THE TRANSGENERATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

NEAR THE FOOT OF MOUNT ARARAT

ANTHONIE HOLSLAG

Palgrave Studies in the History of Genocide

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Near the Foot of Mount Ararat

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In Armenia, 1987

Into a basalt cavern   I wandered
where the moon slid like a water snake

in white skin   through the gullies
to the blonde and furry wheat.

I dug toward the damp smell   of a water channel–

found a shard   of a cross
its lacework   a system of streams   wound into a stone–

grapes and pomegranates   pomegranatas
and grapes   pulpy in my hands

Palmettos sawed my palms
A rising moon in the moss-grown   stone mirrored the light

where winged griffins,   those talismans of blood
flew into the arms of Christ

Down a gully   like a volute
I found a way   to the dry clay of the border

where a scimitar cut the horizon

Pegasus flew   out of the tufa walls
into the white shroud of Ararat

and the ringing bells   slid into the scree.

Down there   I felt my name disappear

<div align="center">

Peter Balakian (Pulitzer Prize Winner)
(reprinted with permission from *June-tree: New and Selected Poems 1974–2001*)

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Preface

"Once upon a time…"

Gar u chgar; there was and there was not…

An Armenian storyteller once told me that Armenian stories could be compared to flower petals. "The stories intertwine; they flow into one another, one story leads to another and to another and to another," and while my research progressed, I began to understand what she meant. Armenian literature, personal narratives and life histories are often stories within stories within stories. The story frequently begins in the present and goes back to the past, until a forgotten episode—a forgotten history—is uncovered by the narrator. After several attempts to write a gripping version of my research, the Armenian way of telling a story inspired the format of my book. Here too is a story within a story within a story. I start with the story of the painter Arshile Gorky and the paintings of his mother. Then I tell the story of the 800,000–1.5 million Armenians who were slaughtered by the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1917. Finally, I tell the story of contemporary Armenians in diasporic communities and how they experience their world, history and ethnic identity. Underneath this story flows another story. This is a story of genocidal violence and how scientists can approach these horrendous acts. This story also includes anthropologic paradigms about identity making and building and rebuilding and the story of intersubjectivity and what Van de Port (1998) called "implicit knowledge." The central questions I strive to answer are: *What impact does the genocide of 1915–1917 have*

on the cultural experience of Armenians living in the Netherlands and London? How do they construct their past and how does the past influence their ethnic identity and day-to-day dealings?

The research presented here is not written in a traditional way. It has no formal structure and does not comply with the criteria drawn by Aya (1990): "A good rule for writers of expository prose is: at the beginning, say what you plan to argue; in the middle, argue it; at the end, point out what you have argued, noting what it means for further inquiry" (Ibid.: 93). My book is like an Armenian narrative, which is a story within a story within a story, and where the loss and reconstruction of identity are the major themes.

I present several interconnected arguments throughout this book. I argue that to understand genocide and more specifically, genocidal violence, we cannot approach genocide as a physical act alone, but rather as a social construct and cultural expression embedded in the social fabric and the *social imaginaire* of the dominant culture group. I use hereby the works of Staub (1989 and 2009), Baumann (1999, 2004) and Semelin (2007). I make use of the concepts "continuum of destruction," "the endangered self-concept" (both in Staub 1989 and 2009), the processes of identity making of Baumann and "imaginary constructs" based on "identity," "purity" and "safety" as emphasised by Semelin (Semelin 2007: 22). I argue that these constructions exist on every level in the genocidal process: in the minds of the ideologists, identity entrepreneurs, politicians and those who lay the basis for the genocidal process (and henceforth the violence). It is present in the mind of the decision makers, bureaucrats and legislators, and all the way down to the soldiers, citizens, neighbours and often special forces who were ordered to do the killing. The "fear of losing *the self-concept*" and creating a counter identity lies at the base of all genocidal acts. By killing the Other, the Self is safeguarded and even more importantly—constructed.

In my view therefore, an identity crisis and a pathological fixation on identity by the perpetrators lie at the core of every genocidal violence. This identity crisis is projected onto a minority group. And I purposely use the word "pathological" since perpetrators are not reacting from a positive self-image, but rather a negative self-image that has to be strengthened and protected from the intangible Others (or at least in the perpetrators' minds).

This fixation, I will argue, is expressed in every phase of the genocidal process. Therefore, social scientists can derive cultural meaning from the violent acts *themselves*. Or to phrase it more plainly, if an identity crisis in

the minds of the perpetrators lies at the core of genocide, as both Staub and Semelin claim, then this identity crisis (real or imagined) will be visible and acted out in the violence. This makes violence *meaningful* instead of meaningless or incomprehensible. It shows the perpetrators' *intent*, and demonstrates the extent to which the violence is truly genocidal.

Additionally, I argue that the meaning of this violence becomes internalized and embodied by the victimized group and is expressed in day-to-day life, in contemporary Armenian art, and literature and ceremonies within present-day Armenian diasporic communities. These expressions are transgenerational and even more importantly non-spatial in nature. Thus, certain cultural symbols are used by first-, second-, third- and fourth-generation Armenian survivors. These symbols are used not only in the Dutch diasporic community, but also in the diasporic communities in England and the United States and elsewhere in the world. I argue that, from a social scientific perspective, this is a peculiar outcome, since generally, diasporic communities adapt to the dominant culture group. That the Armenians do so to a lesser extent speaks to the resilience of their collective experiences and sense of loss. Thus, the weight of the (collective) Armenian pain and history is engrained in the (re)construction of their Armenian identity. The Armenian genocide becomes an inseparable part of the "Armenian self."

Finally, I argue that the Armenian internalization of violence not only brings cohesion, but ironically also causes friction and schisms within the Armenian diasporic communities. These schisms are an integrated part of an over-focus on identity and underlines the Armenian community's fear of (another) annihilation. These fears are both imagined and real, for the Armenians have experienced exactly what the perpetrators projected—their pathological fixation on identity or the self-concept and projecting this on an Other that must be eradicated. This is a fear that can be traced back to the impact that the Armenian genocide had on the psychology of the survivors and the whole social fabric of the Armenian culture.

Westerners have to bear in mind that the Armenian genocide has had no closure, and will not have closure until these horrendous acts are fully recognized by the Turkish State and the international community. The fact that Armenians' pain has not been recognized is reopening the same old stinking wound and perpetuates the last phase of genocide—denial of history and remembrance.

Although this book is about the Armenian genocide and Armenian identity, the analysis of this book is a starting point for future

comparative studies. In this sense, the book can be considered a case study about genocidal violence and the genocidal processes and how social history and ethnic identity are constructed.

It is my belief that the start of genocidal violence does not lie in the macro social and political spheres alone. Genocide is also a *cultural* expression. Before the physical act of genocidal violence occurs, the dichotomy of insiders and outsiders or between pure and impure or good and evil is already embedded in the minds of the perpetrators and the social imaginary of the dominant culture group. These images are further mobilized through propaganda.

In his excellent book, *Purify and Destroy* (2010), Semelin analyses how the social imaginary is manipulated in the public domain. He argues that this manipulation occurs on three distinct themes: identity, purity and safety. Focusing on these themes, it is clear that the perpetrators' goal is to create a mono-ethnic (or mono-national, or mono-religious, etc.) identity. The nation state is considered saved if it is cleansed and purified from these foreign elements

The need for a mono-ethnic identity can directly be linked to what Staub (1989) considers a disruption of the self-concept, which is a condition wherein ideas about the self are *existentially* threatened by political and economic uncertainties (Ibid.: 15). Some of these uncertainties are real and physical, but when they are transferred into the political domain, and when the focus on identity in the dominant culture group increases, the threat becomes increasingly imaginary and even mythical.

Warfare and political and economic crises will further pressure the genocidal process as Staub (1989), Sémelin (2010) but also Melson (1992) point out. I then go a step further to claim that the dichotomy of insiders and outsiders, and the *way* culture and identity are made in the midst of this physical crisis becomes increasingly intense and it is within this intensification that identity making, as argued by Baumann (2004), should be explored. Identity making lies at the core of genocide. I emphasise this specifically because this explanation implies that any given society, in specific circumstances (political, economic and social), has the potential to become locked into what I consider a pathological fixation on identity, and can therefore potentially start ethnic cleansing and/or, in a worst-case scenario, genocide.

By doing this, I step away from the historical and often essential approach of studying genocides. For example, the Armenian genocide is the outcome of the crumbling of the Ottoman society in the beginning

of the twentieth century, and thus it is culturally specific and bounded. In the same way, I do not believe that the genocide of the Jews during the Second World War, or the genocide of the Tutsis or the ethnic cleansing and genocide of Bosnian Muslims in Bosnia and Serbia are examples of essentially bounded incidents. While they have *unique* elements, they are also comparable.

If we study genocides as particular incidents alone we are *analytically* limiting ourselves and are no longer approaching genocide as a comparable process. Sure, there are essential and unique elements. The Armenian genocide cannot be studied without mentioning the crisis in the Ottoman Empire, and the persecution and mass killings of the Jews cannot be studied without considering the consequences of the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles and the crisis in Germany. The *processes* behind these genocides do share commonalities; however, that reconfigures the character of the genocidal process. By studying these events, we can shed light on the commonalities.

I can best illustrate this with a small anecdote. In April 2010, I was lecturing on the Armenian genocide and the consequences on the Armenian identity. I was emphasizing the feelings of loss, emptiness and suffering in the current diasporic communities. After the lecture a man came to me and patted me silently on the back. "I am not Armenian," he said, "but I was touched by your story. What you just described also happened to my people. We can never forget the Holocaust." He said these words while he pressed a hand on his chest. He later explained to me that the feelings of loss and emptiness, which I had described in my lecture, were the same feelings he had experienced for years when he thought about his own ethnic and religious background. He then made statements that were comparable to phrases I had heard during my research. "They have taken away my identity, you know. They punched a hole in my heart" and "We have suffered more than anyone can comprehend. We have to protect ourselves."

Although in this book I only analyse the Armenian genocide and its influence on the construction of the Armenian identity, I believe that my findings can be applied to other ethnic groups who have survived such horrendous acts. The sense of loss that the Armenians feel and experience daily can be compared to the sense of loss felt by Jews after the Holocaust, or Bosnian Muslims after the ethnic cleansing and genocide in Bosnia Herzegovina, or Tutsis after the genocide in Rwanda. This book provides an analytical understanding of how collective suffering is

prolonged and reproduced and how this suffering can be mobilized for political agendas when the circumstances are right.

Although I will not discuss this political dimension of genocide in detail in this book, my analysis contributes to an understanding of the political processes such as inclusion and exclusion, discriminatory policies or, in extreme cases, processes that Lemarchand (1998) called "counter-genocide(s)." In a case study of the refugee camps in Tanzania, Malkki (1995) was surprised that the acts of violence committed by Hutus during the Rwanda genocide were similar to the acts of violence directed at the Hutus themselves in 1972. Such acts included the impaling of citizens, cutting foetuses from mothers' wombs, forcing parents to eat their children's flesh and forcing parents and children to commit incest (Malkki 1995; see also Shaw 2007: 138). Although not all Hutu perpetrators were descendants of survivors of massacres in Burundi in 1972, and not all survivors of the Burundi massacres resorted to violence, Rwandan refugees from Burundi were disproportionally involved in the early stages of the killing during the genocide in Rwanda (Campbell 2010: 304). It is a disturbing and thought-provoking observation that the once-victimized group became perpetrators using the *same symbolism* and *modes of violence* as the original aggressors.

I do not claim that the Armenians commit genocide or similar acts of violence today; rather, I argue that the transference of the pathological fixation on identity from the aggressors to the victimized group can be a starting point for further investigation.

In Chap. 1, I describe the life of Arshile Gorky and tell the story of two significant portraits of a mother and her son. In Chap. 2, I present the theoretical framework for this investigation. I discuss the background of my research, give more in-depth explanations of the terminology of the research question and present contemporary anthropological theories on identity, identity making and the social construction of history.

Chapter 3 is contextual in nature. Here, I look at the development and history of the present-day Armenian diasporic communities in the Netherlands and London, examing them in comparison with the Armenian diasporic in France. The questions that I address are as follows: What can these comparisons tell us about the Dutch Armenian diasporic community? How are the Armenian diasporic communities organised?

In Chap. 4 of Part I of the book, I examine the Armenian genocide from an anthropological point of view. I focus on three elements of genocide: the political and social causes, the symbolic meaning of

genocidal violence and the consequences of this violence. I argue that if we can retrieve the meaning of violence, we can understand the processes behind the violence and also, more important, understand the social and cultural consequences of violence for the victimized group. The questions I address are: Why are violent acts of genocide so gruesome compared to other forms of collective violence? What is the symbolic meaning of these acts? How can we connect these violent acts to the identity crisis of the perpetrators and/or dominant culture group?

Whereas the early chapters address the loss of identity, the following three chapters focus on the (re)construction of identity. In Chap. 5, I explore how Armenians in the Dutch diasporic community reconstruct their history and give meaning to their identity in day-to-day life while showing how this identity can be connected to the Armenian genocide.

In Chap. 6, I discuss the complexities of the present-day Armenian identity in the Netherlands. For even though ethnic identity is a vehicle connecting Armenians, the preoccupation with this identity also causes tension, friction and contention. The Armenian community in the Netherlands is exceedingly divided. I analyse this struggle over identity and connect it with the common experiences of collective violence and how "others" within the community are created.

In Chaps. 7 and 8, I focus on how Armenians in the diasporic communities interact with the "outside world." How do they integrate but also shield themselves from external influences and how do they try to safeguard their identity from the dominant ethnic culture group? The underlying question that I address is as follows: To what extent can my observations be explained by transnationalism in general, and to what extent can they be directly linked to the Armenian genocide?

In my conclusion, I summarize my findings, pose questions for further research and return to where it all started—a beautiful but heartbreaking painting of a mother and her son, upon which I can hopefully now shed new light.

A story within a story within a story. Genocide is my focus, but I start with a tale about a painting by a first-generation genocide survivor. A painting with enormous emotional impact.

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Genocide studies is a painstaking topic to research. You are confronted with horrific experiences and bloody eyewitness account. I cannot imagine the horrors the victims and direct survivors experienced. I can only imagine the aftermath and the pain that was still visible in my respondents' lives. This book is for them, together with my wish that this horrific episode will one day be recognized for what it is: a genocide and the destruction of a culture.

On the 17th of February 2018 good news befell on the Armenians in the Netherlands. The Dutch parliament, after long negotiations, recognized the Armenian genocide fully. Even though my research has been done before this recognition the reconciliation process can finally start. It will be a long process though, with a lot of bumps on the road. But it can start now due to the resilience of the Dutch Armenians. Still, true reconciliation can start if Turkey comes to terms with their own horrible and bloody past.

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Introduction

"Have you ever heard of 'Gorky's curse'?" Nouritza Matossian asked me on a cloudy Thursday afternoon in March 2003. We were at her home in Hampstead (London) and I remember how tired I felt. Until that moment, I had been conducting research for two full months. Since my time in London was brief, I had filled my days with as many interviews as possible. Before I met with Nouritza, I had already spoken with the Armenian ambassador to Great Britain, an Armenian artist and an Armenian minister in London. I was actually too tired and too exhausted to satisfactorily conduct another interview. Yet her story caught my attention and would eventually be one of those interviews that turned my whole research upside down. Nouritza continued:

> There is a rumour going round the galleries of New York that Gorky's paintings are cursed. The painting *The Orators* has been damaged in a fire in 1957. Another painting – *The Calendars* – has been completely destroyed. Then there are rumours of paintings falling from walls and of a black-haired ghost in a blue overcoat that visits Gorky's old house in Sherman, Connecticut. The art dealers I have spoken with in New York are absolutely convinced that the work of Gorky is haunted.

Nouritza Matossian[1] is the author of the book, *Black Angel: A Life of Arshile Gorky* (2001), and I first met her in February 2003 during a symposium at the Armenian embassy in London. She told me then that she was originally from Cyprus and had moved to England when she was 16. Later, on the aforementioned afternoon in March, I arrived to write down her life story and derive from what Geertz (1973) so poetically called the 'the webs of meaning': "… man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take cultures to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (Geertz 1973: 5). As a student, this quote had continually inspired me; it gave me a specific angle to view the dynamics of culture and cultural processes. Cultures weren't static, they were reproduced. They were webs that created meaning and during my interview with Nouritza, I had a better glimpse of these webs than I initially suspected.

> I did not really know who Gorky was. I mean, I had heard of him, and I had read something about his abstract art, but I had never seen any of his works. I thought he was a Russian artist who had taken refuge in the United States after World War I and the Bolshevist Revolution. He did not carry an Armenian surname.[2] Only much later I discovered that his real name was Vosdanig Manoug Adoian. I remember how I walked into Tate Gallery and how I was nailed to the ground when I saw *her* face on the wall. The painting was called *The Artist and his Mother* and I recognized it. There was something about those eyes. I don't remember exactly what, neither can I explain it, but they were so familiar to me that tears welled up. Looking back, I recognized something in all of his paintings – even the abstract ones. The Armenianness in his art was so obvious.[3]

[1] Nouritza is one of only two informants in my book who gave me permission to use their first and last name. All other names in my research are pseudonyms. When I asked Nouritza during our interview if she wanted to be assigned another name, she looked at me with a vague smile. "How many Armenians do you know who have written a biography on Arshile Gorky?" she slyly answered. "I can hardly stay anonymous, regardless how well intentioned your question is."

[2] Most Armenian surnames end with "-ian", which means "daughter/son of father" but also refers to a place of origin or the father's profession.

[3] The Armenianness in his art is however a point of discussion among art critics, art historians and biographers, like Auping (1995), Spender (2001) and more recently Herera (2003) who question the "Armenianness" in Arshile Gorky's paintings. His style is considered too "modern" and too "European" and too "American"-influenced to be

Nouritza's life story is a familiar one, as I heard the same from other female respondents of her generation. It is a story of resistance against tradition and of finding a balance between the Armenian culture and the culture of her Western host countries.

Nouritza was born in Cyprus on 24 April 1945—"a typical Armenian day," as she put it[4]—and lived in a district with Turkish and Armenian immigrants. "We kind of had to rely on each other. Our grandparents did not speak the Greek language and because of that we ended up in the same district as other immigrants. I now speak fluent English, Armenian, Greek and Turkish." The Armenian language and history

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interpreted as "Armenian." The argument is that he used various styles throughout his career; some of his paintings were abstract, others surreal and some cubist. As an anthropologist, I follow these discussions with great interest. First, it places "European" and "American" art outside an international and cultural continuum. Second, culture and "cultural influences" seem to be set in a fixed state. If we follow these discussions closely, European and American art seem to exist without influence from other schools or are only being influenced by Western schools. The term Western indicates an emphasis on the word "modern," thus implying that non-Western cultural expressions are traditional. (This is also shown in the European and American centrism in international analyses.) By approaching culture as something that is fixed, the fluidity of culture and how non-Western art (if one considers this dichotomy) can be incorporated in Western art is neglected. These analyses indirectly imply that the Armenian style, whatever this is, is static, unchangeable and can be recognized by specific criteria. This approach underestimates the fluidity of cultural influences and specific themes—like frescoes, landscapes, cultural experiences—that are depicted in an abstract form. There is a greater argument to make here as well. Denying Arshile Gorky's cultural heritage in his work is also denying the experiences that shaped him as an artist. As Balakian (1996) emphasises:

> Can one imagine writing about the poet and Holocaust survivor Paul Celan without noting that he survived the Nazi's extermination plan for the Jews? And that his parents were Holocaust victims? Would one write about Marc Chagall's early work without delving into the climate of Anti-Semitism in Russia during the first decades of the century? Or about Picasso's paintings of the '30's without a consideration of what the Spanish Civil War meant to him? It should be equally unthinkable to write about Gorky without articulating the context and facts of the Armenian Genocide? (…) In an era before the Holocaust gave rise to a global discourse about genocide, Gorky sought to express what had happened to him, his family and his people. (ibid.: 60, 61)

Neglecting this dimension of Gorky's work is therefore ignoring the historical and personal impact the Armenian genocide had on him. It is in a way extending the discourse of denial, even if unintended.

[4] On April 24 Armenians commemorate the genocide, since on that day in 1915 a large part of the Armenian elite was captured by the Ottoman rulers. This event is seen as the onset of the genocide.

were not taught in the English primary schools and Nouritza remembers how on Saturdays she had Armenian lessons with other children her age. "I think that is the first thing Armenian immigrants did; start an Armenian primary school. The Turks and Greeks did not go to school. The Armenians quickly realized that education was the single most important thing to get ahead in the English society."

Nouritza does not remember open hostility between Armenians and Turks. What she does remember is the close-knit subculture the Armenians developed within the district. "There were tunnels connecting Armenian households together and especially the women used the roofs to visit each other."

Nouritza's maternal grandmother had survived the genocide of 1915. "My father had come to Cyprus as a young boy in 1913. My grandmother ended up in Cyprus during the exodus in 1918." From an early age, she had heard the stories of the death marches and how her grandmother and her first daughter, Satarnik (Nouritza's aunt), made themselves as unattractive as possible. "They used ashes to rub their skins with, which made them look unnatural and ill." Satarnik did not survive the death marches and her grandmother's second daughter—Nouritza's mother—was named in honour of her deceased sister. "It was a way to commemorate the past—an homage to their firstborn."

Nouritza grew up in a subculture that was trapped in a constant sense of danger, partially due to the past and partially to the Armenians' minority status in the district. "It was a community that constant felt threatened. 'Don't carry any jewellery', my grandmother would say over and over again. 'Don't carry any jewellery, for they will cut off your fingers to get them.'" Or: "Never build a house when there is a Turk close, for you will irrevocably lose it".[5]

As a young teenager, who in a large part received her education at an English primary school and could identify with the English

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[5] In her research on the current Armenian community on Cyprus, Pattie (1997) points out that the same feeling of risk still exists in the Armenian-Cyprian communities: "The Armenians still in Cyprus watch and wait. They are not detached bystanders, for they have developed a strong sense of being Cypriot as well as Armenian, but they feel just as strongly their position as neither Turkish nor Greek. … They say, resignedly, that the real Armenian story is that of moving and rebuilding." (ibid.: 37—sic).

community more than her parents could, Nouritza experienced the Armenian subculture on Cyprus as claustrophobic and confining due to the community's reaction to the Armenians' perceived risk. "It was a very patriarchal community. The preservation of the Armenian identity was seen as a sacred goal. To marry a non-Armenian, an *odar*, was the equivalent of death. You were banished from the community."

At 16, Nouritza left for England, where she eventually married a German–American musician.

> I think I very deliberately did not choose an Armenian, although we did have an Armenian wedding. The irony, therefore, is that in England, more even than in Cyprus, I became aware of my Armenian cultural background. In Cyprus, you were part of a clearly defined community, whereas here [in England] you only sporadically would meet Armenians. You did not see each other that often. Only in England, I *really* became interested in Armenian history.

Nouritza's contact with Gorky's paintings therefore was more than an acquaintance between an art-lover and an artist. It was a meeting between a painter who deliberately changed his surname, and a young woman who was searching for the traces of her cultural heritage at that time in her life.

Now, years later, that same woman was sitting in a half-dark living room. "Take a look at this painting," she said, while she sat down next to me on the couch with an enormous book. It was a painting of a tall boy, who was standing next to his mother, his dark eyes staring at the spectator with a penetrating gaze. The woman looked fragile and pale in comparison to the boy. "Pay attention to the hands, they are drawn vague and volatile. The details are mostly in the face. As if Gorky forces you to look at the faces, as if he preferred you to ignore everything around it. Now look at this," and she grabbed another book from the small table in front of us and showed me a black and white picture of a mother and a son. The comparisons between the picture and the painting were sublime. Maybe the dress of the woman had changed of motive and colour, and Gorky had used his brown, blue and red pastel nuances to bring a warmth, but also a haunting atmosphere to the canvas that was missing from the black and white photograph. A single glance said it all—this was a self-portrait. The painter clearly tried to tell us something here that would gain meaning in the context of his entire oeuvre. Nouritza said, "It took him years to make this painting. There are a lot

of sketches found in which he drew the face of his mother from different angles. He eventually made two versions." The eyes of the mother were staring mysteriously at me. They were both sad and warm at the same time. "Typical Armenian eyes," Nouritza added, as if she had read my mind.

Even before I started my research, I would go out socially with a long-time Armenian friend. I remember in 2002, I went to a pizzeria and he introduced me to three other Armenians, which was a strange and surreal experience. Here was my friend whom I had known for years, but who I had never heard speak in a language I did not know. I was cordially received at the table, and I remember that our conversations quickly moved to politics, the Armenian genocide, Armenian art and "Armenianness,"[6] which as an anthropologist-to-be interested me immensely. I heard a story that night, which I would hear later during my research in several variations. It was a story about two Armenians who did not know each other by name or face, but who *recognized* each other as Armenians as soon as they passed each other on the street. "How can that be?" I asked at one point during the conversation. "The eyes," they answered. "It's the look in their eyes. You recognize it immediately."

Now, a pair of those eyes was staring back at me from a book. "What other paintings did he [Gorky] make?" I asked Nouritza. She at once showed me a couple of photographs. These were pictures of busy and abstract paintings, full of ink stains—or so they seemed to be to my untrained eyes—that poured into each other, collided, and cut across the canvas with lines and curves. *Agony, Diary of a Seducer* and *They Will Take My Island* were titles that caught my gaze. They lacked the warmth and softness of the first painting of a mother and a son. "Do you see it?" she asked, simultaneously leafing through the book and looking at me. "Do you see the difference? Between this painting (*The Artist and His Mother*) and the paintings that followed?" I nodded. The first one was a portrait and harmonious, the others were fragmented and abstract. "This one was inspired by a picture, a memory *before* the genocide. The other, darker works came in the time *after*…"

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[6]I have spoken with a variety of Armenians in several settings before, during and after my research, but I am still surprised at how these subjects continuously blend together.

1.1   ARSHILE GORSKY

According to Turner (1988), cultural performances, such as art, movies, music and theatre, are windows in which societies portray themselves, windows from which we can derive meanings about life and the tangible world around us and how it is construed: "Cultural performances [are] a … drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting 'designs of living'" (ibid.: 24). Still, this is only one part of the whole story. Art not only gives meaning, but is part of a larger entity, as Gorky himself stresses: "I don't think there is any absolutely original art in the purest sense of that term. Everyone derives from accumulated experiences of his own culture and from what he himself has observed. Art is a most personal, poetic vision or interpretation conditioned by environment" (Mooradian 1978: 284).[7] If art is a reflection, then how was I to interpret those disparate paintings? What were they telling me about Arshile Gorky, and by extension, about "Armenianness"?

   Arshile Gorky was born 15 April 1902 in the village Khorkom, south of Lake Van in Turkey. He was the son of a relatively prosperous farming family, which possessed 300 sheep, 20 goats and 2 horses (Matossian 2001: 10). During his entire life, Gorky would romanticize his youth in Khorkom, a youth he would later commit to canvas in several paintings between 1936 and 1944. The paintings *Image in Xhorkom* (deliberately misspelled to hide his background for art historians), *Plow and the Song*, *How My Mother's Apron Unfolds in My Life*, *Water of Flowery Mill* and *The Liver is the Cock's Comb* all depict his youth and homesickness for his motherland. In 1945, he told his friend Breton about the extent to which his past and his memories came together in his paintings.

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[7]There is a current debate between art historians about how many of these quotes are actually from Arshile Gorky. It is suspected that the letters in Karlen Mooradian's (Arshile Gorky's cousin) biography of Gorky were invented by the author. This would most likely have been politically motivated. Matossian (2001: xiii, xiv), the only person other than Mooradian who had access to the letters Gorky wrote to his sister, defends this theory. I have stayed away from this debate as the authenticity of the letters has never been proven. I defend my position from an anthropological point of view by stating that even if these remarks were not made by Gorky, they would have been made by his cousin. Either way, these comments reflect how the author (Gorky or Mooradian) thought about his Armenian identity and heritage.

> I tell stories to myself, often, while I paint, often nothing to do with the painting. Have you ever listened to a child telling that this is a house and this is a man and this is the cow in the sunlight… while his crayon wanders in apparently meaningless scrawl all over the paper? My stories are often from my childhood. My mother told me many stories while I pressed my face in her long apron with my eyes closed. She had a long white apron like the one in her portrait and another embroidered one. Her stories and the embroidery on her apron got confused in my mind with my eyes closed. All my life, her stories and her embroidery keep unravelling pictures in my memory as if I sit before a blank white canvas. (ibid.: 377)

Gorky's mother played a very important role in his life. After his father left for the United States in 1908, she was the only person aside from his sister whom he trusted and depended on. His mother symbolized his youth and innocence and the years before the genocide.

In November 1910, Gorky's family moved to Aikesdan on the outskirts of Van. It was here, in 1912, that the photograph that became the blueprint for his two paintings *The Artist and His Mother* was taken. In letters to his sister, Gorky would often refer to this time in Aikesdan, mentioning the beauty of the landscape, the mountains, the crops, the flowers, which stayed with him and as he noted, became a part of his paintings and psyche.

> I communicate my innermost perceptions through art, my worldview. In trying to probe beyond the ordinary and the known, I create an interior infinity. Liver. Bones. Living rocks and living plants and animals. Living dreams…these debts I owe to our Armenian art. Its multiforms, its many opposites. The invention of our folk imagination. These I attempt to evoke directly, that is the folklore and physical beauty of our homeland, in my works. (Mooradian 1978: 275, 276)

On 28 June 1914, Franz Ferdinand was killed in Sarajevo. In the months that followed, World War I broke out due to mutual treaties between France, Russia and Great Britain on one side and Germany and Austria-Hungary on the other. On 2 August 1914, the Ottoman Empire signed a treaty with Germany to ensure protection against Russia, and on 29 October, Turkish troops attacked the Russian harbours of Odessa, Sebastopol, Novorossisk and Feodosija (Keegan 2001: 241). Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire three days later, and in December 1914, Turkish troops invaded Russia through the Caucasian border.

For Gorky, these developments took place at a distance. Like others in Van, he heard the rumours of the defeat of the Turkish troops, the Russians' advance, and the massacres that Turkish and Kurdish soldiers had committed in several Armenian villages. Armenian leaders in Van decided to put up defence lines and dig trenches around the city to protect themselves from possible bandits and Turkish troops. Gorky's sister Vartoosh recalled years later how she prayed with her family every night. "In Aykesdan we prayed before going to sleep…. We only prayed that God give peace, that war shouldn't happen, and God guard our lives. Mummy said this aloud and we made the cross and knelt" (Matossian 2001: 61, 62). On Monday 6 April, the city of Van was besieged by Turkish and Kurdish troops under the leadership of Jevdet Bey (the governor of the province). The bombardments immediately set the suburb of Aikesdan on fire.[8]

The defence of Van—one of the few cities where Armenians successfully resisted the Turkish troops—has attained an almost mythical status amongst Armenians. The Armenian defence lines held using only 300 rifles and 1000 pistols, and on 16 May, the Turkish platoons retreated when the Russian troops arrived (Matossian 2001: 65). Gorky, who was a messenger boy during the defence, never forgot the bloodbath the Turkish troops left in the area. Fifty-five thousand Armenians were found killed in a field nearby. Entire villages and churches were burned to the ground and in the village of Akantz, the entire male population (2500 men) was murdered in one afternoon, before the eyes of everybody in the village (ibid.: 71). Many years later, in 1947, Gorky would try to commit those images of pillars of corpses to canvas in his painting *Summation*. This was an extraordinary act, since he rarely spoke about the horrors of his youth. Gorky only mentioned his memories of these massacres in a single letter to his sister.

> I believe I have experienced more than my fellow artists. This does not automatically enable me to know more. But it does enable me to respond necessarily to more experiences than they have had the ability to observe directly. As Armenians of Van…you know well how we were forced to experience with greater intensity and in a shorter time what others can only read about while sitting in comfort. We lived and experienced it. The bloodshed

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[8] In the novel *Aykesdane Ayrevoum E*, by Kourken Mahari describes these events. The title is freely translated in "Aikesdan is on fire".

of our people at the hands of the Turks, the massacres and genocide.[9] Our death March, our relatives and dearest friends dying in battle before our eyes. The loss of our homes, the destruction of our country by the Turks, Mother's starvation in my arms. Vartoosh dear, how my heart now sinks in even discussing it. (Mooradian 1978: 266, 267)

Meanwhile, the "Great Armenian Catastrophe" (as it was called before the Second World War)[10] became more widespread and organised in the early months of 1915. Local governments were secretly assigned to annex Armenian property, round up Armenian leaders and prepare the Armenian population for large-scale deportations (Matossian 2001: 64; Chaliand and Ternon 1983: 36). On 24 April 1915, new orders and regulations were concretely manifested when 650 prominent Armenians (doctors, writers, academics, poets, composers, politicians, and lawyers) were rounded up. Some were tortured and executed and others deported by train to the Syrian desert. In one firm sweep, the Armenian community embedded in the Ottoman *millet* system was adrift.

On 15 June, the Russian offensive began to collapse and the Russian soldiers were forced to retreat. Two hundred thousand Armenian refugees travelled away from their homeland with the Russians. Gorky's mother decided to flee to Erevan (now Yerevan), and her daughter Vartoosh remembered this journey vividly:

Walking night and day for eight days, our shoes were all gone. We clambered over hills and fields. We slept at night a little bit but we had to wake very early to set off because the people who left after us were all killed on the field of Bergri. The Turks attacked and killed them, almost 40 or

[9]The word "genocide" is peculiar in this letter and strengthens the argument that the letters were fabricated. The word, even though first used in his book "*Axis Rule of Occupied Europe*" by Lemkin in 1944 and later in 1945 and 1946, in his publications, the word was not officially coined until 1948 during the Geneva Conventions. That this word is used in a letter of 1947 either implies that Gorky was aware of the word or that the letters are indeed fabricated. Before the word "genocide," the Armenian massacres were known as the Armenian Catastrophe. The truth is, we do not know. I leave it here because it conceptualizes Gorky's past, either through Mooradian or Gorky himself. It could be a shifting of the words that Mooradian made on purpose to emphasize what happened to the Armenians. See also footnote seven.

[10]The word "genocide" is derived from the Greek word "genos"—which means race/clan—and the Latin word "cide," which is derived from the action "to kill" (Hinton 2002: 3).

50,000 were killed there. Some went down to Persia, but we took the route to Erevan. (Matossian 2001: 80)

In August, Gorky's family, the Adoians, arrived in Erevan. The city was flooded with refugees who were famished and in search of food and water. The American doctor, Ussher, who was working for the Red Cross and had fled with the Armenians, would later record a vivid description of this desperate situation in his memoirs.

We reached Igdir, Monday, August 10. During that week more than two hundred and seventy thousand refugees poured over the border into the Caucasus…the Erevan plain filled with a shifting multitude overflowing the horizon, wandering aimlessly hither and thither; strangers in a strange land, footsore, weary, starving, walking like lost and hungry children. (Ussher 1917: 314)

In Erevan, Gorky quickly found a job in a carpet shop with the help of family members who lived there, and in the years 1916 and 1917, the family tried to build their lives again, as did thousands of other refugees. On 28 May 1917, Russia and the Ottoman Empire signed a treaty and in the fall of 1918, the Turkish government set up blockades to prevent goods and products from reaching the New Armenian Republic. In the winter that followed, 200,000 Armenians died—1/5th of the Armenian population (ibid.: 97). Gorky's mother was among them. She died of starvation on 19 March 1919, in the company of her son and daughter. In an interview, years later, Vartoosh gave a detailed account of her mother's death.

She was debilitated, her stomach was swollen and her long fingers had become spindly. Her eyes were sunken and cavernous, she had sores in her mouth and her lips were coated and furry. She was dictating a letter to her husband…. 'Write that I can never leave Armenia. That I will never come to America. They've abandoned us completely.' Then suddenly we saw that mother had died. (Matossian 2001: 98)

In 1920, Gorky and his sister travelled to the United States, where Arshile would begin to focus on his art. In 1922, two paintings appeared in an exposition, signed by an unknown "Ardie Gunn" and "Ardie Colt" (ibid.: 125), and in 1923, a certain "Arshile Gorky" registered at the Boston University of Fine Art and Design. It is unclear

why Gorky decided to change his name at this time. Some critics and art historians argue that he did so for pragmatic reasons. Other biographers argue that his name change had a symbolic meaning. However, it is important to place his metamorphosis in the context of the 1920s. In that period, Armenians were known as "starving Armenians" and carried the stigma of being "needy" due to several public charity events in the 1920s. Arshile fought against this image and deliberately chose a Russian surname, since in the eyes of most Americans, Russia had an air of mysticism, courtesy and purity (ibid.: 131) and did not have the same connotation as Armenian names. Since Arshile had lived in Russian Armenia for several years and spoke the language, a Russian identity was one he could easily assume. He had, after all, become politically aware in Russia where he changed from a boy fleeing the war into a mature young man who took responsibility for his sister.

The Russian poet Maxim Gorky was an important factor in Gorky's conscious awakening. Maxim, a hero for many Armenians, was a celebrated writer who had translated Armenian poets into Russian and gained political attention in 1916 by condemning the massacres of poets in Turkey (Matossian 2001: 91). The name "Gorky" was therefore a perfect pseudonym for Arshile; it was a Russian name, but referred indirectly to his Armenian roots and the genocide.[11]

There is, however, another interpretation for the name change. Matossian reminds us that in ancient times, in traditional Armenian churches, priests sometimes distanced themselves from their family surnames and simultaneously adopted spiritual names. This change symbolised a breach with the past and the start of a new Christian identity (ibid.: 91). One could interpret Arshile Gorky's name change in the same way, and consider it an indication of a lost past, a breach with the "before" and the starting point of a "new" identity that would never be the same after the events he had experienced.

In the 1930s, Gorky worked as a teacher at the *Grand Central School of Art* in New York and slowly created a name for himself in the art circuit. Gorky's career from this time was uneven with several high points, and particularly during and after the Depression, deep hardships and poverty. From 1940, he painted his most famous paintings, which were

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[11] The name Maxim Gorky was in itself a pseudonym. Gorky means "bitter." Arshile is Russian for Achilles. The name translated therefore means Achilles the Bitter (Balakian 1996: 63).

admired for their expressive character and for the way he mixed abstract and surrealist influences in his compositions. Still, he could not let go of his past since it often came back in his sketches and paintings.

"Arshile Gorky," as Matossian would tell me decades later in a dusky living room, "was a man with a photographic memory. He could remember drawings and paintings within the finest detail and I am of the opinion that he subconsciously incorporated the Armenian art he had seen in his youth in his paintings. Take a look at these frescos," she said, while she reached for another book of photographs and put it on her lap. "The static faces and oval eyes come back in his portraits. Or these *Khachkars*[12] which are clearly incorporated in his abstract sketches. Retrospectively I think that I recognized these Armenian references in his art. That is why when I saw his paintings for the first time, I had such an emotional reaction … The Armenian art is so strong and so subtle. It absorbs you."

In the years between 1926 and 1944 Gorky obsessively worked on two pieces that would make him famous, *The Artist and His Mother*, based on the same photograph, but distinct in colours and background.[13] The first painting, painted between 1926–1936, has warm pastel colours, while the second painting, painted between 1929–1942, is more expressive. Both paintings are now generally regarded as his masterpieces and differ significantly from his other paintings. They are portraits, neither surreal nor abstract, and contrary to his other pieces, each has a smooth surface without the thick daubs of paint that are characteristic of most of Gorky's work.[14] The painter Schary explains how time consuming this painting must have been:

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[12] Khachkars are Armenian stone crosses (sometimes also carved out of wood) and I was told by several artists that these are specifically Armenian. The cross is the symbol of Christ. The interwoven flower on top of it symbolizes eternity. The lines on the sides of the stone are interwoven and have neither beginning nor end; they represent the connection between humans and God. As another informant told me, the bow around the cross symbolizes God's reciprocity. It represents the relationship of the earth with God and God with the earth. The stone cross shows this entire cycle.

[13] The first painting of this set can be found in the Whitney Museum of Art in New York, and the second painting in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. In the first painting, the prominent colors are yellow and blue and the face of the mother is livelier. In the second painting, the color red is more prominent and the mother's face seems like a death mask. I will come back to this in later chapters.

[14] During this period, Gorky made two other portraits: *Self Portrait* (ca. 1937) and *Portrait of Master Bill* (ca. 1937).

> This picture took a hell of a long time. He'd let it dry good and hard. Then he'd take it into the bathroom and he'd scrape the paint down with a razor over the surface, very carefully until it got as smooth as if it were painted on ivory. You look at the picture and you won't be able to tell how he did it because there are no brushstrokes. Then he'd go back and paint it again, all very fine and done with very soft camel-haired brushes. He scraped it and he scraped it and he scraped it. Then he'd hold it over the bath-tub and wipe off with a damp rag all the excess dust and paint he'd scraped off. That's how he got this wonderful surface. It's the only painting he ever did that way. (Matossian 2001: 216, 217)

According to Matossian, the first painting of the set resembles the Armenian frescos in the Church of the Holy Cross in Aghtamar in composition and colours, which Gorky studied during this period. The faces are brought back to simple geometrical patterns. The eyes are oval and dark (ibid.: 215), and the emphasis is on the faces. We also see the symbolism of life and death, especially in the second version where the son is colourful and vivid, and the mother is grey and deadly. Her eyes stare accusingly from the canvas.

The paintings are more than a mere reproduction of a photograph. They are memories, a story told in colours. The painting is a monument to a mother who died because during the aftermath of the genocide and was buried in a mass grave. Decades later, his sister still recalled the moment that Gorky showed her one of the paintings for the first time. He brought her into his studio and said: "'Vartoosh dear, here is mother. I am going to leave you alone with her' .... Oh, I was so shocked! Mother was alive in the room with me. I told her everything and I wept and wept" (ibid.: 218).

In the years between 1946 and 1948 Gorky suffered a series of setbacks. In 1946, he fell ill and had to undergo a bowel operation. In 1947 and 1948, he was regularly depressed and his marriage to his second wife, Agnes Magruder, started to disintegrate. On 21 July 1948, Arshile Gorky wrote the words "Goodbye my loveds[15]" on a wall with white chalk, and committed suicide. He was 46 years old.

"He hanged himself," Nouritza said, while she closed the book and turned on a lamp. "I could never get rid of the thought that he

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[15]This is a literal translation of the Armenian words "*Eem seereliners*" (Matossian 2001: 475).

killed himself in the same way other artists were murdered in the old Ottoman Empire.[16] To understand Arshile Gorky is to understand Armenia. He touches the core of our 'being'–our essence. He represents our identity." I had heard this statement from another informant, whom I refer to as Misha, further on in this book, and with whom I had had numerous conversations about Armenian art. "The story of Gorky makes me weep," Misha once told me. "When I saw the paintings, tears were streaming down my face." I never really paid attention to these comments at the time, but after my conversation with Nouritza, I suddenly saw Misha's comments in a new light. If performances are "reflections" of communities and cultures, as Turner (1988) emphasizes, what could the life story of Gorky—and the value it holds for Armenians—tell us about Armenian culture and identity *now*? What symbolism was hidden behind these stories and paintings?

I stood up, overwhelmed by the flood of information I had received, and shook Nouritza's hand. Outside it had already grown dark. For the first time, I realised how everything in a culture is connected and how subtle the webs of meanings are interwoven with each other (using Geertz's terminology [1973]). The story of Gorky, as Nouritza had related to me that afternoon (and as I would later read in her biography), is a tale about the Armenian identity. It is filled with cultural constructions and concepts. It is an imagined landscape of how the Armenian experience is supposed to be. I suddenly realised, while I moved towards the door and thanked Nouritza again for the interview, that my research question had to be adjusted straight away. My original question was too naive and one dimensional, almost too static. My original view lacked the dynamic and interwoven nature of the Armenian experience. My original question—*how does the Armenian genocide influence the contemporary Armenian cultural experience?*—was too direct and too simplistic. It did not encompass the themes of identity, national feelings and ideas of "self". How did a population manage to overcome something as drastic and evasive as genocide? How does a community survive such a blow?

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[16] This is an issue Nouritza also brings up in her book. There she writes: "I recalled photographs of Armenians hanging from gallows in public squares with idle Turkish soldiers leaning on their rifles. Had Gorky punished himself for a dreadful crime?" (Matossian 2001: xii).

When I rode back home in the subway, I asked myself the questions that, in all honesty, I should have asked myself at the start of my field-work. What is Armenianness? How do Armenians view their world? And what was, judging by the emotional reaction of my informants, the all-encompassing meaning of Gorky's paintings of a mother and her son?

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Destruction of an Identity

The Remembrance of a Genocide

We are an old people, Tony. The first Christians. We are the oldest people on earth and great injustice has been done to us. To understand us, you also have to understand our past…
Informant Arpine (United Kingdom), 31 March 2003[1]
Of all the nations of the world no history has been so blameless as the history of the Armenian people…
William Ewart Gladstone, 24 September 1896[2]

The research questions I stated, and which I revised after meeting with Nouritza Matossian, are as follows: What impact does the genocide of 1915–1918 have on the cultural experience of Armenians living in the Netherlands? How do they construct their past and how does the past influence their ethnic identity and day-to-day lives?

To sketch the background of the research question, it is necessary that I look at the context in which these questions were posed. Although the Armenian genocide is not the only tragedy that has befallen the Armenians throughout the centuries, the genocide has had an entirely different impact than earlier persecutions. I will argue

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[1] Arpine and the names that follow are pseudonyms, as is customary in anthropology. This to guarantee the privacy and anonymity of my informants.

[2] William Ewart Gladstone was an English politician, who in 1896 gave a passionate speech about the Armenian massacres in the Ottoman Empire.

that the goal of this genocide was distinct. Second, the construction of the Armenian past in the Netherlands is by no means self-evident. The Dutch government had not officially recognized the Armenian genocide before 2004, which is when most of my fieldwork took place. Yet the Dutch government still speaks of "the events during the First World War" and avoids, if it can, the word "genocide" in its dealings with the Turkish government. The Dutch government's refusal to officially recognize the genocide influenced the opinions of my respondents in the field. Therefore, it is important to consider the political context of this research, the denial politics of Turkey and the significance of remembrance in the Dutch-Armenian diasporic community. Here again is a story within a story. This is a story of the Armenian people, the mountain Ararat and how a gruesome and violent event is neglected in current international politics.

2.1   The Armenian People

Since Armenians put great value on their vast history and past, it is important to provide a broad outline of the historical path of the Armenian people. Arpine, an informant in the United Kingdom, explained to me that the Armenians are the "oldest nation" in the world. They are the first Christian nation (even though this is debated by scholars) and a nation that had specific characteristics, mainly a common language and religion. Even though these aspects shaped the Armenian "identity," I argue that ethnic and national identities are relatively "modern" identities. Although it would take more historic exploration, I strongly believe that the primary identity indicators for Armenians in ancient times were kinship, property, to some extent language and trade. Later, and on a more abstract level, religion bound the Armenian community together. It was not until the nineteenth century and the rise of nation states and nation state building that national and ethnic identities gained importance. This is an important nuance because often people who look at history through national or ethnic glasses can twist and change history to such an extent that it explains their *current* situation. Or as Sémelin (2007) warns us:

> In history there is nothing more dangerous than interpreting events in the light of the aftermath. Every historian risks being ensnared by the temptation to pre-determine the logic of a historical event because of being himself in the comfortable position of knowing the outcome. (ibid.: 62)

In this light, I first lay out Armenian history and emphasize that Armenian history is a history of occupation and repression with relatively short moments of independence. I also show that because of this specific history, kinship and trade became extremely important; it was one of the few ways for Armenians to stay independent while living in occupied empires. But there is another important emphasis here to which I return implicitly and explicitly in later chapters. Even though the genocide of 1915–1917 was unprecedented in scale and had a different intent than previous mass killing and pogroms, for many Armenians the genocide of 1915–1917 is only one dark chapter among many dark chapters, and one that influences their identity and how they perceive their past.

Historically, since the fifth century BC, the region known as Armenia was a territory stretching from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea, to the highlands of Anatolia and Persia, and all the way to the northern border of contemporary Syria and the Euphrates. This area has had a violent history, mainly caused by its economic importance. Armenia was a crossroad between East and West, where many trade routes—linking Jerusalem, the Mongolian Empire, the German Empire and in later periods the Frankish Empire—came together (Demirdjian 1989: 3). The Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Seljuks, Mongolians, Persians and later Ottomans and Russians all fought for this territory. Armenia, and certain parts of Armenia, have been annexed by other countries and empires throughout the centuries, and thus the borders have been difficult to identify, since they have changed time and time again.

The name Armenians is first found in Persian writings in approximately 521 BC, when King Darius I Hystaspes from Iran described three battles with a people—"Armenioi" (his word)—who successfully opposed the royal armies (Lang 1981: 41). In later periods, Hecataeus and Herodotos also referred to "Armenians" as a separate group. The Armenians call themselves *Hay* and their territory *Hayastan* ("historical Armenia"), referring to their ancestors, the people of Hayasa, who fought against the Second Hettitian Empire from 2000 BC until 1500 BC (Demirdjian 1988: 2). This "ethnic" group came into being as a mixture of Hurrian, Urartian and Indo-European speaking people who developed their own language while living in the area surrounding the Ararat mountain (Redgate 1998: 13).

However, for contemporary Armenians their origin goes back even further. According to legends and myths, after the destruction of the Tower of Babel, the Armenian forefather, Haïk (the son of Thorgom

and the grandson of Gomer, who was the grandson of Noah), fled the tyranny of the Babylonian king and settled in a valley near Mt. Ararat (Mouradian 1996: 14). This myth connects Armenians directly to Noah and indirectly to the Ark, which after the Flood, was stranded on the mountain (a mountain called *Masis* by the Armenians). This legend is retold in Armenian communities today, for reasons I explain later.

The political entity of Armenia first came into being in 612 BC, when the Urartian Empire collapsed and the Armenian Kingdom was declared independent under King Yerwant (also known as Orontos). This kingdom, however, did not exist long, as it was attacked by the Achaemenidean Kingdom of Persia. In 331 BC, large parts of the territory were captured by Alexander the Great. After Alexander died, his Macedonian Empire was divided by his two commanders-in-chief. Ptolemy founded a Greek empire in Egypt, while Seleucus expanded his empire so even larger parts of Armenia fell under his influence (Sipaan 1993: 28, 29). Between 189–160 BC, a war broke out between the Romans and the Seleucians, during which two independent Armenian states were shaped in the confusion that followed: one called Great-Armenia and one in Sophen, which was called Little Armenia (ibid.: 30). King Ardaxes I unified Great and Little Armenia by making several truces with the Romans. The Kingdom flourished due to the internal weaknesses of the mighty neighbouring states (Persia and the Roman Empire) and expanded both politically and economically.

In 314 AD, under Tiridades III, Christianity was introduced as a state religion. In 387 AD, after a bloody war, Armenia was divided between the Persian and the Roman empires (ibid.: 32). With this division, Armenia lost its relative independence and political unity, and in 428 AD the Armenian monarchy collapsed (Redgate 1998: 6). However, despite the conquests, a certain feeling of unity and cohesion amongst the Armenian people was sustained. This cohesion can partly be contributed to the unifying factor of the Armenian Orthodox Church, but also to the Armenian alphabet designed by the monk M. Masjdots in 406 AD (Demidrjian 1988: 2).

When historic Armenia came under the governance of the Seljkus, many Armenians fled to Cilicia, where in 1080 AD an independent Republic was declared (Demirdjian 1989: 2). This is also considered the *first* Armenian Republic. In 1198, both the Byzantines and the Seljuks recognized the Republic as an independent state (Sipaan 1993: 36). Cilicia was invaded in 1375 AD and in the fifteenth century it came under Ottoman rule

(Redgate 1998: 6; Demirdjian 1989: 4). Since there were no longer any Armenian political institutions, the Armenian Orthodox Church became the representative of Armenian communities divided over several empires. A significant number of Armenians lived in the Ottoman Empire, and others in Persia. This was a division that led to two distinct dialects still in use today—Western and Eastern Armenian (Herzig 1996: 248, 249).

When we look at history of the Armenian people from a bird's-eye view, it is a history of bloodshed and a stateless population. Multiple rulers over the centuries governed the various Armenian tribes that resided between the borders of several kingdoms and empires. The primary Armenian identity was based on kinship relationships, the local region and the economic networks that came into existence through a conglomerate of trading routes. Secondary identity indicators, especially at a later date, were religion and the Armenian language. An Armenian national or ethnic identity as we know it today was not in existence in the first centuries after Christ. After 314 AD, when Christianity became a state religion, a religious dimension appeared in the Armenian identity, but it is important not to overestimate its influence since religion was often a tool for economic needs. Trading networks and kinship were the most important components of the primary Armenian identity.

This is not to say that the Armenians did not form a distinct and separate identifiable group. They had their own language, religion and customs.[3] Due to their economic interests, Armenians easily adjusted to the dominant culture both in the Ottoman Empire and the Persian Empire, and managed to claim their own status. An Armenian national identity only developed over the course of the nineteenth century (due to the democratic and nationalistic movements in Europe) and even then, only in the higher classes of the Armenian community. The ordinary Armenian farmer or merchant living in the Ottoman Empire was hardly politically aware when World War I broke out or when the genocidal process started in 1915.

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[3] It is important that this should not be overestimated. Language was closely connected to the Church. Outside the Church people spoke distinct dialects. It was only in the nineteenth century, due to the rise of secularization, that the linguistic monopoly of the church was broken. Since that time there has been a distinction between *Ashkharhaparr* (Armenian spoken language) and *Krapar* (classic Armenian), which was mainly used in the Church and for education (Demirdjian 1989: 13).

Since World War I, there have been two officially independent Armenian Republics. In 1918, due to the weakening of Russia and the Ottoman Empire, a second Armenian Republic was created and annexed by the Soviet Union in the winter of 1920 (Suny 1983: 29). In 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the final and third Armenian Republic was founded, which remains today.

Therefore, the Armenian past is a past of war. The people have been continuously scattered and suppressed as superpowers and various empires have seized their historic territory. However, there is a difference between those wars and the systematic massacre of the Armenians in 1915. The wars were motivated by political and economic means and interests. The genocide was aimed at the total annihilation of the Armenian people, a destruction that Turkey continues to deny to this very day.

2.2   THE DENIAL OF A HISTORY

In the book *Wages of Guilt*, Buruma (1994) describes a Germany in which notions of guilt about World War II form the basis of a new German identity. The collective feeling of guilt forms a fictitious division between the present and the past; it reminds Germans about the atrocities they committed as a people and the barbaric character (from the native point of view) that is the deeply rooted in their German identity. These feelings of guilt are more than a break with the past, they are also a warning for the future, as Buruma shows when he paraphrases the fears of the West German writer Grass about unification with the GDR: "Auschwitz … should have made any type of unification impossible. A united Germany is a threat to itself and the world" (Buruma 1994: 17).

A similar process was discovered by Thomas (2002) when she observed a Japanese photographic exhibition about the 1940s in the Museum of Art in Yokohama. Displaying selected photographs in a specific order, she was able to present a new meaning to the past. Depictions of traditional Japanese women alternated with pictures in which Westerners were practicing violence against other Westerners (Thomas 2002: 242). The narrative of the exhibition was not the story of Japan in opposition to the West, but of how the Japanese had suffered equally with other nations in the 1940s and had committed similar

atrocities (ibid.: 243).[4] A feeling of shame—not guilt—, in particular a feeling of shame for all humanity, had an important role in this exhibition. Here, again, one can speak of a fictitious division between the present and the past. The modern Japanese and the modern Westerner were confronted with what humans were capable of in dire circumstances. The Japanese were not placed above humanity, rather they were a part of it. Shame was the binding factor.

Turkey, contrary to Germany and Japan, never officially acknowledged the atrocities it committed during the First World War. Although there have been military tribunals and some leaders of the genocide were convicted at a later date,[5] the tribunals were abolished and a strong policy of denial was implemented when Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) came to power in 1922–1923. This occurred despite the fact that in 1919, Ataturk made the following confession: "Our countrymen have committed terrible crimes. They organized deportations and massacres, burned babies alive and brought Armenians in unbearable situations that no people in the entire history of man has ever known."[6]

The background of this policy of denial has to be sought, according to De Man (1970), in the process of nation-forming and the urge for modernity. By "forgetting" and "denying" parts of the collective history, the present becomes the starting point for the future (De Man 1970: 388). The past is being placed, as it were, in differential time. It is separated and far away from the contemporary now and the collective we. The official reading of Turkey is that although skirmishes between Ottoman and Armenian troops occurred, the incidents cannot be interpreted as an

[4] It is important to note that Japan, contrary to Germany, has undergone one of the largest actions of retaliation then any modern nation had to endure. It would be interesting to conduct further research into the influence of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the collective history and identity of the Japanese people and on how in their emic points of view on their role in World War II is being approached and interpreted.

[5] On 5 July 1919, out of 130 suspects, the leaders of the *Ittihad* regime—Talât, Enver and Dr. Nazim—were sentenced to death. Other members of the party received a sentence of 15 years of imprisonment with heavy labor (Dadrian 1997: 331). Many of them managed to avoid their sentences by fleeing abroad, and on 13 January 1921 the military tribunals were abolished (ibid.: 333). See also Zwaan (2001: 427) and Melson (1992: 148–152).

[6] From the Dutch newspaper *Trouw*, 26 April 2001. Opinion piece: "*Ephimenco*".

organized persecution. The Armenians were "victims" of a brutal war, not of a targeted campaign, and the Ottomans not the Turks were responsible for the possible massacres. According to the Turkish interpretation of the events, the death toll was therefore considerably lower.[7] In some cases, the events and the death tolls were even reversed, meaning that it was not Armenians who were killed, but rather Turkish citizens. An example of this is a museum in Erzurum that currently displays skeletons of Turkish victims who were found in mass graves and murdered by the "rebellious Armenians,"[8] whereas photographs and evidence of the Armenian victims are totally absent in the museum.[9]

In his research on the building and rebuilding of the present-day Turkish State, Üngör (2008 and 2010) implies and may give another reason why the Turkish government still denies its genocidal past. From Üngör's point of view, the Armenian genocide was part of a larger campaign of social engineering in Eastern Anatolia (ibid.: 16). Even though this campaign was the most violent from 1914–1918, when not only Armenians were killed and deported but also Greeks, Syriacs and Kurds (ibid.: 18), the social engineering didn't stop in 1923 when Atatürk came to power, but continued (in aggressive but new ways) until at least 1950. From this analysis, Turkey does not recognize its genocidal past for it is embedded in the history of the New Turkish Republic. Recognizing the Armenian genocide is also recognizing and confronting the atrocities and outwashes of the social engineering campaigns on which the modern Turkish nation is built. The denial is not only used to create what De Man (1970) considers a fictitious "starting point," but also as a way of avoiding the whole scale of social engineering and ethnic cleansing in Eastern Anatolia, from which the "Kurdish question" still remains.

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[7] There are various estimates of the death toll. Lewis (1961) states that 1.5 million Armenians were killed. The Turkish historian Professor Yusuf Halacogly estimates the number of deaths at 56,610 (See an interview with him in the article "*Armeens-Turkse dialoog weer doodverklaard*" [Armenian-Turkish dialogue declared dead] in the Dutch newspaper: *De Volkskrant*, 1 February 2002.) An estimate between 800,000 and 1.5 million is, according to some scientists, the most plausible (Zwaan 2001: 426, 427).

[8] This is what Zwaan (2001) calls "the reversal of truth", in which the perpetrators are declared victims and the victims, perpetrators (ibid.: 428).

[9] In the Armenian community in London circulates an illegal videotape with the title "A Journey Through Western Armenia." In this documentary, a Scottish camera man secretly goes into the museum and films the skeletons that are on display under the sign "genocide". Most of the skeletons are probably Armenian.

Denial of the Armenian genocide continues to this day on an international level. In 1999, when the Congress of the United States wanted to pass a resolution on the Armenian Genocide, the US government received a letter from the Turkish embassy with the announcement that "such an undesirable development would inevitably have consequences on Turkish-American relations" (Dadrian 1999: 59). When in 2002, a Swedish institute published a leaflet on the Armenian genocide, the Swedish ambassador was summoned to the ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara and here too was told that the Turks would immediately consider sanctions.[10]

Because the West has interests in both Turkey and the Middle East, Turkey's demands are being negotiated and met, even in the United States. Resolutions are delayed and possible propositions for recognition are under the banner of further investigation being pushed to the background of the political landscape. Until 2003, only five countries in Europe independently and officially recognized the genocide: Sweden, France, Greece, Italy, and Switzerland. For other supranational organizations and institutions, the decision process about possible recognition of the genocide is incredibly slow. It is only since 1987 that the European Parliament[11] has taken the official line that massacres occurred in the Ottoman Empire. It was not until August 1985—although Lemkin has argued for recognition of the Armenian genocide since the 1950s[12]— that a "Sub-commission of Human Rights" of the United Nations

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[10]See the Dutch newspaper article "*Armeense genocide leidt tot ruzie tussen Turkije en Zweden*" [Armenian genocide leads to arguments between Turkey and Sweden] in the Dutch newspaper: *NRC Handelsblad*, 7 February 2002. For more information, I refer to the following articles "*Turkije en VS botsen over Armenië*", [Turkey and US collide over Armenia] in *NRC Handelsblad*, 23 September 2002, "*Holocaust in Armenië*" [Holocaust in Armenia] in *De Volkskrant*, 4 November 2000, "*Paus zoekt hereniging in Armenië*" [The Pope seeks unification in Armenia] in *Trouw*, 26 September 2001. I also refer to the book "*The Key Elements in the Turkish Denial of the Armenian Genocide: A Case Study of Distortion and Falsification*", Dadrian (1999).

[11]This can be found in resolution A2-33/87, accepted on 18 June 1987. See also: http://www.armenian-genocide.org/index.htm.

[12]As presented in the introduction, Lemkin is the legal scholar who coined the term "genocide". In an unpublished autobiography, he wrote: "In Turkey, more than 1.2 million Armenians were put to death (…) all the Turkish criminals were released. I was shocked. A nation was killed and the guilty persons were set free". This quote can be found in *The Armenian Genocide, 1915–1923*, published by Armenian Assembly of America.

labelled the mass killings of the Armenians as a "genocidal act." This resolution was accepted—14 to 1–after 14 years of research. The Soviet Union voted against the resolution and four countries abstained from voting (Dadrian 1999: 36).[13]

The pressure imposed by the Turkish government must not be under-estimated. It obstructs nations and organizations from recognizing the Armenian genocide as an historical fact and even obstructs individuals on a micro-level. This obstruction colours the Armenian identity. In the 1990s, the Netherlands was also affected by the Turkish policy of denial, as the following story documents.

Case I: the monument in Assen.

In the fall of 1999, a man by the name of Nicolaia Romashuk, an Armenian of Israeli heritage, submitted a request to the city council of Assen, a small town in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands, to place a monument for the victims of the Armenian genocide in the cemetery "*De Boskamp*." Although initially his request was granted, the city council with-drew permission after several Turkish organizations submitted an objec-tion. What followed was a legal battle that eventually took on international proportions.

"I could never have suspected," Nicolaia would tell me later, "that the row would take such extremes. I remember that one time I walked down the street and saw a group of young men handing out leaflets in which the Armenian genocide was being denied and in which the Armenians, not the Turks, were accused of mass killings."

