these individuals. They are making their own interpretations by looking at the images. Thus, they actively engage with the project. *Foto Galatasaray* is a project that does not offer guidelines about how to view and analyze the images. These images do however require a certain visual literacy. In addition to the reliance on looking, the viewers should have the ability to decode the images of *Foto Galatasaray*. Yet every reading will be shaped by subjective interpretations of the viewer. Just as the way the viewers identify the images taken by Maryam Şahinyan, the work of Kutluğ Ataman, which I will explore next, invites the viewers to discover the personal story of his nanny. Kevser was nanny to Ataman and his father and was adopted by the family of artist during the Armenian genocide. I will examine how the installation of Ataman titled *Testimony* deals with the history of Kevser and what this work means for the remembrance of the genocide in Turkey.

Revisiting the Definition of Truth Through Testifying

Unlike Erkmen and Serttaş, Kutluğ Ataman is known for his video installations and films. His works document the lives of marginalized individuals that show their in-between-ness shaped by the tension between their private and public lives.[46] The early works of Ataman examine the ways in which people and communities rewrite their identities through self-expression, blurring the line between reality and fiction. For example, in 1999 Ataman was invited to participate in the 48th Venice Biennale where he presented *Women Who Wear Wigs* [Peruk Takan Kadınlar] (1999), a four-screen video installation that features four women who discuss when, where, why and how they wear wigs. These women are: a political activist and supporter of a revolutionary left-wing organization [Melek Ulagay], a journalist/TV presenter who lost her breast after chemotherapy for breast cancer [Nevval Sevindi], a leading figure of Istanbul's transvestite/transsexual community [Demet Demir] and an anonymous devout Muslim student.

What interests Ataman is the manifestation of the individual identities through the act of testifying and how these testimonies end up creating another "self" as a result of storytelling. The artist either places a single person or gathers large numbers of individuals all together in front of a camera. He encourages them to talk and his presence is often perceived through his voice raising questions or providing instructions to his subjects. That is why T. J. Demos calls the works of Ataman "video sculptures/portraits" (Demos 2010, 31). The close-up videos of Ataman not

46 Born as the son of a diplomat in 1961 in Istanbul, Ataman got caught up in the political uncertainty of the 1980 coup d'état. Following a police raid on his house, he was arrested for participating in a leftist demonstration and recording the street protests that preceded the Turkish military coup d'état when he was an 18 year-old left-wing activist. After 28 days in prison during which he was subjected to beatings and torture, he moved to the USA to study film at the University of California Los Angeles [UCLA]. Apart from Los Angeles, Ataman also lived in France, Germany, the UK and several Latin American countries. He started his film-making career with two short films, *Hansel and Gretel* (1984) which received the Peter Stark Production Award, and *La Fuga* (1988), which won a couple of awards including the First Prize at the New York International Film Exposition and the CINE Golden Eagle Award the same year. Three other movies followed: *Serpent's Tale* [Karanlık Sular] (1993), *Lola and Bilidikid* (1998) and *2 Girls* (2005). He is currently working on a new feature film project, in Erzincan, set in the eastern part of Turkey, called *South Facing Wall* [Güneye Bakan Duvar]. In 2004 Ataman won one of the most prestigious awards in the contemporary art world, the Carnegie Prize. The same year he was one of the four artists shortlisted artists for the Turner Prize, the UK's most prestigious visual arts award given every year by the Tate Gallery London. Finally, in 2009 he received the Abraaj Capital Art Prize and in 2011 the ECF Routes Princes Margriet Award. His works have been shown at Documenta, the Venice Biennial as well as the biennials in Sao Paulo, Berlin and Istanbul. He also participated in the Tate Triennial in 2003 in London.

only reveal radically divergent stories that exemplify how reality is individually created, but they also indicate the floating nature of the truth. The works of Ataman obfuscate the boundaries between reality and artifice through the testimonials of his subjects. How individuals alter and multiply their identities matters to Ataman. Thus, identity politics is at the core of his works. The videos of the artist emphasize how personal identities are hidden, changed, crafted and reinvented within time.

Ataman generally gives voice to certain marginalized group members with unconventional personalities such as a transvestite, an old opera singer or an exotic flower devotee (Demos 2010, 32). The disempowered or disenfranchised characters of Ataman's subjects exemplify several ways of representing personal identities and the never-ending efforts of the marginalized individuals to reach to a collectively imagined identity. Rather than mobilizing sympathy among the viewers of the characters involved in his projects, Ataman keeps his objective gaze. His characters do not seek pity nor do they complain. They share their remarkable personal experiences by talking, testifying and telling stories, which are startling, disturbing and often challenging for the viewers. The subjects of Ataman highlight the complicated nature of reaching the truth and deal with the question: what does 'the truth' mean for an individual or a group?

The work of Ataman titled *Testimony* [Tanıklık] (2006) is a single channel video on DVD, which focuses on the collective amnesia of the Armenian genocide through the personal dementia of his subject (see figures 10 and 11). The footage in home-video style shows Kevser: the nanny of Ataman and his father. It lasts 7 minutes and



Fig. 10. Testimony, video installation, Istanbul Biennial 2007.



Fig. 11. Single-screen looped stills from Testimony, video installation, Istanbul Biennial 2007.

35 seconds. Kevser was a child of Armenian origin when brought into the family by Ataman's great-grandfather after her own family was killed at the beginning of the genocide. (Çalıkoğlu 2010, 21) (Demos 2010, 34-5). From then on her real identity was swept under the carpet. Ataman interviews her in the installation and Kevser provides responses about past events as much as she can remember since she suffers from complete senile dementia.

Throughout the Armenian genocide, many Armenian women were absorbed into Muslim households and Islamized.[47] Kevser is one of these silenced victims of what is often referred to as "gendercide". Gendercide is a concept coined by Mary Anne Warren in her 1985 book *Gendercide: The Implications of Sex Selection*. It refers to the genderization of terror in war and the gender-selective strategies adopted by the perpetrators to liquidate the victims.[48] In 1996 Adam Jones offers a more inclusive gendercide concept. Thereby, Jones counters, mostly female experience-oriented concept of Warren by stating:

47 See Donald Earl and Lorna Touryan Miller. "Women and Children of the Armenian Genocide" (1992); Eliz Sanasarian. "Gender Distinction in the Genocidal Process: A Preliminary Study of the Armenian Case" (1989); Ara Sarafian. "The Absorption of the Armenian Women and Children into Muslim Households As a Structural Component of the Armenian Genocide" (2001); Roger. W. Smith. "Women and Genocide: Notes on an Unwritten History" (1994); Vahe Tachjian. "Gender, Nationalism, Exclusion: The Reintegration Process of Female Survivors of the Armenian Genocide" (2009).

48 See Adam Jones (ed.) *Gendercide and Genocide* (2004); Leo Kuper. *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (1981).

> sex selective killings of men as well as women should be analyzed by scholars of armed conflict, and recognized by policy makers in strategies regarding when, how and whose behalf to engage in organized rescue.[49]

There are many cases in the world history that exemplify the gendercide practices used by perpetrators against victimized groups. During the Kosovo War in 1999 the Serbs carried out "gender-selective detention and mass killing of ethnic Albanian men, especially those of 'battle age'".[50] In East Timor "a systematic targeting of younger males for dismemberment by machete, mass execution, and torture to death" has been unearthed with the help of forensic evidence and personal testimonies.[51] After the genocide in Cambodia the number of men in the country has dramatically decreased whilst the number of widows, who make up 60 to 80 per cent of the adult population, has increased.[52] The gendercide policies targeting men aim to emasculate the manpower of the marginalized groups in order to agonize and victimize women and the children.

During the Armenian genocide, profoundly gendered atrocities targeted Armenian men and women separately Sociologist Leo Kuper portrays the "emasculation of the Armenian population" as a harbinger of full-scale aggression towards the Armenians. Regarding the gendercide policies that targeted the Armenian men Kuper further states:

> Armenian soldiers, mostly combatants, were stripped of their arms and transformed into road labourers, and into pack animals, stumbling under the burden of their loads, and driven by the whips and bayonets of the Turks into the mountains of the Caucasus.[53]

The pre-selection and enlistment of all able-bodied Armenian men continued with their extermination. The liquidation of men exposed women, children and elderly people as easy targets for harassment, sexual abuse or absorption into Moslem households. Armenian women and children did not experience straightforward extermination like men. In contrast women could be exempted from being sent to deadly marches once they agreed to Islamization. The gendercidal strategies adopted by the

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49 R. Charli Carpenter. "Beyond 'Gendercide': Operationalizing Gender in Comparative Genocide Studies" (2004).

50 Adam Jones. "Gendercide and Genocide". p.1

51 Ibid. 2.

52 Ben Kiernan. "The Cambodian Genocide – 1975-79" (2004). p.345

53 Kuper, Leo. Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century. London. Penguin.1981.p.108

Ottoman Empire against the Armenians can be characterized by the pre-selection, dislocation, conscription and extermination of Armenian men in first instance and the concomitant isolation, concentration and Islamization of Armenian women.

Kevser was one of these Armenian women absorbed into Ataman's family as a nanny. That is why in the installation of Ataman, the personal dementia of Kevser acquires a deeper meaning when taking into consideration the collective amnesia of Turkey regarding the genocide. Private history and official history intersect in this work. Kevser is the artist's connection to a marginalized history. Yet although the artist grew up with her – and with whom he must have been close – the story of Kevser remained secret (Temel 2010, 89). The relation of Ataman with his nanny can be compared to the relation of Turkey with the Armenian genocide. The reason why Kevser was absorbed into the Ataman family is not a secret for the artist. Yet, like the Armenian genocide, it is an issue that is never directly discussed between the artist and the nanny in the installation.

In *Testimony*, close-ups of Kevser, sitting in the corner of a kitchen, taken with a hand-held camera, appear from different angles. It is probably spring or summer since the open windows let the street noise in. Kevser is an elderly woman with wrinkles on her aged face, white hair, thick glasses and a toothless mouth. During the shooting she reveals a friendly character with her warm smile. At the beginning Ataman hands her two old black-and-white photographs of his grandfather and grandmother. Kevser stares at them without recognizing them and answers Ataman's questions.

Kevser: So you are Kutluğ. I thought Kutluğ was somewhere else.
Kutluğ! Welcome! Are you taking a picture?
Kutluğ: Tell me about your memories.
Kevser: Do you want me to talk about?
Kutluğ: Yes, talk.
Kevser: I am short of breath. Something like.
Kutluğ: Tell me about Erzincan. (Kutluğ repeats Erzincan three times)
Tell me about the old times.
Kevser: My ears are not hearing

To encourage Kevser to speak and loosen up, the artist hands her two photographs, a portrait of his grandfather Sırrı and another photograph of his grandfather and grandmother. They were in all likelihood taken in Erzincan where Ataman's family used to live. These photos seem of no help to Kevser. She does not understand and stares blankly at the photographs.

Kevser: I am very confused today…my son, I am completely lost.

Throughout this dialogue Ataman is not visible. The artist is aware of the fact that he has an emotional and personal tie to Kevser. To break this personal connection, Ataman speaks off-screen as a ghostly voice-over to her. The artist interrupts the linear progression of the narrative by asking some questions. These very detailed questionings ascribe the role of inquirer and interviewer to the artist. Ataman knows that only trivia and small steps may force her to recall things that she seems to have forgotten. This approach makes him use different vantage points such as family pictures or introducing alternative interpretations. In the middle of the conversation an invisible third person unexpectedly enters the film, and directly asks Kevser if she remembers her Armenian mother and father, using the word "Armenian" for the first time.

> Third person: Do you remember your own mother and father, these Armenians?

This unexpected intervention by the third person alerts Kevser and she turns to the right with curiosity to see who asked that question. Silence prevails for a couple of minutes and she starts re-examining the photos she holds in her hands. Kevser looks as if she is forcing herself to remember information about her past, if only bits and pieces. As she fails to remember, she keeps carefully checking the photos and makes unrelated comments. At this point Ataman hands her a third picture: a black-and-white photograph of four women standing, posing together. She closes her eyes, makes an effort to remember but again fails to recognize the photographed people even though she is one of them and the others are women from Ataman's family. She adds:

> Kevser: Those were the good old days. Weren't they my dear Kutluğ? Now you are Kutluğ, are you not? You are Kutluğ. I have not seen you for years. You disappeared. You disappeared like the others.

Following directly the first explicit mention of the Armenian case, the remarks of Kevser acquire a particular meaning, and become ambivalent. There are various ways her sentences "Those were the good old days" and "You disappeared like the others" can be read. "The good old days" may simply be a standard way of referring to the past, yet the phrase "like the others" raises the question as to what kind of disappearance she alludes to. She may relate to personal experiences, yet coming after the mention of the word "Armenian" they can easily be understood as referring to the genocidal actions carried out by the Ottoman Empire. As a result, the dementia and amnesia carry different connotations.

Testimony is a work that probes into the darkness of Kevser's amnesia. Yet her medical dementia suggests the collective amnesia of modern Turkey. Despite the efforts of the artist, his questioning and showing the photographs, Kevser fails to remember. She cannot reconstruct her past; she is not able to speak about it. The only breakthrough comes when she unexpectedly finds a way to relate not to a past event, but to a *disappearance*, an "emptiness" or "absence" that is at the heart of the story. Ataman modulates his voice or reiterates some words to facilitate her remembering but they do not help to transgress her silence. Her old age draws the limits of her remembrance and prevents her from testifying. In terms of embodying a victim of the gendercide policies carried out by the Ottoman Empire, *Testimony* creates a direct encounter for the viewer about a lesser-known dimension of the Armenian genocide.

The question-and-answer section of the testimony is broken with the sudden voice-over intervention by the third person. The person asks Kevser: "Do you remember your own mother and father, these Armenians?" This disruption not only interferes with the narrative structure but also brings the act of testifying to another level. The artist has chosen another unknown individual to raise this intimate question about her life to establish a critical engagement as the filmmaker. Considering that Ataman grew up in her hands, Kevser has a kind of mother-son relationship with him. The artist wants her to relieve the past but to avoid emotions escalating whilst testifying, Ataman chooses another person to ask the question. In this sense, rather than questioning insistently, Ataman enters a dialogue with her and refrains from disorienting her or increasing her suffering as a victim-survivor. Like Kevser who cannot relieve her past due to her medical dementia, modern Turkish society lives in amnesia as a result of the ongoing denial of the genocide. Hrair Sarkissian, the last artist that I will consider for this chapter, addresses the issue of the archives regarding the Armenian genocide in modern Turkey.

Mediating Memory: The Turkish State Archives and Obfuscating the Past

Whereas the three artists I have discussed so far approach the issue of the relation between private memory and official Turkish memory by focusing on private memories, stories and archives, my final artist, Sarkissian, concentrates on official history and the institution of the archive. After having spent most of his time in his father's photography shop and atelier in Damascus, Syria, Hrair Sarkissian eventually decided to leave the studio and become an artist. This decision led to a conflict between the artist and his father. The artist's Rietveld Academy graduation project, called *Sarkissian Photo Centre and My father & I* (2010), features the reconciliation between the two men. The recent project of Sarkissian, *Istory* [Benim Hikayem]

(2011), realized during a residency programme in which he participated for two months in Istanbul, is based on a personal story of the artist.

The information boards of the exhibition, prepared both in English and Turkish, provide the visitors background information about the artist. One of the boards mentions that the personal history is linked to the books photographed by the artist. Although the word genocide is not used, the careful reader will understand how the personal history of the artist is related to the pictures of the official Turkish archives. The text reads in English:

> Sarkissian's own history is closely tied to these books and files, as his grandparents were forced to flee from Eastern Anatolia to Syria in 1915. The official historical narrative around this period in the Ottoman Empire, as presented since its collapse and transformation into the Republic of Turkey, is a subject of increasing debate within Turkey. (see figure 12)

In addition, the first and last names, of the artist Hrair Sarkissian, are obvious Armenian names. I claim that once a visitor walks into the exhibition of Sarkissian, s/he understands without a shadow of a doubt that the artist is the grandson of Armenian genocide survivors.

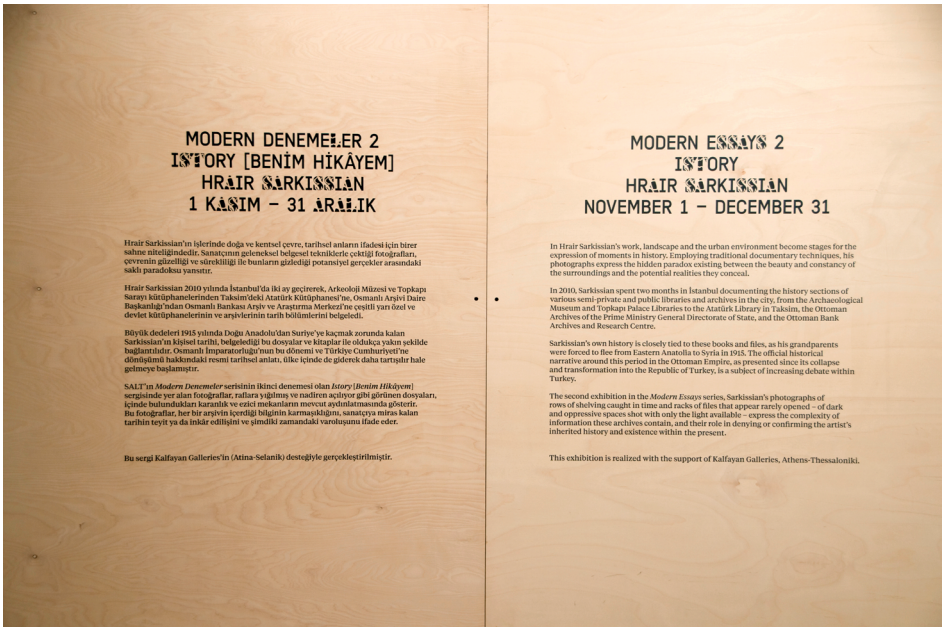


Fig. 12. An information board of Istory [Benim Hikayem] exhibition, Hrair Sarkissian. Courtesy of SALT and the photographer Serkan Taycan.

Istory documents the history sections of various semi-private and public libraries and archives in the city, from the Archaeological Museum and the Topkapı Palace Libraries to the Atatürk Library in Taksim, the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry General Directorate of State, and the Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre (see figures 13 and 14). The names of these libraries are also shared with the visitors on the wall. The whole exhibition consists of interior pictures of these libraries and archives. The visitors just come across these enormous pictures hung on the walls of SALT Beyoğlu, a non-profit cultural institution located on İstiklal Avenue in Istanbul. Sarkissian visually depicts the Turkish archives with the pictures that he took during his participation in a residency programme in Istanbul. These images try to convey how the archive is presented as authoritative, objective and unquestionable in Turkey. In fact, in the case of the Armenian genocide, there was a political decision as to what was to be archived. Regarding the political manipulation of the Turkish archives, Taner Akçam states, "The written documents have not only been used to document the realities but also to manipulate them" (Akçam 2001, 156). Yet, if we take into consideration the fact that an artist of Armenian descent has photographed these archives, a dialogue is created between his personal history

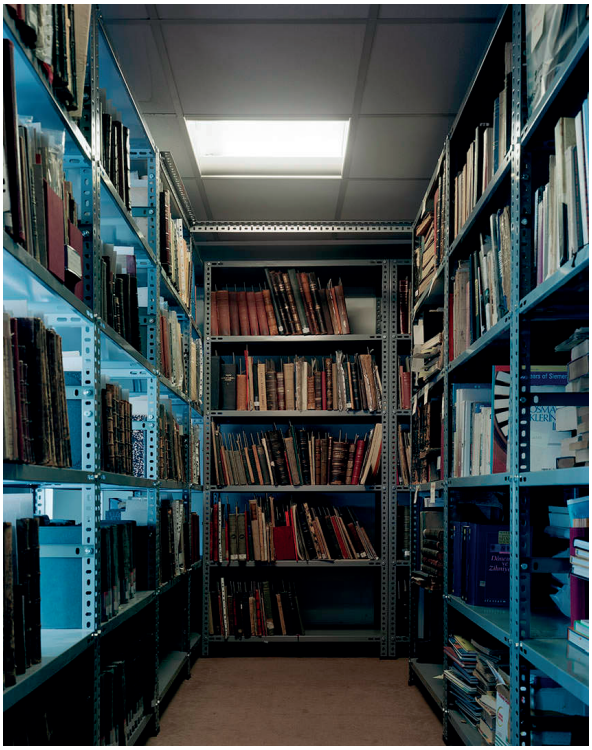


Fig. 13. Istory [Benim Hikayem] (2011), Hrair Sarkissian.

(genocide) and the official version of history in Turkey that denies the genocide through the manipulated archives. All of a sudden these photographed documents acquire new meanings. They can be understood as metaphors for a history that is obscured in modern Turkey.

Viewers never see the titles of the books. However these books make up the archives, which deny the family history of Sarkissian as the grandson of a Syrian-Armenian family. The artist relativizes these archival materials, which mostly consist of files and books about Ottoman history, to his personal story as the grandson of a survivor family. Since the Turkish government always claims that the state archive is a credible reference point to deny the Armenian genocide, Sarkissian uses this state manipulation as an inspiration for his work. These books not only falsify the personal history of Sarkissian but also raise the question of archives and the potential realities they conceal.

Archives are vital components for memory; however, "there is no denying that they are also inevitably the products of selection, suppression and the exercise of control" (Baronian 2014, 81). In modern Turkey manipulated archival materials are used to falsify any allegations of genocide. The Turkish government invariably



Fig. 14. Istory [Benim Hikayem] (2011), Hrair Sarkissian.

says that the archives are open and ready for any scientific projects of historians and academics. However, the existence of modern Turkey is based on eradicating the brutalities committed by the Ottoman Empire, which also includes the destruction of the archives of the genocide. Akçam states that during the genocide "the decisions were first made verbally and then they were given an 'official' character" (Akçam 2001, 157). The Ottoman Empire has been careful not to leave any trace of their systematic plan to uproot the Armenians.

The existing archives in modern Turkey either serve denialist historiography or are far from providing credible data of the genocide. In the first chapter of his book *The Armenian Issue is Resolved: Policies Towards Armenians During the War Years, Based on Ottoman Documents* [Ermeni Meselesi Hallolmuştur: Osmanlı Belgelerine Göre Savaş Yıllarında Ermenilere Yönelik Politikalar] Akçam explains that most of the official documents were destroyed as soon as they were read by whom they concerned. Akçam states that:

> Destroying documents was not just limited to the official institutions. A large number of people involved in the deportation of the Armenians during the wartime destroyed the documents and the information they had at hand. (2008, 28)

The archives of modern Turkey serve to authenticate the official discourses by sanitizing the late Ottoman history. Marc Nichanian claims, "there is no archive because the essence of genocide is the destruction of the archive" (Nichanian 2009, 41). Archives that authenticate the statements of the Turkish state are offered as the validation of the historical facts by the Turkish government. The Turkish authorities use these archives infected with negation to pursue their politics of denial (Baronian 2014, 82). This phenomenon has been a central issue in the work of Sarkissian. The images of the thick books represent the ossified official discourse of the genocide in modern Turkey whereas the personal story of Sarkissian as the grandson of a survivor family offers an opposite narrative. The empty halls in the archives and intimidating volumes of books written in the Ottoman language portray the absence of information, the absence of credibility and the absence of the genocide recognition in these settings.

Conclusion

The works of Erkmen, Serttaş, Ataman and Sarkissian show that the relation between personal memory and official memory lies at the heart of the Armenian case. They also offer a new kind of remembrance by activating the curiosity of the passers-by and the viewers. Each of these artists also focuses on the absence of memory. For

instance, *Testimony* does not directly represent a memory of the genocide, rather it represents the absence of this memory. Forgetfulness, cultural amnesia and the gap between the official and the personal narratives come to the surface. In *Testimony* the nanny does not remember anymore, the figures in the photo-archive of *Foto Galatasaray* are unknown, the portraits of the *Two Siblings* on the square are enigmatic and finally the archival materials of Sarkissian's *Istory* are filled with missing historical facts. As much as I do find the concept of counter-art problematic for reasons I have explained, all the works I have analyzed can function as counter-monuments. Through their exhibitions all four artist invent a new way of storytelling in a country where genocide has been denied for a century.

I believe that these counter-art projects can be considered as new ways to broaden the perceptions of modern Turkish people. Bearing in mind that these projects were carried out in a denialist country where explicit verbalization of genocide may result in prosecution, the context of the works that Young classified as counter-art and the context of the Istanbul projects are not the same. Since Germany has acknowledged the Holocaust, the projects mentioned by Young in his book are framed as Holocaust memorial projects. Thus, passers-by are informed about what they will be confronted with and they interact consciously with those works. On the other hand, the works exhibited in Istanbul do not contain any direct reference to the Armenian genocide.

One of the characteristics of the counter-monument as conceptualized by Young is the transformative role of these works. They not only activate the viewers but also transform them into conscious agents. As a result, the interaction between the individual (private) and the monument (public) becomes very important in terms of absorbing the audience into memorial sites/projects. Transforming citizens, passers-by, viewers and spectators into agents also assigns to them the role of becoming witnesses. Counter-monuments thus produce a new process of memorialization that goes beyond the didactic purposes inscribed on conventional memorial monuments. This is also the case for the works of post-Holocaust generation of artists: Art Spiegelman, David Levinthal and Shimon Attie. Their works have the same effect, not through monumentality but through contemporary art. According to Young, because of their vicarious relationship to the Holocaust, these artists portray the absence of European Jewry as opposed to the event itself. Likewise, in the introduction to his book, *At Memory's Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture,* Young reflects on the gap between the post-Holocaust generation of artists and the survivors. He argues that:

> This post-war generation after all, cannot remember the Holocaust as it occurred. All they remember, all they know of the Holocaust, is what the victims have passed down to them in their diaries, what the survivors have remembered

> to them in their memoirs. They remember not actual events, but the countless histories, novels, and poems of the Holocaust they have read, the photographs, movies and video testimonies they have seen over the years (2000, 1).

