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Survivor or Soviet Stories?

Repatriate Narratives in Armenian Histories, Memories and Identities

Jo Laycock

Following the Second World War around 100,000 diaspora Armenians answered Stalin's invitation to resettle in the Soviet Republic of Armenia. This article examines a set of memoirs published by Armenians who, after resettling in the Soviet Union, eventually returned to diaspora communities in Europe, the Middle East and the United States. Drawing upon Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, I address the ways in which these narratives were shaped by the legacies of the Armenian Genocide. I argue that the repatriate narratives also challenge dominant narratives of Armenian history and highlight the variety and complexity of Armenian experiences in the aftermath of genocide.

Keywords: Armenia; memoirs; genocide; diaspora; repatriation

Introduction

In December 1945 Stalin invited the Armenian diaspora to return to their "homeland," the Soviet Republic of Armenia. In response, almost 100,000 Armenians left their homes to start new lives in the Soviet Union.[1] The majority of these so-called "repatriates" were the children and families of Armenians who had fled or been deported from the Ottoman Empire during the First World War and Armenian Genocide. After the war, most of these Armenians had been unable to return to their former homes and had therefore settled in diaspora communities, principally in the Middle East, Europe and the United States. It was from these communities that the repatriates were drawn.[2]

The Soviet Republic of Armenia was established in Transcaucasia in December 1920, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires and following a short-lived period of Armenian independence.[3] In the years that followed, the status of the Soviet Republic as an authentic homeland for Armenians was highly contested in diaspora communities. In general, supporters of the Dashnaksutiun (the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, a nationalist party that had governed the First Republic of Armenia until the Soviet takeover in 1920 and which had been targeted by the Soviet authorities as a nationalist threat) were critical of the Soviet state, whilst "liberals" associated with the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) were more conciliatory.[4] Despite these divisions, during the 1920s and early 1930s a steady stream of diaspora Armenians resettled in Soviet Armenia through schemes organized by the Soviet Armenian authorities and the AGBU.[5] The campaign launched by the Soviet Union in 1945 was, however, on a much grander scale than these interwar schemes.

An intensive campaign of propaganda was launched by the Soviet Armenian government and sympathetic diaspora organizations. Their rhetoric evoked a Soviet paradise, inviting diaspora Armenians to return to a safe and prosperous life in their "national home."[6] Divisions and doubts were temporarily set aside as diaspora Armenians took up the invitation before the scheme came to an abrupt end in 1949.[7] Perhaps unsurprisingly, those repatriates who arrived in Soviet Armenia were faced with poverty, isolation and sometimes repression. In the words of Hagop Touryantz, a repatriate from Lebanon, "the irresponsible behaviour of the organisers, the poor reception by those considered our native brothers and sisters and most of all the source of all these negative factors—the prevailing political regime—the Stalin era" meant that the promised land evoked in repatriation propaganda failed to materialize.[8] A significant number became the target of deportations to Central Asia in 1949 on the grounds that they were Dashnaks (Armenian nationalists). Under these circumstances it is not surprising that many repatriates chose to leave the Soviet Union from the late 1950s onwards. Indeed, Anahid Ter Minassian suggests that all, or nearly all, of the repatriates from France eventually left Soviet Armenia.[9]

The hardship endured by repatriates coupled with their later exodus has meant that repatriation occupies a complex place in Armenian collective memory and identity. During the Soviet period the repatriations gener-

ally elicited two responses from diaspora communities: they were either dismissed as a mistake or viewed as a symbol of Soviet betrayal. However, since the fall of the Soviet Union repatriation has come under increased scrutiny, both from historians and within the media and political and cultural spheres in the Armenian Republic and diaspora.[10] This burgeoning of interest may be attributed to a number of factors, not least the emigration of Armenians (many of them repatriates) from Soviet Armenia during the 1990s. It is also related to broader reconfigurations of relations between homeland and diaspora prompted by the fall of the Soviet Union and the ensuing individual and collective attempts to navigate the complexities of identity and belonging during a period of rapid change.[11] In addition, a steady stream of new diaspora repatriates to the Armenian Republic has created an imperative to learn lessons from previous experiences.[12]