The reasons for Nicolaia's request were twofold. First, he believed it was simply time for a monument and it surprised him that other Dutch Armenian organizations and foundations had not put in a similar request. "In recent years, more and more Armenians have come to live in Assen. Often, they are placed here in the shelters for asylum seekers. A friend and

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[13]The United Nations holds the following definition of the term "genocide": "*genocide means any of the following acts with intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such by: (a) killing members of the group, (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, (d) imposing meas-ures intended to prevent births within the group and (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group*" (Article II, 1948, United Nations, Genocide Convention).

I started with a local magazine called *Good Day* and the reception was so overwhelming that the time seemed right for a monument." However, there was a second reason, a deeply rooted reason that went back to his childhood.

I was raised in Jerusalem and I remember how my grandma spoke about the genocide. She could really scare me with her stories. She told me how she fled from Turkey and how eventually her daughter (my mother) arrived in Jerusalem. I was born near a cave in the mountain Zion. At a later age, when I went to a monastery, there was a saying on the blackboard, which I will always remember. "*When our children forget the horrors, the whole world will be cursed.*" I did not want to forget, you see. I did not want to forget my grandmother's stories. I still feel her pain every day. At some point, I received support from Armenian organizations and foundations and even from the Armenian government. It was not their initiative, but they appreciated my efforts. The only thing I wanted was a commemoration stone, as was also placed in the United States, Belgium, Germany and France.

On 24 April 2000, a day on which the Armenian genocide is commemorated, the stone was unofficially unveiled in the church of Almelo (a town in the eastern part of the Netherlands). Nicolaia Romashuk, the patriarch of Jerusalem, the Armenian ambassador and five Armenian members of parliament were amongst the guests. Meanwhile, tensions between Turkish and Armenian communities and the Turkish and Dutch government were rising. The Netherlands was blamed as being partial to Armenians in the Turkish newspapers and in the spring of 2000 the Turkish ambassador in The Hague warned that the placing of a commemoration stone would harm the bilateral relations.

"It was crazy," Nicolaia told me. "The city council of Assen had, by this time, received mail bombs from various Turkish groups from all over Europe and was forced to change their email address. Turkish neighbours, who I had known for years, started treating me with hostility." The question of whether or not the commemoration stone should be placed started to take on another dimension. The discussion that developed between Turkish, Dutch and Armenian representatives no longer revolved around the monument, but whether or not the Armenian genocide actually had occurred. Several Turkish "scientists" and representatives, amongst whom were Professor Yusuf Halacoglu and spokesperson Yuksel Koc of the Turkish community, were quoted in Dutch newspapers denying that a genocide had occurred. "There is no evidence for a genocide," stated Yuksel Koc. "We can imagine that he wanted to commemorate his ancestors with a stone. If he would not give it political connotation, I would even help him

put the stone there." [author translation][14] In January 2001, Romashuk appeared in court, where (as he states) he came forward with the "facts" of the genocide. "I had to prove that the genocide had taken place."

In March 2001, the judge gave a ruling. He dismissed the Turkish objections and agreed to the placement of the commemoration stone. However, the inscription had to be changed. "The Netherlands had not officially recognized the genocide, therefore the word was not allowed to appear on the stone."[15] A compromise was made. "For the Armenians who have fallen" was replaced by "in commemoration of our ancestors."

Friedlander (1993) states that the commemoration of a traumatic experience can lead to acceptance of this experience: "Thus, if we make allowance for some ritualized form of commemoration, already in place, we may foresee in the public domain, a tendency toward closure without resolution, but closure nonetheless" (Friedlander 1993: 133). In the aforementioned case, however, Nicolaia Romashuk's fight for his interpretation of the past and his desire for a public commemoration was suppressed by various organizations and institutions due to political interests and hegemony.

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[14] See the newspaper articles "*Die politieke lading stoort ons enorm*" [The political charge disturbs us] in *Trouw*, 22 September 2000 and "*ArmeensTurkse dialoog weer doodverklaard*" [Armenian and Turkish dialogue has ended again] in *De Volkskrant*, 1 February 2002. For other articles, see: "*Standbeeld-affaire in Assen breidt zich uit*" [The monument-gate in Assen expands] in *De Volkskrant*, 21 December 2000; "*Mail bommen duperen Assen*" [Mailbombs in Assen] in Algemeen Dagblad, 21 August 2000; "*Fel verzet tegen monument Assen*" [Protest against the monument in Assen] in *Het Parool*, 9 January 2001; "*Monument voor Armeniërs maakt Turken woedend*" [Armenia monument angers Turkish immigrants] in *De Volkskrant*, 9 May 2000; "*Elke dag, elke minuut voel ik de pijn*" [Every day, every minute, I feel the pain] in *Trouw*, 22 September 2000; "*Nooit vergeten, dat is ons ingeprent*" [Never forget, that is drilled into us] in *De Volkskrant*, 5 January 2001; "*Toch Armeens monument*" [The Armenian monument will come] in *NRC Handelsblad*, 3 April 2001; "*Rechter beslist over Armeense gedenksteen*" [Court decides over Armenian monument] in *Trouw*, 21 March 2001; "*Armeniërs zegenen alvast de steen der conflicten*" [Armenians already bless the 'monument of conflicts'] in *Trouw*, 24 April 2000; "*De strijd om een Armeense gedenksteen*" [The struggle over an Armenian commemorative stone] in *Het Parool*, 9 January 2001; and "*Gedenksteen*" [Commemorative Stone] in *Trouw*, 22 September 2000. I have received further information from the interview I conducted with Nicolaia Romashuk on 4 June 2003.

[15] The Netherlands officially recognized the Armenian genocide in 2004, but in an indirect way. The Dutch parliament speaks of "the question of the Armenian genocide."

Nevertheless, this decision does not imply that in the recent years there have not been changes. There has been an increase in scientific interest about the Armenian genocide in the last decade, and even in Turkey, the subject is slowly opening for reflection and deliberation. However, this is not without struggle and tension. When the author Orhan Pamuk stated in 2005, that "thirty thousand Kurds have been killed, and a million Armenians," he was both hailed by some left-wing Turkish organizations and criticized and persecuted by ultra-nationalists. Pamuk had criminal charges filed against him for his action, which were dropped but then reinstated in 2011. During this same period, the first Turkish schoolbooks were published that mentioned the Armenian "massacres" and the first commemoration of the Armenian genocide, on 24 April, was openly held in Istanbul in 2010.[16] In 2013, Erdogan even apologized for the atrocities (notice: not "genocide") done to the Armenian people.

So, Turkey has been in a strange dance of opening up on one hand and denying on the other hand for the last two decades. This ebb and flow is partly caused by international pressure and Turkey's wish to become a member of the EU as well as to internal politics. To the great frustration of the Armenians in the diasporic, this issue seems to be a process of one step forward and two steps back. The political landscape in Turkey and its confrontation with its own past does not change as *quickly* as the Armenian diasporic and some Western governments would like. It will probably continue to remain slow with the current political situation.

Turkey's policy of denial has a counter effect for the country and is a great burden for the Armenians in Armenia and the diasporic communities. It emphasizes the loss the Armenians have experienced and colours, as I will explain later, the Armenian identity. The denial policies make the Armenian identity more urgent and combative.

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[16]For further information about the changes within Turkey I refer to the following articles: "ArmeensTurkse dialoog weer doodverklaart" [Armenian and Turkish dialogue has ended again] in *De Volkskrant*, 1 February 2002; "Ephimenco"[opinion piece] in *Trouw*, 26 April 2001, "Het was een geweldige tragedie" [It was a great tragedy] in *De Volkskrant*, 9 May 2000; "Je gelooft die onzin toch niet? Wij Turken doen zulke dingen niet" [You don't believe that nonsense do you? We Turkish are not capable of this.] in N*RC Handelsblad*, 6 May 2002; and "*Een taboe op de helling*" [A taboo under review] in *Trouw*, 9 February 2001.

There is another dimension that is equally important and is strengthened by Turkey's denial policies. The death of 1.5 million Armenians is rarely placed in a macro-historical, supranational and causal context. Although the causes of the Armenian genocide are being studied, and in particular the internal political struggle that led to the genocide, there has been little attention given to the consequences of this genocide on a global level. "*Wer redet heute noch von der Vernichtung der Armenier?*" [Who still talks nowadays of the extermination of the Armenians?] Hitler asked his officers before the invasion of Poland in 1939. It is exaggerated to claim that a lack of publicity drove Hitler to his horrific actions. However, as Auron (2000) emphasizes, it is "significant and thought-provoking" that Hitler was aware (and emphasized it in his speech) that the Armenian genocide was a true crime without punishment (Auron 2000: 7). To what extent did he not only use the Armenian genocide as an example, but possibly even worse, as a personal justification for his deeds?

As long as the Armenian genocide does not have a place in history, as long as it is denied, a "process of closure" as envisioned by Friedlander cannot take place. People such as Nicolaia Romashuk have to continuously fight for their memories and this ongoing battle has an enormous impact on the Armenian identity. The struggle perpetuates a sense of suffering and displacement, which is strengthened by the denial policies. Or as Nicolaia explained: "This battle made me realize, I was a true Armenian."

2.3   Remembering and Forgetting

"Collective memories" are one of the pillars on which groups base their collective identity. The other foundations can be language, territory/state, race/physical appearance and, as Baumann (1999) shows in his book *The Multicultural Riddle*, religion and "civilization." The criteria for ethnicity and national identity, especially in a world where many ethnic groups are seeking "self-determination,"[17] are often intertwined. Groups claim a shared heritage, a shared (cultural) language and often

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[17] See Gellner (1997: 103).

a shared past.[18] This sounds logical on the surface, were it not that a shared past is often construed just as identities are. There is a factual past that can be measured and observed with specific dates, facts, chronicles and events that cannot be dismissed or argued. However, there is also a past of *interpretation*. Dates or events in and of themselves have no meaning. It is only when they are considered through a national or ethnic tale that meaning is given to them. It is this meaning-making that is important to understand how identities are interlinked and sometimes even submerged in a collective history.

According to Anderson (2006), the process of remembering and forgetting is an important component of the creation of an "imagined community," which is a community that reaches beyond the individual and in which people are connected to each other by specific traits. He states that the territorialisation of religion, the decline of antique kinships, the interaction between capitalism and print[19] and the start of bureaucratic governing structures and secular languages of state have led to the creation of new "abstract identities." Language was an important denominator since by merging dialects and creating one "state language," feelings of connectedness initially based on direct relationships were replaced by a more abstract notion—the "national identity" of the nation state.[20] Forgetting and remembering, as he shows, play a pivotal role in this process. They give meaning and direction to a given group:

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[18]When Baumann researched the definitions of ethnicity and national identity in a dictionary, he discovered significant similarities. Both appeal to: "descent, often recognizable by physical appearances, sharing cultural traits (language, perceptions, values, etc.) said to be acquired from birth." Only when considering a state and/or political entity do the two identities differ. An ethnic group is "a community of destiny" and a political organization, "a community of destiny" based on a present state (Baumann 1999: 31).

[19]Print capitalism is the process in which various dialects are merged into one language to create a larger market. Thus, printed language can abstract feelings of commonalities among individuals (Anderson 2006: 44–46). Nowadays, we can also recognize other abstract identities such as identities of "civilization." These identities don't claim language as a shared denominator, but rather claim a shared history and (at least so it is interpreted) specific norms and morals derived from this history. Autochthony (Geschiere 2009), which can be translated to a sense of belonging to a land/soil is another example of one abstract identity.

[20]The nation state and the national identity, therefore, are relatively recent developments that only started to take shape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

> As with modern persons, so it is with nations. Awareness of being imbedded in secular, serial time, with all its implications of continuity, yet "forgetting" the experience of this continuity (…) engenders the need for a narrative of "identity". (…) Yet between narratives of person and nation there is a central difference of employment. In the secular story of the 'person' there is a beginning and an end. (…) Nations, however, have no clearly identifiable births, and their deaths, if they ever happen, are never natural. Because there is no Originator, the nation's biography cannot be written evangelically, 'down time', through a long procreative chain of begettings. The only alternative is to fashion it "up time". (Anderson 2006: 205)

To give a group the feeling of solidarity, a tunnel vision is cast on the past. This tunnel vision is a fictitious starting point that leads upward in linear time to the current situation. Specific elements and experiences in the past are magnified, whereas others are "forgotten."

> We have been taught, inside the classroom and outside of it that there exists an entity called the West, and that one can think of this West as a society and civilization independent of and in opposition to other societies and civilizations. Many of us even grew up believing that this West has a genealogy, according to which ancient Greece begat Rome, Rome begat Christian Europe, Christian Europe begat the Renaissance, the Renaissance the Enlightenment, the Enlightenment political democracy and the industrial revolution. (Wolf 1982: 5)

Therefore, the past is a continuation of events that together imply (an illusion of) progressive continuity. To a large degree, this is a deceptive approach. It changes the past into a moral success story without the contextual backgrounds in which those events occurred. Greece did not simply "dissolve" into Rome, and Rome was not replaced by Christian Europe. Dozens of factors, situations and relationships were at the basis of these processes. If one studies the motivations of those events, battles and political changes from a modern-day perspective, the norms, values and narratives that are perceived as universal, are shown not to have necessarily existed at that time. It is "we" who *now* project those norms, values and narratives onto the past. The outcome of the events is often dictated by fate. People create their own collective narrative.

How does a collective narrative become interlocked with a personal narrative? What does this process of history-making mean on a micro-level and in someone's day-to-day experiences? To answer these questions, it is necessary to take a closer look at the term collective memories,

which are memories preserved by a community. Some of those memories are collectively remembered through ceremonies, rituals and commemorations, whereas others are often indirectly interwoven with a (collective) past: "The narrative of one life is part of an interconnecting set of narratives; it is embedded in the story of those groups from which individuals derive their identity" (Connerton 1998: 21).

The desire to give meaning to personal experiences and to place thoughts and events into context causes people to continually draw on this frame of reference. A group compares their experiences/memories—directly, but sometimes also indirectly—with other memories and stories through which unintentionally an interconnected narrative about their world comes into existence. The memory dissolves into a bigger story that the people (and the nation state) rely on to give meaning and a sense of continuity to their experiences.

> It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize and localize their memories. If we enumerate the number of recollections during one day that we have evoked upon the occasion of our direct and indirect relations with other people, we will see that, most frequently, we appeal to our memory only in order to answer questions which others have asked us, or that we suppose they could have asked (…) It's in this sense that there exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory; it is to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection. (Halbwachs 1992: 38)[21]

An individual story becomes part of a collective history. This is not a motionless process. The story of today is not the same or even interpreted the same as the story of yesterday. People are agents, they *negotiate* their interpretations, constructions and meanings *within* the given

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[21] In this quote, we see a difference from Connerton's writing (1989). According to Connerton, societies remember on a subconscious level; memories are trapped in ceremonies, rituals and in what he calls bodily practices. Bodily practices are actions and behaviors that often indirectly and unintentionally carry out the collective past. Because of this, the past is "trapped" as it were in the body. (But, be careful: Connerton does not use the term body politics or embodiment, which is a term that is generally used in medical anthropology and refers to how the body captures, alters and creates culture.) Therefore, Connerton does not look at man as an agent or as a negotiator who tries to give meaning to his memories, but rather he looks more at the historical origin of behaviors and how these can be connected to collective memories.

structures. There is a constant dialectic process at play between an individual and his or her surroundings (Jackson 2002: 14). Imagine for instance, a very vivid dream as Halbwachs (1992) does in his analysis. In principal, this dream stands on its own. It comes forth from a subconscious and is personal in nature. As soon as the individual tries to understand the dream, or to interpret it, he or she will draw on a collection of references to give the dream meaning. Perhaps a person does this alone or perhaps the person shares the dream with others. In both cases, a variation of ideas, constructions and social symbols is confirmed, whereas others—in light of the new experience of the dream—are disregarded or receive new meaning. Personal experiences, memories and even life stories are hereby placed in a greater (historical) framework in which social symbols are (re)confirmed or (re)constructed or outright dismissed. In all cases, from the experience of the individual at least, the personal story is put forward in serial time and becomes part of a greater whole. From the personal point of view there are no discrepancies. Possible discrepancies are either re-interpreted or re-constructed.

A person's story is therefore only one story in many. A person constructs and reconstructs the meaning of these stories time and time again and so they become the bearers of their ethnic and/or national history. The "webs of significance" are not a text as Geertz previously claimed, in the narrow sense of the word, but rather elastic boundaries that people change on a day-to-day basis. Everyone is the storyteller who carries the "imagined community" to an unknown future. Everyone is the narrator of their own collective narrative. Everyone forgets and everyone remembers; everyone creates their own collective identity.

2.4   A Closer Examination of the Main Research Question

The research question I posted and will analyse below has two important concepts that have to be explained and contextualized, since these concepts have been given multiple definitions and investigative approaches in anthropological literature. One of these concepts is cultural experience, and the other is ethnic identity, which is the more problematic one. It is therefore for me important to explain how I operationalized and implemented those concepts during my fieldwork.

2.4.1   Ethnic Identity

Identity is a paradoxical concept. On the one hand, people experience their identity (the so-called *emic* point of view) as something static with an air of tradition, whereas from the point of view of the social scientist (the so-called *etic* point of view) identity is part of a dynamic and cultural process.[22] Identity is *made.* It is being constructed, reconstructed, disregarded or affirmed in daily conversations, symbols and dialogues.

In our day-to-day lives and communication, people have various identities that they apply to certain situations on a subconscious level. For example, Baumann (1999) shows that a fictional character working in an office employs several identities in a single day. With every person he meets or interacts, he tries to find mutual characteristics and taps from religious, geographical and class-identities and symbols depending on the context (ibid.: 85). With every step this person's identity is being determined (both for him and the person he is interacting with) by his surroundings and forms a frame of reference in which he can place him/herself and the other in a specific situation. In this case, as Baumann points out, one should not talk of identity, but rather of identification processes.

> In replacing the word "identities" with the word "identification" … we have taken a liberating analytical step. We no longer see any identity as fixed beyond question and change. National identity is no longer as rationalist as it pretends to be, ethnic identity is no longer as natural as it appears to be, and religious identity is no longer as eternally unchanging as it preaches to be. (Baumann 1999: 137)

If identity indeed changes depending on context, why do I focus on just one aspect of it in my research question? Why have I chosen the words ethnic identity and not religious or national identity? My answer to this question is twofold. First, because the respondents in my research field generally referred to their ethnic identity. It is their primary denominator. Second, because Baumann in his theoretical analysis neglects an

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[22] *Emic* and *etic* are described as follows: the *emic* point of view is the experiential world of the "insiders." The *etic* point of view is how "outsiders" see the experiential world of the group.

important element of identification. Although he takes the experiential world of the respondents into account, the consequences of this person's *emic* point of view are generally ignored. I will clarify both of these points.

"Ethnicity" differs from other identifications (such as nationality, religious identity, or identities of autochthony or civilization) by over-emphasizing the meaning of "descent."[23] National identities are built on the notion of a nation state and autochthony on a sense of belonging to the land (see also Geschiere 2009), religious identity on the interpretation of a certain religion and identities of civilization are built on abstracted norms and values that are connected with a specific civilization (as for instance the West). For ethnicity, descent plays a much greater role: "ethnicity appeals, first and foremost, to blood of the past; it invokes biological ancestry and then claims that present-day identities follow from this ancestry" (Baumann 1999: 20).

Until the summer of 1990, Armenians did not have an independent state. The short-lived Republic that came into existence in 1918, after World War I, was annexed by the Soviets in the winter of 1920 (Suny 1983: 29). Therefore, Soviet Armenia only received limited sovereignty and became a small state in the far greater Soviet Union. The Armenians in the diasporic communities could claim an Armenian nationality to a lesser extent, since Armenia did not exist as a political entity. Many respondents didn't consider Soviet Armenia as an independent state.[24]

For religious identities, there are several differences amongst the Armenian people. Although historically Armenians are Orthodox Christians with their own Catholicon, Catholic and Protestant Armenians,

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[23]Ethnicity and autochthony have many similarities since they both focus on "descent". Even though there is overlap in the definitions, these definitions are fluid. In general, we can say though that autochthony focuses more on notions of belonging to soil (Geschiere 2009: 2) and civil citizenship to a specific nation (ibid.: 98). "Ethnicity" focuses more on "descent" and "kinship" and "blood". This is a very superfluous distinction, however. I think due the fluidity of symbols and classifications, and identifications of autochthony and ethnicities are often intermixed in the field. What can be carefully stated is that autochthony seems to represent a stronger link with "land".

[24]I do not wish to suggest that there are no national feelings amongst the Armenians. Both Herzig (1996) and Suny (1983) point out that although Soviet Armenia was part of the Soviet Union, there were very strong national sentiments amongst the Armenian people (Suny 1983: 45). On 20 January 1974, a 25-year-old woman torched a portrait of Lenin. She did this, as she would later state, to "resist the Soviet occupation of Armenia" (Suny 1983: 79). National sentiments were therefore deeply rooted within Armenian society. The war in Karabach can be described as a nationalistic war (Herzig 1996: 262).

and even Muslim Armenians also exist, although the latter is a taboo (see also Peroomian 2008). Armenian opinion about who is and who is not a real Armenian can differ per individual and context. Some Armenians put more emphasis on religious identity, whereas others emphasize nationality. However, both groups unintentionally and subconsciously select ethnicity as the most important element. When discussing identity with my respondents, I always felt as though national identities and religious identities were merely shifts within the ethnic idiom. From the *emic* point of view, one is only considered Armenian when one parent is of Armenian descent and not when one has converted to Orthodox Armenian Christianity or when one has become an Armenian citizen. Being Armenian, as one of my respondents once told me, "is in your blood and in your bones." And this is the second reason I have specifically used the concept ethnic identity in my research question. It is something my respondents believed in and which had distinct implications for them.

According to Baumann (1999), ethnicity is not "blood" (nature) but "wine" (a cultural and cultivated mixture), and an identification created by social interaction (ibid.: 21). Because identities are bound to context, Baumann suggests that students in anthropology should not aim their research at the Turks in Berlin, the Berbers in Paris and the Sikhs in New York, but rather at the process of identification itself (ibid.: 145). Although I agree with Baumann's assessment from an idealistic point of view and I believe that identities to a large extent are determined by context and situation, I am of the opinion that Baumann dismisses the *emic* point of view a bit too quickly for fieldwork. He also warns: "The … golden rule of every empirical social scientist [is]: informants are never wrong; they have reasons to think what they think" (ibid.: 90). And yet, Baumann hardly looks at the consequences that abstractions like ethnicity, nationality and religious identity imply for the group. As Thomas (1928) already remarked: "If men define situations as real, they are as real in their consequences" (Thomas 1928: 572). The aim of anthropologists is not necessarily to seek factual truth but what Kidron (2009) considers narrative truth: subjective truths hidden in narratives which we can place within an web of inter-subjectivity.

I shall therefore argue that the Armenian identity based on ethnicity has specific implications for the diasporic communities. It determines how they look at and relate to the world and to each other. Identities and identifications are more than mere constructions coming forth from a dynamic and cultural process. As constructions, they also carry importance and weight and, particularly because of this, consequences.

For these reasons I use Jenkins' (1997) approach in my research. He argues that identity and identity formation have two dimensions: on the one hand, identity is being constructed and defined by the outside world, on the other hand, identity is being internalized through a process of self-identification (Jenkins 1997: 13, 14). So, identity does not stand on its own. It comes forth out of a social and interactive process and simultaneously forms a frame of reference in which future negotiations and constructions of identity take place. In this sense, identification is both dynamic and static. It is dynamic since identities vary according to context and situation. It is static since the symbols and meanings with which one constructs their identity, do not come out of thin air; they are symbols and meanings already used in previous constructions and on which others are judged and perceived, often without realizing it.

2.4.2   Cultural Experience

The concept of culture has seen many approaches by anthropologists and its definition has changed over the past two centuries. According to Baumann (1999), these developments can be best described as ranging from "an essential approach" to "a discursive approach" (ibid.: 81–89). Following the philosophical texts of Gottfried Herder, he argues that the first social scientists were mainly occupied with searching and finding the so-called "essential" character of a community (ibid.: 24). A culture was envisioned, as an entity of customs, traditions, norms and values, which would present us with the essence of a group.[25] Thereby, the world became a patchwork of various cultures (Boas 1928: 205), in which the boundaries often were artificially constructed by social scientists (Baumann 1999: 146).[26]

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[25] This approach is most apparent in the definition of culture by Tylor (1871): "Culture…taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. The condition of culture among the various societies of mankind, in so far as it is capable of being investigated on general principles, is a subject apt for the study of laws of human thought and action" (ibid.: 1).

[26] Various anthropological schools of thought have implicitly and explicitly used this essentialist approach to culture. This approach can for instance be seen in the evolutionism of Spencer and Tylor, in the historical particularism of Boas, in the structuralism of Radcliffe Brown and in the functionalism of Malinowski (See also McGee and Warms (ed.) 1996: Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History. Mayfield Publishing Company: California).

The emphasis was placed on the static side of culture and therefore could not explain how culture changed over time. This caused a true theoretical revolution in anthropology in the 1960s—also known as the theoretical crisis of the sixties—in which the notion of culture was newly dissected. Culture was no longer seen as one static entity, but rather as a dynamic whole in which individuals constructed their culture through daily interactions. Cultures were webs of meanings and symbols, which people used to interpret their lives and their place in the world (Geertz 1973: 5). In this sense, people were no longer passive individuals who took over the essential characteristics of their culture, but rather agents who made, created and changed their cultures and defined and confirmed these in relation to each other and the abstract world: "Culture… only exists in the act of being performed, and it can never stand still or repeat itself without changing its meaning" (Baumann 1999: 26). This process-focused approach is based on a number of presuppositions (as any other theoretical approach) that need to be explained and emphasized to be able to conduct clear research.

The first presupposition is that the task of an anthropologist has shifted from finding universal patterns and rules to *describing* and *interpreting* cultures. The emphasis no longer lies with the essential character of culture, but instead with how meanings are given and how people experience their world.

The second presupposition is that culture takes place *amongst* people. There is an ongoing interaction between the individual and the social world. It is in this interaction where culture changes, ideas are being reproduced and constructed, and old symbols are given new meaning, confirmed or are discarded (Driessen and De Jonge 1994: 10). People create their world in conversations and dialogue, time and time again and day after day. This is an ongoing process. At the same instance, definitions of culture (just as identity) are being internalized. No matter how dynamic and changeable ideas are, they simultaneously form a frame of reference with which to look at the world and *on which future symbols are built.*

Third, the meanings people give to their life experiences are being influenced by macro-processes that lie beyond the scope of the individual (ibid.: 14). People do not create their world alone; it is also being influenced by greater political, social and economic contexts. The ways in which people imagine and construct their world are dependent upon the developments and the possibilities that a specific place, group and time offers them to a large extent. For example, my cultural ideas are bound

to my social-economic position in Dutch society on the one hand, but also to the current political situation of the Netherlands. If I had been born in a region affected by war, the traumas of the war and the collective violence would influence my ideas.

Fourth, through participant observation, the anthropologist can decipher this process and the dialectics of culture, interaction, meaning-giving and contexts and can describe and explain the behaviour of people in a specific group by observation and interpretation. Herein also lies the fifth presupposition, rarely acknowledged by anthropologists—an anthropologist must be aware of the *emic* and *etic* points of view of the group under study at all times. The construction of culture is simultaneously the construction of the obvious. Respondents are rarely or never aware of the larger connections from which their notions about their world come into existence or of the process of construction itself. From the point of view of the respondent (the *emic* point of view) the world is "as it is." One rarely (or never) thinks consciously about how those notions and the construction of those notions came into being. It is up to the anthropologist to take away these blind spots and decipher and deconstruct social notions and connect these with the time, place and contexts in which they came to existence.

In this process, it is important to take into account the difference between what people say and what people do, which is something that Baumann (1999) calls the discursive approach (ibid.: 94). He argues that the essential definition of culture is not yet entirely extinct and that the respondents often believe in the *essence* of their own culture. Culture to them is something that is being carried rather than something that is being constructed. People rarely give thought to the subtle changes in their notions and ideas. As with identity, culture expresses a feeling of continuity that reaches far beyond an individual's life; yet culture is something that is being made in social interaction. Therefore, culture can *seem* to be essential, larger and more eternal than a human life, but it is not. People create cultures and create specific notions and ideas.

In my research, I chose to use the discursive approach to culture specifically because it takes the essential emotional value (the *emic* point of view) of culture into account, but places the emphasis and creation of culture into contextual developments. I consider people as agents who creatively construct their cultures, and I consider cultures as *elastic* webs of interwoven meanings.

2.4.3   *Summary of Used Concepts*

In the previous paragraphs, I have discussed the background and concepts of my general analysis. Now I narrow the scope and provide the stipulated definitions I have connected to these concepts:

Factual history:	History that we can retrieve from sources.
Collective history:	Factual history and the constructed history that people, within a specific community, share with each other.
Collective memories:	The meanings of (personal) memories that through ceremonies, rituals, social interactions or by placing personal experiences in a collective frame of reference, are shared by several people.
Culture:	Webs of meanings that people construct in social interaction to give meaning and direction to their individual lives.
Identity:	A process of identification that is both constructed in social interaction and internalized through self-identification.
Ethnic identity:	A process of identification based on heritage, background and culture that is both constructed in social interaction and internalized through self-identification.
Cultural experience:	The way people define and construct their culture for themselves and others.

2.5   METHODOLOGY

The definition and operationalization of concepts do not say anything about the applicability of those concepts. In the dynamic, complex and daily social interaction that anthropologists call the field, how can one make those processes of identification and remembering concrete? How can one get a grip on constructions—which by definition are volatile and intangible?

Research on the Armenian genocide—which took place more than 100 years ago and to this day is still officially denied by Turkey—is a demanding subject. As with so many topics concerning collective violence, it is psychologically intense. I listened to many stories and read

more than a hundred direct eyewitness accounts that touched me and even changed me. I was sometimes emotionally distraught for days. As a researcher, you can only experience and acknowledge these feelings and the impact the data has on you. Feeling nothing, or being left untouched by those stories, images and horrors, is perhaps even worse than letting those images in. (An academic in genocide studies can never be neutral; this is a fictitious disengagement of the research field, caused by the psychological need to distance ourselves from the horrific facts we study.) Yet this emotional reaction is important data. The experience of violence and the feelings of bewilderment, anger, sadness and shame that comes with this kind of research—even in an indirect manner—tells the researcher something about the experiential world of his/her respondents. I often had to take a few days off to be able to put my experiences, my feelings, my observations and also indirectly my research question back into perspective.

This kind of research is also intense in another way. Collective violence never occurs spontaneously. There are political and historical contexts that have driven the violence forward and to understand the violence, these contexts need to be studied. A research based on life stories and interviews alone is not enough; the macro political and social contexts have to be connected to the stories.

Thus, I took a two-fold approach in my research. On the one hand, I wanted to focus on contemporary Armenians and how they construct their world. On the other hand, I conducted a literary study of the political and social backgrounds of the Armenian genocide. I divided this literary study into several levels. First, I read theoretical and analytical books that gave me insight into the developments that led up to the genocide. Second, I read direct and indirect eyewitness accounts that gave me a better insight into the *subjective* experiences of violence. (By "indirect" I mean eyewitness accounts written by third parties—doctors, civil servants, missionaries and ambassadors.) For this, I consulted several books, archives and articles. Third, I read books concerning theoretical approaches on (collective) trauma and the experience of violence.

In addition to the literary study, I conducted ethnographic research in which I wrote down the life histories of my informants. Life stories are a primary method for a research about identity and violence. They provide: (1) directly and indirectly discursive and non-discursive symbols

regarding violence and the consequences of collective violence, even transgenerational and (2) simultaneously give the researcher insight into how the past is constructed by the respondents. Life stories also carry certain constraints and require a relationship based on mutual trust between the researcher and the informant, particularly with an emotionally and politically charged subject as genocide. Because the respondent needs to feel safe, the researcher must create a feeling of safety, which takes time and repeated meetings. I had many informal conversations, and made myself visible in the field, before I could finally achieve a personal conversation with an informant.[27]

There are also two other limitations when it comes to life histories that are more abstract and theoretical in nature. First, one has to ask if the respondent is not unintentionally influenced or moved in a certain direction because of the *presence* of the researcher. In other words, did the respondents start to talk about "identity" because they knew that this was the main focus of my research or was this a topic they wanted to address themselves? From the point of view of the researcher, this problem seems to be similar to the infamous chicken-and-the-egg conundrum. What came first, the observations that the researcher made or the presence of the researcher that indirectly influenced those observations? This is an impossible question to answer and even more impossible to completely ignore.

I tried to limit my role as researcher as much as possible. I conducted to a high degree passive research. What I mean by this is that I let the conversations be guided by the respondents. I barely directed the conversations and generally let the informant speak. Of course, this is a most artificial method, but not a method that one necessarily has to disregard or underestimate. Sometimes, I left my research topics purposely vague. I would explain that I was interested in the lives of the respondents in the Netherlands, but deliberately avoided words like "genocide" or "collective violence" or "identity."

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[27] I learned early on during my research to never use the word "interview"; this immediately scared respondents. I think this is because of the connotations of the word "interview" as it sounds important, formal, weighty and static. It sounds "official" and therefore has political consequences. Because of this, I quickly switched to the term "personal conversation".

Another method that I applied during my interviews and life stories was to conduct the conversations and interviews in the respondents' homes. I had a specific motivation for this since Armenians are proud of their heritage. When you step into their personal sphere, the pictures and paintings of the mountain Ararat, Armenian churches, crucifixes and other symbols literally confront you. These are the Armenian symbols of identification that existed *before* I came into the setting as a researcher. I had no influence over this. During conversations, I would sometimes refer to one of these symbols and ask what the symbol meant for the respondent. I would not only write down the life story, but also often draw the setting in my notepad. This way, I tried to gain an understanding how the Armenian identity was construed.[28]

The second implication of life histories is their reliability; to what extent are life histories an objective reflection of the social reality? To what extent are these stories individually based? According to Prins (1991) the answer to this problem can be overcome by a method he calls *triangulation*, by comparing and combining several sources. When a life story is being associated with other life stories, and these other life stories are associated with informal conversations, interviews, questionnaires, art and even literature, larger connections become visible that tell something about the experiential world of the respondents. Although the life story may not be an objective reflection, it is definitely a reflection of inter-subjectivity.

Although it was not my intention to research several dimensions, because of the limitations and complexities of my topic as sketched above, I was forced to do so. Therefore, I used several sources: I wrote down 12 life (his)stories, and conducted 57 deep interviews and twice as

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[28]There is another side to this debate that I cannot fully discuss in this paragraph. This has to do with my *presence* as a researcher and how much this influenced the data that I gathered. In other words, is the researcher not an actor him/herself in the dynamic process of creating constructions? One could argue that although my presence magnifies certain topics and conversations, these magnifications did not develop outside of the social context. The respondent does not construct views or ideas that are strange to him or her. The respondent uses ideas and worldviews that are already commonplace. The topics and magnifications are not useless by definition, and can tell much about the respondent and his or her experiences.

many informal conversations.[29] In addition, I handed out and received 49 questionnaires[30] and studied Armenian music, art, movies and literature. With this approach, I tried to place the life stories in a larger context and compare them with other sources. By comparing the life histories with ceremonies or literature (see also Chap. 4), I hoped to have an insight on the inter-subjectivity of my respondents and to make the processes of identification more tangible.

It is important to note that comparing observations and other findings went further than merely comparing them *within* the direct research field. I did not just compare the life stories, interviews, informal and secondary sources with each other, but also connected them with other interviews, observations and findings in *other* research and community studies, including *other* geographic research fields and studies *over time*. (So, my approach was not just synchronic, but also diachronic.) This book is highly comparative in nature. I have compared contemporary interviews with eyewitness accounts of Armenian survivors to identify possible tendencies *over time*, and I have compared the Dutch-Armenian community with the Armenian communities in London and France to retrace the specific characteristics of the community in the Netherlands. I have also studied other research on a variety of ethnic communities, who were victims of collective and genocidal violence, to retrace possible differences and similarities in ideas and worldviews.

Research is a dynamic process. It is only through continuously comparing and cross-referencing that one can distil larger observations that give anthropologists a clue about the complex process of culture and identity formation.

[29] By "informal conversations," I refer to coincidental meetings, appointments and/or conversations that did not have the structure of an interview. These were conversations in which I refrained from asking questions with particular topics in mind. These informal meetings occurred during performances, lectures, music and dance events, etc. After every meeting, I made a summary, and scribbled down the most important and outstanding observations. I count approximately 53 informal meetings, however, there could have been more, since I didn't note the dates in the beginning of my research diary.

[30] These questionnaires were not meant for statistical analysis, but rather for providing me with an orientation to Armenian worldviews and ideas.

2.6   Fieldwork

I conducted fieldwork in the Netherlands in three phases. The first phase occurred from 3 January until 4 June 2003. (This does not include the literature and source research, which lasted until 2005.) During this period, I conducted interviews in Amsterdam, The Hague, Amersfoort, Assen and Utrecht. Between February and April I spent eight weeks on and off conducting research in London. During this phase, I collected nine life histories and 36 interviews. The demographic of my population was wide as I spoke to second-, third- and fourth-generation survivors. Of the nine life histories, three were conducted among second-generation survivors, four among third-generation survivors and two among fourth-generation survivors. We see a similar proportion of the interviews: 7 interviews were conducted among second-generation survivors, 24 among third-generation survivors and 5 among fourth-generation survivors.

My presence in London occurred by coincidence. I heard about an international Armenian conference to take place in February 2003 and which I wanted to attend. But that was not the main reason. During this time, I felt that my research and fieldwork was not progressing as I hoped and I hoped that a long weekend away would clear my mind and clarify the key points of my research. An Armenian respondent from the Netherlands put me in touch with an Armenian respondent in London, who introduced me to the entire community. Before I knew it, my research became comparative and I had the opportunity to see the colours and nuances of the Armenian community in the Netherlands more clearly by comparing them to the London community.

Comparative research is the basis of anthropological fieldwork. It is in comparison to one's own frame of reference that specific behaviours and ideas become magnified. There were other reasons why I chose a comparative method as well. First, it offered me a unique opportunity to compare two communities with *the same* research question. This is not always the case when a researcher puts their fieldwork next to a literary study. A case study can be written from various viewpoints and can answer multiple research topics. Second, one must not forget that the Armenian community in the Netherlands is merely part of a much larger Armenian diaspora. To gain insight into the Armenian-Dutch community, the anthropologist is forced to look over the borders of the research field. Only then can the anthropologist derive the characteristics, problems and ideas that are particular to the community in the Netherlands and identify ideas that are also present in the greater diaspora.

According to the Armenian experiential world, the community in the Netherlands is merely a fraction of a larger entity, a link in a much larger chain. Some ideas about the Armenian identity (which I discuss further in this book) are similar to those of other Armenian communities. This is because the ideas of identity can be traced back to the communal history *before* the diaspora. At the same time, there are also local obstacles that influence the community within a certain country that make the character of a community unique. A respondent I refer to as Ado, explained it to me like this:

> All Armenian communities in Europe have their own colour. They all belong to a specific shade. Imagine for example that the Armenian culture [read: ethnicity] is red. In some countries, this colour mixes with blue and in others with yellow, which makes the colours respectively purple, dark red and light red. The basic colour, however, remains the same: red.

Thus, by comparing the community in the Netherlands with the community in London, I have tried to retrieve the specific colour of the Armenian-Dutch community, without neglecting the similarities in views and ideas of both communities. Of the nine life stories I transcribed, three were from England, and of the 36 interviews I conducted 14 were in England as well.

The second phase of my research occurred after the publication of my first book at the beginning of 2010 in the Netherlands. To promote my book and to also create a greater understanding of the Armenian genocide and the consequences of this genocide to Dutch listeners, I made contact with other Armenians whom I had not met during the period between January and June 2003. For these meetings, I transcribed three more life histories and 21 more interviews. These life stories and interviews were not as intense as the interviews I had conducted in 2003. The reason for this, was because the aim of these meetings was not ethnographic research as such, but rather to satisfy a personal curiosity (to be very honest). I wanted to know if my 2003 findings were still as urgent as they had been when I did my primary research. Of all the interviews I conducted, two were with second-generation survivors, and two of the life histories were from second-generation survivors. All other interviews and life histories were from younger generations and all were conducted in the Netherlands.

The third phase of my research started in December 2010. I was invited to go to a conference in Yerevan, Armenia. When I stood near the genocide monument looking out at Mount Ararat (on this specific day it was shrouded with clouds), the history of Armenia and its people hit me full force once again. Here I was on a place of remembrance looking out over a landscape where many of my respondents place their ancestry. Yet at the same time, this landscape was severed by an invisible line. Mount Ararat was in Turkey. I was in Armenia. We were near the foot of the mountain, but at the same time separated from it.

I decided right then and there that I was not only going to translate my Dutch book, but that I was going to rewrite and restructure it. There was always one theoretical link in my (Dutch) work that bothered me—the connection between the experience of violence and the reconstruction of identity. Even though I had analysed this link in my original work, I always felt that my analysis wasn't comprehensive enough. For this reason, I decided to do an even more in-depth ethnographic analysis of the eyewitness accounts. Thus, I used 13 historical sources, and did not only study the life histories and experiences described in these accounts, but (more specifically) also studied the symbolism and the language of violence. What does violence do? What does it mean? I truly believe that it is not possible to study the consequences of violence without studying the acts and brutality of violence as well.

2.7   LIMITATIONS AND CRITICAL NOTES

A research of this size and complexity has limitations, especially when the research had to be conducted within a short amount of time. Therefore, there are several critical notes to be made, namely: *language*, *access to the female community* and *terminology*. There is also a fourth critical note. This has to do with studies on genocide in general and the definitions of perpetrators and victims. I briefly reflect on these limitations.

Language. Armenians speak, on average, three or four languages and most of my respondents were fluent in Dutch. I only had to use a translator once. All other times, the conversations were in Dutch or English. However, I quickly discovered there was an unbridgeable restriction. Although my respondents spoke Dutch (or English), the meanings of the words they used were not necessarily the meanings *I* would connect to those words. For instance, some respondents made a sharp distinction between *feeling* Armenian and *being* Armenian; this was a distinction

I only recognized after several conversations. Therefore, I continuously compared several concepts and words to retrieve their cultural meanings. This was an artificial intervention. People simply express themselves better in their mother tongue, especially when the conversations are personal and emotional. For Turkish Armenians this means Turkish, for Armenians from Iraq, Syria and Jordan this means using Western-Armenian and for Armenians from Armenia and Iran this means using Eastern-Armenian. I tried to overcome this problem by cross-referencing the linguistic limitation presented throughout my work. To do full research, one would have to be fluent in Turkish, Western-Armenian, Eastern-Armenian and Arabic. I believe that only then can this linguistic problem be resolved, and this has its own restrictions. You can be fluent in a language, but it will not be your native tongue, so you may still miss the cultural meaning of words.

Female community. Because of strict rules of endogamy in the (Dutch) Armenian community, I had almost no access to females in the community. Of all the official interviews that I conducted, only 12 were with women and for most informal conversations, there were no women present. I found this to be a regrettable limitation in my research, since women often play a key role in the family, especially amongst Turkish Armenians who have large extended families in the Netherlands. However, due to my gender, there was no way for me to overcome this limitation. It is a restriction in my research I have to reluctantly accept.

Terminology. Armenians assign themselves to specific groups and categories within the community. They speak of "Turkish Armenians," "Iraqi Armenians," "Syrian Armenians," etc. I have adapted this terminology to a large extent, without initially understanding the derogatory nature of those terms. The term "Turkish Armenian" in particular carries a specific stigma for reasons that will become apparent later. I want to make clear that the terms I use throughout this research are not used with derogatory intention. I use them to identify the various territories and countries of origin of my Armenian respondents.

Perpetrators and victims. When you study genocide and genocidal violence, it is easy to polarize the research field in perpetrators and victims. This is especially true when the research reaches an abstract level where identification, cultural construction and social symbols as well as actions are examined. It is easy for a researcher to, what Black (2004) considers, "over-collectivize" behaviour: meaning that we use collectivistic theories to explain the complexities of human behaviour "on the ground."

Or as a teacher once told me: "The differences between individuals are far greater, than the differences between cultures." What he meant was that cultures are abstractions that individuals may follow but cultures do not necessarily define all the elements of an individual's behaviour.

At the same time, it is important to be careful to not "over-individualize" violence (ibid.: 147). Culture may not define behaviour, but it does give individuals direction and influences how an individual interprets his or her world.

What we must keep in mind is that when violence occurs, and people face the enormous reality of death when bullets are flying, behaviour can be contradictory. Perpetrators are not mere perpetrators and victims are not mere victims. In some cases, Ottomans helped Armenians and some Armenians helped Ottomans (more often than not, under great threat and in fear of their lives). On the ground, people make decisions based on political affiliation, familial kinship, networks and self-interest. And even then, the behaviour of *one* individual itself can be contradictory at times (Campbell: 2010).[31] This nuance has to be in place. Not all Ottoman citizens killed Armenians and not all Armenians were passive victims. Some Armenians resisted, some fought and in a few very rare cases, some collaborated with the Ottoman soldiers and bureaucrats. Therefore, if I speak of perpetrators and victims in this book, I speak of general political and social tendencies and cultural abstractions. I do not speak of individual people. Not all Ottomans killed Armenians, but Armenians were killed by Ottomans.

The aim of this book is to explain the cultural processes that lead to genocide and the cultural ramifications on identity *after* genocide. On this abstract level, it is sometimes impossible to leave room for nuance,

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[31] Campbell (2010) explains this contradictory individual behaviour through social distance and social closeness within the context and structure where the violence takes place. If there is a high degree of distance between "cultural" commonalities, or a high degree of "relational distance" (interaction between individuals) or "functional independence" (political or economic interdependent relationships between individuals) it is more likely that violence occurs (ibid.: 303). Campbell explains why some perpetrators kill victims on some occasions and rescue victims on other occasions. Even though I think that social proximity is of importance of understanding contradictory behaviour, I do not think that even this approach or analysis explains *all* contradictions. Human behaviour is too complex for "one" overarching theory. We are driven by psychological aspects (fear, experiences, stress) *and* political, social and cultural aspects. In this sense, Campbell makes the same mistake that he warns us about: "over-collectivize" behaviour.

but that doesn't imply that nuance doesn't exist. As a matter of fact, bystanders to (genocidal) violence can have a crucial role in the escalation of this violence (Staub 2008). If bystanders intervene, if they protest in great numbers, the machinery of violence can come to a halt. However, nuances in the genocidal process on the ground do not vindicate Turkey's refusal to recognize the genocide.

Anthropological research is never finished. There are always new interpretations, other points of view or alternative paths to follow. As Van de Port (1998) emphasizes: "I favour stories with cracks and draughts, texts where you can still find the remains, the greasy edges of crumbs of other, untold stories, other possible kinds of arrangement, other possible claims" (ibid.: 27). Perhaps an anthropologist's answer is never absolute because it is embedded in the dynamic process of construction and reconstruction. People change, the world changes, and the constructions of culture, identity and history change with it. This does not make the work of an anthropologist superfluous. Conclusions and data can be used for future research and can describe a general tendency in some cases. Thus, it is my hope that this research contributes to further insight and understanding into how communities survive something so enormous and devastating as genocide and how the collective trauma of genocide can be transgenerational and even non-spatial. For an Armenian the genocide within is very much alive.

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The Great Diaspora

We are a people that always move. We have no home.
We are permanent refugees…
Informant Agnes (the Netherlands), 26 May 2003

the real Armenian story is that of moving and rebuilding
(Pattie 1997: 37)

The two quotes above give an example of the lives of many Armenians living in diasporic communities after, what some scholars consider, the Great Diaspora following the first World War. The first quote is from one of my informants. The second quote is from Susan Pattie (1997), who did a study of Armenians living in Cyprus. In both the quotes we sense the dislocation Armenians feel after the Great Diaspora and Exodus from the Ottoman Empire, but more than that the fear of losing everything again after the experiences of the Armenian genocide. I will return to the latter in Chap. 8. For now, in this chapter, I will study the Great Diaspora and how much this differs from the smaller diasporic movements of Armenians throughout history.

3.1   Historical Background of Armenians in the Netherlands

Dutch-Armenian relations in the Netherlands are centuries old and can be traced back to the start of the Golden Age when Amsterdam became the leading harbour in Europe and the focal point of international trade. Civil registers from 1560–1565 show accounts of Armenian merchants of Persian heritage trading in Amsterdam (Sarochan 1926: 571) and early notaries mention Armenians renting apartments in 1627 (Bekius and Ultee 1985). In 1715, 71 Armenians were registered in the Netherlands (Abrahamian 1964: 405). In the centuries that followed, this number slowly declined, until in the course of the nineteenth century there was no longer any mention of Armenians in civic documents (Demirdjian 1983: 24).

Although the motives of the Armenians for immigration have never become entirely clear, Demirdjian (1988) points at the possible political backgrounds that may have brought Armenians to the Netherlands. Bekius and Ultee (1985) emphasize trade as a primary motive for Armenians' arrival in the Netherlands and economic reasons seem to be the most plausible. In the fourteenth century, Brugge was the largest trading centre of northern Europe and it was there that the first Armenian merchants settled. When trading routes moved to Amsterdam during the war with Spain, Armenians settled in this city. The Dutch Republic had a number of advantages in comparison to other areas in Europe.

First, the newly founded Dutch Republic had trading treaties with the Ottoman Empire and Persia (where most of the Armenians in the Netherlands came from), which stimulated the settlement of foreigners in the capital. Second, it was forbidden for foreign ships to import goods due to legislation. Thus, the Armenian merchants were forced to use Dutch ships and stayed in the Netherlands so they could exercise direct influence over the trading routes. Finally, the Dutch tolerance toward religion gave the Armenians a chance to profess their beliefs. In 1714 a request for an Armenian church was submitted to the city council; the church was built in 1749 on the Krom Boomssloot in Amsterdam.

The economy of the Dutch Republic stagnated and fell into a crisis in 1806, and the Armenians slowly disappeared from Amsterdam. The trading routes in Persia were also under pressure at this time due to the collapse of the Safawidic dynasty and the decline of the Mongolian Empire. Armenians mainly lived in Amsterdam during its economic peak and left the capital as soon as trade declined. In 1835, the last member of the

Armenian Church died, and in 1874 the building was sold to merchants, only to be rebuilt again as a church in 1985 (Bekius and Ultee 2008: 89).

I place an important side note here. During my fieldwork, I often stumbled upon the question "why did the Armenians *disappear* from the Netherlands in the nineteenth century?" "How did it happen," a passionate Armenian respondent once asked me, "that the Armenians, despite the existence of the Armenian Church were *assimilated*?" The question was expressed when the respondents wanted to emphasize the presumed contemporary assimilation in the Netherlands. Although I return to this concept in Chaps. 7 and 8 in more detail, I would like to reveal some of the answer now, as these questions reflect on how the past is interpreted.

National communities that do or do not coincide with ethnic identities are a relative modern invention; they only come into existence when a nation state is being formed (Anderson 2006). Before this, a community is often bound by kinship, trade and religion. The Armenians who lived in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century are no exception. They were merchants who maintained relationships with their families in the East. Their stay in the Netherlands was for economic reasons. They weren't as politicized as the Armenians are today. The Armenian Apostolic Church was not exclusive. It had similarities with protestant movements[1] and it was easy for Armenians to start a (marital) relationship with Protestant Dutch merchants for financial gain. Notary records in the eighteenth century show that 50 Armenians were wed to Dutch women.

The outrage and confusion with which the Armenians ask me this question, and the outrage that Demirdjian (1983) implies in her thesis with the words "disappearance" "and the loss of the Armenian community" in the seventeenth century (ibid.: 24), can be answered with similar indignation. Compared to Armenians today, Armenians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were not occupied with their national and ethnic identity in the same way Armenians are today; they acted out of economic motives and interests. The fear of assimilation that characterizes the Armenian community *today* was not present *then*. The question is more important than the answer since it projects the present onto the past and shows something about *contemporary* Armenians and how they experience their role in *present*-day Dutch society.

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[1] See also the newspaper articles "*Het Badwater van Jezus*" [The bath water of Jesus] in: *NRC Handelsblad.*, 9 November 2001 and "*Paus zoekt hereniging in Armenië*" [The Pope seeks reconciliation in Armenia] in: *Trouw*, 26 September 2001.

3.2   The Great Diaspora

The forced deportations of Armenians from Turkey between 1915 and 1917 and the migration that followed are known in the literature as the "Great Diaspora." This is in contrast to the small Diasporas that had taken place since the sixth century onward.[2] As noted in the previous paragraphs, the reasons for these migrations were not always clear. Although a minority perhaps had fled their homeland for political or humanitarian considerations, most Armenians were traders and merchants (Demirdjian 1983, 1988). This was not the case during the Great Diaspora, which was mainly driven by the political developments in the Ottoman Empire and later by the political and humanitarian crisis in the host nations that had taken the first wave of Armenian refugees. Therefore, these migrants included a large group with a variety of backgrounds and diverse economic strata.

The first refugees from the violence in the Ottoman Empire migrated mainly to Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Russia and Cyprus (Demirdijan 1988; Pattie 1997). From there, depending on the political situation in the hosting country, migration started to other areas. From the 1960s and 1970s onwards, there was a pull to Western Europe, the United States, and Canada. As of the 1990s, we see a large group of Armenian economic refugees moving from the former Soviet Union to the West.

Exact numbers are hard to find, especially because not all Armenians are registered in their host country as Armenians. Therefore, only rough estimates can be given. The numbers below give an impression of how the Great Diaspora in the twentieth century developed and how authors differ in their data (see Table 3.1).

The table shows that slightly less than half of the Armenian world population lives outside Armenia and most immigrants still live in the primary host countries—Georgia, Lebanon, Syria and Iran—that sheltered the first wave of refugees in 1915–1917 (Van Geel mentions 1,060,000 and Glimmerveen and Van Breevoort 900,000). The move to the West (United States/Canada and France) is estimated in both tables as 900,000. (Glimmerveen and Van Breevoort count 950,000 when Australia is included). It is important to bear in mind that these estimations were made

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[2] In the sixth century, the first Armenian monasteries were founded in Egypt and Palestine. In the seventh and ninth centuries, the first Armenian bishops arrived in Ireland and France (Demirdjian 1989: 1, 3).

Table 3.1 Geographic distribution of Armenians worldwide in the twentieth century

Van Geel (1986: 23)[a]		*Glimmerveen and Van Breevoort (1990: 22)*	
Worldwide:	6.8 million		5.3 million
Armenia:	4.4 million		3.2 million
Diaspora:	2.6 million		2.1 million
Azerbaidjan:	600,000		
Georgia:	600,000		
United States/Canada:	600,000		600,000
Lebanon:	200,000		
Syria:	110,000	Lebanon & Syria:	450,000
Iran:	150,000		450,000
France:	300,000		300,000
Argentina:	80,000		
Latin America:			150,000
Turkey:			50,000
Australia:			50,000
Other countries:			100,000

[a]I have taken the estimations of Van Geel and Glimmerveen and Van Breevoort from an "exercise-research proposal" written by Dolmans for the course Methods and Techniques III (given by Rody Aya), faculty PSCW at the University of Amsterdam

before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus, estimates differ considerably with the numbers given in the mid-1990s. The movements of migration, if we look at the course of time, appear as follows (see Table 3.2):

The term historical region refers to the Great Armenian Empire that includes present-day East and West Anatolia, Southeast Turkey, Armenia, and Karabakh and was surrounded by the Black Sea, Caspian Sea and Mediterranean Sea. The cultural border region refers to the present-day countries Georgia, Iran and Turkey. Considering the data in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, it is shown that more than half of the Armenian population (58%) is still living in or around the old historical region, and the largest groups live in present day Armenia, East Anatolia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaizjan. The increase in Armenians living in Armenia from 1925 to 1995, from 53 to 58%, is mostly caused by local population growth. There has been a decrease of Armenians living in East and West Anatolia. Between 1914 and 1925, at the height of the massacres, there was a

Table 3.2 Migration flows of the Armenian population throughout the twentieth century

Mouradian (1996: 121)		
1914	*1925*	*1995*
East Anatolia and Cilicia		
160,000	30,000	10,000
Istanbul and West-Anatolia		
3,500,000	50,000	40,000
Goevernorat Jerevan/Armenia		
670,000	743,000	3,300,000
Nagorno-Karabach		
170,000	117,000	150,000
Transcaucasus: Georgia-Azerbaizjan		
930,000	480,000	500,000
North-Caucasus, Crimea, Russia, Ukraine, Moldovo and Central Asia		
150,000	230,000	750,000
Iran		
100,000	220,000	140,000
Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus, Egypt, Kuwait, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Iraq		
30,000	200,000	350,000
Bulgaria, Romania, Greece		
100,000	200,000	125,000
France		
4000	80,000	350,000
Italy, Great Britain, Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany		
6000	20,000	150,000
United States of America, Canada		
60,000	150,000	950,000
Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Venezuela		
5000	20,000	100,000
India, Far East		
2000	4000	10,000
Australia		
30,000		
Historical region		
80%	53%	58%
Cultural border region		
19%	32%	12%
Remote Western region		
1%	15%	30%

decline of Armenians living in Armenia from 80 to 53%,[3] while in the cultural border regions there was a population rise of 13%. These data not only provide an indication of how many Armenians were actually killed, but also that survivors first fled to their neighbouring countries.

Examining the migration movements after 1925, it is apparent that migration towards the former Soviet states was relatively greater than migration movements towards the West; between 1925 and 1995 approximately 3 million Armenians fled to Soviet-Armenia, Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania and Central Asia, compared to the 1.5 million who fled to Western Europe, Australia, the United States and Canada. The migration to the West doubled, from 15 to 30% between 1925 and 1995. This can be divided into two main migration centres, the United States/Canada and France.

The Great Diaspora should not be underestimated. Push and pull factors caused the migration movements to be in constant flux. Of a total of 6.9 million Armenians, only 3.3 million (according to 1995 estimates) live in the Armenian Republic, with 1.4 million of whom live in the West; with the largest group living in the United States and Canada and Armenians in Europe living in France.

3.3 Demographic and Geographic Division in the Netherlands

The migration of Armenians to the Netherlands in the twentieth century was part of the Great Diaspora. The Armenian population in Western Europe is estimated at 500,000. 10,000–14,000 of those live in the Netherlands, according to my informants. Once again, the numbers are not exact, and this is due to two reasons. One, Armenians who are trying to gain asylum in the Netherlands do not register as Armenians, but instead register as citizens from their (host) country of origin. In other words, a Syrian-Armenian usually registers as a Syrian citizen, an Iraqi-Armenian as an Iraqi citizen, etc. Two, the numbers fluctuate due to the

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[3]This seems to be a small decline, but the historical region of Mouradian encompasses more than the Ottoman Empire. In some cities and towns in the Eastern and Southeastern part of the Ottoman Empire, the decline of Armenians was almost 95–99.9% in the region of Bitlis and Trabzon. See maps at: http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/mapping_armenian_genocide.php.

difficult asylum procedures in the Netherlands. For example, in 2003, when I did my primary research, an estimated 3000–4000 Armenians were waiting for their residence permit. It was unclear how many Armenians ultimately had to leave the Netherlands, how many had come in and/or how many disappeared into illegality. The Armenian Diaspora is constantly changing and should not be seen as a "fixed state," as Libaridian (1979) warns. Due to individual and personal motives, the composition of the Armenian society is in a constant state of flux. Since familial relations are spread out over several countries, it is relatively easy for an Armenian migrant to move to another country if a local legal asylum procedure doesn't succeed; the networks are already in place. The Armenian Diaspora is still a diaspora in the *making* both in size and composition.

3.3.1   *Demographic Division*

After I finished my 2003–2004 research, a new study on the Armenian population in the Netherlands was published in 2008. This research was partly financed by the Dutch government and partly financed by the Federation of Armenian Organizations in the Netherlands (FAON). The research methodology was quantitative. Although some of the new statistics differ from the findings I now present based on oral accounts and estimations, there are also similarities. According to FAON, the total number of Armenians living in the Netherlands was between 9000 and 15,000 in 2006 (FAON 2008: 42–43). Exact statistics were not available, but it was estimated that 4000 Armenians were from Turkey, 3000 from Iraq, 400 from Syria, 800 from Iran and 5000–6000 from Armenia (ibid.: 42). My findings differed somewhat. In my estimation in 2003, there was a larger group (approximately 5000) Armenians in the Netherlands of Turkish descent. If the FAON figures are correct and compared to my findings in 2003, changes in the Armenian community occurred and are visible. However, two critical notes must be made.

One, I have criticism of the quantitative methods used in the FAON research (which I elaborate on in Chap. 7 to show the omissions that were made in light of internal struggles within the Dutch Armenian diasporic community and its self-representation to the Dutch polity and public). I believe that Armenians from Turkish descent in particular were omitted

in the FAON research. This is partly to do with how the research was conducted and how the data were collected, and the fact that some Armenians of Turkish descent feel ostracized from the Armenian community in the Netherlands. Since specific statistics were not available, the FAON researchers used the databases of Armenian foundations and organizations in the Netherlands, which provided 1974 addresses (ibid.: 45). FAON researchers also searched for Armenian surnames in Dutch telephone books (ibid.: 45–47), which resulted in an additional 704 addresses. Furthermore, the study calculated that if the average family has 2.9 members, then at least 7766 Armenians were traced (ibid.: 47). Looking for surnames in the telephone book as a research strategy however is peculiar and fictitious from my perspective as an ethnographer. For one, Armenians from Turkish descent do not always have a biblical first name or a typical Armenian surname that ends with "ian" or "yan." Second, not all names that end with "ian" or "yan" are necessarily Armenian; people with a Persian background sometimes also carry a surname that ends with ian or yan. Avetisyan (2000) estimated "Armenian names" in the Netherlands to be 17,051, which is significantly higher than the estimated 15,000 stated above.

What makes these numbers even more questionable is that I know from my ethnographic data that not all Armenians are connected with an Armenian foundation and organization, *especially* not Armenians with a Turkish background. It is safer to say that the number of Armenians from Turkish descent living in the Netherlands is somewhere between the estimated 27% in the FAON research and the 40% that I estimated during my ethnographic research in 2003–2004. This estimation is of importance, especially if we compare the composition of the Dutch Armenian community with the Armenian communities in London and France.

The second critique I have of the FAON research is its lack of analysis. Chapter one of the book (pages 13–30) is an historical overview of the Armenian history; the second and third chapters (pages 31–63) describe how the research was conducted. Chapter four (pages 64–93) covers the results of the questionnaires given to 502 respondents (ibid.: 61). Chapter five (pages 94–104) summarizes the findings, and the pages 104–174 are appendixes and more quantitative results. Unfortunately, there are no, or few, explanations given for the statistics. The result is statistical data that is quite interesting, but also unusual. For example, FAON states that 45% of the Armenian respondents have pursued high education in the Netherlands (FAON 2008: 69). This is a higher rate

than any other minority group or even Dutch-born citizens. Compared to the 45% Armenian respondents, only 6% of Turkish citizens (non-Armenian) has a higher-education degree and 31% of Dutch-born citizens pursue higher education. This makes the Armenians the highest educated group in the Netherlands. If we compare these statistics with statistical data gathered in other diasporic communities, this high number of Armenians with higher education (bachelor's degree and above) could be partly explained by the *omission* of Armenians of Turkish descent in the FAON study. In research done in 2009 by Bakalian and Douglas on the Armenians in the United States, the authors state that immigrants from Turkey had the lowest educational levels in the Armenian diasporic communities (ibid.: 47). This finding coincides with my findings in 2003 and has nothing to do with the willingness of Armenians from Turkish descent to pursue higher education (as some Armenians within the Dutch diasporic community seem to believe), but rather with economic possibilities in Turkey. By omitting a large number of Armenians in the research, the statistical findings are immediately influenced.