Thus, Young differentiates the knowledge of the upcoming generations from the knowledge of the survivors. He highlights the inevitable distortion of the real Holocaust experiences as a result of translating them into a narrative. He names the final stage of the memory of history, when it ceases to be testimony, the "memory of the witness's memory, a vicarious past" (2000, 1). Young addresses the necessity of memory by acknowledging the inability of three American post-Holocaust artists – Spiegelman, Levinthal and Attie – to recall events that they never experienced. In her book *Memory Effects: The Holocaust and the Art of Secondary Witnessing,* Dora Apel extends the discussion of second-generation art and literature about the Holocaust. She considers artists born after the Holocaust as "secondary witnesses" for not having experienced the Holocaust personally. Apel demonstrates how these new-generation artists interpret the past within the conditions of the present and the implications of these memory effects for the future and the present.

Similarly, the four artists that I have examined all have a vicarious knowledge of the genocide. Rather than remembering the events that led to the extermination of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, they remember their own relationship to the events as non-witnesses. They do not attempt to portray the events that they did not witness but they address their own knowledge of the events as it has been passed down to them. That is why their works add a new dimension to the concept of Young as projects unveiled in a denialist country by taking advantage of art. Whether it's displaying in certain local settings [*Two Siblings*], digitalizing material and incorporating society by photo tagging days [*Foto Galatasaray*] or personalizing a societal trauma that is negated in a nation's daily life [*Istory*], these projects compel the visitors to review their own memories.

In Testimony Ataman refrains from asking direct questions to Kevser because he believes that only through trivia he can start transgressing the silence of the genocide. Similarly, these four projects do not point a finger to Turkish society but they raise awareness of the Turks step by step. Each project highlights certain issues of Turkish denialism through different angles of memory: the conflict between the personal and the public, the reconfiguration of urban memory, the manipulation of the archives and the absence of Armenians in modern Turkey. I believe that these four projects are serious initiatives seeking to break the silence around a denied past and promoting the reassessment of the state monopoly over the mass killings of the Armenians.

Chapter 3

Transformation of the Church of Surp Khach into Akdamar Museum

The Armenian church of Surp Khach [Holy Cross] is located on Akhtamar island in Lake Van in the eastern part of Turkey.[54] King Gagik Artsruni, the most famous ruler of the medieval Armenian kingdom of Vaspurakan, built it in AD 921. Written records reveal that the church was near a harbour and a palace on the island, but only the church survived (see figure 15). Until the genocide, the eastern part of Turkey was home to dozens of Armenian monasteries and churches.[55] The church of Surp Khach shared the same destiny as other churches in the area. It was abandoned almost a century ago.[56] In 2005 the renovation of the 1100 year-old Surp Khach

54 The Armenian name of the island is Akhtamar however the Turkish government has changed the name to Akdamar.

55 I use Surp Khach [Church of the Holy Cross] and Akhtamar alternately in this text. The Armenian expression Akhtamar refers to an old Armenian legend about the island in Lake Van where the church is situated. The legend tells that an Armenian princess named Tamar was in love with a young man across the lake. Each night, the young man would swim from the mainland to the island, guided by the light Tamar was holding up. One night, her father, who did not approve of the young man's visits, smashed her light while he was swimming towards her. The young man drowned, exclaiming "Agh Tamar!" in sorrow, and for centuries, the island and the church were locally referred to as Aghtamar/Akhtamar. The original name of the church was Surp Khach [Church of the Holy Cross]. Various Armenian spellings and names are in circulation; however in Western Armenian the island is called Akhtamar.

56 Yaşar Kemal, a prominent Turkish author, tells the story of the destruction of the Surp Khach church and how he has stopped it in his book called *Yaşar Kemal Kendini Anlatıyor* [Yaşar Kemal Talks about Himself]. The book consists of interviews between Alain Bosquet and Kemal. He mentions that 25 June 1951 is one of the important moments for the Surp Khach church. He explains the importance of this specific date to Bosquet and further elaborates on how he managed to stop the destruction of the church. One day, Kemal takes the ferry from Tugra to Van. On the ferry he meets an army officer and they get talking. The lieutenant remarks, "It is fortunate that we me. Here on Akhtamar Island there is a church left by the Armenians. It is a masterpiece. Nowadays they are destroying the church. Tomorrow I shall take you there. The church belongs here, even though Armenians built it. It is an asset for humanity regardless of who built it. Could you help me and our country?" On the lieutenant's request, Kemal

church began and lasted two years. The UNESCO's World Heritage List initiated the renovation.[57] After the state-funded renovation, which cost approximately 1.4 million US dollars, the church has been functioning as a museum since the spring of 2007. This restoration can be appreciated as a positive move towards reconciliation with neighbouring Armenia and the Armenian diaspora. Nonetheless its opening ceremony and current status as a "museum" need to be analyzed in order to understand the ramifications of this inauguration. The ultimate transformation of the church from a sacred place into a museum space is an emblematic example of creating un lieu de mémoire [site of memory], as French historian Pierre Nora calls it. Nora developed this concept as a tool to analyze "sites of memory" in France invested with symbolical significance for ideological and political purposes.

In this chapter, I will show why Surp Khach deserves a closer scrutiny as a site of memory. I will provide background information about the Surp Khach church, its historical importance for the Armenians and a brief analysis of Turkey's policy towards the Armenian cultural heritage. The Turkish government, the Kurds and the Armenians have conflicting narratives about this site. I will first examine the memory of the Armenian cultural heritage on the Akthamar Island and the transformation into a museum as a fundamental element that characterizes the relationship between the modern Turkish government and the church. Secondly, I will perform a close reading of the inauguration ceremony with Turkish flags over the entire church,

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contacted the newspaper he was working for at the time. In sum, through the Minister of Education Avni Basman, the mayor of Van is told to stop this destruction. The mayor implements the order and 25 June 1951 is the day the Surp Khach church was saved. In September 2013 the Armenian Ministry of Culture awarded Kemal the Grigor Naregatsi Medal for his contributions to literature and his efforts to preserve the Armenian cultural heritage in Anatolia. During a visit to Kemal's home to present him the award, the representative of the Armenian Ministry of Culture, Seyranuhi Geghamyan, said: "We are here to show our appreciation to Kemal on his contribution to protect important Armenian architecture such as the Akhtamar Church [in Lake Van]". See: "Turkish Writer Yasar Kemal gets Armenia's Krikor Naregatsi Medal". *DoganNewsAgency* 04 September 2013. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-writer-yasar-kemal-gets-armenias-krikor-naregatsi-medal.aspx?pageID=238&nID=53835> [accessed 07 September 2013].

57 In 2004 the European Parliament ratified a resolution based on Turkey's progress report prepared by the EU Commission. The resolution included the recommendation for Turkey to register Akhtamar along with a number of other sites in the World Heritage List of the UNESCO. Furthermore, Recommendation 11 invites Turkey to "drastically improve its perception of ethnic and religious minorities, for instance by highlighting their contributions to the cultural heritage of the country; in particular, requests the Turkish authorities to consider some of these specific contributions such as Hasankeyf, Ani, Zeugma or Akhtamar as suitable for registration in the World Heritage List of UNESCO". See: Eurlings, Camiel. "On the Regular Report and the Recommedation of the European Commission on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession". 03 December 2004. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A6-2004-0063&language=EN> [accessed 08 March 2010].



Fig. 15. View of Surp Khach church and the island from the northwest with the mainland in the distance.

of the posters used to welcome the visitors and of the information panels erected on the island. Thirdly, I will examine the Armenian memory of the Surp Khach church framed by *the lost homeland* narrative. I will discuss how Armenians negotiate the present status of the church, which has a topological importance due to the specificity of its location in historical Western Armenia. I will analyze the interviews I conducted in Van with Armenians from Canada and the Republic of Armenia. Finally, based on my visit to Van region in October 2012, I will reflect on the Kurdish memory of this Armenian cultural and religious site and how it is shaped by the development of bilateral relations between the Turks and the Armenians.

This examination helps me to both complicate and advance Nora's concept because in contrast with his examples, my case concerns multiple memories/narratives attached to a single space. Where his concept of "site of memory" enables the analysis of the transformation of a unique place into a site of memory, Surp Khach is a site with conflicting memories revolving around it. Certainly, the church and its surroundings have been a popular destination for a kind of tourism labelled "dark tourism", "trauma tourism", "memory tourism" or "roots-seeking trips" for Armenians living abroad.[58] Visitors are linked with their ancestral past through these

58 In the last part of *Rites of Return Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory* (2011), four scholars highlight the notion of new tourism of witness that includes dark tourism, trauma tourism, memory tourism and

trips. Whether they seek a different kind of authenticity to forge a new relationship with the lost homeland or historical Western Armenia is not an easy question to answer. However, I will focus on what kind of "return" these "roots-seeking trips", concentrated in the Van region, might provide for the third generation. I will also examine the repercussions of this memory tourism to these tense inter-ethnic relationships between the Kurds, Armenians and Turks.

Sites of Memory

French historian Pierre Nora wrote *Sites of Memory* during the François Mitterrand era between 1984 and 1992. It aims to map the "memory sites" of national French identity such as the prehistorical caves of Lascaux, the historical figure Joan of Arc, the Tour Eiffel or the French national anthem "La Marseillaise". The approach of Nora to the history of France concentrates on imaginary representations and historical realities that frame the symbolical sites, which have shaped French social and cultural identity. The scope of his concept site of memory is very broad. It covers geographical places, emblems, commemorations, symbols, monuments and historical figures. Nora sheds light on the construction of cultural representation through symbolic topologies, which codify the historical consciousness of France. His concept can also be summarized as a new way of reinterpreting French history in symbolic terms.

In the introduction to his book Nora states, "There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire,* real environments of memory" (1989, 7). He suggests that the creation of a site of memory is closely linked to modern society's inability to live within real environments of memory. Since real environments of memory have vanished with time, societies feel their lack and cherish and re-activate this gap by consecrating a site of memory. Therefore, the search for memory in modern societies, especially in nation states such as France, means reinvesting in history in order to resuscitate it for ideological and political purposes. One of the ramifications of the site of memory concept is closely connected to the act of deciphering signs of cultures, sites, images, objects and people shaped by the past and remembered collectively through the lens of a society's imaginative values. For instance, the Eiffel tower is more than a triumph of engineering or an

roots-seeking trip. See Liz Ševčenko. "Sites of Conscience: Lighting up Dark Tourism"; Nancy K. Miller. "Kishinev Redux: Pogrom, Purim, Patrimony"; Diana Taylor. "Trauma as Durational Performance: A Return to Dark Sites"; Marita Sturken. "Pilgrimages, Reenactment, and Souvenirs: Modes of Memory Tourism".

emblem of steel architecture for the French. It is a symbol of modernity, proof of France's technological prowess and an established "site of memory", one of the markers of French identity. The concept of site of memory offers a method for analyzing national historiography by cataloguing the sites of memory produced over time in France. It is more focused on the imaginary constructions of national French memory than providing empirical information about these sites.

Nora discusses the difference between history and memory while developing his concept. He believes that the gulf between the two has deepened in modern times, which has resulted in generating two oppositions. For him, memory equals life, borne by living societies and prone to ongoing evolution. It is shaped by remembering and forgetting, subject to manipulation/appropriation and open to change. At the same time, he considers that history is a reconstruction, which is always problematic and incomplete. In essence he argues that memory is an actual phenomenon that ties us to the eternal present. However, history is nothing but a representation of the past. Nora asserts that memory selects the facts that suit it and history requires analysis and criticism. Memory can be multiple and yet specific, collective but also individual, whereas history is defined as a collective phenomenon. Nora explains that concrete things like spaces, gestures, images and objects are foundational sources for memory; conversely, history is limited to temporal continuities and progressions.

It is clear that Nora idealizes living memory whilst denigrating history, and he creates a rather simple and reductionist opposition between the two. Nora assigns countless characteristics to memory and a limited number to history. The ultimate mission of history is defined as being suspicious towards memory and having the tendency to destroy and contaminate it. He argues that a generalized critical history would suffice to preserve some museums, medallions and monuments, in other words: materials that are necessary for history to exist. However, he believes that this approach would strip these materials of the characteristics, which qualify them to be a site of memory, necessary to anchor the memory of a nation. Nora asserts that the emergence of a historiographical consciousness in France has not only deepened the split between history and memory, but it has also helped to introduce more specific memories.

One might ask: why do we need the concept of site of memory? Nora claims that there is no longer a spontaneous memory. That is why we must create archives, organize anniversaries and deliver eulogies. He argues that it is not only certain ethnic and social groups marginalized in traditional historiographies who feel the acute need to search for their own origin or identity. The materialization of memory has influenced many individuals and many have now become archivists to track their roots and collect family histories. Otherwise, without any commemorative diligence, history could sweep them away. In support of his argument about the threatening role of history towards memory he says:

> We buttress our identities upon such bastions but if what they defended were not threatened there would be no need to build them. Conversely, if the memories that they enclosed were to be set free they would be useless; if history did not besiege memory deforming and transforming it, penetrating and petrifying it there would be no *lieux de mémoire*. (12)

Basically, the tension between history and memory is what the concept of site of memory is based on. Nora argues that since what we call memory is already history, the search for memory is the search for one's history.

Nora also discusses the complex nature of the materialization of memory. The recording and archiving fetishization of our age pursues the "complete conservation of the present as well as the total preservation of the past" (13). The archive does not only facilitate the ability to trace past events but it also displaces the responsibility of remembering. However, the ongoing obsession with storing and archiving also raises the question of what is worth remembering. The proliferation of conservation and preservation consciousness is closely related to the emergence of memory mania. This can be seen as the product of the shifting parameters from memory to history. Nora asserts that:

> The passage from memory to history has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history. The task of remembering makes everyone his own historian. (15)

To avoid being swept away by history, marginalized groups who have been ostracized in the grand narratives of the national historiographies reinvent their past by creating a site of memory. This understanding not only generates a bonding between the members of a certain society but also results in revaluing private memories. Nora explains that if the memory of a certain group is not experienced collectively this will require individuals to become themselves memory individuals (16). For example, the Armenians of Turkey are ignored in the public space of Turkish society and their demand for the recognition of the genocide is not met. This failure of cherishing a collective memory also places a heavy burden on the shoulders of those individuals who at all times feel the need to remember their silenced history. One hundred years after the genocide, the Armenian heritage, or rather what remains of it, still has a strong effect on the minds of third or fourth generation Armenians. That is why the grandchildren of the survivors feel the need to transmit the memory of the genocide to other people. The collective remembrance takes a different form through the individual efforts of the upcoming generations. Nora classifies this kind of memory as duty memory.

The third kind of memory that Nora introduces is distance memory, shaped by discontinuity. In this kind of memory the past is restored through re-memorialization in which the present becomes a kind of recycled and updated past. Nora asserts that the disintegration of the distinction between history and memory has contributed to the emergence of a new kind of historian. He believes that "his role and place in society were once simple and clearly defined: to be the spokesman of the past and the herald of the future" (18). Thus, scholarly transparency, objectivity and acting as an interlocutor between the raw material and knowledge were once the sole characteristics of an historian. However, the newly emerged historian is more likely to develop a relation to his subject by demonstrating and deepening this tendency. This brings to mind the increasing popularity of testimonies within the discipline of history. Cultural historians also analyze autobiographies and testimonies to gauge the stories omitted from national historiographies. With the broadening of the discipline and the fragmentation between history-memory, the historian himself has become a site of memory.

Nora asserts that to be able to classify something as a site of memory, first of all there must be a will to remember. Otherwise, it would result in a site of history (19). Let me explain this by giving a concrete example from the work of Nora. For instance, the cave of Lascaux in the southwest of France is best known for its Palaeolithic cave paintings, which attract thousands of tourists every year. The French government has appropriated this cave in order to indoctrinate the French citizens about their extensive civilization and history. Nora gives as example a television series shot at Lascaux that even claimed to offer a glimpse of "the Frenchman of fifteen thousand years ago" (185). The case of Lascaux exemplifies how archaeological heritage is used for the purpose of consolidating power and generating a bigger will among the French to remember their "extensive" civilization. This symbolic topology is used in the service of creating imaginary constructions that give new meanings to French history and identity. Nora believes that the transformative role of sites of memory marks certain territories and redefines their boundaries for ideological and political purposes as in the case of Lascaux. He further argues:

> For if we accept that the most fundamental purpose of the *lieu de mémoire* is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial – just as if gold were the only memory of money – all of this in order to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs, it is also clear that *lieux de mémoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications. (19)

The case of *Le Tour de la France par deux Enfants* will clarify what Nora means with the above quotation. *Le Tour de la France par deux Enfants* is a French schoolbook written by Augustine Fouillée in 1877. It was one of the core books in the curriculum of French schools during the Third Republic. The *Tour* was instrumental in terms of bringing about a sense of a unified French nation. By 1914 it had reached a circulation of 7 million copies. It suddenly became an essential guide to encourage French children to reflect on their identity and to reignite their national pride following the defeat in the Franco-Prussia war. Obviously the work of Fouillée was meant to be more than a basic book aimed at exalting the French identity.

At first sight the Surp Khach church looks like one of the examples described by Nora. However, in contrast to the sites of memory that Nora mentions in his book, it carries a different symbolic meaning for the Armenians, the Kurds and the Turkish government. I will discuss each of these conflicting narratives and try to analyze the kind of site of memory the church offers for these different groups and how these manifested narratives unfold.

The Surp Khach Church

The church of Surp Khach is one of the most important examples of tenth-century medieval Armenian art and architecture. It was built by the King Gagik Artsruni and designed by architect the Manuel.[59] According to Stepen Mnatsakanian, the church is the only remaining construction from the metropolis of the Artsruni kingdom of Vaspurakan (Mnatsakanian 2010, 9). He further believes that it was a part of several other structures constructed next to the church complex such as the royal palace. The reliefs carved onto the facades of the church depict biblical and secular themes such as King Gagik presenting a model of the church to Jesus Christ, the battle between David and Goliath or scenes from the sacrifice of Isaac (see figure 16). An attentive visitor can still see the holes in the eyes of the apostles or in the tails of the birds on the facade of the church. Şevket İpşiroğlu reports that these holes on the exterior facades of the church were filled with gold and ornaments so that the rays of sunlight and the interplay of shadow and light would create a magical divine effect on the church (İpşiroğlu, 2007). This not only created an optical illusion but it made the glittering church visible from every angle of Lake Van. It is one of the rare examples

59 See Richard G. Hovannisian. *Armenian Van/Vaspurakan.* (2000); J.G. Davies. *Medieval Armenian Art and Architecture: The Church of the Holy Cross, Aghtamar.* (1991) and Sirarpie Der Nersessian. *Agh'tamar, Church of the Holy Cross* (1965).



Fig. 16. Examples from the reliefs carved onto the exterior wall of the Surp Khach church: King Saul (left), David (middle) and Goliath (right).

of Armenian architecture that have survived in the region, mainly because of its inaccessible position on Lake Van. Today ethnic Kurds constitute the majority of the population in the city of Van. However, before the genocide, Van and its region had one of the largest populations of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. With its 450 towns and villages, the pre-war Armenian population in the vilayet [province of the Ottoman Empire] of Van was 110,987 and the city had an Armenian majority (Kévorkian 2011, 319). Another historian, Vahakn Dadrian, states that:

> The entire region was considered by the Armenians as hallowed territory, a landmark of Armenian culture and civilization, steeped in the traditions of the ancient Armenian church. (2003, 131)

That is why Van still houses many Armenian churches and monasteries such as Surp Nshan, Surp Asdvadzadzin, Surp Vartan and Naregavank. The first thing that makes the church of Surp Khach unique is the renovation it has undergone under the auspices of the Turkish Ministry of Tourism and Culture. Since the genocide, the Turkish government has demolished or ignored most of the Armenian religious and

archaeological sites. Some have undergone an architectural rehabilitation for the purpose of functioning as a mosque, whilst others were not considered worthy of preservation.[60] Dickran Kouymjian states that since Turkish history has been rewritten to sterilize its controversial past, the destruction of the Armenian monuments has been the marker of this understanding (1985, 173-74). In order to strengthen the denialist narrative, the Turkish state has followed a policy of eradication of the Armenian heritage. The denialist discourse does therefore not only negate the genocide but also the cultural existence of the Armenians in Turkey.

Kouymjian lists the steps taken by the Turkish governments against Armenian monuments: a) wilful destruction by fire, explosives, dynamite or artillery; b) conversion of Armenian churches into mosques, prisons, granaries, stables and museums; c) demolition for the construction of roads; d) neutralization of a monument's Armenian identity by erasing Armenian inscriptions; and e) international reattribution of Armenian monuments to Turkish and especially medieval Seljuk architecture (1985, 174). These measures have been implemented mainly in the eastern part of Turkey, which is considered to be the historical Western Armenia by Armenians, to Turkify the region.

In addition to the destruction of Armenian cultural sites, a decree issued on 5 January 1916 by Enver Pasha, one of the architects of the genocide, prescribed a change of name for many cities, including the ones in the historical Armenian region.[61] The Kemalist regime continued the legacy of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) of altering the memoryscape of the Armenian genocide by effacing physical traces of Armenian heritage and by destroying and getting rid of engravings (Üngör 2014, 5). In the fifth chapter of *Imaginary Geographies: The Names of the Places Changed in Turkey During the Republican Period* [Hayali Coğrafyalar: Cum-

60 The Armenian Church of St. Giragos in Diyarbakir has been reopened in 2012 after a restoration initiated by Raffi Bedrosian. Bedrosian is an Istanbul Armenian who has immigrated to Canada after his studies. His brother-in-law was head of the church council in Diyarbakir and asked him for his help in restoring the church. He helped to raise funds for the church and worked closely with the Surp Giragos Foundation. See Thomas de Waal "Great Catastrophe: Armenians and Turks in the Shadow of Genocide" (2015) p.12-13. I believe that the Church of St. Giragos has been not musealized due to two reasons. First, the restoration has been conducted not by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism but by the local Armenians through the funding they have raised. Second, the church was already a registered property of the Armenian community, which has not yet been confiscated by the government. Therefore, Diyarbakir Armenian community has managed in restoring their religious site and reopening it as a functioning church.

61 Although it was suspended for a certain time for reasons of military practicability, the toponym change policy of was reinstated after the war and continued well into the 1980s and tens of thousands of Armenian place names were changed (Üngör and Polatel 2011, 78).

huriyet Döneminde Türkiye'de Değiştirilen Yer Adları], Sevan Nişanyan brings up the issue of toponym changes and the erasure of the non-Turkish cultural memory in Turkey.[62] The report states that between 1916 and 2011, more than 15,000 place names were changed in Turkey. Nişanyan publishes the 1916 decree in his report. The decree stipulates as follows:

> 1. It has been decided that provinces, districts, towns, villages, mountains, and rivers, which are named in languages belonging to non-Muslim nations such as Armenian, Greek or Bulgarian, will be renamed into Turkish. In order to benefit from this suitable moment, this aim should be achieved in due course.[63]
> 2. In cooperation with military commanders and administrative personnel within the boundaries of your jurisdiction, lists of name changes should be drawn up of provinces, regions, villages, etc. and forwarded to military headquarters as soon as possible. Once examined and approved, these lists of proposed changes should be sent to the Ministry of the Interior Relations and the Ministry of Communications for implementation.
> 3. It is imperative that the new names reflect the history of our hardworking, exemplary and praiseworthy military. The glorified events of our present and past war experiences should, by all means, be mentioned. If this is not possible, the names of those with high moral principles who fell whilst rendering invaluable services to their country should be remembered; or names should be found that are appropriate to the given area's specific crop, product, trade or geographical situation. Last but not least, school teachers in different parts of our motherland should find appropriate topics to teach about the given territory's glorious history, climate, crop, trade and culture. It should be borne in mind that any sudden change of a conventional name into an inconvenient or improper one may bring about the continuation of using the old name by the population. Therefore, new names should be chosen taking all this into consideration. If such principles cannot be observed, then Ereghli, for example, should be turned into Erikli or Erakli, Gallipoli into Veliboli in order to maintain the roots of old names.

In his report Koyumjian states that nearly ninety per cent of the historical Armenian names have been changed except Van and Bitlis (1985, 173). This decree thus

62 Sevan Nişanyan is a linguist, columnist, academic and an outspoken critic born in Istanbul in 1956. His latest report, *Imaginary Geographies: The Names of the Places Changed in Turkey During the Republican Period* (2011), catalogues the changing of toponyms in Turkey. He is also the author of *Adını Unutan Ülke Türkiye'de Adı Değiştirilen Yerler Sözlüğü* [Dictionary of Places Whose Names Have Been Changed in a Country That Forgets Its Name]. Moreover, he is undertaking an online project through his website named www.nisanyanmap.com, which lists the altered names of the Turkish villages and cities.