In this article I address the place of the repatriations in Armenian history and collective memory through an analysis of memoirs published by repatriates from France, Lebanon and the United States.[13] Like many others, the authors of these memoirs ultimately left Soviet Armenia. Even though they began to leave the Soviet Union in the 1950s, in the majority of cases they did not publish their memoirs until the final years of the Soviet Union's existence. Few of these narratives have attracted a wide readership beyond Armenian communities. The aim of this analysis is not to supplement recent research on the integration of repatriates into Soviet society and the nuances of repatriate identity.[14] Rather, I turn to these narratives in order to examine the place of repatriation in contemporary Armenian discourses of history and identity, considering the ways in which repatriates have understood and represented their own experience. In particular, I examine how narratives of repatriation have been inflected by the memories, legacies and denial of the Armenian Genocide. As Razmik Panossian explains, the Genocide remains "the cornerstone of modern Armenian identity, particularly in the diaspora. It is a defining moment, which on the one hand acts as a fundamental break with the past and the historic homeland, while on the other it serves as a prism through which national identity is seen, politics interpreted and culture redefined."[15]

I draw on Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory in order to examine how repatriates framed their experiences and made sense of such complex trajectories of displacement and resettlement. Postmemory, according to Hirsch, "describes the relationship of the second genera-

tion to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their birth but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right."[16] Whilst Hirsch's work focuses on the aftermaths of the Holocaust, her conception of postmemory offers powerful insights into the ways in which other experiences of mass violence are remembered by later generations.[17] Although the primary focus of the narratives I address here is repatriation, they also relate to the post-memory of Genocide in the Armenian diaspora. For authors and readers alike, these narratives negotiate a difficult history, providing a framework and a language through which individuals are reconnected with family, community and national pasts.

The history of the Armenian Genocide and its aftermaths is central to the majority of these repatriate narratives. It variously provides a point of departure, structures the narrative and imbues it with a sense of purpose or direction. Nonetheless, despite the pervasive presence of the Genocide and its consequences, the experience of repatriation and its place in Armenian national histories and collective memories cannot simply be reduced to an aftermath. Repatriate narratives are inflected by a range of other events and processes which have shaped the diverse trajectories of displacement and resettlement that characterize Armenian experiences in the twentieth century. I therefore turn to repatriate narratives in order to bring to the fore the factors that have intersected with the aftermath of Genocide in the shaping of Armenian identities and memories, in particular the Cold War and the rise and fall of the Soviet Union.

National pasts and personal narratives

A turn to narratives has been increasingly evident in the study of post-Genocide Armenian communities.[18] Alongside the growth of oral-historical approaches in diaspora communities, survivor memoirs have proliferated. While popular memoirs and autobiographies are qualitatively different from academic oral histories, the significance accorded to first-person narratives in both cases is nevertheless striking. Some of these texts are new, others are versions or translations of memoirs written over previous decades.[19] A survivor memoir, according to Victoria Rowe, "usually centres on the deportation and experiences of the individual writer, her family, village or

town in 1915. Some memoirs also describe the pre-Genocide Armenian life, including information about towns and villages, family histories and local customs…."[20] This renewed interest in narratives has coincided with wider changes in diaspora Armenian communities since the 1960s, in particular the growth of formalized, public practices of commemoration and demands for international recognition of the Genocide. Khachig Tölölyan terms this development a "critical stock-taking" in a diaspora that has become more socially, politically and economically secure and sought to reengage with its past.[21] Since then a range of narratives exploring "hidden" family pasts or meditating on remembrance in the context of denial, such as Peter Balakian's *Black Dog of Fate* and Michael J. Arlen's *Passage to Ararat*, have also emerged.[22] These narratives are part of the structures of postmemory, the means of "inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge" in Armenian families and communities. They recall a traumatic past and integrate it into broader narratives of familial and national history, in an "uneasy oscillation" between the rupture of the Genocide and the continuities and connections made by tracing the trajectories of Armenian families and individuals through space and time.[23]

In the face of active Turkish denial, oral and written accounts of the Armenian Genocide and its consequences have a particular significance. For example, Armenian scholar and collector of oral histories, Verjine Svazlian, states that "each one of these testimonies has, from the juridical point of view, an evidential significance in the equitable solution of the Armenian case and in the recognition of the Armenian Genocide."[24] Survivor narratives have thus been regarded as a form of "testimony" with which denial can be countered. This need to provide evidence has multiple effects. Whilst it generates an impetus to tell and to record stories, it also shapes the way in which these stories are told, for if they are to function as evidence they require certain qualities in terms of content, consistency and coherence.[25]

Survivor narratives must be understood in the context of a dominant narrative of the Armenian past which has emerged in the post-Genocide period, stressing the ancientness of the nation and contrasting ever-present threat with the historical capacity of the nation to survive against the odds.[26] The dominant narrative of modern Armenian history charts a path from the Genocide through the struggles of life in the diaspora and posits recognition and/or reunification and return to the "lost lands" in Eastern Anatolia as an ideal conclusion. In order to make sense of the