A similar statistical curiosity in the FAON findings is related to entrepreneurship (FAON 2008: 78). According to FAON, 23.1% of Armenians are entrepreneurs, which is the highest of all ethnic groups in the Netherlands, even when compared to the 10.5–11.5% of Dutch entrepreneurs. My point is not that Armenians are not highly educated or don't show entrepreneurship. Bonacich (1973) points out that Armenians are a classic "middleman minority" because they had no access to political power, and were often victims of discrimination and pogroms, thus they relied on self-employment and craftsmanship more than other groups (ibid.: 583–594). My point is that there is no analysis given to the data. *Why* are the Armenians the most highly educated ethnic group in the whole of the Netherlands? *Why* were Armenians from Turkish descent omitted? *Why* do Armenians show such a high level of entrepreneurship? Data for other ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands and the Dutch-born population were taken from the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Netherlands. The Armenian data were taken from questionnaires that did not include all Turkish Armenians or Armenians not active within organizations and foundations. By only analysing portion of the Armenian population, and only providing statistical data as given facts, indirectly calls into question the data's accuracy, especially in contrast to the ethnographic data I collected. By only providing the results of the questionnaires without explanations, FAON gives the

impression that all Armenians are highly integrated in Dutch society and highly educated—better than any other ethnic group in the Netherlands including the Dutch themselves.[4] Something I will return to in Chap. 7.

I do not dismiss the FAON study, because it does provide an explorative starting point for further research on the demographics of Armenians in the Netherlands. I am critical and careful with the underlining assumptions that shaped the FAON's quantitative research results however and how Armenians of Turkish descent were omitted. For these reasons, I concentrate on the demographic data I collected in 2003–2004, since this data includes a larger portion of Armenians from Turkey.

There is another reason why I am careful of fully incorporating the results of the FAON research and this has more to do with the methodology. In this chapter, I compare the Dutch-Armenian community with the Armenian communities in France and London. I believe that the Dutch-Armenian community has very specific characteristics that could explain the struggles within the community that I witnessed during my fieldwork. Because my primary ethnographic research was done in 2003–2004 and was part of a bigger holistic approach in which there

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[4]Another curious example that is not explained in the study has to do with languages. I know through my interviews that most Armenians speak the language of their former host country in their family surroundings. This is especially true for Armenians of Turkish descent (as shown in later chapters) who do not necessarily speak Armenian. In the FAON study (page 153) it is stated that 31% of the respondents speak Armenian (no difference between East- and West-Armenian is made in the research), 34% speak Dutch and 35% speak an other language, including Arabic, Assyrian, German, English, Farsi, Kurdish, Turkish etc. (FAON 2008: 153). In this category ("other languages"), 24 languages are mentioned. If 27% of the Armenians in this study are of Turkish descent, we can safely presume that of the 35% that speaks another language, 27% at least speaks Turkish. The question then arises: who speaks the other 23 languages? This statistic seems to imply that the other 23 languages are spoken by the remaining 8% and the languages differ enormously from Farsi to Hebrew. I think that this discrepancy can be partly explained by the fact that many Armenians are bilingual or even trilingual (or in some cases even more). A more important reason could be that many Armenians of Turkish descent are omitted; this could have changed the language statistic drastically. It is also interesting that if 27%, according to FAON comes from Turkey: this makes the Turkish language is *not* a separate category, but is included in the category other languages. The anthropological question that arises is: why is the Turkish language that more than 25% of the Armenian population (at least) speaks, not seen as a separate and specific category?

was a comparative angle, I thought it was unfair to use demographic data published in 2008 that was only focused on the Netherlands. This would have given a crooked, if not unbalanced, analysis.

As mentioned earlier, the Armenian community worldwide is in a state of flux. No matter when research is performed, especially collecting demographic data, it will always be an analysis of a "specific moment in time." When this book is printed, the demographics of the Dutch Armenians will have already changed. Demographics can only show a frozen moment. However, this does not mean that demographics are not important. They give us a contextual backdrop and starting point to study *tendencies* within the community. Demographics tell us how populations are and how they might become. Unfortunately, demographics of Armenians don't explain culture or how respondents experience life in the Diaspora. For this, qualitative research gives us a far better insight, even if this insight changes over time.[5]

For this reason, I have decided to use a dual trajectory in this paragraph. Most of the findings that I express here are based on the findings that I gathered from 2003–2004 from a literature study written by Demirdjian (1988) and my conversations with informants. My informants included the leader of the Ararat foundation in Amsterdam, other prominent members of the Dutch-Armenian community and the Armenian ambassador in London. If my findings differ or coincide with the FAON's findings from 2008, I note this specifically. For although there are differences in the statistics, the differences are minimal in shaping the greater context of the Dutch-Armenian community.

In the contemporary diasporic community in the Netherlands there are a number of specific periods when Armenian immigrants entered the country. The demographics and character of the immigration flows differ for each period. The first period was in the 1950s and 1960s, the second 1960–1975, the third 1975 to the early 1980s and the fourth in the 1990s and onward. These so called flows of immigrants are an analytically fictitious division based mainly on the demographic and geographic backgrounds of the Armenian immigrants. In reality, you can distinguish smaller streams between the larger waves and in some cases the waves overlap.

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[5] This said, I do believe that cultural constructions and symbols, *because* they are built on previous constructions and symbols, change less than demographics, and especially when the constructions and symbols are colored by a significant event.

Between 1950 and 1960, 50 Armenian families from the Dutch Indies came to the Netherlands (Demirdjian 1988: 5). Many had lived in Indonesia before the Great Diaspora and were mostly merchants. This migration push happened when Indonesia declared independence in 1949, and non-Indonesian possessions were nationalized. Armenians living in Indonesia had the choice between an Indonesian or a Dutch citizenship. Some of them chose the Dutch citizenship and migrated to the Netherlands.

Between 1960 and 1975, the first large group of Turkish Armenians came to the Netherlands. This group consisted of approximately 400 individuals (ibid.: 5), who fled to Western Europe for political or economic motives. They were generally from the lower or middle classes and mainly came from Istanbul, Yozgat, Kayseri and Sivas.

The largest flow of Armenian immigrants came to the Netherlands from 1974 through the early 1980s, and included generally Turkish-Armenians who came as migrant workers from southeast Turkey, the regions of Diyarbakir and Shirnak, and were (in general) uneducated. Although these migrants were migrant workers due to the labour shortage in the Netherlands, their motives were political to a large extent.[6] The situation of Armenians in Turkey, especially in the 1980s was (and remains) volatile. Armenian political parties were prohibited and religious and community life was difficult due to special legislation and taxes for typical Armenian crafts.[7] There was open repression and discrimination. The Armenian language was prohibited in public and was only allowed to be used in Armenian schools in Istanbul, which is one of the reasons why many Armenians today from Turkish descent don't speak Armenian. The economic move to the West was more than an attempt to escape poverty, it was also an opportunity to leave a bad political situation *without* immediately becoming a political refugee. The estimations given to me of the number of Armenian migrants during this time was approximately 5000.

[6] During this time, the Netherlands had a shortage of laborers and had an open-door policy for migrant workers, which the Dutch government presumed would be temporary. This was a chance for Armenians living in Turkey to leave the Republic with its repressive laws against Armenians.

[7] For more information on the more recent situation of Armenians in Turkey, I refer to the report: *Human Rights Reviews, the situation of the Christian minorities of Turkey since the coup d'état of September 1980* of the Dutch Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees, Utrecht, June 1982.

During this period, the first Armenian organizations were founded in the Netherlands. These organizations were generally Turkish-Armenian at first, but the demographics changed over time. Even though no exact percentages are available, according to my informants in 2003–2004, 90% of the Armenians in the 1960s had a Turkish background. The language used in Armenian organizations during this time was mainly Kurdish or Turkish, although due to Armenian language courses, (Western) Armenian slowly started to become prominent.

Between 1950 and 1985, there were smaller migration streams. In 1956, the United Nations requested that the Netherlands grant asylum to several Armenian families from Greece. Between 1950 and 1985 there were also refugees from Iran, and this last group has a special place in the diasporic community because the Armenian community in Iran is interwoven with the history of Persia. Some families can trace their lineages back for centuries (Mouradian 1996: 125). This has significant consequences; contrary to the Armenians from Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Georgia and Armenia, who had experienced the violence between 1915 and 1917 or had fled to regions near their homeland, not all Armenians from Iran were *directly* affected by the genocide. In 1915, Armenians from Van (and later Armenians who had fled the Soviet regime in 1921) strengthened the Iranian communities, but not everyone from this area has a *personal* story in relation to the violence. Just like the Armenians from Indonesia, these Armenians experience the genocide as a collective and abstract trauma—something that was done to the Armenian people as a whole. It is important to realize that not all Armenian immigrants are direct descendants of the genocide victims. For some groups, such as the Armenians from Indonesia and Iran, the genocide has an abstract ethnic and national meaning.[8]

Since the mid-1990s, the composition of the Armenian community in the Netherlands has changed dramatically. Due to the first Gulf War, the Islamization in the Middle East and economic problems in the former Soviet republics, the last decade of the twentieth century saw many Armenians migrate from Iraq, Syria and Armenia. The estimations of these groups were quite rudimentary, but the respondents I spoke to

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[8]There are of course exceptions to the rule. I speak here of general tendencies. There were also survivors of the genocide in Iran and Indonesia, although in lower numbers compared to Syria, Iraq, Armenia, etc.

in the Dutch community estimated that there are now 2000 refugees from Iraq, 500 from Syria and an additional 700 from Iran.[9] There are also many Armenians who came from Armenia beginning in 2000 and onward; they were mostly economic refugees. The various estimates I heard about this group are too diverse to summarize in a rough number: some respondents said 500–1000 Armenians, while others spoke of approximately 5000 migrants (which makes the size of the total Armenian population approximately 10,000–14,000 in the Netherlands). Many of these Armenians have had ancestors who had survived the deportations from Turkey.

The arrival of Armenian "newcomers" has drastically changed the Armenian communal landscape. The dominant Turkish-Armenian community has now become a melting pot of Armenians with all sorts of backgrounds, since only 40% (in my estimations in 2003) now have a Turkish background and 60% come from other areas. This affects the language used in community centres and organizations. Nowadays, approximately 40–50% of Armenians in the Netherlands speak Western-Armenian as compared to 20–30% in the 1980s, while 30% (mainly the refugees from Armenia and Iran) speak Eastern-Armenian.[10] Host languages, in this case Dutch, is often used to cross language barriers.

3.3.2   *Geographical Division*

As with demographic data, it is hard to give an exact representation of the geographic division of Armenians in the Netherlands. Whereas the division of the 1970s and 1980s was mainly dependent on kinship (Armenians migrated to places where Armenian families already lived), settlement of Armenians in the 1990s and onward was decided by the Dutch government due to new asylum procedures.

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[9] These figures differ somewhat compared to the figures mentioned by FAON in 2008. As stated above, FAON estimates there were: 4000 Armenians from Turkey, 3000 from Iraq, 400 from Syria, 800 from Iran and 5000–6000 from Armenia (FAON 2008: 42).

[10] Although the Western- and Eastern-Armenians can understand each other, I have been told that the differences between the two main dialects are significant. One respondent said that although he spoke Western-Armenian fluently, he had had to "learn" Eastern-Armenian. The consequences this has on the Armenian community in general is an issue I discuss at length in Chap. 7.

Most Armenians living in Amsterdam come (generally) from Istanbul and central Anatolia. It is likely that kinship relations, job markets and push- and-pull factors have centralized these Armenians in the Dutch capital. In recent years, this group has been complemented by Armenians from Syria, Armenia, Iraq and Iran.

Almelo, the second largest Duth-Armenian centre, is mainly habited by Armenians from Shirnak, Turkey. Family ties and the textile industry brought the Armenians to this city since most Armenians from Shirnak were weavers (Demirdjian 1988: 7). When in the early 1970s the fabric industry suffered from labour shortages, many Armenians moved from Shirnak to Almelo. In the 1980s and 1990s, this community expanded with the addition of Armenians from Iraq.[11] Almelo is the only place in the Netherlands, aside from Amsterdam, with an Armenian Church.

In addition to Amsterdam and Almelo, there are also Armenians concentrated around Dordrecht, The Hague, Rotterdam, Leiden, Amersfoort and Assen. Here are generally Armenians from Iran, Armenia, Turkey (Istanbul) and Syria. In Amersfoort, there are also Armenians from Greece (Demirdjian 1990). In 2003, Assen was a relatively new community in comparison to the other cities and included mainly new Armenians, who were awaiting asylum status. Since this is merely a broad outline, I have left out smaller Armenian migration groups from Egypt, Israel, India and Georgia.

If we take the FAON's percentages as a baseline, 4000 Armenians from Turkey, (ibid.: 42) and compare them to my statistics of the Armenian community in 2003 (5000), the Turkish-Armenian presence in the Netherlands changed drastically. There is a discrepancy: maybe because the demographics have changed since 2003 or because Armenians from Turkish-descent had been omitted. This change is more obvious if we look at the percentages used. The approximately 40% of Armenians of Turkish descent, as I stated above, has to be corrected to 26.6% if we assume FAON's baseline of 15,000 total Armenians. It is important to be careful with this conclusion since both estimates in my research as with FAON's are not exact and as explained above, many Armenians of Turkish descent are omitted in the FAON research; it is safest to presume that 26–40% of the Armenians living in the Netherlands today have a Turkish background.

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[11] Shirnak borders Iraq. Due to families, intermarriage and trade, many relationships have developed between Turkish and Iraqi Armenians. One has to keep in mind that many "Iraqi Armenians" are descendants of Armenians who survived the deportations of 1915–1917.

3.3.3   Social-Economic Position

The social economic position of the Armenian immigrants depends on their country of origin, education, and when they came to the Netherlands. The first wave of Armenians now have a social economic position equal to the Dutch.

For Armenian immigrants of Turkish descent, the region of origin, level of education and traditional crafts are of crucial importance of their position in the Netherlands (Demirdjian 1990: 9). Armenians in Istanbul were often uneducated or had little education, although they—in comparison to other areas in Turkey—had more opportunities to achieve education. This is because in Istanbul there were Armenian schools, contrary to other parts in Turkey. Unfortunately, these schools are subjected to discriminatory legislation,[12] thus, some Armenian children do not attend these schools. In addition, not all Armenians are born in Istanbul; many come from the East and move to the city to look for work. When these Armenians come to the Netherlands, most have had only a basic education. Second, many Armenian boys are generally pressured to leave school early to find work, so the level of education of Armenian women from Istanbul is higher than Armenian men.

In southeastern Turkey, the opposite is true. Here, again, Armenians are usually less educated and one third has no education at all. Illiteracy is the highest in this region. The causes for this lie partly in the continued feudal and rural society. There are no Armenian schools, so males go to Turkish schools while women are traditionally raised at home and do not receive any formal education (see Sepojan 1988 for more information regarding education in southeastern Turkey). This is one of the main reasons why women from these areas, according to research in 1988, do not participate in the Dutch job market (Demirdjian 1988: 8).

If possible, Armenians in the Netherlands continue with their traditional trades. In general, Armenians from Istanbul work in retail and jewellery, while Armenians from southeastern Turkey work in the fabric industry. Due to the declining job market in the Netherlands at the end of the 1980s and saturation in several job trades, many Armenians were forced to find work in other industries. Only one in ten still works in a traditional trade. One quarter of Armenians in the Netherlands work in the restaurant business (ibid.: 9).

[12] See also: *Human Rights Review, the situation of the Christian minorities of Turkey since the coup d'état of September 1980* of the Dutch Interchurch Aid and Service to Refugees, Utrecht, June 1982.

The low level of education on the one hand, and the saturated job market on the other, has determined that the social-economic position of Armenians of Turkish descent is relatively low. Recent numbers are not available, but in 1985, 25% of this group was unemployed (ibid.: 8, 9). Exceptions to this social-economic status are the Armenians of Turkish descent who were born in the Netherlands or came to the Netherlands at a young age. They have often enjoyed a Dutch education and have a much stronger economic position in the job market in comparison to their parents.

For the immigrants who came to the Netherlands during the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is too early to give a description of their employment status, especially since many are still awaiting residency status. However, the impression I got during my field research is that the Armenians from Syria, Iraq, Armenia and Iran are usually higher educated than Armenians from Turkey. Iranian-Armenians have a special position; they are the best educated Armenians in the Netherlands (ibid.: 9), due mainly to the Armenian community's privileged position before the Iranian revolution in 1979. They were well-educated merchants and belonged to the upper social classes who fled Iran after the revolution (Mouradian 1996: 125). Iranian-Armenians often came to the Netherlands by going through other host countries.

In the paragraphs above, I have given a contextual outline of the Armenian community in the Netherlands and the multiple sub-groups who are part of this community. Because there are so many sub-groups within the Armenian community, with various economic and social backgrounds, it is hard give a specific description. According to FAON research, 55% of the Armenians between the ages of 15 and 64 are employed (FAON 2008: 99), and Armenians have the lowest unemployment rate compared to other ethnic minorities in the Netherlands mainly because Armenians born in the Netherlands generally have the same education and social and economic position as the native Dutch population (ibid.: 99).

Even though I agree that there is a great entrepreneurship among Armenians and that education is very important to many Armenians I spoke to, it is important not to overemphasize or magnify these percentages and thus give an unjustified portrayal of the community. In some statistics, the Armenians are better integrated in mainstream Dutch society than other migrant groups and harder to distinguish as a separate group than the Dutch in various geographic locations.

As stated above, I believe that a majority of Armenians of Turkish descent with a low education were excluded from the FAON statistics. This influenced the outcome of the FAON study drastically. The outcome of research should not be a reflection of how the community *wants* to be perceived, but rather show the community as *it is* in all shades and plurality. It is important that the outcome is not a mirage or a reflection, but instead an objective portrayal of a much more complicated truth. If the statistics do not give a proper portrayal, which I believe FAON fails to do, they give an unfounded standing of the community. By omitting Armenians from Turkish descent, they give the Armenian community a higher standing than it actually has.

This implicit bias in the statistical data has nothing to do with an unwillingness on the part of Armenians of Turkish descent to participate in the Dutch job market, for they work hard and most of them *are* employed, albeit not always in high employed positions. Unemployment is actually a bit higher among educated Armenians from non-Turkish descent, who were isolated for a long period of time in the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century, due to difficult asylum procedures in the Netherlands (see also FAON 2008: 100). FAON's exclusion or at least downplaying of the numbers of Turkish-Armenians, which paints a more synchronized and less conflicted community, dismisses the struggles and nuances the community has had to endure. The FAON results do not explain how Armenians experience *their* community in the Netherlands or how they struggle in maintaining their identity. *These* issues are (ironically) the main concerns in the statutes of the organizations and foundations and lives of the respondents I spoke to. These are the issues that stir the most passionate dialogues and heated arguments during organized or unorganized debates.[13] To understand how Armenians experience their culture and identity, we have to look more closely at the communal life of Armenians living in the Netherlands.

[13]When my Dutch book was released in 2009, I was criticized by prominent figures of the Armenian organizations and foundations, that I had painted the Armenian community too bleakly and over-emphasized their struggles. One main founder of FAON stood up and gave a whole monologue and lecture about this. The irony was that the audience, mostly consisting of Armenians, disagreed with his analysis and even started booing him. I didn't have to defend myself; my audience did this. (At one point, someone stood up and asked: "You tell me what a true Armenian is?") I always found it very unfortunate that the leaders of Dutch Armenian community didn't see the importance of what I was trying to convey, which was that the struggles today are a direct result of the Armenian genocide of 1915–1917.

3.4   Community Life in the Netherlands

The Armenian community in the Netherlands is divided. Several times, I witnessed intense discussions revolving around the question of who *is* and who is *not* a *real* Armenian. This also becomes clear from the following observation I wrote down in my research diary:

> We are chatting informally about the Armenian community in Amsterdam when suddenly my respondent explodes with irritation. "The Armenians from Turkey are not interested in politics at all. They only visit their family and sometimes the church (…) They do not even speak the Armenian language". Several weeks ago, I had heard a similar complaint about this, but reversed. Then, a Turkish-Armenian complained about the lack of religiosity amongst non-Turkish Armenians.

I return to these conflicts in Chap. 7. Now, I outline the structural backgrounds in which these conflicts take place. Although the demographic battle between Turkish Armenians and non-Turkish Armenians can come from a power struggle between the old Armenian leaders within organizations, who generally involve those from Turkish descent and the new Armenian communal leaders from non-Turkish descent, I am of the opinion that there are greater processes at play. I now focus on the four main institutions that shape the diasporic communities in the Netherlands: the church, political parties, foundations/organizations and family. Later, I compare these institutions with similar institutions in France and London.

3.4.1   Church

The Armenian Apostolic Church has historically been a symbol of unity for Armenian society. While Armenia was continually overrun by Byzantine, Persian, Arabic and later Ottoman powers, the Orthodox Church was the only institution that could guarantee political independence and limited autonomy for Armenians (Demirdjian 1989: 10). However, through the centuries, the Church has been subjected to various schisms.

In 301 AD, after 14 years of imprisonment, Gregory The Enlightener convinced King Tiridates IV that Christianity was the only righteous

belief and thus, Christianity was declared the state religion in Armenia.[14] In 451 AD, the Armenians separated from the Byzantine Church and together with the Syrian-Jacobitic and Coptic Church formed the first monophysite Church.[15] Pressure from the Byzantine Church (and later from Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism) led to conversions and schisms inside the religious community. In addition to the Apostolic Church (also referred to as the Gregorian Church), Armenian Catholic and Protestant churches were founded, all of which were allowed to build their own schools and received the distinct juridical status of *millet* within the Ottoman Empire (ibid.: 10, 11).

It is important to remember that until the nineteenth century, Armenians mainly identified with kinship and religion and not with a national or ethnic group, as assumed by my respondents (Ter Minassian 1981: 42). The Armenian national identity, as we know it now, started to develop in the nineteenth century after the example of other national movements in Europe and when the Armenian identity went through a renaissance (Demirdjian 1989: 4).[16] Religious identity was slowly replaced by a national identity and it was then that the influence of the Armenian Church waned and political parties started to exercise power.

The largest schism in the Armenian Church took place during the Great Diaspora when the catholicon in Turkey was forced to move from Sis (in Cilicia) to Antelias (in Lebanon) due to the mass killings and deportations. The religious centre of the main catholicon at that time resided in Estjmiadzin, Armenia and the catholicon of Sis fell directly under his governance. Shortly after the catholicon moved, Estjmiadzin fell under Soviet governance, and the Tashnak party—a fierce opponent of Soviet regime in Armenia—seized the opportunity to create a new religious centre. They started to work closely with the recently relocated catholicon in Antelias and deliberately caused a schism within the church, so they could gain more influence over the waxing diasporic communities[17] (Demirdjian 1989: 13, 14).

[14] 301AD, 303AD are often stated. It is assumed that the Armenians were the first people to embrace Christianity. Historians do not necessarily agree with these dates. According to some scientists, Tiridates only converted to Christianity in 314AD and this was after the Roman Empire Galerius (293AD–311AD) called for tolerance of Christians on his deathbed, and after 312AD when Constantin converted to Christianity (Redgate 1998: 116, 117).

[15] Monophysite refers to the doctrine that Jesus did not have a separate divine and human nature, but only one, a human divinity.

[16] Armenians also refer to this renaissance as *veradznoent* (rebirth).

[17] This was a particularly fierce battle, which led to the death of an archbishop in 1933.

These developments had far-reaching consequences for Armenian immigrants in the Netherlands. Armenians of Turkish descent have a *discourse* about being Armenian that differs from other Armenian immigrants. Immigrants from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Iran are politicized to a larger extent due to the intermix of church and political institutions. Religion has a political dimension for these immigrants, due to the influence of the Antelias catholicon. In Turkey, religion is mainly a tool to experience and practice the Armenian identity inside the church or at home. Identity in Turkey is, therefore, covertly intertwined with religion.

This is exemplified by how landlords in eastern Turkey still refer to Armenians. I have been told that on some occasions an *aga* (landlord) will call an Armenian *Felhé me* (my Christian), to which Armenians usually answer *Es ghoelam, es beni* (your servant, your being), showing how important religious identity is in daily interactions. Religion influences how Armenians are addressed, why they have a distinct position in society and their place in the rural and patron-client hierarchy. Religion and the Armenian identity cannot be separated. It is the basis of an Armenian identity, and also the reason why they have fled from Turkey.[18] Armenians from other regions have a political *discourse* about their Armenian identity in addition to their religious *discourse*.

[18]Of course, there are several careful side notes to be made. The Armenians from Istanbul come from an entirely different society than the Armenians from eastern Turkey. Istanbul, for example, has 30 apostolic churches, 10 Protestant and Catholic churches, 19 elementary schools, 2 high schools and Armenian newspapers. Thus, there are more possibilities to express an Armenian identity there than in south-eastern Turkey (Mouradian 1996: 126). Still, these differences should not be overestimated. In Istanbul, Armenians are often less politicized than Armenians from other countries. This is mainly expressed in the indignation that many Armenians feel towards the Armenians in the diaspora. On 23 September 2001, the patriarch and spiritual leader of 10,000 Orthodox Armenians in Turkey, Mesrob II, commented on a resolution in the United States about the recognition of the genocide: "I do not believe anybody here will profit from it and I believe that it will harm the Turkish-Armenian relations" (NRC Handelsblad, 23 September 2001, "*Turkije en VS botsen over Armeniërs*"). [Turkey and United States collide over Armenia—translation by author.] A similar statement can also be found in another article. Here, an Armenian shopkeeper gives the following answer in regard to the renewed international interest in the genocide: "It might be easy for Armenians abroad to keep the issue hot. But here in Turkey, we have to live together with the Turks. Here, I have never been discriminated because of my background. And I would like to keep it that way. My Turkish friends see me as Devrim and not as Devrim, the Armenian. Okay, it was tragic what happened 85 years ago, but it happened 85 years ago" (*Trouw*, 9 February 2001, "*Een taboe op de helling*"). [Scrutinizing another taboo—translation by author.] This statement is questionable and could have been made under conditions of fear and government pressure.

3.4.2   Political Parties

There are three main Armenian political parties with roots in the nineteenth century, when Armenian intellectuals were inspired by the national and Marxist movements in Europe and Russia. The first political party was the *Armenakan* founded in Van in 1885. It was a nationalistic movement whose aim included autonomy within the borders of the Ottoman Empire and protection of Armenians against Kurdish attacks (Demirdjian 1989: 18). In 1921, after deportations and the mass killings, the party merged with the *Constitutional Democratic Party* (founded in 1908) and changed its name to *Ramgawar Azadakan*. The party has a liberal-democratic orientation (ibid.: 20).

In 1887 the *Hntsjaksoetoen* party was founded in Geneva. This was a Marxist-inspired party that placed the emancipation of Turkish Armenians at the top of its programme in contrast to Marxism and the international revolution. This led to several rows and schisms, in which some people aligned with the *Reformed Hunchak* and others with smaller socialist parties (Matossian 1962: 23). When the Soviet Union occupied Armenian in 1920, both the *Hntsjak* and the *Ramgawar* saw this as a temporary solution for the foundation of an independent Armenian Republic. They reasoned that Armenia would disappear as a whole or would be occupied if it did not have Russian protection (Ternon 1983: 121).

In 1890, the *Tasjnak* party (*Federation of Armenian Revolutionaries*) took a completely alternative stance. This party was also inspired by nationalistic and Marxist influences, but when the temporary *Tasjnak* government in the Second Armenian Republic of 1919–1920 was overthrown by Russian Bolshevists, the party turned against the Soviet regime in Armenia. Not only did the Armenians in Turkey need to be liberated, but Armenia had to be freed from the Soviet rule as well (according to the *Tasjnak*). The *Tasjnak* considered itself to be a government in exile and felt responsible for all Armenians in the diaspora. It started alliances with host governments, made concessions to local organizations and used religious institutions to increase their power over Armenians. Even today the *Tasjnak* have influence in Iran, Syria, Lebanon and the United States, although according to their claims they have reached 50–60% of the Armenians in diasporic communities (Hofmann 1985: 298).

What all these parties have in common today is that they all want an independent Armenian Republic, all claim territorial rights in eastern Turkey (historically West Armenia) and all want formal recognition of the mass killings of 1915–1917. The way to achieve this, however, differs depending on the party.

Over recent decades there has been a shift in the interests of the parties who are involved in the diasporic communities. Where at first the Armenian issue was the key focus, now the preservation of an Armenian identity is the primary goal. In Armenian this is also called *hajabahbanoem*. The parties tried to address *hajabahbanoem* by exercising influence on the diasporic communities. For instance, political parties govern social and cultural organizations, erect sport, youth and women's associations, finance schools and scholarships and defend their views in newspapers and magazines (Demirdjian 1989: 21). The branches of the parties, especially the *Tashnak* party, are deeply rooted in most diasporic communities (read: non-Turkish communities). As a consequence, Armenians from Syria, Iraq and other non-Turkish areas (where the parties can exercise influence) are much more politicized. Their view of the world and identity is mixed with a political discourse.

It is difficult to ascertain to what extent these political parties are also active in the Netherlands, but that they are active became clear during the commemoration of the genocide on 24 April 2003. There were two commemorations taking place at the same time. The first was a commemorative service in Assen that was mainly sacral and informative in nature. The second was a demonstration in The Hague, where people were protesting the denial of the genocide by the Dutch government. It would be too black and white to state here that the commemoration in Assen was mainly visited by Turkish Armenians and the demonstration in The Hague by non-Turkish Armenians. These claims lose sight of the dynamics of everyday life. People are continuously influenced by each other and sometimes, practical motives—such as place of residence and employment—have a decisive role. Still, I can carefully claim that the Armenians in The Hague were mainly aligned with and/or influenced by political parties and political notions and that this was much less the case in Assen.

There is another indicator that reflects the contradiction between religious and political discourses in the Dutch-Armenian community; many Turkish-Armenians I spoke to were neither present in Assen nor The Hague. The attendance at both commemorations was relatively low. I heard several reasons for this in the field. The most persistent explanation was that many Turkish-Armenians felt too insecure due to the conflicts

in the community and did not know which commemoration to attend.[19] They had difficulty choosing between a political and a religious affinity.[20] These contradictions in the political and religious discourse are discussed more in-depth in Chap. 7. Now I examine other institutions that have meaning for the Dutch-Armenian diasporic community.

3.4.3   *Foundations and Other Organizations*

When I did my research in 2003–2004, the Netherlands counted 10 Armenian organizations. However, this number is subject to change due to internal conflicts. These organizations all have a similar goal: to maintain and cultivate the Armenian identity (Demirdjian 1989: 52) and to stimulate the integration of Armenians in Dutch society.[21] This is done by organizing parties, gatherings and lectures, writing newsletters, organizing Armenian education (usually teaching the Armenian language), and collaborating with the Armenian Church, as well as by simply *existing*. What I mean by this, is that the foundations are informal; they provide a space where Armenians can come together (often after church on Sunday), games are played and, while drinking a cup of tea or coffee, the Armenian issue and situation in the Netherlands and/ or Armenian politics are discussed.

[19] Other explanations I have heard are that both ceremonies were badly organized and that many Armenians did not know that there would be a commemoration on the 24 April. (Due to the importance of this date, however, I question this explanation.) Other respondents were afraid that the Turkish secret service might have been present during both commemorations; these respondents had families in Turkey and did not want to endanger their family members by participating in the commemoration services.

[20] It is important to keep in mind that for many Turkish-Armenians political discourse is a relatively new phenomenon. Many Armenian parties are banned in Turkey. In particular, older Turkish-Armenians (second generation) have problems with this. Younger Turkish-Armenians are far more politicized.

[21] For instance, the goal is verbalized in the charters of the "Armenian Cultural Foundation Abovian" in The Hague. It says: "The foundation aims to: (1) maintain the Armenian identity and the Armenian ethnic and religious traditions. (2) to stimulate the cultural and friendly relations between the Dutch and the Armenian people and (3) the strengthening of the cultural and friendly relations of the Armenian community in the Netherlands with the motherland Armenia and the Armenia community in Diaspora." Although I have not read all charters of all foundations and organizations, I know through interviews, that all foundations have similar goals.

The organizations are well attended, although it is difficult to provide exact numbers. It is also difficult to estimate how many Armenians are of Turkish descent and how many are of non-Turkish descent. The general tendency that I observed, especially in Amsterdam where I did most of my research, is that during informal gatherings on Sunday there are more non-Turkish Armenians present than Turkish Armenians. This is peculiar because Amsterdam has a large Turkish-Armenian population due to their extended family networks; thus, they are not solely dependent on these organizations to meet other Armenians.[22] Still, I am convinced that every Armenian, whether they are active or not, knows where to find an Armenian organization. I have not yet met a single Armenian who has never visited one.

And here, perhaps, is the most important function of these organizations, which is so self-evident that my respondents never mentioned it during their discussions. The organizations bridge the gap between the various political, regional and religious backgrounds. Armenians come together and political and religious differences (which are emphasized in Church or in a political party) are obscured. The organizations are ultimately the places where the negotiation between the subjective world and the inter-subjective world takes place, or as Jackson points out (2002: 14), where respondents can place their subjective experiences in a larger framework. This is where webs of meanings take shape, and social symbols are confirmed, changed, or renewed. This is probably the main reason why discussions about the Armenian identity (and as we shall see later on, the endless conversations about who and who isn't a real Armenian), find expression within the organizations. The inter-subjective world of the political parties, non-believers and the Church clash with each other at these informal gatherings, so an Armenian identity is not defined in the Church nor at a political rally but at the playing field within the organizations.

3.4.4   Kinship Relations

Families are of considerable importance, as Pattie (1997) in her study on Armenian communities in Cyprus and London emphasizes: "the family is the unit that reproduces new Armenians, educates them, and persuades

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[22]A second reason that some of my respondents gave was that Turkish-Armenians have a minority complex in relation to non-Turkish Armenians and do not come to these organizations easily. The extent to which this is true is difficult to determine and depends on the narrator's point of view. (This comment was often made by non-Turkish Armenians.) I return to this tension at length in Chap. 7.

them to "be" Armenian and continue the nation" (ibid.: 144). Due to overwhelming barriers in the Armenian community (see also Chap. 2), I was not able to research the influence of families and kinship networks in the Dutch Armenian community adequately. I can, however, describe some general tendencies.

First, family networks are of greater importance and have played a larger role for Armenians from Turkish descent than for those from other countries. This has to do with the time of immigration and not the Armenians' preferences or the extent to which they appreciate family life. Turkish Armenians, as noted earlier, came to the Netherlands during times of considerable labour shortages. They came as migrant workers and enlarged their family networks by Dutch laws of family reunification. Today, for new groups of Armenians (the fourth wave), this is generally more difficult. They are now coming as economic refugees and are often forced to leave their families. They simply do not have access to the kinship networks that the Turkish Armenians have. Second, familial networks are international and not bound to a country. Many of the Turkish Armenians I have spoken to have families in Belgium, Germany and France.

3.5   The Armenian-Dutch Community in a Comparative Perspective

To have a deeper understanding of the Armenian-Dutch community, I compared it with the Armenian communities in both France and England (London). While this is not a balanced comparison (as explained in Chap. 2), it is a comparison that helps to contextualize the Dutch-Armenian community within Europe. My comparison with France is mainly based on desk research, while my comparison with British Armenians in London stemmed from field research. It was not the Armenian communities in each location that I was interested in, but rather it was the processes of identity making at the core of community building that I studied. I wanted to see which cultural elements of identity making were transcendental to local communities and which elements were cultural or even communally specific. I wanted to use the communities in France and London as a backdrop to carve the shadows and nuances *within* the Dutch-Armenian community.

The community in the Netherlands is after all a small community in the whole diaspora. Therefore, we cannot artificially separate the diasporic community in the Netherlands from the Great Diaspora in Europe. However, it is also impossible to create a holistic and complete view of both the communities in France and London. Communities are in a state of flux and the primary research I conducted (2003–2004) may not reflect changes in the communities over time. There are undoubtedly cracks and crumbs and unexplored territories in my research or even unanswered questions. If my approach is not holistic, then my representation cannot be holistic either. So, I sketch broad outlines of the two communities, with all their faults and complexities, and without an in-depth analysis of their internal dynamics.

The comparisons are not accidental. Both the London and French Armenian diasporic communities are in Western Europe. Second, France is the oldest "modern" Armenian community in Europe, while the London Armenian community is relatively new. What is important is that the stage of the French-Armenian community and the composition of the community in London contrast dramatically with the Dutch-Armenian community. This explains (partly) the struggles within the Dutch-Armenian community that I witnessed (and which I explain further in Chaps. 7 and 8) as well as the various nuances and shadows of the composition of the Armenian community in the Netherlands. The causes of these struggles should be found not in the specific elements of the communities alone, but rather in the common experience of genocide. Although the communities in France, London and the Netherlands differ, and *the way identities are expressed* differ, the fixation on identity and giving meaning to the genocidal experiences are transcendental (and therefore non-spatial) in nature.

3.5.1   *France*

France has one of the oldest Armenian communities in Europe with approximately 350,000 members (Mouradian 1996: 121). In 1914, there were 4000 Armenian living there, and by 1925, this number had risen to 30,000. There were three distinct migration waves. The first wave from 1915 to 1932, the second wave between 1959 and 1986, and the third wave after 1975. These waves are analytical abstractions as

were the previous waves. Between these waves, there were smaller migration streams and the second and third wave actually overlap. What makes them differ from each other are the migrants' demographic backgrounds of origin and the motives of the migration movements (Demirdjian 1989: 23, 24).

The first wave of Armenians were immediate refugees from the genocide and came directly from Turkey or the refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Bulgaria, and Greece.[23] There were several reasons why Armenians came to France. One reason was that the refugee camps were overcrowded and the hosting countries were not capable of sheltering the refugees. Due to France's close connections with the host countries, moving to France seemed natural. Another reason was that France was responsible for a national shelter for the Armenians in Cilicia according to international peace treaties (ibid.: 24). Another motive was less altruistic. France was suffering from a chronic labour shortage, partly due to World War I, mainly in agriculture and the confection industry. Many Armenians, including orphans and widows, were drawn to these jobs. The first big wave mainly consisted of artisans. This changed in the 1950s and 1960s. Whereas 50% of Armenians in 1926 performed unschooled labour, this percentage had shrunk to 4% (ibid.: 29) due to the upward mobility of the first wave and that the migrants of the second wave were generally better educated.

The second wave (1959–1986) consisted mainly of refugees from (in declining numbers) Syria, Soviet Armenia, and Turkey. These migrants were not direct refugees of the genocide, but rather refugees from the political situation after the genocide in the Middle East and Turkey. In Syria, this was the 1958-drafted national campaign, when Armenian schools were closed and Armenian education was forbidden. Another factor was the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1967, which caused another fresh stream of Armenian refugees into France (ibid.: 25). In the migration stream of the Soviet Armenians, both economic and political uncertainty played a major role. The failed repatriation to Armenia after negotiations between France and the Soviet Union caused many French Armenians to return to France in 1976 (ibid.: 26). Refugees from Turkey who had come before 1975 mainly originated from Istanbul. Between 1956 and

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[23] France is one of the few western European countries that took in refugees during WWI.

1965, tension in Istanbul between Armenians and Turks increased as Armenian churches and school were closed, shops were vandalized and widespread public intimidation was evident.

The economic background of this second wave of immigrants was thus significantly different from the first wave. There were both academics and highly educated refugees (mainly from Soviet Armenia and Syria) as well as students, labourers and retailers from Istanbul (ibid.: 27). The third wave of Armenians (from 1975 until roughly the late 1980s) comprised Iranian, Lebanese and eastern Turkish immigrants. This last group included mainly farmers, who were less educated.

Although the exact data was not known when I conducted my research, it can be assumed that migration to France in the 1990s unfolded for the same reasons as migration to the Netherlands, since there was an increase at that time in both countries of (economic and humanitarian) Armenian migrants from Iraq, Armenia and Syria.

The main difference in Armenian migration to France compared to the Netherlands is the size and time span. In France, during the 1990s, there was a considerable longer process of integration.[24] The Armenian community in France is well organized with 40 churches, several youth and political organizations, schools, libraries, social-cultural institutions, regional and veterans organizations, etc. (ibid.: 33, 34). Armenian political parties are more active in France than in the Netherlands.

Although exact numbers are absent, the Armenian community's situation in France is due to the history of migration to the country being more politically involved. There were a number of political activists among the first wave from the refugee camps in Syria, Egypt and Greece. An indication for this can be found in the number of youth organizations that aligned with political parties in an early stage of community building. The organization *Nor Seroent*, for example, was already aligned with the *Tashnak* party in the 1920s. UCFAF (*Union Culturelle Francaise*

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[24] I deliberately use the word integration here, and not assimilation, as Demirdjian (1989) does in her thesis. I find that assimilation is used too loosely and inaccurately, as I explain further in this book. It is true that the French language has become the main language of communication among Armenians in France, mixed marriages have risen to 54% and the level of education of an Armenian born in France is as high as that of the French native (ibid.: 31, 32). Still, I do not think you can measure assimilation in this way. Assimilation means dissolving into a society and disappearing in it, and based on the dense networks of Armenian organizations in France this is not the case. Armenians are integrated, not assimilated, and the use of this word says more about the fear that comes with the word assimilation, than about the factual developments on the ground.

des Arméniens de France), later the *Jeunesse Arménienne de France*, was founded directly after World War II by the *Hntsjak* party (ibid.: 34). Several women's organizations, such as the *Comité de Défense da la Cause Arménienne*, worked closely with the Tashnaks (ibid.: 36).

In the 1970s, there was another indicator that illustrated the presence of political parties in France, which was the sympathy for and the presence of radical organizations. An example of this is the *Armée Secrète Arménienne pour la Libération de l'Arménie* founded in Lebanon and which committed terrorist attacks against Turkish diplomats. This organization became part of the French *Mouvement National Arménien pour l'ASALA* (ibid.: 38).[25] Another example is the left-radical newspaper *Haj Bajkar* (Armenian Struggle) written in French especially for French Armenians (ibid.: 37).

What I focus on here is that the Armenian diasporic community in France, contrary to the Netherlands, has a far larger network and that the various parties and organizations are strongly embedded in politics. The first wave of Turkish Armenians is now integrated in France and the now relatively small group of Turkish Armenians and for those who came later, can rely on those networks and settled relationships. Although I do not doubt that from the emic point of Armenian respondents, the Armenian identity in France is of considerable importance (made clear by the number of foundations and organizations), I believe that the available networks and possibilities to learn Armenian, makes the struggle for identity less problematic than in the Netherlands. In France, there are considerably more opportunities to learn the Armenian language, become politically active and integrated into the Armenian community. Therefore, potential clashes between religious and political interpretations of ethnic identities can be breached.

Since many Armenian political organizations were already active in the early stages of community building, an Armenian identity in France is much more politicized than a Dutch-Armenian identity. Proof of this is shown in the strong lobbying that made it possible for denial of the Armenian genocide to become a criminal offence in 2012.[26]

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[25] It is important to keep in mind that the parties officially denied any ties with these organizations.

[26] A French court overruled this law as "unconstitutional" on 28 February 2012.

3.5.2   *England (London)*[27]

Like the Netherlands, England has a long history of Armenian migration. The first Armenians were already living in Manchester in 1830 and in 1870–1871 the first Armenian Church was built. Early Armenian migrants in London were mainly textile merchants from Iran and the Ottoman Empire, who saw their numbers swell with Armenians from other countries during the time of the Great Diaspora. These new Armenians were mainly refugees from Cyprus, Iran, Lebanon and Turkey.

To narrow my research, I focused my study on London because, first, the community in London came into being during the Great Diaspora (as in France and the Netherlands), and second, because I had already conducted field research in London.[28] London has experienced several distinct waves of migration in the years 1915–1920. In 1923, a small group of Armenians from Istanbul founded an Armenian Church with the aid of an Armenian millionaire. The community comprised approximately 100 members. In the 1950s, this group slowly increased to 500 Armenians, and also founded several political parties (Pattie 1997: 127).

The second wave of immigrants was larger and came from the late 1950s until the early 1970s. These Armenians fled to the United Kingdom due to the struggle for independence in Cyprus. This migration reached a peak in 1974 when there was a coup d'état in Cyprus when an anti-Turkish guerrilla movement seized power. Turkey launched a short invasion to end the civil war that had erupted in Cyprus (ibid.: 36); however, 2000–2500 Armenians had fled to United Kingdom by then.

The reason to escape to the United Kingdom was self-evident for many Armenians. At that time, Cyprus was a British colony and many Armenians were British citizens. Fears of a Turkish backlash was

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[27] I acquired all the data I use in this paragraph through interviews with Snork Bagdassarian, pastor of the Armenian Church in London, and the Armenian ambassador, also based in London.

[28] My knowledge of the Armenian community in Manchester is limited since I could not extend my field research to this second largest Armenian community in the United Kingdom due to time constraints.

enormous. The Armenian migrants emanated mostly from the middle class—merchants, shopkeepers and office workers (Sabbagh 1980: 17) and settled in London.

In the 1950s and 1960s, there was a small group of Armenian migrants from India. These were Armenians who had the opportunity to return to the United Kingdom after Indian independence. This group consisted of approximately one thousand Armenians and were generally highly educated and prosperous (ibid.: 18).

The third wave of Armenian migration, refugees from Lebanon and Iran, started in the middle of the 1970s and lasted until the late 1980s. This wave was a direct consequence of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, the Iranian revolution in 1979, and the bloody war between Iraq and Iran in the 1980s. In total, approximately one thousand Lebanese-Armenians and 5000–6000 Iranian Armenians fled to the United Kingdom. In both cases, the groups were generally prosperous and highly educated.

Since the 1990s (the so-called fourth wave), there has been an increase in economic refugees from Armenia and Georgia. The exact number at the moment of my research (2003–2004) was unknown. The total population of Armenians in London is estimated to be 10,000–13,000. The Armenian population from Iran is by far the largest and represents between 50 and 60% of the total Armenian community in 2003–2004. The Armenians from Cyprus form another 20–25% of the total population with 2000–2500 people. The refugees from India and Lebanon add a further 10%, and the rest (Armenians from Turkey, Armenia, Egypt, former Palestine and Georgia), make up 5% (ibid.: 22). Most Armenians are concentrated in the London districts of Ealing Broadway, Brent, Kensington, Chelsea, Haringay and Hounslow (ibid.: 20).

Demirdjian (1989) states that there are 22 organizations in London and that most operate independently: "organizations serve firstly as a place to meet, where Armenians can be introduced to each other, and not as lobby groups that should stimulate the economic or political integration in the British society" (Demirdjian 1989: 53—translation by author). It is unclear how many organizations are currently active. During my short stay in 2003, I was in contact with two organizations, which worked closely together. As far as I know, present-day organizations

have not yet been mapped out. There could very well be splinter groups (such as women's associations and youth organizations) and it is unclear to what extent they cooperate.[29]

However, it is known that there are overtly active political movements and political parties based in London due to migration streams from Iran, Lebanon, Cyprus and Armenia. Demirdjian claims that the *Navasartian* and the *Armenian Youth Federation* are aligned with the Tashnak party, while *Tekeyan* and the A.G.B.U. (A*rmenian General Benevolent Unio*n) are connected to the Ramgawar movement (ibid.: 54). Therefore, the Armenian population in London is relatively more politicized compared to the Dutch Armenians and political parties are more embedded in the whole community structure and fabric.

However, I do not agree with the claim that the associations in London are merely "meeting points," as Demirdjian states. In my experience, there is a close collaboration between the organizations and the Armenian embassy with only one goal—stimulating the Armenian identity (which Demirdjian calls *hajabahbanoem*, mentioned earlier) and Armenian integration into British society. To do this, they even look across English borders. For instance, when I went to London on 6 February 2003, there was a three-day conference titled "Identities Without Borders" for which Armenian academics from the United States, Canada and other parts of England were invited to discuss how to maintain the Armenian identity within a foreign country. The organizations are therefore clearly more than "meeting points." They are organizations with a clear (political) aim to maintain the Armenian identity and to prevent complete assimilation (from their point of view).

The size of the Armenian community in London is similar to the Armenian community in the Netherlands. However, there are differences. First, the community in England is more highly educated and prosperous than the one in the Netherlands. This is mainly due to the

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[29]Talai (1989) states that the relationships between the organizations are competitive and based on various political, national, linguistic and general orientations (ibid.: 2). According to the author, Armenians do not share a uniform experience of ethnic identity (ibid.: 2). What they do share though are "symbolic concepts" (ibid.: 5) through which identity is expressed. I share this view, and will explain these symbolic concepts in Chap. 6. Talai's analysis coincides with the struggles in the Dutch Armenian community, but there are also very important differences between the two communities, which I emphasis in this paragraph.

highly educated Armenians from Iran, Cyprus, India and Lebanon in London. Due to the greater flow of money into London's Armenian community, more highly educated Armenians and academics (also from abroad) are attracted. As a consequence, England has an Armenian elite that is less visible or absent in the Netherlands. Second, in England there is a relatively small number of Turkish Armenians, less than 5%. Difficulties with language, even though they do exist (see also Talai 1989: 2), they seem (relatively) less prominent and conflicted than in the Netherlands. Although there are struggles between Western-speaking Armenians and Eastern-speaking Armenians in England, there is less of a struggle with those immigrants who do not speak Armenian as in the Netherlands because there are few Armenians from Turkish descent. Language has an effect on the struggle for identity, which I discuss in Chap. 7.[30]

This is not to state that the Armenian community in the Netherlands is apolitical or that no overarching organizations are trying to reach common goals (as I have been accused of, stating in my book on Armenians in the Netherlands in 2009). The Dutch Armenian committee of the 24th of April (which existed in 2003–2004), that later became FAON, can be loosely compared to the English CRAG (Campaign for Recognition of Armenian Genocide) that lobbies for recognition of the Armenian genocide. However, making this comparison risks losing sight of the dynamics of community building and the fact that communities are always in a state of flux. The large Turkish-Armenian population in the Netherlands places more emphasis on the struggles with language and identity within the Dutch-Armenian community than the United Kingdon *by comparison*. This struggle stifles Dutch-Armenian organizations and causes many fractions and schisms, which results in a lower flow of financial support and a smaller elite establishment. The Dutch-Armenian community is significantly more divisive than the one in London.

[30]Armenians distinguish themselves by background. For example, they make a distinction between Armenians from Cyprus, and those from Lebanon and other countries of origin. These differences are being emphasized here, but I have never seen a real struggle over who is or who is not a real Armenian to the same extent as in the Netherlands.

3.6   DIASPORA AND IDENTITY

If we analyse Armenian communities, we can conclude that the Great Diaspora is the most direct and visible consequence of the Armenian genocide. Armenians fled their country of origin to settle in foreign territories, thus, the importance of the Armenian identity became magnified as seen in England, France and the Netherlands. The clerical institutions and kinship relationships that formed the basis of the Armenian community and identity for years have become diffused due to the Diaspora. Armenians are literally uprooted and come to live in areas that feel both foreign and hostile. The questions of who you are and how to distinguish yourself from the hosting nations increase in importance.

Armenians try to survive and define who they are in a strange environment, as Arshile Gorky did. Thus, they subconsciously rely on political and religious institutions that had an important place in the community *before* the genocide. Unfortunately, these institutions are no longer the same. During the Great Diaspora, the Church underwent a schism as the aims of the political parties shifted (from emancipation and self-determination to preservation of the Armenian identity). As a direct result of the genocide, many kinship relationships disappeared, thus forcing foreign Armenian families to make alliances with each other in the diasporic communities.

Everything after the genocide was upside down and changed. Western dialect-speaking Armenians met Eastern dialect-speaking Armenians. Or, in the case of Turkish refugees, there were Armenians who did not speak the Armenian language at all. The question who is and who is not Armenian becomes almost *automatically* prominent, not only in relation to the hosting nation, but also *inside* the community.

There is another process at play as well, an invisible process of implicit knowledge and non-verbalized ideas. Knowledge that often indirectly seeps into conversations and symbols, and tells us something about the *interpretation* and *expression* of the Armenian identity. To understand this process, it is important to look at the Armenian genocide and the symbolic and cultural meaning of genocidal violence.

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The Loss of Identity

The genocide has changed everything. Entire genealogies have disappeared. For example, I have never met my father's father. And all I know of my mother's mother are the gruesome stories I have heard about what happened to her as a child.

Informant Yaldo, 6 April 2006

Genocide, like other collective activities, carries a specific meaning. To understand the consequences of genocide, it is important to study the reasons and cultural constructions *behind* the genocide. For the Armenian genocide, it is useful to compare the genocidal violence of 1915–1917 with the earlier Armenian massacres of 1894–1896. Although both mass killings were bloody, the motivations and intent of the two were in my opinion different.

4.1   The Events of 1894–1896

Armenians, just as Greek Orthodox Christians, Assyrians and Jews, had a specific status in the Ottoman Empire. Since the fifteenth century, Armenians were considered a *millet* (a specific category of "people of the book") within the Ottoman hierarchical corporative structure. This exceptional position was only reserved for *dhimmis*, who were ethnic groups that professed a monotheistic religion acknowledged by the prophet Muhammad (Zwaan 2001: 217). According to Islamic customs, these

groups received *aman* (mercy) and safe-conduct under Islamic law. These groups had a degree of religious and executive freedom, although limited. At a local level, *dhimmis* could practice their own customs, observe their own family and religious laws, run their own schools, collect their own taxes and be represented by ambassadors and consuls within the hierarchy of the Ottoman Empire (Zürcher 1993: 15). Armenians could exercise influence over their own communities, represent their interests on a state level and by the end of the nineteenth century, Armenians held high-ranking positions within the Ottoman structure.[1]

Still, Armenian influence was limited. Although Armenians, Assyrians, Jews and Greek Orthodox Christians were allowed to practice their own religions, they were still treated as inferior to the Muslims. It was forbidden for Armenians to hold public office. They had to pay specific taxes in return for their status in the hierarchy and were exempted from the military (Gaunt 2006: 13). This exemption in particular stirred jealousy among other ethnic groups within Turkey, mainly the Turks and the Kurds (Akçam 2006: 33).[2] The differences between Christians and Muslims were visible in other ways. *Dhimmi* men were not allowed to marry Muslim women, they were not allowed to carry weapons and their houses had to be painted in a specific colour and built lower than Muslim houses (Akçam 2006: 24). This was also exemplified in social interactions. Christians had to wear clothing in a specific colour; it was not uncommon to refer to a *dhimmi* as cattle of the sultan or as dogs or pigs (Zwaan 2001: 218). The *dhimmis'* inferiority was affirmed by many laws, social interactions and sometimes humiliation. These groups were constantly reminded that they were subordinate to Muslims and the Islamic faith.

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[1] The influence of the Armenians may have been greater than other minority groups. The Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople also represented the Syriac Orthodox Church (Gaunt 2006: 12), for example.

[2] Jealousy was enhanced because of international treaties with European countries that protected the rights of Christian minorities within the Ottoman Empire (see Akçam 2006: 27; also Gaunt 2006: 38–39). There was a Treaty of Edirne in 1829 that gave Christian communities the right to participate in local Ottoman administrations. The treaties of Paris (1856) and Berlin (1878) not only provided for changes in the legal status of Christian minorities (Akçam 2006: 27), but also turned the Armenian Question into an international concern (Gaunt 2006: 38). At the same time the treaties gave the Great Powers the opportunity to influence the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire under the pretext of humanitarian intervention (Akçam 2006: 28).

Zwaan (2001) argues that the ideological reasoning behind Christian inferiority comes from the *Ghazi* tradition[3] originating during the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. The expansion was mainly aimed at military conquests and economic exploitation during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Ottomans believed that the world was divided into two houses: the House of Islam and the House of War. The House of Islam was inhabited by the true believers, upright Muslims, who in an ideal future would coexist harmoniously in a large Islamic Empire. Non-believers occupied the House of War and were subordinated. According to this ideology, the *Ghazis* were justified in conquering the non-believers and expanding the House of Islam. (ibid.: 210). A *dhimmi* could never be equal to a Muslim. Under the concept of *aman*, *dhimmis* could only be tolerated.

The growth of the Ottoman Empire stagnated near the end of the eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century expansion ended, which directly confronted the *Ghazi* tradition's ideology. The reasons for stagnation were externally and internally influenced. Externally, the Ottoman Empire faced competition from other emerging European powers. Internally, the unwieldy structure of the state apparatus made expansion more difficult. The economy based on exploitation weakened and Europe considered the Empire to be a sick old man that could not survive the modernization of its European competitors.

Changes were occurring simultaneously within the Empire. Influenced by the European democratic movements, several new political parties and groups were formed. The Armenian community in particular experienced a renaissance. There was a renewed interest in Armenian arts and literature and the Armenian elite was inspired by the political and national movements across the Empire's borders.[4] It is important

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[3] Even though the Ghazi tradition in the Ottoman Empire had a definite Islamic dimension, the warrior tradition of expanding boundaries through conquest was actually older. The Ghazi tradition started to have Islamic connotations after Islam was established. (See also: H. Y. Aboul-Enein, and S. Zuhur (2004) 'Islamic Rulings on Warfare,' *Strategic Studies Institute US Army War College* (2004) or A. C. Hess (1973) 'The Ottoman Conquest of Egypt (1517) and the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century World War,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4).

[4] According to historians, the emergence of new printing capabilities made a great contribution to this renaissance. The first Armenian book was printed in Venice between 1509 and 1512. In the nineteenth century, however, printing also acquired a new function. It became an efficient (and fast) way of spreading the Armenian national consciousness (Demirdjian 1989: 4, 5).

to review the motivations for this renaissance from within the Armenian community. This was a period of secularization and democratization. The Armenian Orthodox Church began to lose its function as a source of Armenian identification and intellectual Armenians searched for a new form of cohesion and solidarity. Just as other nations and groups within Europe, Armenians found an identity in nationalism, and by the end of the nineteenth century, the first Armenian political parties were founded.

Although some Armenian political movements appeared to be radical and revolutionary in their activities, their primary goal was emancipation and *not* to overthrow the Ottoman Empire. Even the cultural renaissance should be understood in this light. The Armenians' aim was to preserve their culture *within* the Ottoman Empire, not to create a counter culture *against* the Ottoman Empire. They wanted to improve the position of Armenians *within* the existing Ottoman hierarchy. Or as Melson (1992) emphasises:

> For the Armenians were not struggling to destroy the Ottoman Empire or the Turks, nor were they even attempting to secede or to join Russia (…) Ottoman Armenians wished rather for a regenerated and orderly Turkey and thought that autonomy would be possible only within Turkey and not Russian domination (ibid.: 157)

Sultan Abdul Hamid, however, regarded the Armenian emancipation movements as a threat, to which he responded with an iron fist. In the summer of 1894, there was an uprising of farmers in the province of Bitlis. Kurdish and Turkish soldiers were sent to stop the upheaval, which resulted in 8000 Armenians being killed (Zwaan 2001: 220). This event was followed by a series of pogroms and mass killings in 1895 and 1896 in Constantinople and the provinces of Arabkir, Harput, Sivas, Mush, Van and Erzurum. The final pogrom and mass murder took place on 15 September 1896 in the town of Egin, during which 2000 Armenians were murdered (ibid.: 221–224).

Although the violence was disproportional and there were mass (and forced) conversions to Islam (Deringil 2009), the Sultan's reaction should be placed in proper historical context. The Ottoman Empire was in decay; it was economically and politically weakened. The ideological basis of the *Ghazi* tradition was tilting as minority groups began to raise their voices and the Empire faced an increased threat from other European countries. As the Empire slowly lost power, the Sultan's decisions became increasingly more *reactionary* (Melson 1992: 63). These violent acts were the

spasms of an authoritarian despot, who tried to preserve the status quo and the cohesion within his Empire at all costs (ibid.: 225, 231). Even the mass conversions that took place can be seen in this light since they were highly symbolic. The forced conversions were aimed to "cow, decimate and humble the Armenians, but not to destroy them" (Deringil 2009: 368). In fact, many Armenians converted back to Christianity after 1897.

The Sultan's motivations were therefore different from the massacres that were to come in the period 1915–1917. The main goal of persecution was not *preservation* of the State, but rather the *renovation* and/or *social engineering* (see also Üngör 2011) of the New Ottoman Empire. The key question at the root of the persecutions was not how to maintain the status quo, but rather who *did* and who did *not belong* in the New Turkish Nation, ideologically speaking. Thus, the new power holders and elite attempted to formulate a new *Turkish* identity.

4.2   The Genocidal Persecutions of 1915–1917[5]

In 1908, a movement called the Young Turks seized power in the Ottoman Empire. This movement emanated from the Ottoman Turkish middle class, intellectuals and Christian minorities that had been fighting for reformations since the late nineteenth century. In 1902, the Ottoman opposition parties came together in Paris to discuss both political reforms in the Ottoman Empire in general and specific reforms in the Armenian provinces (Akçam 2006: 60). There was a second meeting in 1907, when the CUP (Committee for Unity and Progress), also known as *Ittihad ve Terakki*, and the Armenian Tashnak party agreed on an armed revolt against the Sultan (ibid.: 65). The aim of this first coup was not to overthrow the Sultan, but rather to implement a constitutional government and to stop the decline and decay of a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Empire.

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[5] I only superficially describe the Armenian genocide in this paragraph, for my aim is an anthropological analysis, which cannot do justice to the complexity of the events. For a more detailed description and analysis of the genocide, the following authors are recommended: Zwaan (2001), Melson (1992), Chalian and Ternon (1983), Auron (2000), Dadrian (1997), Akçam (2006), Gaunt (2006) and Üngör (2008, 2011). Dadrian, in particular, gives a detailed account of the international political background that contributed to the genocide.

It is important here to bear in mind the difference between the goals of a revolutionary group and what they are able to achieve. Once a revolution begins, it generally follows an internal logic and development: "… the point here is that recognized revolutions often start without anyone intending them, and conclude with results no party desires or expects when the shooting starts" (Aya 1990: 16). It is essential to study the Armenian genocide within the context of the 1908 and the 1913 coups and revolutions. In his book, *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust*, Melson (1992) argues that genocide usually happens during a political crisis when an ideological battle occurs. The new political party and elite need to be legitimized and establish their authority. To do so, politics need a new ideological meaning, grounding and framework. During a revolution, a shift of identity occurs during which the new rulers attempt to make an ideological differentiation between their movement and the old administration. Because of this physical, instrumental and ideological battle, the questions of who belongs to the new State and who does not become prominent.[6]

At the start in 1908 and in 1909, the CUP did not have a homogenised political ideology. Their aim was the restoration of the grandeur of the Ottoman Empire and at the same time to press for new reforms based on examples of national reforms in Europe. Although the CUP's political ideology was not openly clear, it did have a nationalistic basis. From the very beginning, there were nationalists present in the CUP movement. In 1902, there were already covert nationalist opinions and in 1906, the CUP considered itself to be a Turkish organization (Akçam 2006: 83).