63 All translations from Turkish to English are mine unless indicated otherwise.

finalized the eradication of Christian heritage by buttressing the Turkification of former non-Muslim settlements belonging to Armenians, Greeks and Bulgarians. It also encouraged the glorification of the militaristic state by naming these Turkified villages after soldiers and commanders. The decree meant the erasure of Armenian cultural memory and "was an attempt to wipe out the geographical imprints of non-Turkish cultures" (Üngör and Polatel 2011, 78). In accordance with the official ideology Enver's project seized the Armenian heritage in Anatolia and reassigned a Turkish character to it. Naming historical Western Armenian villages and cities after military figures invested these locations with nationalist meanings. As a result, the regime produced other memories and narratives while silencing certain memories and narratives (Üngör 2014, 8).

In *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en Terre sainte* Halbwachs highlights the importance of assigning a role to a certain landmark to create a symbolic meaning for a group or a society. To elaborate his statement he analyzes the construction of the Holy Land as a commemorative landscape for Christians. Halbwachs delineates how this imaginary land, established within the borders of Palestine, was created by elaborating, modifying and remodelling the places mentioned in the New Testament. In the case of the Holy Land, the Church invested new meanings in this location with imaginative conceptions. A number of biblical landmarks such as Bethlehem, the Mount of Olives, Nazareth and the Lake of Tiberius were reconstructed to locate the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Since the physical evidence and traces that confirmed Jesus' life had already vanished from these landmarks, the Church obliterated the past of the Holy Land and reassigned a Christian character to it. Through veneration and imaginative representatives projected on these landscapes, the places of Christian memory dotted the Holy Land. These biblical landmarks, imbued with new memories, were re-presented as the holiest Christian locations *par excellence*. In order to revitalize memories about Jesus, memories of other groups, such as the Jews, were excluded. Halbwachs convenes that the disciples "annexed a part of the Jewish collective memory" in order to situate the beliefs of the Christians in these consecrated landmarks (Halbwachs 1992, 215). Hence, pinpointing the vicissitudes of the life of Jesus at the Mount of Olives or the Holy Sepulchre entailed the expunction of the memories belonging to the Jews. This topographical appropriation commenced with the reabsorption of certain landmarks into Christian memory and continued with laying claim on these territories. Ultimately, the obliteration of Jewish memory was finalized by rewriting history through these fictive sites.

Similarly, the decree of Enver Pasha gave a material form to a project, which ultimately aimed to rewrite Turkish history through the appropriation of Christian locations. By suppressing the Armenian heritage and changing the names of cit-

ies and villages, the regime obliterated the non-Turkish past of the country. The political exploitation of non-Turkish memories paved the way for the revitalization of a new Turkish memory that sanctified Anatolia as the homeland of the Turks. The memory engineering entailed modifying and effacing any reminder of the Armenians in Anatolia. That is why in 2005 the Turkish government also altered the names of three animals found on its territory. Accordingly the Latin name of wild sheep, *ovis armeniana,* became *ovis orientalis anatolica*, roe deer known as *capreolus capreolus armenus* turned into *capreolus cuprelus capreolus* and a red fox called *vulpes vulpes kurdistanica* was changed into *vulpes vulpes* (Marchand and Perrier 2014, 120). Considering that between 1915 and 2005, the Turkish government conducted a destructive policy against the Armenian heritage, the restoration of the church formed an enigma for many people.

In what follows, I will carry out a close reading of the opening ceremony and the current status of the church both of which claim to "show" how inclusive the Turkish government is towards the Armenian heritage. Through this close reading, I will examine what kind of site of memory the Turkish government aims to create with its inauguration ceremony. There is a tension between the statements and the executions of the Turkish government. I will first analyze the tension between the posters, the Turkish flag and the Surp Khach church during the inauguration ceremony. The meaning produced by this tension will be the basis for my analysis. The posters used during the opening ceremony of the church, and which I read when visiting the church in October 2012, state:

Respect the culture, respect the history

These posters suggest recognition and collective remembrance. It seems the addressees of the political statement of the Turkish government are the visitors of the church. Consequently, any visitor will read these posters as the expression of a country that respects its cultural diversity and retains any cultural heritage as it is. As an expository agent, the Turkish state conveys an ambiguous message through which it presents the renovation. It is not clear whose culture and whose history should be respected. The Armenians' or Turkey's in general? The use of Turkish flags on the walls of an Armenian church creates a narrative constructed through the current position of the Turkish government towards the Armenians. Cultural domination and the consolidation of power through cultural heritage play an important role in it. Therefore, I will scrutinize the whole inauguration ceremony to ascertain the narrative of the Turkish government about the case of the Surp Khach church.

I will now address the ramifications of the transformation of the Surp Khach church into a museum and explore what this means for the collective memory in

modern Turkey. The information boards on the hill leading to the church provide information about how the church has been curated as a museum. That is why they deserve closer scrutiny. I will focus on whether turning a religious site into a museum is a life-enhancing practice to preserve and sustain the transgenerational transmission of a particular heritage or a mummifying experience that freezes time and generates cultural ossification.

The Memory Engineering of the Turkish Government

After two years of renovation, the opening ceremony of the Surp Khach church took place on 29 March 2007. An enormous Turkish flag was draped over one of the island's spurs and could be seen long before the church silhouette came into view (see figure 17). Speaking against Turkish flags and a portrait of the founder of the modern Turkish state, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Minister of Culture and Tourism Atilla Koç called for the protection of "the cultural diversity and assets of the different cultures and civilizations in Turkey", without mentioning Armenians by name. After the Turkish Minister of Culture's address, Armenian Patriarch Mesrob II gave a speech delivered in Turkish with a simultaneous translation into English, as was



Fig. 17. A Turkish flag draped over the edge of the island.

the case for the speech of Mr Koç. Handouts of both speeches printed in English were delivered to the journalists after the press conference (see figures 18, 19 and 20). The speeches were followed by the Turkish national anthem. Posters on the walls of the church and on the entrance of the hotel where the Armenian delegates stayed declared: "Respect the culture, respect the culture" [Tarihe saygı, kültüre saygı] (see figures 21 and 22). I will now analyze the opening ceremony, the speeches delivered on that occasion and the posters/flags stuck on the walls to explore what kind of memory the Turkish government was seeking to promote in respect of the Surp Khach church.

The first element of the opening ceremony that caught the eye was the fetishization of the Turkish flags used during the inauguration. Generally speaking a national flag is a symbolic representation of a group or a country. It is not only a unifying symbol and the essence of patriotism for the citizens of a particular nation but also a representation of national independence and sovereignty. The Turkish flag with a white crescent moon and a star in its centre takes its red colour from the blood of dutiful soldiers killed on the front. Thus, it also carries a militaristic symbolism. Patriotic people display the flag at national days and it stimulates national solidarity. The display of Turkish flags all over the island where the church is situated not only conveys a message of nationalism but also claims ownership of this cultural



Fig. 18. The Armenian Patriarch Mesrob Mutafian delivers his speech between the Turkish flag and a poster of Atatürk.

Opening Speech of Mr. Atilla KOÇ,
Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey
Opening Ceremony of Van Akdamar Church Memorial Museum
March 29, 2007, Van

Dear Ministers,

Dear Governor, Deputies,

Distinguished Leaders of Religious Communities and Chives of Missions,

Esteemed Press Members and Guests,

First of all, I would like to welcome all of our guests from Turkey and abroad who have been here with us on the occasion of opening of Van Akdamar Church Memorial Museum.

As we all aware, Turkey is located in such a cultural geography in which different cultures have blended during the history. The interactions among these different cultures have brought dynamism in global scale.

These lands, which have the richest cultural heritage, have been contributing to the cultural diversity of the world.

The perception of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Republic of Turkey is to protect and enhance cultural diversity by taking the requirements of globalization into consideration.

Within this context, one of the duties of Ministry of Culture and Tourism is to protect the cultural diversity and assets of the different cultures and civilizations in our lands and pass them through the next generations

Our government has a new sense to protect this cultural heritage as a result of its efforts in terms of legislation and practice; thus, the restoration of our cultural assets has been realized in order to resuscitate them.

Within this framework, our Ministry, General Directorate of Foundations, and local administrations have been completing the restoration of the assets for three years and we had never completed the restorations in the history as many as we have realized during this three-year period.

Van Akdamar Church Memorial Museum, which will be opened today, is one of the good examples.

The main purpose of the restoration of Van Akdamar Church Memorial Museum is to perpetuate a world cultural heritage.

Considering cultural diversity as richness for contributing the coexistence in the society, our efforts will be continuing in the future as we have done realized before.

Moreover, it is my firm belief that inauguration of Van Akdamar Church Memorial Museum will contribute to the promotion of Van, homeland of different civilizations for thousands of years, for tourism purpose as well.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed and devoted themselves for the restoration of Akdamar Church Memorail Museum.

Sincerely yours,

Fig. 19. Official English version of the speech given by the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Mr Atilla Koç, during the opening ceremony.

SPEECH OF HIS BEATITUDE MESROB II
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY
OF THE NEWLY RESTORED ARMENIAN CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS
ON THE ISLAND OF AGHTAMAR
29 March 2007

Today, in the historic city of Van, on the Island of Aghtamar, we are gathered to witness the inauguration ceremony of the Armenian Church of the Holy Cross, as a museum, shortly after the completion of its restoration. The unique frescoes and the exterior reliefs of this church have been the subject of numerous studies by art historians. They make the Armenian Church of the Holy Cross on this island one of the most extraordinary churches and monastic complexes in Anatolia, and one of the strongest symbols of a culture that has existed in Anatolia for the last 3,000 years.

This church has not been used as a place of worship for over ninety years now, and it is only natural that snow, rain, earthquakes and other natural phenomena have dilapidated it. It is therefore a joy to see that the church is restored in accordance with the original structure. This restoration is, of course, part of a vision encompassing the entire cultural heritage of Anatolia, with a view to protecting this heritage as effectively as possible. This vision has been realised, despite much harsh and politicised criticism from various opponents, by our Government and our Ministry of Culture, who have courageously completed the restoration project. On this historic day, on behalf of the Armenian citizens of Turkey, I would like to offer them my profound thanks. From an architectural and also an artistic viewpoint, this difficult restoration work has been completed in a relatively short period of time by the Kartalkaya Company staff; I would like to thank the owner of the company, Mr. Cahit Zeydanlı and also our architect Mr. Zakarya Mildanoğlu, to whom I offer my heartfelt congratulations.

This successful restoration work is a strong sign that our Government pays attention to all historic structures without discrimination. This restoration work is also quite a positive development in Turkish-Armenian Relations, which I hope will be blessed by the efforts of all people of good will.

I would also like to express an idea: people would experience good feelings if allowed to pray in an historic church or religious centre. If further steps are courageously taken, the Island of Aghtamar and this Armenian Church of the Holy Cross might possibly become the focal point of an annual pilgrimage. Everyone knows that this structure was built as a house of worship, indeed it is an ancient church. According to our holy traditions, all the clergy, bishops and benefactors who have served in this monastic complex in the past should be remembered by a special Divine Liturgy once a year. This is not only a part of our own holy tradition; it is common knowledge that all societies remember and bless the memory of their benefactors on certain occasions.

In this respect, an annual Divine Liturgy that could be celebrated in this church, and an Aghtamar Festival linked to it, would gather believers from the four corners of the world, to this historic island. Their feeling of spiritual joy would be doubled by the folkloric dances, folk music of the region and exhibition of regional handcrafts, and perhaps could pave the way for the longed-for dialogue, in which both sides have been unsuccessful to date.

We hope and believe that our Government, who has allocated the funds for the protection and restoration of this church, may also make it possible to hold annual celebrations in this church.

Fig. 20. Official English version of the speech given by the Patriarch Mesrob Mutafian during the opening ceremony.

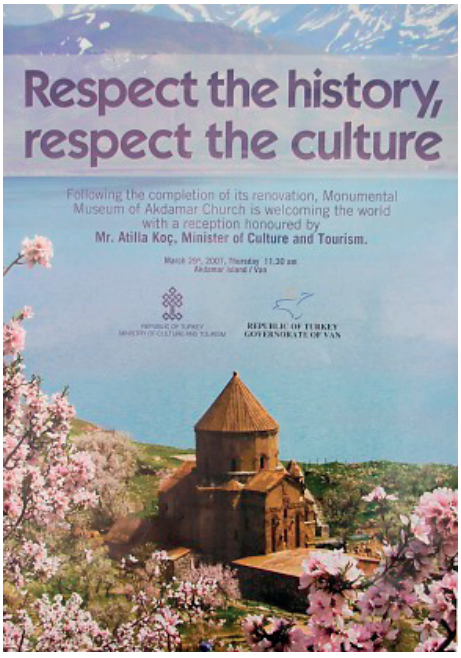




Fig. 21. and 22. A copy of the poster used during the opening ceremony both on the church walls and on the Şahmaran Hotel in Van where the Patriarch and most of the Armenian visitors stayed.

site. Considering the fact that the Turkish government has been resisting claims to formally return the church to the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul since 2007, the Turkish flags on the island demonstrate Turkish hegemony.

The second element of the inauguration was the official speech delivered by the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Mr Atilla Koç and the Patriarch Mesrob II. In his speech Koç did not mention the Armenians or the Armenian heritage. Instead he chose general terms such as "different cultures", "different civilizations", "cultural diversity" and "cultural heritage". The speech can be seen as the continuation of the state policy that ignores the existence of Armenians in modern Turkey. On the other hand, Patriarch Mesrob II started his speech by alluding to the "historic city of Van", an implicit reference to the historical Western Armenian heritage that existed in that area. In contrast to Koç, the Patriarch adopted the island's Armenian name "Aghtamar" and referred to that cultural site as "The Armenian Church of the Holy Cross". Neither did he shy away from mentioning Surp Khach "as one of the strongest symbols of a culture that existed in Anatolia for the last 3,000 years". Unlike the speech of Koç that portrayed the Turkish state as having great respect for "different cultures", Mesrob II raised concerns about the transformation of the church into a museum and pleaded for permission to organize a holy mass once a year at the church.

The third element of the inauguration concerns the contradiction between the posters reading "Respect the culture, respect the history" and the policies of the Turkish government. The government had prepared special posters for the opening ceremony of the Surp Khach church. They are approximately 4mx4m plastic banners with an image of the church in the middle against a blue sky. On the right top of the poster is the logo of the Van governorate and on the left top the logo of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The headline is written in dark blue to match the blue skyline. These posters were put up on the wall of the church, on the facade of the hotel where the Armenian delegates stayed and in the crowded squares of Ankara. The commanding sentences and the present tense on the posters "Respect the culture respect the history" emphasize ethics and universalize a specific morality. They present an image of a country that pays heed to any type of cultural heritage and also urges others to act accordingly. These posters were also exhibited in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey, which houses the embassies of the international community. Thus, the renovation was presented to the world as a political achievement of Turkey in recognizing minority rights. Apparently by reaching out to foreign representatives the government strove to bolster its reputation and minimize any obstacles for the accession of Turkey into the EU.

The fourth element of the opening ceremony concerns the holy mass that the Surp Khach church would like to organize annually. The right of the church to organize a holy mass once in a year has been presented as a "permission" given by the Turkish government to normalize relations with neighbouring Armenia. However, if an Armenian wants to visit the Surp Khach church, s/he can only reach Van via Georgia as the Turkish-Armenian border is closed.[64] Since 1989 Azerbaijan has imposed a permanent blockade of road, rail and energy links with Armenia, and Turkey has supported this blockade along its border with Armenia (Herzig 2000, 66). Considering the absence of diplomatic relations and the closed border between Armenia and Turkey, the inauguration of the Surp Khach church and the organization of an annual holy mass will not be decisive for the reconciliation between the two countries.

The fifth element of the inauguration concerns the failed attempt of the Armenian community to consecrate the Surp Khach church in accordance with the traditions of the Armenian Church. Traditionally, the rituals of the Armenian Church

64 The first flight between Yerevan and Van was scheduled on 3 April 2013. The Narekavank Tour agency in Yerevan had announced that Van-Yerevan flights would be operated twice a week. However, Turkey cancelled the flights following Azeri resistance and suspended the project indefinitely. Since Turkey has kinship ties with Azerbaijan and a partnership with that country in terms of its role in the Caucasus, the Turkish government suspended the flights after the project sparked anger in Azerbaijan.

require a religious site to be consecrated before its opening. In the case of the Surp Khach church, this was not allowed on the grounds that it is a museum. Thus, Turkish officials were also highly concerned about mounting a cross on the roof of the church. Since they did not want to give an impression of officially consecrating the church, they did not allow a cross on it. However, the church was "consecrated" by the Turkish anthem that was sung during the inauguration. Since this anthem is not only a saga of the sacrifice of soldiers but also a sign of patriotism that evokes and eulogizes the heroic Turkish army that fought during the War of Independence, it was another example of the disconnection between the official statements and the practices of the officials in modern Turkey. The renovation of the Surp Khach church under the auspices of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism has been carried out to convey a message to the world of how respectful Turkey is of its non-Muslim cultural heritage. Thus, the opening ceremony of the church has been conducted with the aim of promoting an image of Turkey as a tolerant nation that embraces its cultural plurality. The inauguration has been utilized as a showcase for the Turkish government to demonstrate its engagement with the cultural heritage of religious and ethnic differences. The government chose this angle to instrumentalize the renovation of the church and to avoid the pressure from the international community to admit the genocide. It has turned out to be a government public relations campaign to suppress the genocide claims.

Transformation of a Religious Site into a Museum

In October 2012 I conducted fieldwork in Van. In this section, I will present my observations as the basis of my analysis of the transition of a religious site into a museum and its ramifications for the remembrance of the Armenians in modern Turkey. Since the church is located on Akhtamar Island, tourists visiting the church have to take a boat from Gevaş. At the time we arrived at the port, an old little boat waiting for us to depart. One thing that attracted my attention before the beginning of our boat trip was the militaristic greeting of the Turkish army made out of stones on the mountain slope facing Akhtamar Island. It reads in Turkish "The Homeland Will Never Be Divided: Gendarmerie Commando" [Vatan Bölünmez: Jandarma Komando] and in between these two sentences a symbolic Turkish flag on this deserted mountain.[65] It was not only a nationalist warning in a city where ninety per

65 "The homeland will never be divided" [Vatan bölünmez] or "Our martyrs are immortal and the homeland will never be divided" [Şehitler ölmez vatan bölünmez] are nationalist mottos adopted

cent of the inhabitants are Kurdish, but also an implicit message to Armenians using this route on the way to the Surp Khach church against any irredentist claim. One of the things that I noticed while approaching the island was an enormous Turkish flag. After a boat trip of approximately twenty minutes we arrived on Akhtamar Island where the church is located. While climbing the stairs that lead to the church, we came across an information panel written in Turkish and English. It provided brief information about the Surp Khach church without mentioning Armenians or the Armenian history of the island (see figure 24).

We continued walking and suddenly saw the Surp Khach church in front of us. Each side of the church was decorated with stone reliefs representing biblical figures including Adam, Eve, Abraham, David and Goliath, Jesus Christ as well as hunting scenes depicting humans and animals. A design of vines interspersed with animals carved onto stone reliefs surrounds the exterior facade of the church. In addition to these depictions there are scenes portraying King Gagik and the grape harvest. These stone reliefs made by the Armenian master carvers are still in good condition. Black steel containers for keeping the candles for the annual holy mass were stationed outside, next to the church. They were the only proof that the Surp Khach hosts an annual holy mass that attracts hundreds of tourists from all around the world.

Two security guards were protecting the church against any vandalizing or destruction. They were locals dressed in special security guard outfits and greeting most of the visitors in Kurdish, standing right next to the church entrance and ensuring that every visitor had a valid ticket. When we were about to enter the church one of them approached us; we paid him and received our tickets.

The moment I looked at the exterior of the church, with its long-debated cross on top of the roof, it felt like standing in front of an Eastern Armenian church. Inside the darkness and the coldness of the empty space surrounded me. Frescoes of saints and religious subjects adorn the inside of the church. The interior walls and the cupola are covered with outstanding frescoes, such as the one on the high altar wall representing Jesus' triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem, an event mentioned in all four canonical Gospels. The upper part of the apse is covered with wall paintings that depict various biblical scenes. The figure of Christ can be seen giving a blessing with his right hand and holding a book in the other. To his left is a figure of the Theotokos with his hands extended towards Christ, and to his

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mostly during the funerals of the martyrs who fell during the fight against Kurdish PKK fighters in Turkey. However, "The homeland is indivisible" is also used with reference to the ethnic minorities as in the case of the mountain slope facing Akthamar Island. It is both an explicit message to the Kurdish majority of the region and a warning to the Armenians against any irredentist claims in the historical Western Armenia.



Fig. 23. An information board designating the church as Akdamar Island and Monumental Museum

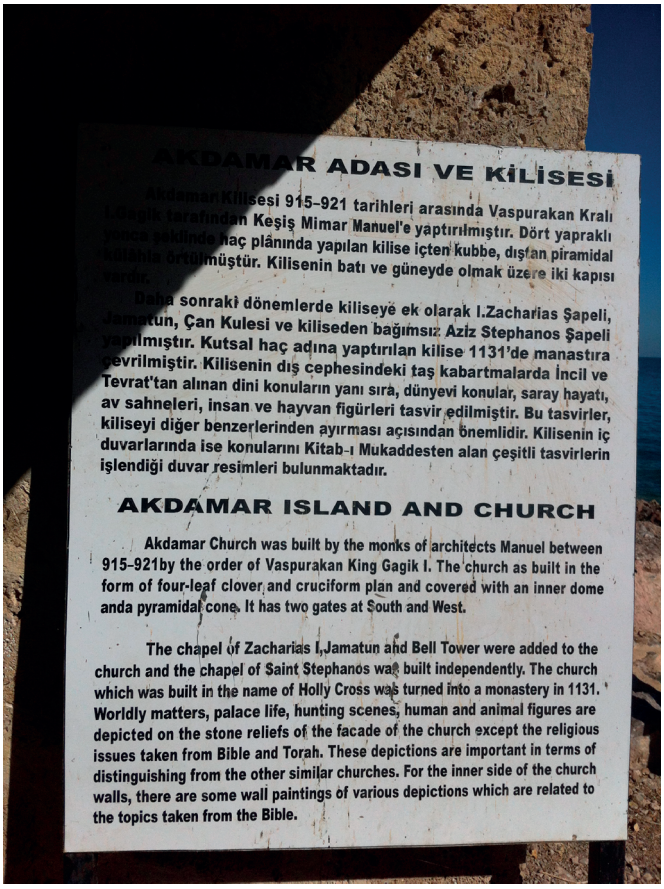


Fig. 24. Information board

right is Saint John the Baptist. Below these figures are six apostles, whose names are inscribed next to them. The apostle near the central window represents Peter whereas those to the right are Paul, Andrew and Philip. The creation story from the Book of Genesis covers the entire drum of the dome. It includes representations such as Adam's entrance into heaven, the creation of Eve and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

The southern part of the east apse is decorated with scenes from the New Testament whilst the childhood of Christ is depicted in the south and west apses. To the right of the central window the south apse is covered with a number of Nativity scenes. In the upper section of the north apse the representation continues with a scene of the baptism scene and the scene of the Crucifixion occupies the second band of the northern arm. In addition to the biblical frescoes, an icon representing the seated Madonna and the Christ child on a wooden panel is situated in front of the altar. The icon depicts the arm of baby Jesus around his mother's chest. Mary looks away, her face is full of warmth but also deep sadness. They both have an affectionate look and Mary strokes the Child by holding him in an informal, tender and maternal manner. The absence of church chairs, prayer candles in front of the icon, entrance tickets, souvenir shops or cafés to cater for the visitors and the presence of security guards all indicate the current status of the church as a museum. This is also confirmed by the first descriptive board on the island, which reads in Turkish as "Akdamar Island and Monumental Museum" [Akdamar Ada ve Anıt Müzesi] (see figure 23).

But, what does musealization mean? In order to answer this question I will focus on what this concept entails and how the musealization of a church can be read. Next I will further explicate the meaning of the information boards and describe what their presence suggests. In addition to the musealization of the church, the information boards deserve a closer scrutiny in order to develop an argument to help understand the kind of memory that is at stake at this site.

In his book *Twilight Memories Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* Andreas Huyssen touches upon the concept of musealization and explains what it refers to. He argues, "the modern museum has always been attacked as a symptom of cultural ossification by all those speaking in the name of life" (Huyssen 1995, 13). Huyssen believes that it is difficult to describe museums as single institutions with stable and well-drawn boundaries. Since their practices correspond to altering visitor expectations, museums mainly reformulate the past "in terms of present-day interest." Huyssen further states that:

> Fundamentally dialectical, the museum serves both as burial chamber of the past – with all that entails in terms of decay, erosion, forgetting – and as site of

> possible resurrections, however mediated and contaminated, in the eyes of the beholder. (15)

There are two contradictory ideas about the function of a museum. The first perceives a museum as a conservation and preservation site. The second equates musealization with petrification of life and ahistoricism. Adorno, Baudrillard, Jeudy, Huyssen and Maleuvre have theoretically discussed the question whether museums are life-enhancing or mummifying institutions. For Huyssen, as Adorno points out, analogies between "museum and mausoleum are more than just phonetics" (Huyssen 1995, 16). Maleuvre further expresses how Adorno associates "an unpleasant affinity with necrology, with a culture of death, mausolea and sepulchres" (Maleuvre 1999, 2). Thus, storing, managing and selecting might also result in producing knowledge that is alienated from the common practices of life. Similarly, Baudrillard and Jeudy think that musealization is analogous to "killing, freezing, sterilizing, dehistoricizing and decontextualizing" (Huyssen 1995, 30). This is the tradition that holds the museum responsible for the estrangement and alienation of art.

In the introduction to *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art* Maleuvre informs us that the first great museums of the nineteenth century were also heavily criticized because they were seen as destroying history and culture rather than preserving it. Museums were considered as confined spaces where loss of context and cultural meaning prevail. Huyssen argues that rather than an overall critique of the musealization process; site-specific critiques of musealization are more appropriate. He further adds that the museum is no longer a sheltered space "nor do its walls provide a barrier against the world outside" (Huyssen 1995, 21). Huyssen claims that rather than taking a rigid stance against musealization per se, one should judge its activities and measure their success in terms of overcoming the superiority of one culture over another through exhibitions. He further believes that museums should open themselves to other representations and foreground problems arising from representation and narrative through their designs and exhibits. Huyssen suggests that "new curatorial practises and new forms of spectatorship" have resulted in transforming museums into new cultural spaces that function as cultural mediators (35).

Following the state-funded renovation, the Surp Khach church has been functioning as a museum since the spring of 2007. If the musealization of the church is read together with the inauguration ceremony, the refusal of the authorities to place a cross on the church during the opening ceremony, the belated permission to organize holy mass and the abundance of Turkish flags around the church, it becomes clear that these practices have created a neutral site stripped of its cultural heritage. Although the musealization is legitimized as the preservation of other

"cultural differences", it also deprives the site of its cultural and historical character. The musealization has played a neutralizing role, which has failed to integrate the church with its surroundings and its history. Since there are innumerable Armenian churches scattered around the city of Van, the musealization of a specific church distinguishes it from the other churches that are reminiscent of the Western Armenian cultural heritage. Once it is categorized as a museum, the church is washed off its religious function. That is why the two security guards protecting the church immediately intervene when people want to place flowers, pictures or candles for those who lost their lives in that region during the genocide. In 2010 a group of Armenian children from Armenia were told to leave the church for lighting candles, singing and praying in Armenian.[66] Lighting candles in a recently renovated museum might stain the walls or lead to a fire but the reaction of the police was prompted by the re-positioning of the site as a museum by children who reaffirmed the former function of the site by praying.

The musealization of Surp Khach also means producing knowledge alienated from society. Stripped of its function as a church, the site becomes a space unconnected to its topography and difficult to grasp at first hand. The government has publicized the musealization as an example of safeguarding the cultural heritage of Turkey. However, in the case of Surp Khach, the failure to acknowledge the Armenian history of the site suggests neutralization, fixation and denial of its history. If the church were inaugurated as a church to establish a memory of the past "before it is too late", it could be construed as evidence that the government ensures its generational transmission of awareness of the genocide. However, in a country that has been denying the genocide for a century, this is more than wishful thinking. Until recently a section in Van Museum simply presented the Armenians as cutthroats who murdered Muslims in 1915. This special section dedicated to the genocide of the Muslims by Armenians contained skulls, skeletons and other materials. During my visit to Van in 2012, the museum was under renovation following a powerful earthquake with a magnitude of 7.2 on the scale of Richter that hit the city in 2011. As a result I could not visit the museum but my local guide told me that this section had been removed shortly before the inauguration of the church for fear of any negative effects on the "roots-seeking trip" developing in the region.

66 Barsoumian, Nanore. "Armenian kids made to leave Sourp Khatch Church on Akhtamar". *Armenian Weekly* 21 August 2010.
<http://www.armenianweekly.com/2010/08/21/armenian-kids-made-to-leave-sourp-khatch-in-aghtamar> [accessed 03 January 2011].

The information boards assume a walking tour, which starts the moment visitors step onto Akhtamar Island. The first board reconfirms the current status of the site by highlighting it with the title:

Akdamar Island and Monumental Museum
Fee: 3 TL
Open: 08:00 am Closed 18:00 pm

It not only asserts the current status of the church as a monumental museum but also draws attention to the commercial activities involved. From the very first minute the Turkish government, as the agent responsible for the perspective produced, draws the boundaries of the space. It can be perceived as an agreement between the Turkish government and the museumgoer. S/he is expected to agree that the place is exclusively a museum that no longer acts as a religious site. A few hundred meters further another bilingual board, written again in Turkish and in English, follows the first information board. In contrast to the first board, the second board is fixed to a wall and located in a shady corner. Tourists, wanting to come closer and see the board, stand for a while in order to read the information carefully. Before reading the information on the board, I thought that the randomly chosen location for the panel was to prevent visitors from learning about the Armenian history of the site. However, the board does not use the word Armenian anywhere. The English part of the board states:

Akdamar Island and Church

> Akdamar Church was built by the monks of architects Manuel between 915-921 by the order of Vaspurakan King Gagik I. The church as built in the form of a four-leaf clover and cruciform plan and covered with an inner dome and a pyramidal cone. It has two gates at South and West. The chapel of Zacharias I Jamatun and bell tower were added to the church and the chapel of Saint Stephanos was built independently. The church, which was built in the name of Holy Cross, was turned into a monastery in 1131. Worldly matters, palace life, hunting scenes, human and animal figures are depicted on the stone reliefs of the facade of the church except the religious issues taken from Bible and Torah. These depictions are important in terms of distinguishing from the other similar churches. For the inner side of the church walls, there are some wall paintings of various depictions, which are related to the topics taken from the Bible.[67]

67 This is the exact text that is written on the information board. Therefore the translation is not mine.

The panel provides brief information about the church without mentioning the Armenian background of the site. This omission helps portraying the Surp Khach church as a site of memory detached from its cultural background. Thus, visitors enter a site of memory where the existence of Armenians is not visible. This leads to an uneasy balance between preservation and estrangement. The information concerns an account of the history of the church. However, it neutralizes and silences the Armenian heritage. This politicizes the site by openly providing a partial truth. The partial information on the boards mediates the relationship between the site and the visitors in a specific way. The board presents the information as the credible account of the site. However, the Armenian past is bypassed and this deliberately reconstructed history shapes the understanding of the visitor.[68] These information boards aim to rewrite the history of the site by omitting certain historical facts.

At the beginning of this chapter I outlined the concept of Nora *lieu de mémoire*. He exemplifies it by discussing certain sites in France, which give new meanings to the notion of identity in French society. Specific sites such as the Lascaux cave or Versailles do not only impose an imagination upon the French citizen about how long-lasting their civilization is, but also strengthen their attachment to France. In the case of Surp Khach, the site is not utilized to increase awareness of the Armenian heritage among the Turkish citizens, neither is it protected in the interests of cultural diversity. The site has been conserved to generate an image of modern Turkey, which is respectful of the cultural heritage of other cultures. However, several aspects of the inauguration ceremony indicate the opposite. For instance, the Armenian Patriarch Mesrob II's efforts to have a cross placed on the top of the church were frustrated by the Turkish authorities. Since the church was re-opened as a museum, no cross could be placed on the roof of the church. Although a replica of the original cross, made under the guidance of the Istanbulite Armenian architect Zakarya Mildanoğlu, was brought to Istanbul, the Turkish authorities did not allow it to be mounted on the church. Thus, Surp Khach has been transformed into a museum without a cross.

68 Similarly, medieval Armenian city of Ani, situated in the eastern part of Turkey, poses dilemmas shared by the Surp Khach church. Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh states that Turkish Republic's nationalist architectural historiography assigned Ani a place in the country's patrimony as the locus of the first known "Turkish" mosque in Anatolia (Watenpaugh 2014, 535). The renovation team lead by Beyhan Karamağaralı, a member of Turkish nationalist MHP party, has removed the cross at Lion's Gate of Ani to erase signs of Christian Armenian presence in Anatolia. Besides, similarly like the name change of Akthamar to Akdamar, many government signs and reports have referred to Ani with an undotted "ı" which makes the site sound more "Turkish". The renovation of Ani conducted by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism has obscured the Armenian past of the site deliberately.
See Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh "Preserving the Medieval City of Ani: Cultural Heritage between Contest and Reconciliation" (2014).

The pianist of Armenian origin Şahan Azruni wished to give a free recital at the opening ceremony. He applied to the Turkish Ministry of Culture but his request was refused and the Turkish pianist Tuluyhan Uğurlu was chosen instead.[69]

The Church of Surp Khach derives its name from the Surp Khach festival celebrated every year on the second Sunday of September. The Patriarch Mesrob II requested to celebrate a holy mass on this specific date every year on the island but no official approval was given until 2010. Since 2010 the Turkish government has allowed the church to organize a holy mass every September. The church hosted the first religious service after an interval of 95 years in September 2010. Three thousand people, most of whom foreigners, attended the mass. TRT [the national public broadcaster of Turkey] broadcasted the Sunday mass live. The service was marked by controversy over the placement of a cross, which erupted after the Turkish authorities failed to erect a purpose-made cross on the top of the church. This sparked a boycott of the services by many Armenians, with the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin saying that the Turkish authorities broke their pledge to restore the cross on the Surp Khach dome in time for the first liturgy.[70] The Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia refused to take part in the mass on account of the ongoing denial of the genocide in modern Turkey. After the first mass in 2010, a two-metre-long cross weighing 110 kilogram was eventually installed on the church.

The official date set for the opening of the Surp Khach church was changed four times. The inauguration ceremony was first announced to be in December. Then the Turkish government moved the opening date to 24 April 2007. As is well-known, 24 April is the international Armenian genocide commemoration day. Therefore, it was a deliberately chosen date rather than pure coincidence, allowing the Turkish government to achieve two things at the same time with a single action. On that specific date the government would hold the church's inauguration ceremony and unofficially join the international Armenian genocide commemoration day. Weather conditions were reported to be the reason for rescheduling the event on 24 April and it led to sarcastic headlines in certain newspapers.[71] When the opposition reacted in

69 Çakırözer, Utku. "Kral torunu piyaniste izin çıkmadı". *Milliyet* 29 March 2007. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2007/03/29/siyaset/axsiyo3.html> [accessed 11 July 2010].

70 The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin is the pre-eminent centre of authority in the worldwide Armenian Apostolic church. Situated in Vagharshapat, near the capital Yerevan in the Republic of Armenia, it consists of the Mother Cathedral of the entire Armenian church, the monastery and monastic brotherhood, the residence of the Catholicos of all Armenians, various religious and cultural institutions such as the Kevorkian Theological Seminary and a museum.

71 See: "Bak şu havaların işine: Akdamarın Açılışı 24 Nisan". *Radikal* 12 January 2007 <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=209828> [accessed 27 February 2007].

parliament, the opening date was deferred to 11 April 2007. According to the Julian calendar, 11 April coincides with 24 April. For the second time the Turkish government was trying to associate the inauguration with the international Armenian genocide commemoration day. Eventually, the opening date was set for 29 March. The official opening ceremony would therefore take place just before the US Congress was about to ratify a resolution recognizing the 1915 massacres as genocide.

The inauguration of the Surp Khach church was used to strengthen the political lobby of the Turkish government against the US Congress bill. The Turkish authorities distributed pamphlets about the Surp Khach church in Washington D.C to refresh the image of Turkey as a country that respects the Armenian cultural heritage. The lobby campaign and its intensive public relations strategies of Turkey paid off and the US Congress did not adopt the bill.

On one hand the Turkish state showcases the renovation of the church as a political step towards reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia, on the other hand the inauguration and the musealization do not acknowledge the Armenian heritage of the island. This results in conflicting memories from the Turkish state, the Armenians and the Kurds. The Turkish state, which merely assessed the entire renovation on the basis of the millions of US dollars spent on an Armenian church, strongly believed that it had taken a giant step in terms of acknowledging the Armenian history. In contrast to the Turkish state's official statement, the Armenians responded differently to the musealization of their religious site. In the next part of my chapter, I will analyze how the Armenian memory of this Western Armenian cultural heritage site was shaped by the transformation of a religious site into a de-politicized space under the name of "musealization".

An Analysis of Armenian Memory

Western Armenia is a term used by Armenians to refer to certain areas of the Armenian highland formerly inhabited by Armenians during the Ottoman Empire. This area became part of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, eight years after the genocide. For the Armenians Western Armenia is a symbol of the lost homeland and their vanished cultural heritage. Van, Ani and Ararat are more than just historical cities for many diasporic Armenian communities they are the names given to their children to transmit the memory of these sites to the next generations. The movie *Ararat* produced by Canadian-Armenian director Atom Egoyan deals with the siege of Van during the genocide. It starts with Raffi's (David Alpay) root-seeking-trip to Van and is shaped by the lost homeland and historical Western Armenia narratives. The commercials and the tourist brochures prepared in the Republic of Armenia

also contain images of Ararat or the Surp Khach church. Tourists consider these places located within the borders of modern Turkey as part of the Armenian heritage in Armenia. One of the Republic of Armenia tourist websites also lists the tourist attractions in Western Armenia. This section is highlighted in red and is placed between brackets with the mention "currently occupied by Turkey".[72] It further informs the visitors that:

> In 1915 Turkish government organized and systematically implemented genocide of Armenian people who lived on their native land for over 3000 years. About 2 million people were killed in these bloody crimes against humanity and against the Armenian nation. Turkey not only killed the Armenian people but also destroyed thousands of Armenian Christian churches, historical monuments and khackars (cross-stones). Even today Turkey steals and assimilates Armenian cultural heritage, churches, architectural sites, monuments, music, ornaments, food recipes, dance and other things. In spite the above mentioned, Western Armenia tourist attractions are still impressive and attract thousands of tourists to this region from all over the world.[73]

Officially, the Republic of Armenia considers the eastern part of Turkey as Western Armenia. Since cultural and archaeological sites such as Ani or the Surp Khach church are reminiscents of Western Armenian history, these sites are still important places for the Armenians. Although the Armenians have closely followed the renovation and the musealization of the church, the church of Surp Khach in itself does not play a central role in the memories of the Armenians. Nonetheless, the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin refused to participate in the first holy mass on Akhtamar Island because of the various shortcomings of the inauguration.

During my visit to the Surp Khach church, I had the chance of interviewing a number of tourists from Armenia. One of my interviewees, Mrs Hakobyan, was a 44 years old dentist working in Yerevan. At first she was reluctant to talk to me but soon she felt comfortable. The first question I asked her was how she felt when she first stepped onto the island. She replied saying:

> Honestly, before my trip to Western Armenia, I was both anxious and excited. We hear many stories about how the Armenians are treated in modern Turkey. But so far I have been welcomed by the local Kurds and I really feel at home

72 See: <http://www.welcomearmenia.com/armenia_tourist_attractions/armenia_travel_guide> [accessed 06 May 2012].

73 This is the original text on the above-mentioned website.

> here. My grandfather was from Kharpert that is why I am also an Anatolian. I brought my children here to show them our great civilization. They should always remember their past and take lessons from history.

For Mrs Hakobyan taking her children to Van to inform them about the genocide and keep their memory active against cultural amnesia was the main motivation. During our conversation she highlighted many times the need to remember the past and transmit the memory of the genocide to the next generations. Mrs Hakobyan sees the church as a link between her traumatic family past and her present. She told me a couple of times that she could cherish her personal memories by sitting in the garden of Surp Khach and watching Lake Van. Rather than an amnesiac memory imposed by the musealized version of the church, Mrs Hakobyan considers the church as a gift from the past brimming with memories. These are precisely the trans-generational memories that are transmitted from one generation to another. In my first chapter I dealt with the notion of post-memory. Mrs Hakobyan is a good illustration of this concept. She believes that all Armenian families should do their best to commemorate the genocide on an individual level by informing their children or organizing travels to the "lost-homeland" to make the younger generations remember the pain and the sufferings their ancestors were subjected to.

My second interviewee was Mr Arslanian, an Armenian-Canadian from Montreal fresh out of graduate school. He was interested in his Armenian history and heritage. We met while drinking coffee on Akhtamar Island and that is how I started interviewing him. He told me that as an Armenian born in Montreal it was always difficult for him to establish a solid identity. He continued, "Whenever I said I am Armenian, some people in my class did not even know what Armenian was. That is why I always envied my Greek friends who were admired by everyone". During his childhood, Mr Arslanian started looking for Armenian cultural heritage sites concentrated in the eastern part of Turkey. He has attended summer camps both in Los Angeles and Yerevan as an active member of the Armenian General Benevolent Union [AGBU]. After finishing graduate school, he wanted to discover his roots. That was the reason why he was visiting the Surp Khach church. He told me:

> During my high school years I volunteered for many projects in Armenia and also attended summer schools there. Somehow I did not feel connected to the Republic of Armenia as a person whose ancestors come from Anatolia. Strangely enough I feel more at home in Van than in Yerevan. It is such an exciting trip for me to visit the region where my grandfathers lived before the genocide. We, the Armenian people, do not have the graves of our beloved ones; that is why the whole Western Armenia is a place to mourn for us.

Mr Aslanian's root-seeking-trip was shaped by melancholia and the desire to remember his past. He found it extremely difficult to make the decision to visit Turkey. However, he also saw the musealized Surp Khach as a pilgrimage to pay his respects to his ancestors and mourn his losses. He was happy at least that after its musealization the church would not be destroyed anymore and that the church would encourage the trans-generational transmission of this cultural heritage. Mr Aslanian believes that "the lost homeland" narrative of Armenians scattered all around the world is an important phenomenon for the diasporic communities living in the West. He said:

> No matter how educated they are, most of the Armenians living abroad have a poster of mount Ararat on the most visible place in their houses. It reminds them of the lost homeland; thus they always remember the genocide and they never forget.

The eastern part of Turkey, which is considered as Western Armenia by Armenians plays an important role to my interviewees. It not only represents the lost homeland but also functions as a mediator between the present and the past. Nora claims that if a certain group's memory is not experienced collectively, these marginalized or forgotten communities themselves become memory individuals. Because it is necessary to nurture the act of remembering actively, individuals make efforts not to forget. Both at the individual and the communal level, they feel the need to remember. That is why my interviewees emphasized the importance of remembering. They believe Surp Khach to be a mediator for them, both to commemorate the pain of the victims and to keep the memory of the genocide alive. Thus, the Armenians have created a site of mourning on Akhtamar Island where they can reactivate their collective memories. In the last part of my investigation, I will focus on the local Kurds and analyze their relationship with the Surp Khach church.

Kurdish Memory

Local Kurds have undertaken many initiatives in Van to create an Arshile Gorky Museum in a village near Van. Arshile Gorky, whose real name was Vosdanik Adoian, was born in Khorkom, in Van, in 1904. During the genocide he fled the Van region with his mother and three sisters and took refuge in Russian-controlled territory. In 1925 he changed his name to Arshile Gorky – literally "Achilles the Bitter One" before enrolling at the Grand Central School of Art in New York. Gorky is one of the best-known painters of the Abstract Expressionism movement.


Syrian crisis derailing freight plans

Turkish State Railways rues lost business due to violence. p.11

Examining empire with jewelry wink

A new book presents an alternative view of Ottoman decline by focusing on jewelry in the empire. p.08

Hürriyet Daily News

Est. 1961

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2012, TL 2

LEADING NEWS SOURCE FOR TURKEY AND THE REGION

Come back, Diyarbakır mayor tells Armenians

Diyarbakır's BDP Mayor Baydemir issues a call for exiled Armenians to 'return to their city' following the 1915 events while condemning the massacres as 'cruelty'

FOLK MASTER GETS FINAL RESPECTS AS THOUSANDS LAMENT SINGER'S PASSIN

Fig. 25. Headline of Hürriyet Daily News, an English-language daily newspaper in Turkey.

In addition to a Gorky Museum, local Kurds are looking to set up another museum specialized in Armenian ethnography. Local travel agencies specializing in the history of Armenian monasteries and churches have started to cater for Armenians from all around the world visiting the city. They work with other Armenian travel agencies located in Istanbul to attract Western Armenians to Van. At the time when the holy mass was organized on the island, local Kurds also initiated a campaign called "We are opening our houses to Armenians" [Evlerimizi Ermenilere Açıyoruz]. This campaign proved to be a great success thanks to the locals' hospitality. In another city, Diyarbakır, where the majority of the population is Kurdish as well, the local municipality started to offer language courses in Western Armenian.[74] The Kurdish mayor of Diyarbakır, also called for Armenians to "return" to their homeland. This

74 Western Armenian is one of the two standardized forms of Modern Armenian, the other being Eastern Armenian. Generally speaking, Western Armenian is used outside the Republic of Armenia, for example in Turkey, Lebanon, France and the United States, while Eastern Armenian is used both inside and outside Armenia. After the genocide, Western Armenian has been relegated to the position of a language only spoken by the Armenians who forcibly migrated to various countries in Europe, North America and the Middle East. Western Armenian is listed in the atlas of the world's languages in danger prepared by UNESCO.

unusual statement made the headline of the English daily newspaper *Hürriyet Daily News* (see figure 25). In addition, in February 2013 Ahmet Türk, co-chairman of the Democratic Society Congress [DTK], a pro-Kurdish party in Turkey, and an independent deputy from Mardin, said that Kurds were responsible for the policies implemented in 1915 against the Armenians, the Assyrians and the Yezidis. He further stated:

> The Kurds have their share in that as well. Our grandparents persecuted these people. As descendants we apologize to them.[75]

The narratives of the Kurds relating to Surp Khach church have been influenced by two phenomena. The first one is the victimhood shared with the Armenians who used to live in that region. Since the Turkish government has marginalized the Kurdish people for many years, the local Kurds sympathize with the Armenian victims of the genocide. Furthermore, most locals believe that some Armenians survived thanks to the altruism of Kurds who absorbed Armenian women into Muslim households. In addition to this, the Kurdish position regarding the church has been shaped by the root-seeking-trips that increase tourism in the region. Locals say that more Armenians should visit the region without being afraid of the conflict between the PKK fighters and the Turkish government. Let me further analyze these two dimensions in detail.

In modern Turkey, the Kurdish issue has always been a taboo and Kurds have been "scientifically" proven to be Turks who live in the mountains. The state has argued for many years that when these specific Turkish tribes walk on snow, they make a noise, which sounds like *kird-kurd*. That is why they have been called Kurds.[76] This theory not only discouraged the Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin to acknowledge their Kurdish identity but also created their marginalization. After Turkey was declared a candidate country to the EU in 1999 in Helsinki, the Kurdish question started to be debated widely in the mass media. That is why the government extended the rights of Kurdish citizens on paper but in practice Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin still face discrimination and are denied the right to

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75 "Pro-Kurdish party leader apologizes to Armenians for 1915 incidents". *Hürriyet Daily News* 28 February 2013.
<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/domestic/10672641.asp> [accessed 21 March 2013]

76 See Kemal Kirisci and Gareth M. Winrow. *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict* (1997); Martin van Bruinessen. *Kurds and Identity Politics* (2001) and John Bulloch and Harvey Morris. 1992. *No Friends But The Mountains: The Tragic History of the* Kurds. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



Fig. 26. Monument of Common Conscience

education and to broadcast in their mother tongues.[77] The local Kurds sympathize with the Armenians as they are also disregarded by the Turkish government. Most of the Kurdish locals that I interviewed in Van told me that they see Armenians as "Christian Kurds" who have suffered a lot at the hands of the Turkish state. Whilst some local Kurds also collaborated with the Ottoman soldiers during the genocide, local Kurds do not ever mention it. They believe that history connects them with the Armenians through the victimhood and altruism of the Kurds. However, Kurdish politicians such as Ahmet Türk always talk about the accountability of the Kurds in relation to the mass extermination of the Armenians in 1915. On the 12 September 2013 the Sur municipality of Diyarbakır held an official inauguration ceremony for the Monument of Common Conscience [Ortak Vicdan Anıtı] (see figure 26). The inscription on the monument at Anzele Park reads in six languages including Armenian, Kurdish, Turkish, English, Assyrian and Hebrew:

> We share the pain so that it is not repeated. This memorial is dedicated to all peoples and religious groups who were subjected to massacres in these lands.

77 In its written form Kurdish has two regional standards today, Kurmanji and Sorani. The former is spoken in the northern parts of the geographical region of Kurdistan whereas the latter is dominant further east and south. Besides, Zaza is also spoken by Kurds and it is generally described as Kurdish.

During the erection of the monument the mayor of Diyarbakır, Abdullah Demirbaş, apologized on behalf of the Kurds for the "massacres and deportations" of Armenians and Assyrians. In his opening speech Demirbaş stated, "We will continue our endeavours to secure atonement and compensation for them". The mayor called upon the Turkish authorities to issue a formal apology and do whatever is needed to atone for the genocide. He also highlighted the fact that the monument remembers all the Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, Yezidis and Alawites subjected to the state-orchestrated violence that took place in these lands, as well as the Sunni Muslims who "stood up against the system".

When I was in Van for my research, I also had the opportunity to interview a couple of locals about the Surp Khach church. Metin Binici, a local Kurd who owns a jewellery shop that produces replicas of rings, bracelets and earrings made in the Urartu kingdom, welcomed me as a researcher in his shop. During my visit Mr Binici told me:

> I believe that the reopening of the church as a museum is a great opportunity for the region. Van has always been a multicultural city and this multiculturalism also includes the former owners of this city, namely the Armenians. Have a look at these antique jewelleries! They are the necklaces and bracelets that used to belong to well-off Armenian women in this region. I strongly support the renovation of the other Armenian churches in the region and Armenians from the all around the world are welcome to experience the Kurdish hospitality of Van.