It is important to see these developments in the context of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' political climate in Europe. There was a wave of democratization and nation building, and a belief in the Ottoman Empire, Germany and Italy that the nation state could be made and social engineered (see also Üngör 2011). One of the ideological founders of the CUP, Ziya Gökalp, saw no contradiction in reinstating the Ottoman Empire on one hand and using Westernized models to do

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[6] Not every revolution is accompanied by genocide. According to Melson (1992), revolution and other political crises are a necessary, but not a decisive condition. Therefore, revolution does not necessarily lead to genocide, but revolution usually lies at the heart of genocide.

so. To Gökalp, civilization was "a matter of mechanical imitation incorporated into a national culture" (Kadioğlu 2010: 494). Turks were "those who aim at Western civilization while remaining Turks and Muslims" (Gökalp 1923: 290). For this reason, there were various decrees, laws and proposals aimed at enhancing the Turkish national citizenship between 1908 and 1909. In 1908, there was a CUP program to install governmental schools in which the language had to be Turkish.[7] In another proposal in 1909, all citizens, including non-Muslims, had compulsory military service. The aim of these proposals was to create a *citizenship*[8] and an identity with a Turkish basis.

Even though the CUP during this time was not overtly nationalistic, there was a nationalistic tendency in their policies and political agenda. Through years of national and international setbacks between 1908 and 1913, the voices of the extreme nationalists in the CUP became more powerful and eventually shaped the conditions of the CUP (extreme) nationalistic ideology and militaristic point of view.

In the early years, the *Ittihad* administration suffered significant defeat both nationally and internationally. Nationally, the economy was weakened and there were counter revolutionary movements throughout the Empire, especially in Istanbul in 1909. This was immediately followed by specific laws and decrees. The Law of Association was promulgated on 16 August 1909, wherein it became unlawful to "form an institution that violates the political integrity of the state" (Akçam 2006: 72). Greek, Bulgarian and other minority organizations and societies were closed.

The massacres in Adana in 1909 deserve special mention since many informants I spoke to believed that these massacres were a prelude to the genocidal violence in 1915. I agree that these massacres give us an insight into the tensions between Muslims and Armenians on a local level, and give expression on what Scheper-Hughes (1996, 2003),

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[7] This proposed law was not accepted in 1908, but instead was put into effect in 1913 after many changes (Akçam 2006: 73).

[8] It is important to keep in mind that the Ottoman Empire was ethnically diverse. There were Serbs, Armenians, Kurds, Greeks, Assyrians, Jews, Muslim Arab, Bedouins and many more, with their own customs and in some cases their own language. They lived in strained circumstances, but side by side in the *millet* system, which was put under extreme pressure after the 1908 revolution. According to the CUP nationalists, a new *citizenship* (and not necessarily nationality) had to be created (Akçam 2006: 72).

Kleinman ([2000](#)) considers "everyday violence,"[9] I do think that the intent of the violence was different from the violence in 1915. (Even though it could be considered a prelude of this violence.) The violence in Adana started when there were rumours about counter revolutions in Istanbul (Akçam [2006](#): 69, 2012: 166) wherein the CUP had been forced out and counter revolutionaries had taken over. This rumour caused a great stir amongst local Muslims who were opposed to the modernization of the 1908 Young Turks movement. Armenians in the region were considered to be collaborators in this movement and at the same time the most prosperous, which was not inconsequential. Therefore, the violence in Adana targeted Armenians. The violence wasn't necessarily genocidal, but rather driven by envy and counter revolutionary motives. Within the violence and pogroms, an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 Armenians were killed.[10]

The massacres in Adana had a great impact on the CUP movement. At first, the impact seemed to be more unifying than dividing on the surface. The CUP distanced itself from the violence, the Ottoman parliament set up a commission of inquiry and there were court-martials. One hundred and twenty-seven Muslims and seven Armenians were executed (ibid.: 69). The CUP and the Tashnak party came to an agreement in September 1909 and promised to "work together for progress, the Constitution and unity" (ibid.: 70). Although the violence was not genocidal, it openly showed the hostility and tension among various ethnic groups. That this hostility was also present *within* the CUP became more evident when it became known that local unionist leaders had been involved in the massacres.[11]

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[9] Everyday violence refers to violence that occurs in day-to-day life and may not only be physical, but also social, e.g. experiences of inequality and discrimination.

[10] Not all scholars agree with Akçam's observation. Some scholars like Dadrian ([1999](#)) and Hovannisian ([1999](#)) consider the massacres in Adana to have been a prelude to the genocide in 1915. To them the Armenians were specifically targeted even though actions against them weren't as organized as the deportations from 1915 onward. A total of 20–30,000 Armenians were killed (Adalian 2012: 117–156) and 1300 Assyrians (Gaunt: 2009). The violence in Adana showed the tension within the CUP and also the willingness to implement Turkification with violence.

[11] A letter of a Turkish soldier that came into possession of a German consul stated the following: "We killed thirty thousand of the infidel dogs, whose blood flowed through the streets of Adana" (see Akçam [2006](#): 70, quotation taken from *Frankfurter Zeitung,* 20 June 1909).

In 1910, CUP leaders came together. They were disillusioned with their progress to date and on 27 July 1910, the CUP openly declared that their policies had failed (ibid.: 75). In the secret meetings that followed, it became obvious to certain members of the CUP, including Talât Bey and the Minister of Finances Cavit Bey, that the core of the problem was the "diversity of the Ottoman Empire" and the "constitutional equality between Muslims and non-believers" (ibid.: 76). For the first time, a link between the Turkish identity and Islam was clear. The link became more focused and emphasised when the crisis within the CUP deepened. The multiform of the old Ottoman Empire was interpreted as the core *reason* of all the problems and not the goals that the CUP had set out or the significant political threats lurking on the national border. The call for social engineering became the solution of all solutions. The State had to be completely reassembled to function and the need for one ethnic nationality became more aggressively and urgently pursued.

Internationally, there were also many political setbacks. In 1908, the Ottoman Empire lost Bosnia-Herzegovina to Austria-Hungaria, Bulgaria proclaimed independence and Crete declared its intention to unite with Greece (Zwaan 2001: 242). The most devastating experience, however, was the Ottoman Empire's loss of the Balkan war in 1913. Balkan Muslims fled from the Balkans to Turkey with horrendous stories of what had happened to their communities and families. Some, including the Islam scholar Mehmet Akif Ersoy, considered this loss "a punishment from Allah for not unifying the Ottoman Empire" (Akçam 2006: 84).[12]

At this time, pressure was mounting. Before the war there were rejuvenated student protests and speeches held in 1912 that reminded the CUP of the glorious past of the Ottoman Empire and the heroic acts of its forefathers. The CUP had to act, and it did. A second military coup was staged on 23 January 1913 as the CUP seized complete power. By this time, the CUP's ideology had changed dramatically. At the beginning of 1908, their first aim was to build a "unifying *citizenship*." However, this changed from 1908–1913 into a *Turkish* citizenship and later, a Turkish nationality and citizenship, which was intertwined with Islam. Therefore, in the years 1908–1913 there was a stronger emphasis on identity and the definition of identity slowly shifted.

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[12] See here how an international defeat is translated into a national defeat; the loss of the Balkan war was caused by the multiform society at the core of the Ottoman Empire.

Pan-Islamic thinking that envisioned a Great Islamite Empire where *aman* amounted to some freedom for non-Islamic groups was replaced by a strong nationalistic Turkish ideology known as the Pan-Turkish or Turanian ideology. As Gökalp has openly stated (see also Akçam 2006: 84), within this ideology, there was no difference between Ottoman and Turkish. This differentiation, which had been at the core of the *mille*t system and the old Ottoman Empire, was "artificial" according to Gökalp: "Turkism is simultaneously Islamism."[13] Every Ottoman was Muslim, so every Turk had to be Muslim. A Turk didn't have to be Turkified, Turkey had to be cleansed of foreign and non-Islamic elements. According to this ideology, the Turo-Arian people scattered all over the Balkans and Anatolia needed to be united in a Great Turkish Empire (Zwaan 2001: 436). To accomplish this Great Turkish Empire, unity and an internal cleansing was required.

As a direct consequence of this new ideology, the *millet* system was abandoned, independent organizations of ethnic and national minorities were banned and Turkification gained momentum when the Turkish language became the official language (ibid.: 243). There were also other decrees and laws. Christians were no longer allowed to have memberships of guilds and in the spring of 1914 Christian possessions were confiscated (Akçam 2006: 91). Businesses in non-Muslim hands were harassed and forced to use the Turkish language in all corporate dealings (Üngor 2008: 22). And the discourse of modernization slowly became a discourse to legitimize political, cultural, economic and finally, physical violence of exclusion (Kieser 2006). The goal was no longer to (re)build a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual society, but rather a mono-ethnic and national society based on Turkism.

In 1914, the Greeks were deported from Turkey (Akçam 2006: 111) and on 14 November 1914, extreme nationalistic actions reached a peak when the Turkish government declared a fatwa—the Islamic holy war / Jihad—against "all enemies of the Islam" including Britain,

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[13] Gökalp, *Türkleşmek,* p. 12.

France and Russia and *other* non-believers at the start of World War I (Gaunt 2006: 62). According to Zwaan (2001), this led to a downward spiral of "decivilization" and violence.[14]

During this period, a series of rapid Armenian persecutions followed and the CUP became increasingly radicalized. By the end of January 1915, Russian authorities reported the number of Christian refugees from the Caucasus war zone which included 49,838 Armenians, 8061 Assyrians, 9345 Greeks and 113 other nationalities (Gaunt 2006: 65). In March 1915, the governor of the province of Van was ordered to capture and kill all Armenians in the region. The reasoning behind this order was the belief that the Armenians would cooperate with the Russians and therefore posed a threat to national security.[15] This decree led to the death of 10,000 Armenians in Van.

Subsequently, the Armenians protected themselves against the violence directed at them in an action that ended on 16 May 1915 after the Russians had conquered the area. The Russians withdrew two months later and 200,000 Armenians took the opportunity to flee to the Russian border, including the family of Arshile Gorky. This uprising was exactly the confirmation and motivation the CUP regime needed to further legitimize the genocidal persecution of Armenians. Various laws

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[14] The decivilization process is opposed to the civilization process as formulated by Elias. According to Elias, the civilization process is characterized by a constant need for self-regulation due to increasing interdependent relationships among various groups in society. During this process, particular values and behavioral patterns of the middle and high classes interweave with those of other layers of society. People's behaviour becomes attuned to one another and regulated. These processes of civilization, however, are accompanied by moments of decivilization (Zwaan 2001: 110): Moments, as I have understood it, in which the interdependent relationships decrease and interwoven behavioral patterns unravels. Not everybody agrees with this theoretical point of view, however. Bauman (1989) argues that genocide, particularly when directed by a well-oiled state apparatus, is in fact a sign of "regulation." According to him, specific interdependent relationships increase and the behavior of the dominant group is strongly controlled by bureaucracy. In this case, genocide is the consequence of modernization, not decivilization, and is an example of "civilization" in its extreme form.

[15] This reasoning was unjust; Armenians voluntarily applied to join the Turks to fight against the Russians (Matossian 2001: 60). For a comprehensive chronological overview of the legal decrees of the Turkish government around this period, see Sonyel (1978) who brings all these salient documents together.

and orders were passed by Parliament and on 24–26 April, 650 politically, culturally and economically prominent Armenians were arrested and murdered. Until this day, 24 of April is considered the starting point of the Armenian genocide and the date to commemorate the genocide worldwide.

In June 1915, the Turkish government issued a decree to deport all non-Turkish populations living near trade routes. Although the decree was generally formulated and aimed at all non-Turkish communities, all non-Armenian communities were exempted from the order (Auron 2000: 42). The Ministry of Police and Internal Affairs made use of a special police unit (operational since 1911 called the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa* and comprised released criminals and Kurds), to one purpose—the execution of the "evacuation order." During the deportations that followed from April to November 1915 until 1917 several hundred thousand Armenians died due to continued deportations, pogroms and massacres. The total number of Armenian victims throughout the genocide is estimated to be somewhere between 800,000 and 1.5 million.

4.3   ANALYTICAL APPROACHES TO GENOCIDE

Studying a physical act such as genocide is a methodological challenge for anthropologists. Historically, anthropologists focus on the participants' microcosms through participant observation to learn how *they* (participants) perceive their world. However, at the same time, the anthropologist is always very much aware of the macro political and social structures in which the worldview of the informants is construed. In this sense, genocidal violence juxtaposes macro political and social contexts (the abstract) on one hand, and the microcosms of everyday life (the concrete) on the other in a most physical way. The anthropologist, as Ohnuki-Tierney (2002) points out in her study on Japanese kamikaze pilots, "have to find the dialectic between internal developments, the global and external forces and the behaviour and actions of social agents" (ibid.: 2) and individuals.

From this point of view the juridical definition of genocide that the United Nations has adopted poses problems for social scientists. According to the United Nations:

> Genocide means any of the following acts with intent or destroy, in whole
> or in part, a national, ethnical racial or religious group as such by: a) kill-
> ing members of the group, b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to
> members of the group, c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions
> of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part,
> d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group and e)
> forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (Article II,
> 1948, United Nations, Genocide Convention)

According to Fein (2002), the above definition is too static and does not
take the dynamics of genocide into account. The violence of genocide
is aimed too closely at an "overtly restricted set of categories" (Hinton
2002b). Fein argues that the definition is in accordance with the juridi-
cal subtext directed at *commonalities* and emphasises the *method* rather
than the dynamics of the genocidal process itself (Fein 2002: 76). The
definition of the identifiable groups is also problematic from an anthro-
pological point of view. As Hinton (2002b) already claims, genocide
is too focused on an "overtly restricted set of categories" (ibid.: 3–4).
The definition is based on the modern discourse of identity. It is aimed
at national, ethnic, racial and religious identities, but excludes tribal,
totemistic, lineages, clans and class identities (Hinton 2002b: 4). Even
the mention of a political identity, which some members of the UN had
vetoed against, was omitted in the legal definition.[16]

Hovannisian (1999) argues that there are commonly two approaches
used in sociological monographs and case studies on genocide. One
approach to genocide is embedded in specific historical, political and
economic circumstances and settings. This approach considers geno-
cide as the outcome of a volatile political situation and crisis and is often
therefore historically bounded. The other approach is more compara-
tive and focuses on the internal *development* of genocide and the phases

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[16]Lemkin (1944) distinguishes yet other aspects of a group: political, social, cultural,
economic, biological, physical and moral structures (Lang 1990: 6). The omission of the
cultural and political aspect of genocide has caused many legal debates during the kill-
ings in Burundi (1972), the massacres of villagers in Cambodia (1975–1979), the ethnic
cleansing in certain areas of Bosnia and Serbia (1990s) and the killings of Mayan villag-
ers in Guatemala 1982 (and many more contested areas where civilians have been killed
on the basis of their identity) and can be considered genocide. To some members of the
UN Security Council, the definition of cultural and political genocide was too vague to be
included in the official definition.

and various stages that occur *within* the spiral of violence. From the late 1990s onward, there has been yet a third approach, an anthropological approach, wherein the focus is on the symbolism of violence and the transference of everyday violence into genocidal situations.

These approaches are not exclusive, they are not in essence different schools of thought, but instead they come from various disciplines. The historical approach tends to have an historical, sometimes juridical, political, and sociological background (see for example Akçam 2006; Gaunt 2006; Üngör 2007, 2008, 2011; Melson 1992; 2001). The approach that focuses on the dynamics of genocide has a more social-psychological (Staub 1989), sociological (Zwaan 2001) and even psychological (Charny 1982) and psycho-analytical background (Volkan 2006). Together the various approaches emphasize various dimensions of genocide, genocidal violence and genocidal behaviour.[17]

In this chapter I will try to cluster, integrate and set apart these three theoretical and analytical approaches. I do this for two reasons. One, I believe that each approach sheds a specific light on the genocidal process. I also believe that if we set these approaches apart we start to see a common thread, an overarching theme, that is implicitly present in all analyses. A note of warning, however. Scholarly work on genocide has been deep and wide with many subtleties and emphasises. It is impossible to include all subtleties, so I set these approaches apart in general terms and only magnify the overarching themes that I think are important for understanding the consequences of genocidal violence. It is not the aim of this book to create yet another theory on genocide. I don't think that there is *one* theory on genocide or even a mono-causal reason for violence (Clark 2009: 4). I believe that there are several theories and combining factors that lead to genocide. Genocide is the outcome of multiple processes that centers around identity building and destruction.

I will try to add another supplementary dimension to genocide, which combines internal developments, macro political and social structures and the behaviour of individuals. In this dimension, I focus not only on

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[17] These are only a few authors and a few of their publications. Genocidal scholarship, due to its complexities, is always inter- and multidisciplinary. These authors have done groundbreaking work in understanding genocide.

the facts and the chronology of the genocidal events (although those are equally important) or the internal developments of the genocidal process or the commonality of the violence. Instead, I focus on the *intentions* and *purposes* with which genocide is committed *and* how these intentions and purposes are translated into *cultural expressions.* I argue that these expressions are of profound significance in understanding the transference of trauma and long-term transgenerational consequences.

4.3.1   Genocide as the Outcome of a Political Crisis

The above description of the Armenian genocide is an example of an historical and sociological approach. Authors like Akcam (2006), Üngör (2008, 2011) and Gaunt (2006) place the Armenian genocide in the context of the decay and needs of social engineering in the Old Ottoman Empire. However, Melson's (1992) description of genocide deserves special mention for he takes it a step further. In Melson's analysis, described earlier, genocide is placed in a causal relationship with the Young Turks' political revolution and the economic and political decline of the Ottoman Empire. As the country weakened and the threat of other superpowers increased, it became more difficult for the CUP to legitimize their power. The question of who did and who did not belong to the Ottoman Empire became more salient and urgent due to mounting tensions that the CUP had to face.

It is important to keep in mind that the Armenians formed the ultimate minority group in the Ottoman Empire. They were: (a) the largest minority group and were completely integrated into the old *millet* system; (b) were at the same time concentrated in eastern Anatolia, an area that the Turkish nationalists considered the heartland of the Turkish nation (Melson 2001: 122); (c) the Armenians went through a moment of cultural revival, the so-called Armenian Renaissance which was opposite to the decline of the Ottomans; and (d) Armenians were overtly visible in the Turkish landscape due to Armenian architecture and churches. In many ways, Armenians were an "absolute Other," while the Ottoman Empire was crumbling (Melson 1992: 161). During this period, Armenians were everything that Ottomans were not—a strongly organized group with a central and visible identity.

From this point of view, we can question the oft-repeated thesis that the Armenians "provoked" the violence by establishing political parties and resisting the Ottoman Empire (Melson 1992: 10).[18] The actual mechanism of the genocide was more nuanced. The Armenians did not bring the violence upon themselves, but rather they were seen as a threat due to the perpetrators' identity crisis. The powerlessness and the political, economic and ideological crises within the CUP were projected onto the Armenians. Armenians became the Other—the absolute Other opposed by the dominant group to determine their *own* identity.

Taking this approach, genocide is not just a massacre and elimination of a minority, but above all a *battle for identity*, which to some extent takes place in the minds of the perpetrators. *They* see the Other as a threat. *They* define the Other as inferior or impure. The perpetrators' powerlessness and identity crisis finds a voice in the newly formed ideology—in this case the Pan-Turkish ideology—and in the various stages of the genocidal process.

4.3.2   The Dynamics of Genocide: Genocide as a Process

Stanton (2013) recognizes 10 phases of genocide including the classification of the out-group, attaching negative symbols to the out-group (symbolization), discrimination, dehumanization of the out-group and then state organization, polarization (separating the out-group from the community), preparation, persecution, extermination and denial.[19]

Stanton emphasizes the symbolic dimension of the genocidal process and how the out-group becomes more separated from the in-group. Zwaan (2001) focuses more on the act of genocide itself. To Zwaan, there is a typical sequence of violence: "identification of the persecuted group, segregation or isolation of the persecuted, expropriation of possessions, concentration and elimination" (Zwaan 2001: 204). Hovannisian (1999)

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[18] The criticism of this provocation thesis is similar to the criticism voiced against Lewis' famous work (1961–1966) "The Culture of Poverty," which placed the guilt and responsibility on the victims and not the perpetrators. (Within anthropology this is called "blaming the victim.").

[19] See also the website www.genocidewatch.org where Stanton has added two stages to the eight stages he published in 1996 and 2009 (153–156).

adds another stage to genocide: "forgetting" or "denial."[20] By denying genocide, people not only lose their possessions, but also their shared history. Future generations are deprived of their right to commemorate "what happened" (ibid: 16, 17). It is important to realize that a large-scale genocide is never a spontaneous act by a group of misbehaving soldiers—something the perpetrators and the media would sometimes like the world to believe. To a large extent, genocide is ritualized and therefore embedded with meaning. I underscore this idea by discussing each of the aforementioned stages of genocide, since all are present in the Armenian genocide.

As described in Sects. 4.1 and 4.2, the classification of phases and symbolization of the out-group were already present before the genocidal violence of 1915 and were even an integrated part of the Ottoman *millet* system. However, these classifications, symbolizations and discrimination were enhanced and became more negatively charged when the CUP's ideological crisis reached a climax before the 1913 coup and during the Balkan war.

War, as a political and physical act, is of extreme importance here. It can be a catalyst for violence:

> Where a power organization is already involved in war, especially when it is deploying military forces extensively against civilian populations linked to armed enemies, it is more likely to extend violent campaigns to "civilian enemies". (Shaw 2007: 147)

The starting point of the genocidal violence "on the ground" were the orders to evacuate Armenians from the trade routes. These had additional consequences of identifying Armenians and segregating them as a separate group, thus, the stages of identification, segregation and persecution. Armenians were forced to hand in their weapons and so they became isolated within their local communities. They could no longer defend themselves against the gendarmes and Kurdish landlords and were instantly made both vulnerable and visible.

Although massacres of the Armenians did not always follow the same trajectory, there were commonalities. After the Armenian deportation orders and in the days that followed, Armenians were often given

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[20] For a concrete example of these stages, I refer to the eyewitness accounts of Reverend H. Riggs, who was an American missionary who had seen these events up-close in Harpoot (Kharpet), during the First World War. In his published memoires *Days of Tragedy in Armenia* (1997), he discusses these stages in detail. Especially in Chaps. 10–17.

the chance to pack their belongings or sell them for almost noth-
ing ("expropriation of possessions"), which was often accompanied by
promises that their belongings would be kept safe during their absence.
Many Armenians were convinced that they would return to their farm-
lands after the First World War. They were not aware that the Turkish
and Kurdish landlords had immediately divided Armenian properties
amongst themselves following the Armenian deportations.

The deportations that followed were carried out in several phases. In
the first phase, Armenians were gathered and sent in caravans to the Syrian
Desert, the Black Sea or to neighbouring countries. Next, on the first
or second day, men who were approximately 10 years or older and were
therefore often separated from the group and executed out of sight of
their villages. The rest of the group, particularly children, women and the
elderly, were forced to march on without shelter, food or water. Many of
them died from hunger, thirst, exhaustion and exposure to the elements.
Here, the phases concentration and elimination were prominently visible.
The Armenians were gathered, sent into the desert, or the sea, or bru-
tally murdered during random attacks by the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* and local
Kurdish army units (Zwaan 2001: 254). Those who survived the death
marches were left in the Syrian Desert or executed upon arrival.

The final phase of the genocide—denial—is still relevant today. As
noted earlier, Turkey denies the genocide, as do other countries. Yet, the
Armenian genocide is not only "repressed" and "denied" in the politi-
cal arena, it is also "denied" by silencing the Armenians who still live in
present day Turkey and making their collective history inferior to that
of the dominant culture group. For example, Pamuk [a Turkish writer
and intellectual] made comments in 2005 in which he overtly and openly
discussed the Armenian genocide. There were threats to his person and
a lawsuit in which it was claimed that he openly challenged the Turkish
stand on the "Armenian question." "Denial" also occurs in indirect ways.
Currently, Armenian political parties (especially outside Istanbul) are for-
bidden, Armenian religious and community life is made difficult by spe-
cial legislation, and there are specific taxes for typical Armenian crafts.[21]

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[21] See also the report: *Human Rights Review, the situation of the Christian minorities of
Turkey since the coup d'état of September 1980* written by the Dutch Interchurch Aid and
Service to Refugees, Utrecht, June 1982. There are recent changes. In 2010, there was the
first open commemoration of the Armenian genocide in Istanbul. So, even though there is
a policy of denial, a policy of acknowledgment is slowing coming forward.

Armenian architecture and art are also subject to Turkish legislation. Armenian churches, for example, which have been a part of the Turkish landscape for centuries, are deteriorating due to "non-restoration" laws or have been converted to mosques. In this manner, Turkey continues to literally banish the Armenian past from the east Anatolian landscape.

I became aware of this phenomenon when I was watching an underground movie that circulates within the Armenian community in London. In this film, an anonymous Scottish cameraman travels through West Armenia and shows decaying Armenian houses and churches in southeast Turkey.[22] There are literally dozens of churches and buildings in decay. The blurb on the cover of the film video speaks for itself:

> Soon, the Turks hope, there will be no evidence to show that there were Armenians living in what is now called Turkey – but this video shows that much of the once rich cultural landscape of western Armenia still survives…

Armenians once held services in those churches, they wed there, they were baptised there, and religion was a part of their day-to-day lives. The message of the movie is clear, although quite politicized; the Armenians and the Armenian genocide may have been obscured, but the Armenian buildings in Turkey remain as silent witnesses.

A central theme in all phases of genocide is the increasing extent to which victims are stripped of both their humanity and their civil identity. The Turks as perpetrators made it clear to the Armenian victims and bystanders that Armenians were no longer a part of the dominant culture group or Turkish polity and were inferior to Turks. The denial phase

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[22] The movie is called *A Journey Through West-Armenia* and was made by an anonymous Scotsman in 1995. The places he shows in his film are the following: Sivas (where he shows an old eleventh century Armenian Church), Divigri (with an old eighteenth century church and an Armenian cemetery where the graves were plundered by Turks with human bones still scattered around), Erzurum (including the museum I mentioned before), Oltu (which has several abandoned churches), Ani (a completely deserted city, with abandoned churches where the Turks have tried to scratch the Armenian inscriptions off the walls), Kötek (featuring an Armenian castle and several old churches), Hahu (including a church transformed into a mosque), Van (where the largest Armenian defence took place) and Trabzon (the site of thousands of Armenian crosses). In particular, the title of the movie is remarkable since it is "A Journey Through *West-Armenia*," whereas the filmmaker in fact traveled through southeast Turkey.

connects to this by denying the collective Armenian history and memories. Armenians are made subordinate to the dominant hegemony. This concludes the circle of the genocidal process wherein not only is a territory cleansed of a minority group, but in addition, a group is removed from an imagined national body as if this minority group (and this is very important) never "*existed*."

4.3.3 The Anthropology of Violence

Anthropology with a few exceptions has been remarkably silent about genocide. It's only since the late 1990s that there has been a growing interest in the study of genocidal violence. There are several reasons for this. One, historically, anthropological research was aimed at indigenous peoples and pre-state societies. It is only since the 1980s that anthropologists changed their focus to political violence in (modern) states (Hinton 2002a: 1). This change in focus was partly caused by a dramatic change in anthropological theory. Anthropology from the 1970s onward, due to works of Geertz (1973) and Clifford (1982), changed from a descriptive science whose primary aim was to describe other cultures to an interpretative science with a focus on the dynamics of culture and culture-making. This broadened the scope of anthropological research. The question that became more urgent in this theoretical change was not how indigenous societies were built or interacted with each other (a descriptive science), but rather how they reacted to political marginalization and how this influenced their cosmology (an interpretive science).

A second reason anthropology has been relatively silent on genocide has to do with cultural relativism at the core of anthropological theory. Since Boas[23] (1928 and 1938) cultural values were considered historical products, where one value was not superior to another. This inhibited many anthropological scholars from doing research on genocide:

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[23] Boas is considered the forefather of cultural relativism, however, this is not correct. Even though he advocated that cultural values should be studied in historical settings and race was a biological differentiation that could never be considered an exclusive unit (Boas 1928: 63), he still differentiated between "modern" and "savages," which was common in his era. He generally opposed the ethnocentric nineteenth century version of cultural evolution and its ethnocentric bias in anthropological research. However, he did not believe in ethical absolutes (see introduction by Ruth Bunzel, page 9, in the reissue of Boas's book *Anthropology and Modern Life* in 1962) and that all morals and values were equal from an ethical point of view.

> For, if one assumes that the values of other societies are legitimate as one's own, how can one condemn horrendous acts that are perpetrated in terms of those alternative sets of morals, since the judgement that something is "horrendous" may be ethnocentric and culturally relative? (Hinton 2002a: 2)[24]

This ethical debate is still prominent, as shown in the 2005 article by Wilson, *Towards an Open Debate on the Anthropology of Genocide*. He shows that cultural relativism is still present today, and that it could be used to understand the mind-set of perpetrators.

There is also another and maybe a much darker reason why anthropology has been reluctant on the topic of genocide. Anthropologists were sometimes historically passive bystanders or even active perpetrators in the genocidal processes. In his study on stigmatization, medicalization and bodily practices in early Nazi Germany, Proctor (1995) describes the roles not only of anthropologists, but also psychiatrists, psychologists and other medical scientists and their part in constructing a worldview wherein the Jew, as the absolute Other, was dehumanized (ibid.: 181). The Jew was considered impure, moral deprived, criminal and mental inferior. Many of these ideas were built on anthropological concepts of cultural evolution that led to ideas of (for example) the pure Aryan race.

As Scheper-Hughes (2001, 2002) points out, the role of the anthropologist is sometimes more circumventive and passive, but not less ethically questionable. In one case study, she discusses the ambiguous role of anthropologist Alfred Kroeber in the early twentieth century regarding the Mill Creek Indians in California. Her case study starts in 1911 when bounty hunters came upon a concealed Yahi camp and took all their belongings, including materials needed for survival. The belongings were sold and later displayed in the Hearst Museum of Anthropology (Scheper-Hughes 2001: 14). One survivor, who Kroeber later called Ishi (the Yahi word for human—and notice the symbolic importance of this), survived the attack in a state of near starvation and was eventually imprisoned. Kroeber was summoned to identify the man as a Yahi Indian and consequently rescued the man by hiring him as a salaried assistant janitor at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of California.

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[24] Even though I understand that there are ethical barriers in doing research on genocidal violence from a cultural relativist point of view, I also believe it opens doors. We can study the violence, and what it meant to the perpetrators without attaching an ethical value to it. This would in my opinion enrich genocidal research.

This case study shows the diabolical irony of how science and the continuation of violence become passively entangled. Here was an Indian survivor, considered a savage during his time, who had to work in an Anthropological Museum displaying primitive cultures including his own culture. It is obvious in Kroeber's writings that he had feelings for the Yahi Indian and personally tried to help him. At the same time, however, Ishi was seen as a living specimen that could help anthropology understand the native mind. This tense relationship between personal feelings and science was magnified by Ishi's death in 1915. According to Indian custom the body had to be cremated intact. Unfortunately, Ishi's brain was considered to be scientific property. When Ishi died, Kroeber was not in California; Kroeber pleaded in telegrams to keep Ishi's body intact. However, ultimately, he arranged for Ishi's brain to be shipped to the Smithsonian Institution (ibid.: 16) upon his return. Science had won. Ishi was a specimen for further study and not a fellow human being on equal terms or equal rights.

What these examples show is the contesting nature of genocide in anthropological thought and theory, and this is one of the core reasons why anthropological research on genocide came relatively late. Renewed interest in genocide in the 1990s is not surprising. The theoretical framework of anthropology had broadened, and since the 1970s onward there has been a critical reflection on anthropological methodology/theory and its political application. The 1990s were pockmarked with mass atrocities both in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Not studying genocide seemed borderline ethically criminal.

Yet there is a big difference between the anthropology of violence and the two aforementioned approaches: genocide as a political outcome and the dynamics of the genocidal process. Whereas the historical approach on genocide and the procedural approach on genocide tended to look at abstract and macro political frameworks and processes, the anthropology of violence tends to look at microcosms of the perpetrators and victims.

According to Scheper-Hughes (2002), genocidal tendencies are an *endemic* feature of modernity. The human species in the modern nation state has developed a genocidal capacity to socially exclude, depersonalize, dehumanize and normalize violent behaviour towards others. Genocide does not only occur in tense political settings, but also as a continuum of violence including small wars and "invisible mass killings" conducted in "public schools, clinics, emergency rooms, hospital wards, nursing homes, court rooms, prisons, detention centres and public

morgues" (ibid.: 369). For Scheper-Hughes, genocide is not just a process or a terrible outcome of a political crisis, but rather first and foremost a mental framework where genocidal violence is possible:

> the preparations for mass killings can be found in **social sentiments** and **institutions** from the family, to schools, churches, hospitals and the military (…) the 'genocide continuum' refers to an evolving **social consensus** toward devaluing certain forms of human life and life ways; the refusal of social support and human care to vulnerable and stigmatized social groups. (ibid.: 374–375—emphasis by the author)

These "genocides" are masked and invisible because they are sanctioned by the state and practiced daily against those who are considered "Others" (Scheper-Hughes 1996: 890). Kleinman (2000) speaks not of "violence of everyday life," but rather of "violences (plural) of everyday life" (ibid.: 228). He considers oppressive practices, inequality, extreme poverty, etc. as structural violence that according to Scheper-Hughes (2003) can erupt in genocidal violence when the (political) circumstances are in place. "Everyday violence (or "peacetime crimes") makes mass violence and genocide *possible* (ibid.: 175—italics by the author).

Proctor's study (1995) is an example of how everyday violence can turn to genocidal violence. In his research, he shows that there were already oppressive practices in 1933 when Civil Service Law excluded non-Aryans from government employment (ibid.: 173). During this same period (1933), there was a Sterilization Law for mentally disabled people and medical journals used the term "life not worth living" (ibid.: 192). Proctor shows how euthanasia practiced on the incurable sick from 1939–1941 where more than 70,000 patients were killed, was a prelude to the systematic killing of Jews, homosexuals, Roma and Sinti from 1942 onward. The core was how Nazi Germany envisioned the nation state as a biological body that needed to be "purified" from "impure elements." Or as Hitler stated: "Judaism was disease incarnated" (ibid.: 173).

Sociologist Bourdieu's (1977) term "habitus" is of significant importance here. Habitus refers to "mental structures" that individuals develop while growing up within certain social environments (Wallace and Wolf: 2005). German habitus was shaped by ideas of absolutism. The relatively late nation building of Germany within Europe and late industrialization didn't develop from the bottom-up, but from the top down. Authoritarian structures were of extreme importance within the mental

frameworks of Germans (Elias 1996: 288–297). The discourse of medi-
calization and viewing the German nation state as a biological body were
ways of socially engineering the German Republic.

Many of the theoretical pillars of the anthropological approach on vio-
lence have been built on the unfinished theory of violence by Bourdieu
(1977) and the philosophical approaches of violence by Foucault (1977).
Bourdieu tried to reveal the normative forms of violence in social prac-
tices like gender relations, communal work, exchange of gifts, etc.
(Scheper-Hughes 2003: 179). Foucault focused on the "microphysics of
power" and how these can be inscribed in the body. Foucault suggested
that there are practices when the State exercises power over the body
(which is the ultimate form of power a State can exercise), institutional-
izes this power, and then this power becomes internalized by the victims.
It's an intimate and almost invisible process. Both of these approaches
from Bourdieu and Foucault tried to combine macro political structures
in which the violence occurs and the micro cosmology of the individu-
als. I discuss Foucault's analysis in the next paragraph in more detail for
I believe that the bodily practices of violence are significant for under-
standing the long-term consequences of genocide. For now, I comment
on the anthropology of violence. This approach provides insights on how
to understand the *endemic* nature of genocidal practices from the bottom
up, but these analyses also have a major ethical drawback that Scheper-
Hughes (2002) recognizes and refutes.[25]

By overextending the definition of genocide to every aspect of the
mundane, it becomes analytically difficult to emphasise the processes and
factors that make genocidal violence exceptional and different than other
forms of political violence. In this sense, I agree with Ambos (2009) that
genocide is a "goal oriented" crime (ibid.: 835). "The 'intent to destroy'
requirement, turns genocide into 'an extreme and the most inhumane
form of persecution'" (see Ambos 2009: 835–836, where he quotes pros-
ecutor Zoran Kupreškic). Even though "violences of everyday life" give
us an understanding of the preconditions, moral structures/frameworks
and even institutions that existed *before* the genocidal violence erupts,
this does not indicate that all forms of everyday violence are genocidal

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[25] In her article, *Coming to Our Senses,* she writes: "If there is a moral risk in overextend-
ing the concept of 'genocide' into spaces and corners of everyday life where we might not
ordinarily think to find it (and there is), an even greater risk lies in failing to sensitize our-
selves, in misrecognizing protogenocidal practices and sentiments daily enacted as norma-
tive behavior by 'ordinary' good enough people" (Scheper-Hughes 2002: 369).

in nature. Some everyday violence may exist to repress or subordinate certain groups within society; the intent doesn't have to be "to destroy." This may seem a question of semantics or emphasis, but as I argue further below, *intent* is of great importance if genocide is studied as a cultural expression.

There is also another critical note. Although Scheper-Hughes makes a convincing case that genocidal thoughts and behaviour in all their dimensions are not as uncommon as one might think, she does not explain why people feel the need to exclude social groups or conform to this aggressive social consensus. If genocidal tendencies are so ingrained in our modern mind-set, as Scheper-Hughes claims, why don't we commit overt acts of mass killings more often? Why is it that violence in the Ottoman Empire, Nazi Germany, former Yugoslavia and Rwanda are the exception and not the rule? What do these genocides have in common?

In part I think the answer lies in the contention between the dominant culture group and the victimized group. It also lies in the political uncertainty of the dominant culture group and its pathological fixation on their own identity, as mentioned earlier. The theory of everyday violence does not explore these dimensions enough. It overextends genocide so much that these dimensions become invisible.

These critical notes aside, the anthropological approach on violence does give us insight into the importance of institutions, mental frameworks and cultural values *before* genocidal violence erupts. It shows that no new institutions and values are created, but rather that *old* institutions and values are reinterpreted and exemplified. The machinery of genocide and genocidal thought is in fact already in place. In the case of the Armenian genocide, Armenians were already subordinated in the *millet* system, and there was a perpetuation of "unequal power relations in normal times" as noted by Roy (2008) (ibid.: 318). We also saw in Sect. 4.1 that there were specific words to designate Christians and therefore Armenians in the Ottoman hierarchal system. *Dhimmis* were sometimes called dogs or pigs or cattle of the Sultan.

Bozarslan (2007), Proctor (1995) show that language is significant for understanding genocidal processes. Language creates Others, and so gives us insight into the cultural views and value system of a specific society. Power was already unequally distributed before the genocidal violence in 1915 erupted and Armenians and other *dhimmis* were already considered Others and outsiders *before* the genocidal violence took place. In this sense, genocide is not a new social construct in uncertain times, it is the other way around. Genocide is the (extreme) implementation

of language, social images, social symbols and institutions that already existed with new emphasis and meanings for those social symbols and changes *within* the genocidal process. Germany already viewed their nation state as a biological entity when war erupted and the political crisis increased. However, the biological discourse became a primary vehicle to exterminate various social groups.

4.3.4   Summary and an Alternative Definition of Genocide

If we combine all the approaches to genocide, we can make the following summary: First, genocide often occurs during a political crisis. This is a necessary condition. The political crisis often coincides with an ideological crisis whereby the new political elite ideologically distances themselves from the old political elite. The question of who belongs and who does not belong to the new dominant culture group (and often nation state) becomes more urgent. Second, when political violence and genocide occur, they follow an internal logic. War is often a catalyst for genocidal violence. There are specific stages and phases within genocide. The violence is ritualized and not a babaric act without an ideology or a specfic intent. Third, perpetrators of genocide make use of already existing cultural models/modes (Hinton: 2002a),[26] social symbols and existing institutions. In the case of the Armenian genocide, there was already a visible and identifiable group, symbolism (dogs, pigs, cattle of the Sultan) to identify the group and normal and daily practices of subordination within the *millet* system. In the worldview and habitus of the Ottomans, inequality was normalized. Islam was superior to other *dhimmis.* The "deep-seated cultural devaluation of and discrimination against Armenians had existed for centuries" (Staub 2008: 8).

How does this change during the genocidal process? How did Pan-Islam become replaced by a Pan-Turkish ideology? The mental framework (habitus), symbols and institutions may already be in place, but how

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[26]Cultural models are tacit knowledge structures that are widely shared by the members of a social group (Hinton 1998: 96). Hinton argues that these cultural models are of extreme importance in understanding why individuals commit atrocities. In his research on the massacres in Cambodia, he believes that cultural models of "honor" and "face" (ibid.: 98) played a key role in the genocidal violence. He argues: "For genocide to take place (…) changes must be accompanied by a violent ideology that adapts traditional cultural knowledge to its lethal purposes" (ibid.: 117). The fear of losing face to authority was of essence of committing violence. At some point, it became "honorable" to kill people who were considered enemies of the state (ibid.: 115).

do these frameworks, symbols and institutions change *during* the ideological crisis and become genocidal and murderous? How do the cultural models become lethal? The answer lies in what I consider a pathological fixation on identity by the perpetrators. I argue below that this pathological fixation has its own momentum and is expressed in the violent acts. It is these expressions that are crucial in understanding the transgenerational transmission of trauma and the long-term consequences of genocide. It is my argument that the pathological fixation on identity of the perpetrators causes a fixation on identity by its victims. It's in the acts of violence where the hegemony, the worldview, the mental frameworks and social symbols become "bodily inscribed," to use Foucault's phrase, from the perpetrator to the victim.

I started this paragraph with the official definition of genocide as accepted by the Geneva Conventions in 1948. As both Fein (2002), Hinton (2002b) argued, this definition is too static to use in social sciences; it doesn't encapsulate the dynamics of genocide or how genocide is experienced on the ground. Therefore, Das (2008) argues that the emphasis should not be on the definition of genocide, but instead on the fundamental ideas underlining collective violence. These underlining ideas are what Card (2003) considers "social death" (Das 2008: 290, 291). Card (2003), who borrowed the term from Patterson (1982), states that "social death" is the driving force behind genocide and could give another interpretation of its legal definition:

> Before death, genocide victims are ordinarily deprived of control over one's vital transgenerational interests and more immediate vital interests. They may be literally stripped naked, robbed of their last possessions, lied to about the most vital matters, witness to the murder of family, friends, and neighbours, made to participate in their own murder, and if female, they are likely to be also violated sexually. (Card 2003: 73)

Even though I agree with Card that the *outcome* of genocide is social death, I do not think that this is the underlining and fundamental idea of genocidal violence.[27] I believe that the fundamental idea of genocide is much more basic and primordial. The aim of the perpetrators is in my opinion best captured by the definition of genocide given by Hinton:

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[27] According to Card (2003) and Das (2008), this is the fundamental idea of all "forms" of collective violence, even violence that is not homicidal (see Das 2008: 291). From this approach "social death" is as over-extended as Scheper-Hughes' definition of genocide; the definitions do not take the intent of the crime into account.

> Genocides are distinguished by a process of "othering" in which the boundaries of an imagined community are reshaped in such a manner that a previously "included" group (albeit often included only tangentially) is ideologically recast (almost always in dehumanizing rhetoric) as being outside the community, as a threatening and dangerous "other" – whether racial, political, ethnic, religious, economic, and so on – that must be annihilated. (Hinton 2002a: 6)

I would even go a step further, and say that where genocidal violence differs from other forms of political violence is the need to *annihilate* an *identity*. The aim is not repression or subordination of a specific group, rather the aim is the complete *destruction* of an identity in *all its forms*. Therefore, genocide is the destruction of an *identity* (political, cultural, social, ethical, racial, economic and so on) in *all* aspects. Its identity politics in its most brutal form. Genocidal violence is the act of destruction itself. Genocide is aimed at the destruction of institutions, language, identity indicators and eventually the physical body of an identifiable group with social, historical and physical death as outcome. The starting point is not depriving a specific group of its vital interests, the starting point, as I argue below, is the fixation on identity in the mind-set of the perpetrators.

4.4   Genocide as a Cultural Expression

Genocide studies and especially studies that try to explain genocidal behaviour tend to look at the reasons *why* a specific group has been selected for genocidal violence. *Why* were the Jews targeted in Nazi Germany, *why* were the Bosnian Muslims targeted in former Yugoslavia, *why* were the Armenians targeted during the Ottoman Empire, etc.? These questions are important and must be answered, but they tend to (analytically) overemphasise the victimized group. Before looking at *why* the Jews, Bosnian Muslims or Armenians were targeted, there is another question that has to be answered and which gives us another analytical opening. This question is: *what* did the Jew, or the Bosnian Muslim, or the Armenian *signify* and *represent* in the mind-set of the perpetrators?

We have to keep in mind that perpetrators are not a homogenized group. Perpetrators include various groups from multiple economic strata, from the political elite, intellectuals and intelligentsia that shape the

ideological landscape on a macro level, to bureaucrats, merchants, businessmen and average citizens who either play an active part in the killings or are muted bystanders on a micro level. There are also the obvious designated actors of the killings including gendarmes, neighbours, farmers and, during the Armenian genocide, also the special forces (*Teşkilat-i Mahsusa*) of Kurds and criminals, who were promised freedom and property in return for performing the massacres. How painful this may be for the current diasporic communities. There were also Armenians, under force and threat who collaborated in the killing spree and were (often) killed afterwards. When violence occurs on the ground, there is no clear categorization. Violence is messy, and violence goes beyond the borders of the normal, ordinary and daily. Some actors killed out of conviction and believed in the new national identity, some killed for their commitment to the State, some for fear or peer pressure, revenge or jealousy, and others because they got caught up in the escalation of violence itself. As one perpetrator of the Rwanda genocide later admitted: "Me, I was not scared of death. In a way, **I forgot I was killing live people**" (Hatzfeld 2005: 44—bold emphasis by author). Or as another perpetrator confessed: "**Killing became an ordinary activity**, since our elders and **everyone did it**" (ibid.: 44—bold emphasis by author).

Clark (2009) warns us of dehumanizing the perpetrators and by doing so creating an Other that cannot scientifically be understood (Clark 2009: 1–2). Unfortunately, we do not have data—documents or diaries—of the direct actors of the Armenian genocide as we do from German soldiers and Japanese kamikaze pilots or transcribed interviews of Hutus during the Rwanda genocide. Most direct actors in the Armenian genocide were illiterate or the documents that did survive were either not translated or destroyed. The only documents that exist to provide a peek into the mindset of the perpetrators are the various statements, essays and poems written by Gökalp (an intellectual and "identity entrepreneur" who played a large part in building the new Turkish national identity and ideology), various statements by Talât Pasja (Interior Minister), statements of diplomat Söylemezoğlu in his memoirs, and the statements of Staff Officer Ismet from the War Office or Minister of War Enver. There are court documents of the military tribunals in 1919, when Ataturk himself confessed that his countrymen had committed "terrible crimes to the Armenians" and when Gökalp openly admitted that he approved of

the expulsion of the Armenian people (Heyd 1950: 37).[28] The problem with these documents and statements is that they happened *after* the fact. Documents from the bottom up, from the actors who had partaken in the killing sprees, are unfortunately lost in time. We do not know and we can only guess what their primary motives were.

Roy (2008) in her study on political terror in West Bengal speaks of "grey zones" or morally ambiguous spaces where "normal" and "every day" violence erupts in abnormal violence in "abnormal" circumstances (Roy 2008: 318–319). It is clear that in most Ottoman villages there was already inequality between Christian minorities and Muslims. There was also envy, as the case of Adana (see Sect. 4.2) details. Christian minorities were very prosperous due to trading relationships with Europe (see also Parla 1985: 5) in comparison with the local Muslims. This may have caused personal envy, vengeance, feelings of greed or feelings of inferiority on a microcosmic level, and may have contributed to the violence. Yet, at the same time, there were also geographical differences. American missionary Riggs, who was a witness to the atrocities in Harpoot (Kharpet), states that some Turks at the beginning of the deportations were very outspoken in their condemnation of the government and that they openly sympathised with the Armenians (Riggs 1997: 96). While in the eyewitness accounts that Barton (1998), Gaunt (2006) gathered, fellow villagers in other provinces played a vital part in the massacres. Gendarmes and specialized forces were often the direct culprits, and villagers played a secondary, but crucial, role.

War suspends the rules of law. It creates a space where feelings of envy, or anger, inequality and ill treatment, already present in everyday life, can be acted out: "War is a dreadful disorder in which the culprits of genocide can plot incognito" (Hatzfeld 2005: 50).

Economic incentives, and in-group coercion, social pressure and in some cases, fear of punishment play an important role in motivating actors to commit atrocities. Straus (2006) in his research on the Rwanda genocides states: "many men experienced a choice between compliance and the risk of punishment, and many opted to join the attacks" (ibid.: 152). This is also an important factor in the Armenian genocide when various orders sent to provinces instructed that any Muslim who

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[28] Gökalp was sentenced to be exiled from Turkey. He returned in 1921, where he played an influential part in creating the current Turkish national identity.

protected an Armenian should be "hung, his property should be burned and he should be removed from office and appear before a court-martial" (Üngör 2008: 24). Riggs (1997) states that after the first wave of protest from the local Turks in Harpoot (Kharpet), the police made it clear that any suspected Muslim would suffer severe punishment (Riggs 1997: 97). Not complying with the orders and not partaking in the killing could have devastating consequences for Muslim villagers.

But even these factors—forced compliance, covert feelings of envy and vengeance or institutionalized inequality in normal times—do not explain the *intensity* of the atrocities or why some did not follow orders and helped Armenians by taking them in their houses or converting their children to the Islam even in the face of potential danger.[29] Some behaviour can be explained by social proximity,[30] and some can be explained by the intensity and being caught up by the insanity of the violence. The truth is, there is not *one* explanation; there is a myriad of explanations.

Religious motivation also played a key part in the persecution of Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire.[31] In his memoirs, Grigoris Balakian (2009), who survived the atrocities and was a bishop in the Armenian Apostolic Church, at some point has a discussion with a gendarme during the death march. After agreeing to convert to the Islam, he asks the captain if he feels remorse for the atrocities committed. The captain answers:

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[29] And here it is important to be careful, for not all motives were altruistic. Some Armenian girls were brought in harems or be sold (see eyewitness account from George E. White, President of Anatolia College in Marsovan in: Barton 1998: 82).

[30] Campbell (2010) tries to explain why some individuals are bystanders and others commit heroic acts. He is especially interested in the contradictory behavior of individuals and those who are heroic in some instances and on other occasions bystanders or even violent actors. He explains this contradictory behavior through theories of "pure sociology." The social proximity of the bystander and the victim is in this case of extreme importance. If there is less cultural distance, less relational distance and more functional and economical independence between actor and victim, it is more likely that the actor will commit an "heroic act" and protect the persecuted group, unit or person (Campbell 2010: 303–304).

[31] As Üngör correctly observed during a lecture at the Dutch-Armenian Foundation at Abovian on 13 April 2012, it also played, as a de-escalating aspect of violence. Through religion and conversion some Turks were able to help Armenians survive. Here we also see the complexity of violence. Even though religion could be an escalating factor, it could also be seen as a de-escalating factor. The lines are not clear cut. This said however, I show below that surviving through conversion carried a very specific cultural meaning that the violence was not necessarily directed at Armenians, but rather at the Armenian *identity*.

> Not at all (…). On the contrary, I carried out my **sacred** and **holy obligation** before God, my Prophet, and my caliph (…) A *jihad* was proclaimed (…) The Seikh-ul-Islam had issued a *fatwa* to annihilate the Armenians as traitors to our state, and the caliph, in turn, ratifying this *fatwa*, had ordered its execution (…) And I, as a military officer, carried out the order of my king. (Balakian 2009: 146—bold emphasis by author)

Waller (2007) states that people engaged in extraordinary acts of violence have to justify the morality of their actions (Waller 2007: 203). From his point of view, genocidal violence is not a product of pre-existing or deep-seated ethnic hatred, but rather of *manufactured* hatred from the "top down" (see also Clark 2009: 7). Feelings of inequality and superiority may already be in place, but it is the manufactured hatred that is the catalyst for the local violence. People get caught up in what Straus (2006) considers "collective ethnic categorization" wherein the victimized group is losing their individual identities (Straus 2006: 173). Or as one perpetrator of the Rwanda genocide reveals:

> I don't remember my first kill, because I did not identify that one person in the crowd. I just happened to start by killing several **without seeing their faces**. (Hatzfeld 2005: 18—emphasis by author)

I think that people at the bottom killed for similar reasons during the Armenian genocide. They killed for envy, or to settle old grudges. They killed because the Ottoman society was in essence unequal. They also killed for economic gain (Üngör 2011). However, it was the collective ethnic categorization on one hand, and the suspension of rules during the war on the other that escalated the everyday violence into abnormal violence in abnormal times. Grudges could now be settled. Feelings of envy could be expressed. The Armenians were a category without a face or individuality; they were labelled, categorized and in the end depersonalized.

To understand genocidal violence, it is crucial to look at the manufacturing of identity from the top. The question remains: were the actors at the bottom conscious of this identity building or were they caught up in the thrill, eruption and excitement of the violence itself? This is a difficult question to answer—and outside the scope of my research. I do think, however, that the use of *méconnaissance* may shed a light on this process. In her study on Kamikaze pilots, Ohnuki-Tierney (2002) concludes that the pilots may not have followed the state ideology of Japan

in their hearts and minds, but they did follow it in *actions* (ibid.: 299). The pilots died for their country, their families, their ideals but *not* for the Emperor. Yet by dying they indirectly confirmed the state ideology of *pro rege et patria mori* (dying for Emperor/National Father), because the meanings of (State) symbols are unclear and ambiguous. So, there is room for what Ohnuki-Tierney considers *non-communication* and various interpretations of the same symbols wherein individuals *believe* that they understand each other but are actually miss-communicating:

> Méconnaissance is a crucial mechanism which facilitates the transformation of a symbol into a symbol of mass killing, without provoking people to whom the transformation of meaning is not apparent. Rather, people take the new meaning as "natural", or they keep reading their own meanings from the symbol. (Ohnuki-Tierney 2002: 283)

I argue that identity is in essence a symbolic category. As I noted in Chap. 2, it is something, that is made and not something that exists. People on the ground may have had a different definition of identity than the ones who were creating a new Turkish ideology and identity from the top. Yet, by partaking in the killing, the ideology from the top is confirmed in *action*. Not all perpetrators and actors on the ground were nationalists, but by taking part in the massacres, nationalism as an ideology became solidified.

With all these complexities in mind, I return to the Armenian genocide through an analytical microscope.

4.4.1   A Deeper Theoretical Analysis: Mental Frameworks and the Protection of the Psychological Self

To understand violence, it is necessary to take a step back and not look at the violence itself, but rather at the imaginary constructs that lay at the basis of the genocidal violence. In contrast of other forms of warfare that is aimed at political goals, subordination or conquest, genocidal violence is aimed at the *annihilation* of a specific targeted group. The intent is to not only *to destroy*, but (as we will see) but also to *purify* a specific land, race, ethnicity or nation.

Whereas in the previous paragraphs I laid out the progression of the Armenian genocide and the analytical approaches of genocide, in the next paragraphs I look at the mental frameworks that lay at the basis of the genocidal violence and how the Turkish identity had shifted during

the crisis of 1908 until 1915. I do this by looking specifically at the works of Gökalp (Sect. 4.4.2).

Staub (2009) states that: "nationalism arises partly from this combination of superiority and self-doubt" (ibid.: 101). This self-doubt is crucial since it is caused when the self-concept of a specific group is *imagined* to be in existential danger:

> All human beings strive for a coherent and positive self-concept, a self-definition that provides continuity and guides one's life. Difficult conditions threaten the self-concept as people cannot care for themselves and their families or control the circumstances of their lives. (Staub 1989: 15)

We must keep in mind that the revolution in 1908 did not bring the outcomes it promised. The Young Turks tried to bring the Empire back to its former glory (Staub 2009: 102) and rejuvenate it, but instead it suffered international defeat, financial difficulties and contra-revolutionary movements *within* the State (as described in Sect. 4.2). These were very uncertain times. Everything that was evident, normal, ordinary and even stable during the old *millet* system—everything that makes day-to-day living customary—became unstable, uncustomary. The old image of the Self no longer applied to the new situation. The self-image that the Ottomans had, partly created by the *Ghazi* tradition, was disrupted by the international, economic, political and everyday realities.

Hayden (1996) considers this contradiction between the imagined community and reality as a clash between culture as ideology, the way culture is perceived, and culture as lived and exists in practice (ibid.: 784). The CUP (as mentioned above), had a very loose ideological basis with militaristic and extreme nationalistic elements present from the start, as Akçam points out (Akçam 2006: 58–61). In 1908, however, the credo of the Young Turks movement was still unity, modernity and fraternity. This changed between 1908 and the second coup in 1913, as the Ottoman Empire lost Bosnia-Herzegovina to Austria-Hungaria, Bulgaria proclaimed independence and Crete declared its intention to unite with Greece. Over and over again, reality and the great imagined Ottoman Empire were in collision. The Turkish self-image was continuously confronted.

For many, the Balkan war was the final solution to *redeem* the old Empire (and with that the Turkish self-image). This regaining of its self-image was the symbolic significance of this war, magnified and expressed in speeches during student and political rallies in 1912 *before* the war.

Here were statements by students, intellectuals and politicians that reminded the Turks that they were "the heroic descendants of [their] glorious grandfathers, who had caused the entire earth to tremble through their military heroism" (Akçam 2006: 85). And "(…) the natural border of the Ottoman state is the Danube. We shall [re-]take our natural border. Forward, Ottomans — to the Danube" (ibid.:85).

What these statements signify is that *during* the political crisis, students, intellectuals and politicians didn't steer away from the *Ghazi* tradition of expansion, but instead romanticized and glorified it. The psychological self, so to speak, could be restored, from the *emic* point of view, when the old expansion policies were continued (the culture as ideology). This approach was in stark contrast with the political realities in 1912 (the culture as lived). At best, these statements seem, in *realpolitik,* as illusions of grandeur. They make perfect sense however considering the cultural defence mechanisms when the psychological self is in danger. The new Turkish identity (which I discuss in the next paragraph) still had to be (re)assembled, so that intellectuals, politicians and students fell back to *known* ideological and intellectual territories and frameworks. It was not the self that was being questioned, but rather the outside world. Only by continuing what was known (the old *Ghazi* tradition) could the self be restored.

We see a similar mechanism at work in Milošević's speeches before the war in Yugoslavia or Kayibanda's speeches before the massacres against the Tutsi and the Twa. The self-image expands into unnatural and even pathological proportions.

Therefore, imagine the disappointment when the CUP lost the Balkan war. The borders of the Ottoman Empire were flooded with refugees and approximately 350,000 Muslims died. This was the final confrontation. The voices of the extreme elements in the CUP became louder and louder, until the CUP turned inward as Üngör (2008) states: "away from pluralism, to a direction of aggressive nationalism and social engineering" (ibid.: 20).

To understand this process, we have to look at what Pandey (2006) considers the attraction of purity. When the intelligentsia is faced between a clash of culture as ideology and a culture as lived, it tends to look *inwards* to find answers. Going back to *imagined* primordial roots during this ideological crisis is very tempting. It creates clarity where there is no clarity, unification where there is in fact pluralism:

> An obsession with purifying the community generates constant redefinition of the "true" autochthon, with ever smaller circles being drawn. This goes together with an obsession with unmasking fake autochthons inside – people who pose as autochthones but are really traitors. (Geschiere 2009: 27)[32]

Semelin (2007) speaks in this light of imaginary constructs. He emphasizes that massacres are not simply physical acts, but rather acts "born out of mental processes," which become a catalyst during events of war (ibid.: 9).[33] These mental processes are usually built on three major themes: "identity", "purity" and "security" (ibid.: 22). What happens during the pre-phase of genocide, and during the crisis, is that an identity already categorized before the genocide starts (ibid.: 21) is reassembled and re-shaped by specific identity entrepreneurs. This could be done by politicians, intellectuals, poets and social scientists. They reshape the identity to a purer form that is imagined to be in a state of danger due to the collision of culture as ideology and culture as lived. The *imaginiaire* becomes as Semelin states: "an *imaginaire* of death" (ibid.: 17).

Nationalism is in fact a two-edged sword. The first task is to establish the oneness of the people claimed as a nation. The second task is to find political arrangements to make room for those who do not naturally fit into the unified and undifferentiated order (Pandey 2006: 129). In the worst-case scenario, the dominant identity can become predatory, meaning that it can "cannibalize other identities instead of accepting a pluralist configuration" (Geschiere 2009: 166). This is what happened in the Ottoman Empire between 1908 and 1913. Nationalism changed from a pluralistic approach to an aggressive mono-national approach, where there was a denial of identity or in this case a denial of identities of others.

Nationalism's predatory characteristic tends to happen more frequently in places where the clash between culture as ideology and culture as lived is the fiercest. Bringa (2002) argues that violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina was so gruesome because Bosnia was the region

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[32] In Geschiere's study, specifically about autochthony, he describes a process that can easily be described as the making of other "identities" including national and ethnic identities.

[33] Shaw (2007) argues in his book "*What is Genocide?*" that militarization is one of the key undertones of genocidal violence: "War and genocide are often woven together in the same campaign, so that, to describe it as a whole, it is inadequate to talk only of 'war' or of 'genocide'. Instead, we need to use the concept of genocidal war" (ibid.: 148).

in former Yugoslavia where intermarriages were the most common (ibid.: 209). The region could not be defined as a national home of one *narod*—people or nation (ibid.: 214). Therefore, the idea of a Bosnian ethnic entity was impossible.

Buss (2009) argues that the violence in Rwanda was so aggressive because ethnic classifications were a relative new phenomenon:

> In the 1950's ethnicity was not the primary way that Rwandans classified each other (…) In the 1960's, when asked, "*Ubwoko bwawe n'ubuhe? –* What is your type?" by a foreign scholar, respondents spontaneously gave their clan and lineage name (…). In Rwanda today however, the same question *"Ubwoko bwawe n'ubuhe?"* is immediately interpreted as "What is your ethnicity?" (Buss 2009: 158)

Because ethnicity was a relative new classification, differences between Hutus and Tutsis had to be exemplified by the perpetrators. Their idea of ethnic purity (culture as ideology) didn't exist in reality (culture as lived), so it had to be manufactured. Racial differences weren't always visible. Sometimes there were even fictitious racial differences used to separate a Tutsi from a Hutu.

What these examples show is that in the most contested areas, where the culture as ideology (of the dominant culture group) and the culture as lived (the reality) collide, the psychological self is sometimes protected by violent means. In these areas, compared to other areas, differences have to be *essentialized* from the perspective of the perpetrators (Hinton 2002b). The differences between "us" and "them" have to be laid out to such an extreme that the differences and not the commonalities are magnified. In this respect, the Armenian genocide is very peculiar. First, Christian minorities in small villages were quite prosperous compared to Muslim villagers. Second, the Armenians were dominantly present in central Anatolia, which was an area that nationalists considered to be the primordial heartland of Turkey. Third, as mentioned before, Armenians had a cultural revival, while the Ottoman Empire was in decline. In all these instances, Christian minorities in general and Armenians specifically, became an Other, an absolute Other and exemplified everything that the Turkish culture and identity at that time was not—strong, prosperous and in certain areas dominant. From this point of view, Armenians were an *existential* threat and an internal threat to the Turkish self-concept. The fragile Ottoman identity was projected onto a minority group.