Local Kurds see the renovation of the church as a sign of cultural diversity in their city. However, whether it is multiculturalism or economic gain, which make them sympathetic to the musealization of the church remains the question. Local Kurds think that the musealization of the church somehow helps to accelerate the economic growth of their cities. Since more and more Armenians are flying to Van via Istanbul to discover their roots, locals have commercialized Akhtamar Island trips through souvenirs specially crafted for the visitors. Regardless of whether a cafeteria would deconsecrate the site or not, they have constructed a cafeteria on Akhtamar Island where visitors can drink and relax. Two bookstores next to the cafeteria sell guides of the island in different languages. Magnets, souvenirs and memorabilia fetishization have also created a kitschification of memory. As soon as the locals see a non-local in the city, they are curious to learn whether s/he is Armenian or not. Even though I expressed many times that I was not Armenian, the locals always thought that I was an Armenian living abroad. There are myths circulating in the city that most of the Armenians buried their gold treasures during the genocide to pick them up later. That is why the moment the locals see a tourist they think that the grandchildren

of these Armenians have returned to the city to retrieve the golden coins buried by their grandparents.[78]

To sum up, the inauguration of Surp Khach was welcomed by the locals for many reasons, including economical growth in the region and the shared historical traumas. Many Kurds still cherish the old times when Kurds and Armenians used to live together. Moreover, they also highlight the fact that had the Kurds not saved the Armenians, more people would have died during the genocide. The claim that the Kurds have saved Armenians is part of a discourse that portrays Kurds and Armenians as fellow sufferers and promotes nostalgia. That is why locals appraise the present condition of the church through the lens of their private memories of cohabitation and multiculturalism in the region. My case study shows how different narratives are constructed, transmitted or consumed by different ethnic groups at the site of Surp Khach. The memory that the Turkish state has sought to create perpetuates the denialist discourse of the government. Former Armenian sites have been neutralized and stripped off their historical and cultural backgrounds. At the same time, Armenians fight against collective amnesia by highlighting the importance of keeping their personal memories alive. Lastly, the Kurds cherish their private memories, which are shaped by melancholia and past cohabitation shared. Since the Kurds and the Turks are mostly Muslim, they do not see the transformation of the church into a museum as a deconsecration. However, keeping the religious function of the church is very important to the Armenians to preserve the memory of the victims who lived in Western Armenia prior to the genocide.

Conclusion

Pierre Nora's concept of site of memory enables the understanding and analysis of certain sites in France, which are utilized to consolidate the country's historical consciousness. Specific sites have been chosen by the French government to impose a new way of interpreting French history. Nora mentions one of these sites such as Versailles or the Eiffel tower. However, his use of the concept seems to imply that a specific site can evoke only one particular set of memories. Nora does not examine the tension created between specific topographies such as the Lascaux cave and the

78 Other scholars who have worked in the region have also observed such a pattern among the locals. "Ambivalent rumours had spread that Armenians had buried their gold in their houses or gardens, or that Armenians had taken their movable wealth with them and that the deportation convoys were walking goldmines. Empty houses of Armenian deportees were often searched, ransacked and their gardens plowed through by Turkish neighbours" (Üngör and Polatel 2011,71).

paintings in the cave. For instance, he discusses at length the historical importance of Versailles without ever outlining the web of narratives adopted by the implicit agent aimed at the visitor/museumgoer or the audience. Nora never clarifies which strategic tools are used at these specific sites. He analyzes each site through a single memory. However, my case study indicates the fact that one site might embody more than one memory with conflicting narratives. That is why this chapter extends the concept of Nora due to multiple narratives attached to a single site. It is possible to draw conclusions from few interviews that I have conducted in Akthamar Island. Although a large number of interviews would have supported my argument more convincingly. Therefore, this chapter opens a debate that should be extended by further and broader ethnographical research.

A lack of church chairs, prayer candles in front of the icon, regular divine liturgies and priests, as well as the presence of souvenir shops, cafés, security guards inside the museum and the commercial activity of buying tickets characterize the musealization of the church. The musealization of Surp Khach is invested with a couple of meanings for the Turks, the Armenians and the Kurds. Since the collective Turkish identity is based on forgetting, the narrative created by the Turkish government during the inauguration ceremony and the musealization of the church reaffirm the official Turkish policy. The written boards, the MP speeches and the posters trivialize the Armenian cultural heritage and claim ownership of the site by de-politicizing it. This symbolic topology is utilized to redefine the collective memory of the Turkish people. It not only ignores the Armenians but also transforms the Surp Khach site into an ambiguous space through its musealization.

However, it is clear that the will to remember the genocide is strong amongst Armenians. The inauguration, the musealization and the transformation of the church into a museum create a narrative from which the Armenians are absent. The Surp Khach church has become a site of mourning for them which functions as an intermediary between the past and the present. The church reconnects the Armenians to their past. Yet, both Mrs Hakobyan and Mr Arslanian wondered whether there would be uneasiness if the church were kept as a religious site as in the case of Surp Giragos church in Diyarbakır. Ultimately, the local Kurds cherish the old days shared with the Armenians. The Kurds are tired of the militarism that has shaped society in eastern Turkey for many years. They believe that the musealization of the church will not only boost the economy but also provide new reconciliation opportunities for the Armenians, the Kurds and the Turks.

Chapter 4

Visualizing Genocide in the Animation Film *Chienne d'histoire*

In the previous chapters I looked at the ways in which the Armenian genocide was represented in a literary work, a series of contemporary art projects and a cultural heritage site. These three examples are breakthroughs, which have taken place outside the sphere of "official" history. That is the reason why these cultural texts are not simply representations of Turkish history, but they should be understood as active forces that participate in a political battle over memory. I proposed that despite their differences these three cultural texts stimulate an exploration of the past in Turkey.

In this chapter I will focus on cinema, or rather an animated short film, titled *Chienne d'histoire*, shot by the Armenian-French director Serge Avédikian in 2010.[79] This animation film is based on a historical event that took place in 1910 in Constantinople.[80] *Chienne d'histoire* is set five years before the Armenian genocide, when the streets of Constantinople were overrun with stray dogs. Stray dogs roamed freely in the city until the newly established Ottoman government decided to get rid of them. At first European experts from institutes such as the Institute Pasteur showed an interest to talk further about the possible methods of eradication. Later on, due to budget problems, the Ottomans made a decision not to collaborate with any institute and drafted a new plan. The new plan proposed the deportation of the dogs

79 Avédikian was born in Yerevan, Armenia, in 1955. After his birth, his family moved to France and now Avédikian has the French nationality. His grandfather lived in Soloz, a town located on the southern side of the Sea of Marmara and 170 km south of Istanbul. Thus, during the extermination of the dogs in 1910, his grandparents were still living in that area. Avédikian's film *Nous avons bu la même eau* [*We drank the same water*] (2008) evolves around his visit to Soloz, the village of his grandparents, in 2006. At the moment Avédikian is working on another animated film about the dogs of Istanbul called *Dernier round á Istanbul* [*The Last Round in Istanbul*].

80 The original title of Avédikian's animation film *Chienne d'histoire* means something like Damned Story in French. In Brazilian Portuguese the film was called *Cães Ilhados*, Stranded Dogs, and *Hundeelend* was the German title of the film, which means dogs of a misery story. 'Hundeelend' means wretched and awful and is used because it contains the word 'hund' [dog]. So, the emphasis of the titles in French, Portuguese and German languages is on the dogs. On the other hand, the film was named *Barking Island* in English and *Hayırsızada* in Turkish. For the Turkish title, the current name of the island has been chosen.

to Oxia, a deserted island of barren and steep cliffs, located in the Sea of Marmara.[81] All stray dogs of Istanbul were rounded up and transported to the island, which turned into an open-air dog pound. In the end, approximately 80,000 dogs were exterminated. The rulers of the time believed that to establish a modern nation, the city had to get rid of stray dogs. The mass extermination of the stray dogs of Constantinople is related to the attempts of the Ottoman government to modernize the city by removing them from the streets.

Sacrebleu Productions (France) and Anadolu Kültür, a Turkish non-profit cultural institution, have collaborated on the production of *Chienne d'histoire*. It was broadcasted on NTV channel in October 2010 in Turkey and Anadolu Kültür organized public screenings of the animation film in Istanbul. The film was a big success inside and outside Turkey. Still, there is a fundamental difference in the way the film was interpreted by Turkish and foreign critics. The Turkish media praised it as an important historical film about the extermination of stray dogs. Yet outside Turkey scholars and critics in the United States, the Netherlands, France and Belgium have read the film as an allegory of the Armenian genocide.[82]

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81 The name of the island where the dogs were left to starve to death was called Oxia in Greek. That is also how the island is named in *Chienne d'histoire*. Later a Turkish name was given to the island. It became *Sivriada*, which literally means Sharp Island. In 1910, right after the mass hunting of dogs, a severe earthquake hit the Sea of Marmara. Some people believed that this had to be seen as the punishment of God for mistreating stray dogs and eliminating them. That is why the name of the island was changed one more time to Hayırsızada. In Turkish *hayırsız* means useless or good for nothing/no one. Since then the island has been called Hayırsızada. Hence, the Turkish title of the film *Hayırsızada* has been chosen in accordance with the current name.

82 Myrna Douzjian states that "The film's thematic focus on the government's move to purge the city of stray dogs can clearly be read as an allusion to the Armenian Genocide, eerily suggesting that the brutal eradication of the dogs foreshadows this latter moment in history… While the deportation of dogs defines the historical focus of Barking Island, the genocide is its metaphorical subtext". See: Douzjian, Myrna. "Exploring the Modes of Representation in Barking Island, The Third Rider, and Aghet: A Genocide". *Asbarez* 8 October 2010. <http://asbarez.com/86385/notes-on-three-films-screened-at-the-2010-arpa-film-festival/> [accessed 14 December 2010]. Erik Schumacher from the Netherlands argues that "De film gaat over de verbanning van tienduizenden straathonden uit Istanboel naar een onbewoond eiland in 1910. Stadbewoners konden de honden horen janken tot ze verhongerden. Het is voor Turkse dierenvrienden een traumatisch hoofdstuk uit hun nationale geschiedenis. Bij wijze van goedmakertje is het in Istanboel nog altijd een gebruik om straathonden stukken biefstuk toe te werpen. Maar het is regisseur Avedikian niet alleen om de straathonden te doen. Zijn grootouders overleefden de Armeense genocide van 1915. Die wetenschap geeft Chienne d'histoire een indringende dubbele laag". See: Schumacher, Erik. "Zondagochtend Short Chienne d'histoire". <http://cineville.nl/magazine/zondagochtend-short-chienne-dhistoire> [accessed 07 April 2015]. Christiane Passevant and Larry Portis claim that "Cette histoire est en fait le prologue au génocide de la population arménienne". See: Portis, Larry. "Chienne d'histoire" 05 December 2010. <http://divergences.be/spip.php?article2198> [accessed 06 July 2014]. Finally Marc Samo from the newspaper *Libération* argues

This contrast between Turkey and the rest of the world is significant in itself. That is why in this chapter I will try to answer the following questions: which elements in the film make an allegorical reading possible; what does this allegorical reading tell us about the genocide? What kind of insights can be conveyed *only* in allegorical form and why is allegory such a helpful strategy in representing the genocide? What does it mean to compare the plight of the Armenians to that of the dogs?

First, I will provide a brief summary of the film to familiarize the reader with the plot. Next, I will broadly examine how Avédikian constructs the story of the stray dogs left to die in 1910. Then I will elaborate the notion of allegory in light of the discussions developed by Angus Fletcher. I will then scrutinize the role of the pashas in *Chienne d'histoire* and I will continue by analyzing the way the dogs are exterminated in the film and the way Armenians were deported during the genocide. Finally, I will examine how the Turkish media received *Chienne d'histoire*.

The Story of Chienne d'histoire

The opening caption of the film informs the viewer that the city portrayed is Constantinople (see figure 27). We see the Galata Bridge, with Eminönü and the histori-



Fig. 27. Opening shot of *Chienne d'histoire.* Design: Thomas Azuelos

that "Une scène saisissante montre Enver et Talat Pacha, les deux hommes forts du pouvoir, en train de dîner , tentant d'échapper aux cris d'agonie en fermant les fenêtres. Les deux dignitaires seront cinq ans plus tard les maîtres d'œuvre de l'extermination des Arméniens de L'Empire ottoman". See: Samo, Marc. " 'Chienne d'histoire', un court qui en dit long". 17 September 2010. <http://www.liberation.fr/medias/2010/09/17/chienne-d-histoire-un-court-qui-en-dit-long_679545> [accessed 21 March 2012].



Fig. 28. The man, who fed the stray dogs of the city, returns to the street where the dogs are wandering. Design: Thomas Azuelos

cal island in the background, as seen from the Galata tower. The next scene takes place at night. It is dark, the street lamps are on and stray dogs are barking. Black dogs start walking to a square and the buildings behind the dogs look abandoned. The barking of the dogs not only creates a feeling of fear but it also increases tension. Other dogs start fighting on a square and they stop after they see a man approaching with pieces of meat. At first the man gives just one piece of meat to a dog. However, later we see around ten stray dogs, which are completely black, eating raw rib steaks on the street. Two dogs are fighting. All of a sudden ten dogs or so gather there. The man looks terrified but keeps on watching them. At the foot of a tree one dog surrounded by many puppies tries to seek shelter from the violence taking place just a few metres away. The scene depicting the fear of the newborn pups and their mother shows the fear that the fighting dogs generate on the street. The shady moustachioed man feels scared and runs away in panic (see figure 28).

Then a new day starts in Constantinople. First we see the colossal building of the Dolmabahçe Palace situated along the European shore of the Bosphorus Strait (see figure 29). The scene zooms in on the stairs of the palace and we see a door. All of a sudden we see a red carpet that leads to the second floor of the building. A group of men are sitting at a table. Three Ottoman pashas are sitting at the corner of a table (see figure 30). These Ottoman pashas have undoubtedly higher positions than the rest of the men because their appearance has been portrayed as being superior and

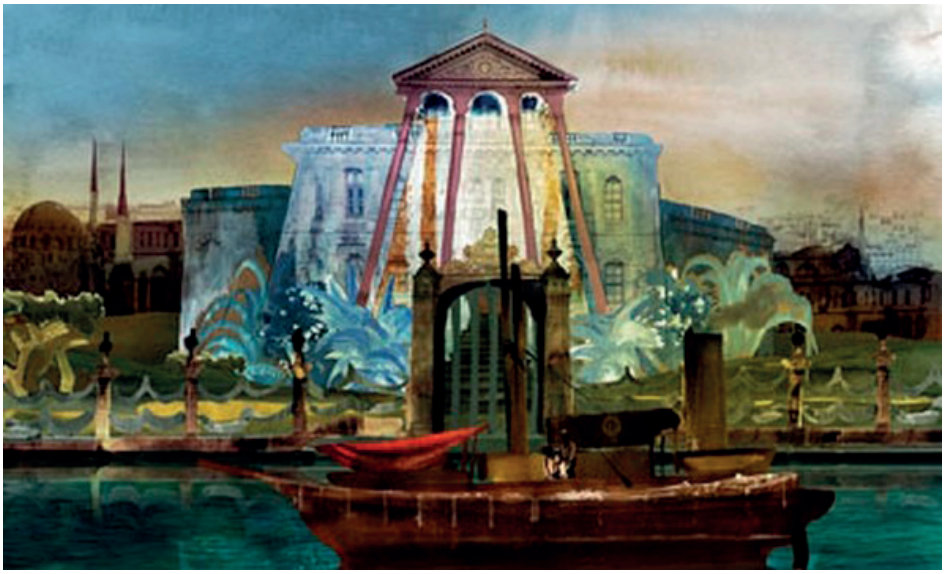


Fig. 29. The Dolmabahçe Palace with its colossal gate in front of the Bosphorus. Design: Thomas Azuelos

they lead the discussion. First, the pashas talk amongst each other and their facial mimics convey their concurring and dissenting contributions. Since every single person at the table is nodding his head and listening to each other carefully, we get the sense that a serious matter is being discussed. Later on, this scene turns out to be a photograph attached to the headline of a newspaper.

The next scene shows a printing house where newspapers are being printed in the Ottoman language. A hand picks one of these newspapers and the headline is highlighted on the screen. Since the newspaper has been printed in the Ottoman language a translation pops up on the screen in French:

> Plus de 60 000 chiens dans les rues d'Istanbul.[83]
> Les autorités lancent un appel d'offre pour éliminer les chiens.[84]

The caption makes clear that the group of men sitting at the table represents the authorities and that they have decided to eliminate the dogs of Constantinople.

In the following scene, we see three thick books on a table. The door of the room suddenly opens. A middle-aged man wearing a suit, tie and gloves walks in. He bows

83 All translations from French to English are mine unless indicated otherwise.

84 In the streets of Istanbul there are more than 60,000 dogs. The authorities have called for tenders to eliminate the dogs.



Fig. 30. The triumvirate of the late Ottoman Empire: Cemal, Enver and Talaat Pasha. Design: Thomas Azuelos

and greets the three pashas. The books, which are on the table, have been written in English, French and German. The title of the green English book is *Extermination of the Dogs;* right next to it is the red French book titled *Comité Hygiène et Progrès.*[85] The third book, which is blue and written in German, bears the title of *Ausradierung der Hunde.*[86] Following the scene a caption pops up on the screen:

Dr Remlinger
Directeur Institut Pasteur

The caption introduces the unknown visitor as Dr Remlinger from the Institute Pasteur. The first pages of the book, which Dr Remlinger has brought, show black and white postcards of the street dogs of Istanbul. These photos have been taken in the street where the dogs live amongst the inhabitants of Constantinople. The title of the postcards reads in French *Constantinople - Les Chiens de Rue* and *Souvenir de Constantinople*.[87] Dr Remlinger then shows black and white postcards from Berlin. Three elegantly dressed women are posing in front of the Brandenburg Gate. Each has a pet dog. Right next to this picture, we see another woman with her pet dog posing

85 The Committee of Hygiene and Progress.

86 Dog Extermination.

87 It means 'Street dogs of Istanbul' and 'Souvenir from Constantinople'.

in front of the Eiffel Tower. This charming Parisian woman is smiling to the photographer while strolling with her dog in the streets of Paris. The third picture depicts again a European city, which looks neat and clean. This time a woman is standing right next to the Thames with her pet dog. In the background of the photo we see the Tower of London. On the right top of the photo the title of the picture reads *London*. In his presentation Dr Remlinger compares the situation of the dogs in Europe to that in Constantinople. The following picture, which Dr Remlinger shows to the pashas, is the façade of the institute he works for: the Pasteur Institute. Suddenly on the screen a new presentation appears. The presentation consists of four parts and a conclusion.

The first slide contains a sketch drawn in black and white. In the middle of the drawing there are approximately twenty cubicles, which look like small shelters for animals. The title of the slide reads in French:

Abattoirs hors de la ville[88]

The first strategy that Dr Remlinger proposes is the construction of slaughterhouses outside the city to exterminate stray dogs.

Then the second slide of his presentation appears on the screen. We see another black and white drawing showing approximately twenty dogs in a small room. The title of the second slide states:

Chambre hermétique[89]

His second plan turns out to be the construction of airtight and completely sealed rooms where the dogs will be left to die.

Then Dr Remlinger's third slide appears on the screen. This slide is labelled:

Atelier de dépeçage[90]

Dr Remlinger thinks that the third step of the extermination should be to dismember the dogs. That is why in the last slide of his presentation we see three separate units that contain *Graisses, Peaux, Os* in French, basically the fat, the skin and the bones of the dogs.

88 Slaughter houses outside town.

89 Hermetic chamber.

90 Chopping units.

The latest phase of his extermination proposal is called *Triage et récuperation*.[91] After the detailed extermination proposal, two of the Ottoman pashas move towards the green book. The conclusion maps the benefits of this massive dog extermination. The two Ottoman pashas read the conclusion carefully which states:

Décanisation terminée en 2 mois
Valeur marchande
80.000 chiens – 300.000 francs
Bénéfices affectés à des œuvres de bienfaisance de la ville[92]

After Dr Remlinger's presentation, we see the three Ottoman pashas in a room. They evaluate the plan and meanwhile they talk to each other. The pasha at the window shakes his head at the other two. He does not agree with Dr Remlinger's plan.

In the next scene, we see bandits running after the dogs until they catch them with neck clamps (see figure 31). The dogs are barking and crying for help. The struggle between the dogs and the bandits escalates into a mass hunting of stray dogs (see figure 32). The dogs are caged and loaded on to ships moored at the harbour. The ships set sail through the Bosphorus around the Leander Tower [Kız Kulesi]. Meanwhile one of the pashas is watching the sea with his binoculars.

The following scene depicts a foggy morning in Constantinople. One of the ships carrying the dogs is in the middle of nowhere in the Sea of Marmara sailing towards a tiny island. Suddenly, one by one cages are randomly thrown on to the island from the boat by the bandits, who are completely coloured in red. Some cages immediately break and the dogs inside them perish. The surviving dogs run away in panic. They bark and howl, expressing their pain.

In the final scene a highly luxurious yellow ship passes in front of the island where the dogs have been left to their destiny. The island is covered with dog corpses. The men on the ship are in formal suits; they wear ties and elegant hats. The women are elegantly dressed and their outfit communicates their high social and financial status. It is certain that these are European travellers that have come to explore Constantinople on a cruise. The closer their ship comes to the island, the more surprised the adventurous tourists look. The surviving dogs, seeing the ship, jump into the water and do their best to swim towards the ship in the hope of being rescued. Seeing an island full of desperate dogs shocks the European tourists.

91 Selection and reprocessing/recycling.

92 The disposal of dogs will be completed in two months. Market value: 80,000 dogs – 300.000 francs. Profits will be distributed among the city's charities.



Fig. 31. The hunting of stray dogs begins. Design: Thomas Azuelos



Fig. 32. The struggle between the dogs and the bandits escalates into a mass hunting. Design: Thomas Azuelos



Fig. 33. The island turns out to be an open-air dog pound. Design: Thomas Azuelos

The women can't hide their bewilderment. They close their mouths out of surprise and no one even dares to move. However, the dogs' efforts turn out to be fruitless, but they do not give up swimming towards the ship. Because of the dead bodies scattered all around the island, the colour of the island turns out to be red. After a while, nothing but the bones and skin of the dogs remain on the island and the colour of the island becomes dark grey (see figure 33).

Next a French caption on the screen marks the end of the film. The concluding remark of the film states that:

> En 1910 près de 30.000 chiens ont été déportés sur l'île déserte d'Oxia (Sivriada) et livrés à leur sort.[93]

A tiny and barren island has been the last destination for 30,000 stray dogs collected from different parts of Constantinople. The Ottoman pashas have declined Dr Remlinger's extermination plan and instead sent the stray dogs of the city to Oxia Island.

Chienne d'histoire makes a number of specific historical references to Ottoman history. It provides the spectator with dates, names and also some historical characters such as Dr Remlinger from the Pasteur Institute and the triumvirate of the late Ot-

93 In 1910 nearly 30,000 dogs were deported to Oxia [Sivriada] and were abandoned to their fate.

toman Empire: Cemal, Enver and Talaat Pasha. Furthermore, at key moments such as the opening sequence and later in a sequence, it includes historical photographic postcards of Constantinople that portray the historical island and the Golden Horn. Thus, it suggests that the spectator is dealing with an animated documentary or animated non-fiction film that dramatizes an event that took place in 1910.

However, a closer look at the film complicates this view. For example, the postcards shown are not realistic renderings of the city: they are staged. In most of the postcards, the scenes showing the Galata Bridge or the Golden Horn offer an image of a city without stray dogs or, as seen in the last postcard, they co-habit with the inhabitants of the city as pet animals.[94] Hence, rather than giving us a direct and unmediated access to the past, these postcards provide us a "cleaned up" version of history. This sanitized version of Constantinople has removed the stray dogs.

During Dr Remlinger's presentation dogs are portrayed for the second time on postcards as pet dogs. The visual presentation shows that "civilized" dogs can be kept after the "uncivilized" among them have been exterminated in accordance with the Pasteur Institute's proposal. Therefore, in the animation film *Chienne d'histoire,* the photographs do not give "objective" access to reality. In contrast, they are depictions of a "staged" and "sanitized" version of history. The relationship between reality and fiction is also highlighted during the closing scene when European travellers on a cruise ship accidentally witness the disaster on the island. One of the passengers tries to photograph the pitiful situation of the dogs while another draws a sketch of the horror taking place on the island. Interestingly, the photograph, which aims to depict the agony of the dogs that are barking and running around in pain, turns out blurry whereas the drawing captures the anxiety and the pain of the dogs. The animation film of Avédikian uses two closely related logics of representation: the photographic and the documentary. Both are considered to be realistic and referential. Yet, even though the film uses this media and this genre, by referring to dates and historical Ottoman figures, it also *shows* the limitations of representing the horror taking place

94 These are based on photos taken by Max Fruchtermann who was the most prominent early publisher of Ottoman postcards. Born in 1852 on the eastern border of Austria-Hungary to German parents, he came to the central part of the Ottoman Empire in the 1860s. Two years later, at the age of seventeen, he opened a frame-shop at Yüksekkaldırım in Istanbul. Max Fruchterman seems to have recognized the exoticism of the dogs's survival: in a series of Istanbul views he produced around the turn of the twentieth century, he was as careful to include as many street dogs as dervishes, cemeteries and mosques. See the three-volume set of *The Postcards of Max Fruchtermann* by Mert Sandalcı, published in 2000 by Koç Bank and Hakan Akçaoğlu, *Kartpostallarda Istanbul Köpekleri*, *Tarih ve Toplum*, no 118, Ekim (1993) s. 21-23. In addition to Fruchtermann, Sigmund Weinberg was a very important Ottoman-postcard photographer who took many pictures of the stray dogs of Constantinople.

on the island. The agony cannot be reflected on photographs. There is something in the tragedy of the dogs that can only be captured in art or drawings.

The Meaning Produced by Allegory

The film suggests that there are limitations to the illusion of realism that photography captures. This was, however, largely overlooked in the reception of the film in Turkey, since most critics analyzed it as a "realistic" representation of a historical event. That is why the Turkish media offered a referential reading of the film. However, outside Turkey *Chienne d'histoire* was read as an allegory of the Armenian genocide (see footnote 80). To understand how an allegory works I will now turn to Angus Fletcher. I will briefly analyze what allegory does and whether it can be adopted for a further reading of *Chienne d'histoire*.

In *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* Angus Fletcher defines allegory "[i]n the simplest terms, allegory says one thing and means another" (Fletcher 2012, 2). Etymologically speaking, Fletcher states that "allegory" derives from the Greek *agoreuein,* "to speak in the agora", namely at the centre of where the civic life takes place, and *allos* meaning "other" (Fletcher 2012, 2). There are three types of allegories: allegory as a mode of speaking, allegory as a genre of literature and allegory as an extended metaphor. 1) Fletcher claims that allegory as a mode of speaking is "a fundamental process of encoding our speech" (Fletcher 2012, 3). He argues that allegory is a mode of speaking or writing in which language is enriched by suggesting other possibilities of meaning. This is a very general notion of allegory, which is why Fletcher also introduces more specific ones. 2) Fletcher contends that allegory as a genre of literature presents "a literal surface" which "suggests a peculiar doubleness of intention, and while it can, as it were, get along without interpretation, it becomes much richer and more interesting if given interpretation" (Fletcher 2012, 7). What is distinct in allegory is a series of verbal structural devices that enable various meanings and open up the way for possible readings. 3) Allegory as an extended metaphor highlights how the notion of allegory does these above-mentioned phenomena. The extended metaphorical reading of allegory does not discard the first-order phenomena that the words generate in our minds. However, it opens up the way for multiple readings of the same text: a literal and a symbolic meaning.

What is metaphor then? Metaphor means "carrying over" and "changing place" in Greek. It is a trope, which describes one thing as though it were another thing. In the last chapters of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* Ivor A. Richards establishes the essence of the modern notion of metaphor (Richards 1936, 89-97). To elaborate the phenomenon that metaphor produces two ideas at once, Richards proposed

two terms: "tenor" and "vehicle". For Richards tenor is the idea expressed or the subject of the comparison; the vehicle is the image by which this is conveyed. He considers that, if the reader or the spectator cannot distinguish the tenor from the vehicle, it means that the text has a literal statement. On the other hand, if these two phenomena can be distinguished from each other it is an indication that the reader is dealing with a metaphor.

Allegory as an extended metaphor extends the meanings of the objects, people or actions within the narrative to the narrative as a whole. Therefore the underlying meanings, which might have moral, social, religious or political importance, are "coded". Rather than directing readers to a specific historical, social or political similarity, allegory evades exegetical closure. Translating ideas into words or images is facilitated with the help of allegory. This urges the readers to re-translate words back into ideas. Thus, it offers the readers the possibility of exploring readings suggested by the extended metaphor.

Fletcher states that allegory is often characterized by a bizarre sense of scene, as if to disconnect readers from any impression that the text is mimetic. Instead, the visionary dimension of the text is foregrounded to reveal the reader that the word depicted is an allegorical one and it shall be appreciated accordingly. Allegory is a trope that calls upon readers to pay close attention to the literal surface, asks them to examine closely its words, images and symbols. Fletcher compares allegory to surrealism, in its provisions of isolated and disconnected details, all described minutely, but not connected in the way that we would expect objects in our world to connect. This, he claims, partly derives from allegory's primary attachment to its own meaning and to the ideas that it wants to convey: the images must be presented discontinuously, and often without reference to how objects are necessarily arranged in the world (Fletcher 2012, 101-104). He argues that the whole point of allegory is that it does not *need* to be read exegetically; it often has a literal level that makes good sense all by itself, even though it inevitably becomes richer with interpretation (Fletcher 2012, 7). In sum, Fletcher believes that there are elements in a text, or rather certain details, which invite allegorical interpretation. It is this allegorical re-reading of a text that enriches its meaning.

Returning to *Chienne d'histoire,* we can see that the film is totally coherent on a first, literal level. It can simply be (and often is) read as a film about the stray dogs of Constantinople. Yet there are several moments in *Chienne d'histoire* that suggest to an audience familiar with Turkish history an allegorical reading of the film.

On the basis of the notion of allegory that I have discussed, I will analyze three main elements in the narrative of the film that invite an allegorical reading. These elements are the personal involvement of the three Ottoman pashas in the decision-making process leading to the extermination of the stray dogs, the deportation of

the dogs to Oxia Island and its references to the genocide. These three examples can all be integrated into a "realistic" reading of the film. Yet, to someone familiar with the history of the Armenian genocide who reads these elements together, the narrative opens up an allegorical reading of the film.

The Three Ottoman Pashas

There are two scenes in the film that represent three men that are supposed to be the three Ottoman pashas: Enver, Talaat and Cemal. The first scene introduces these pashas and the second scene delineates their impassive attitude towards the ongoing plight of the dogs on Oxia Island. The first scene about the pashas starts with the view of the colossal Dolmabahçe Palace situated along the European shore of the Bosphorus Strait. The monumental white marble gate to the Bosphorus helps the spectator to recognize the place. It is one of the glamorous palaces in Constantinople, built in the nineteenth century. Dolmabahçe Palace was the administrative centre for the late Ottoman Empire and the last Ottoman sultans resided there. After this show all of a sudden we follow a red carpet that brings us to the second floor of the building. It is this scene that introduces the three pashas. A group of men, all in suits with ties, are sitting at the table. They are having a meeting under the guidance of the three pashas. One of the participants is standing and giving a speech addressing the rest of the men in the room. Meanwhile, the three pashas carefully listen to the other men and discuss the matter with each other. Later it becomes clear that the three pashas have made a decision that urges the elimination of the stray dogs in Constantinople.

However, these characters never talk or engage in a dialogue; sound effects and music shape our perceptions of the characters. The type of music used in *Chienne d'histoire* is an example of extra-diegetic music. The characters cannot hear the extra-diegetic music, which is added to the story by the auditive narrator (Verstraten 2009, 154-155). It acts as an indicator of the next step that will happen in the film. The louder the extra-diegetic music becomes, the more tension and danger increase. Similarly, music contributes to the way we assess characters (Verstraten 2009, 157). While we are following the red carpet that leads to the hall where the three pashas are sitting, we, as viewers, guess that something important will follow. It provides hints to the viewers to fill in characters and establishes the relationship between them. In Avédikian's film, indeterminate sounds create ominous feelings when it comes to observing the pashas. The sounds function as the herald of unpleasant things that will occur in the upcoming shots.

Following the pashas' decision to exterminate the dogs, a foreigner pays a visit to these three important men. The presentation, which he shares with the authorities,

makes it clear that he is Dr Remlinger from the Pasteur Institute. When the Ottoman Pashas meet with Dr Remlinger, or during the dinner, the music and sound effects hint at the escalation of violence that will target the dogs. Next, we see three thick books on a table. The three Ottoman pashas are in the room where the table is situated. On the screen suddenly a new presentation appears. The presentation consists of four parts and a conclusion and it details the extermination plan proposed by Dr Remlinger. Two Ottoman pashas read the conclusion carefully and they decline the offer of this French man who intends to make chemicals out of the dogs.

In the second scene, we see the façade of Dolmabahçe Palace. It is a very windy night and the trees in the garden are shaking. On the second floor of the palace, there is a room with lights on. The following scene takes place inside this room where the three pashas are having dinner. Above the dining table we see a huge chandelier. There are just three chairs for the three pashas. The wind outside is so strong that it shakes the trees outside and gives the impression that the windows may break any moment soon. All of a sudden, the storm blows one of the windows open. The wind is so strong that even the chandelier swings to the other side of the window. The open window carries the sounds of howls and screams of dogs inside the room. Alerted by what they hear, the three pashas walk towards the window. They examine what is happening on the Bosphorus and quickly close the window.

These scenes not only portray the pashas as the responsible agents of the extermination but also exemplify their impassive attitude towards the plight of the dogs. In an interview Avédikian explains that he has read *Les chiens d'Istanbul* [The Dogs of Istanbul] by Catherine Pinguet, which inspired him to make an animation film about the story of the stray dogs.[95] That is how the idea of *Chienne d'histoire* was born. Pinguet's *Les chiens d'Istanbul* [The Dogs of Istanbul] explores the history of the stray dogs of the city. Pinguet states that the extermination of the dogs was a policy of the ruling CUP party. In her articles she never associates the three pashas personally with this annihilation campaign. Other scholars such as Taner Timur, Hakan Akçaoğlu, Palmira Brummett and Irvin Cemil Schick do not mention either any personal involvement of the Ottoman pashas in the extermination of the stray dogs.[96]

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95 See the interviews published in Turkish newspapers that mention the influence of Pinguet in the realization of *Chienne d'histoire* <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/14791591_p.asp> [accessed 25 January 2011]. <http://cadde.milliyet.com.tr/2014/01/28/YazarDetay/1522732/onlari_bir_de_beyazperdede_izleyin> [accessed 11 May 2014]. Catherine Pinguet. *Les chiens d'Istanbul.* Saint-Pourçain-sur-Sioule: Bleu autour, 2008 [Türkçesi: *İstanbul'un Köpekleri*. Çev. Saadet Özen. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2009].

96 See articles: Taner Timur, "Köpekler", *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi,* vol. 5, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1940), p. 89 and Hakan Akçaoğlu, "Karabasname-i Istanbul", *Tombak,* vol. 16 (1997). 22-32),

Yet the addition of these three figures is meaningful since it is precisely these three pashas who played a key role in the history of Turkey, especially during the Armenian genocide. After the proclamation of the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, the Second Constitutional Era (1908-1918) introduced the new practices of the ruling party's political organization. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) was the ruling party during the late Ottoman Empire. The new vision proposed by CUP focused on modernization and political reforms that would transform Turkish society into a Western model of democracy. According to Abdullah Cevdet, a member of this newly established government, the existence of the stray dogs in the streets of Constantinople was a serious threat to hygiene (Pinguet 2009, 54-9). After having heard the intentions of the CUP party to get rid of the unattended dogs, Dr Remlinger expressed interest in purchasing these dogs as he was wanted to produce chemicals out of them (14). However, the Committee of Health Affairs [Meclis-i Umur-u Sihhiye] rejected this proposal (15). Later on, the stray dogs of Constantinople were sent to Oxia Island for the third time in the history of the Ottoman Empire. Prior to the exile of dogs in 1910, dogs were also expelled to the same island during the reign of Mahmut II (r. 1808-1839) and Abdülaziz (r. 1861-1876).[97] Following public protests, the exiled dogs were brought back to Constantinople after the first and the second attempt. However, in 1910 more than 80,000 dogs were exterminated. But the three pashas were not personally in charge of the mass extermination of the dogs. It was the Committee of Health Affairs of the Ottoman Empire that rejected Dr Remlinger's proposal. So, what does Avédikian aim to achieve by placing these three pashas at the centre of the narrative in *Chienne d'histoire*? The fact that the pashas figure in this animation film about the extermination of dogs functions as a hinge to another history of extermination. It invites us to consider an allegorical

Ekrem Işın's *İstanbul'da Gündelik Hayat: İnsan, Kültür ve Mekan İlişkileri Üzerine Toplumsal Tarih Denemeleri* İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995, Palmira Brummett's "Dogs, Cholera, Women and Other Menaces in the Streets: Cartoon Satire in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press 1908-11", *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* vol. 27, no. 4 (1995), 433-60) and Cihangir Gündoğdu's "Doksan Yıl Önce İstanbullu Hayvanseverler", *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 116 (August 2003), 10-17; Irvin Cemil Schick, "Evliya Çelebi'den Köpeklere Dair", *Toplumsal Tarih*, 202, Ekim, 2010; Irvin Cemil Schick "İstanbul'da 1910'da Gerçekleşen Büyük Köpek İtilafı: Bir Mekan Üzerine Çekişme Vakası", *Toplumsal Tarih*, 200 (2010), 22-33; Ümit Sinan Topçuoğlu, *İstanbul ve Sokak Köpekleri* İstanbul: Sepya Kitaplar, 2010.

97 Orhan Pamuk also mentions the extermination of the dogs in his memoir *Istanbul: Memories and the City*. Pamuk informs his reader that: "After he abolished the Janissaries for not complying with Western military discipline, Mahmut II turned his attention to the city's dogs. In this ambition, however he failed. After the Constitutional Monarchy, there was another 'reform' drive, this one aided by the gypsies, but the dogs they removed one by one to Sivriada managed to find their way triumphantly back home. (Pamuk, 2005, 219)

reading of *Chienne d'histoire*. That is why the role of three historical pashas during the Armenian genocide needs to be analyzed.

Ahmet Cemal Pasha [Minister of the Navy and governor of Syria], Ismail Enver Pasha [Minister of War] and Mehmet Talaat Pasha [Minister of Interior Affairs and subsequently Grand Vizier] were the three dominant figures of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. These three pashas, known as the dictatorial triumvirate, were members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the ruling party during the late Ottoman Empire era. "These would be the driving force behind the genocide and the other population policies enacted during the First World War" (Bloxham 2003, 150).[98] In Armenian history there are two dates that represent a major point for the Anatolian Armenians. These are 24 April 1915 and 23 May 1915. The former refers to the general arrests of the Armenian élites in Constantinople and the latter is the date when the general deportation order to annihilate the Armenians was given. Historian Uğur Ümit Üngör states that:

> In April 1915, some Armenians had already been deported from their native regions, though this was not yet an empire-wide campaign. The process of deporting practically the entire Armenian millet began on May 23, 1915, when Talât issued orders for the compulsory deportation of all Armenians to Der Zor, starting with the northeastern provinces. (Üngör 2011, 297)

The order of Talaat Pasha started the *en masse* deportation of Armenians that also resulted in the extermination of the Anatolian Armenians. Turkish historian Taner Akçam also states "the overall coordination of the Genocide was taken over by Talât Pasha" (Akçam 2004, 174). Akçam claims that the position of Talaat Pasha as the head coordinator of the genocide is confirmed by the telegram of the German consul in Jerusalem (174). He asserts that the telegram sent on 9 September 1915 reports that the German diplomat had met with Cemal Pasha who was the Minister of the Navy at that time. "Cemal Pasha told the diplomat that he was only responsible for the military implementation of the decrees issued by Department of the Interior" (174). However, Talaat Pasha introduced the main coordination and "decided on the extent of the deportations" (174). In her article "Identifying the 'Internal Tumors' of World War I: Talât Paşa'nın Hatıraları (Talât Paşa's Memoir), or the Travels of a Unionist Apologia into History", Hülya Adak scrutinizes Talaat Pasha's role throughout the genocide and states that "Talât Pasha, as Minister of the

98 Donald Bloxham. "The Armenian Genocide of 1915-1916: Cumulative Radicalization and the Development of a Destruction Policy", *Past & Present*, no. 181 (2003).

Interior during World War I, was one of the leaders responsible for the deportation of the Armenians from Asia Minor to Syria and Mesopotamia."[99] Between 1919 and 1920 three pashas and Unionist leaders were tried for war crimes by the Turkish military tribunals. The court sentenced Talaat, Enver and Cemal Pashas to death.[100] However, they managed to escape and lived in exile for a while. Armenian Revolutionary Federation member called Soghomon Tehlirian assassinated Talaat Pasha in Berlin. Stepan Dzaghikian, Bedros der Boghosian and Ardashes Kevorkian killed Cemal in Tbilisi in Georgia. Enver was killed in action against the Red Army in present day Tajikistan.

Examining the role of the three pashas during the genocide provides a clue for how the film aims to establish an analogy between the plight of the dogs and the Armenians. Despite the fact that these pashas were not personally involved in the extermination of the dogs, Avédikian places them in the foreground of the narrative. They are portrayed as the decision-makers of the process that led to the annihilation of the stray dogs in Constantinople. This representation allows the film to be interpreted in a way that connects it to the fate of the Armenians. Once one notices this detail, other similarities between the genocide and the case of the stray dogs in Constantinople become noticeable. Next, I will scrutinize displacement as a strategy of extermination, both for the dogs of Constantinople and the Armenians in the late years of the Ottoman Empire.

An Extermination Strategy: Deportation

The history of the dogs is linked to Turkey's history of modernization. Stray dogs have always been a part of Constantinople.[101] They roamed freely in most parts of the city and bore traces of disease, malnutrition and injuries. Even though nowadays the inhabitants of Istanbul are used to living side by side with stray dogs, their

99 Hülya Adak. "Identifying the 'Internal Tumors' of World War I: Talât Paşa'nın Hatıraları (Talât Paşa's Memoir), or the Travels of a Unionist Apologia into History". *Selbstzeugnisforschung transkulturell*. Ed. Andreas Baehr, Peter Burschel, Gabriele Jancke. Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2007.

100 See Vahakn Dadrian. "The Documentation of the World War I Armenian Massacres in the Proceedings of the Turkish Military Tribunal". *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 23, no. 4 (Nov. 1991) and Vahakn Dadrian. "The Turkish Military Tribunal's Prosecution of the Authors of the Armenian Genocide: Four Major Court Martial Series". *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 11, no.1 (Spring 1997).

101 Edmondo de Amicis, an Italian author who visited Istanbul in 1826, shares his observations about the dogs of the city in his book *Constantinople*. Amicis states that "Constantinople is one vast dog kennel; everyone notices it as soon as he arrives. The dogs constitute a second population of the city, less numerous, but no less strange than its human one (Amicis 2013, 73).

presence was regarded as an issue during the last period of the Ottoman Empire[102] In 1910 the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) party put forward modernization as a legitimate reason to get rid of the dogs. Therefore, the Empire was looking for a way to exterminate them. In her book *İstanbul'un Köpekleri* [The Dogs of Istanbul] Pinguet states that Dr Remlinger, from the Institut Pasteur, calculated that a dog was worth 3-4 francs for its hair, guts and other body parts (Pinguet 2009, 14-15). Thus, 80,000 dogs could potentially bring a profit of approximately 300,000 francs to the Ottoman government. Remlinger would get ten per cent of the profit if such a deal were to be made with the Ottomans. He even recommended that the rest of the money be donated to philanthropic organizations. As a result of subsequent budget problems, the Ottoman authorities made a decision not to collaborate with any institute and they drafted a new plan. Pinguet informs us that the new plan proposed the deportation of the dogs to Oxia, a deserted island of barren and steep cliffs, located in the Sea of Marmara.

In *Chienne d'histoire* the campaign against stray dogs begins with bandits and vagabonds trapping the dogs in wooden cages and treating them inhumanely (see figure 34). As Pinguet writes, it started on the historical peninsula of Istanbul and then mass hunting of more than 80,000 dogs was centrally organized in all parts of the city. Trucks carrying cages were loaded onto a ship that transported the dogs to Oxia Island. There they were left to their own destiny without any shelter, food or water. Images of dogs huddled together on Oxia awaiting starvation and death



Fig. 34. Vagabonds earned fifteen francs for every dog they caught with their wooden clamps.

102 Nowadays all sorts of pure breed pet dogs can be seen in certain districts of Istanbul such as Nişantaşı, Bebek and Bağdat Caddesi. These pet dogs are considered a social status symbol. There are also many pet shops located in these districts.

captured the viewers. It was only later that it became clear that a mass extermination of stray dogs took place there. The island turned out to be an open air dog pound. The exact number of dogs that managed to survive or swim back to the mainland is difficult to estimate. Considering the remote location of the Oxia Island in the middle of the Sea of Marmara, it is highly likely that most of them perished.

In *Chienne d'histoire* the displacement of the dogs to Oxia is depicted in a highly sentimental way. The representation of a mother dog with her puppies and their journey exemplify this sentimentalized approach to the dogs' deportation. In one of the first scenes we see a dog with mammals and surrounded by puppies, attached to a tree. She tries to shelter from the hunt taking place just a few metres away. The scene, which depicts the fear of both the newborn dogs and their mother, summarizes the fear that the fighting dogs generate on the street. Later on we see again the mother dog lying next to a tree with her puppies. All of a sudden bandits start running after the dogs until they catch them with clamps. The mother dog does not know where to escape to with her newborn puppies. Out of fear she picks them up in her mouth to carry them to a safer location. Meanwhile one of the bandits grabs the puppy off the mother with his clamp. Another bandit hunts the other puppy from its mother. Highly agitated, the mother dog starts walking towards the bandits. However, the bandit traps her and puts her into a wooden cage. The struggle between the mother dog and the bandits escalates into a scene of a mass hunting of stray dogs. Later we see a dog carrying a big bag, which contains the corpses of two small dogs. At that point we understand that it is the mother dog that has found her puppies thrown into a bag after the bandits caught them. Unfortunately they are dead after having been relocated to the island. Although it is presented as "relocation", the proper word to describe the liquidation on the island should be extermination of stray dogs.

As depicted in *Chienne d'histoire,* the extermination of the stray dogs was linked to Turkey's modernization attempts. The plan to get rid of the dogs started with emptying the streets and collecting the dogs in a central location. The next step was relocating them to an island far away from the city. Finally, the dogs died from starvation and disease on the island. Although the depiction of these events is historically correct, the extermination strategy evokes another history that goes through a similar set of phases. The way the stray dogs of Constantinople were collected and killed resonates with the way the Armenians were liquidated in the last years of the Ottoman Empire. The Armenians were also subjected to a number of steps that aimed for the total elimination of the community.

During the genocide, Armenian villages were first emptied and people were uprooted from their homes. The next step entailed sending them to perish in a desert: "hundreds of thousands of people would be transferred to an under-populated region dominated by the desert landscape" (Dündar 2011, 280). Some were murdered at

the outset, some perished on the way, and some died after reaching their destination (Toynbee 1990, 641). Between May and August 1915, the Armenian population of the eastern provinces was deported en murdered en masse (Akçam 2007, 135). The Der Zor province had a surface of 78,000 square kilometres. And this vast territory was the region to which most of the Ottoman Armenians were displaced. In the concentration centres stationed near the Mediterranean coast, most victims died from starvation and diseases (Bloxham 2011, 271). Historian Akçam states, "by the beginning of 1917, the Armenian problem had been thoroughly 'resolved'" (Akçam 2007, 135). Strategic deportations had reduced the Ottoman Armenian communities on their ancestral lands. Most were killed, some were forcefully converted to Islam, while a few survived the death marches that were at the core of the genocidal process (Panossian 2006, 231-232).

Fuat Dündar claims that there are three factors that would explain why the deportation of the Armenians to the desert was a deadly action. These are: (1) the fatal difference in climate, ecology and topography between the regions of origins of the Armenians and the region of destination of the deportation; (2) the actualization of the deportations under conditions of war, accompanied by both spontaneous and organized attacks; and, most significantly, (3) the execution of the deportations by an empire that had spent the previous century experimenting with all kinds of population displacements, thereby accumulating vast knowledge and experience in the process (Dündar 2011, 276). Thus, we can conclude that the deportation of the Ottoman Armenians to the desert was a strategy to reduce the community and leave them to die.

In *Chienne d'histoire* the location chosen for eliminating dogs was an island situated in an inaccessible part of the Sea of Marmara. Thus, the obliteration of animals was executed easily without attracting much public attention. The Ottoman Armenians were also transported to a place out of view. In 1915 Ottoman Armenians were suddenly perceived as a threat to the fragile relationship between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. For the sake of protecting the empire borders, the annihilation of the entire Armenian community was seen as legitimate. In 1915 Armenians were obliged to walk through Syrian deserts as a part of the Ottoman 'relocation' policy. Soon the Der Zor desert turned into a mass grave for the victims of the genocide. Thus, structurally speaking, the extermination strategies depicted in *Chienne d'histoire* resemble the way the genocide was executed. In the case of the Armenians, villages were emptied, people were transferred to under-populated areas, convoys were attacked on the way to the desert and en masse incarceration took place. It was an organized and planned activity. After having analyzed the role of the three pashas and the displacement of dogs in *Chienne d'histoire*, I will continue with the relationship between the Armenians and the dogs.

Dehumanizing Victims to Justify their Extermination

Chienne d'histoire is open to two readings: a realistic reading of the historical events in which the film is understood as a documentary on the one hand and an allegorical depiction of another event, namely, the Armenian genocide on the other. The relationship between the film and the genocide is suggested by details in the narrative such as the pashas who are depicted as the responsible agents for the extermination and by the fact that both extermination stories closely resemble each other. In the allegorical reading, the "killing of animals" is an extended metaphor for the history of the killing of human beings, namely the Armenians. In this paragraph I want to propose that the animal metaphor is very significant in the context of genocide. As many studies have argued, genocides are often performed by gestures of animalization. For instance, in his book *Animals in the Third Reich: Pets, Scapegoats, and the Holocaust,* Boria Sax argues that the Nazis have blurred the boundary between animals and human beings during the Holocaust (Sax 2000, 150). The German Nazi Party aimed at killing victims like slaughtering animals. He illustrates his statement by giving examples of how the Jews were treated by the Nazis. For instance, the victims were forced to get completely naked and huddle together. Sax states that "nakedness suggests an identity as animals; when combined with crowding, it suggests a herd of cattle or sheep" (Sax 2000, 150). In *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, Leo Kuper observes that the animal world has provided ample sources of metaphors of dehumanization so that the people classified as animals "have been hunted down like animals" (Kuper 1981, 88). Thus, this kind of allusion to the sub-humanity of certain ethnic groups facilitates the mass bloodshed, as was the case for the Jews.