For example, consider a comment that Talaat made, in the spring of 1915, to a correspondent after he had received telegrams about the violence in Erzurum:

> I received many telegrams about the Armenians and became agitated. I could not sleep all night. This is something that a human heart cannot bear. But if we hadn't done it, they **would have done it to us**. Of course we started first, that is **the fight for national existence**. (Gaunt 2006: 70—bold emphasis by author)

Or, a statement, according to Grigoris Balakian (2009) that Talaat openly made regarding the Armenians in 1915:

> It is necessary to eradicate the Armenians (…) For, if 1000 Armenians are left alive by some misfortune, before long they will become 100 000 and again they will be trouble for the Turkish government. (ibid.: 119)

An opinion that was also expressed by Turkish apologist Ernst Jäckh: "Turkey is fighting for its **existence** or **nonexistence**" (ibid.: 51—emphasis by author). The fight for existence is according to Foucault (1976) a product of the industrialization and the forming of *modern* nation states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Power was no longer confined to a sovereign body, but was extended over whole populations:

> War are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity; massacres have become vital. (ibid.: 137)

Talaat doesn't state that the Turks started the aggression to stop revolts or rebellions, he states that they fought for "national" *existence*. This threat from the Armenians and other Christian minorities for him was a "real" threat and no longer just an imaginary threat. In the same way, the Jews, Tutsis or Bosnian Muslims were the imaginary enemies of Nazi Germany, Hutus or Serbians, respectively. To the aggressors they were *real* threats to the psychological self. A threat that was further translated into ideas of security and purity. The enemy lives within and has to be eradicated (the country has to be purified) in order for the nation to survive (Semelin 2007: 33).

Notice this letter that Staff Officer Ismet wrote to Talaat from the War Office:

> About Lake Van and in Van itself, as we know, there has been a center for continual Armenian revolts. I think that we must remove them from the **revolt-nest** and scatter them (…) Either the above-mentioned Armenians with their families should be forced into the Russian side, or we should force them to the innermost parts of Anatolia. I ask you to choose one of these alternatives. **If it is not any security risk, I desire to send the bandits with their families outside the area of rebellion and instead of them I would like to move in the Muslim people**. (Gaunt 2006: 67— emphasis by author)

What is significant about this statement is the mirroring between bandits that have to be removed and the Muslims that have to be sent in. They are polarized. They are opposites. In no way can they co-exist together. Or consider this comment of an unnamed Turk in Bitlis:

> "On one occasion the superintendent of hospitals, a Turk, said to Mr. Knapp in the presence of all us Americans, that these ignorant village Armenians were **not fit to live – they ought to die**. (from eyewitness account Myrtle O Shane, in: Barton 1998: 7—emphasis by author)

In all these instances, we see fear of Armenians in all forms. Armenians are "rebels", "enemies of the state", "they are not fit to live", "they have to be removed for national *existence*." Each time again the "danger" that Armenian represent is being confirmed in the thoughts, ideas, statements and eventually in actions.

This fear is not real. It is a psychological fear and a self-imposed fear. The real threat is not the minorities. The real threat is that the self-image no longer corresponds with the macro political reality. The psychological-self, from the *emic* point of view of the Ottomans, had to be protected. Christian minorities and especially the Armenians were the mirror images; they were what the Ottomans were not. So how does this work and what does this Ottoman identity entail? In order to answer these questions, I turn to one of the major identity entrepreneurs: Ziya Gökalp.

4.4.2   A Deeper Analysis in Practice:
The Building of Turkish Nationalism and the
Pathological Fixation on Identity

Community identities are built upon identifications and exclusions by differentiating between us and them, the self and the other. (Pandey 2006: 114)

Gökalp was one of the main ideological manufacturers of the Turkish national identity. He is also one of the most controversial. Some consider him to be the intellectual mastermind of the Armenian genocide, while others celebrate his contribution to the current Turkish identity after 1923. Some consider Gökalp to be a systematic and original thinker (Parla 1985), while others argue that he had no profound knowledge of European history and that he constantly changed his views (Heyd 1950). Therefore, Gökalp seems to be a man of many faces, with an equal number of scholarly opinions and interpretations.

Gökalp was born in 1876, in Diyarbakir, and was one of the founders of the CUP. He was intellectually influenced by Spencer and Durkheim and sought a way to combine the Eastern ideology of the Ottoman Empire and the Western canon of thought (Kadioğlu 2010: 489–490.) Heyd (1950) concludes that Gökalp's writings illustrate the major inner problems of modern Turkish nationalism: "of how to regain **national self-respect** and **self-confidence** which had been so deeply shaken by **the continues decline of the Ottoman power** and prestige vis-à-vis the West" (Heyd 1950: 170—emphasis by author).

Due to the decline of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, Pan-Islam ideology that envisioned a great nation of Islam was already being questioned before the revolution in 1908. Could the Ottoman Empire keep expanding, and could the *Ghazi* tradition be upheld? According to the intellectual Yusuf Akçura, who published an influential article in 1904 called "*Three Types of Policies,*" this was impossible. He contrasted Islamism with Turkism and argued "that Islamism was doomed to failure and that only Turkism had a chance of political success (…) Ethnic Turkish people living in the Caucasus, Crimea and Central Asia had to be liberated from Russian rule" (In: Gaunt 2006: 50). The Ottoman Empire shouldn't focus on a Great Nation of Islam, but rather on its Turkish ethnic people.

What makes this article important is that it showed openly that the Turkish intelligentsia were looking inward for explanations for the

Ottomans decline. It also showed overtly that the West and Russia were seen as great enemies (as international others) and that only an *expansion* of the Ottoman Empire could answer these international threats. Thus, the Ottoman identity had to be reconfigured. Pan-Islam could no longer be the basis of the Ottoman identity. If the focus of identity changed, so the article states, the Ottoman Empire could be restored to its former grandeur.

In this article, we see an expression of the threat of the psychological self. This self is threatened by the great powers in Europe, but also internally by the Pan-Islam ideology. This threat can be lifted by reformulating the Ottoman identity and regaining the Ottoman Empire's former stature. This threat would *not* be lifted by simply reconfiguring the borders or stopping the expansion policies themselves. The Ottoman self-concept can only be saved when the Empire *grows* (and here is the psychological processes of an identity that is under attack). To quote Staub (2009) once again: "Nationalism arises partly from this combination of superiority and *self-doubt*" (ibid.: 101—cursive emphasis author).

Gökalp was undoubtedly influenced by this article and as the intellectual and ideological founder of the CUP he was very much aware that "the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 affected the politics of the Ottoman Empire and that new values had to be created in all spheres of national life" (Heyd 1950: 43). In many of his writings he tried to distance himself from the former elite and intelligentsia.[34] In an article in 1918 he writes:

> There is in our country a class, the so-called Levantines and Cosmopolitans, who try to adopt the aesthetic, moral, philosophical tastes, and entire customs, ceremonies and behaviour of the West rather than its scientific methods and industrial techniques. That is, they try erroneously to imitate the cultures of other nations under the name of civilization. (In: Parla 1985: 30)

What is important in this quote is that Gökalp creates a difference between the old Ottoman intelligentsia and the new intelligentsia, by focusing on the Turkish culture, which he believed was neglected by the old political elite. "He wanted his countryman to be rooted first of all in Turkish culture and only afterwards to adapt Western civilization" (Heyd 1950: 65).

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[34]I would even go a step further and state that Gökalp's writings were mostly aimed at the former elite (the Ottoman others) and secondarily to Christian and other minorities.

"Civilization is a book to be written internationally; its chapters to consist of the culture of each nation" (In: Parla 1985: 28).

Just like Akçura, Gökalp looked inward when restructuring identity. In contrast to Akçura, however, although he was critical of the old elite and distanced himself from the Pan-Islam ideology, he did not dismiss Pan-Islam outright. Gökalp implicitly sought a synergy of Pan-Islamism and a new Turkish identity. From an anthropological point of view, it is important to understand that Gökalp did *not* create *new* concepts or *new* cultural frameworks, but instead reused, re-phrased and rearranged old ones. His vision of the Turkish National identity was based on Pan-Islam ideology of the old Ottoman Empire and (especially in his early writings) on the Islamic tradition of fraternity and equality of believers (ibid.: 55). This changed in the course of political developments between 1908 and 1913. Whereas Gökalp first envisioned a multinational state with multiple communities and separate nationalities, he afterwards concluded that "only a State consisting of one nation can exist" (In: Heyd 1950: 131). The binding factor was Islam. He considered "Islam as the foundation of the Turkish *culture*" (Heyd 1950: 150).

To understand Gökalp's approach on culture, we need to consider his ideas, which were inspired by Durkheim. Even though Durkheim wasn't an evolutionist, evolutionism crept subconsciously into his work. To Durkheim, society was an *entity*, with its own collective conscious and subconscious, and should be studied as such (see for example Durkheim: 1887). Each society had its own history, trajectory and functions. The aim of society was social cohesion. Gökalp adapted these ideas. To Gökalp (and also according to Durkheim) society passed historically through several stages from a primitive or tribal society to a society based on ethnical affinity, and then to a society with a common religion, and finally to a society united by "culture" (Heyd 1950: 60). It's the cultural heritage rather than political will or affiliation that builds a nation. Gökalp's definition of a nation was: "a society consisting of people who speak the same language, have had the same education and are united in their **religious**, moral and aesthetic ideals" (In: Heyd 1950: 63—emphasis by author). What makes this statement important is that Gökalp makes religion a basic aspect of culture. As a matter of fact, religion is a *primordial* phase of culture. It is the former step in the cultural evolution. In this sense, Gökalp's intellectual thoughts are not only an evolutionistic approach, but also a primordial approach, as culture encapsulates all the evolutionary steps before. This is a very important distinction: Whereas in the Pan-Islam a great nation of Islam was envisioned, this religion was

not necessarily primordial. For this reason, multiple religions could co-exist side by side. In Pan-Turkish, or later Pan-Turan, ideology however, this was impossible. Religion was a basic feature of the Turkish national and ethnic identity. It excluded Christian minorities and Jews.[35]

We see this concept returning in some of Gökalp's writings. In one of his essays, according to Heyd, he wrote:

> that non-Muslim communities had no part of the political life of the Empire and were exempt from military service and that they therefore could concentrate their attention on their economic interests and, thanks to the large measure of autonomy granted to them by the Turks, on the development of their social life. (In: Hedy 1950: 130)

What is interesting in this statement is the exclusive role Gökalp gave to non-Muslims in society. Non-Muslims were not burdened by political responsibilities and could therefore pursue economic goals. Here, Gökalp immediately contextualizes the prosperous position of Christian minorities in some villages and combines this with their lack of political commitment. The status-quo was *tolerated* by the Ottomans through *aman* in Pan-Islam ideology and the *millet* system. Non-Muslims were not only *outside* society, but they were also parasitic and it was the *old* Ottoman intelligentsia that had let this happen.

Binary differences in anthropology are of great importance. According to Lévi-Strauss (1966), every human thought can be reduced to dichotomies that form the basis of the way we think and perceive the world (McGee and Warms 1996: 316; Lévi-Strauss 1966). By using dichotomies, we define and classify our world and give meaning to the tangible

[35] This is not to state that the leaders of the CUP were religious, they were mostly secular. This was not a religious, but rather an intellectual approach on Islam. We have to separate this. For two major reasons: (1) the Armenian genocide was not a religious genocide. It was a genocide based on nationalism and national sentiment. Religion was politicized and used to mobilize the Turkish population. It is unclear what the role of religion in effect of the genocide was (see also footnote 22); it had both a catalyst as a tempering effect. Islam was used to mobilize citizens, especially against Russia before the First World War and "internal enemies". It was a tool used by the Young Turks, but it was also tempering for it also allowed Armenians to convert to Islam and therefore escape massacres. (2) By placing Islam *now* in the center of the Armenian genocide, we are in fact unconsciously projecting *present-day* international and political tensions and the *present-day* notions of extreme Islam onto the old Ottoman Empire and the old Ottoman elite. For Gökalp, Islam was mostly an intellectual tool to understand the Turkish identity and society and not a religious tool.

reality surrounding us. There cannot be an I if there is not a we, and there cannot be an us if there is not a them, and so forth.

Our world exists of black and white, good and bad and hell and heaven or in the case of Lévi-Strauss, nature and culture. An object can only exist in opposition of something else. In some cases, however, especially when the sense of self is considered to be under threat, these binary opposites can become negatively charged. In her classic research on the Srinivas in India, Douglas (1966) discovered that the binary differences of purity and impurity are often connected to the body. The other is not just different, but also physically filthy, disgusting and unclean. Due to the *physical* danger of contamination, this Other needs to be avoided or in the worst cases exterminated (Hinton 2002a: 9). The focus on identity becomes in this sense pathological. It stems from a negative self-image.

In Gökalp's statement above we see identity played out on several levels. First, he creates a schism with the old Ottoman intelligentsia and the new Ottoman intelligentsia. Second, he places the Turks in opposition to non-Muslims, and by doing so intertwines Turkism with Islamism (contrary to Akçura). The Turk is further burdened with the political future of society, while the non-Muslims are not. Therefore, the non-Muslim is not a true part of the political entity.

That the old Ottomans squandered away their *spiritual* strength also becomes obvious in some of Gökalp's poetry:

We succeeded in conquering many places,

But spiritually we were conquered in all of them.

(In: Heyd 1950: 111)

The sword of the Turk and likewise his pen

Have exalted the Arabs, Chinese and Persians.

He has created a history and a home for every people,

He has deluded himself for the benefit of others.

(In: Heyd 1950: 110)

Here again is the threat of the psychological self. This is a self that was not only endangered by external enemies, but also by the old Ottoman intelligentsia and other people who had created a home within the Ottoman Empire. For Gökalp, the object of Turkism was "to seek the

(Turkish) national culture *(milî harsi aramak)*, to bring to light what was hidden in the **soul** of the nation" (In: Heyd 1950: 110—cursive emphasis by author).[36] And here is a layer in Gökalp's ideology that is very sensitive, implicit and often not recognized: Even though Gökalp disregards a connection between racial ideas and origin and national character—"nationality is based solely on upbringing" (In: Parla 1985: 10)—it is *implicitly* present in his work. On the one hand, Gökalp states that the Turks are more racially mixed than any European nation, since they belonged partly to the Mongolian race and partly to the white race (In: Heyd 1950: 62). By education and learning Turkish history and Turkish language, one can become a Turk. On the other hand, Gökalp contradicts this concept with the emphasis on Islam as the soul of the nation (which cannot be taught but must be converted to). It is in his poetry, wherein he binds cultural heritage and racial ideas together:

> Oğuz Han,[37] whose figure remained vague to the scholar
>
> Is clearly and fully known to my **heart**
>
> In my **blood** he lives in all his fame and splendour.
>
> (In: Heyd 1950: 160—bold emphasis by author).

The ancestor of the Turks is in the heart and in the blood, but invisible to the scholar. (The Turk is primordial.) The old former intelligentsia of the Ottoman Empire were not aware of this vague figure. (They are represented in the poem as the scholar and once again considered ignorant compared to the Young Turks Movement). They (the old elite) didn't feel the legendary Turkish ancestor that lived in the heart and blood of the common Turkish men.

To understand this racial connotation, it must be placed in the cultural body and not in the physical body where racial thoughts are often placed. It is in society where the ancestral Turkish identity lives:

> In the **bodies** there is multiplicity,
>
> In the **hearts** there is unity,

---

[36] See here also the influence of Durkheim who believed that society was entity with its own (collective) conscience.

[37] Oğuz Han is considered the legendary ancestor of the Turks.

> There are no individuals, there is (only) society.
>
> There is no God but Allah.
>
> (In Heyd 1950: 56—bold emphasis by author)

Here is the linkage between individuals and society. This society is not bound together by the bodies, but by one God, Allah, and religion. Islam is the binding factor of the Turkish identity. Islam (in the hearts) is unity. Nationalism had become a religion (Heyd 1950: 57). This implies that non-Muslims are not in the cultural body and therefore symbolize "discontinuity."[38]

It is too simplistic to state that Gökalp engineered the genocidal process on Christian minorities by himself. He was what Semelin (2007) considers to be an identity entrepreneur. The goal of an identity entrepreneur is "to make something new out of something old, that is to transpose ancient themes on to a new ideological grid" (ibid.: 60). Gökalp did this. His Durkheim-oriented ideas lay the groundwork for extreme nationalists to use his ideological frames for genocidal violence. An important factor in these ideas was how nationalists envisioned the nation state. The nation state was not an historical product, but rather an organism that could be manipulated and changed.

The work of Proctor (1995) and the short essay of Bozarslan (2007) show the importance of Social Darwinism in the (early) twentieth century. Proctor, as mentioned above, showed how German nationalists in Nazi Germany envisioned the state as a *biological* organism that had to be protected from "lives not worth living" (ibid.: 170). Such lives included mental patients, homosexuals, Jews, Gypsies, etc.—those actors who were considered to be a danger to the pure Aryan race. The ideas of body, race and pure racial blood in Germany, were externalized and extended to the whole nation state. Not just the German blood had to be purified, but all of Germany had to be purified. Jews [and others] were considered a "disease" (Lang 1990: 20). The genocidal methods were also medicalized. Gas chambers were symbolised as "showers for disinfection," and ghettos were considered a "quarantine", and so forth.

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[38] Here once again is the influence of Durkheim in his approach. Society is an entity, with its own conscious. Whereas Gökalp first appeals to Turkish *citizenship*, he later places minorities outside society.

In Rwanda, society was imagined as a system, a living organism almost, of bodily fluids and Tutsis were imagined as blocking society's natural flow (Taylor 2002). According to Taylor, this is one of the reasons why impalement was one of the genocidal methods since it symbolized unblocking the blocked society (ibid.: 164–168).

The Ottoman Empire wasn't seen as a biological organism or entity as such, but definitely was seen as a cultural organism, with its own pure soul (Islam). When the fixation on identity extended, the Empire had to be purified from enemies within.

In Gökalp's ideological framework, the individual was subordinate to the State. "He envisaged the future Government of his national State not as the servant of the people but as its instructor and leader whose task it was to bring about the necessary changes" (In: Heyd 1950: 168). Or: "the self of the individual was absorbed into the "social personality" (ibid.: 53). This is also found in Gökalp's poetry:

> What is duty? A voice that comes down from the throne of God.
>
> Reverberating the consciousness of my nation.
>
> I am a soldier, it is my commander,
>
> I obey without a question all its orders
>
> With closed eyes
>
> I carry out my duty. (In: Heyd 1950: 124)

While the crisis intensified between 1908 and 1913, nationalism (and the fixation on identity) deepened. In 1911, during a Congress, the CUP came with the following statement:

> In our opinion, it is the aim of the Committee of Union and Progress to establish an united and progressive **Ottomanism** (…) The Committee of Union and Progress considers **the Islam the basis** of Ottomanism and attributes the existence to this **spiritual force**. (Akçam 2006: 77—emphasis by author)

Here, we see how Gökalp's ideas take flight and his ideological framework becomes the central piece of the new CUP policy. There is an element of a self-fulfilling prophecy here. By stating and restating,

through propaganda, policies, laws and decrees, that the problems of the Ottoman Empire lie with the minorities *within* the State and the enemies outside the State, minorities by extension become a *real* threat. Identity is being reshaped to counter an imaginary Other.

In a periodical called *Genç Kalemler*, on 4 August 1911, after the Italian invasion of Tripoli, an author claims that the Europeans' goal are "to swallow us." That the Europeans "were crushing the peoples in the East, who trampled the humanity of the East underfoot, and who engaged in civilized brigandage which was anything but compassionate and merciful, and which desired to imprison and curse all who were not like themselves" (In: Akçam 2006: 81). Here the fear of the physical and psychological selves increases and the Ottomans are portrayed as the binary opposites of the inhuman and the uncompassionate Europeans.

According to Baumann (2004) identity making can sometimes disintegrate into what he considers "baby grammar"/ orientalization. Orientalization is an identification process, where a cohesive sense of Self is created by reversed mirroring (see Fig. 4.1).[39]

What makes this figure so significant is that not only is othering important, but also the process of selfing. Through a process of what I consider positive mirroring, negative images are attached to the Other to enhance another group's positive (self) images. These are not exotic identification processes, as Baumann emphasises. Just as the *endemic* mechanisms that are already in play in a post-genocidal society, these identification processes are *normal* and day-to-day processes on which identifications are built. Besides positive mirroring as the figure shows, there is also a process of negative mirroring, wherein positive images are attached to the Others to circumvent one group's own negative qualities.[40]

What is important is that these processes increase when the self-concept is considered to be in danger. It's during these circumstances when more and more negative connotations are attached to the Other and

[39] Baumann 2004: 20.

[40] In his article (2004) "*Grammars of identity/Alterity*", Baumann makes this differentiation between "Occident positive" versus "Orient negative" or "Occident negative" versus "Orient positive" (ibid.: 20). If we structure our identity through baby grammar, we always construct ourselves in the image of an Other. Where I disagree with Baumann however, is that he believes that genocide occurs when the structures of grammar implodes (ibid.: 42). I think that this is not the case (see also Holslag 2015a). I think that genocide occurs when baby grammar is taken to its utmost extreme, as I will show.

Occident Positive	Orient Negative
rational	irrational
enlightened	superstitious
technological	backward
Occident Negative	**Orient Positive**
calculating	spontaneous
sober	luxuriant
materialist	mystical

Fig. 4.1   The grammar of orientalization or reverse mirroring

more positive connotations through the process of positive mirroring are implied to the self (Holslag 2015a).

The images that the Ottoman nationalists used after 1908 are highly pathological in the sense that they didn't come from a positive self-image, but rather from a negative self-image. They were built from images of victimization. First, as the work of Gökalp shows, the Turks were victims of the old Ottoman elite (the Ottoman other), and second they were victims of the inhuman and uncompassionate Europeans (the international other). Third, the Turks were the victims of minorities within (the internal other), who had become prosperous in the old *millet* system and didn't have any political responsibility.

In each step of the political crisis, the Turks tried to alleviate threats of the psychological self by attaching negative images to the categorical "others" (Ottoman, international or internal) and at the same time bloated and expanded their own self-image and self-esteem by a false sense of superiority. This is the basis of each genocidal process and it is the feelings of *inferiority* and fears underneath[41] that shape the identity and by extension the course of the genocidal violence.

Italian psychoanalyst Fornari (1969) claims that people (and also groups) can get into a "paranoid-schizoid" position when their sense of self is imagined to be in danger. To safeguard the "self", the person or group destroys the object they feel is attacking them (see also Semelin

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[41]To this extent, I would like to add a dimension to the analysis of Waller (2007). He speaks of "manufactured hatred". I do think there is manufactured hatred, as I will explain further when I consider the role of propaganda. But "hate" is not the cause of genocide per se. It is actually the fear underneath that is the true culprit.

2007: 19). Self-worth grows when the Other, that is imagined to be attacking one's Self-image, is destroyed in all shapes and forms.

The fragility of the "self-image" was crucial during the Balkan wars, wherein the loss of European territory and possessions had devastating effects. The dream of a rejuvenated and great Ottoman empire was shattered. The Ottomans felt that they no longer played a role within the international and European arena. The war became the "shame" of the Ottomans.

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire was handled in the same way the whole ideological crisis of the Ottoman Empire between 1908 and 1914 was handled, by turning inward and *essentializing* "Others" and bloating their self-image. This is obvious in the poem *Esnaf Destam* that Gökalp wrote after the Balkan wars:

> We were defeated because we were so backward
>
> To take revenge, we shall adopt the enemy's science
>
> We shall learn his skill, steal his methods
>
> On progress we will set our heart
>
> We shall skip five hundred years
>
> And not stand still. Little time is left
>
> (in: Heyd 1950: 79)

This poem continued victimization—the Ottomans were "backwards" compared to the Europeans. We also see the fragile self-concept once again. This poem, after the first sentence, is not a source of introspection, but rather the opposite. The focus and emphasis is on revenge and taking a step forward—even five hundred years—and the strength of the Ottoman, who is in danger and is not allowed to stand still because time is limited. There is a sense of an existential threat and urgency in this poem, as if the Ottoman is at the point of being obliterated if he or she doesn't respond quickly. The aim is to destroy the Other before it destroys you. Backwards is juxtaposed with an internal superiority. The Ottoman can skip five hundred years.

The threat of the psychological self is often repeated by the perpetrators of genocidal violence. Referring to Roger Cohen, Bringa (2002) states that genocide was the most overused word in Milošević's vocabulary (ibid.: 202). Milošević' kept repeating that atrocities had been committed

against the Serbians during the Second World War. The culprits were *poturice*, "those who had become Turks" or those who converted to the Islam. They were seen as "turn-coats,", "internal enemies.". In some contexts, *poturice* was even a synonym for "traitor" (ibid.:215). The Bosnian-Muslims were considered intruders those who did not belong to the Serbian nation state (ibid.: 214).

Taylor (2002) points out that before the Rwanda genocide, Tutsis were depicted as invaders from Ethiopia. Tutsis were *hamite* (intelligent) invaders, who conquered the slow-witted (*bantu*) Hutus (ibid.: 140). Here again is an example of a negative self-image. The massacres of Hutus in Burundi (1972) were used as a political example of what the Tutsis were capable of doing, if they had the chance (Malkki 1995). Rwanda president Kayibanda had already used the word genocide in his speech on 11 March 1964 (Semelin 2007: 71, 72) and kept repeating how genocide was still imminent.

In these narratives, there is a need for a pre-emptive strike. The enemy from within should be stopped, before it engulfs, destroys or even, to paraphrase the author above in *Genç Kalemler*, "swallows" the dominant culture. The self is in an immediate and urgent danger and can only strike outward. This is worded by Gökalp in one of his writings, right before the First World War:

> The enemy's country shall be laid to waste;
>
> Turkey shall grow into Turan with haste
>
> *(In: Akçam 2006: 93 or, worded alternatively, in: Heyd 1950: 128).*

The emphasis of course, in these sentences, is on Turan; the great Turkish Empire.

In the CUP leaders' narratives there was no longer a difference between the European Other (the external) and the Christian Other (the enemy within); the latter was the extension of the first. This is best shown by a statement Talaat Pasha made to Ambassador Morgenthau and was later quoted in "*Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*" in 1918 (p. 51):

> These **different blocs** in the Turkish Empire (…) always **conspired** against Turkey; because of **the hostility of these native peoples**, **Turkey has lost province after province** – Greece, Serbia, Rumania, Bulgaria. Bosnia Herzigovina, Egypt and Tripoli. In this way, **the Turkish Empire has dwindled almost to nothing**. (Also in: Akçam 2006: 92—emphasis by author)

In this statement, we clearly see that the Christian minorities were held responsible for the great losses of the Ottoman Empire. This is further exemplified in a statement by diplomat Söylemezoğlu in his memoirs:

> A number of crimes were perpetrated during the war (…). These crimes occurred for a number of reasons (…) **I only remember that 350 000 Muslims were murdered during the Balkan War**. (In: Akçam 2006: 117—emphasis by author)

Here, the Balkan Wars legitimized the violence against the Christians. This violence was for survival. It was to purify the cultural organism from foreign elements: "Turkey to survive in possession of its territories (…) it would have to be free of foreign peoples" (Quote of Talaat Pasha, in: Akçam 2006: 92). At this point in the process, these foreign elements were completely dehumanized. They were no longer human beings or identities, they were, to quote Kuşçubaşı Eşref, who played a vital role in the cleansings and was a gendarme in the Special Organization, "**internal tumors** that needed to be cleaned"[42] (In: Akçam 2006: 92—emphasis by author.)

Devaluating is a very important component to protect the self-concept: "Devaluating a subgroup helps to raise low self-esteem" (Staub 2009: 99). Violence is the absolute extreme of this. It's through violence that the subgroup is diminished and the image of self is elevated. "Violence (…) includes assaults on the personhood, dignity, or sense of worth or value of the victim. The social and cultural dimensions of violence are what gives violence its power and meaning" (Scheper-Hughes 2003: 170).

Violence can also have an escalating and accelerating effect. Violence can breed further violence. Staub (1989) speaks of a "continuum of destruction," which is not to be confused with the continuum of genocide that Scheper-Hughes (2002) proposes. The genocide continuum of Scheper-Hughes is everyday violence projected (and thereby magnified) in abnormal circumstances. Day-to-day violence that is already genocidal in nature becomes intensified during a political crisis. Therefore, genocidal frameworks already exist, perhaps small and invisible, *before* a political crisis starts. With the continuum of destruction, according to Staub, violence itself plays a vital part. One act of violence can lead to another (and more) extreme act of violence: "Initial acts that cause limited harm result in psychological changes that make further destructive actions possible" (ibid.: 17).

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[42] This quote can also be found in: Ben de Yazdim, vol. 5. P. 1578.

For the Armenian genocide, the order of Enver—to liquidate political opponents using the Special Organization (read: the Ottoman other) in 1911—was the first step of the genocidal violence (Gaunt 2006: 58). Deportations of the Orthodox Greeks in 1914, (Akçam 2006: 111) and the killings of Syriac villagers in 1914 (see Gaunt 2006: 328-346) were the second and third steps in the continuum of destruction. Where this violence differs from the violence in Adana in 1909, is that the violence from 1911 onward was focused on protecting the Ottoman identity from internal enemies. The violence was not aimed at subordination (like the massacres in 1894 and 1896) or to fight revolutionists (like in Adana). The violence that started in 1911 had only one aim—to protect the conceptualized self and to annihilate the Other.

Staub (2008) emphasises the importance of bystanders during this continuum of destruction.[43] Bystanders can have an "inhibited force" (ibid.: 5) on the escalation of violence. It is not just national bystanders who see the violence transpire in front of them, but also international bystanders who can influence how genocides develop. I present below an example, wherein international bystanders had a greater influence than local bystanders.

In her study on the escalation of violence in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Woodward (2000) shows that the international community's concepts about the Balkans shaped the way it reacted to the violence. The Balkans were considered "an intractable problem from hell," due to the history of blood vengeance (ibid.: 31). The international community's position was a self-fulfilling prophecy. By not intervening, the violence and the extremity of the violence increased, and the stereotype of the Balkans as an area with endless ethnic conflict became a confirmed fact. Bringa (2002) points out that the media and the UN continuously used the word "ethnic cleansing" and by doing so aestheticized the actual violence (ibid.: 204). It is a provocative thought to consider if the international community had intervened, would the massacre in Srebrenica ever have happened?

International forces may have a greater influence than local forces. This has to do with the proximity of violence and the way actors of violence are often coerced. In his eyewitness accounts, Riggs states that there were many Muslims who actually were quite outspoken and

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[43]Semelin (2007) does not speak of bystanders, but of "third parties" that he gives–yet more carefully formulated—similar importance.

opposed to the deportation orders of the Armenians in 1915 (Riggs 1997: 96). Unfortunately, this did not inhibit the violence, but rather had an opposite effect. The violence was now extended to Muslim villagers who were considered internal Ottoman enemies (the Ottoman Other). There were threats of severe punishment and suspected houses were searched (ibid.: 97).

If genocidal violence is regarded as a pathological fixation on identity, then the responsibility of the international community increases. During the identity fixation, a community is psychologically and culturally locked within itself. The dominant culture reinforces its views and opinions and drifts farther and farther away from (international) reality. I do not state this to release the burden of guilt from the perpetrators of genocidal violence; instead, I say this to emphasize that the international community may play a larger role than first thought or realized.

4.4.3   From Ideology to Action

In the previous paragraphs, I explained how a new ideology was created out of the ashes of old cultural and ideological frameworks. However, this ideology was not entirely new; these were not new ideas created outside the *habitus* of the Ottoman culture. In many ways, the new ideology was an extension of the already existing culture and ideology and only magnified and rephrased other aspects. For example, inequality and discrimination were not unknown to the old Ottoman hierarchical structure, rather they were an integrated part of it. However, the differences of groups became essentialized during the ideological crisis between 1908 and 1914, which made more extreme forms of exclusion possible. In the same way, the new ideology created by Gökalp and other nationalists was in essence not a new ideology. It was a synergy between the Pan-Islam ideology that already existed before 1908 and Turkish nationalism, which had created the Pan-Turan ideology. The average Turkish citizen, villager and soldier was familiar with inequality and discrimination and the ideology of Pan-Islam. These aspects however, became more urgent, prominent and magnified in the crisis of 1908 and 1914, when old ideas, concepts and ideologies were *remanufactured*. And in here also lies the danger: since the population is already familiar with the ideas (since they are not outside the habitus of the Ottoman culture) the population adapts the ideas more easily.

This does not explain, however, how the Pan-Turkism ideology was translated into atrocities on the ground and the enormity of the violence. It can only give us an understanding of how Pan-Turkism received such a great following and how there were relatively no major rebellions and counter-movements when the violence actually occurred.

In his book *Purify and Destroy* (2007), Semelin implies[44] specific steps in which the "*imaginaire* of Death" is slowly translated into tangible actions. First, there are identity entrepreneurs, like Gökalp, who take old concepts and create new ones. There are politicians who use the new identity concepts in speeches and rhetoric (ibid.: 71–72) and make them available for a greater audience. As an extension of this action, the media becomes extremely important. It's through relentless propaganda that ideas of identity, purity and security are repeated and rejuvenated and the general public is placed in a constant emotional state of insecurity and fear. Semelin warns us that we shouldn't approach propaganda only as a technical tool, but rather as a way that new powerholders try to submit the population to remanufactured frameworks (ibid.: 72). Propaganda works more subtly than that. It is not just top down. Propaganda is first and utmost a "universe of meaning for all" (ibid.: 72). What Semelin means is that propaganda is not only a tool to persuade or indoctrinate a population, but that there is a more dialectic relationship where the populous are using the media (and therefore also the new concepts) to give meaning and direction to their lives. The population does not follow the powerholders blindly. Rather, the new powerholders answer the fears and insecurities of day-to-day existence. By approaching propaganda only as a technical tool wherein identity entrepreneurs and politicians broadcast ideas to create a following, is to dismiss the subconscious element and dialectic importance between the listeners and the broadcasters of propaganda. It is not that the populous is fooled, it is that the populous *wants* to be fooled. Media creates culture and concepts on a mass scale.

Ambos (2009) distinguishes three levels of perpetrators: high-level perpetrators, mid-level perpetrators and low-level perpetrators, also considered foot soldiers or, in the case of the Armenian genocide, civilians and gendarmes (ibid.: 846). The high-level perpetrators create the ideological framework in which genocidal violence is sanctified. These are

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[44]Semelin doesn't approach genocide in "steps" and "phases" like Stanton (2009) or Zwaan (2001) do. The phases he mentions are more entwined in his analysis. Even so, we can recognize certain steps.

politicians, intellectuals, generals and ideologists and identity entrepreneurs. Eventually, these high-level perpetrators create ideological concepts and frameworks and translate these into tangible decrees, laws and logistics,[45] thereby creating the settings where genocidal violence can occur. The mid-level perpetrator is the bureaucrat who implements the laws and decrees and oversees the implementation. The most famous mid-level perpetrator is the SS Colonel Adolf Otto Eichmann depicted in the famous book by Arendt (1963), *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. In this book Arendt describes the trials, where Eichmann, a military bureaucrat, was responsible for the logistics of mass deportations of Jews and how he kept repeating and responding "that he only did his duty" and that these were the way "things were done." These are interesting statements. Identity-making was institutionalized to such an extent that they were normal. Violence to Eichmann was a daily routine.

The low-level perpetrators are the ones who commit the violence itself. They are the ones that deport, separate males from females and get caught up in the excitement of killing.

My point is that on each level the ideas of Others and Self are to a high extent already internalized. This has to do with the familiarity of the ideas and with propaganda, media, and the implementation and institutionalization of the ideological framework. As each ideological idea is translated into a law, a decree or an action, the framework becomes *tangible*. The ideological concepts become *concrete*. They are no longer *imaginary* constructs, but rather *physical* constructs, which become *normalized,* because they are repeated and translated into physical acts (see also Holslag 2015a).

This process can be compared with the continuum of destruction mentioned by Staub (1989). One action of institutionalization can lead to psychological changes wherein further and extreme actions of institutionalizations become normal. The ideas of others, which are at first abstractions, thoughts and daily identification practices, are slowly integrated into the state apparatus and by doing so become increasingly solidified. It is an endless self-fulfilling prophecy whereby the imaginary Other turns into an institutionalized Other, and again turns into a physical Other of flesh, blood, brains and bones. In this sense, the first steps

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[45]Which according to Scheper-Hughes, are already to a high degree in place for other purposes.

of Turkification are simultaneously the first institutionalized steps of the genocidal process. Here images of Others and Selves are not only vocalized and textualized, but also emphasised, essentialized and confirmed. It is a repetition of negative mirroring on all levels. There is an endless mechanism within the bureaucratic and state apparatus that recreates (and emphasises) Others as a distinct group over and over again.

The first attempts at this process in Turkey occurred in 1908. There were proposed laws that the Turkish language should become the state language. However, these were still opposed. In 1913, after a second coup, when the crisis in the CUP deepened, there was an explosion in laws and decrees, as mentioned before. All state organs were obliged to correspond and communicate in the Turkish language, non-Muslims were forced to use Turkish in all corporate transactions and there was a "national education" and "national economy" (Üngör 2008: 21–22). With the declaration of the *jihad*, as the ultimate climax in the institutionalization of differences, the forming of a Turkish identity and nationality was not only a political obligation, but also a religious one. This again was translated in 1914 into the first deportation orders of the Greek minorities and the non-restoration orders (and sometimes even destruction) of Christian Churches. With each step in these bureaucratic measures the Other becomes an absolute outsider, a true and *tangible* Other, who is no longer part of the nation state.

Power over the "body" is of specific importance here. In the most literal sense, according to Foucault (1977), it is the *ultimate* power one has over another. This (State) power goes further than bureaucratic and institutional power. It is the power over personhood. "It was taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body" (Foucault 1976: 143).[46]

Bureaucratic measures had to be translated into physical measures to have complete domination over the imagined community and the individuals in this community. The Other and otherness not only had to be described in rules, decrees and laws, but also in the body itself: "It is clear (…) that the victimizer needs the victim for the purpose of **making truth**, objectifying the victimizer's fantasies in the discourse of the

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[46]I will return to this issue when I discuss the sexualization of violence; where power of the State influences the reproduction of the community.

other" (Taussig 2004: 40—emphasis by author). It is my argument that the Other is not only created in the ideologies or the primary ideological framework, but also in the intrinsic nature of institutionalization and that this eventually will be expressed in the acts of violence on the ground.

Violence is the ultimate method of making an Other truly an Other. (And making the self a real and tangible self through the process of mirroring.) It is the outcome of dominance, and ideas of dominance, in a most physical and microscopic way. Violence turns abstract notions of others into brains, bones and blood. It makes the other physical, tangible, visible—it is the ultimate confirmation of the existence of the superiority of the psychological self. Violence is also where the trauma for victimized groups starts. It is here where the imaginary constructs are translated in the microcosm of violence and where mental frameworks turn into horrifying and physical acts and where violence is placed and embodied by the victims.[47]

4.4.4   Within the Acts of Violence: Genocide as a Cultural Expression

In this paragraph, I look at eyewitness accounts and show how Othering and Selfing, or reverse mirroring, are both institutionalized and culturally expressed through violent acts. What lingers in the background is that identification processes of Selfing and Othering are not *exceptional* processes in exceptional times in the same way that identity entrepreneurs don't use new frameworks, but instead reconstruct old ones. This is important. The processes at play are not new or unknown. That is why they feel familiar and perpetrators, especially the foot soldiers who do the killing, cannot pin-point why they are swept away by the momentum of violence. The processes of Other and Selfing are daily mechanisms that people use in peace time and in war time to define themselves and make their place in the chaotic world around them artificially more organized and comprehensible. As shown in Chap. 2, people continuously construct and reconstruct their identity. Othering and Selfing is one of the identification processes used. Since identity is at the heart of the genocidal process, Othering and Selfing become more and more negatively charged and is gradually expressed through laws, decrees etc. Later it

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[47]"Embodiment" is a term used in medical anthropology when norms, values, experiences (culture itself) are so inscribed in our essence, that they become a part of our physical being.

is expressed in the violence as the war grows and soldiers become radicalized. Violence, in this sense, is not an inseparable part of the identification process, but an intrinsic element that is already in place. The violence itself is a conscious act, but has a subconscious context. It becomes the vehicle to make the Other a true Other, and by doing so solidifies the ideas of the Self through the same dialectic process.

Van de Port (1998), in his research on the massacres in the former Yugoslavia, is surprised by the disproportional violence that took place during the Balkan wars (ibid.: 116). The acts of violence he encountered are in some ways comparable to those of the Armenian genocide. Just as during the conflict in former Yugoslavia, the Armenians were sexually disfigured, buried alive, collectively burned, hanged and drowned. The question arises: why do people commit such horrendous acts? If the aim is to destroy populations efficiently, why is genocidal violence so gruesome and sometimes painstakingly slow?

Blok (1991) argues that violence, no matter how senseless it seems, always carries a meaning:

> To characterize violence as pointless or irrational is to abandon research at the point where it should start…. Violence as a cultural category or construction should be understood in the first place as a symbolic activity – not as meaningless, but as meaningful behaviour. (ibid.: 203)

Taylor (2002) goes a step further and states that cultural representations of violence are already operative during times of peace (ibid.: 139). It is for the anthropologist to retrace the symbolism of violence and how it is grounded within the cultural frameworks *before* the physical violent starts. In his case study of the Rwanda genocide, Taylor shows that cultural images and cultural constructions of flow and blockages of the body were extended to the nation state, and that the nation state had to be cleansed in the same way that the body had to be cleansed—by removing obstructions (ibid.: 172–173). This is why, according to Taylor, the Hutus used impalements, removal of foetuses, etc. in their modes of violence. These modes of violence were similarly used during the "silent genocide" in Burundi in 1972 when the Hutus were the victims (Malkki 1995). According to Taylor, this similarity has nothing to do with the experience of violence, as Malkki (1995) implies, but because both the Hutus and the Tutsis used similar cultural frameworks and cultural models (see also Hinton:1998) and symbolisms.

Although I agree with Taylor that existing cultural constructions before a genocide are of extreme importance for understanding specific modes of violence, I also think that his analyses and Malkki's interpretation are not mutually exclusive. As Campbell (2010) emphasises, Hutu descendants of the Burundi were disproportionally active at the start of the Rwanda genocide in 1994 (ibid.: 304). As I explain in Chaps. 6, 7, and 8, experiences of violence become integrated into a cultural framework and in the victims' sense of identity. By over-focusing on the existing cultural frameworks *before* the violence, the fact that violence has intrinsic dynamics and that the violence *intends* to do something may be overlooked. In the case of genocide, violence intends to destroy an identity. Many meanings and interpretations of violence can be derived from this specific intention and the acts of violence and the modes of violence used. The cultural expression of violence can be linked not only to the cultural frameworks and symbolisms already in place, but also to the perpetrators' identity crisis.

In the above paragraphs, I examined the ideological crisis at the heart of the Ottoman Empire and how this became translated into ideologies, laws and decrees that essentialized differences and became institutionalized in the state apparatus. In this paragraph, I focus on the violence itself. For this reason, I studied several memoirs including Chitjian (2003), Balakian's (2009), and several eyewitness accounts such as in the collections and articles of Adalian (1997), Miller and Miller (1993), Riggs (1997), Barton (1998), Gaunt (2006), Sarafian (2001), Danielyan (2005), Bryce and Toynbee (2000) and *The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors* compiled by Svazlian (2011). I also examined the Dutch collection of eyewitness accounts published by the Dutch Committee of "Suffering Armenians" in 1918, and another collection published in 1917. These eyewitness accounts included primary eyewitness accounts from survivors to indirect eyewitness accounts by missionaries, ambassadors or other third parties who had witnessed the massacres. My aim was to study violence not only as a mode of action or something that happened, but also as a *cultural expression* that expressed the Ottomans' identity crisis and therefore, the genocidal intent. I believe that the bodily experiences of violence are of paramount importance to understand the consequences of trauma, which I will discuss in later chapters.

I argue that if the violence against the Armenians is examined from the bottom up, from the Turkish point of view, there was not only a political or physical threat of contamination or a fight for existence,

symbolically speaking, but also a cultural contamination of Armenian influences on the newly formed "Turkish identity."[48] I argue that due to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the *Ghazi* tradition and the increasing fixation on their *own* ideological framework and identity, the perpetrators projected their identity crisis onto the Armenians and this is what was being expressed in the modes of violence. Othering and Selfing became more and more important. By diminishing the identity of the Armenians, the perpetrators tried to enhance and establish their *own* identity through the process of Selfing and Othering. This was not done only ideologically or institutionally, but also through the *physical* acts itself.

In Hampartzoum Mardiros Chitjian's memoirs (2003), there are clear depictions of the several stages and phases of the genocidal process, and how the violence "on the ground" increases and becomes more and more violent and gruesome with each step. As a genocide survivor, he states: "One never survives from a Genocide" (ibid.: 16). The practices and experiences of violence are what Taylor (2002) considers *bodily memories* (ibid.: 142): Memories that are not only inscribed in the mind, but also in the body where the evidence of violence—scars, pain and trauma—is physically carried.

In 1912, Chitjian, as a child going to school in a town with a majority population of Armenians, observed the first stages of symbolic and institutional violence. Old teachers were exchanged with new teachers:

> From the very beginning our Christian names were changed to secular names by the new teachers. Kasper became Massis and I became Papken. Although we and our parents accepted this practice, we used those names only in the classroom by the teachers and principal. We maintained our Christian names at home and outside of the classroom. (ibid.: 76)

What makes this quote significant is that the first steps of the phases of identification and discrimination are visible, and in an indirect way, classification and symbolization as well. By changing the students' names,

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[48]A comparable process occurred in Nazi Germany as Melson (1992), Auron (2000) emphasize. Due to the Depression and the humiliations following the First World War, an identity crisis arose in Germany, which the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) used for political gain. However, the new German identity was magnified and based on race, whereas the Turkish identity was based on ethnical and nationalistic sentiments (Melson 1992: 250–253).

it became clear who was and who wasn't a Muslim or a Turk in the classroom. If someone wasn't a Turk, they were forced (and everyone in the community knew this) to change their name to a secular name. By doing so, it was communicated indirectly, that this person had to be Turkified.[49] However, there is another discourse underneath this action. By changing a name, the Christian name became subordinated to the non-Christian name. The Christians were made an Other. This process continued until the spring of 1915, when Chitjian made the following observation: "All of the Armenian shops were confiscated and converted into makeshift jails" (ibid.: 89).

This is of great symbolic importance. Here were the phases of segregation and isolation and even removal of property. By confiscating Armenian property, the property became subordinated to State property. But, it went even further than this. The State didn't create new shops from the old ones, but instead converted them into jails; as if the property itself was tainted and could serve no other purpose than to imprison criminals. Here we see the negative connotation attached to Armenian property.[50] These jails were quickly filled, not only with criminals, but also Armenians.

In 1915, after many Armenians had been imprisoned and tortured, Chitjian's father brought his family to a church in another town that had been turned to a Turkish school.[51] At first, Chitjian did not understand his father's decision or what the purpose was. He and his two brothers were still quite young. Why did his father leave them there? The purpose became quite clear:

[49] Keep in mind that this was in 1912, before or at the start of the Balkan war. The CUP still believed in a plural society, which changed dramatically in 1913.

[50] As Üngor (2011b) in his excellent research points out, another salient detail is that some of the property was actually confiscated by the Muslim refugees of the Balkan war. If we take the significance of the Balkan war into account (see former paragraphs), this has a very symbolic connotation: Armenians weren't seen—as we saw in the works of Gökalp—as part of the political entity or society, but the Muslims refugees were. Their property was property of an "enemy within" and could be used as such.

[51] His father by this time had been imprisoned and tortured. He didn't speak when he brought his children to this unknown school and left them there with tens and later hundreds of other Armenian children.

> Within a few days, we slowly realized what their intentions were for us. They began a very deliberate plan to convert us. We were to become Turkified. The very first thing they did was to change our Armenian names into Turkish names. My name was changed to Rooshdee, Kasper became Rasheed, Kerop became Hamdee, and Nishan became Nahyeem. Next day they demanded we no longer speak Armenian. They insisted we speak only in Turkish (…) What surprised me more was how quickly and subconsciously we completely forgot how to speak Armenian. (ibid.: 100)

Here we see a few very crucial elements. In 1912, Armenian names were changed to secular names, thus still symbolizing the plurality of the Ottoman Empire. In 1915, however, the names had to be changed into Turkish names. There was a refocus on language, since not only names were subordinated to the Turkish hegemony, but also the language. What is also interesting in the quote is how quickly the Armenian students, left by their parents, *internalized* this change and how this change was embodied. The symbolic suppression went further:

Next they started to teach us their Turkish history. We were taught to say in Turkish:

> Freedom, Liberty, Fraternity – long live the people
>
> We are Ottoman, we are brothers, our customs are ancient
>
> We must devote our lives as a gift towards our country
>
> We are Ottomans, we are brothers. (ibid.: 101)

Thus, language and the interpretation of history and national sentiment were all subordinated. Armenians had to abide by the new national identity. "All Ottomans" were "brothers," their customs were "ancient." (See here also Gökalp's ideological framework.) Lives should be devoted as a gift to the country. This implied that if someone wasn't an Ottoman (and bear in mind here that the definition of Ottoman was more narrow than at the start of the revolution of 1908), that person wasn't a brother who followed the ancient customs and thus was an outsider. What being an Ottoman meant was expressed in the following actions: "The last thing they tried to change was our faith in Christianity. We had to memorize and recite in Turkish: Mohamed is a saint and his teachings are correct" (ibid.: 101). To be Turkish meant that you had to: (a) speak the

language, (b) carry a Turkish name, (c) subscribe to the Ottoman interpretation of history, (d) follow "ancient" customs and (e) convert to the Islam. Here is Gökalp's theoretical and ideological framework expressed in the modes of day-to-day violence. Religion was primordial to culture and people were subordinated to the State.

In each step, Armenian personal identities were erased by the Nationalistic identity of the CUP and the Other became increasingly institutionalized. By the following steps, property was confiscated on a larger scale:

> Those [Armenian] houses were bolted shut and tagged with a government seal indicating that the occupants had been taken away by an order from the Turkish government. The properties and all of the contents both within the houses and on the exterior now belonged to them. (ibid.: 102)

Armenian property, a significant (economic) identity marker, was taken over by the Turkish dominant culture group. The otherness was exemplified by tagging the houses with a government seal. From this point onward, the violence increased.

> Three weeks later without warning, about ten o'clock in the morning, three gendarmes entered the Protestant Church before we were taken out to pillage for the day. Without a word they promptly started to separate boys according to their physical size and age (…) as it turned out, the older boys were separated from the group because they were designated to be killed on that day. The Turks knew the older boys were not going to convert and become Turk and therefore would continue to be a threat. (ibid.: 104)

What makes this eyewitness statement so significant is that the children who the gendarmes believed would not convert or who were considered too old to convert, were a threat to the Turkish identity. Here the imagined threat of the self-concept is expressed in physical action and identity becomes the focus of the violence. Older boys who couldn't be converted were killed. It wasn't necessarily the boys who were being targeted or who were a danger—for the younger boys were kept alive—but their Armenianess.

Here also, as the following (indirect) eyewitness account shows, removal of material possessions is of great importance during the violence. Possession has a symbolic value. The social status of a Christian was often based on his/her economic position within a village. Taking away their material possessions therefore, was not only taking away their wealth, but also their social status and economic identity.

I saw them go: an endless procession, accompanied by gendarmes, who spurred the crowds on with sticks. Scantily clad, exhausted they dragged on. Elderly women had collapsed from exhaustion, but had to carry on; they did not want to get acquainted with the threatening sticks of the gendarmes…. The Turkish do not allow them to carry a single item of clothing or a mule or a goat. All that they possessed was sold for next to nothing…. The deportees were forced to abandon their possessions in Zeytoun, so that the Bosnian Muslims, the *Muhadjirs*, who the Turks had appointed as the new inhabitants of the town, could occupy their new dwellings (Translated by the author from *Nederlandsche Comité tot Hulpbetoon aan de Noodlijdende Armeniërs* 1918: 16, 17)

The stripping away of material possessions also returns repeatedly in the memoirs of Grigoris Balakian (2009). At some point a gendarme tells him:

Every woman, girl, and boy was searched down to their underwear. We collected all the gold, silver, diamond jewellery, and other valuables, as well as the gold pieces sewn into the hems of their clothes (…) Before long we had made piles of hundreds if not thousands of gold chains, gold watches, necklaces, bracelets, earrings and rings with diamonds and other precious stones. (ibid.: 143)

Sometimes the act of stripping away material possessions took sexualized forms, as one eyewitness confided to Grigoris: "We saw caravans of women, completely naked because the Yeneze bandits who greeted the caravans had even taken their undergarments" (ibid.: 250).

At the same time, Christian churches (another important local identity indicator) were being destroyed or converted to schools or Mosques. As one eyewitness account indicated:

After the killing of the Protestants, the Turkish government, the *Mulhallemi*, and the Kurds were openly encouraged to set their whole plan in action with respect to disposing of all the [East and West] Syriacs in the area. They surrounded Midyat from all sides in vast numbers and started indiscriminate killings of the Syriacs, destroying their houses, churches, monasteries, and palaces. (Gaunt 2006: 330)

Killing wasn't enough. Churches and houses also had to be destroyed, as if the landscape had to be cleansed (purified) from Christian elements. Here we see that not just people, but more importantly, identity was being targeted in all its aspects. When houses weren't destroyed, they were repossessed by (Balkan) Muslims:

> Oh, my *Der baba*, wherever we went, they threw us out. Through the windows we would enter the houses left empty by Armenians and sleep there at night, but now those houses are filled with Turkish refugees. (Balakian 2009: 249)

What makes this act so symbolic is that the Turkish refugees were in fact Muslim refugees from the Balkan wars. As Üngör (2008) points out, the deportations went both ways. The Christian minorities were deported outwards, while the Muslim refugees from the Balkans and Russia were deported inwards. The Syriac and Armenian houses were used as accommodation for the homeless refugees (ibid.: 22), who were considered to be a part of the nation state, while the Syriacs and Armenians were not. If we combine this action with the importance that the Balkan wars had on the identity crisis of the Ottoman Empire, the movement of Muslim refugees was not only economically motivated, but also symbolically. The Muslims were literally claiming possession of their land. It solidified the idea that the non-Muslim was indeed an internal threat that had no place in the Ottoman Empire.

At the same time the deportations, the physical handling of the deportations in itself was emphasising the inferiority of the Christian minorities:

> We got farther away from the houses and reached an open field. We noticed that all the animals were gathered there – our sheep, cows, horses and so on. I remember my aunt jumping over the fence and going to our cows and hugging them. It was a very sad scene for me, a child. Thus, we left everything behind. There were crowds from every street, all going to the same place. We walked and walked until dark, and I noticed how all the people coming from different directions would end up on the same road. There were gendarmes on both sides of the road to make sure no one swerved from his line or fell behind. (Miller and Miller 1993: 81, 82)

In the existing literature on the Armenian genocide, there is little attention given to the symbolism behind the concentration of the Armenians and how overwhelming such an experience must have been. Hundreds of people walking in a single line, captured by 20, maybe 30 gendarmes and not a single person in the group took action against this. How significant is the psychology of fear? How does fear deprive the victims of the willpower to stand up for themselves or resist? In such a moment, how are the feelings of inferiority internalised and embodied?

As a victim, one is completely subjected to the power of the perpetrator. Therefore, it is significant to notice the indirect reference that the above quoted eyewitness makes to the cattle: the animals stand in an open field, while the people are driven through the streets as a herd.

At this point in the memoires and eyewitness accounts, details of the atrocities become more graphic, fragmented and circumventive. The most horrifying scenes are described, but often with distance and without emotions or with metaphors. Take for example the following eyewitness account that I found in a Dutch book with the title (translated) *Tortured Armenia,* published in 1917:

> We saw it everywhere; a man punctured with bullet holes, a woman ripped open, a child next to her sleeping at the side of his mother, a girl at the bloom of her age, laid out in a position that tells its history. (translated by the author, in: "*Gemarteld Armenië*" from El-Ghusein 1917: 31)

We have to keep in mind that this was published in 1917 and that the Netherlands was at this moment a conservative Protestant country. Many descriptions and depictions in the book *insinuate* meaning, but at the same time circumvent it. What does *"laid out in a position that tells its history"* mean? It has a sexual connotation, but can you as a scientist be certain?

This is a methodological problem that Shirinian (1999) implies in her article when she studies survivors' memoirs as a cultural history:

> …each [writer] attempts to recreate the events in written texts. This act, remembering and writing, is yet another reminder that in such texts, whether they be historical or literally in nature, we are given reality that is *represented*. (ibid.: 167—emphasis by author)

Many of the memoirs were written many years after the fact and were shaped by the author's experiences *after* the violence: "The survivor memoir is a response to exile and represents the home reached through a voyage of self-realization" (ibid.: 171). Therefore, we often read representations and interpretations of the past, that not only tell *what* happened during the massacres, but also what occupied the writer's mind at the moment of writing. Sometimes there can be personal or political motivations that lay *underneath* the accounts.

There is a similar methodological problem with indirect eyewitness accounts. These are also shaped through time and often bounded by the norms and values of the time and the culture it is written in, as the

Dutch example above shows. For example, the eyewitness accounts of the American missionaries are often more explicit than the Dutch eyewitness accounts. If the Dutch eyewitness accounts were written today, with the cultural changes that have occurred since 1917 in the Dutch culture, they probably would have been more graphic. So, we are dealing with *textual* representations of *physical* events, and there are multiple layers and possible interpretations.

This is not to say that the physical events *didn't* happen (an argument that is often used by genocide deniers.) The amount of data, the diverse sources of data—from direct and indirect eyewitness accounts of Armenian, British, American, Danish and Dutch sources—rejects this interpretation of the Armenian genocide. Because they are written after the atrocities does not mean that the descriptions should be dismissed outright or that this provides an opening for denying that the Armenian genocide ever happened. It only indicates that researchers should be aware that descriptions of genocide can only be representations of multiple interpretations of the same data. This data is still important. Comparing various sources, even those written years after the fact, can tell something about the violence that was used and what the violence culturally represented. It's through the multiplication and comparing sources that you validate the data.

I believe there is another reason why the texts about explicit physical violence are often riddled with metaphors and indirect and circumventive accounts. This has to do with the explicit nature of the violence itself. It is impossible to capture these horrors in texts since violence goes beyond words and meaning and language cannot translate what transpired. Violence unravels culture for the one who experiences it and the one who witnesses it.

Taussig (1987) speaks of "space of death," and Perera (2001) calls it the "shadow of death." It's the moment that all cultural and social meanings within the acts of violence are lost: "[it] must ideally be understood as a particular stage in journey or path that any individual may have to go through at some point of time in a society of terror" (Perera 2001: 164). Taussig defines it even more narrowly:

> space of death is pre-eminently a space of transformation: through experience of coming close to death there will be a more vivid sense of life; through fear there can come not only growth in self-consciousness but

also **fragmentation**, then **loss of self-conforming to authority**. (Taussig
1987: 7—emphasis by author)

I interpret the space of death as a moment during the experience of vio-
lence when there are no words, culture disintegrates, the victim is very
much aware of his or her physical being and the loss of control over their
own self-determination and destiny. At that moment, the victim is noth-
ing more than blood, brains and bones; a physical vessel that can be tor-
tured or killed to the liking of the aggressors. Language cannot fill this
experiential space. There are no cultural frameworks that can give mean-
ing, definition or direction, there is only the experience of fear and the
realization of death itself.

This is also the moment when violence in the most physical form is
inscribed in the mind and the social and physical body of the victim-
ized group. This is the experience that direct survivors cannot convey.
If they do, it is often fragmented, loose images that are communicated
in non-discursive ways or through silences.[52] At the same instant, this
moment is symbolic of extreme importance for ethnographers; especially
if it is placed in the continuum of the perpetrators' identity crisis. It is
here where the perpetrators' dominance is the most visible and acute. It
is here where the aggressor's experiential world becomes the experiential
world of the victim. There is no longer just institutional subordination,
but also physical subordination. The other is not just imaginary in the
social fabric of the perpetrators' world, but the Other is physically (re)
constructed. The victim experiences this. They are not only objectified.
They are also the object.

Riggs, an American missionary, speaks of the horror of starvation,
especially near Harpoot (Kharpat), where caravan routes converged and
the Ottomans created a "death camp":

As we reached the edge of the camp, an unforgettable scene occurred.
Seeing us coming, the people thronged about us, each trying to get within
reach, and all crying out with the pitiful fierceness of starvation, "Bread!
Bread! Bread!" Each one was thinking of **their own hunger**, or of her

[52] The first-generation survivors are therefore often called the "silent generation". They
cannot convey what they have experienced or have felt. The trauma lies deep, both physi-
cally and socially. Since they can't convey their trauma, there is no outlet of the pain and
trauma on a social level.

children, so they jostled each other as they surged about us, an uncontrollable mob, **more like starving animals than human beings**. (Riggs 1997: 147—emphasis by author)

George E. White, president of Anatolia College located in Marsovan speaks of a similar experience:

A concentration camp for some of them was established at an Armenian monastery about two miles from the city. Sickness was reported to have broken out there, but our doctor was not allowed to go to the relief of the situation or send a nurse or druggist, or send supplies. (Barton 1998: 79)

In both descriptions, the powerlessness of the narrator is visible as the narrator struggles to make sense of what is happening. The experiences of starvation, disease and exhaustion disintegrates the collective identity. Only fear survives. People fight for bread. People fight for life. All other identity indicators at that instant are simply stripped away.

For those Armenians who didn't die of disease, exhaustion or starvation, there was often a worse fate. Miss Myrtle O. Shane, an American missionary, described the following scene that was told to her:

(…) near the Gate of Semiramis, about two hours from the city, she [the eyewitness] saw fifty men near the road forced to lie down on their backs in a row, their hands and feet bound. Then a butcher proceeded to cut their throats one after another, each man knowing when his turn would come. (Barton 1998: 15)

Or as another eyewitness account indicates:

Many caravans arrived at Midyat; and they were filled with women and children. They were taken to the mosque's yard. The yard would become overcrowded. To reduce the number of hostages, the Turkish forces gathered the boys, around 500–600. They told them to lie down, face down. Then they took some thick sticks and beat them on the head. Then some 40 to 50 Turkish soldiers riding horses rode back and forth over the boys' heads until they died. (Gaunt 2006: 342).

Here is the collectively of death, the individual surrender to the executioner. The eyewitness accounts do not speak of the cries, the screams or the smell of blood, they do not speak of objections or rebellion, or

even more confronting, the look in the eyes of the victim before he lies down. All these descriptions are omitted. The only thing that is left is a dry description of *facts.*

In the eyewitness accounts I read, authors spoke of insufferable torture including public humiliation of being spat in the face, men being chained, victims being beaten by sticks on their hands and feet *before* they were killed, women and children being thrown into rivers and wells, Christians being burned alive in churches, houses and sometimes on public squares. There are even stories about nuns being crucified like their "Master" (Gaunt 2006: 330). All these accounts provoke images, and give short accounts of tortures, but do not describe this non-descriptive experiential world. The descriptions do not necessarily tell what impact they had on the narrator or how the narrator was changed by the experience. There is a detachment behind the words.