For example, although the Germans often called the Jews "rats" and insulted them with other animal names, their favourite epithets were "pig", "Jew-pig", "swine" and "Jewish swine" [Saujuden] (Patterson 2002, 47). Charles Patterson argues, "by constantly describing Jews as 'vermin' and 'pigs', the Nazi regime convinced the German public that it was necessary to destroy them" (Patterson 2002, 49). Theodor Adorno suggests that "Auschwitz begins wherever someone looks at a slaughterhouse and thinks: they're only animals."[103] Animalizing certain groups of people transforms them into anonymous individuals. Their lives become unworthy of life and their existence is constantly negated. The lives of Jews were obliterated

103 Translation of "Auschwitz beginnt da, wo jemand auf Schlachthof steht und denkt: Es sind ja nur Tiere". Quoted in Christa Blanke. *Da krähte der Hahn: Kirche für Tier? Eine Streitschrift* (Eschbach, Germany: Verlag am Eschbach, 1995), p. 48.

deliberately so that their extermination was justified in the eyes of German society. Ultimately, such a classification leads to a life, which is not worth mentioning. Their extermination does not deserve grieving and their lives are not avowed as loss. In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence,* Judith Butler states that:

> Certain lives will be highly protected, and the abrogation of their claims to sanctity will be sufficient to mobilize the forces of war. Other lives will not find such fast and furious support and will not even qualify as "grievable". (Butler, 2004, 32)

Animalizing people generates a perception that does not count the lives of certain groups as lives. They do not count as humans and their animalization is projected as killing the "unfit". Thus, the lives of innocent people are easily obliterated.

Animalization was also a strategy adopted by the Ottomans towards the Armenians. Ervin Staub states, "the Ottomans referred to Armenians as *rajah* (cattle)" during the genocide (Staub 1989, 175). This practice of vilifying Armenians by referring to them as animals has served as a prelude for their extermination. Once they are animalized and stripped of any human character they become invisible and absent. It also paves they way for the implementation of a "deportation" that forced women, children and elderly to emigrate. It is clear that significant parallels exist between the Armenian genocide and the representation of the dogs in *Chienne d'histoire*.

In the film, the extermination of the dogs is portrayed as ill-treatment and an act of cruelty. Thousands of dogs were shipped miles away through all weather extremes, confined in cramped filthy conditions and herded to their deaths. The dogs were crowded together in despicable cages and transported without food and water. These animals, powerless to react, resemble the Armenians who were condemned to similar treatment, pain, imprisonment and deportation. They also had to undergo degradation, cruelty and murder. What they underwent during this process could be called a process of animalization.

In the film the human characters involved in the killing show no compassion for the animals and this indifference to animal suffering also resembles the impassiveness of the Ottoman government towards the plight of the Armenians. After the dogs are collected and caged, they are oppressed and their movement is restricted. This subjugation of animals and enslavement also resemble the way Armenians were treated during the genocide. The Ottoman Turks ruled over the Armenians and established authority over the entire community.

Chienne d'histoire as an Allegory of the Armenian Genocide

The very act of "coding" certain elements in *Chienne d'histoire* allegorically helps Avédikian to avoid censorship. If he had shot a movie with a mimetic representation of the genocide, it would not have been broadcasted in Turkey.[104] It would have been censored due to the institutionalized state negation. Thus, *Chienne d'histoire* would have a limited audience. Providing an allegorical representation of the genocide through the story of the dogs helps the director to circumvent censorship in Turkey.

In the same way Avédikian tells the story of the genocide through a non-problematic event. The specific choice of a non-problematic event that is considered as a positive and necessary step to a modern Turkey enables him to reach the Turkish audience. Yet, through a series of details that are recognizable to a Turkish audience, *Chienne d'histoire* invites the audience to pay close attention to details, words, images and symbols to re-interpret the film allegorically.

Still, the question is: in what way does this extended metaphor play a critical role during the genocides? As has been argued by Kuper, Sax, Staub and Patterson, treating victims like animals, framing them semiotically as "animals", understanding them "allegorically" as animals has been central to genocidal campaigns. The animalization of certain ethnic groups has not only dehumanized them but also facilitated the public support for extermination. I contend that the allegorical representation of the genocide through the story of dogs is based on the relationship between the victims and animals. To refer to the victims of the genocide, Avédikian has chosen the case of unattended dogs.

The film "repeats" the genocidal gesture of depicting the victims, in this case the Armenians, as filthy dogs. In doing so, the film invites the spectator to "feel" for the dogs so that the audience watches it with compassion. The sentimentalization of the story through the story of the mother dog and the puppy that I have explained is crucial for my argument. It very strongly appeals to the viewer's feelings. Hence, two readings of the film can exist next to each other. It is possible to read *Chienne d'histoire* "just" as a movie about the extermination of the stray dogs in Constantinople. Nevertheless, the representation of the plight of the stray dogs in *Chienne d'histoire* enables a reading of the film as an allegory of the genocide. The allegorical

104 Avédikian shot his animation film in 2010. In October of that same year, the Turkish Court of Cassation ruled that Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk could be sued for remarks made in 2005, when he was quoted in a Swiss magazine commenting on the Kurdish and Armenian issues. Thus, it was highly possible that a subtle representation of the Catastrophe would be censored in Turkey. See European Union Progress Report of Turkey 2010: <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2010/package/tr_rapport_2010_en.pdf> [accessed 07 June 2014].

narrative in the film unfolds through three elements: the personal involvement of the three Ottoman pashas in the decision making-process leading to the extermination of the stray dogs, the deportation of the dogs to Oxia and the concept of animalization and its references to the genocide. First, the three Ottoman pashas Enver, Talaat and Cemal are projected as the decision-makers of the extermination of the stray dogs. They are represented as the ones who are personally involved with this mission. However, these three Ottoman pashas have not personally been involved in the annihilation of the city's unattended dogs. They were, however, the architects of the genocide. These pashas implemented a nation-wide decision that led to the eradication of the Anatolian Armenians.

Next, in *Chienne d'histoire* the mass hunting of the dogs ends with starvation due to the lack of vegetation and water. This scene resonates with the extermination strategies adopted for the liquidation of the Armenians. In every Armenian village the men were rounded up first and executed in remote areas. Later on, the elderly, women and children were expelled from their villages and cities. In both cases the chosen topographies to deport the dogs and the Armenians are located in the periphery. These remote areas facilitate the liquidation of the victims.

Finally, the similarity between the story of exiled dogs and the Armenian victims raise the issue of the bestiality involved in the genocidal campaigns. Categorizing certain ethnic groups as sub-human or as animals legitimizes the execution strategies of the perpetrators. Thus, the dehumanization of the victims, and the analogy between the dogs and the Armenians as victims also confirm that *Chienne d'histoire* functions as an allegory of the genocide.

Yet the cruelty of this animalization is countered on the sentimental level, the level of affect, through the feelings of pity that the film inspires. The film ends with a scene in which a group of tourists watches the massacre on the island from a distance. One person tries to photograph it, but the photograph turns out blurry. Someone else draws pictures, which is more successful. Since this is an animation film, we can choose to understand this as a self-referential moment in which the film reflects on its own mode of representation through drawings. It suggests that drawings can capture the horror, fear and anxiety of the dogs. In doing so, drawings regard the pain, not with the clinical and cold gaze of the camera but with something like compassion or feeling, perhaps even sentimentality. It is precisely this feeling that the film itself adds to the story of both the dogs and the genocide, giving the spectator the chance to watch it with a different attitude.

The Reaction of the Turkish Media to Chienne d'histoire

It is hard to decide whether the film has brought Turkish society closer to the remembrance of the Armenians and the genocide. We do not know yet whether it is a step towards the collective remembrance of the extermination of the Armenians. Yet it is interesting that the story of the stray dogs has recently achieved a lot of attention in Turkey. After the animation film of Avédikian received a Palme d'Or for best short film at the Cannes Film Festival in 2010, it attracted the attention of the Turkish media. In his column, at the pro-AKP government daily newspaper *Sabah*, Ünal Ersözlü mentions the success of *Chienne d'histoire.* First of all, he provides a historical analysis of the extermination of the stray dogs in 1910. This part aims to familiarize his readers with this unknown part of Turkish history. Further Ersözlü states that:

> It is 2010 and one hundred years after Hayırsızada, a French director has shot a film, based on historical facts, about this sad dog deportation with the technique of animation. At the 63rd Cannes Film Festival, it received the Palme d'Or for best short film. After having found the film online, I watched it and I could not help crying.[105]

From his text, one can understand how emotional he was after he had watched the animation film. Yet in his reflections he plainly denies any link to the Armenian genocide. His analysis is just based on the extermination of the stray dogs without any further close reading. Moreover, Ersözlü prefers to introduce Avédikian just as "French" without mentioning his Armenian identity. Turkish journalist Vecdi Sayar from *Milliyet* newspaper even offers a reading of *Chienne d'histoire* that seeks to disavow the responsibility of the Turkish state. In his article published one day after the end of the 63rd Cannes Film Festival, Sayar writes:

> *Chienne d'histoire* (Hayırsızada) was one of the films nominated for the best short film category. It is about the deportation of more than 30,000 dogs in 1910 in Istanbul from former 'Hayırsızada' to current Sivriada and Yassıada. Avédikian explains that Talaat Pasha was also personally involved with this business. And

105 Ünal Ersözlü "Hayırsız ada Hayırlı mıdır?" *Sabah* 3 October 2010. <http://www.sabah.com.tr/Bolgeler/Yazarlar/ersozlu/2012/10/03/hayirsiz-ada-hayirli-midir> [accessed 21 January 2014].

> he explains that Talaat Pasha has paid Kurds and gypsies to collect the dogs for the sake of modernizing the city.[106]

In his summary of the film Sayar states that the vagabonds and the bandits responsible for collecting the dogs were Kurds and Roma people. There is not any historical research proving his claim and the film does not suggest anything about the ethnic identity of the dogcatchers. Therefore it is obvious that these are Vecdi Sayar's personal ideas. I contend that this is a highly significant point in terms of analyzing the reception of the film in Turkey. By identifying the Kurds as the perpetrators of the extermination campaign, Sayar effectively purifies the Turkish nation of its historical accountability related to the extermination of the stray dogs. Pointing out a certain ethnic group as the responsible agent of the extermination of stray dogs is nothing but diverting the historical facts and the film itself.

Yet in the left wing press a link was made between the film and the Armenian genocide. In her article in the newspaper *Radikal* titled *100 Yıl Önceki Köpek İtilafı* [The Execution of Dogs Carried Out 100 years Ago], Pınar Öğünç establishes a connection between the genocide and *Chienne d'histoire*.[107] First she asserts that even though it has been more than a century since the dogs of Istanbul were killed, the remembrance of this brutality marks a new phenomenon in Turkey. Öğünç claims that a number of books, articles and finally *Chienne d'histoire* have initiated the discussions taking place in Turkey about the fate of the Hayırsızada dogs. She claims that the mass extermination of dogs in 1910 also represents the steps that can be taken against the ones who are not "welcome" in a society. Öğünç argues that the case of the dogs also shows the applicability of any violence to human beings in the name of exile, deportation and relocation. She uses the term *tehcir*, which means deportation in Turkish, a term adopted by the Turkish government to refer to the genocide. It is not only a euphemistic term that neutralizes the atrocities committed against the Armenians but it also strips the Turkish state of any historical accountability. Thus, Öğünç makes it clear that *Chienne d'histoire* is not only powerful in terms of the way it depicts the obliteration of the stray dogs. She considers that it is also a pivotal film as it exemplifies any outcome that a human being might face in the name of deportation, exile or relocation if s/he is not considered as a member

106 Sayar, Vecdi. "Hayırsız Adanın Köpekleri". *Milliyet* 24 May 2010. <http://cadde.milliyet.com.tr/2014/01/28/HaberDetay/1242128/palmiye-tayland-ve-hayirsiz-ada-ya> [accessed 30 May 2013].

107 Öğünç, Pınar. "100 Yıl Önceki Köpek İtilafı". *Radikal* 14 August 2010. <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/pinar_ogunc/hafakan_ruhu_100_yil_onceki_sozde_kopek_itlafi-1013600> [accessed 03 August 2014].

of any society anymore. Ottoman Armenians, who were once considered as *Millet-i Saduka* [the trustworthy nation], became unwanted citizens due to the genocidal plans of the ruling authorities. Öğünç invites any viewers to watch the film through the lens of this broad perspective that she offers in her analysis.

Since the animation film of Avédikian came out in 2010, Turkish society has become more aware of the elimination of the stray dogs in Constantinople. The Animal Party of Turkey organized a trip to Oxia Island on 1 June 2012 to commemorate the centenary of the mass extermination (see figure 35).[108] The party members erected a plaque on the island reading "In the memory of tens of thousands of dogs that were left to die on this island in 1910" (see figure 36). The first official



Fig. 35. The Animal Party of Turkey organized a trip to Oxia on 1 June 2012 to commemorate the centenary of the mass extermination of the stray dogs.

108 Hayvan Partisi [Animal Party] is a political group founded in 2012 in Turkey. Despite using the word "party" in the title of their group, they do not have the status of a political party and are therefore not represented in the Turkish parliament. For further information: <http://www.hayvanpartisi.org> [accessed 17 July 2013].



Fig. 36. The plaque erected on Oxia by members of the Animal Party.

event of the Animal Party, an academic conference organized on 24 March 2012 at Istanbul Şehir University was dedicated to dogs.[109] In 2010 Turkish director Emre Sarıkuş shot a documentary entitled *Sesim Rüzgara: Modern Bir Sürgün Hikayesi* [Wind, Carry my Voice: A Modern Story of Exile].[110]

The 14th Istanbul Biennial, *Saltwater: A Theory of Thought Forms,* opened in the first week of September 2015. During the opening all the participating artists suspended their work for 15 minutes to support the Kurdish minority of Turkey. In August 2015, the ceasefire between the Turkish government and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) broke down and this led to escalating violence targeting the Kurds of Turkey. In addition to the Kurdish issue, the Biennial focused on the Armenian genocide. At the press conference that took place on the 2th of September 2015, the curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev stated that it was "very timely" to talk about what happened a century ago. She also publicly announced that, as a result of a collaboration between the Istanbul Biennial and the Dilijan Art Initiative, which supported the Armenian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale this year, the works of 13 artists who made works containing references to the Armenian history and genocide would be displayed.

109 See: Kuşen, Mustafa. "Animal Party to Commemorate Four-Legged Massacre Victims". *Today's Zaman* 01 June 2012. <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-282180-animal-party-to-commemorate-four-legged-massacre-victims.html> [accessed 30 August 2014].

110 *Sesim Rüzgara: Modern Bir Sürgün Hikayesi* [*Wind, Carry My Voice: A Modern Story of Exile*] is a documentary shot by Emre Sarıkuş. It lasts 36.46 minutes, including interviews with two Turkish historians Ekrem Işıṇ and Orhan Koloğlu. The documentary is available at: <http://vimeo.com/43135166> [accessed 11 May 2015].



Fig. 37. Michael Rakowitz, The Flesh Is Yours, The Bones Are Ours (2015), Istanbul Biennial. Photo by Sahir Uğur Eren



Fig. 38. Michael Rakowitz, The Flesh Is Yours, The Bones Are Ours (2015), Istanbul Biennial. Photo by Sahir Uğur Eren

Among these artists, the work of Chicago based Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz, entitled *The Flesh is Yours The Bones Are Ours* (2015), opened the debate about the analogy between the annihilation of the dogs of Oxia and the Armenian genocide one more time. For his work Rakowitz compiled plaster moulds of livestock bones from dispossessed Armenian farms in Anatolia and fragments of lost Louis Sullivan buildings in Chicago to create rubbings (see figure 37). Moreover, the artist collected dog skeletons from Oxia Island where the stray dogs of Istanbul were left to die in 1910 (see figure 38).[111] The work of Rakowitz is homage to the workshop of Garabet Cezayirliyan, an Istanbulite Armenian craftsman plaster caster whose plaster casts have decorated thousands of houses in Istanbul. *The Flesh is Yours The Bones Are Ours* follows the invisible traces of the buildings ornamented by Cezayirliyan's plasters, which witnessed the annihilation and the deportations of the Armenians.

Conclusion

Chienne d'histoire invites two readings: an allegorical one, which understands the story as a depiction of the Armenian genocide and a literal one about the story of the stray dogs. These readings are not mutually exclusive. Both stories keep resonating with each other and the audience follows them at the same time. The film allows for both readings and it does not give an ultimate clue for its "correct" reading. The film could be an allegory, but it could also "literally" be about the extermination of dogs. In this way it represents two genocides, yet it gives the viewers the freedom of choosing the historical narrative they prefer. This duality created by the representation of the story of the dogs generates different possibilities. The film works on the intersection of the political and psychological repression of the genocide. This way the genocide is remembered but its remembrance is also somehow denied. The duality that the film offers also mimics the current memory conundrum of modern Turkey, in which the events are gradually acknowledged, while their genocidal nature is denied.

The animation film of Avédikian uses a popular medium to pave the way for coming to terms with the past for a country caught in the middle of one hundred years of silence. Rather than directly confronting the audience with the truth about the genocide, *Chienne d'histoire* stimulates the spectator to solve the enigma created

111 See the editorial by Julie Baumgardner on 9 September 2015 <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-istanbul-s-saltwater-themed-biennial-exposes-the-ebbs> [accessed 12 October 2015].

by the film. So, it implicitly urges the audience to negotiate with the dark spots of Turkish history through the representation of the dogs offered by the film. Yet at the same time one could still claim (as in the case of the some Turkish journalists) that *Chienne d'histoire* is an "innocent" movie that does not mention the Armenians. Considering the fact that the national curriculum in Turkish schools does not provide any information about the genocide, one has to be aware of the censorship by the Turkish government in order to come up with two readings. Therefore, an allegorical reading of the film may not be available for every spectator. The genocide awareness in Turkey entails fluency in foreign languages to follow independent media channels and to have access to scholarly literature that adopts a distanced approach to Turkish history blinded by nationalism. Since the role of the three pashas during the genocide and the way they are represented, as the responsible agents of the dog extermination, are highly important details to decipher the film, the audience should also have information about the extermination of the dogs on Oxia Island. Thus, to come up with an allegorical reading of *Chienne d'histoire* the spectator should be familiar with Turkish history. This may unfortunately limit the effective reception of the film by a mass audience.

Conclusion

One century after the Armenian genocide the denial of the atrocities committed against the Armenians is still a lingering issue in Turkey. In *Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present and Collective Violence Against the Armenians, 1789-2009* Fatma Müge Göçek explores the roots of the denial of the collective violence committed against the Armenians and demonstrates its occurrences before 1915 (2014). On the basis of this analysis Göçek argues that this denial is a multi-layered historical process, which developed through four stages. It began with the imperial denial of the origins of collective violence committed against Armenians, which started in 1789 and continued until 1907. It was followed by the Young Turk denial of violence lasting for a decade from 1908 to 1918, then an early republican denial taking place between 1919 and 1973 culminating with the late republican denial of the responsibility of the collective violence starting in 1974 and continuing to this day.

One indication that this denial of the violence against Armenians is, indeed, far from over is the fact that one century after the genocide, the Turkish government is still spending millions of dollars every year to plan and coordinate the denial of the genocide both domestically and internationally to sustain and promote its official narrative. For instance, in 2001 the Turkish government established an agency called Committee to Coordinate the Struggle with the Baseless Genocide Claims (Asılsız Soykırım Iddialarıyla Mücadele Koordinasyon Kurulu, or ASIMKK). Co-headed by the Foreign Minister and the general heading the National Security Council, the main goal of the committee is to implement a centralized policy on the genocide denial by shaping public opinion on this matter.

Part of the argument proposed in this thesis is that 'cultural memory' is not a monolithic phenomenon. Memories are embodied, triggered or provoked by texts and other media, and each one does so in a specific way. In this study I have concentrated on different media (cinema, art, literature, monuments, architecture) and sought to understand how these have contributed in their own way to our understanding of the relationship between the remembrance and the denial of the genocide in modern Turkey. I want to highlight two things in my conclusion.

First, I will draw some conclusions on how different media have constructed the representations of a violent past and what these media have shown us about

the way the official memory in Turkey is contested and contradicted. Second, I will summarize what kind of critical reflections on the Armenian genocide my reading of the novel *Karşılaşma,* my visiting displays of works of four contemporary artists, and my watching of *Chienne d'histoire,* actually offers to Turkish society.

The starting point of this study was the assumption that memory is also constructed through cultural productions. I therefore chose to analyze a novel, four works of art, museums, monuments and an animation film to create revisionary perspectives on Turkish history. I have studied these expressions not as isolated, autonomous works of art but as interventions in an ongoing, highly contested debate about memory. For instance, as I demonstrated in chapter 2, to understand what kind of memory the works of four contemporary artists (*Two Siblings* (2007) by Ayşe Erkmen, *Foto Galatasaray* (2011) by Tayfun Serttaş, *Testimony* (2006) by Kutluğ Ataman and *Istory* (2011) by Hrair Sarkissian) invoke or construct, the examination of the monument in Taksim Square, the display strategies adopted in the Harbiye Military Museum and an analysis of the urban architecture of Istanbul were important. Public squares and museums are often instrumentalized for political ends by the Turkish state and politicized in official memory. Studying artistic expressions together with political and official acts of commemoration shed light on the complex intertwinement of the denial of the genocide, remembrance and memory.

Although the state maintains its firm denial of the genocide, Turkey´s cultural sphere allows alternative pasts to surface through allegorical representations. In chapter 4, I claim that the short animation film *Chienne d'histoire* (2010) by Serge Avédikian invites two interpretations: an allegorical one, which reads the story as the representation of the Armenian genocide, and a literal one, which understands it as a depiction of the extermination of the stray dogs that took place in Constantinople in 1910. Both readings are equally possible, and the film doesn't give explicit clues as to which should prevail, thereby offering the viewers the freedom of choosing the historical narrative they prefer. This multi-layered representation, which is perhaps a crucial characteristic of allegorical texts, has an additional political advantage: it helps the film to circumvent censorship in Turkey.

This strategy can also be found in other texts that I studied. For instance, Erkmen's *Two Siblings* situated at Taksim Square also offers two possible readings. The first one is about the separation of two siblings whereas the second one opens up another reading, which brings up the Armenian genocide. Like the name of the Taksim Square, which means "division", Erkmen's work points to the fundamental "separation" on which the creation of modern Turkish nation is based. Furthermore, the allegorical mode has a specific impact on the spectator, audience or visitor. Rather than adopting a didactic mode, explaining the past explicitly and telling

which position to assume, the works that I have analyzed stimulate their spectators to be active and to solve the puzzles these works create. This interaction transforms them into conscious agents and also (indirectly) activates the viewers' personal memories. For instance, since the links between the photographs and the official histories remain implicit in Erkmen's installation, *Two Siblings* asks the passer-by to establish a relationship between themselves and the work.

Indirectness is a central feature of all works I have studied. Nowhere in these works is there even the slightest visual reference to the annihilation of the Ottoman Armenians. The artists delineate their vicarious knowledge about the events that unfolded in 1915. I argue that this indirectness could be linked with the specific generational situation of the artist. As members of the generations who had not directly experienced the genocide they reflect on their learnt memory as non-witnesses. Yet, taken together, the artists have taken memory under their wing, so to speak, and developed new forms of 'memory art' in a country shaped by the denial of the genocide. These four contemporary artists offer works that can be considered as 'memory art'; they make visual objects that preserve, trigger or contain memories. Often these artists did not focus on memories that were present or accessible, but rather on absences. In doing so they do not only reflect on the memory of the genocide, but at the same time on its denial by the Turkish state. For instance, the books Uncle Şirag gives to Zayrmayr in the novel *Karşılaşma* remain inaccessible for him as a child. Images that contemporary artist Ataman hands over to Kevser indicate blankness. The portraits of the *Two Siblings* on Taksim Square are enigmatic and the archival materials of Sarkissian's *Istory* are filled with unknown/missing historical facts. The lack of information boards about the Armenian heritage of the Surp Khach church and the musealization of this religious site raise puzzling questions about the fate of the ethnic group that lived on this territory. At the heart of every work there is a *disappearance*, *emptiness* or *absence*.

To explore how the genocidal past is reimagined, represented, remembered, forgotten or asserted through narratives and counter-narratives these artists highlight the absence of Armenians in modern Turkey through different media. Pointing out what is not shown allows the audience to think about what happened to the Ottoman Armenians and stresses the denial of the genocide and censorship at the same time. These media urge the Turkish society to ask: why is Anatolia bereft of Armenians today and why aren't we allowed to know? Every chapter inspires a rethinking of how the Armenian genocide has been obscured by the Turkish state and its attempts to produce a new historiography of the past.

Finally, the theoretical concepts of this research were first developed to analyze the Holocaust, which differs from the Armenian genocide in terms of its afterlife in memory culture. Although the Holocaust is still denied by some individuals

or regimes, it has been acknowledged by the German state where the responsible agents came from. The Armenian genocide and its afterlife differ radically from the Holocaust due to censorship and denial. Therefore, this research does not only initiate debates about how to come to terms with the past without forgetting, but also extends the theoretical framework by delineating the complexities of the memory conundrum in a country where the denial of genocide prevails.