At the same time the violence obviously carried multiple symbols. The cutting of throats by a butcher is often done to animals in similar rituals. The crucifixion of nuns symbolises the crucifixion of Christianity within the Ottoman nation state. So, the public display of violence emphasises the inferiority of the Christian victims to the dominant hegemony. It was also meant to *depersonalize* the victims and make them puppets in the hands of the powerholders. At the same time the disregard in which the bodies were spread out and displayed also carried a warning for spectators, bystanders and passers-by:

> [the corpses] were laid in such a position as to expose **their persons** to the ridicule of passers-by, and on the abdomen of each was cast a large stone. They had evidently been murdered there at the noon hour and then the brutal guards had stopped to leave behind them the signs not only of violence but of **mockery and insult**. (Riggs 1997: 57, 58—bold emphasis by author).

Or:

> Hundreds of Armenian bodies were slaughtered, disfigured in all possible heinous ways—men, women old and young—children and babies. No one was spared. Their bodies were scattered and strewn about or piled upon each other. The ravine and both banks of the Perri River were totally covered. The limbs of babies were sticking out here and there. Gradually, I became aware of the putrid odour of the decaying bodies. (Chitjian 2003: 111)

Humiliation in life had to be perpetuated after death. The mockery and inferiority had to be inscribed literally in the physical world as well as in the social and even geographic world and maybe even in the spiritual world. The deaths had to be visible, and where they were invisible, there were often sanitary and not humanitarian reasons to do so:

> The corpses of tens of thousands of Armenians had been buried – not as the sacred obligation finally due to all mankind, civilized or savage, since prehistoric times. Rather, these corpses had been buried by Muslim labourers sent by the government simply to "cleanse the environment" of the pollution caused by tens of thousands of rotten and decomposed bodies. (Balakian 2009: 242)

In the above statement, the victims are not only placed outside the new Turkish nation state, but also outside of time. They weren't given the same rights of the prehistoric ancestors of *all* human kind. In short, the victims weren't human. They were buried by the aggressors for they were afraid of diseases.

There is another dimension of the violence to address, which has only been implicitly present in the above statements. This is the sexualisation of the violence (see also Holslag 2015b). One eyewitness account speaks of "raping women and young girls in front of everybody" (Gaunt 2006: 330) and of "pregnant women being killed after their babies were taken from their bellies" (ibid.: 334). Others describe how girls were taken to harems or were raped before they were killed. Consider for example the following testimony:

> The gendarmes caught my sister-inlaw who was pregnant, and made a bet: "What is - girl or boy - inside this gavur's belly?" said one of them. The other cut open her belly with a sword before our eyes and replied, "Gavurs do not bear boys, see" (Silian's Testimony in: Svazlian 2011: 414)

There was also violence aimed at genitals:

> For a whole month [during the summer of 1915] corpses were observed floating down the river Euphrates nearly every day, often in batches of two to six corpses bound together. The male corpses are in many cases hideously mutilated (**sexual organs cut off,** and so on), the female corpses are ripped open. (Bryce and Toynbee: 2000—bold emphasis by author)

Or:

> In Dilman there is also the same amount of murdered Armenians, whose martyrdom was carried out in the most horrific manner. **They cut off the feet** of living people with saws, they cut their wrists in the same way, **they cut noses, cheeks, and lips off with scissors**. **They burned those parts of the body which are more sensitive.** Both the elderly and the young were killed by frightful tortures, without regard to gender. We saw the traces of boundless brutality, **glowing skewers were run through genitals of both women and men,** and they were put to death this way. (Danielyan 2005—bold emphasis by author)

The cutting of noses, cheeks and lips is very peculiar. It is taking away characteristic elements that were sometimes specifically attributed to Armenians. Even Armenians sometimes see similarities in the faces often in the eyes, noses, lips and cheeks. If this is factual or not, is not important. What is important, aside from the sexual connotations of the violence, is that the perpetrators tried to make the victims unidentifiable and faceless.

The glowing skewers of genitals and the removal of genitals were acts witnessed and told in many eyewitness accounts. According to Wood (2006), the sexualisation of violence is a recurring theme in all warfare, but is more specifically present during ethnic cleansings (2006: 327 or Buss 2009: 150). Some of this violence is considered to be opportunistic and strategic, meaning that sexual violence occurs when "an armed group believes it to be an effective form of terror against or punishment of a targeted group" (Wood 2006: 331). The intent of the violence is of great importance. Wood underlines that if the intent is to govern civilian populations or if the armed group is dependent on civilians, sexual violence is less likely to occur (ibid.: 328, 329).

There is of course another dimension of sexual violence, and this is the symbolic dimension. Raping a victim, and penetrating the body of the victim, is the ultimate physical dominance of the aggressor and the one that is subordinated. It is an intimate act. Raping is putting shame on women's bodies, and by doing so on their communities. It is a way to differentiate the dominant cultural group from the Other (Banerjee et al. 2004: 129) but also at the same time to make the Other complicit. The importance here is that women are often seen or visualized as "symbolic representations" of the community or nation: "Women thus become the embodied boundaries of the nation state" (Buss 2009: 148. For a more in-depth analysis on this subject see also Das 1996 and 2008 and Appadurai 1998).

Assaulting a community in a most personal and intimate way is also assaulting the community in a primordial way: "the penis in ethnocidal rape is simultaneously an instrument of degradation, of purification, and of a grotesque form of intimacy with the ethnic other" (Appadurai 1998: 239). The physical body becomes the "theatre of the body" for politics. As Foucault has noted, the power over life and reproduction in the most literal way is the ultimate power that sovereign states may have over their populations. In ethnic violence, this takes perverted forms. It is not only penetration that counts, and the twisted intimacy of this act, but symbolically controlling the reproductive organs of the community. By raping females of the victimized group, the perpetrator is symbolically reproducing his own dominant culture. Here again is the focus on identity and in this instance the physical *reproduction* of this identity. However, this interpretation of sexual violence does not explain the genital mutilation or removal. Here there is another mechanism of identity destruction at play that can be placed in the mechanism of Othering and Selfing. It is the literal deprivation of the *gender identity* of the victimized group and thereby, enhances the *masculinity* of the aggressors.

In other eyewitness accounts this overarching purpose of the tortures and the killings is visible:

> There were parties of exiles arriving from time to time throughout the summer of 1915, some of them numbering several thousand. The first one, who arrived in July, camped in a large open field on the outskirts of the town, where they were exposed to the burning sun. All of them were in rags and many of them were almost naked. They were emaciated, sick, diseased, filthy, **resembling animals** covered with dirt and vermin, far more than human beings. They had been driven along for many weeks like **herds of cattle**, with little to eat, and most of them had nothing except the rags on their backs. (Sarafian 2001—bold emphasis by author)

Or:

> We were the first caravan to leave with much tears and anguish since it meant separation for so many. They assigned a few soldiers to us and thus we began. We used to travel by day, and in the evenings we stopped to eat and rest. In five to six days we reached Palu. There while we were washing up, I will never, never forget, they took my father away, along with all the men down to twelve years of age. The next day our camp was filled with the Turks and Kurds of Palu, looting, dragging away whatever they could, both possessions and young women. They knocked the mules down to kill

them. I was grabbing onto my six-year-old brother; my sister was holding her baby, and my two young sisters were grabbing her skirt; my mother was holding the basket of bread. There was so much confusion, and the noise of bullets shooting by us. Some people were getting shot, and the rest of us were running in the field, not knowing where to go…Then I saw with my own eyes the Turks beating a fellow named Sahag, who had hid under his wife's dress. They were beating him with hammers, axes right in front of me and his wife. He yelled to her to run away, that we are all going to die a **"donkey death"** [Expression meaning, "to die worthlessly, slaughtered like an animal"]. (Adalian 1997—bold emphasis by author)

Metaphors for victims resembling animals are the most often used metaphors in the memoirs and eyewitness accounts. I literally read them over and over again. (See for example Balakian 2009: 131; Riggs 1997: 125, 148; Barton 1998: 10; Gaunt 2006: 329, 330, 346 and many, many more.) I heard similar expressions in conversations with Armenians today. "We have been slaughtered like animals, Tony, and the world did nothing," or "they butchered us as dogs and let us die." One informant used another metaphor: "My grandmother and her sister where thrown in a well like *stones.*" The use of these metaphors has a great symbolic meaning. By killing the Armenians as animals or as objects, they were regressed as non-human beings. We see the same symbolism in the following eyewitness account, although indirectly, wherein Armenians are treated not only as animals, but also as a commodity. Almost in the same way that Jews were a commodity during the Holocaust when their hair was used (and imagine the symbolism of this!) for the blankets and socks of German soldiers:

During that same time, other American soldiers were hiring Turkish boys to canvas the area to collect Armenian bones that were strewn throughout the vicinity. Some bones were still in the exact spot, where the Armenians saw their fate. Other bones were stacked in mounds several feet high. For each gunnysack that Turkish rogues gleefully filled with Armenian bones, they were paid one American dollar. (Chitjian 2003: 191)

This example shows the passivity of the Americans buying the bones (and think of the implicit critique here to the West!). What is equally important is that the "Turkish rogues" sold these remains as a *commodity*.

The symbolism can be compared to the mechanisms of Othering and Selfing, which results in an interesting observation: the mechanisms of identification that are used on a day-to-day basis don't stop, but instead become more aggressive. During each step in the continuum

of destruction, the violence increases and a layer of identity is stripped from the victimized group. First, the obvious and primary identity makers, like names (kinship), language, (collective) history, property and religion (churches) are destroyed. Then comes physical destruction and within these acts the violence is highly symbolic. Victims are concentrated, overpowered, de-gendered, penetrated and in the end dehumanized and slaughtered like animals. This violence, as a cultural expression, carries implicit, tacit and symbolic meaning. Through the act of mirroring, the identity layer that is stripped away confirms the identity of the in-group. By destroying the names (kinship), for example, of the victimized group, the perpetrators are confirming and solidifying their own kinship. By destroying the language of the out-group, the perpetrators are confirming the superiority of their own language. By making the collective history of the out-group subordinated to the nationalistic tale, the perpetrators are actually confirming their own history and hegemony. By destroying churches, the perpetrators are confirming the superiority of their own religion. Within each step of the violence, the pathological fixation on identity for the in-group is symbolically resolved, ending with the most gruesome acts by which the in-group confirms its masculinity and humanity over the out-group.

In his article, *Dead Certainty,* Appadurai (1998) emphasises the great importance of torture. He sees the acts of cutting open bodies and disembowelment as a "pre-mortem autopsy" (ibid.: 232), wherein the perpetrator is not only eliminating the ethnic other, but also: "establish the parameters of this otherness, taking the body apart, so to speak, [is] to divine **the enemy within**" (ibid.: 233, 234—emphasis by author).

Abstract notions of othering are translated into literal and physical actions, by which the other is not only physically constructed and deconstructed (from the *emic* point of view of the perpetrator), but also subordinated, changed, stripped and eventually killed. Killing is the ultimate power and solidifies the *existence* of the dominant culture group. By killing, they show their supreme dominance over the physical body, social body, the national body, and the geographic body (the nation state). By destroying the Other, the perpetrator reconstructs and reconfigures the Self. Here I go a step further than Appadurai (1998). To Appadurai, killing is seen as an act where the construction of "fake" identities demands the brutal "creation" of real people through violence" (ibid.: 242). Since identities are constructed, we need real people to die to solidify these new constructed identities: "violent action can become one means

of satisfying one's sense of one's categorical self" (ibid.: 244). In this, I agree with Appadurai. However, I think that this process goes even further. It is not only death that solidifies the categorical self, but also the various acts of violence that precede it. Each step of the violence solidifies a layer of identity in the minds of the perpetrators.

In his article, *Individual and Large-Group Identity* (1999), Volkan describes the development of an individual identity to a group identity. His approach is psycho-analytical. He describes how an individual first separates a subject from object and establishes his "ego", which Volkan describes as an "inner sense of sameness" (ibid.: 459). When this ego is constructed and the individual ages, additional layers of identity are absorbed. An individual becomes aware of gender (a primordial identity marker), family and eventually group identity-markers and includes these into self-representation (ibid.: 460). Although it would be too early to hypothesize, it is interesting and thought provoking that within the acts of violence a similar process exists, but in reverse. First, the obvious and group identity makers (language, names and churches) are destroyed, until the more abstract identities, like gender and humanity, which are to a child more primary, are deprived and diminished from the victimized group. By stripping away each layer of identity from the out-group, the in-group solidifies and establishes its identity and more subconsciously, its own existence.

This is where genocidal violence differs from other acts of collective violence. When warfare is used to meet political goals, and political actions are used to repress a population, and revolutions are used to overthrow the current hegemony and power, genocidal violence is aimed at destroying an identity. The physical destruction of people is its ultimate outcome, but not its ultimate aim. This destruction, from the perpetrator's point of view at least, has to be complete whether it is aimed at an ethnic identity, national identity, cultural identity or political identity. This is why genocide is indiscriminately aimed at citizens and generally includes cultural genocide and ethnic cleansing. The goal of the violence is pure annihilation. Genocide is successful when a specific group no longer exists and the nation state and national history is cleansed from this foreign element.

This sense of loss and the enormity of the symbolism in the violence are felt by the victims. I do not mean this metaphorically, but in the most literal sense. The feeling of loss is lived. The suffering is embodied. The survivors, even third and fourth generations, are overtly occupied with their identity, and are afraid at their core to lose this identity again, as I show below. The fixation on identity of the perpetrators has become, to some extent, a fixation on identity for the victimized group.

4.5   The Consequences of the Armenian Genocide

The consequences of genocide are enormous and multiple and cannot be summarized in a few sentences, or even paragraphs. There are no words to adequately describe the pain, the trauma and the loss. I have seen it in the faces of my informants. I have read it between the lines of the eyewitness accounts, yet I lack the talent to commit it to paper. Some experiences cannot be expressed; only silence can reflect them. Still, I analyse specific tendencies and consequences of the Armenian genocide.

The first major consequence of the massacres and deportations of Armenians was the decrease in the importance of kinship relationships. In the old Ottoman Empire, local communities had a feudal character to a large extent. Farmers maintained patron-client relationships with landlords. Interrelationships and marriages between the Muslims and the *dhimmis* rarely occurred. Land and possessions were passed on through the name of the family. Who a person was, what they were entitled to and how they defined themselves was mostly dependent on the family relationships they maintained. This changed with the genocide. Due to ethnic cleansings, entire families were diminished. The family networks that had formed the basis of the Armenian identity for centuries vanished in the explosion of violence.

A second consequence was the enormous diaspora mentioned in Chap. 3. Armenians were forced to flee to new territories and build new communities in exile. They were forcefully confronted with areas and cultures that were completely new to them and possibly even hostile. Eastern-speaking Armenians encountered Western-speaking Armenians. Everything that was natural and familiar in day-to-day lives had disappeared. As a result of this disruptive experience—of being uprooted—many who had survived the Armenian genocide never completely felt at ease in their host country:

> My grandmother could never get used to Syria. She was constantly convinced that we could be forced to leave at any minute; that it was not safe … She spoke nostalgically about the past and about the mountain Ararat. According to her, that was our only 'home'. Only there, so she would say, would we be safe. (Informant in the Netherlands)

Many Armenians compare their experiences to those of the Jews. "Armenians are successful in the places where there are no Jews and vice versa," is something I have heard several times. This comparison,

however, is not entirely justified. It is true that the Armenians have a history of exodus and diasporas, just like the Jews. Armenians were living in Europe as early as the twelfth century. However, the motivation of those early Armenians was economic rather than political. As can be seen in the statistics in the previous chapter, the majority of the Armenians lived in and around Anatolia. When the massacres and deportations took place in the early twentieth century in Turkey, a much larger diaspora with a broader demographic diversity emerged. In other words, Armenians lacked the networks that the Jews had set up in Europe throughout the centuries. This forced the Armenians to build new networks. Armenians literally made new homes in unknown host countries and territories.

Two additional consequences should be seen as an extension of this large diaspora. First, is the declining influence of the Apostolic Church and second, the increasing influence of the political parties. As noted in the previous chapters, the Armenian Church slowly started to lose its binding role in the community starting in the nineteenth century. The process of secularisation began to take hold and during the renaissance when many intellectual Armenians searched for a new core identity, which they found in nationalism. This tendency evolved even more after the genocide and during the great diaspora.

At the same time, political parties within the diasporic communities underwent a true ideological transformation. When they were formed at the end of the nineteenth century, the parties' main objectives were emancipation. They wanted to improve the position of the Armenians *within* the Ottoman Empire. After the genocide, these objectives changed from the erection of the Armenian State to *hajabahbanoem*, the preservation of the Armenian identity.

What all these tendencies and consequences have in common is that after the genocide and the deportations, a solid basis of Armenian identity had been destroyed. Political parties were struggling with each other, the influence of the Church was waning, Armenian territory was lost and the economic role of kinship relationships had decreased in the diaspora. There were virtually no institutions left that symbolised the identity of the Armenians. However, if we look at the symbolism of violence, another loss of identity can be found. Not the loss of the importance of institutions, but rather a personal loss that cuts deeper than words, which has been embodied and internalised by the victims through the violence and the experience of violence:

> My grandmother never talked about Armenianness. She did not speak about it. She went to Church every Sunday, but I don't believe she ever spoke Armenian at home. She also did not know anything of Armenian history. She only warned us for the Turks and that we should hide our jewellery. Come to think of it, I don't think she really knew what being Armenian was. (Informant in London)

According to Ewing (1990), the individual knows not one ego or self, but several selves, which can differ depending on context. People reconstruct selves to answer the demands of a specific situation: "When we consider the temporal flow of experience, we can observe that individuals are continuously reconstituting themselves into new selves in response to internal and external stimuli" (Ewing 1990: 258). Concretely speaking, this means that an individual highlights specific elements from their frame of reference in a given setting, even retrieving specific memories, which in that moment correspond to the current context. Sometimes, these memories contradict each other. Sometimes, a person shows a completely alternative side. How one represents themselves, how one defines their self, is therefore dependent on the situation at hand.

Differences and contradictions are coordinated by the *illusion* of oneself. People forge one unity and cohesion where those do not actually exist: "In order to establish a sense of continuity, we do not have to recall *all* of our experiences of an hour ago or a year ago; we need only command a few representative memories" (ibid.: 267). But what happens when the experiences are so grotesque that someone cannot give them a name or a place? What happens to the illusion of unity when its fragmented through genocide?

Violence knows no words. It is the largest invasion on one's personal integrity. It breaks through physical barriers and internalises all feelings of powerlessness, disgust, rage and fear. This invasion is so intimate that it can only be indirectly and non-verbally expressed between the lines of poems and stories, facial expressions or interpretations of art. It is impossible to verbalise the invasion, the so-called space of death. As an Armenian respondent in the Netherlands once told me: "We are fragmented as a people. We cannot describe it. We can only sense and show it through our art…"

In the novels "*Rise the Euphrates*" and "*Black Dog of Fate,*" real or metaphorical journeys are described during which the Armenian authors retrieve pieces of their identity. What struck me in these books is that the

Armenian past is shrouded in silence and mystery. In the novel "*Black Dog of Fate*," for example, the author [Peter Balakian] tries to retrieve the history of his grandmother, and states the following observation:

> Safety and numbing were inseparable in my family's pathology. The United States was a free place, that is, a place where Armenians with their ancient culture in a suitcase were free from bodily harm. Free to worship, practice business, raise families, make art. Free to hide from a past that was – in those decades immediately following the Genocide – unutterable. My mother and father in different ways were amnesiac about the past, caught in some twilight of half-acknowledgments. At some place in their minds my parents must have found real issues of being Armenian too hard, too painful, too absurd. As my aunt Gladys had put it, "It was a pill too bitter to swallow, a pain too bad to feel." In affirming the American present, my parents had done their best to put an end to exile. In the suburbs of New Jersey, they found rootedness, home, belonging. Yet, the past was a shadow that cast its own darkness on us all. *The old country.* I realize now that it was an encoded phrase, not meant for children. Spoken by numbed Armenians of the silent generation. It meant lost world, a place left to smoulder in its ashes. (Balakian 1997: 300)

In the previous quote, identity and physical pain come together and shows how the pain resulted in "numbed Armenians of a silent generation" and a generation that never spoke of being Armenian and what occurred between 1915 and 1917.

A similar relationship between violence and the loss of identity is described in "*Rise the Euphrates.*" The novel depicts the story of Casard, an older woman who survived the genocide as a nine-year-old and who is forced by Turkish soldiers to witness the suicide of her mother when they reach the river the Euphrates after a long death march through the desert. Casard sees her mother jump and drown, and years later she can still hear her mother continuously crying out her own name: "Seta, Seta, Seta" during those final moments. In that instance, Casard loses her identity. She forgets where she comes from. She forgets her "*self*." She forgets her real name 'Garod' and from that moment on lets everybody call her Casard.

> At night, with the house empty and no one to hear her, Casard's thoughts returned to the Euphrates. She placed herself at the riverbank, and gazed once again upon the bodies of women and children, flotsam in the driving

current. She felt the blinding sun like a hot thumb pressing down on her head and the heavy, swollen, raw meat that was her tongue. Opening her eyes wide, she tried to trick herself by saying quickly: My name is … but her mind refused to release its secret and only clamped shut. (Edgarian 1994: 49, 50)

Violence and identity go hand in hand in these stories. Casard loses her self as she sees her mother die. What this scene explicitly shows, and what at the same time is the inheritance with which Casard lives, is that as a survivor she has lost her identity—her mother had taken her identity with her. Casard is the archetype that symbolises all survivors of the genocide in this story.

The loss of identity goes further than the loss of institutions or what Card (2003) considers "social death." The power of the Armenian Church waned, political parties lost influence, kindred relationship deteriorated and Armenians were driven out of their territory. But there was also a personal loss that people cannot verbalise. The experiences of those unspeakable atrocities. Atrocities where the illusion of unity of the self, of culture or meaning got fragmented and stolen.

Here, I return to the definition of identity that I used throughout my research and which I mentioned in Chap. 2. Identity is constructed both in *social interaction* and *internalised* by self-identification. In the case of the Armenians, both social interaction and self-identification have become problematic due to the genocide. Genocide, as I have argued in the previous paragraphs, is a struggle and fight for identity. The acts of violence that followed carried meaning. They carried the message: you are less than a human, as an Armenian you have no right to exist. It is the internalisation of this symbolism in Armenian self-identification that has made the Armenian identity problematic. How can one verbalize an experience or give it meaning, when there is no frame of reference to do so? How can one internalise symbolism that is meant to deprive one of their self, worth and even humanity? Patterson (1982) considers this to be "natal alienation." This occurs when an individual is born with all social connections cut off at the very outset of one's life (In: Card 2003: 74). Even generations later, Armenians still try to cope with this loss of identity as illustrated by the following life story of my informant:

Karlen's life story

Karlen was born in south-eastern Turkey and moved shortly thereafter to Istanbul. He remembers from his early childhood that his grandparents never spoke Armenian. They were afraid of the possible repercussions from

the co-inhabitants in the village. When he started to attend the Turkish elementary school, he discovered that he also had a Turkish first and last name. His grandparents had assumed those names in order to survive. Only at home would there be talk of our Armenian identity, and even then, only shallowly. He knew nothing of Armenian culture and history.

At school Karlen tried to hide his Armenian background, in which he only partly succeeded. He did not participate in Ramadan, did not attend a mosque and because of this, especially at high school, he was bullied. When he attended the University, his life changed. He became more and more interested in his family ties and started to search for his family. He also became acquainted with left-wing political movements. During this period, he states, his identity was primarily oriented to the political and the religious frameworks, and only secondarily to the ethnic. He was rebellious, became aware of the discrimination at the University and in everyday life and started to become more and more interested in his historical background.

"Maybe it was exactly the silence of my family which made me so aware. I rebelled not only against the authorities, but also against them." In 199X he fled with his sister to the Netherlands. There he came into contact with the Dutch Armenian communities, which sparked his interest in "Armenianness" even more. "I started to get more interested in where I came from and what had happened to my people. During this period, I read a lot about the Armenian history and genocide. I tried to make up for everything I had missed up till then."

He became active in the community life, became a member of a Foundation and started an entirely different area of study than he had begun in Istanbul, focussing on refugees and asylum seekers. "I wanted to do something concrete with my experiences. After all, I knew how it was to be a refugee; to belong nowhere." Nowadays he calls himself a Dutch Armenian of Turkish descent, even though – to the great irritation of other members in the community – he does not speak the Armenian language. "The language is not functional in the Netherlands," he argues. "But also, by *not* learning the language, by confronting the people, I try to honour the history of the Armenians. By not speaking the language, I try to remind the people of what was taken from us. What has happened with our 'Armenianness'."

Karlen is a third-generation survivor, and in his story, his struggle from the loss of identity to rediscovering his identity is visible. His family had always tried to hide their Armenian background. "The survival of my grandparents had been a survival in silence. Indoors we were Armenians and attended the church (in Istanbul), to the outside world

we were Turks." He only became aware of his cultural heritage at a later age.

Identity that has been lost and has to be rediscovered is a discourse that is vivid among all Armenians, but has a special dimension for Turkish Armenians. Being an Armenian in Turkey is still problematic. As a result, this group of Armenians, many of whom have fled to the Netherlands, become very active in learning the Armenian language, reading about Armenian history and participating in community life.

The loss of identity is also important for Armenians from other areas, although in another way. They often grew up in countries where the Armenian community is a visible group, which starkly distinguishes itself from the Islamic host society. As one informant stated: "We never needed to ask whether we were Armenians. We lived in a relatively small group. Everybody knew each other and we hardly, unless it was unavoidable, associated with Muslims." The loss of identity is hidden in the segmented fragments of their past that they manage to uncover bit by bit. As an English informant of mine once told me: "My grandparents only spoke Turkish. We grew up in Cyprus and got to know the Armenian culture only bits at the time…. It was school that taught me the Armenian language and Armenian history. My grandparents were silent about their heritage." Another informant confided to me: "Sometimes I think that *they* (Turkish Armenians) know much more about our history than we do."

Identity, defining identity, and the interpretation of identity are topics Armenians struggle with daily in exile. Every day they are confronted with their Armenian background. "Listen, I'm not here because I want to be. My grandparents have fled their motherland and now I live here (…). Up until now, I have lived in five different countries…" Or:

> When I came to The Netherlands I struggled for a long time with the question of how to spell my name. If I would spell it this way or that way, it would sound so or so according to the Dutch pronunciation. But if I would spell it differently, I could no longer recognize it for myself. Therefore, I decided to choose a middle ground.

Just as other minority groups in The Netherlands, Armenians realise that they are "different." But where other minorities can fall back on their collective history or institutions, the collective past of

the Armenians is full of holes. As one informant said: "We all come from different countries. We do not even speak the same language." The genocide is at the core of this disruption in the self and collective history. It is the reason why people were forced to flee, change their names etc. The questions "Who are we?" and "How does the 'Armenianness' need to be interpreted?" become more urgent and important in the diasporic community but is an overarching theme for all Armenians.

4.6   Back to Arshile Gorky

In the introduction, it was noted that (art) historians and biographers have two explanations for Arshile Gorky's decision to change his name. It was either a pragmatic reason, to sell more paintings, or a conscious attempt to distance himself from the past. Perhaps there is a third possibility. His name change was not only meant to formulate a new identity, but also to formulate a non-identity. By assuming another name, Gorky symbolised his lost past. He wanted to make known, consciously or subconsciously, that even his name—his most personal identity—had been taken away.

These fragments of his self were expressed in his paintings. It was through his art that he could project the horrors he had seen as a child. It could be for this reason that his paintings depict crossed lines, colliding figures, and fighting colours. It is as if Gorky wanted to use fragmented images to reflect his inner world. Maybe he wanted to show us indirectly how something so grotesque and horrendous as a genocide can change life into something unrecognizable and how it creates a fragmented self-image. In this sense, Gorky's paintings are individual stories in colours and his oeuvre is the story about Armenianness and the Armenian identity.

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Intermezzo

5.1   "Komitas: Embodied Silence"

Arshile Gorky, his life story and his paintings, symbolize life in exile and the experiences of being uprooted in the diasporic communities to many Armenians I spoke to. The life story of Komitas, on the other hand, symbolizes not only the Armenian Renaissance in the nineteenth century, but also the destruction of the Armenians during the First World War in the Ottoman Empire. I heard Komitas's name over and over again. This was always in combination with the ancient history and rich culture of Armenia or as a representation of the first and "silent generation" after the genocide. Komitas symbolises what violence in its most primitive form can do.

Komitas was born on 26 September 1869 in Kutais in the Ottoman Empire. He was baptized as Soghomon and in 1876, he already had shown a talent for art, languages and music. In his biography in 1908, he related the importance of music in his family:

> My parent's family was naturally gifted with a [good] voice. My father and uncle, Harutiun Soghomonian, were well-known cantors in our city's Theotoros Church. The melodies and lyrics composed by my parents in

the Turkish language – a few of which I wrote down in 1893 in my native land – are still sung by the older folk of our city with great admiration.[1]

In 1881, after his father died (his mother had already died in 1870), he became an orphan and was sent to the city of Etchimiazin, where he pursued a career in the church. He was selected from 20 orphans to enter the musical Gevorkian Seminary. In 1895, he became *Vardapet* (celibate priest) and received the name "Komitas." In 1896, he went to Berlin to study music and aesthetics at the Friedrich-Wilhelm University and in 1899, he was one of the first musicologists who participated in the International Music Society.

Komitas was a priest, poet, singer and composer at the height of the Armenian Renaissance. (He almost embodied this Renaissance.) *Before* the genocide, he wrote approximately 500 compositions. Armenian music was his greatest passion, and especially music that was on the verge of "disappearing":

> During the last 20 to 30 years we have been witness to the steady decline of our religious music. The Armenian mass is now little more than a confused and disordered collection of Turkish, Persian and Arab tunes with no hint of Armenian accent or Armenian versification.[2]

Komitas saw it as his duty to collect and preserve Armenian songs. He envisioned the Armenian culture to "conquer both mind and heart and demonstrate that the Armenians are an indispensable component of humanity." He travelled to Armenian monasteries and churches in Tiflis, Bolis, Cairo, France, Germany and Switzerland. He spent hours and hours in libraries studying old manuscripts and transcribing old Armenian folk-tunes he discovered during his travels. He had the

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[1] This quote and many other fragments of his biography can be found on the website: http://15levels.com/24.April/html/komitas.html. Other information was found on the following websites: www.gomidas.org/books/kuyumjian.htm and http://groong.usc.edu/tcc/tcc-20030421.html during the time I did my primary research.

[2] This quote and many other fragments of his biography can be found on the website: http://15levels.com/24.April/html/komitas.html. Other information was found on the following websites: www.gomidas.org/books/kuyumjian.htm and http://groong.usc.edu/tcc/tcc-20030421.html during the time I did my primary research.

capacity "to work, to work and to work yet more" as he wrote in his biography.

Armenian music had a true aesthetic beauty—a peace and calm—that made it possible to escape the injustice of the world. He was not only a preserver of the Armenian culture, but also a great contributor. The amount of work he contributed was spectacular. He composed, wrote poetry, transcribed old folk songs and wrote scientific books about music theory. He was one of the major Armenian intellects of his time. His whole life Komitas fought for the recognition and perseverance of the Armenian culture and indirectly contributed to the forming of the Armenian identity in the nineteenth century.

This all changed during the Armenian genocide. In 1915, Komitas was imprisoned with 200 other Armenians and two-thirds of his work—his compositions, poetry, books and folk tunes he collected—were destroyed. No one knows exactly what transpired during this period, or in which camps he was imprisoned, but in 1916, after the intervention of influential people, he was released from the Chankeri prison camp and sent to Constantinople. Komitas was taken to a psychiatric hospital and later moved to a sanatorium near Paris where he spent the last 20 years of his life. He was no longer the man that the world had known. The priest who had fiercely fought before the genocide for the resurrection and the perseverance of the Armenian culture in his correspondence and letters never picked up a pen again or said a single word. He died in 1935, and was buried in Yerevan.

According to psychiatrist Kuyumjian (1982), Komitas suffered from a post-traumatic stress disorder that was never fully diagnosed. Until the end of his life, Komitas had heavy mood swings, isolated himself and didn't speak. According to others, especially the respondents I spoke to in the field, the silence was not just caused by a psychiatric disorder, but was also a protest against the atrocities and inhumanity that he had witnessed. "He could no longer talk," one of my respondents confided to me. "For he was disillusioned with humanity in general."

Both explanations tell the story of the influence of genocidal violence on an individual. Komitas was an artist who lived for expression in his poetry, compositions, and letters or as an academic spokesman at the forefront of preserving the Armenian history and culture. His whole life revolved around communication and maybe the disintegration of communication and culture was for him too much to bear. His life work was destroyed and one can only imagine the physical pain he had suffered.

The embodiment of the Renaissance became the embodiment of silence. He became, unwillingly, the representative of a generation that cannot express what it had suffered or seen.

Maybe silence was the only tool of communication left to him, and it encapsulated what he had experienced, witnessed and felt between 1915 and 1916—the becoming of a "non-identity."

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The Reconstruction of an Identity

Between Suffering and Resurrection

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.

Karl Marx

On Friday, February 21, 2003, I visited an Iraqi-Armenian and together with his friend, Ado, we watched the Dutch television program, "Otto in Armenia," broadcast by an Evangelical network. Otto, a Dutch TV presenter, had gone to multiple countries to find and discover early and old Christian roots. At two specific moments during the program, my respondents fell silent. The first was when we saw the commemoration museum for the victims of the genocide in Yerevan and the second was when the main character, Otto, spoke with survivors of the 1988 Armenian earthquake. Ado looked at me with tears in his eyes and said: "Even if I was not an Armenian, I would still love these people." When I asked what he meant, he added: "We have survived so much already."

Until that moment, I had focused my research solely on the Armenian genocide and the impact it had had on my respondents' perception of the world. I had not yet placed my research in a broader framework or studied the various ways in which the symbolism of the genocide was reconstructed within a narrative. I subconsciously assumed that my respondents thought along the same lines as I did and that they too, ordered

the world in a *before* and *after* the genocide and made the distinction between the causes and the consequences of the genocidal violence. Without realizing it, I put the genocide in serial time. What was so striking about Ado's statement however was that he spoke about the earthquake in the same terms I had heard others speak about the genocide. For me, the earthquake and the genocide were unrelated; for Ado, they were part of the same (his)story. Their story wasn't placed in linear time but in circular time.

To understand Ado's reaction, it is important to delve into my Armenian respondents' perception of the world and to view this world through their "glasses". For not all knowledge can be verbalized, and some knowledge is too self-evident to ever explain to an outsider. Still, this knowledge is of vital importance and tells us something about the way Armenians feel and how their world—with attendant webs of meanings—is constructed.

Turner ([1974](#)) called this knowledge *basic analogy*. Van de Port ([1998](#)) used the term "implicit knowledge." According to Van de Port, we can discern two distinct forms of knowledge. The first is explicit knowledge that can be described as factual, visible and tangible. It can be measured and compared and it is the *content* of the conversation. Behind this explicit knowledge, however, there is also a subconscious, tacit and invisible knowledge that cannot be expressed in words, but is instead formless and automatically understood by a specific cultural group. It's an enculturalized language. This indirect knowledge is of extreme importance since it guides how a respondent experiences and interprets the conversation. In other words implicit knowledge guides the content of a discussion. This content is interpreted through figures of speech, intonation, and cultural symbols. These symbols are often self-evident for the in-group, but alien for the out-group. Therefore, implicit knowledge is highly cultural. An example I use often during my lectures is to imagine a chair. If in my culture a chair is red and has three legs, I will not communicate this since from my *emic* point of view this is self-evident. If I speak to someone else from another culture about a chair, I may not be aware that in his culture a chair is blue and has four legs. The content—a chair—is in both conversations explicit knowledge. When we talk about this chair and its importance, we may not be aware that there is a complete miscommunication. Implicit knowledge guides our thinking and is present during the conversation, yet invisible. It is this knowledge that is always unmentioned. It is the knowledge of in-between-the-lines. The knowledge that is so natural to us that we do not even converse about it.

It is up to the anthropologist to expose implicit knowledge since understanding implicit knowledge is also understanding a cultural language. As Kidron (2009) has stated, the aim of the anthropologist is to seek "narrative truths" (ibid.: 9).

This indirect knowledge and how this knowledge is constructed can be summarized, if we look at it symbolically, as follows:

> A man desiring to understand the world looks about for a clue to its comprehension. He pitches upon some area of common-sense fact and tries if he cannot understand other areas in terms of this one. The original area then becomes his **basic analogy** or **root metaphor** … a systematic repertoire of ideas by means of which a given thinker describes, by analogical extension, some domain to which those ideas do not immediately and literally apply. (Turner 1974: 26—emphasis by author)

In the next paragraphs, I analyse this *basic analogy* or implicit knowledge of Armenians living in the diaspora. Before I do this, however, it is important to take a closer look at how the violent past of the Armenians is incorporated into their cultural perception. Ado's choice of words, his pronunciation and body language when speaking about the genocide served as a *basic analogy* for the Armenian earthquake. The earthquake became an extension of the Armenian past and a chapter of the same story. The earthquake became part of the collective memories that tell the Armenians who they are.

6.1   The Breakdown and Reconstruction of Narratives

Violence breaks through every form of discourse and barrier. All the meanings we find valuable and how we interpret the world are being dismantled by violence. Violence shapes memory and our sense of self. Freud (1923) described trauma in the following way:

> any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield …. Such an event as an external trauma is bound to provoke a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the organism's energy and set in motion every possible defence measure. (Freud 1923)

In the previous chapter, I argued that through violence, the self is being violated. I noted that during an act of violence—the moment it is

committed (Taussig considered this a "space of death")—identity, influence, power and self-determination are taken away from the victims. Even the most basic element such as language loses its meaning:

> Physical pain does not simply resist language but **actively destroys it**, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state **anterior to language**, to the sound and cries human being makes before language is learned. (Scarry 1985: 4—emphasis by author)

The world also unravels on a cultural level:

> I am reality, war say…Experiences obtained in the terrible reality of the war, in which these confrontations with the most brutal violations of the integrity of the human body – violations of what is perhaps the ultimate story we have to tell about ourselves: the story that says that we are more than just skin, bones, blood and brains – seem to bring about an utter alienation. (Van de Port 1998: 102, 103)

The stories of who we are, as Van de Port emphasises, are diminished by the act of violence. We lose ourselves and the meaning and mythology we attach to ourselves by blood in the snow and brains against the walls. The estrangement that stems from this can only be illustrated by silence: "The mute, silent version of the victims of war betrays the alienation that occurs when there is no story at hand to confer sense and meaning" (ibid.: 126).

In her ethnographic study of holocaust survivors and their descendants in Israel, Kidron (2009) describes a confronting (but at the same time sad) case study, where a Holocaust survivor only seems to come alive to his children when he opens up a drawer and looks at photographs of his life *before* the war. One of his children relates to Kidron during an interview:

> In our everyday life he was (…) a zombie (…) you could see the death in his eyes (…). But when he opened the drawer and took out things it was like he was taken back to his life before the Holocaust (…) to his childhood. He re-enacted intimate moments of his childhood, playing with his magnets, smiling at his family in the picture. The drawer for me was like an enchanted forest (…) not just because of the content but because I could be with the person I never really knew. (ibid.: 12)

The story of violence is inscribed in the minds and bodies of the victimized. The pains of torture and alienation, and through this also trauma, are absolutely private instead of public (see also Daniel 1996: 143). An experience of violence is un-shareable, incommunicable; if a narration is given to the experience, it is often nothing more than a sketch (Scarry 1985: 32).

However, at the same time, a meaning for the experience has to be derived: "Grieving (…) goes beyond the heavy burden of grief itself and encompasses interpreting and reinterpreting the past as a guide to engaging the future" (Manz 2002: 295). From the destruction of language and narratives, new stories of self have to be constructed and told. Sometimes, these stories take over-exaggerated proportions, whereby the self is magnified:

> The range of these modes of symbolic re-empowerment is infinite – from 'imagined communities' that provide a quasi-familial, fantasized sense of collective belonging, through forms of madness in which one imagines that external reality is susceptible to the processes of one's own thinking, to 'techniques of the self' in which consciousness and the body are subject to all manner of symbolic manipulations. (Jackson 2002: 35)

As I argued in Chap. 2, storytelling is a dialectic process. People try to place their experiences in an intersubjective web. By sharing their experiences with each other and giving meaning to them, new webs of meanings are constructed.

The experienced violence has to be contextualized. We have to give it a place, and within this process not only does the explicit knowledge of the violence become incorporated in the cultural narrative, but so does the non-discursive nature of violence. The silence and what this silence encapsulates (the fragmentation with the past and the self) are incorporated in the narrative.

When Kidron (2009) asked the descendant of the Holocaust survivor what she meant by her father being "a zombie," the descendant responded as follows: "The way he was when he played with the drawer, so different, so alive (…) we had to realize that his life with us was not real to him (…) because he never really left his past" (Kidron 2009: 12). Here we see the microscopic transference of silence. The father's experiences were communicated *without* words, and on a more abstract level, the magnitude of the violence was also communicated. The daughter

realized that her father was not truly with them. He was dead. She felt, as Kidron said, "the presence of absence and the absence of presence in the survivor's home" (ibid.: 12).

This silence of an inscribed and embodied memory is of importance for understanding the creation of cultural narratives. Not only is the silence transferred, but also the trauma. The daughter felt her father's pain.

> Thus, despite the great salience of this macro-micro nexus, scholarly interest in the political instrumentalization of memory and/or political semiotics of memory work (the way memory has been put to work to re-present politically meaningful/forgotten pasts) has elided a closer examination of the mechanics of the micro pole of the axis, namely, the way in which everyday, taken-for-granted mnemonic practices are constituted, sustained, and intergenerationally transmitted to the create the silent yet no less living presence of the past. (Kidron 2009: 8)

According to Manz (2002), a social scientist should not only concentrate on the factual history and the content of memories, but also on the "unspoken thoughts," "hidden voice" (or what I call implicit memories) and "the thoughts that reside between the lines" (ibid.: 299).

Violence and the experiences of violence are often *silently* incorporated in the victims' social imaginary and not only find expression in stories, but also in poetry, music or art. It may be here in the social imaginary, even more than in personal memories and stories, where the violence is vocalized.

Manz (2002) studied collective trauma in Guatemala, where from 1981 to 1983, thousands of villagers were killed, of whom 83% were Mayan. The author analysed the importance of theatre in Guatemala and how theatre was used as a circumventive tool to publicly confront this horrific past. By doing so, the Mayan people could indirectly confront their feelings of uncertainty, pain and grief. The theatre became a vehicle by which the past was displayed and reinterpreted and at the same time, the present position of the Mayans as refugees near the border of Mexico was given meaning. Thus, an individual story of violence and exile became a collective story through art.

For Perera (2001), this circumventive way of dealing with the past and alienation of violence takes supernatural forms. In her study on the aftermath of the political violence between 1988 and 1991 in Sri Lanka, Perera considers religious and spiritual beliefs as a way of coping with

the consequences of collective violence. She dissects two cultural narratives, spiritual possession and ghost stories, as a way of contextualizing the horrific and non-discursive experiences. Spiritual possession symbolizes and re-enacts physical acts of violence when the community, body (and mind) is penetrated by torture, rape and murder. The ghost stories refer to family or community members who are still lost:

> I suggest that the function of these narratives and many of those to follow is to construct a continual set of experiences parallel to the traumatic experiences of the immediate past (….) These narratives are also reflections of the distraught conscience of the community. Until the community is able to come to grips with the experience of the past, its collective conscience would remain tormented and unhealed. (Perera 2001: 170)

In this sense, the spiritual and religious narratives are used indirectly to communicate the experience of violence (through stories of possession), while also giving meaning to the consequences of violence (the ghost stories) to come to terms with this collective history. The non-discursive becomes discursive. Violence is contextualized in a cultural framework through possession and ghost stories.

Sometimes, within these cultural narratives, the focus shifts from the experience of violence to the importance of identity. In a study by Adelson (2001), the author relates the story of indigenous Canadian peoples in Québec, who were severely traumatized by two centuries of colonial violence. This violence was directly aimed at the Indian identity. Church, educational and health programs were enforced well into the twentieth century, to take the "Indian" out of the children and people (ibid.: 78). From 1989 through 1994 the Canadian government planned to build a hydraulic system into the territory of the *Whapmagoostui Iiyiyuu'ch* community, and the indigenous community created an uproar. The community planned a gathering as a political statement, which received international attention and caused the hydroelectric project to end in 1994. The first gathering was overly political. The political alignment of the James Bay Cree Nation (representing many indigenous communities) held protests and speeches against the hydraulic system. The indigenous identity was used as a political vehicle to emphasise an Indian identity. However, this changed between 1993 and 1995, when the gatherings weren't as much political statements but rather cultural gatherings where the indigenous culture and identity was "relived," "revived" and celebrated (ibid.: 88–91).

What makes this case study important is is the link between reformulating a past, and the experience of violence within this past to reconstructing an identity. As the colonial violence aimed to diminish this identity, so the violence was used to *define* the identity. By emphasising their Indianess, the indigenous people not only reclaimed their history, but also magnified the exact aspect that the colonial violence *intended* to destroy—their ethnic identity. It was the intent of the violence that also gave weight to their Indianess.

We see a similar process in Malkki's (1996) study on refugees in Tanzania. According to the author, after fleeing genocidal violence and civil war in Burundi, Hutus believed that their newly obtained status as refugees provided a healing power. By suffering they became cleansed and prepared to triumphantly return to the motherland at least in their own perception. The experienced violence became a vehicle of purification. It purified the Hutu's national and ethnic identity.

If violence is the violation of body's integrity and the self, then this same experience of violence may indirectly be used to create what it intends to destroy; an identity. The self becomes magnified *through* the acts of violence. The narratives constructed in the aftermath not only encapsulate the events and the horrors and the non-discursive knowledge and silence, but also encapsulate what the violence meant to do—the destruction of the self and collective identity. This is culturally answered by creating a new self and a new identity whereby the violence is incorporated and given meaning. This identity can be made in reaction to events on the micro axis of macro political structures.

Thus, I offer an alternative interpretation of the famous case studies on *cargo cults* first researched by Lawrence (1964). [Note from author: this is my interpretation of his research and does not necessarily follow his analysis.] Lawrence observed that religious movements in New Guinea and Melanesia integrated devastated local economies—destroyed by the new capitalistic system—into their religious beliefs. According to the local leaders, the ancestors of the indigenous community would soon return in cargo airplanes and cargo ships filled with European commodities. These planes and ships could not land or moor, because the local authorities tried to stop the return of the ancestors.

Here we see how a community compensates for the loss of traditional networks and family relationships (primary identity indicators), in new

webs of meanings. They were the chosen ones and would be rewarded by their ancestors with ships and goods. Unfortunately, the authorities (read: rulers and colonizers) blocked the cargos and stopped the indigenous people from restoring (or continuing) their economies.

In all these examples, we see how violence—sometimes horrific and physical, other times economic and symbolic—becomes integrated into a cultural narrative and thus becomes an important building block of social memory. The more horrific the violence, the more circumventive the narratives becomes. The suffering and the silence as well as the meaning of violence are being incorporated.

I am not of the opinion that the Armenians whom I have encountered think about their identity or their culture in the same magical way as some of the previous examples above. However, I do believe that the violence of 1915–1917 is incorporated in the Armenian cultural narratives and social imagery and has become an integrated part of their identity. I would even go further: due to the genocidal nature of the violence and the destruction of institutions, which in the previous chapter I have called social death and natal alienation, the genocide has *defined* the Armenian identity. This collective experience is what holds, in certain instances, the diasporic communities together.

This incorporation of the violence, and how this violence is culturally re-enacted, can best be described as a tension between suffering and resurrection. I will argue that it is in between these two poles that the Armenian experience is placed. It is here where the *implicit* knowledge—the non-discursive experience of violence and the embodiment of violence—is expressed. As an informant once told me: "You cannot read about being Armenian. You have to *feel* it…" Then she pressed her hand on my chest. "Here. Nowhere else can you discover what it is to be an Armenian."

6.2   Between Suffering and Resurrection

The terms suffering and resurrection, which I elaborate on in the next paragraph, returned over and over again in conversations, not only with Armenians from Turkey or in The Netherlands, but also with Armenians I met in England. The statements that I recount in the following section are a small representation of the statements I have collected in the course of my research.

6.2.1   Suffering

The Oxford dictionary gives the following definitions of suffering: "the state of undergoing pain, distress, or hardship." The word suffering, however, also has a Christian connotation. Jesus suffered for all mankind on the cross. Suffering is therefore a significant symbol for the Armenians I spoke to. In their perception of the world, suffering represents who they are and how they feel. It is what separates Armenians from other groups, as the following joke I heard in several settings shows: "The Germans say, when they raise their glasses, 'to your health' but they are not healthy. The Turks say 'to our honour', but they are not honourable. The Armenians say 'to our life', but they have no life."

Everywhere I went and all the Armenian informants I approached used the word suffering—in the broadest sense of the word—in our conversations. It is something that is blended in Armenian music, arts and literature and plays a significant role in everyday life. "I feel it every day, you know, the pain… It's what makes me an Armenian" (Informant, third generation, United Kingdom). The pain in this quote is not a symbolic abstraction; it is something that my informants literally felt. The Armenian words of endearment, *tsaved tanem*, literally mean "I take away your pain."[1] Several Armenian informants told me that the folk poet Toemanian describes this pain best: "The Armenian pain is a great sea and that great black sea, wanders in my soul …. In this great dark sea my soul can find neither bottom, nor the mirror. In this great black sea I suffer eternally…".

Even though this poem was officially written before the Armenian genocide,[2] this suffering, this eternal suffering, was often related to the genocide in daily conversations with my informants. In fact, as the example of the earthquake shows, every form of misfortune, every catastrophe that is bestowed on the Armenian people, is placed in the idiom of suffering. Accepting and carrying this suffering makes an Armenian, "Armenian". The genocide is a prominent example of this, as my

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[1] In the Dutch-Armenian community it is also used as a greeting.

[2] It is important to keep in mind, that cultural concepts—as explained in Chaps. 2 and 4—are often not *new* concepts, they are elaborations or magnifications of older concepts. Even though I return to this topic further in this chapter, I do believe that suffering as a collective experience has a different meaning after the genocide than before.

informant Masis (second generation, the Netherlands) explained during an interview:

> The genocide is the symbolism of our entire history! It shows what has been done to us for centuries, and what is still being done to us. We still have lost everything. We are still being suppressed. The genocide is the ultimate injustice.

Therefore, we must not underestimate the impact of the Armenian genocide. Family ties and traditions were torn apart. People were forced to flee their homeland. Language and culture were lost because of the persecution of Armenians:

> The genocide broke down everything. It has a before and an after. Before the genocide there were large families and there was tradition. My grandparents spoke the Armenian language. I do not speak the Armenian language. Every day I am being reminded of the genocide…. It makes us who we are today. (Informant, second generation, the Netherlands)

Or:

> You have to understand clearly, Tony. Imagine a family tree that has been growing for centuries, but some of the branches have disappeared. The remembering of those branches – the remembering of the genocide – is what connects me with my deceased grandparents, my culture and my people. (Informant, second generation, the Netherlands)

Therefore, the suffering does not come forth out of the genocide, at least in the experience and worldview of the Armenians I spoke to. It is seen the other way around; the genocide is a part of an eternal suffering and this is almost primordial. In these narratives, suffering is connected to Noah, the Armenian descendants of his great grandson Gomer, and 4000 years of oppression and spilled blood. From this point of view, Armenians have suffered for centuries and the soul of the Armenian has always been drenched with pain: "The sadness of the Armenians is a result of all that suffering. The sadness has been mixed with our blood" (Informant, second generation, United Kingdom).

The suffering is more than a collective feeling. It is something that has nested in the *body*, that literally, according to my informants, flows through their veins:

> We are a people that have been oppressed for centuries. We have no place of our own; we have always been forced to move. We are constantly searching for our roots, for other countrymen. You can see 'the blessing' of the Armenians on their faces, because we are baptised. The Turks are not baptised …. The centuries of oppression are carved into our faces. It can be seen in our eyes. We have a look in our eyes that is both melancholy and joyful. Just like our music. The eyes are the mirrors of our Armenian soul. (Informant, second generation, United Kingdom)

In this quote, we can see how the suffering is intertwined with Christian beliefs. It is not only a "burden" that needs to be carried, it is also a "blessing" that we can "see" on the faces of the Armenians. Just as Christ did, Armenians are carrying their grief in silence.[3] The absolute Other—the Turks—do not carry this grief. After all, they are not "baptised" and therefore not "blessed"; they do not feel the suffering.

Sometimes the suffering and the pain are so strong that they can be recognized by others. I have encountered this myth in a variety of conversations throughout my research:

> I can't explain it, but when I am waiting at the tram stop and see another person, I know whether he or she is Armenian, even though I have never met this person in my life. I can't explain it. You have to feel it. The same blood attracts each other. (Informant, third generation, the Netherlands)

Or:

> When you meet another Armenian, your entire history goes through you: you see yourself in others and the other in yourself. You experience this literally. At that moment, you become one body. (Informant, third generation, the Netherlands)

Schwarcz (2002) claims that memories in the West are generally experienced individually. People share their experiences and give them meaning, but the memories are usually personal in nature. The meaning given to the memories is merely an abstraction of the personal experience. Schwarcz argues that for non-Western groups this remembering has a collective character. Collective memories are being "felt" and "experienced" and can change the emotional life of the respondents:

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[3] It is interesting from this point of view that the biography of Grigoris Balakian (2009) is titled *Armenian Golgotha*.

In both Chinese and Jewish tradition, memory is neither abstract, nor simply personal. To remember is to take the collective experience of the past to heart in such a way that one is thoroughly transformed by it. (ibid.: 141, 142)

I am of the opinion that the suffering of the Armenians has to be seen in this light. The suffering is not linear, but circular. My informants truly experience loss over and over again. The genocide is a shared collective memory, a physical state of being; it is the essence of the "Armenian character." At the same time it is only half of the equation, and just one side of the pole of their identity. To understand the other side of suffering, we have to look at the importance of resurrection.

6.2.2 Resurrection

I was standing there in front of the mountain Ararat and I had to cry. It is difficult to describe what I felt; I had never seen the mountain before. While I was standing there, I felt the past flowing through me. Noah came from that place. My ancestors came from that place …. And I realised the mountain was still there. Do you understand what I mean? The mountain is made of stone. It is powerful. It stays there. Just as the Armenian people: nobody helped us, but we are still there. (Informant, second generation, the Netherlands)

The Oxford dictionary gives the following definition for resurrection: "the revitalization or revival of something." It, however, also has a Christian connotation; Jesus resurrected after his death. Therefore, resurrection is just like suffering, a significant symbol for the Armenians I spoke to. The suffering they felt also made them strong and different from other ethnic groups:

Armenians were always a minority. They have the strength to adapt …. We have a core so strong that nothing can get rid of it. Art, music, so refined, so evolved, that it nourishes the core. It gives us an emotional intelligence, a perceptiveness we value. We value the core. Because we have lost so many other things in our history. (Informant, second generation, United Kingdom)

Here we see how suffering and resurrection are connected. Armenians suffer and this suffering gives them strength. This is a strength that, according to their narratives, makes them strong enough to survive

anything. Whatever happens to them as a people, they will always rise again. "They will never beat us down, Tony. We are a strong people. Whatever happens, we will always **resurrect**" (Informant, third generation, the Netherlands).

"Resurrection" occurs in the mythological belief system, *before* the genocide, just as the suffering does. It is part of the Armenian character:

> Gregory the Enlighter, our Armenian ancestor, has been locked in a well for 14 years because he was a Christian. The Romans only gave him water and bread.[4] When they opened the well after 14 years, they had expected he had gone mad or died, but he climbed out as if he had never been gone. Jesus, he told them, had given him the **strength** to survive the past 14 years. The King was so impressed, that he decided to make Christianity the state religion. God had shown His strength through Gregory. (Informant, second generation, the Netherlands)

This story, which I have heard in a number of variations, shows how the strength of the Armenian is connected with Christianity. Gregory survived 14 years in the well because he was a Christian. The Christian faith gave him strength. And this is the strength the Armenians still carry with them and as the following story shows is passed on from parent to child:

> I knew a girl once who had an Armenian father and an English mother. The father was "strong," the mother was weak, so when he died and the daughter married, she was giving her children an Armenian upbringing; to pass the strength along… It was in her blood, you see. (Informant, third generation, the Netherlands)

The father was "strong," and the mother was not. It was the strength of the father that the daughter passed on to her children. This was because this "strength" was in her blood and could therefore be transferred.

The aforementioned strength, like the suffering, has to be approached as something literal; it is not an abstraction. It is what my informants felt and experienced and what comes to the foreground in daily dealings among Armenians. I found the most concrete example of this in the

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[4]However, this is historically incorrect. The legend has it that an old woman gave him bread everyday after the Armenian King Tiridates the 3rd had thrown him into a well.

word *kef*, a Persian word that was initially incorporated in the Eastern-Armenian dialect (and also in Turkish and other areas of Anatolia), and later included in the Western-Armenian dialect. It represents a state of mind, which can best be translated into English as pleasure or revival. But, even this translation does not come close to how *kef* is experienced. It is more than pleasure or revival; it is pleasure that can be shared with others at the same time. It is a collective experience:

> When I am at an Armenian party, I feel *kef*.[5] We dance with each other, we are standing around in a circle, we laugh – we realise we are alive! At that moment, I am aware of all the people around me. I feel them all. We share that moment. In that moment, we are whole. (Informant, third generation, United Kingdom)

When I asked my informants if only Armenians can experience *kef*, the answer was firm: "Yes, only Armenians can share *kef* with each other…" *Kef* is from this perception was a part of the Armenian being just as pain and suffering is.[6]

In the previous section, I painted a picture of what it means to be Armenian. This is a construction I can only define as a state of mind between suffering and resurrection. Armenians not only suffer, but they also carry a continuous heavy load of grief. This grief is literal and it is **embodied**. I believe that this embodiment of suffering is a continual experience parallel to the traumatic experiences of the past, just like the case study of Perera. It is within this embodiment of suffering that the non-discursive part of violence is being culturally expressed. The endurance of this suffering gives the Armenian strength. It is based on this strength that the Armenian people will constantly rise again and that they will survive everything according to their *emic* point of view.

This knowledge is never explicitly expressed; it is in between the lines, formless behind conversations. At the same time, the knowledge guides the interpretation of experiences and even catastrophes such as an earthquake, as Ado's statement at the beginning of this chapter shows.

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[5] This word comes from the Persian word *Keif*, sometimes also spelled as *Kaif*, which means, "feeling pleasant" or "high spirited." It is sometimes also used for slang for "being high." It generally indicates an altered state of mind.

[6] This is of course an *emic* point of view. As stated above, the word is also used in Persian and in Turkish.

However, this knowledge is not only expressed in narratives or in the stories we tell about ourselves. It is also expressed in art, which Turner (1988) defines as cultural mirrors. In the next paragraphs, I analyse ceremonies, films and Armenian literature and I show how the basic analogy of suffering and resurrection is embedded in all these cultural representations. It is important to keep in mind that these constructions are not only expressed in The Netherlands. I heard the same remarks from my English Armenian respondents and read the same symbolism in books by American-Armenian and Canadian-Armenian authors. The ideas of suffering and resurrection can be found throughout the entire diaspora, because they have the same breeding ground and the same source. I argue that the ideas of suffering and resurrection do not go as far back as Noah and Gregory the Enlighter, as many Armenians claim, but rather that they were created in the aftermath of the genocide.

6.3   Other Representations of Suffering and Resurrection

Narratives, as explained in Chap. 2, can only gain scientific insight if they are triangulated with other forms of inquiry (Prins 1991). Interviews or life histories by themselves are not enough. To have a sense of what I call implicit knowledge, it is important to always compare observations with other forms of data. I performed participant observation and studied literature, art and film photography in addition to the interviews and oral biographies of my informants. In the paragraph below, I triangulate the implicit knowledge of suffering and resurrection by comparing my findings from participant observation, literature written mostly by American-Armenians and movies made by Armenian filmmakers. I will argue that Armenian suffering and resurrections are expressed in multiple ways.

6.3.1   Ceremonies

In the Netherlands, on April 24, 2003, there were two gatherings held at the same time for the commemoration of the Armenian genocide. The first gathering was a protest march organised by the Tashnak party and conducted through The Hague, where the Dutch government is seated. The second gathering, sober and more ceremonial, was a memorial service at the commemoration monument in Assen. Since I could not be at two places at the same time, I decided to go to the commemoration

service in Assen. My reasons were twofold. First, the protest march was the first to be held and I suspected it would not be an accurate representation of how the Armenian genocide had been remembered throughout the years. Second, the protest march was explicitly political and more of a demonstration than a commemoration. Since my research was about collective memories, I believed that these would be better expressed at a commemoration service than a political rally. Afterwards, I managed to interview some of the demonstrators. But the information that I gathered from these conversations was too scant to use in my research.

In this paragraph, I focus on the commemoration service in Assen and a ceremony held on April 27, 2003 at the Ararat Foundation in Amsterdam. Both ceremonies illustrate the ideas of suffering and resurrection.

The Assen commemoration ceremony started with a march to the commemoration stone at the cemetery De Boskamp. I remember it was an extremely beautiful day—the sky was ocean blue, and the sun was pale and warm—the sunbeams fell scattered and fragmented through the green leaves on the path in front of me. We walked as a procession of approximately 100 people, all of whom had come to Assen by their own transportation or in organized buses. I had been picked up by a bus at a train station in western Amsterdam together with six other Armenians.

At the front of the procession, a woman in a wheelchair was being pushed on the cobblestone path. She carried a bouquet of roses on her lap and every now and then she broke into tears. She was the only *direct* survivor and the sole eyewitness in the crowd who had survived the genocide. She had come by bus to Assen all the way from Maastricht (a city in the southern part of the Netherlands, a distance of almost 200+ kilometres), which is a drive of almost three hours. When we reached the monument, everyone grew silent. Even my informants, who during the journey had been fooling around, became quiet and serious. Everyone stood behind fences in a half circle around the monument. Inside the fences were two priests and two young men. One man stood on the left side of the stone carrying a Dutch flag and the other on the right side with an Armenian flag.

The ceremony started with a speech and a prayer in Armenian,[7] after which the audience was given the opportunity to place flowers near the

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[7] Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain a translation of the speech. The prayer was "Our Father".

monument. I noticed that during the ceremony, the old woman in the wheelchair was the only person from the crowd *inside* the fences. This was no coincidence. A respondent told me afterwards that the commemoration held an even greater meaning for her than for the other people present. "She has experienced it, you know. We have only heard the stories; we only know it from hearsay." The division of the fence between her and the Armenians on the other side had a symbolic meaning. It represented the past, and the gap between her and the generations that came after her. This was the tear in the Armenian identity.

After flowers were placed by the monument, we walked back to the auditorium to hear a number of lectures by Armenian and Dutch speakers. The auditorium was decorated with painted sheets that were hung on the wall and represented the Armenian genocide. The lectures alternated with Armenian songs and poems. The programme was as follows:

1. A speech by the organisers of the commemoration.
2. One minute of silence in remembrance of the Armenian victims.
3. A speech by Leen van Dijk (a member of the "Christian Union," a Dutch political party) regarding the importance of a commemoration.
4. A song by Ilda Somanian.
5. A speech by Ton Zwaan, a Dutch sociologist, who gave a summary of the Armenian genocide and the latest scientific developments on the subject.
6. Two poems (both in Western-Armenian).
7. A speech by the Armenian ambassador, spoken in Eastern-Armenian, and emphasizing the importance of the commemoration.
8. An Armenian commemoration song played on a Duduk.[8]
9. A speech by Rojhat Bülent Gul (Turkish intellectual), who gave a lecture on the Turkish policy of genocide denial.
10. A song by Ilda Somanian.
11. A speech by Van de Berg (member of Dutch Labour party), who spoke about the Armenian genocide and its role in European politics.

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[8]A Duduk is considered to be a typical Armenian instrument.

12. Two Armenian songs by Ilda Somanian.
13. A poem in Western-Armenian.
14. One minute of silence.
15. Additional poem in Western-Armenian.
16. Closing.

Commemorations have a specific purpose for the participants. They come together to collectively remember an event and give this event specific meaning. The ceremony is therefore more than a commemoration; it is a playing field in which interpretations of the past are being negotiated, and in which a collective memory is established and solidified.

For these reasons, I focused my research mainly on the Armenians and less on the lectures by the Dutch and Turkish speakers who also gave interpretations of the past. However, the Dutch and Turkish speakers spoke from an ideological or political position, while my research was aimed at the social imagery of the Armenians. The first thing I noticed during the speeches was how few Armenians *spoke*. Only the Armenian ambassador gave a speech on the genocide, and that was in Eastern-Armenian, a language that many of the Armenians of Turkish descent did not understand. The distinctive commemoration—the becoming one with a collective whole—was largely expressed through the poems and the music. It was here where the language was not a barrier, where politics for a moment became irrelevant. It was here where the suffering and the resurrection—the non-discursive and tacit and implicit knowledge—was expressed most strongly.

Unfortunately, I could not translate the songs, but I did manage to speak with the person who recited the poems. Many Armenians agreed and emphasised that the music and songs embodied the Armenian experience: "You could feel the pain," I heard one respondent say. "I heard typical Armenian sadness in the music."

The sadness—the suffering—was also featured in the poems, as was the resurrection that came back in the stories. Both themes were expressed in several variations, sometimes as opposing poles and at other moments intertwined.

The first poem, "*One Horrible and Gruesome Event*," was written by Hantakian and tells the story of how one nation is massacred in a single

night.[9] It begins with a nostalgic image of a fatherland that is drenched in blood. "Help please, help…" screams the nation at the end of the poem. But nobody comes to the rescue. The scream slowly fades away. "Help, help, help…" In Hantakian's poem, the loneliness and alienation that violence brings is apparent. We see how violence instantly changes everything that we perceive as safe and natural. The author shows how even the landscape, the ground beneath our feet, is suddenly drenched in blood. The scream for help is a scream into the void. Nobody listens, says the poem. Nobody understands what has been done to us as a people. Not even other Christian nations.

The second poem, "*A Drink to My Fatherland*," is an elaboration on the same theme. The poem is written by Siamanto and tells the story of an author who remembers clear water and a tree with pomegranates from a distant childhood. Water stands for purity. A pomegranate is a fruit that grows in Armenia and often symbolises the fatherland in Armenian films, books and poems. "After death my soul returns to my father's house," writes the author.

> Believe me, I will come… And I will be dangerous and black…
> Who will give me a drink to my fatherland in my grave?
> How can anybody bring that to me?
> Because in my life I cared for you, my fatherland?
> How can somebody bring me a piece of your land?

Here again we see the pain, grief and alienation. In Siamanto's poem the author has not only lost his fatherland, but also his "father's house," which is a direct reference to the loss of kinship. Behind the grief and the loss hides an almost sinister promise. "I will return," the author writes. "And I will be dangerous and black." These are metaphors that conjure up the image of death. Only after death (after the suffering) can an Armenian return to his fatherland, either as an angel of death to punish the culprits or as a ghost unable to find peace.

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[9]There are few texts translated from Armenian into Dutch. I acquired the translation from the narrator and from a professional translator who was at the memorial and translated specific fragments on the spot. He also translated this poem for me. I didn't find however an English translation of the poem or the poet. (The name could be spelled in a different way in English.) By the time this manuscript was in the finishing stages I could no longer ask the original translator since he had passed away.

In "*The Dance*," the third poem, also written by Siamanto, the central theme is suffering. The poem tells the story of a German woman who has witnessed an horrific ritual. "What I will tell you now," the woman says to the listener, "I have witnessed with my own eyes. In the window of hell, I clenched my jaws and saw the city Bardez changed in a pile of ashes." "Don't be frightened", she says later. "I have to tell you what I saw, so that people will understand which cruelties humans do to each other." She continues to describe how she is sitting near the hospital bed of a patient who has been stabbed, when on a Sunday morning she suddenly hears men sing shabby songs and scream in the vineyard below her. She walks up to the window and sees Turkish soldiers surrounding twenty Armenian brides in the centre of the vineyard. "Dance," she hears the soldiers yell, "dance until you die, unbelievable beauties. With your flapping tits, dance! Laugh for us. You are alone now, you are naked slaves, so dance fucking bitches. We get off on your corpses." Then the German woman sees how the soldiers take a jar of petrol and pour it over the brides. "Dance," yell the soldiers. "Here is the smell you can't get in Arabia." The German woman turns away from the window, closes the shutters and asks not only to herself but to the entire human race: "How can I claw out my own eyes?"[10]

The German woman in this poem stands for the entire Western (and Christian) world who looked on, but did nothing. The dance to which the title refers stands for the suffering that is unbearable for the Westerners to witness. Here we see how the suffering is connected to being Armenian. Armenian brides (not Orthodox Greek or other Christian minorities) have to do the dance and experience the humiliation. We also see the sexualisation of violence and the complete annihilation of personal identity. They are slaves. Even their bodies are used for sexual gratification. The poem tells us that the Armenian suffering is an unbearable suffering and a suffering that is too gruesome to witness and that makes you "claw out your eyes."

In the last story, "*The Armenian and the Armenian*"[11] by Saroyan, resurrection is the central theme. The story is about an author who

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[10] I use here the translation given to me by the translator for the authenticity. It may differ from the poem and how it is depicted in the book *Bloody News from My Friend: Poems by Siamanto.*

[11] I heard the oral rendition of this story. For the written rendition, I refer to *Saroyan's Armenians, An Anthology*, edited by Alice K. Barter, pp. 80–81.

meets a man in a beer garden in an unnamed country. "How are you?" he asks him, and without thinking says, "You and I stem from the same dangerous house." Here again a "house" symbolises blood and kinship and blood relationships among Armenians. He does not recognize the man by his face, eyes or heart, since other nationalities have those too. He recognizes him by an invisible force connecting one to the other. "Where do you come from?" he asks the man. "From the city Moush," he answers. (Moush is an Armenian city.) The author tells the man that he has never been there, but loves it instantly, since his father has told him about the area. Saroyan concludes his story with the following words:

> I should like to see any power in this world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people whose history is ended, whose wars have been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, whose literature is unread, whose music is unheard, and whose prayers are no more answered. Go ahead, destroy this race! Destroy Armenia! See if you can do it. Send them from their homes and churches. Then, see if they will not laugh again, see if they will not sing and pray again. For, when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia.

This final story shows the strength of the Armenians, which is a strength that goes beyond words or physical characteristics. This is a strength that only Armenians can sense amongst each other. It is the strength of the suffering that the Armenian characters share with each other in the foreign beer garden.

Therefore, the constructions of suffering and resurrection are not only visible in the two stories, but also in the structure and order in which they were told during the commemoration. The first two poems illustrate the silence and the alienation of violence and how violence breaks through every barrier and discourse. In the third poem, the central theme is the unbearable suffering itself. Here, violence has acquired a meaning. It is meant to destroy, humiliate, depersonalize and dehumanize. It is a suffering that is unbearable for the Christian world to witness. In the fourth story, we see the aftermath and how this experience of violence connects the two Armenians. The violence becomes a source of recognition and strength. "You cannot kill us," the storyteller told me when I asked him about the order of the stories and the poems he recited. "That was the message I was sending out. You cannot kill us. The whole world has seen this tragedy, but no one has responded."

The Assen commemoration ceremony was first and foremost a ceremony for the outside world. The ceremony had a political charge aimed at the Dutch spectators and carried a message of recognition that went beyond commemoration alone. It was politicised. The second commemoration service on April 27, however, where I ended up by accident, had another character. That service was more intimate and was only for invitees and members of the Armenian foundation called Ararat in Amsterdam.

I went, as I did every Sunday, to the Ararat foundation to talk with my respondents. When I arrived on April 27, the room where my respondents normally socialised after church was dark. For the first time since I started to visit the foundation, the heavy curtains were drawn and there were a few candles on a little stage at the end of the room. There were no more than 20 people present. I sat down and looked at the paintings that were hung above the candles on the wall. The painting on the left showed an old woman who carried a child on her back. The colours were grey and brown and the face of the old woman was twisted with pain. Respondent Masis would later tell me that the painting was based on a photograph made by an American missionary during the death marches.

The second painting, on the right of the stage, was more colourful and brighter (I later heard that this painting had come from the top floor and had been placed downstairs for the occasion). It was a surreal image of the composer Komitas pictured in a casket placed by the painter in a vertical position. If you looked closely, you saw that it was no longer a casket, but rather a tree with deep roots and branches. In the branches and leaves you could discern the faces of Krikor Zohrab, Siamanto and Taniel Varoujan (three writers who were killed during the massacres on April 24, 1915 in the Ottoman Empire).

Briefly after I arrived and found a seat, the candles were blown out and a representative of the Ararat foundation explained that they were holding a small commemoration service in remembrance of the victims of 1915 and 1917, and that during this service "nothing would be allowed to be said, but everyone should only listen." I was not entirely sure what he meant, but when he turned away and the music of Komitas started to fill the room, I unintentionally felt tears welling up in my eyes. Between the two paintings there was an empty projection screen on which slides of the death marches were shown with the rhythm of the music. Photographs (like the painting) of women with children on their backs, pictures of piles of corpses and mass graves, burned churches,

Armenian intellectuals who had been hanged and decapitated and next to them proud gendarmes, and pictures of a group of Armenian orphans, who just before their march to Jerusalem stared into a camera. (I knew that not all of them would survive the journey.) All the images I had seen during my research were shown on that projection screen. The symbolism was overwhelming. This was the expression of the non-discursive nature of violence. "Here is Death," the photographs told us. "Here is alienation." "This is what has been done to us." "Blood in the snow." "Brains against the walls."

According to Van de Port (1998) violence can never be verbalized. After all, *words* are the vehicle by which webs are woven and it is those webs that are broken by the act of violence itself. It is striking that during this commemoration service, which was more intimate and smaller than the earlier one I had attended, there were no speeches, but only music and images. It appeared as if only the shared experience of being in the room could *truly* commemorate the event and not a single word or speech could add value to the experience. Violence of this magnitude could only be expressed in silence.

Behind this discourse of violence, however, another narrative existed. This was a narrative expressed in the paintings placed on the wall with care. The paintings hung over this narrative of black and white slides as an invisible encompassing arch creating an illusion, which was also conjured by the paintings being placed higher than the projection screen. The painting on the left portrayed the suffering of the Armenians in black and brown paint strokes. The painting on the right, however, showed the "strength" of the Armenians. Here Komitas was painted in bright colours, standing in an open casket. A casket that by now had changed into a tree with roots cut deep into the ground and the leaves showing prominent Armenians.

"Here is Death," the photographs said. "This is the discourse of violence. See what you have done to us." "But we have survived it," the painting on the right exclaimed as the Armenian music climaxed. "You have not beaten us down. Our Armenian tree has kept on growing and the music of Komitas is still being played."

If art is the mirror of our culture, as Turner (1988) claims, then the commemoration ceremonies I witnessed were projections of how the past is being experienced by my respondents. In the 10 minutes that I sat in the darkness, I saw the construction of suffering and resurrection being expressed and performed through the paintings, slides and music.

The Armenian story was being told in the combination of all those factors and interwoven webs of significance. Here is where the past—by seeing and hearing it—acquired meaning. This is how we feel, the ceremony told me. This is the basis; this is the core of being an Armenian.

No matter how hard it is to admit as a researcher, there in between those horrific slides with Komitas' music in the background, I softly cried.

6.3.2   Literature

During the course of my fieldwork, if I asked my respondents about their experience of being Armenian, I would always be sent home with several books. I have not however read all of these books. I focused on eight books and here I discuss six.[12] I chose these six because they were written by Armenians who lived in diasporic communities, and one living in Turkey. I did this to create a big geographical scope as possible. Therefore, the themes of these books overlap to a large extent. They all address the search of the Armenian identity, which is often portrayed as a personal journey of an unknown past. The search is sometimes autobiographical and sometimes fictional. But, even fictional stories carry cultural representations (deliberate or subconscious) of the Armenian identity. Literature is a form of art wherein culture is expressed.

In the book *Zabelle* (1998), the consequence of violence is the most vivid. The book tells the story of the fictional character Zabelle Chahasbanian, a woman who dies at the age of 75 as the book opens. She survives the death marches (after she lost her whole family) and ends up in an orphanage. In the orphanage, she is forbidden to be "Armenian" and receives a Turkish name. She has to learn the Turkish language and sing Turkish songs. One day, an Armenian woman approaches her in a bathhouse. The following evening, Armenian priests rescue her from the orphanage.

Here we see the symbolism of violence most explicitly, not only as a physical and murderous act but also an symbolic act, as the Turks try to take away her identity in all of its expressions and forms (kinship, name,

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[12] The other two books, which I could only quickly flip through, were: "The Story of the Last Thought" by Edgar Hilsenrath (1990) and "Between the Stillness and the Grove" by Erika de Vasconcelos (2000).

language and even music). In the remaining part of the book, Zabelle tries to compensate for this loss and tries to cope with the horror she has experienced as a child. (In the same way, the Armenian community as a whole tries to interpret and conceptualize the horrors it has experienced.) Zabelle cannot forget her past and at several points in the novel—even at moments where you least expect it—she remembers the death marches and the violence. The memories break through her day-to-day life. For example, Zabelle describes walking into the kitchen and seeing her son Moses sitting at the table:

> Moses sitting next to me at lunchtime. The flash of his smile. His hands on the rough-grained table. The hands reminded me of my father's, how they reached down a bolt of cloth from the shelf in the shop. Once I let that image in, black rags blew across desert sands. Flesh-covered bones rotted in the sun. A Turkish soldier held a bloody bayonet. (Kricorian 1998: 120)

The bitter irony, but strength of the book is that the protagonist never speaks about the horrific events she has experienced. Instead, the older she becomes, the more vivid her memories become. Therefore, Zabelle symbolises the first generation of genocide survivors and the embodiment of violence and silence. She is an archetype of the Armenian community as a whole. Even though she is safe, raises three children and is settled in her family life, the discourse of violence never leaves her. It's the cause of all her fears, the core of her perception. Zabelle's whole being and world view is coloured by those awful experiences. This book tells us that violence can change an individual and a community beyond recognition. The suffering of this unspeakable act is something that Zabelle and the Armenian community suffer in silence.

This silence is also expressed by other authors. Take for example, the Armenian author and first-generation survivor, Arpiar Der Markaryan, who lived in Turkey. In his autobiography, Arpiar skips over the years of the genocide (Peroomian 2008: 121), but pauses every now and then to compare the "Catastrophe" with his present life. In 1937, when he is a student, he makes the following observation:

> (…) a posthumous life, without a smile, without dreams, a life suppressed by the shadow of death (….) We carry the scars of old wounds on our face, and a new wound is cut in our hearts, a deadly wound that can't be cured. (Der Markaryan 2006: 19)

Here we see how the experience of violence is being vocalized, and how it is symbolized as a "posthumous life" or a "shadow of death." This suffering is in the body and cut in the heart.

However, this pain is something that not only first-generation survivors have to deal with but also second and third generations. Because the suffering is so silent, second- and third-generation survivors try to give meaning to the experiences of the "silent generation." Notice that *Zabelle* is written by a second-generation survivor. It is a representation of the Armenian genocide instead of a life history.

The book *The Knock at the Door* (2007) by Margaret Ajemian Ahnert is autobiographical. It tells a story within a story within a story as Armenian stories often do. This book tells the story of Margaret who is near the bedside of her dying mother Ester. Ester is a survivor, who starts to talk for the first time about her ordeals during the genocide. What makes this book exceptional is its structure. The chapters written with cursive letters are written in the present tense, while chapters written in a non-cursive letters represent the history and are written from Ester's perspective.[13] This is curious because in most books the past is written in cursive and the present in non-cursive. By reversing this pattern, the past is put in the foreground, while the present is pushed to the background. Thus, it appears as though the genocide is more present than present time.

The depictions of violence are even more horrible and graphic than in *Zabelle*. Some of these descriptions are depictions of physical acts, while others show more of the symbolic dimension of identity destruction. For example, the following is a description of when Ester returns to her uncle's home after she has been forced to marry a Turkish man. She escapes and asks her uncle why they no longer speak Armenian in their own houses. The uncle reacts fiercely:

> You think you are special returning here. Well, you will not endanger us by speaking Armenian in this house. You know it is against the law. Do you want to get us all killed? Remember, stupid girl, you fell in 'black dye' (meaning: you slept with the enemy, the husband – note of author) and you will never be pure again." It was an old adage that if one slept with

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[13] In books this is often the reverse. Cursive parts indicates scenes or chapters of the past, while non-cursive parts the present. By reversing this, the writer wanted to remind us that the past is more tangible than the present.

the enemy it was said that they had fallen in black dye. What was he talk-
ing about? Was I blackened and not pure because I marched out of Amasia
instead of becoming a Turk? (ibid.: 167)

In this scene, the Armenian genocide is depicted in the first place as a
war against identity. If people didn't speak Armenian, converted, and
abided by the rules, they had a chance to survive, even though it was a
small chance. The scene also shows how conflicted the Armenians them-
selves were. They couldn't speak Armenian, and the forced marriage to a
Turk immediately carried a stigma symbolized by the words "black dye."
This inner conflict of the survivors living in Turkey is also expressed in
the following observation: "In the privacy of their homes, Armenians
whispered the ugly stories, but not very often. *Mortseer* became the word
they all used. But how does one forget?" (ibid.: 173).

In Ahnert's book, just like in *Zabelle*, there are descriptions of physi-
cal acts, some of which are more horrendous than others. Notice for
example the following description when Ester overhears two gendarmes
boasting about the violence they committed:

> "All right, *Janum*, I'll take you both," I said. After I raped the one, I
> reached for the other and realized I had a boy instead. So, I cut off his
> genitals with my sword. "There, now you are a girl, how do you like it?"
> Then my men and I propped the boy up against a wall so he could watch
> us take turns sodomizing the girl. (ibid.: 114)

The symbolism here is enormous. What makes this scene so striking is
the overt sexualisation and symbolism of violence in its most direct and
graphic form. The boy is made a "girl" and is forced to witness the *sod-
omy* of the other rape victim. Here we see how the gender identity of
both victims is reversed. The boy became a girl and in the act of rape
itself, the girl became a boy. What makes this statement so significant is
that this novel is written in 2007 and deals with an act of violence which
even among the respondents I spoke to is uncomfortable and a taboo.
What this scene shows is how this experience—even if it is dramatized—
is still engrained in the collective memory and framework. Ester and
Margaret try to make sense of this horrible act. It is no longer just sym-
bolic destruction of an identity, but also a basal and physical destruc-
tion. One of the basic identity indicators (gender) is taken away from
the victims.

At some point in Ahnert's novel Ester's brother comes to rescue her and tells her before he gets killed:

> And you survived! God must have a special purpose for you in life. Yes, he surely must have placed His hand on you, my little sister." Haroutoun tapped the top of my head gently with his palm. "How does it feel to return from the dead?" I thought for a moment before I answered. "I can breathe. The air does not smell. I have no blood or slime on my body. I can walk. I can talk. I wish I could forget. That's how it feels to return from the dead." (ibid.: 163)

Here again, we see the embodiment of suffering. First, there are Christian connotations in the brother's remarks. Ester survived because God has a "hand on her." She is "chosen." At the same time, Ester's survival creates a great burden. She wishes she could forget, but she can't. She has to carry the suffering and the experiences she has witnessed with her. This survival is engrained and embodied in her most inner self. "I can breathe," she states. "I can walk." (Both are physical acts.) But more mournfully, she says: "I wish I could forget."

This burden of the past is a returning theme in Armenian literature. It is also expressed in other novels, like *A Summer Without a Dawn* written by Hacikyan and Soucy (2000).[14] This book tells the story of the fictional character, Vartan Balian, who survives the genocide. In the final scene of the book, Vartan stands with his son Tomas (a second-generation survivor) in front of a photograph and states: "They're standing behind us!" When his son doesn't understand, he continues:

> Our forefathers, my father, his father. You're the end result of dozens of generations who have created the culture which is your legacy. You must learn about it and enrich it so that it will never die. That way your ancestors can live on. (ibid.: 537–538)

This statement illustrates the importance of heritage and (lost) kinship and the burden and responsibility of carrying the past. In the story, this

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[14]Agop Hacikyan is not an American-Armenian, but rather a Canadian-Armenian. It is interesting though that he uses the same metaphors and themes.

heritage should not be lost. Tomas is the carrier of the Armenian identity and it is his burden to keep this identity alive.

What is significant about these books and biographies is that the authors have various backgrounds. Hacikyan lives in Canada, Der Markaryan lived in Turkey and Margaret Ajemian-Ahnert and Kricorian both live in the United States. Yet their ideas of suffering are comparable. The same metaphors are used and the same references are made. The suffering is in the body, the experiences are unspeakable and identity is taken away.

Authors in Turkey are more circumventive in their descriptions. Peroomian (2008) makes the case that due to the Armenian suppression in Turkey and the prohibition of the recognition of the Armenian genocide, the stories of pain and suffering are put in an international framework. Peroomian calls this the "collective I" (ibid.: 112), where the suffering is not only the suffering of the Armenians, but the suffering of all human beings. If one reads the poetry of some Armenian authors carefully, there is a strong allegory to the Armenian past.

In a poem by Galustian, with the title *Khaghaghutiun* (Peace), we find the following passage:

> My mother had two brothers
> she had father
> she had mother
> they had sisters and brothers
> they were all married
> they all had children
>
> From them neither this nor that remained
> they all – they all
> died before I was born (Peroomian 2008: 115)

In this passage, we see suffering and the silence of suffering. We see a description of social death.

Hacikyan is a second-generation survivor in the same way that Margaret Ajemian-Ahnert is a second-generation survivor. They both deal with the burden of telling the Armenian story. At some point, on her mother's deathbed, Margaret makes the following observation: "Terror, like genes, gets passed down, from him to her, from you to me" (Ajemian Ahnert 2007: 108). Here once again terror is embodied. It is in the genes. Margaret carries the same suffering as her mother and

this obliges her to remember: "Swivel. Swivel. The cataracts in the eyes. These clouds could be a blessing" (ibid.: 181).

Here we see how the suffering is also a source of strength at the same time. By listening to the stories of her mother, Margaret remembers what her mother had endured. The flag of suffering has been transferred from one generation to the next. Curiously, when this realization comes upon her after her mother has died, the chapters in present time are no longer written with cursive letters, as if the past has become part of the present at the end of the book. Margaret reflects: "I imagine my mother united with her family, and my father is there, too. They are all together now, amongst the clouds, perhaps somewhere near Mt. Ararat" (ibid.: 200). Mt. Ararat is of course the symbol of Armenian heritage and of Noah and the Armenian ancestry that is still located in present day Turkey. It is as if Margaret's family is finally at home, while also imprisoned.

This transference as a point of contention becomes obvious in the book, *Rise the Euphrates* written by Edgarian (1994). This book explores themes similar to *Zabelle* and *The Knock at the Door*. However, whereas the author of *Zabelle* attempted to paint the experiences of a direct survivor and the author of *The Knock at the Door* focused on retracing personal roots and the responsibility of telling the Armenian story, the protagonist of *Rise the Euphrates* is more rebellious. She is a third-generation American-Armenian who at first violently rejects her Armenian heritage, and even runs away from home, but finally comes to terms with her history in the end. The book is fictional with autobiographical elements.

Edgarian's book starts with Casard Essayan, whose mother, Seta, commits suicide on the shores of the Euphrates during the death marches. Casard regards Seta's death as a major act of treason since her mother had begged Casard to also commit suicide with her in the wild river. Casard refuses and loses not only her mother, but also her own identity on that day. Casard forgets her Armenian name and only remembers it suddenly, decades later when her granddaughter Seta (who bears the same name as her great-grandmother and is the main protagonist of the story), is baptised. In an instinctive moment, and in fear that her name will be forgotten again, Casard whispers her true name, Garod, and the story of the Euphrates in her granddaughter's ear.

Here we see the impact of violence. Because of the violence, Casard forgets her identity. This forgetting is also a reoccurring theme in other Armenian literature. Sevda Sevan (1981), a Bulgarian second-generation

survivor, tells the story of Hermine who survives the massacres in 1894—1896 in her book *Rodosto, Rodosto*.[15] Hermine forgets her name and calls herself Filor, a name given to her by the wife of the French consul.

This theme is also expressed in the book *The Knock at the Door* (2007) when Ester tells Margaret: "As Ester, I died that spring morning in 1920 (...). The only thing I brought with me to America was my memory—the thing I most wanted to leave behind" (ibid.: 177). This is symbolic. The forgetting of the name is an allegory of losing the Armenian identity. Identity, as explained earlier, was at that time highly linked to kinship. By forgetting your name, you also forget your family and ancestry.

The rest of the book *Rise the Euphrates* is written from the perspective of the granddaughter, who grows up in Connecticut. It is during the granddaughter's adult life that she suddenly remembers the true name of her grandmother, exactly at the moment when she returns home after having run away with various *odars* (non-Armenians) and embraces her identity. Home of course stands for blood relations. In the book, this is an important symbol. Seta suddenly remembers her grandmother's history when she consciously and fully embraces her Armenian heritage. She remembers the story that her grandmother had whispered in her ears when she was a baby. It was the story of the Euphrates, of forgiveness and Garod's mother. It was a story that had nestled under her skin and connected her with her Armenian identity. Garod, she realises at the end of the book, when she wakes up from a very vivid dream, is the Armenian word for yearning (Edgarian 1994: 347). From that moment on, her life changes; she realises that her history is *within* her:

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[15] Even though this story deals with the massacres in 1894–1896, this fictional story is written by a second-generation survivor. To many Armenians, the massacres in 1894–1896 had the same intention of the genocide in 1915. I do not agree with this analysis as shown in previous chapters. But, I do know that from the *emic* point of view, this is a common belief. Therefore, I suspect that although Sevda Sevan uses the massacres of 1894–1896 in her story, she is actually symbolically dealing with the genocide of 1915. This is a misrepresentation. What is important however, is that according to Sevda Sevan, these massacres had the same intention. In her opinion, they have the same consequences. So, while Sevan writes about the massacres in 1894–1896, she is really writing about the Armenian genocide in 1915.

I would travel far, but Memorial would always follow me. Only a fool thinks she can leave behind what has come before. We are of a knit. We are (…) bound of the same thread. Mother begets daughter, father begets son (….) Before I ever was a seed in Momma's womb, the women of the church prepared me, as they prepared the lavash and hatsig rolls in their floured palms. I was then and am now their Armenian girl. (ibid.: 349)

What binds these three generations of women together (the grandmother Casard/Garod, the mother and the daughter/protagonist) is the experience of violence. It penetrates everyday life, as her closing words before the epilogue dictate:

(…) so I might be going about some business in my new life, say, walking to my car, or in the drugstore aisle buying shampoo, and way a ways in Memorial they give a gently tug and, far away in the aisle of shampoos, the bottom drops out of me, and the River, that riparian ache that is in me always and forever begins rising, just as Seta [great-grandmother/mother of Casard/Garod], the first, felt her dress rise over her head, as she dropped under the muddy water like a stone, and Yearning, Yearning is her name. (ibid.: 350)

Here is the transference of trauma, not just as the great-grandmother drowns, but as each generation coming after her also drowns metaphorically. It is this invisible and silent pain (riparian ache and in the body) that each Armenian generation has to carry.

What makes Edgarian's novel so complex is the implicit link with the Armenian genocide. The protagonist, Seta the granddaughter is not a survivor herself, but remembers the horrors and loss of identity *through* her mother and grandmother. She is the first to vocalize this pain by calling out the true name of her grandmother—yearning. This name symbolizes not only pain but also life. The grandmother decided not to jump into the river (she chose life over death), and the first Seta, the grandmother who died, is yearning for life (for a life not lived) when she drowns.

Yearning is therefore a metaphor of what is taken away for a past that is forgotten, but should be remembered. It is also a metaphor for living and a yearning for the homeland. Suffering and resurrection are intertwined as the protagonist remembers and relives the past and carries this in her body. This not only symbolizes the continuation of suffering, but also her Armenian strength. Even though Seta the granddaughter

rebelled against her identity in the beginning of the book, in the end her identity is stronger. Her identity is represented in her blood and is presented when the protagonist embraces her Armenianness.

In contrast to these books, *Black Dog of Fate* (1997) is autobiographical. This book tells the life story of Peter Balakian, an Armenian poet, who felt a close bond with his grandmother from his early childhood. She is a mysterious woman, who tells incredible stories—from his perspective as a child—but at the same time carries a sadness with her that he never fully understands. Her sadness is the same sadness that he recognises in his father, his mother and himself to various degrees. What follows is a search for his grandmother's past, and underneath the surface, also a search for his own Armenian identity. He has to understand where this suffering is coming from. His search ends with the Armenian atrocities.

In all these books, there are four themes that return repeatedly: the continuation of silence and suffering, the loss of identity, the search for identity and the preservation of identity. I have also encountered the same themes in conversations with my respondents.

The loss of identity is best described by Balakian when he tells the story of a distant cousin and genocide survivor. This is what his cousin told Balakian's aunt:

> I walked out of our courtyard through the doorway where my father's crucified body had been left, and into the street. The sun was high and bright and the sky cloudless, and I decided not to put on my *charshaff*. It did not matter anymore. Everyone seemed to know who was Armenian. We were marked, and I felt for the first time how false our names were. How the Turks had stripped us of that, too. (ibid.: 223)

As Balakian explains early in his book, the cruelties that had been committed were more than the realisation that people you cared about would disappear or that your own life would end. "After the Genocide, the fear of death was different from the fear of mortality" (ibid.: 94). Genocide was more than death and its continuation is shown in the fear of *disappearing* and the fear of evaporating as an ethnic group. This fear is the core of the Armenian suffering and coincides with the genocidal intention of the perpetrators as described in Chap. 4.

It is this fear and loss of identity that the characters and authors are trying to compensate for and represent in their stories. When Seta, the

granddaughter in *Rise the Euphrates* asks her father why he fell in love with her mother, Araxie (her father was an *odar*), submits the following observation:

> And this: at the day's end he came home and found his wife in their house, still choosing him. He loved her for this, he loved her so much he might kill another man if he had to. And it was not for her beauty, not only her beauty, but for a deeper mystery she carried, as some women possess good posture or a weighty brooch. He thought for a moment, and then it came to him, quite suddenly, that Araxie's mystery had something to do with sadness, a profound melancholy he thought their marriage would cure, though he had to admit, as yet it had not. (Edgarian 1994: 79)

This internal form of suffering, this grief, returns in Armenian novels as if for some unexplainable reason the genocide has been internalised in the Armenian character:

> The Turks took something from them, the ones that survived, something more than life – dignity, purpose – something humans aren't meant to do without. That lack just keeps on perpetuating through the generations. A terrific sadness, I suppose, that keeps getting passed down in the blood. (ibid.: 299)

Within this sadness is also a strength, and a martyrdom that is exclusively Armenian: "We have a tremendous historical ancient background with strife against odds, bravery against treachery, but eventual triumph" (Balakian 1997: 122).

The strength of the Armenian character resides in the suffering itself; it is a strength (just as is the sadness) that is internalised. Especially in good Armenians that show very specific characteristics. This is most prominent when Balakian's mother approves or disapproves of his girlfriends:

> For my mother, a woman had to qualify by being *jarbig*, which meant she had to have energy, wit, vitality. She had to be *achgapatz*, open-eyed, so that nothing could get past her, for she was the keeper of the gate, the protector of things sacred: family and husband. If a woman wasn't *jarbig* and *achgapatz* – clearly my mother thought she possessed these qualities in abundance – she wasn't worthy, she wasn't, in the existential sense, "Armenian". (ibid.: 132)

Balakian does not write: "then she was not in the existential sense a *woman*," but rather "she was not in the existential sense *Armenian*." By doing so, he implies that every Armenian has to possess *jarbig* and *ach-gapatz*, which is the female obligation to be the gatekeeper of the blood-line. It is these character traits that make an Armenian an Armenian. In short, these characteristics are a part of the inner world of the Armenian identity.

Suffering and resurrection, grief and strength, are a part of the same story and two ends of the same essential existence. The Christian connotations are patently obvious: "Had the treaty of Sèvres passed, it would have said: The civilized world cares about the most ancient *Christian* nation of the Near East. It would have said: The *martyrdom* and suffering of Armenians will not go unheeded" (ibid.: 215—emphasis by author). The strength and exclusivity of this strength in the quote above are rooted in martyrdom. Just as Jesus suffered silently, Armenians have to carry their cross and suffering in their history.

This hybrid form of identity—wherein violence is encapsulated and embodied (suffering) and at the same time empowers the Armenian through martyrdom (resurrection)—has to be preserved. Beyond the borders of the ethnic group, this concept and the Armenian identity as a whole are always subjected to possible destruction. This is best expressed in the book *Zabelle* when Kricorian describes Zabelle's fear when she observes her children from a distance:

> Although Moses had stopped speaking Armenian when he was twelve, he never pretended he didn't understand us when we spoke it, which some kids did. He answered us in English, and soon Jack picked up the trick. That was how the Armenians would be finished off. First we were driven out, then the children abandoned the language, and finally they married *odars* (non-Armenians) and birthed children who were barely half Armenians. (Kricorian 1998: 148)

The Armenian community sincerely feels this fear. I return and elaborate on this further in Chap. 8. Here, I will suffice by emphasizing the connection between the genocide and this fear of destruction in this citation. "First we were chased away" it says, and "Then the children abandon the language." The Westernisation and Americanisation of children are seen through Zabelle's eyes as an extension of the genocide itself. They are part of the same process. The loss of the language and relationships

with *odars* are both ways to forget the Armenian identity and blend into a larger ethnic group.

This fear is most prominent and expressed when she looks at her son Moses who does not speak the Armenian language, changes his Armenian face with cosmetic surgery and finally breaks with his entire family. In a symbolic way, her son (literally) embodies the genocide.

This fear is also expressed in *The Knock at the Door* (2007) when Margaret observers: "The killing of a culture was still going on" (Ajemian Ahnert.: 185). It is this fear which makes her realize the importance of blood when her mother says:

> "You're a good girl. You always did what I asked. God will reward you someday." "He already has, Mother," I said. I thought of my children, the skeins of strength that ran through me, the skeins of strength that she gave me, the world, so storied and full. (Ibid.: 188)

For Balakian, in *Black Dog of Fate*, this fear of forgetting the past is the reason why he eventually writes his autobiography. Edgarian in her novel, *Rise the Euphrates*, uses a more moderate tone. But, this is mainly because her main character is a crossbreed: a child of an Armenian mother and an *odar*. Still, Seta eventually listens to her Armenian side. It is the Armenian side that tells her the name of her grandmother and reminds her of her history that had laid dormant in her blood and the responsibility this realization carries.

And here we perhaps touch the core, the source, on which this fear is based. If Armenianness is being placed in the body and can be passed on through blood, then marriage to an *odar* can threaten the Armenian identity. Thus, the Armenian communities and the respondents I spoke to try to uphold rules of endogamy. In the perception of some Armenians, the loss of Armenian blood is equal to death.

6.3.3   Film Photography

During my research, I watched two Armenian films, *Ararat*, directed by Egoyan (2002) and *I Love the Sound of the Kalashnikov; It Reminds me of Tchaikovsky*, directed by Khazarian (2002).

In *Ararat*, life in the diaspora is approached from all sides. The movie is about the story of a mother who is writing a biography of Arshile Gorky, and is trying to establish a relationship with her own son. The son

is arrested for smuggling drugs, after he visited Armenia, and tells his personal history to the customs officer. The customs officer's son is associating with a Turkish immigrant. The story is also of a director who tries to make a film about the Armenian genocide. The film meets the Armenian expectations of a blossoming flower since it is a story within a story within a story. The characters are often associated with each other in an indirect way. Their lives are intertwined often without the characters realising it.

All the characters and storylines are archetypes. The mother symbolises a second-generation Armenian as she tries to keep her son on the right path while writing the biography of Arshile Gorky and trying to find her own Armenian roots. The son symbolises the youngest generation of Armenians that strays from the righteous path by smuggling and by almost disappearing in the system. The Turkish immigrant plays the role of the denier and represents the denial of the Turkish government. He is an actor in the Armenian film, but still raises questions about the Armenian genocide on his final workday. The customs officer is the Western spectator who passively listens to the son's story and does little or nothing.

All the characters show a specific and symbolic side of the genocide and thus, the Armenian story is told from various perspectives. Two factors return in all the storylines. The first is the film in which everybody is somehow involved directly or indirectly. The second factor is Arshile Gorky's paintings of a mother and a son. Every character sees the painting at some point and is captured by the beauty and the strength it radiates. The director explains why he gave the painting a central role in the movie. "For many years it [the painting] hung in the Whitney, and another version in the National Gallery of Art in DC, and no one even knew that he [Arshile Gorky] was Armenian. And people could respond to the *power* of the piece without understanding the story it told."[16]

The "strength" of the Armenians, and the idiom of suffering and resurrection, do not directly return in the characters (for they are archetypes) as they do in the storylines. The mother is obsessed with Arshile Gorky's life and the strength of the paintings, while the son is captivated by the beautiful Turkish/Armenian landscape through which he travelled and from which he eventually feels remorse and confesses his story to

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[16]This can be retrieved at: http://popmatter.com/film/interviews/egoyan-atom-021129.shtml.

the custom officer. The Turkish actor's denial starts to stagger when the movie ends and he starts to understand the impact of the violence. The customs officer, touched by the boy's story, lets the son go unpunished. The message of the film is, therefore, albeit subtle, is self-evident. The Armenians' past is so powerful, so present, that it cannot leave a human untouched.

The film *I Love the Sound of the Kalashnikov; It Reminds me of Tchaikovsky* is more abstract. It consists of loose images that are just as fragmented as Arshile Gorky's paintings. The film is in colour and black and white. In the coloured parts, the film shows the day-to-day activities of common and unnamed Armenians crisscrossed and intercepted with two black and white storylines. The first storyline is an eyewitness report of an old couple who talk about the genocide in a fragmented way. The second storyline is of an army unit followed on foot by a cameraman during the war in Karabakh.

Despite the inaccessibility of the film, the message is clear. The coloured images show the fragmented existence of the present-day Armenians. The black and white images display the suffering and resurrection of the Armenian people. The genocide is the cause of the present-day fragmentation and a suffering that is represented in the eyewitness account. The war in Karabakh, which the Armenian Republic won, symbolises the strength of the Armenian Republic. Its victory brings a fragmented existence together and shows that the Armenian people will prevail in the end. It is telling that the film ends with a naked man in the shower; zooming slowly in on his manhood. "Here I stand," the movie seems to say, "My Armenian identity was once taken, but I have retrieved my masculinity."

Films, literature and ceremonies all give glimpses and representations of how Armenians reflect their lives. They are also symbolic frameworks and directions that Armenians use to construct their interpretations and worldview. In all these representations, the concepts of suffering and resurrection are constantly used, negotiated and confirmed. After each film I have seen or each book I have read, a real debate began among my respondents. What did I think of this scene or that character? And how had I as an *odar* interpreted this film, book or poem? As Jackson (2002) emphasises, people negotiate the meanings they give to their daily lives; interpretations rarely just exist. The web of social imagery is woven daily. But, that does not imply that the concepts of the Armenian identity are taken out of thin air. They need a starting point to be confirmed

and negotiated every day. Therefore, it is important to look at the start of these constructions. Where do the contemporary ideas about the Armenian identity come from? When did the ideas of suffering and resurrection first come into being?

I argue that these concepts have been construed in the aftermath of the Armenian genocide.

6.4   The Origins of Suffering and Resurrection

It is difficult to retrieve the exact origin of ideas, narrations and constructions. After all, they are never independent and always stem from other ideas, belief systems or social imagery. Still, it is possible to observe a turning point or a moment in which the old meanings needed to be revised.

According to Halbwachs (1992) these moments arise in situations of crisis:

> It is not at all paradoxical to argue, on the contrary, that when an event occurs that is worth remembering and reporting, it is precisely the presence of direct witnesses which increases the chances that some of its features will be changed, so that it becomes quite difficult to determine its characteristics. This is especially the case when the event is of a nature that arouses deep emotions in groups of people, giving rise to passionate discussions. (ibid.: 194)

Violence goes through barriers and violence goes through language and culture. The moment violence occurs, there is nothing but violence itself. Violence is the ultimate invasion and intrusion of the body, the mind and sense of self.

As described in Chap. 4, the *intent* of the Armenian genocidal violence was to destroy an identity *in all its forms*. People were murdered in the most horrific way, and all institutions and identity indicators were destroyed. This destruction of identity was literally inscribed in the landscape (churches were destroyed or turned into mosques) and more invisibly in the mind and bodies of the victims. The result of this destruction was what Card considers social death: deprivation of control over one's vital transgenerational interests (Card 2003: 73) and the destruction of all vitality of a community. The descendants of the survivors have to rebuild all these institutions, but have to do more than that; they also have to

make sense of the violence and give a voice to the silence of violence and the intention of violence. It is here where the experience of violence and the incorporation of violence into identity took place. The violence became culturally internalized and not only shaped the identity, but *defined* it as well. There are three markers within the cultural narrative of identity that underline this concept. First are the Christian connotations within the cultural narrative. The story of Jesus's suffering became the collective story of the suffering of the Armenians. The biblical story became personified. Just like Jesus, the Armenians had to suffer and gain an inner strength from their martyrdom.

To be clear this was not a conscious or premeditated process. This identity is a manufactured identity. I believe that the narrations regarding identity were made from the bottom-up. They were made by the survivors and not by institutions. It was due to circumstances (but possibly not by coincidence) that the Armenians highlighted exactly those elements of their identity that were a factor for their persecution—their Orthodox Christianity. They could use this identity to sharply differentiate themselves from the perpetrators of the genocide and made the events bearable, at least symbolically.

It is important to bear in mind that communities do often not create *new* concepts or *new* cultural constructs, but rather reuse or rephrase old ones. Christian symbols already existed before the genocide; in the same way, a sense of sadness already existed before the genocide in 1915, as Toemanian's poem (in paragraph 4.2.1) described. These cultural and religious symbols and narratives gained a new depth and another meaning *after* the genocide. Whereas Toemanian's suffering can first be linked to the subordinate positions of Armenians in the *millet* system, this same suffering had another dimension after the genocidal violence. The suffering was no longer linked to subordination, but instead it was linked to outright destruction.

As with other ethnic groups, the Armenians invent a past that confirms their present-day existence, which is very confusing for a social scientist. As explained in Chap. 2, culture and identity are constructed in dialectic processes on a daily basis. People tell themselves stories and the most important story, as Van de Port rightly states, is the one we tell about ourselves. From the Armenian *emic* point of view, suffering started *before* the genocide. It's placed in serial time. It's elaborated in stories and myths that highlight characteristics that are now conceived as part of the Armenian identity, such as the stories of Gregor the Enlightener. From

an *etic* point of view, this would imply that these concepts of identity are static and unchangeable, having survived for centuries. Nevertheless, research has shown that concepts of identity change over time due to major outside influences such as collective violence. In short, an eighteenth-century Armenian, as described in Chaps. 2 and 3, may not have been aware of his/her ethnicity in the same way that a twentieth-century Armenian is aware of his/her ethnicity. The older Armenian's concept of self and identity was more based on family, kinship and status.

The idea of suffering and how this is connected with identity and the fear of losing this identity is more recent. It is not something that has survived thousands of years, even though present-day Armenians may have another opinion on this. The idea of suffering is created in the aftermath of a horrible collective and indescribable experience—the Armenian genocide.

A second marker of why this identity is new lies in the importance of blood within the Armenian cultural and mental frameworks. Suffering is part of the Armenian identity and the Armenian identity resides in the body in the same way that violence during an act of violence becomes inscribed in the body and mind. Violence is a bodily experience. I believe that suffering in this way, just as in the example of the Holocaust survivor in Kidron's study (2009) and the narratives of possession and ghost stories in Sri Lanka (Perera 2001), become cultural extensions: "continual set of experiences parallel to the traumatic experiences of the immediate past" (ibid.: 170). By placing identity (literally) in the body, it resides in the same space where the violence was inscribed. The body becomes the vehicle of remembrance.

And this brings us to the third marker and the second reason why blood is important. After the Armenian genocide, almost all institutions and identity-markers were destroyed. There was not only personal alienation due to violence, but also cultural and social alienation. One institution survived the genocidal violence, however, and that was the body itself. It may have been scarred and starved, and it may had been tortured and hurt, but at the same time, *it* survived. It isn't a stretch to think that identity was imagined in the body, for it was the only institution left. The body became the symbolic vehicle where an Armenian identity existed when all other institutions were deemed unreliable.

The reconstruction of identity, as argued in Chap. 2, is never clear. It is always connected with its surroundings, momentums, time and place. Identities change, just as cultures and mental frameworks change.

They change by reconfirming or disregarding certain symbolic elements in their cultural narrative. But here we see something very interesting. We see, in the Armenian narrative, that the Armenian identity as a construction is both transgenerational and non-spatial in nature. To elaborate, the first-, second-, third- and even fourth-generation survivors tell the same narrative about themselves involving suffering and resurrection.[17] Furthermore, these narratives are not confined to a specific geographic community. My respondents in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, as well as the Armenian authors and moviemakers in Canada, United States, Turkey and Bulgaria use the same symbolism, metaphors and analogies to express their ethnic identity. This is curious. The Armenian community of the Netherlands has very specific characteristics that differ from the community in London, yet at some level, there are commonalities in their narrations. These commonalities come down to what Turner (1974) called *basic analogy* or *root metaphor*. These are symbols in the social and cultural repertoire that an individual uses to make sense of his or her day-to-day life. I believe that the experience of the Armenian genocide and the aftermath of the Armenian genocide have become a root metaphor to make the present more understandable. Or to rephrase it: the root metaphor is the glasses by which Armenians see the present world. These glasses are non-spatial, and not confined to one specific geographic community. Thus, this root metaphor has been constructed in the aftermath of the Great Diaspora when the direct survivors were still relatively closely knit. It is during these days, weeks and months when the survivors tried to give implicit meanings to their devastated lives and experiences.

This creates a very important implication for social scientists studying diasporic communities. As stated in Chap. 2, identities are both created, confirmed, and at the same internalized. What this case study teaches us is how resilient identity can be. The more extreme the environment was where the identity got created, the more resilience it will show.

It is for this reason that Ado had teary eyes when he spoke of the earthquake of 1988 at the beginning of this chapter. The earthquake confirmed the suffering of the Armenian people, but also their inner strength. Ado's comments were eerily similar to the narration of the

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[17]It may differ over time, as I will explain later. But the essence, especially the ideas of suffering and "resurrection" are quite resilient.

Turkish author Yalçin (2003) in his book *You Rejoice my Heart*, after the protagonist had survived an attack on his Armenian family: "How many threats have we put up with? How many times have we endured in patience? Stone would crack. Iron would melt… We are tougher than stone and iron" (ibid.: 305). Ado told me: "Who cannot love these people? We are unbreakable."

Does this imply that all communities are the same and that there are no differences among Armenian diasporic communities? No, there are similarities, but there are also differences that have to do with the demographics of the communities. But, the fact that there are *such* strong similarities is of great importance scientifically and anthropologically. They tell us something about how identities in general are constructed.

6.5   A Reflection on Baumann I

In anthropological research and publications, the concepts of constructions, symbols, discourse analysis, social imaginary and narratives are often lumped together or used interchangeably. Thus, it becomes unclear to the reader what the writer means, especially if the reader is not an anthropologist. For this reason, I define the use of these terms throughout this book.

Symbols are cultural representations that give meaning and direction to an individual. The strength of symbols, as Turner (1974) and Ohnuki-Tierney (2002) already emphasised, is that they are ambiguous; they have various meanings, and give a *sense* of unity and continuity (the socalled *emic* point of view). However, they are open for several interpretations, and in the worst case, for manipulation as Ohnuki-Tierney shows in her study on kamikaze pilots during the Second World War. Symbols are always used in a space of non-communication. The definitions of symbols may alter due to circumstances, situations and settings.

Yet, as Turner also emphasizes, it is possible to distinguish two sets of symbols: core symbols, which he considers *root metaphors* or *basic analogies*, and regular symbols. The difference lies in that core symbols carry more weight. They can be used as extended analogies to give meaning and direction to other symbols or day-to-day dealings.

I argued in Chap. 2 that "identity" is a symbolic construction. Thus, identity is construed and the definition of identity is always open to multiple interpretations. Identity gives a *sense* of continuity, but is in fact constructed in a specific setting, place and time. At the same time,

however identity is internalized. It gives meaning to other symbols and is less susceptible to change over space and time than presumed. It can be resilient if it is created in extreme circumstances. In this sense, identity could be considered a *root metaphor* or *basic analogy* due to its intrinsic nature.

The meaning of identity can be derived from *cultural narratives* and stories we tell ourselves about our world, ourselves, our views, etc. On the one hand, these narratives carry explicit knowledge—knowledge that can be measured and that is visible—and implicit knowledge. That is to say, non-discursive knowledge that guides the interpretation of the content (the so-called explicit knowledge) during conversations. Implicit knowledge is highly culturalised. It is the knowledge that informants and respondents take for granted and is seen, from the *emic* point of view, as something *natural.* Discourse analysis is aimed at making the implicit knowledge explicit to carve out the social imaginary or the whole repertoire of symbols of a specific cultural group. And it is here where my critique of Baumann (1999) starts.

In his book *The Multicultural Riddle* (1999) the author claims that identifications are contextual to such an extent that they cannot exist. They are too fluid. We should study identification processes instead of identity (Baumann 1999: 137). In this I agree. We should not forget, however that identities are also internalized and even though they are fluid, there are resilient elements within identities whose origins should also be studied. These origins may follow the grammatical rules of identification that he later describes in his article "Grammars of Identity/Alterity" (Baumann 2004) where he takes a structural approach to understand identification processes and how identities are created. What he doesn't take into account though is that identity, like any other symbol or basic analogy, is never free of history or meaning. So even though, as Baumann claims, individuals can assume various identities during the course of a day—from an identity bound to a certain profession to identities bound to religion or ethnicity—I am not of the opinion that these constructions are as free of obligation or only guided by grammatical structures as Baumann leads us to suspect. In fact, I argue that *basic analogies* and *root metaphors* would sooner have a restraining influence on individuals and their daily constructions of identity than a liberating one. Root metaphors are the *margins* between which people construct their identities and experiences. I believe that Baumann dismisses the narrative truths of informants too easily. In the case of my Armenian respondents, ethnic identity is a core symbol that guides other

symbols and other narratives and even other more superficial identities, such as identities bound to a specific profession. From the Armenian *emic* perspective, they are first and utmost an ethnic category and only second a doctor, a teacher or as we will see religious or bound to a national identity.

This argument may be splitting hairs, but as I show in the following chapters, when I focus on the mutual relationships among Armenians and the relationships between Armenians and the outside world, there are specific consequences for the Armenians living in diasporic communities that shows the resilience of their identity can sometimes be more confining than liberating. For who is a real Armenian? Who meets the demands of suffering and resurrection? And how is the Other from the *emic* point of view regarded and constructed?

Suffering and resurrection are not only narratives and constructions bound to settings and situations, they are also tools and directions that to a high degree *determine* situations, attitudes and the behavioural patterns of individuals. We are not as free in our identities as contemporary theories would sometimes lead us to believe. We operate in constraining frameworks. The incorporation of violence in the narratives and the body leave the diasporic Armenian communities in certain situations in a stranglehold. Root metaphors and basic analogies are exactly that: *basic* and *rooted* and it is from here that other constructions about identity, our world, and our selves spring. Dismissing the resilience of identities is dismissing the importance of *narrative truths* and the way that identification processes occur. Identities are created, but this creation is not entirely free or even chosen. They occur within specific margins.

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The Struggle for Identity

We are a very, very divided community. Sometimes I don't even know myself any more what it means to be Armenian.

Informant Misa (the Netherlands) on 30 April 2003

On April 6, 2003, I witnessed a heated debate between a Turkish-Armenian and a Syrian-Armenian at the Ararat foundation in Amsterdam. The discussion became more and more intense and the two main participants, Karlen and Arthases, both tried to convince me—the outsider—of their arguments.

> "The Armenian language is to me not functional," argued Karlen, "I live in The Netherlands, work here and I speak Turkish with all my friends. Why should I learn the Armenian language?" "Because it is the language of your country," Arthases answered, "What language do you speak here at the foundation? How do you make yourself understandable towards other Armenians? Shall I tell you? You speak Dutch or Turkish; you speak the language of your *destroyer*. You are weak."

I had overheard similar discussions at several Armenian associations, including in London, although less personal and charged. Language, and the command of the Armenian language, was often the scale by which being a *real* Armenian was measured. When I told an

informant in London that I was conducting research on Armenians in the Netherlands, she told me: "Be careful. Keep in mind that Turkish Armenians who don't speak Armenian aren't *real* Armenians; they don't know what *being* Armenian means…"

To understand the importance of language, or to even make sense of this heated debate, it is necessary to look at the dynamics within the Armenian community and determine which identity discourses are represented.

7.1   A Divided Community

One of the first things I heard, when I told my gatekeeper Misa that I wanted to research within the diasporic community in the Netherlands, was that the Armenian community is very divided and thus, one cannot actually speak of Armenians:

> Here in the Netherlands we have Armenians of different backgrounds. Armenians from Turkey, Armenians from Syria, Armenians from Iran and Iraq and of course Armenians from Armenia. Some speak Western-Armenian, others Eastern-Armenian, and again others do not speak the language at all. Even when they come from the same country, they often come from different regions: Armenians from Istanbul are very different from Armenians from South-east Turkey. There are people from the cities and people from the villages. Some are religious and others are secular. What I am trying to say is that the Armenian community is heavily divided. We are not a homogeneous group.

In Chap. 3, the Armenian community in the Netherlands was explained as comprising various groups. Less than half of Armenians living in the Netherlands (approximately 40%) came from Turkey, while the other 60% came from Indonesia, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Greece and Armenia. Because of this diversity in origin, language, and background, the Armenian identity is publicly contested, especially in foundations that bring Armenians from multiple backgrounds together.

In the questionnaires I handed out during my research, this struggle became indirectly visible. The differences in answers to the question about what the respondents found important regarding their Armenian culture, the answers were significant. In the 49 completed questionnaires, language was mentioned 32 times. Other answers (number in parentheses) were religion (22), history (15), architecture (9), music (8), ability to

adapt (2) and feeling Armenian (1). These answers only gain importance when comparing them to the respondents' backgrounds. Of the respondents who thought that language was the most important characteristic, 23 were from outside Turkey; specifically: 18 from Iran, 2 from Iraq and 3 from Syria. Of the respondents who chose religion as the most important characteristic, 18 of them came from Turkey. The other answers were equally spread across all groups. Although the number of returned questionnaires (49) was too low to draw statistical conclusions, it is possible to say that for respondents from outside Turkey, the *emphasis* of what makes an Armenian lies in language and for Turkish-Armenians it is religion.

The Armenian community in the Netherlands is divided. But this division is not only connected to countries of origin, but also to how the Armenian identity is interpreted. How should anthropologists approach this division? How much does this division coincide with the unity the Armenian community displayed to the outside world during demonstrations, commemorations and even the book "*The Armenian Community: An Explorative Study*" published by The Federation of Armenian Organizations in the Netherlands (FAON) in 2008? The answer is hidden within the group dynamics of Armenians living in the Netherlands themselves and in the implicit meaning they give to *being* and *feeling* Armenian.

7.2   Three Grammars of Identity: Orientalization (baby-grammar), Fission/Fusion and Encompassment

Social scientists, and anthropologists in particular, have always been occupied with the internal dynamics of specific communities. Since Evans-Pritchard's (1940) ground-breaking work, published in the book *The Nuer*, the various processes of group inclusion and exclusion have been well researched.

According to Baumann (2004),[1] the dynamics within a group can best be understood through three interdependent processes and

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[1] In his article "Grammars of Identity/Alterity" (2004) Baumann tries to give a structural approach to identities and identification. This may seem a contradiction compared to his book *The Multicultural Riddle* (1999), wherein he describes the contextual nature of identities, were it not that his approach in his article is in fact an structuralist answer to the riddle he himself proposed in 1999. In *The Multicultural Riddle* he writes: "In replacing the word "identities" with the word "identification," however, we have taken a liberating analytical step (…) If we thought of culture as something we have and are members of, we can now

(subconscious) grammars with their own specific rules: orientalism (baby-grammar), segmentation and encompassment. All three processes are present in the Armenian community in the Netherlands, but only segmentation and encompassment explain the internal dynamics of the community and the contradictions on the surface.

The orientalism approach, as Baumann describes it, is mainly based on Said's (1978) theoretical thesis of orientalization, an identification process that Baumann, as explained in Chap. 4, calls baby-grammar and plays, in my point of view at least, a pivotal role during the genocidal process. It is a primordial form of identity-making. We do it daily. But as a crisis before a genocide deepens, the mirroring of the Other gets increasingly negatively charged.[2]

The orientalization, which is once again a normal process, was evident in the narrative my respondents used and how they see themselves: as strong, powerful, and simultaneously melancholic. From their point of view, Armenians are an ethnic group with a strong culture, implying that the ultimate Other is weak and does not know the sadness and melancholy that Armenians feel.

Here is where the discussion about language between Karlen and Arthases acquires a new dimension. For Karlen, language was functional. Its only value was whether or not it could be used in Dutch society. For Arthases, however, the Armenian language also possessed a symbolic value. The language told Arthases something about the strength of Armenian culture and personality. Therefore, according to Arthases,

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think of culture as something we make and are shapers of" (ibid.: 137). In this article, he tries to explain how we *shape* culture through identification processes (which he calls grammars).

[2] Baumann placed orientalization outside the genocidal process, while I see orientalization in the center of the genocidal process as I showed in Chap. 3 About genocide he writes: "If the three grammars are truly useful in distinguishing the different starting-points and consequences of selfings- and otherings, then we must look for cases in which our three grammars hypothesis can pre-specify its own criteria of falsification and defeat. Everyone knows such examples, and they are easy to find under key words such as genocide, ethnocide, political, racial or religious extermination or annihilation. Each of these spells a breakdown of all three grammars and a return to the anti-grammar of: "we are good, so they are bad" with the genocidal conclusion: "we must live, so they must die" (Baumann 2004: 42). By stating this though, he doesn't connect genocide with identity-making, while identity is at the core of genocide. He considers genocide as a breakdown, an implosion of the grammatical structures. What comes after the implosion however, especially since identity-making is a subconscious process, remains a mystery and does not explain the violence.

not mastering the language was a characteristic of the Other, thus, Karlen was not *really* an Armenian. Arthases even said at some point: "You are *weak*." And compared Karlen, through reversed mirroring, in the most brutal and insulting way to the absolute Other by stating: "You speak Dutch or Turkish; you speak the language of your *destroyer*." In this single sentence Arthases compared Karlen with a Turk. The biggest insult you can probably throw to an Armenian. Karlen remained, unfazed however. And his answer, which I give below, gave me a new insight.

Before we go to his answer let's look at the other grammatical structures that exist.

Baumann's segmentation process, the second grammatical structure, is inspired by Evans-Pritchard (1940) and explains the plurality and complexity of the grammatical processes even further. Segmentation is based on fission and fusion and oppositions *within* a group. Fission means the separation of groups from the main group and fusion means the merging of these groups at a higher level. According to Evans-Pritchard (1940) fission and fusion occur through the importance of lineages within the Nuer society; however, these processes also happen in modern day society. We could compare fission and fusion (for example) to sport teams: supporters of a specific team distinguish themselves during national competitions, but as soon as the competition becomes international, the supporters dress up in similar clothing and stand perhaps (without knowing it) side by side on the same bench shouting for the international team. In that moment, they are no longer for this or that city or that specific team, instead they are supporters of their country.

Context is of key importance in this process. Context determines whether groups divide or fuse. For Armenians (and other ethnic groups) this means, in practice, that there are always distinct groups within the main group. Within the group, a distinction is made between Armenians from a Turkish background, from a Syrian background, or from an Iraqi background etc. However, to the outside world, these groups are projected as one—Armenian—but could simultaneously be diffused and divided in the inner-world. This projection (fusion) is mainly seen during commemorations and demonstrations, but also, for example, in the book published by FAON, which is in fact a book of self-representation *to* the Dutch society. During these instances, all internal differences disappear and all Armenians—despite their various origins—project themselves as one group.

Although Karlen and Arthases differed in opinion, they are both active in the Ararat foundation and often tried to convince me (as an outsider) of their Armenian identity and the importance of the recognition of the genocide. To me, and to the outside world, from their *emic* perception, their personal and individual differences no longer mattered. They were first and utmost Armenian, before being Turkish or Syrian. It was only after months of access within the Armenian community that the two men showed their divided sides.

And this brings us to the final grammatical structure that Baumann calls encompassment, and which I believe plays an important role in the Armenian community in the Netherlands. Baumann's grammar of encompassment is based on Dumont's (1980) theories and reflects a process in which a segment of one group becomes encompassed by another group. In other words, a part of the community tells the other part of the community that they are slightly distinct, but still part of the same lineage. We see this grammatical structure at work, for example, with the Sikhs and the Hindus. The Sikhs have a distinct religion and distinct customs; however, in the experiential world of the Hindus they are seen as Hindus (Baumann 2004: 26). They are perhaps different from Hindus, but still the same. Despite their differences, Hindus are still a unit.

We see this process strongly reflected in Armenians of Turkish descent and of non-Turkish descent. The Armenians of Turkish descent are mostly (in the experiential world of the non-Turkish Armenians) encompassed within the Armenian community. "Although you do not speak the language," Arthases basically said to Karlen, "you are still an Armenian. But if you also learn the language, you will be a *real* Armenian. Then you are *really* a part of the group."

The problem with this grammatical structure is the *emic* point of view. Although during my research I saw the process of encompassment, it was unclear to me who actually applied this encompassment. For example, do the Sikhs also feel that they are Hindu? Baumann implicitly assumes that the dominant cultural group encompasses the smaller subgroup, but does the smaller subgroup also experience this in a similar fashion? Or do they encompass the dominant group in their own way? With the Armenians, I think both groups encompass each other.

As described above, the Armenian community in the Netherlands is divided. The genocide destroyed every stable identity indicator. Feeling Armenian is now often defined in terms such as inner sadness, suffering, inner strength and resurrection. Every Armenian experiences these

feelings regardless of background and heritage. Herein lies the key. Although every Armenian experiences these feelings, the translation of these feelings differs for individuals and groups. For Arthases, for example, the inner strength of the Armenian is translated into mastering the Armenian language, while for Karlen this strength is in the experience of suffering itself. Both groups try to convince the other of their authentic Armenianness but use different definitions to do so. To understand this, it is important to look at the multiple discourses that arose after the Great Diaspora in the various communities: a political discourse and a cultural discourse.