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Summary

Though reports vary, most sources agree that there were approximately two million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire before World War I. In 1915 the Ottoman regime started exterminating the Armenians. The Ottoman propaganda during World War I portrayed Armenians as Russian collaborators and non-patriotic citizens of the Ottoman Empire. They were stigmatized as a community that stabbed the Turks in the back and aimed to disintegrate the country for irredentist purposes. Coordination of the genocide was made possible by the telegraph, which informed different provinces to follow rules for decimating the Armenians. The Armenian genocide was implemented in three phases. First, on 24 April 1915, the Armenian elites of Constantinople were rounded up. These operations started with arrests at home or at workplaces by the State Security Office. The Armenian elites were held for twenty-four hours or more in the central Constantinople prison and then taken to Haydarpaşa railway station under police escort. From there, they were transferred to two internment locations: Ayaş and Çankırı. Second, the able-bodied male population were massacred or subjected to forced labour. Third, Armenian women, children and elderly were forced to join death marches into the Syrian desert.

One century after the genocide the Turkish state still denies the violence committed against the Armenians. Despite the continuing silence and censorship, there is a plethora of initiatives that commemorate the Armenian genocide in Turkey. None however has remained unchallenged. It is usually outside the sphere of "official" history that breakthroughs take place. In this study, I want to focus on one particular sphere, i.e. the cultural sphere. My question is: how do cultural texts, which broach the question of memory, function within this specific political and social setting? Which aspects of the historical past do they make visible?

By raising these questions I situate myself in the tradition of memory studies. I analyze artworks in different media that helped to shape a new collective remembrance of the Armenians in modern Turkey in the twenty-first century. However, since I cannot offer a comprehensive survey of all texts, films, and exhibitions that engage with the Armenian memory in Turkey, I have chosen certain works and had to leave out many others. Thus, for this thesis I have chosen Markar Esayan's novel *Karşılaşma* [Encounter], the art works of four contemporary artists (Ayşe Erkmen, Hrair Sarkissian, Tayfun Serttaş and Kutluğ Ataman), the musealization of the Surp

Khach church and the animation film *Chienne d'histoire*. Rather than providing a generalizing overview, I seek to understand the specific textual dynamics of a small body of works. Every chapter also questions a specific concept in memory studies (postmemory, site of memory, counter-monument, allegory) by inserting it into a historical context that differs from that of the Holocaust due to the key role played by censorship and denial. By closely examining a selection of specific cultural texts I aim to discover in what ways we need to rethink these concepts.

Two motives have steered the selection process of these corpuses. First of all, since I want to figure out how these corpuses function in the context of modern Turkey, I chose works, which were publicly available to the Turkish public. Due to state censorship not all cultural products are broadcast, screened or published in Turkey. However, these works did reach a large of number of Turkish citizens between 2000 and 2014. That is why they are important cultural texts for analyzing Turkey's memory conundrum regarding the Armenians and the Armenian genocide. Secondly, these works represent different media such as literature, visual art, commemorative architecture and film. I decided to select works in different media in order to widen the question of collective memory about the Armenians to the larger question of cultural production. I wanted to see how different media and different genres of texts allow for an exploration of the past. Thirdly, the artists that I have chosen for this thesis have hyphenated identities and diasporic lives. Their multinational identities resemble the transnational character of the politics of memory regarding the Armenian genocide. For instance, Ayşe Erkmen lives in Berlin and Istanbul and Syria-born Armenian Hrair Sarkissian now lives in London after a few years spent in Amsterdam. That is why I have chosen these works to scrutinize the relationship between memory, history, national identity and collective remembrance.

This thesis revolves around the question of how the Armenian genocide is being represented in literature, the visual arts, commemorative architecture and films. I am specifically interested in the way in which the memory of this past is constructed under conditions of censorship and state pressure. For a century Turkish governments have successfully silenced the country's Armenians. Moreover, those who wished to make statements about their existence were marginalized, criminalized or declared *persona non grata*. Even though I want to focus on the unique and singular case of the Armenian genocide, I also believe that my interdisciplinary approach to the question of memory in Turkey regarding the Armenians will provide lessons applicable beyond the Armenian genocide. For, this research speaks to the theoretical questions surrounding the full spectrum of historical circumstances in which history, violence, remembrance and cultural productions intersect.

Finally, my research also has a moral and political motivation. It seeks an alternative way to create hope for coming to terms with the haunting past and provide new road maps between Armenia and Turkey for reconciliation. Hence, it is of vital importance to bring back to the surface the omitted memories of the Armenians in Turkish society, first of all to generate awareness and provide lessons for future generations and subsequently to pave the way for reconciliation between Armenia and Turkey. This thesis is an attempt to pay serious attention to art works that break the monopoly of the Turkish state over the memory of the genocide. By doing so these works foreground Turkey's violent past, which has so far been muted.

Overview of the Chapters

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, this thesis is organized in four chapters.

Chapter 1, "Exploring Postmemory in Markar Esayan's Novel" Karşılaşma, attempts to offer a survey of experiencing the history of remembrance of the Armenian genocide as a memorial practice in Turkey. In this chapter I analyze *Karşılaşma* [Encounter], a novel by the Istanbulite-Armenian author Markar Esayan, to explore the repercussions on later generations of the genocide remembrance. In doing so I take advantage of the concept of postmemory, which emphasizes the survivors' transmission of memory to the following generations. However, what the following generations bear witness to is nothing but a connection to a subject they have not experienced: learnt memory is treated as a witnessed memory. This chapter is a starting point in the attempt to shed light on the postmemory of following generations in Turkey. Markar Esayan's book *Karşılaşma* does not shy away from adopting explicit references to the Armenian genocide. The plot of the novel revolves around the question of memory in two ways: by means of a dedication and through the modes of narration. Chapter 1 aims to examine the difficulty of transgenerational memory and manifestations of trauma through an analysis of the multiple dedications at the opening page of the novel and the issue of the politics of remembrance of the Armenians. I elaborate on the concept of postmemory by examining the theoretical approaches developed by Marianne Hirsch, Ernst van Alphen, Dori Laub and Gary Weissman. At the opening page readers come across two dedications: one to the late Hrant Dink and the other to all those who lost their life in Anatolia in the name of the Gomitas Vartabed. I develop the reasons of these dedications and examine their meanings. In addition to these dedications, the novel's characters play an important role in terms of portraying the historical amnesia and transmitting this unknown part of the Turkish-Armenian history to the following generations. I then describe the plot of the novel, and proceed to analyze the modes of narration to delineate the

manifestations of memory. Ultimately, this chapter gives answers to questions about the multiplicity of narrators and their relationship vis-à-vis memory.

Chapter 2, "Art Projects as Counter-Monuments in Istanbul", is an analysis of the work of four contemporary artists whose works were exhibited in Turkey. This chapter outlines artistic commemorations produced outside the official memory, which seek to commemorate the genocide. In this chapter I analyze the works of Ayşe Erkmen, Tayfun Serttaş, Kutluğ Ataman and Hrair Sarkissian. They are four contemporary artists whose work deals with the Armenian genocide in modern Turkey. These artists do not represent the memory of the genocide; rather their work represents the absence of this memory. They address their vicarious knowledge of the genocide as it has been passed down to them. I examine their works of art to see whether we could classify them as "counter-monuments" in the light of the concept developed by James E. Young. In Young's definition, counter-monuments allude to an artistic criticism of monuments, which is a conscious departure from the traditional iconography of monuments through which the past is rigidified in monumental forms. These projects provide an important window into questioning the official war narratives. *Two Siblings* [İki Kardeş] by Ayşe Erkmen, *Foto Galatasaray* by Tayfun Serttaş, *Testimony* [Tanıklık] by Kutluğ Ataman and *Istory* [Benim Hikayem] by Hrair Sarkissian are the works that I examine. Chapter 2 traces the shifting role, which the projects of these artists have generated in Turkey. I examine how these works contest the celebratory record offered by the Turkish government through its denialist policies. In what way do these projects complement, undermine or criticize the official history of Turkey is an important question. In addition, I analyze how these projects in Istanbul challenge, extend or apply Young's concept of counter-monument. With the role of these works in mind, I also scrutinize the specificity of these projects. Since some of these have been unveiled in the vicinity of militaristic sites or close to statues of Atatürk, I also explore the meanings generated by the conscious choice of specific settings. Positioning these personal artefacts in proximity to official monuments intervenes in Istanbul's urban setting. I address how this memory of past times shapes the understanding of the present moment and reflect on the contributions of these works to the way Turkey deals with its controversial past.

Chapter 3, titled "Transformation of the Church of Surp Khach into Akdamar Museum", takes a close look at the reopening of a religious site as a museum. The Armenian church of Surp Khach is situated on an island in Lake Van in Turkey's eastern part. In 2005 the renovation of the 1,100-year old Surp Khach church began and lasted for two years. Since 2007 the church has been functioning as a museum. The ultimate transformation of the church from a sacred place into a museum is an emblematic example of the creation of a *lieu de mémoire* (site of memory) as Pierre

Nora calls it. By means of this concept Nora analyzes certain "sites of memory" in France invested with symbolical significance for ideological and political purposes. In October 2012 I conducted fieldwork in the region to analyze the current situation of the church. I claim that the inauguration of the church, the transformation of a religious terrain into a museum and the memories belonging to different ethnic groups in relation to the church can be analyzed to decipher different conflicting narratives attached to the site. I discuss the fetishization of Turkish flags placed on the island, the question of ownership and what the appropriation of the site by the Turks means for the Armenian memory. I also highlight what musealization involves and what "dark tourism", "trauma tourism", "memory tourism" or "roots-seeking-trips" mean for the Armenians coming to this island from all over the world.

Chapter 4, "Visualizing Genocide in the Animation Film Chienne d'histoire", offers a reading of an animation film, shot by the Armenian-French director Serge Avédikian in 2010, entitled *Chienne d'histoire.* The animation film is set five years before the Armenian genocide, in 1910, when the streets of Constantinople were overrun with stray dogs. These dogs roamed freely in the city until the newly established Ottoman government decided to get rid of them. They proposed deporting the dogs to Oxia, a deserted island of barren and steep cliffs, located in the Marmara Sea. All dogs were rounded up and transported to the island, which turned out to be an open-air dog pound. In the end approximately 80,000 dogs were exterminated. In this chapter I broadly examine "how" Avédikian constructs the 1910 story of the stray dogs left to on the island to die. I discuss the concept of allegory by examining the theoretical approach developed by Angus Fletcher. I analyze which elements in the film make this allegorical reading possible. As a rhetorical trope, allegory is able to portray complex concepts and ideas by establishing a narrative that has another meaning under the surface. It conveys a hidden message through actions, figures, symbolic events and representations. As an extended metaphor it gives a new interpretation of the phenomenon. I then scrutinize the role of the three Ottoman pashas in *Chienne d'histoire,* followed by an analysis of the way the dogs are exterminated in the film and the Armenians were deported during the genocide. In the course of my analysis, I offer answers to the questions: what does the allegory bring out? What does it tell us about the genocide? What does it mean to compare the plight of the Armenians to that of the dogs? And finally, why is allegory such a helpful device in the case of modern Turkey?

Although 24 April 2015 marked the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, the Armenian question still remains a highly contested topic in Turkey. In light of this situation it seems that my thesis is rather timely because of the still ongoing denial and censorship of the genocide. It is important to remind the reader that this dissertation covers events up to the third quarter of 2015.

Samenvatting

Voor de Eerste Wereldoorlog telde het Ottomaanse Rijk zo'n twee miljoen Armeniërs. In 1915 begon de Ottomaanse regering met de vervolging van deze bevolkingsgroep. In propaganda werden Armeniërs neergezet als een groep deserteurs die hun land in de Eerste Wereldoorlog hadden verraden en die het land met opstanden probeerden te destabiliseren. Per telegraaf instrueerde de regering de verschillende provincie- en districtshoofden over de te volgen procedures. Eerst werd de elite opgepakt en vermoord, daarna werd het volk omgebracht of gedeporteerd in lange doodsmarsen door de woestijn. Voor de meesten was Noord-Syrië de eindbestemming. Hier werden de Armeniërs eerst opgesloten in concentratiekampen, in afwachting van hun definitieve lot. De meeste Armeniërs werden simpelweg in de woestijn van de provincie Der ez-Zor gedumpt. In totaal vermoordde de Ottomaanse regering tussen 1915 en 1917 1,5 miljoen Armeense onderdanen.

Volgens de huidige Turkse regering was van genocide geen sprake. Turkije blijft de volkerenmoord ontkennen, bagatelliseren en trivialiseren. Turkije voert een diplomatieke loopgravenoorlog door fel uit te halen naar landen die de Armeense genocide erkennen. De belangstelling voor de genocide is door de jaren heen wisselend geweest, maar vanaf het begin van deze eeuw is deze in de Turkse samenleving sterk toegenomen. Er zijn talloze herdenkingsinitiatieven rondom de Armeense genocide geweest. Niet één is er echter onomstreden gebleven. In dit onderzoek heb ik mijn aandacht gevestigd op één bepaald domein waarbinnen herinnering plaatsvindt, namelijk het culturele. Mijn vraag luidt als volgt: Welke rol spelen culturele herinneringspraktijken bij het ontstaan en veranderen van het collectieve geheugen in de Turkse politieke en sociale context? Hoe brengen zij facetten van de geschiedenis aan het licht?

Met deze vraagstelling plaats ik mijzelf in de traditie van *memory studies*, een interdisciplinair wetenschappelijk specialisme dat praktijken en media analyseert die bijdragen aan de vorming van het collectief geheugen. Aangezien een alomvattende studie van teksten, films en tentoonstellingen die betrekking hebben op de Armeense genocide niet mogelijk is, heb ik enkele toonaangevende werken geselecteerd. Ik heb gekozen voor Markar Esayans roman *Karşılaşma* [Ontmoeting], de kunstwerken van vier moderne kunstenaars – Ayşe Erkmen, Hrair Sarkissian, Tayfun Serttaş en Kutluğ Ataman –, de musealisering van de Surp Khach kerk [de Kerk van het Heilige Kruis] en de animatiefilm *Chienne d'histoire.* In plaats van een

algemeen overzicht heb ik er de voorkeur aan gegeven om de specifieke dynamiek van een beperkt aantal werken trachten te doorgronden.

Twee criteria liggen ten grondslag aan de selectie van dit corpus. Aangezien ik wil uitzoeken hoe deze werken in het huidige Turkije functioneren, heb ik ten eerste werken gekozen die algemeen toegankelijk waren voor het Turkse publiek. Ten gevolge van de censuur worden niet alle culturele producten uitgezonden, vertoond of uitgegeven in Turkije. Niettemin waren het deze werken die tussen 2000 en 2015 een groot aantal Turken hebben bereikt. Deze werken zijn dus van belang met het oog op de analyse van het Turkse collectieve geheugen betreffende de Armeniërs en de Armeense genocide.

Ten tweede vertegenwoordigen deze werken verschillende kunstvormen, zoals beeldende kunst, literatuur, en film. Dat maakt het mogelijk om de vraag over het collectieve geheugen omtrent de Armeniërs te verruimen naar een bredere vraag over culturele productie. Hoe laten verschillende media en verschillende tekstgenres een verkenning van het verleden toe?

Dit proefschrift draait om de vraag hoe het historisch bewustzijn en collectief geheugen door literatuur, beeldende kunst, herdenkingsarchitectuur en film wordt geactiveerd en opgebouwd. Ik ben in het bijzonder geïnteresseerd in de wijze waarop het collectieve geheugen geconstrueerd wordt in een politieke context van censuur en staatsdruk. Een eeuw lang heeft de Turkse overheid de Armeniërs in Turkije het zwijgen weten op te leggen. Bovendien werden diegenen die zich over hun bestaan wilden uitspreken gemarginaliseerd, gestraft of tot *persona non grata* verklaard. Met dit als gegeven probeer ik in dit proefschrift het Turkse staatsmonopolie over de herinnering aan de genocide te doorbreken.

Overzicht van de hoofdstukken

Behalve een inleiding en conclusie bestaat dit proefschrift uit vier hoofdstukken. Het eerste hoofdstuk, "Exploring Postmemory in Markar Esayan's Novel *Karşılaşma*", schetst een beeld van de herdenking van de Armeense genocide in Turkije. Ik bestudeer *Karşılaşma* [Ontmoeting], een roman van de Armeens-Istanboeli auteur Markar Esayan, met als doel de gevolgen van herinneringen aan de genocide voor latere generaties te onderzoeken. Daarbij gebruik ik het concept *postmemory* dat de herinneringen van de generaties die volgen op de eerste generatie van overlevenden beschrijft. Wat de volgende generaties meekrijgen is een band met iets wat zij niet zelf beleefd hebben: het betreft geïnternaliseerde herinneringen. De theoretische reflecties op het concept *postmemory* van Marianne Hirsch, Ernst van Alphen, Dori Laub en Gary Weissman hebben als leidraad gefunctioneerd.

Dit hoofdstuk behandelt de *postmemory* van volgende Armeense generaties in Turkije. Markar Esayan's boek *Karşılaşma* deinst niet terug voor ondubbelzinnige verwijzingen naar de Armeense genocide. Deze roman raakt de kwestie van herinnering in twee opzichten: middels de dubbele opdracht van het boek en middels de verschillende vertelperspectieven. Aan de hand van een analyse van de opdrachten en de politiek inzake de herdenking van Armeniërs illustreert Hoofdstuk 1 de complexiteit van het transgenerationele geheugen en traumaverschijnselen. De lezer komt twee opdrachten tegen in het boek: de eerste aan wijlen Hrant Dink en de tweede aan allen die omgekomen zijn in naam van Gomitas Vartabed. Dit hoofdstuk ontleedt de drijfveren van deze opdrachten en hun betekenis. Behalve deze opdrachten spelen de personages in de roman een belangrijke rol doordat ze het historisch geheugenverlies in beeld brengen en dit onbekende hoofdstuk in de Turks-Armeense geschiedenis aan de volgende generaties overdragen.

Hoofdstuk 2, "Art Projects as Counter-Monuments in Istanbul", is een analyse van werk van vier hedendaagse kunstenaars dat in Turkije is tentoongesteld. Ayşe Erkmen, Tayfun Serttaş, Kutluğ Ataman en Hrair Sarkissian zijn vier van de weinige hedendaagse kunstenaars die de Armeense genocide in huidig Turkije als onderwerp hebben. Ze beelden niet de herinnering aan de genocide uit; hun werk behandelt juist het ontbreken van herinnering. Zij gebruiken hun indirecte kennis zoals deze aan hen overgeleverd is. In dit hoofdstuk bestudeer ik een aantal van hun kunstwerken om te bepalen of ze als *counter-monuments*, het door James E. Young geïntroduceerde begrip, kunnen worden beschouwd. In Youngs definitie geven *counter-monuments* op een artistieke manier kritiek op traditionele monumenten. Dit impliceert een bewuste afwijking van de gebruikelijke iconografie van monumenten waarbij het verleden in de vorm van monumenten stolt. Een nieuwe benadering van het verleden ontstaat doordat de band tussen toeschouwer en herinneringsobject versterkt wordt. *Counter-monuments* plaatsen de toeschouwer en haar/zijn rol binnen de herdenkingsruimte zodat hij/zij hier actief betekenissen aan geeft. Tegenmonumenten stellen de officiële oorlogsverhalen aan de kaak. *Two Siblings* [İki Kardeş] van Ayşe Erkmen, *Foto Galatasaray* van Tayfun Serttaş, *Testimony* [Tanıklık] van Kutluğ Ataman en *Istory* [Benim Hikayem] van Hrair Sarkissian zijn de werken die ik bestudeer. Alle vier hebben ze betrekking op de Armeense genocide en zijn tentoongesteld in Istanbul. Ik bekijk op welke manier deze kunstwerken het beeld betwisten dat de Turkse overheid door middel van haar ontkenningspolitiek uitdraagt. Hoe vullen deze kunstwerken de officiële Turkse geschiedenis aan, hoe ondermijnen of bekritiseren ze die geschiedenis? Ook bestudeer ik hoe deze kunstwerken Young's begrip *counter-monument* tegenspreken, verruimen of juist bevestigen.

De transformatie van een religieus oord tot een museum wordt onder de loep genomen in Hoofdstuk 3, "Transformation of the Church of Surp Khach into Akdamar Museum". De Armeense Surp Khach [de Kerk van het Heilige Kruis] kerk staat op het Akthamar eiland in het Vanmeer in het oosten van Turkije. Tussen 2005 en 2007 onderging het kerkgebouw een controversiële restauratie. Het herstel van de 1100 jaar oude kerk werd gefinancierd door het Turkse Ministerie van Cultuur en Toerisme. Vervolgens heeft de Turkse staat de kerk heropend als museum en geweigerd het gebouw zijn oude religieuze functie terug te geven. De omvorming van een heilig oord tot een museum heeft deze plek tot een *lieu de mémoire* gemaakt, in de zin van Pierre Nora. Met zijn concept analyseert Nora bepaalde "herdenkingplekken" in Frankrijk, waar een symbolische betekenis aan is toegekend met ideologische en politieke doeleinden. In oktober 2012 heb ik veldwerk in de streek van Van verricht om de huidige stand van zaken rondom de kerk te bestuderen. Ik analyseer wat de musealisering van de kerk, de fetisjering van de op het eiland geplaatste Turkse vlaggen en de Turkse inlijving van dit oord voor het Koerdisch, Turks en Armeens geheugen betekent. Ik bekijk tevens wat de musealisering inhoudt en wat "duister toerisme" ["dark tourism"], "traumatoerisme" ["trauma tourism"], "geheugen-toerisme" ["memory tourism"] of "reis naar het vaderland" ["root-seeking trips"] behelst voor de Armeniërs die van over de hele wereld naar dit eiland komen.

Hoofdstuk 4, "Visualizing Genocide in the Animation Film *Chienne d'histoire*", ontleedt de animatiefilm *Chienne d'histoire*, van de Armeens-Franse filmregisseur Serge Avédikian. Het verhaal speelt zich af in 1910, vijf jaar voor de Armeense genocide, toen de straten van Constantinopel overspoeld werden door zwerfhonden die vrijuit in de stad struinden. De nieuwe Ottomaanse regering besloot hier een einde aan te maken en stelde voor om de honden af te voeren naar Oxia, een onbewoond eiland in de Zee van Marmara met barre en steile rotswanden. De honden werden gevangen en gedropt op het eiland en aan hun lot overgelaten. Stadbewoners konden de honden horen janken tot ze verhongerden. Uiteindelijk zijn zo'n 80.000 honden uitgeroeid. Het is een traumatisch hoofdstuk uit de nationale geschiedenis, maar het is regisseur Avédikian niet alleen om de straathonden te doen. Zijn grootouders overleefden de Armeense genocide van 1915. Die wetenschap geeft de film een indringende dubbele laag. Ik bestudeer hoe Avédikian het verhaal uit 1910 van de voor dood achtergelaten zwerfhonden opbouwt. Ik gebruik hierbij het begrip allegorie. Ik analyseer momenten in de film die een allegorische lezing toelaten. Een allegorie is een retorisch middel dat gecompliceerde begrippen en ideeën beschrijft aan de hand van een verhaal dat onder het oppervlak een andere betekenis heeft. Het brengt een verborgen boodschap over via daden, personages, symbolische gebeurtenissen en beelden. Daarna onderzoek ik de rol van de drie Ottomaanse pasja's in *Chienne d'histoire* en bestudeer ik de manier waarop de honden worden

uitgeroeid in de film en hoe de Armeniërs tijdens de genocide gedeporteerd werden. Ik beantwoord hierbij de vragen: Kan *Chienne d'histoire* worden gezien als een allegorie voor de Armeense genocide? Wat brengt de allegorie naar voren? Wat betekent het om het pijnlijke lot van de Armeniërs met dat van de honden te vergelijken? En tenslotte, waarom allegorie zo'n bruikbaar middel is in hedendaags Turkije?

Hoewel de genocide op 24 april 1915 een eeuw geleden was, is en blijft de Armeense kwestie een uitermate omstreden onderwerp in Turkije. Honderd jaar na dato zorgt dit taboe nog altijd voor veel onrust tussen de Armeense en Turkse gemeenschap. Dit proefschrift toont de belangrijke rol van literaire, artistieke, museale en monumentale vormen van herinnering voor de gedachtenis aan de Armeense genocide in Turkije.

Curriculum Vitae (Vita Auctoris)

On 9 June 1984, Alaettin Çarıkcı was born in Ödemiş, İzmir, in Turkey. After finishing secondary school, he began studying Comparative Literature at İstanbul Bilgi University in 2002 with a full scholarship. During his bachelor's degree, Çarıkcı did a minor degree in International Relations to feed an already developing interest in nationalism, identity politics, memory studies and war studies. He graduated cum laude with a 3rd ranking degree in the Comparative Literature department in 2006. The same year, he received a full scholarship from Sabancı University for his MA degree in Cultural Studies. Çarıkcı received his MA degree in 2008 cum laude. His master thesis analyzed the gender politics adopted during the Armenian genocide (gendercide) and its repercussions on the Armenian communities of Anatolia. During his graduate school, he attended the Human Rights Law Summer School in Toronto, Canada, and enrolled on a Western Armenian language course at Ca Foscari University in Venice. After having worked in Istanbul for two years as a cultural communication expert and PR manager for various cultural institutions, in 2009 he received the Huygens Scholarship from NUFFIC for four years of PhD research in the Netherlands. So far, Çarıkcı has presented his academic works in Los Angeles, Buenos Aires, Boston, Vancouver, Siena, Berlin, Aarhus, Lund, Cape Town and Ann Arbor (MI).