7.3 Distinct Discourses of Identity

7.3.1 Political Discourse

After the genocide, the Armenian community was instantly divided, as noted in Chap. 3; people were forced to flee to foreign territories. In the 1920s and 1930s, Armenian communities developed in Syria, Cyprus, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and France. Communities maintained their Armenian identity despite, or perhaps even because of, their Christian background. Informant Arpine (second generation, United Kingdom), who comes from Syria, explained it as follows:

> We were an isolated community. We had a different religion and were basically cut off from the Islamic society. We had our own school, our own church, our own language. It was only after the Islamization that things started to change. But not when I was still a child… I remember how I received an Armenian education, how I learned the Armenian language and how I went with my father to visit other Armenian acquaintances. We were all really close, *perhaps* because we were so different. Here [in The United Kingdom] everything is a lot more complicated. This is a Christian country. The differences between me and you, for example, are vague.

When Armenia was being annexed by the Soviet Union in 1920, the ruling Tasjnak party went into exile and slowly started to focus on the diasporic communities. The separate status of the communities, particularly in Islamic societies, magnified the possibility for the Tasjnak party to exercise its influence. They started to get involved in schools, various associations and foundations and clubs. The Armenians in these

communities started to become directly or indirectly politicized; their definition of identity gained a political dimension with a political identity often seen in nation state building.

It is necessary to keep in mind that the Ramgawar party, Hntsjak party and the Tasjnak party were all rooted in the nineteenth century and that all of them, in multiple ways, were influenced by the national movements in Europe. Their definition of national identity is therefore distinct from the church. Whereas the church emphasized religion and belief systems, the political parties emphasized the classical definitions and identity formation of a nation state and citizenship. According to the political parties, Armenians are people who speak the Armenian language, know the Armenian history, receive Armenian schooling, etc. The whole definition of identity is more or less based on nation state building. The feelings of strength and resurrection are connected to this political translation. A real Armenian speaks the Armenian language, a real Armenian knows the customs, the Armenian history, and so forth. This experience is different for Armenians from a Turkish heritage, as noted in the next paragraph. Turkish-Armenians' definition of identity is mainly a cultural discourse.

7.3.2   *Cultural Discourse*

As described in Chap. 3, Armenians in Turkey are in a subordinate position. They are not allowed to become members of associations, have to pay special taxes and are banned in some circumstances from Armenian education. Being an Armenian or giving expression to Armenianness takes place at home. The church has, where possible, a special role in this. Church is the only public place where Armenianness can be expressed and where an Armenian identity, sometimes covertly, can be celebrated. This is the main reason why the Turkish-Armenian respondents marked religion in the questionnaire as the most important element of their Armenian identity. However, a religious interpretation of identity differs from a political interpretation. Politics are aimed at a specific national group with a specific goal. Religion is aimed, theoretically at least, at people in general. The Armenian Church is, more than the political parties, open for non-Armenians. Everybody can convert to Orthodox Christianity, even *odars.*

The emphasis of identity therefore comes to depend on the *feeling* rather than *being* Armenian. (A distinction which I will explore further below.) Neither language nor history is important since these are difficult

to access in Turkey (with the exception of Istanbul), but the cultural discourse itself, translated into feelings of suffering and resurrection. This was also Karlen's counter-argument when Arthases pointed out his insufficiency in the Armenian language. "Yes, I speak the language of the enemy," Karlen declared without showing any emotion, "but I was raised in the country of the enemy. I was born there—that is why I speak the language. A true Armenian *knows what suffering is.*"

These political and cultural interpretations of identity clash continuously. Various Armenian groups (Syrian, Iraqi, Iranian, Turkish) are convinced that they possess the true qualities to be a *real* Armenian. According to Baumann's grammatical structures, groups within the community encompass *each other.* For Turkish-Armenians the cultural discourse is the most important one. To them every Armenian feels this suffering and is therefore a *real* Armenian. Suffering and the resurrection is after all, in the blood. For non-Turkish-Armenians, the emphasis is on the political discourse. From their point of view, all Armenians are Armenians at heart, but to be a *real* Armenian you have to be skilled in the Armenian language, history and schooling as well.

Therefore, the Armenian identity is made up of various colours and angles, but is still part of the same crystal. All Armenians agree that suffering and resurrection lie at the core of the Armenian identity. It is what you *add* to this core identity, especially according to the non-Turkish-Armenians, that makes you a *real* Armenian or not. And to understand this, it is necessary to note the difference between feeling and being an Armenian, which was a distinction that was often made to me during conversations, but eluded me at the start of my research. *Feeling* and *being* Armenian was the implicit knowledge that my informants often expressed, but didn't explain.

7.4   *Feeling* Armenian and *Being* Armenian

Early on in my research, long before I understood the terms suffering and resurrection, I stumbled upon the terms *feeling* Armenian and *being* Armenian. This terminology kept resurfacing in conversations, but also at the Armenian conference in London. "Some Armenians *feel* like they *are* Armenians," one respondent said to me, "but they *are* not." It took me many conversations and interviews before I could make the distinction between those two definitions.

According to Bakalian (1993, 2001, 2009), who conducted research on American–Armenians born in the United States of America, *feeling* Armenian is the basis on which all Armenians experience their identity. It is an *ascribed status* and a status that every Armenian per definition shares. Feeling Armenian means feeling the pain, but also the strength that flows through their body. This is different from *being* Armenian, this is an *achieved status* and something one gains through schooling, learning the Armenian history, customs and language etc.

The idiom of feeling and being Armenian therefore bridges the political and cultural discourses in the community. It gives Armenians the possibilities from their *emic* perspective to encompass each other: Turkish-Armenians base their identity on feeling and non-Turkish Armenians base their identity on being. This distinction, and the discussion that stems from it, only have meaning to insiders within the community who speak the same cultural language and share the same implicit knowledge. For outsiders, all these discussions about feeling and being Armenian are incomprehensible and pointless. As an English non-Armenian once told me: "We speak the same language and use the same words, but it is as if the words are different for them… As if they have a different meaning. Whenever I think I understand them, I am completely off scale."

The feeling and being Armenian have distinct implications. On the one hand, the idiom gives the individual the chance to fluctuate between these two ends by either completely focusing on the Armenian history and language or to only being emotionally connected to the Armenian community. On the other hand, the feeling and being Armenian separates the Armenian from the host society. Only those with inside knowledge and only those with a comprehension of the enculturalized language know what these words mean. As informant Maro (second generation, the Netherlands) said to me: "Some Armenians are *more real* than others. This is true. But to *you*, we are all Armenians."

7.5   FAON Research

This brings me back to the FAON research (2008), as mentioned in Chap. 3. The research gains importance and sheds another light on the internal dynamics of the Armenian community in the Netherlands. As explained, many Armenians from Turkish descent were excluded from FAON's research. They were excluded based on their last names,

but also because many Armenians from Turkish descent didn't participate in the questionnaires.[3] This makes the outcome of the FAON research questionable. This is also shown in the statistics. Of the approximately 12,000–15,000 Armenians living in the Netherlands (FAON 2008: 42), only 502 answered the questionnaires (ibid.: 61). From these 502 respondents, 57 were excluded because they were spouses of Armenians and therefore, not considered true Armenians according to the researchers. This results in a total of 445 respondents (ibid.: 61). From these respondents, approximately 93 came from Turkey. If approximately 27% (according to FAON) or 40% (my research in 2003) of Armenians in the Netherlands come from Turkey, and this is still a conservative estimate, we can conclude that Turkish-Armenians are underrepresented in the statistics.

This result influences the outcome of the FAON research, but also sends a message to the Armenian community at large and Dutch society in general. The FAON book is a self-representation rather than a true empirical depiction. It says more about how the Armenian community "wants to be projected" or is "imagined to be," than how the Armenian community truly is.

Here is the danger of statistical data. As I argued in Chap. 3, the statistics represented by the FAON leave the impression that the Armenian community is a united community and incidentally the best "integrated" foreign community in the Netherlands. They are the highest educated ethnic group, including autochthones (ibid.: 69, 73) and show the highest level of entrepreneurship of all other ethnic categories (ibid.: 78).

Even though I do not dismiss these statistics outright, for Armenians have a long history of entrepreneurship (see also Bonacich 1973), I do think that these are bold statements to make considering the number of respondents, who actually answered the questionnaires, compared to the number of Armenians living in the Netherlands who *didn't* answer the questionnaires. This is especially true if the exclusion of Armenians of Turkish descent is taken into account. The FAON research does state that the Armenians from Turkish descent show a higher entrepreneurship

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[3] Besides statistical data, the FAON also state that they did "some" interviews and group discussions in order to give an interpretation of the statistical data (FAON 2008: 63). It is unclear however, how many interviews or group discussions took place. It is also unclear how this qualitative data actually contributed to the interpretation of the statistical data. There is very little analysis of the statistics.

than Armenians from other areas (ibid.: 79), but it is unclear from the statistics how they came to this conclusion.

Part of the problem with the FAON research lies in how Armenians in the Netherlands were represented. They explain very early on in the book that they had problems tracing Armenians living in the Dutch diasporic community. In order to have an *impression* of how many Armenians actually live in the Netherlands, they spoke mostly with various representatives of the Armenian Foundations and organizations. Another method was searching for Armenian surnames in the telephone book. This last method, as explained, excluded many Armenians from Turkish descent since many were forced to change their surname into a Turkish surname. So, even though I believe the estimate of 12,000–15,000 Armenians is correct, I believe that the percentage of Armenians from Turkish descent is higher than the FAON research documents. This has an enormous impact on the outcome of the statistics, especially since Armenians from South-East Turkey are less educated when they come to the Netherlands than Armenians from Iran, Syria, Lebanon etc.

The second problem with the FAON research lies in the comparative method they use. They compared their statistics, which are not well represented, with formal statistics from the Dutch Bureau of Statistics (CBS), which are well represented. These statistics are based on formal percentages of asylum seekers or foreigners who come and live in the Netherlands or autochthones. This implies that the FAON statistics can never be truly correlated with the statistics that the CBS has collected over the decades. A representation of 445 respondents can never be compared to statistics where thousands or even tens of thousands are represented. The FAON representation is in no way formalized or cross-checked in the same way that the representation of the CBS is cross-referenced. The statement that Armenians are more highly educated than other ethnic minorities can never be concluded outright since the FAON representation is simply not comparable with CBS statistics.

Still, the FAON research is important; it shows something of the dynamics of the Armenian community in the Netherlands, although maybe not in the way the researchers had in mind. It explains *how* the Armenians want to be represented to the Netherlands as a unified group. Here, quite blatantly, is the grammatical structure of fusion. The Armenians wants to be seen as a highly integrated minority group. This is not to say that they are not, but I do think that the reality shows more nuances and complexities than the FAON research shows. The Armenian

minority group struggles with the same problems as other minority groups. These struggles are mentioned on the sidelines, but are not shown or highlighted in the statistics.

The FAON research is also important for another reason, and this is a bit darker and unintentional. By excluding Armenians from Turkish descent, the FAON research actually covered up the process of fission. Turkish-Armenians are no longer only excluded in conversations, as the example at the beginning of this chapter shows, but are also *formally* excluded in the statistics. The FAON research approach, from an anthropological point of view, is actually the political discourse of Armenianness. It doesn't discuss the feelings of suffering and resurrection. It only discusses education, customs, integration, etc. Although the FAON states that the 93 Armenians from Turkish descent feel Armenian, it does not explain what feeling Armenian means. The FAON research is a classic example how "others" *within* the community are *formally* excluded. So, even though the FAON research represents unity, a closer study tells us that it actually represents the opposite. It represents how the community is divided and how this division is made *formal* by statistics and questionnaires. This division is more prominent in the Netherlands than in London and can be directly linked to the aftermath of the Armenian genocide.

7.6   GENOCIDE AND IDENTITY

In this chapter, I have shown the dynamics of identity formation in the Netherlands and how Armenians struggle for identity and try to give meaning to it. Still, *how* and *where* this obsession with identity stems from is important. *Why* were my respondents willing to exclude or include one another? *Why* are there different discourses? And *why* is this fought out so forcefully?

The answer can, in my opinion, be found in the aftermath of the Armenian genocide. This was the contra point, the disruption where every identity indicator and every cultural form of stability was disrupted and destroyed. Both a cultural and a political discourse were created in the vacuum that the genocide left. But this still does not immediately account for the over-focus that I witnessed.

We have to remember that the intent of genocide is the destruction of an identity in *all its forms*. Genocidal violence is not only a physical act, with the aim of the physical destruction of a specific group, but

also a cultural and symbolic act, where not only the physical existence of the victimized group is attacked and annihilated, but also its cultural and symbolic existence (Marsoobian 2015). Before the genocide the Armenians considered themselves Ottomans. During and after the genocide they were suddenly a separate ethnic group that had to be destroyed. It is not strange that the survivors try to over compensate, especially that which the Ottomans intended to obliterate—*identity* or specifically, the Armenian ethnic identity and all the Christian connotations and symbols it carries. Identity gained importance. Even for second-generation survivors who tried to make sense of what the silent generation in the direct aftermath had to endure. Or as my informant Aprine (third generation, United Kingdom) told me: "Everywhere I go I have to think of my Armenian identity. When I listen to music I have to think of Armenian sounds. When I watch a film and see the subtitles, I subconsciously scan for Armenian names. Everywhere I go, I look for Armenians…."

This search for an Armenian identity creates unity. However, the over-focus can also, as we saw, create contention. The internal struggle over the Armenian identity in the Netherlands has to be placed in the context of this over compensation and fixation. It is only when people find something *really* important that they are willing to fight for it. And when examining an abstraction like identity, there are always contradictions, contention, various interpretations and points for discussion. The internal struggle about who is and who is not a real Armenian should therefore be understood from this over-magnification.

That this struggle is more prominent in the Netherlands than in London has to do with the demographics of the Netherlands. At least 27–40% of Armenians in the Netherlands are of Turkish descent compared to 5% in London. These Armenians often don't speak the Armenian language or carry an Armenian surname, but they have a cultural definition of their identity. Therefore, the differences in the Netherlands become automatically more magnified and are in extent harsher and fiercer, which results in disastrous consequences for the community as a whole. There are more schisms among foundations, a lower cash flow returning to the community and there is no visible elite. Although the community tries to form one front against the outside world, or pretends there is one at least, internally the Armenian community in the Netherlands is heavily divided.

This over-focus on identity also has another aspect, which doesn't only occur in the Netherlands alone, but can be found throughout the whole diaspora. This concerns symbolic boundaries between groups within a multi-cultural society. These boundaries are often natural, for the Armenians in the diaspora, however, these boundaries also carry another connotation, often referred to as *Jermag Charrt*, which, loosely translated, means white massacre or in some cases white genocide. Such a terminology indicates a fear of the Armenian identity disappearing again. It is yet another form of the over-focus on identity, but more than that, it lays bare the roots where the over-focus stems from.

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Jermag Charrt

"A recent study of Armenians in London suggests that the commitment and efforts of members of an ethnic group to delineate its boundaries and assert its identity are greatest when other lines of demarcation between it and 'outsiders', for example occupational, residential or economic, are becoming even more blurred."

Redgate 1998: 22

8.1   Transnationalism

There is a presumption in the public domain that the world is becoming smaller. Borders between countries increasingly fade with the arrival of multinationals, increasing interdependent relations etc. There is this sense that we are creating a *global community* and a universal identity, as a result of a worldwide production system (Wallerstein 1984), where a "world citizen" goes beyond the borders of the nation-state in which groups recognize aspects in each other on a massive scale.

Research by Rotenberg (1999) and Caldeira (1999) slightly weaken the presumptions underlying these globalization theories when they analyse people's behaviour on a micro level. Rotenberg's investigation of Viennese gardens shows that people try to preserve their identity, no matter how small, in a world that keeps getting larger and more

interdependent. The garden transforms into a kind of playing field in which people try to express their personal "individuality" (Rotenberg 1999: 161). The "wild" garden suddenly becomes an expression of rebellion and non-conformity against the larger and intangible world.

In her research on new districts in São Paulo and Los Angeles, Caldeira argues that increasing wealth and modernization do not necessarily lead to unification. "Elitist" and "fortified" enclaves arise, surrounded by gates and cameras, thus excluding large proportions of the city's population and constructing new social borders between "us" (people in the district) and "them" (people outside of the district) (Caldeira 1999: 102).

Therefore, globalisation does not automatically lead to unified behaviour or identity formation as Wallerstein (1984) and Hannerz (1996) argue. Sometimes the opposite occurs, as it is precisely the smaller identification processes that increase in significance. Cohen (1985) describes this process as followed:

> As government becomes bigger and more remote from the constituent elements of society; as its economics appears to become increasingly centralized and institutionalized, so it loses credibility and relevance as a referent of people's identity … the vast majority of people are going to feel underrepresented and inadequately understood. They may even feel deliberately excluded. As a result, they become politically introspective and reach back to a more convincing level of society with which to identify. (ibid.: 106)

Smith (1981) and Beer (1980) show that sometimes these identifications are based on ethnicity. It is within the context of globalization that groups label *themselves* as Turks in Berlin, Berbers in Paris, or Sikhs in New York. These identities give a kind of symbolic grip on what is absent in the *global community*: making an intangible world more tangible.

Armenians, just like other (ethnic) groups, participate in this process of globalization to a large extent. They have extensive trade relationships and familial networks. However, within the Armenian communities there is also something else at play. The importance of fighting for their Armenian identity is not merely a reaction to globalization or transnationalism. The motivation for preserving their symbolic boundaries can be directly correlated to the genocide.

8.2   The Preservation of Social Boundaries

According to Cohen (1985), social boundaries are symbolically constructed borders that separate the "we-group", from outsiders (ibid.: 12, 13). He argues that these community boundaries cannot be drawn objectively (as often happens in geographical and demographical maps), but are constantly shifting, because the meaning of the symbols constantly change:

> The notion that communities will be transformed by the dominant structural logic of their host societies, rendering them more alike, ignores the indigenous creativity with which communities work on externally imposed change. Change in structural forms is matched by a symbolic recreation of the distinctive community through myth, ritual and a 'constructed' tradition. (ibid.: 37)

A community reacts to impulses from outside. Therefore, borders are never absolute or static. It is important to remember that the symbols are often ambiguous and merely reflect a direction. They are not written in stone. Cohen makes a distinction between the *personal* content, the subjective meaning that an individual connects to a symbol and the *collective* meaning. The symbols overlap on an abstract level:

> Symbols are effective because they are imprecise. Though obviously not contentless, part of their meaning is 'subjective'. They are, therefore, ideal media through which people can speak a 'common' language, behave in apparently similar ways, participate in the 'same' rituals, pray to the 'same' gods, wear similar clothes and so forth. (ibid.: 21)

Just as in Halbwachs' dreams (1992) and Jackson's narratives (2002), individuals share those symbolic borders with each other, yet simultaneously negotiate the meanings. The meaning can differ by individual, context and situations. In some contexts, the boundaries are being generated, in others they are magnified.

The boundaries Armenians use amongst each other to distinguish outsiders are often based on marriage, language, religion and notions of suffering and resurrection. But where the boundaries of marriage, language and religion are often being transgressed or contested, the suffering and resurrection has a unifying character as described in the next paragraph. This is mainly because this boundary, in comparison to other boundaries,

is the least tangible and the most symbolic. It appeals to a communal and a collective history. It connects to an event that directly or indirectly all Armenians share with each other regardless of language or religious background. This is why this boundary is so resilient.

8.2.1 Marriage

During my first conversation with a future gatekeeper in December 2002, I was immediately pressed to not have a romantic relationship with an Armenian woman. "Tony, you can come to parties, talk to everyone, but remember one thing… You keep your hands off the women." It was a first glimpse of the strict rules of endogamy that are enforced amongst not only Turkish Armenians but amongst Armenians from Syria, Iran, Iraq and Armenia. Only Armenians from Indonesia do not seem to abide so strictly to these rules (Demirdjian 1989: 46). Idealistically speaking, according to the prevailing ideals, Armenians are only supposed to marry other Armenians. This is underlined by the conversations I have had in the field: "Armenians understand each other. They have a similar history. The blood is the same…" Or: "An Armenian has to be with an Armenian."

Regardless of these ideas, however, an Armenian marriage is now a source of conflict. Not everybody in the community abides to the rules of endogamy. The younger generations especially, born in the Netherlands, often violate those rules: "The youth of today simply do not understand! They do not understand that back in the day you were an outcast if you came home with an *odar*. They do not understand how important it is, that our identity is kept intact." Or as a parent of a teenager in the United Kingdom told me, when she was speaking of her son: "Nowadays they just do anything. There is nothing I would want more than for my son to marry an Armenian woman."

For youngsters raised in the Netherlands or who came here in their teenage years, the existing endogamy rules are ambivalent at best. They are an ideal to be aspired to, but this rarely occurs in real life. "Of course, I would prefer to marry an Armenian, but you cannot guide love, can you?" a fourth-generation Armenian told me. "I know that my parents will not agree, but if I fall in love with a Dutchman, I will date a Dutchman… I have never fallen in love with an Armenian, although that of course would be the best thing."

For many young people, their identity is therefore acted out not through marriage, but rather by how they want to raise and socialize their future children. It is on these grounds that concessions take place: "I promised my parents that if I should ever marry a Dutch person, I will at least give my children an Armenian upbringing. I want my children to feel Armenian and learn the Armenian language just like me. I also want them to go to Armenian (Sunday) school."

In some cases, it is demanded that the non-Armenian partner converts to the Orthodox Christian faith. During my research, however, I only met two couples in which the non-Armenian actually took this step due to family pressure or affinity with the religion. Most relationships between non-Armenians and Armenians I only know from hearsay. This may imply that these people are still partially ostracized from the Armenian community.

Generally, it can be said that an Armenian-Armenian marriage stands in higher regard for Armenians who were born abroad than for those who grew up in the Netherlands or other host countries. Of the 16 youngsters I spoke to during my research in London and the Netherlands, only three had had a relationship with another Armenian. Going to school, receiving an education in the Western host countries, and having mainly Western friends all add to the fact that most youngsters look for a partner in non-Armenian circles.

However, an Armenian marriage is also a symbolic border for young Armenians. This mainly comes to the foreground when *odars* are compared with each other. Even though Dutch and/or Western partners are covertly allowed, partners from Islamic circles are not acceptable, both for the older and the younger generations. Turks have a special place in this. In the eyes of some Armenians, Turks are the absolute Other. "Who the hell associates with a Turk?" a respondent asked me almost angrily. "Isn't that the Destroyer?" (However, in reality marriages between Armenians and Turks do take place—but is often not discussed.)

8.2.2   *Armenian Language*

Many Armenians—and in particular Armenians from Syria, Iraq, Iran and Armenia—believe that "real" Armenians speak Armenian (the political discourse). The Armenian language is also a symbolic border that separates Armenians from outsiders. An Armenian who has mastered the Armenian language is more real and more enlightened than the other

who doesn't speak the language. It is, after all, the oldest language on earth—as Armenians often proudly emphasize—and by speaking it and using it, you carry a part of this unique history with you.

Still, this symbolic border is not without conflict, as described in the previous chapter. Due to historical developments on the one hand and the large diaspora on the other, the influence of the language has become more diffuse. The community includes Western-speaking Armenians, Eastern-speaking Armenians and Armenians who don't speak the language at all. This symbolic border, therefore, becomes contested and is being pushed further and further into the background, which is seen as a huge problem as the Armenian community grows (with mostly Armenians from Turkish descent or Armenian descent).

This border has not lost all of its power, though, especially amongst Turkish-Armenians. Although Turkish-Armenians do not put the emphasis of their identity on their language, but rather on their cultural experience (cultural discourse), it does not stop them from studying the Armenian language and culture as soon as they arrive in the Netherlands. As Demirdjian (1990) writes:

> However it should not be concluded … that the immigrants coming from the Eastern [Turkish] provinces are not interested in Armenian culture. On the contrary; these are the most determined advocates of the teaching of Armenian in Dutch schools. (ibid.: 8)

Some Turkish-Armenians learn the language in order to create a border between themselves and the host country as a main motivator. A respondent told me: "Look, I live in the Netherlands and I speak Dutch. I was born in Turkey and speak Turkish. I learn the Armenian language, because both in Turkey and in the Netherlands I want to be Armenian…"

Language is therefore still a symbolic border, but not just to the absolute Other—the Dutchman, the Turk, the Englishman—but in some cases also to each other as Armenians. That makes language not all inclusive. Even though it is a symbolic border, it is a contested one as shown in the previous chapter.

8.2.3   Religion

On April 25, 2004, I was at the Ararat foundation when a discussion on Armenian identity ensued during a lecture on the history of Armenians

in Amsterdam. The audience wondered whether the Armenians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were truly Armenian, because they had "disappeared" throughout the nineteenth century due to interrelations in the Netherlands. "There has been an Armenian church since 1749," someone commented, "so they were Armenian." "But not all Armenians are Orthodox Christians," another speaker thoughtfully reminded the audience. The group went quiet. Then someone behind me somewhat jokingly shouted: "If they were not Orthodox Christians, they were not real Armenians!"

Despite how funny this commentary might have been intended, it also immediately uncovered a symbolic boundary that religion is also a way to distinguish oneself from other groups. But just as with language and marriage, the boundary of religion is not without struggle. Due to the historical developments of Armenia, many Protestant and Catholic congregations have developed over the centuries and all of these differ from Orthodox Christianity and have their own rituals and theological backgrounds. A Catholic Armenian shared with me that he still feels Armenian even if the Orthodox Armenians disagreed: "I find the whole discussion about religion ludicrous. I am Catholic—true—but also Armenian. I feel Armenian. I speak Armenian. I have lost family members during the genocide. When someone tells me I am not Armenian, it hurts me deeply."

Of the respondents I spoke with, five were Catholic and three Protestant, only 15 went to the church regularly and the rest professed their religion passively. In London, my impression was that church participation was higher than in the Netherlands. When I visited the Armenian Church there, it was so busy that people even attended the mass outside. Still, it is important not to overestimate the participation in the Church in London either, as a pastor of the Church told me: "Many come to church, but not all are Orthodox Christians. Some of them come for the social gathering; to meet family and friends (…) I know many Protestants and Catholics in London. I stop by every now and then. They are all Armenian in my view."

The importance of religion should not be underestimated or overestimated. It distinguishes the Armenian community from the other, but just as with languages and marriages, this is not completely inclusive. Here again there are exceptions and compromises made. There are simply too many secular Armenians, Protestant Armenians and Catholic Armenians (and even Muslim Armenians—even though nobody speaks

about them) to accept religion as the basis of the Armenian identity. And this leaves ethnicity as a symbolic boundary that has symbols with inclusive characteristics.

8.2.4   Suffering and Resurrection

Although opinions about marriage, language and religion can differ amongst Armenians, almost every Armenian agrees that Armenianness and the feeling of Armenianness is what makes Armenians a separate group. This feeling is described as a feeling of sadness and a feeling of empowerment that I have defined earlier as suffering and resurrection. This feeling is enclosed within the body and expresses itself through the eyes and the blood. Even when you cannot speak the language or are not religiously active, you feel the Armenianness in the deepest corner of your soul. This suffering is instilled. I have often been told that Armenians can recognize each other on the street by this invisible pain that only Armenians carry.

"I walk on the sidewalk and I can recognize another Armenian a hundred feet away," one informant told me. When I pressed the issue, he added: "We have to carry a whole history on our shoulders, Tony. We have been oppressed, humiliated, massacred. Other people do not feel or know this history. I feel this pain every day… So I can see it in the faces and in the eyes when another Armenian pass me." Chitjian (2003), an Armenian genocide survivor, writes in his book: "The world no longer was mine. Another part of my soul was eternally wounded" (ibid.: 332). And it is this eternal wound that forms the ultimate boundary between Armenians and the outside world. It is something that separates Armenians from others. At the same time, it is so symbolic and so intangible that it can satisfy everyone's subjective experience. Older and younger generations. Western-speaking Armenians. Eastern-speaking Armenians. Armenians who don't master the language. Protestants. Catholics. Orthodox Christians. They all feel this pain. "An Armenian suffers," one respondent told me. "And an Armenian survives. That is the burden we share."

These feelings can be traced back to the genocide. It was during the massacres that all reliable institutions were destroyed and that the integrity of the body and the Self were violated through acts of violence.

The survivors have spun new webs of meaning that encapsulated these horrific experiences. Therefore, it is not so strange that language and religion (institutions that other groups often use in transnationalism as symbolic ethnic boundaries) cause so much division amongst Armenians. The institutional basis for unity in these matters were destroyed. Only the suffering and resurrection and the communal history is what connects. To understand this fully, and to understand the fear that stimulates this symbolic boundary, it is necessary to look at the term *Jermag Charrt*. A term that kept returning in the narratives of my respondents and demonstrates probably most blatantly how this definition of ethnic identity can be connected to the events of 1915–1917.

8.3   White Genocide

The Armenians I spoke with during my research make only a small distinction between integration and assimilation. These terms are often used simultaneously as if they mean the same thing: "My children go to a Dutch school, they speak Dutch, work in the Netherlands—I am afraid that soon they will no longer 'be' Armenian." The definition of integration (although this word is not without controversy) in the dictionary means, the "incorporation as equals into society or an organization of individuals of different groups" (with emphasis on "equals"). This implies incorporation, working together, getting along *with the preservation of one's own identity*. Assimilation means to become absorbed; disappearing into the dominant culture group often without a trace. Even though my informants spoke passionately about assimilation, I saw many examples of integration during my research, and no indication of assimilation. This was of course my *etic* point of view. Many Armenians do not agree with this. Their fear of assimilation is real.

Chitjian (2003) speaks about assimilation in his book *A Hair Breadth from Death*:

> There was total assimilation into the *odar* world within one generation. We had managed to escape the bloody barbaric *charrt* of 1915. Now we were both left wounded emotionally by the **"White Charrt"** – **assimilation!** There is no escape from the **"White Charrt"**. If allowed, the **"White Charrt"** will finally achieve the aspirations of the vicious barbaric Turk – our youth must understand this! (ibid.: 331—bold emphasis by original author)

According to Armenians in London and the Netherlands, irrespective of generation or language, the Armenian culture is always on the verge of being swallowed by the dominant culture. The term that is used for this is *Jermag Charrt*: White massacre or sometimes translated as white genocide.

"We are disappearing Tony… We are disappearing… In three generations, we will no longer exist. Just as the Turks wanted," a respondent told me. Or as another respondent stated: "What the Turk could not do with violence, the West will do with a smile."

In all these quotes we see a direct connection between the fear of assimilation and the Armenian genocide. This fear is so enormous, so deeply instilled, that every form of integration is immediately placed in the light of white massacres. "We do not want to lose our identity again," a respondent told me. When I questioned him, he formulated more precisely: "We do not want our identity to be taken away from us by a bigger power."

And here is where the symbolic boundaries of Armenians differ from the symbolic boundaries of other ethnic groups. Where other ethnic groups create boundaries in multi-cultural settings because of globalization and transnationalism, Armenians create boundaries out of fear. Not fear of integration. But the fear of annihilation that has nestled itself in contemporary ideas.

We cannot place this outside the experience of genocide. It is here where the symbolism of suffering and resurrection is created and both are embodied and internalized. The body (metaphorical for some, literal for others) was the only thing standing between Armenians and total destruction. It was the only institution left. The only reminder that the Armenian people had survived. It is as if the survivors could say: "Look, you [Turks] could not take all away from us. Look, I have survived. Look, I am still standing and I carry a piece of my ethnicity with me."

Marriage is, therefore, especially for older generations, so important. It is not merely a connection between two people who share the same language or the same religion, but it is a connection between two people with the same blood. This blood tie has to be preserved due to the fear of *Jermag Charrt*. This is why many Armenian associations spend much time and money to bring Armenian youth together while other goals—the stimulation of integration and organizing lectures—are sometimes pushed to the background. Marriage equals passing on the Armenian identity. Language can be studied later. One can always convert to the Orthodox

Christianity at a later date. But the Armenian identity is something that resides in the body and should be preserved. To Armenians, this is not a fight for maintaining an identity in a greater and complex world, it is a fight for utter existence.

8.4   Younger Generations and Identity

In the previous paragraph, I examined the fears that stimulate the preservation of boundaries. Now, I turn my focus on how far these fears are justified. Do younger generations of Armenians truly assimilate or disappear, as is presumed? For this, I draw on large-scale research conducted in the 1990s in New Jersey and New York by Bakalian (2001). In this research, 584 respondents were questioned about their Armenian identity. A total of 272 of the respondents were second-generation Armenian-Americans (Armenians born in the United States of America) and 93 Armenians were third generation (children of Armenians born in the United States of America). The results of this research were striking, since: "In spite of predictions about assimilation and white massacre for the last hundred years, the second generation is strongly attached to its Armenian identity" (ibid.: 18).

There were some differences. For example, the importance of endogamy differed per group of respondents. A total of 68% of the first generation was of the opinion that a real Armenian should ideally marry another Armenian. This opinion was shared with 33% of the second generation and 13% of the third generation. When it concerned their own possible future children, however, the differences were less significant, as 75% of the first generations thought that their children should marry someone from their own ethnic background, compared to 39 and 26% of the second and third generations, respectively (ibid.: 11).

There is a similar tendency in relation to the Armenian language, as 98% of the first generation spoke the Armenian language fluently or well. This was in comparison to the 74 and 25% of the second and third generations (ibid.: 11). When it comes to the question of whether or not their (future) children should learn to speak Armenian, again the differences become less significant: 94% of the first generation wanted their children to learn Armenian, compared to 76% of the second and 66% of the third generation.

Based on the findings described above, the importance of the Armenian identity does not immediately decline through the

generations. Only the definition changes. Second- and third-generation Armenians increasingly acquire an hybrid form and call themselves American-Armenian or an Armenian-American rather than just Armenian. The second observation is more subtle. Although endogamy rules decline somewhat in importance for the younger generations, the urge to pass on the Armenian values and language to future children stays relatively constant. A total of 76 and 66% of the second and third generations want their children to learn the Armenian language, although only 39 and 26% want their children to marry other Armenians.

It appears that for future generations the definition of being Armenian will change. Younger generations feel Armenian and American. The Armenian identity becomes more and more of an ascribed status. And even though many second- and third-generation Armenians would like to receive the achieved status, the percentage is in decline. The emphasis on the dichotomy between being and feeling shifts to feeling (the cultural discourse).

I have observed a similar development in the Netherlands. Although I did not have the means to do large-scale research, I did have the impression that second-, third- and even fourth-generation Armenians put more emphasis on feeling Armenian than being Armenian, even though some took an active role to study the Armenian language, history, etc. This was not the majority. Many put emphasise on the passive part of feeling and the ascribed status attached to this, even though this was often still more complex—as the following life-story shows, since identities are sometimes not as straightforward as one likes to think.

Life story of Manoug

Identity and giving shape to an identity are important parts in the life of Manoug. He can, draw on several ethnic identities, as we shall shortly see. His Armenian identity is at no time self-evident. Still he feels "Armenian" and tries to "be" as "actively" Armenian as possible.

Manoug is a third-generation Armenian. He was born in Amsterdam and feels simultaneously "Armenian", "Assyrian" and "Dutch". "My parents," he starts, "come from a town called Sirnak." His father was Armenian and his mother Assyrian. He speaks both Turkish, Kurdish and Dutch. "They grew up in an area that was mainly Kurdish. All their friends and neighbours were Kurdish. My father still speaks Kurdish at home."

In his youth, he never learned the Armenian language. "My mother speaks Aramaic. My father has never spoken the Armenian language at home." According to Manoug, this has caused an identity crisis. "I was raised in a household with many Kurdish influences. My parents both come from different backgrounds and I was raised in the Netherlands. I realised when I grew older, that I spoke none of my parents' languages! That I hardly even knew anything about their background!" Still, Manoug feels more Armenian than Assyrian. "I do not exactly know why. I am of course both. Perhaps it is because of the family of my father. They live in the Netherlands. Perhaps it is because it is also in my blood. The Armenian side is stronger in me."

The Assyrian and Armenian cultures are according to Manoug very different. Assyrian cultures are very patriarchal, whereas Armenian cultures are matriarchal. Manoug believes that Armenian fathers focus on the outside world. A mother mainly occupies herself therefore with the upbringing of the children. In Assyrian families, this is reversed, he told me. "Men are very authoritarian. Whatever they say is the common law in the family." [author's note: Manoug's definitions are very different from the definitions used in the social sciences. I have left it this way to reflect the experiences of the respondent.] There was also another difference, which he only realised later: "Assyrians do not have a nation state. Their identity is purely based on their belief system. With Armenians, the identity is politically charged. There is always the motherland."

As a consequence, Manoug received a structurally Assyrian upbringing. "My mother had a much stronger identity than my father. She spoke the language, was occupied with her belief system, whereas my father mostly kept to the background." Still, from time to time his father drew some boundaries. For instance, he was not allowed to learn Suryani (Aramaic) and every week he had to go to Armenian Sunday school where he was taught religion and folk dances. "I have forgotten it all."

The first major shift came when he realised he was "different" from his fellow students in school. "I became conscious of the fact that Dutch families worked differently. They were not as complex as mine. The Dutch fathers were much more actively involved in the upbringing. I was different and I felt it." The second major shift came when he was 15 and read the book "The Story of the Last Thought" by Hilsenrath. "I suddenly became aware of my roots. I suddenly understood where my father and mother came from."

These shifts, and the questions that arose, led him feel more and more Armenian and becoming actively involved in Armenian foundations. "I simply wanted to do something. I do not want the genocide to be forgotten. The massacre of our people is something that binds my parents with each other. It does not clash with my Armenian and Assyrian identity."

Still, as he states himself, his identity is problematic. It is a century-long struggle. "I now consider myself mainly Dutch Armenian: Dutch because of my civic identity and Armenian because it is my cultural background. My blood. I feel my Armenian side more strongly. But it is not easy. I have to fight for it."

He takes on this "fight" by engaging in foundations, organizing social evenings and mainly by explaining the importance of the genocide to outsiders. When I met him during my research, he was one of the main advocates during parties and informal evenings for discussing the Armenian genocide in the public domain. It was his sharp tongue that stood out for me during those conversations. He was in his mid-twenties when he was asked to join the Ararat meeting board.

"They needed young people to bring new life into the organization. Things needed to be organized."

When I asked him about his love life, far removed from all his activities in the foundation, he momentarily fell silent. "I once dated a Turkish girl," he said. "But that brings a lot of friction. If one thing connects Armenians, it is their distrust of Turks. Both my father and mother disapproved of the relationship. But also, her family disapproved. Not because I was Christian; they were not very traditionally Islamic, but because my family came from Sirnak. Many Turks believe the people from Sirnak are traditional and backwards. Relationships between two cultures bring a lot of tension…"

When I asked him if he wanted to teach his future children Armenian, Dutch, Aramaic or Turkish, his answer was immediate, direct and straightforward: "Armenian and Dutch, of course. I want my children to be, like me, Armenian-Dutch."

I have chosen this life story because it brings together so many previously discussed aspects. First, Manoug uses a hybrid identity (Dutch-Armenian). Second, his life story shows how actively Manoug is involved in giving meaning to his Armenian identity. Armenianness is not only something you feel, but also something you do. For Manoug it is both simultaneously an ascribed, but also an achieved status but not in the

traditional sense. The emphasis for example doesn't lie with learning the Armenian language, but more with the choices you make between the identities that are available to you.[1]

The emphasis that the younger generations put on "active participation" has slightly shifted. With the first generation and second generation, and in particular for the non-Turkish Armenians, active participation was highly politicized in the diasporic communities. Learning the Armenian language, participating in the Armenian Church, marrying a fellow Armenian or studying Armenian history were important factors that determine your Armenianness. For the second-generation Armenians in Western societies and the third generation as well, these factors also play a role, but to a much lesser degree. They have often not fully mastered the Armenian language, but they find it important that their children learn it. Active participation is reduced to going to Armenian associations, foundations, to social gatherings or for the females playing a greater role in the household and thus, more removed from public life. The political dimension has become secondary.

The reason for this can be found in the experiential worlds of the second- and third-generations. In most cases, they were born in a Western country and in this case the Netherlands. They have to deal with Western politics and society and possible future Western partners. Armenia is an abstract notion, or for some, a holiday destination. Marrying an Armenian is only an ideal choice. Preserving the language or an Armenian marriage is not a high priority for the younger generation, but an Armenian upbringing or the socialization of the Armenian character is. Only this way can Armenianness be awakened in the blood. An Armenian respondent who was married to a Dutchman told me: "Whether my future children do or do not marry an Armenian does not interest me. The upbringing does. I want to give my children something Armenian. I want to awaken them. I want them to be as strong as I am."

It is important to note here that feeling Armenian, according to some, still lies in the blood and has to be cultivated and nourished. By raising future generations of Armenians, the Armenian side has to be stimulated,

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[1] Manoug's life story is also atypical to a certain degree. He has unique reasons for emphasizing the Armenian genocide. Whereas most Armenians emphasize it because it connects them to the group, Manoug's motivation is more personal. It is the only thing that does not directly clash with his Armenian or Assyrian identity. Genocide is what his parents share in their collective histories.

and with this it is predominantly implied the so-called feelings of *suffering* and *resurrection*.

The idea that *Jermag Charrt* exists is unfounded according to the aforementioned large-scale research and my own findings. Yet it is real in the *emic* worldview of the respondents. There is always this existential threat. The second- and third-generations are consciously active with their identity. It is only how they deal with their identity that has changed.

8.5   A Critical Note to Baumann II

I stated earlier that I have three critiques of Baumann (1999 and 2004). One is that he doesn't take the narrative truths into account in his grammar of identities or the contextual nature of identities. Two, by stating that genocide is the consequence of non-communication and an implosion of the grammars (Baumann 2004: 42). By stating this he actually places genocide and the causes and intent of genocide outside identity-making, while identity-making is at the core of the genocidal process and violence.

My third critique is an extension of my first critique. By not taking the narrative truths into account, we also don't take the constraining factors of identity-making into account, and these constraining factors may tell much about the collective history of the people we study and the grammars they use. I even go a step further. Even though Baumann (2004) implies that only a structuralist approach could explain identity-forming and construction, he says nothing or little what the *content* of an identity implies. An identity is not only an outcome of a contextualized process, but is more than that. It is internalized. Coloured. And this internalization, especially if fear propels it, can tell us a lot how identities are construed and how the grammars are applied. Baumann seems in his critique on post-modernism (in his book *The Mulit-Cultural Riddle* (1999)), create an analysis of or/or, while I believe in an and/and approach which is more satisfactory. Yes, the grammars (the structuralist approach) do exist, but how we colour them and use them is to a high extent culturally dependent. Identification processes are important. This I agree. But what an identity entails and how this can restrain the grammatical structures is of equal importance. In other words, we never stop, no matter how small, creating and making an identity with the grammatical structures as Baumann proposes. But these structures, since they are invisible, subconscious and normalized (on a day-to-day basis), they never stop or implode—not even during warfare. Besides the structures

it is the meaning we attach to identity that is of profound importance, not just the mechanisms behind identity. For the meaning can have both a liberating or confining aspects. And as we see with the survivors of the Armenian genocide these confining elements can have a profound impact on the community. Contrary to what theory of identity often indicates, the Armenian identity is resilient over time and space. This shows the importance of the internalization of an identity and how this is acted out and shapes our inner-world. Identities are coloured. They are filled with meaning. They are never meaningless.

To Baumann, identities are contextually determined (1999) and as scientists we have to abandon the idea that identities are predetermined structures:

> it must be aware that all identities are identifications in context and that they are thus situational and flexible, imaginative and innovative – even when they do not intend to be. (ibid.: 138)

Baumann argues that a person assumes multiple identities in a single day. Depending on the context and situation, a person will construct a religious, ethnic or cultural identity. What Baumann does not mention, however, is that identities are also internalized. A person may assume an identity in a specific context or setting, but will always do so within their own framework. This framework is not neutral. It is built from specific symbols, ideas, constructions and implicit knowledge. The webs of meanings are constantly all around us and sometimes they have a constraining and predetermined effect.

It is important to distinguish the various gradations of symbols. There are symbols that are contextually constructed, on a day-to-day basis, but there are also more basic symbols, or root metaphors, that determine the constructions of these contextual symbols. These symbols only change in moments of deep crisis where they can no longer be applied in day-to-day life.

I have argued that for Armenians, these basic symbols are the notions of suffering and resurrection created in the aftermath of the genocide. It is from this framework that they approach the world and construct their Armenianness. These symbols are the glasses through which Armenians colour and see their surroundings. It is possible that within a specific context Armenians assume a religious, national or civic identity, but this identity will always be placed within the framework of the ethnic identity. A respondent once told me: "An Armenian is first and foremost an Armenian and only then Catholic or Protestant."

Armenians will always nuance their identities to each other and to others. They do this either by putting an emphasis on being or on feeling or by formulating boundaries between themselves and the other. Again and again, multiple elements of their Armenian identity will be magnified. However, the ideas of suffering and resurrection remain central to all these nuances, the constructions are never as free as the theoretical approaches of Baumann seem to imply. Narrative truths have much more weight than Baumann would have us to believe. The nuances and magnifications take place within specific margins.

> Symbols are thus essentially objective, not subjective forms. They may be originally the spontaneous creation of specific individuals going through specific subjective experiences, but they attain an objective existence when they are accepted by others in the course of social interaction within a collectivity. What was originally subjective and individual becomes objective and collective, developing a reality of its own. The symbols become obligatory and thus exercise constraint on the individual. (Cohen 1974: x, xi)[2]

It is important to remember that these root metaphors are not static. People negotiate their meanings, and therefore the root metaphors as well, and with every new interpretation the basic symbol will be reshaped. Basic symbols differ from more contextual constructions since a total renewal of these symbols can only take place under very drastic circumstances. This happens when the basic symbols can no longer adequately give meaning to a disastrous situation. This is what happened during the Armenian genocide. Through the violence and disruption of Armenian institutions, the ideas of suffering and resurrection acquired a complete new meaning.

So if we follow Baumann, we can state that both identification processes and identities exist as constructions and structures. People will nuance and construct their identities to the outside world due to the influence of their surroundings, but they will simultaneously use narrative structures to do so. On a small scale, daily identities are the end products of these processes, but on a larger scale they are the references to the root metaphors. Thus, basic symbols are constantly being confirmed and future ideas will be built on constructions already in place. The questions: Who are we? or in what way do we differ from others?

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[2] I would prefer to replace objectivity here with intersubjectivity. It is namely in *the sharing* of ideas that they become tangible.

never leave us. People redefine themselves and use limited resources to do so, regardless of the situation and context.

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Conclusion

9.1   NEAR THE FOOT OF MT. ARARAT

There is a story that I have heard numerous times, but I could never verify. It is about Mt. Ararat and how the first Armenians carved paintings and drawings into the rocks at the base of the mountain to declare this mountain their home. According to this myth, those carvings still exist, although thousands of years of erosion and rainfall have tainted the stone. "You can still see them," a respondent told me. "If you get near the foot of the mountain, at certain places, they are still visible."

This myth represents everything I have tried to analyse and argue in this book, albeit indirectly. It symbolizes the Armenians' loss today (the mountain, after all, lies in Turkey), the genocide (Armenians no longer live or live in lesser numbers near the mountain) and the fear of the carvings disappearing (by erosion and rainfall), and the feelings of suffering and the inner strength. The drawings still exist, and the presence of the Armenians is literally carved in the landscape.

The research questions I have addressed throughout this book were formulated as follows: *What impact does the genocide of 1915–1917 have on the cultural experience of Armenians living in the Netherlands? How do they construct their past and how does the past influence their ethnic identity and day-to-day dealings?*

From my point of view, Armenian culture and identity are in a constant state of flux. They are negotiated, rebuilt, reconstructed, changed and reconfirmed. They never form a static and unchangeable entity, although the group will experience this differently from their *emic* point of view. Identity and culture are human constructions.

This does not imply that identities and cultures as a whole are connected to contexts and situations alone as Baumann (1999) argues in his book *The Multicultural Riddle* or as he proposes in his book *Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach* (2004) on grammatical structures. Identities are also internalized. By focusing on grammatical structures or contexts alone is to lose sight of the weight and importance of *narrative* truths. These are narrations that respondents use to understand their world and shape the framework on how they feel, think and therefore act.

I addressed the above-formulated questions in two dimensions and I did this because they are intertwined to a large degree. On one hand, I offered an anthropological analysis on genocide and the violence used during genocide, for I believe that this violence expresses the specific *intentions* of the perpetrators. On the other hand, I anthropologically analysed the aftermath of genocide and how this collective experience is now embedded in the cultural framework of the victimized group.

Identities, the content of identities, and the narratives about identities are internalized after all. There is an ongoing dialectic between individuals, macro political and social contexts and basic symbols. People will construct and define their identities, but this defining will always take place between well-demarcated margins. Because of this, the constructed identities show similarities with previous identities, and only distinct elements and factors will be emphasized or magnified, as Baumann (1999) also argues. However, the *basic* symbols and analogies from which the constructed identities are derived stay the same. (And here is where Baumann and I differ.)

To retrieve the influence of genocide on Armenian identity-making and rebuilding in the diaspora, it is important that we first examine the Armenian genocide itself. This was not only a political event or a political and violent act and process, but also a cultural, social and symbolic act that carried specific meaning. If one studies the acts of violence against the Armenians, and in particular the nature of the violence, it is clear that the deprivation and destruction of identity in all possible forms played a pivotal role in the massacres. From my perspective, genocide is more

than the intention to destroy a specified group in whole or in part. It is first and foremost *the intention* to destroy an *identity*. The violent acts in genocide are derived from this basic idea and the violence is the cultural expression of this intention. The Armenians were stigmatized, tortured, and alienated and in the end, they were ritually slaughtered like animals and nonhumans. In each step of the continuum of destruction (Staub 1989) a layer of identity of the victims was stripped away, while the same layer of the perpetrators' identity was enhanced or solidified.

To understand the nature of this mechanism I don't look at the Armenians or *why* the Armenians were persecuted, but I look first and utmost at the mind-set and cultural frameworks of the perpetrators. Here is where the exclusion and eventually the extermination of the Armenians as an identity began.

I argue that the basis of the genocidal violence is a fixation on identity in the minds of the perpetrators. The Ottoman Empire was in a constant state of disintegration, the revolution of the Young Turks did not hold its promise to unite the Ottoman Empire to its former glory and the Ottoman national identity was in a state of permanent crisis. Staub (1989) notes that the self-concept of the Ottomans was in a *symbolic* danger. In this mental framework, the country had to be purified and the Other, who contaminated the Turkish identity, had to be destroyed (Semelin 2007). This included the Ottoman Other (the old Ottoman elite), the international Other (Europeans and Russians) and eventually the national and internal Others (the Christian minority groups in the nation-state).

The Armenians took a very peculiar role in this process. While the Young Turks fought for political and symbolic existence, the Armenian culture went through a revival, also known as the Armenian Renaissance, a direct confrontation with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. The enormous political and social problems that the Ottoman Empire, and more specifically the Young Turks faced and the loss of the Balkan war were a catalyst whereby the new Turkish identity had to be reformulated and reconstructed. And even though the Armenian community was fully integrated into Turkish society, the Armenian became a symbol of the absolute Other, the anti-image, the anti-self of everything that didn't fit in the new Pan-Turkish ideology and self-image.

The underlining process is what Hinton (2002) considers *essentializing* the Other, which is enhancing negative differences to make the Other not only different, but also filthy, impure and in the end even dangerous.

Baumann ([2004](#)) considers this baby-grammar (orientalization), which is a grammatical structure of identity-making whereby the in-group places itself against the out-group to create a cohesive sense of self. In this grammatical structure, there is a mechanism I consider to be positive and negative mirroring. By mirroring negative aspects to the other, one is in fact enhancing and implying positive images of themselves.

This is not always a conscious process. As a matter of fact, I believe that this is a common group dynamic process and happens daily. How mirroring in the genocidal processes differs, is that the fixation on identity has become so pathological that this mirroring takes grotesque forms. Mirroring doesn't take place from a positive sense of self, but rather from a negative sense of self—a self that is in danger, fragile, and at a point of being exterminated. These are feelings that are further enhanced due to the deepening political crisis. The in-group becomes locked in itself, while other forms of grammatical structures in identity making—fission and fusion and encompassment—disintegrate. Only baby grammar (orientalization) and reverse mirroring is left. The in-group is so focused on establishing a new and secure sense of self and thereby creating a cohesive collective identity that more negative images become attached to the Other. By stripping away the identity of the Other, layer by layer, this same layer is confirmed by reverse mirroring in the mental frameworks of the perpetrators to such an extent that this is eventually expressed in the modes of violence. By killing the other in all its institutionalized and physical forms, the in-group establishes its self-image and self *existence*. It is not the Other who is of importance in genocidal violence, but rather the self of the in-group.

This has a very important implication since it makes the starting point of genocide not as exotic or uncommon as one would like to think. As a matter of fact, genocide is an *extreme* and *physical* expression of day-to-day processes of identity-making. It is the national and international macro political and social contexts that create these pressure-cooker settings, and in the end, these extreme reactions. The processes of how the self and the other are established (through baby-grammar, and negative and positive mirroring), however, are common tools in identity-making. Due to the crisis, these tools take on fatal forms. Placing yourself against an other is not enough. The other has to be destroyed for the self to exist (see also Fornari [1969](#)).

The consequences for the Armenians (and other Christian minorities) living in Turkey were disastrous. They were forced to flee their motherland and whole lineages were murdered. Religious and political

institutions were destroyed and all other basic identity indicators, such as language, wealth and status, were destroyed or fragmented. These visible consequences of violence (what Card [2003] considers to be social death) were enormous to overcome as a community. Yet, they are pale in comparison to the invisible and cultural consequences. The Armenians weren't only murdered and traumatized; they were tortured, mutilated, exposed and displayed. The violence came forth from a cultural and mental framework that was focused on establishing identity through reverse mirroring in its most *physical* way of the other, at least in the perpetrators' mind-set. In return, the violence was filled with symbolic meaning. The violence wasn't meaningless, but instead it was meaningful. It was a cultural expression of the intent to *annihilate* an identity.

The physical intrusion on the collective and individual Armenian self and on the collective and individual integrity of the body was significant. Violence speaks. Violence breaks. Violence has a voice. It is blood in the snow and brains against the walls. Violence is the direct and symbolic subordination of the will of the dominant culture group over a victim. The survivors of the Armenian genocide weren't only lost, traumatized and disoriented when they took their refuge during the Great Diaspora. They also encapsulated (in whole or in part) the symbolic meaning of violence in their ideas of self and identity. The acts of violence *itself*, and the brutality of the violence, had such an impact that the violence became internalized.

Non-victims cannot understand this impact. It can be analysed and rationalized, but the emotion that comes with this kind of degradation and humiliation goes beyond the scientific narrative and comprehension. The fact that others *had* power over Armenians and *could* do this them— could murder them as non-human beings, and did so collectively— unravels the social and cultural fabric. The Armenian consequences are not only visible, but also *felt*.

I argue that *after* the genocide a new basis of identity was construed. This was an identity that integrated the acts of violence, the intent of the violence and the experience of the survivors in a new cultural narrative of the Self. In this new identity, new basic symbols and analogies were created in which suffering played a central role. Suffering became the core of the ethnic character and a focal point of strength. According to the *emic* point of view of my informants, the Armenian people suffered and it is the task of the Armenians to bear this suffering as well as possible. Suffering is also a form of resurrection, an inner strength and a will to survive.

It is important to note the key role of implicit knowledge and cultural narratives here. It is in these narratives that identity through basic symbols and analogies are constructed. Identities are not *only* constructed by identification processes of baby grammar, fission and fusion and encompassment (Baumann 2004). They are also constructed through sharing and confirming ideas and symbols. Implicit knowledge is enculturalized knowledge. It is knowledge that Armenians do not verbalize, but rather share with each other tacitly. It is expressed indirectly in narratives and metaphors. The seemingly contradictory idiom of suffering and resurrection has become a *root metaphor* after the genocide, in which the daily experiences of Armenians are still being placed. So too are the experiences that the community as a whole still undergoes, such as the earthquake of 1988 and the experiences in the Diaspora. The experiences are confirmed and expressed in rituals, stories, movies, novels and day-to-day conversations. They are the core of "what being an Armenian" is all about.

From an analytical point of view, the contemporary Armenian identity can be connected with the genocide on a number of points. First, the Armenian identity was placed within the body, perhaps due to the lack of other institutions in the direct aftermath.[1] Upbringing, education and socialization do not form the processes by which Armenian norms, values and self-image are passed on, but instead they are passed through blood. In this view, the suffering is embedded in the flesh and not in the institutions that were destroyed, from the point of view of the survivors.

Second, we can distinguish the very strong and implicit Christian connotations in the narratives about the self. The self emphasises the Christianity that distinguishes the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire from the dominant cultural group before and after the genocide. In this sense, the deprivation of the Armenian identity can be seen as a failure. A Christian background became internalized and Christian elements—such as martyrdom and suffering—were magnified in the Armenian character. Even secular Armenians seem to believe in the Armenian suffering.

The third point is more implicit, but not less important. Because the impact of the genocide was so enormous, as institutions were destroyed and the Armenians in diasporic communities must sometimes live in hostile and foreign territories, there is an *over-focus* on identity in the

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[1]For instance, this is contrary to the identity in the Netherlands. If we follow the contemporary debates closely, Dutchness lies mainly in socialization. You can become "Dutch," as long as you adapt the "Dutch" norms and values (whatever they may be).

diasporic communities. This focus on identity is both transgenerational and non-spatial, albeit with varying nuances and emphasis. First-, second-, third- and even fourth-generation survivors share the same narratives and symbols of suffering, body and resurrection. These narratives and symbols are used in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America as we saw in the interviews, statements, art and various other forms of expression and self-representation. This implies a similar breeding ground, which I believe was in the direct aftermath of the genocide and in the first diasporic communities and refugee camps. It is here where the new narrative about the self was constructed and where the experience of the genocide was incorporated in new constructions of identity. This identity encapsulated the destruction Armenians had experienced collectively. It enhanced the aim of the destruction and made the experience of genocide its new starting point.

However, an over-focus on identity also has constraints. There are demarcated margins through which people act. (Cultural narratives are not as flexible, as Baumann stated.) In the Netherlands for example, where the differences among Armenians are more prominent than in the United Kingdom, this over-focus on identity causes friction among various Armenian groups, which often results in open hostility. In some instances, Armenians are being ostracized or completely excluded (even formally through research) and there are schisms among Armenian foundations and organizations. This is more prominent within the Dutch-Armenian community than the community in London, where there is more homogeneity and a stronger elite.

This over-focus on identity also causes another contention, mostly between the Armenians and the outside world, which can be best expressed in the term *Jermag Charrt* (freely translated as white genocide).[2] From this *emic* point of view, relations with *odars*, and even integration (like learning the language of the host country or intermarriage) can be seen as a threat, a way of disappearing, or more frighteningly of losing the Armenian identity *again*.

Here we see that the Armenian identity is not driven by Christian connotations of suffering and resurrection alone, but underneath this, it is driven by a constant fear of destruction, albeit it be literal or symbolic.

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[2] Even though this is how my respondents used this word, it is sometimes also used to connote "white massacre."

If Armenianness is in the body and blood, then having relations with *odars* can be considered dangerous and a way of losing your Armenian heritage and culture. Here (again) we see a link with the Armenian genocide and how this collective experience influences day-to-day behaviour and thoughts.

Suffering and resurrection, form the borders ("margins" as I have called them above) between which people act, construct and live. The outside world and the personal events are approached through this prism. Identity is not only determined by the daily contexts, as Baumann (1999) claims, or through grammatical structures, but also by history, basic symbols, analogies, implicit knowledge, and narrative truths that are indeed internalized. People define themselves as a specific group and therefore also act as a specific group to the outside world. It is a constant dialectic of reconstructing and reconfirming.

Indeed, identities exist as cultures exist. Identities are all constructions that become tangible as soon as they are shared by others. The carvings at the foot of Mt. Ararat will always be visible, in the same way an Armenian always carries the weight of the genocide within. This burden and this pain lie at the core of the Armenian identity.

9.2   Back to the Portraits of a Mother and an Artist

Suffering and resurrection, suffering and resurrection, suffering and resurrection—that is what the painting of an artist and a mother tells us. And that is what Nouritza tried to express on that cloudy afternoon in March. "Terrible things happen. But we always survive."

The painting starts to acquire meaning when we place it in Arshile Gorky's entire oeuvre. His paintings *the Orators, the Calendars, Agony, Diary of a Seducer, They Will Take My Island* and many others are abstract and fragmented. The paintings of a mother and a son are personal portraits, as if he tried to establish a marking point. This point was a period *before* the genocide when all was harmonious and clear and a period *after* the genocide when clarity had lost its meaning.

The suffering lies in the existence of the paintings. The portraits are a momentary view or life-sized pictures of a world that was taken away. This was a world with colours, warmth, and steady contours. It was a world in which motherly love and kinship relationships still played a role, but changed to a world that lacked all coherence. (This is also the reason why the artist tried so hard to make the painting look like a photograph

and scraped and scraped his brushstrokes away.) The paintings are indeed portraits of a mother and a son. They are paintings of mercy and love; of a period in which a simple photograph still had a meaning.

The succession of the two paintings and the abstract surrealistic paintings that came afterwards tell a frightening story. In the first painting (in the Whitney Museum of Art), the mother seems lively and vivid, and the colours are subdued. It is taken directly from the photograph even though the mother's dress has changed. The focus is on her face and the eyes, since her lower body and especially her hands seem to be out of focus and blurred. Here lies the story of things to come. The faces are lively, but the hands, especially the mother's hands, seem to disappear in the white cloth. Gorky knew about the various tortures that the Turkish gendarmes had used and incorporated this subtlety in his paintings. One torture was bastinadoing, which is the prolonged beating of hands and feet with sticks or metal rods (Balakian 1996: 67). By incorporating this aspect in the painting, Gorky seems to suggest that the future of the Armenians was already laid out; the hands were already tainted and bounded, when the photograph was taken. Armenians had already become increasingly stigmatized as an isolated group.

Gorky's second painting, an *Artist and his Mother*, in the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, shows an even more frightening picture. Here, the photograph from which the painting was originally derived is ever more tainted. Everything has changed, including the dress. The colours are red. The mother is pale and deathly, and the background is bloodstained. The mother's hands seem beaten and chopped off. All attention is drawn to the self-portrait of the artist in the left corner with his dark complexion (and similar colours of the face in the first painting). He stands next to his mother, this time, with colourless flowers in his hands. This painting seems to say: This is violence. This is subordination. This is blood. This is destruction. This is blood in the snow and brains against the wall. Where the previous portrait was harmonious and had only a slight foreboding of violence, here the violence is complete and present and pushes the harmony to the background. It is intertwined in the painting. The mother is dead; the son is alive. Here is the face of a survivor standing next to Death in all its horrible contours and aspects. The trauma, killing, fragmentation, and bloodshed are visible.

And herein also lies what I have labelled resurrection. Because the paintings *still exist*. People can still visit and view them. People can still see these momentary snapshots from a dark and forgotten past. *We stand*

here the paintings tell us. *We stand here. Not everything is taken from us. Our dreams, our love, our warmth still exist. They try to destroy us. But we are still visible. You can still visit us. In a way, we are still alive…*

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