Genocide and fulfill the function of securing international recognition, this narrative is highly coherent and leaves little space for articulations or explorations of individual experience. As Talar Chahinian has explained, "Although multiple memories of many survivors contribute to the making of the narrative, the experience of the Genocide is recounted as a shared experience. Ultimately, the narrative serves as the conflated sum of many individual perspectives, unified as one, as that of the victim."[27]

It would be easy to assume that finding a place for repatriation or homecoming within an overarching narrative of post-Genocide history would be straightforward. After all, the notion of longing for homeland and the quest for return has long been understood as central to diasporic identities.[28] In addition, the perceived betrayal of the Armenian repatriates at the hands of the Soviet authorities easily fits a narrative of national suffering and survival. In reality, an in-depth examination of the repatriations uncovers challenges to conventional narratives of history and identity. It brings to the fore divisions within the diaspora and tensions inherent in representations of homeland and suggests that homecoming does not necessarily represent a happy ending. These issues have the potential to undermine the unified national narrative and threaten its ability to make sense of a traumatic past. Because of this, the voices of repatriates have been somewhat marginalized. Even though recent analyses have begun to address the diversity and complexity of repatriate experiences, in diaspora communities perceptions of repatriation are still usually incorporated into a narrative of national suffering and survival as "one more trial" for the long-suffering nation.[29]

In popular diaspora perceptions repatriates emerge as a unified, passive group. These repatriates, so the story goes, were rejected by the local Armenian population of Soviet Armenia who called them "aghpar" (the word means brother but is used here in a pejorative way.) They were also said to be intentionally isolated and disproportionately persecuted by the Soviet authorities. This negative view of repatriation was not unfounded. That the majority of repatriates suffered a great deal of hardship is beyond doubt. The scheme lived up to the expectations of neither the diaspora nor the Soviet authorities. The problems encountered by the repatriates were witnessed with anger and regret by those who had "stayed behind" in diaspora communities and became a key feature of critiques of Soviet Armenia.[30]

Nonetheless, attending to the narratives of repatriates complicates this picture in a number of ways. Certainly the narratives testify to suffering and hardship, many of them making direct reference to the deportation of repatriates to Siberia and Central Asia and the climate of fear it created. Two of the narratives, Lazare Indjeyan's "Les Années volées" and Armand Maloumian's *Les Fils du Goulag*, specifically concern the authors' incarceration and eventual escape from the gulag.[31] However, other narratives tell the stories of individuals who had more "ordinary" experiences of life in the USSR, presenting the repatriates as active agents who were able to create new lives for themselves in the Soviet Union. Life did not stand still in Soviet Armenia for the repatriates and the vast majority of these narratives evoke a sense of progress and even success through reference to the development of romances, the building of new homes or forging of new careers. Sonia Meghreblian's narrative describes her mother's satisfaction "that she had begun working practically immediately after our arrival in Yerevan." Meghreblian also describes with pride her progress through the Pedagogical Languages Institute in Yerevan.[32] Tom Mooradian, one of the few repatriates to arrive in Soviet Armenia from the United States, meanwhile explains how his talents as a basketball player allowed him to forge a more bearable life whilst simultaneously giving him hope of finding a way out: "as soon as I saw the ball, the backboards, and the baskets and heard the sounds of shots bouncing off the rim and sinking into the net, I felt that I was back home. This was the perfect escape."[33]

The narratives also call into question the characterization of repatriation as either a discrete event or even as an interruption of the "natural" path of Armenian history. The majority address repatriation not as a stand-alone event but instead as part of life stories or one stage in prolonged and complex trajectories of migration. The very titles of Meghreblian's *An Armenian Odyssey* and Touryantz's *Search for a Homeland* are indicative of the way in which repatriation is framed as part of an extended individual, familial or even national journey. The narratives chart movement through time and space, but also chart the progress of the protagonists and their families through a series of hardships to an eventual place of peace or resolution, thus echoing longer-term national narratives of survival against the odds.

An emphasis on family connections across multiple generations, in particular reference to reunions between family members separated during the Genocide, help to frame repatriation as part of a broader historical

narrative. Tom Mooradian reports that on arrival at Batumi, "as the repatriates left the ship, most were greeted by long lost loved ones."[34] In *Les Pommes rouges d'Armenie*, Jean and Lucie Der Sarkissian describe a reunion between Jean's mother, Marinos, and Marinos's own mother.[35] Knowing that her mother had escaped the Genocide by fleeing to the Soviet Armenian town of Kirovokan, leaving her in the care of the American orphanage in Harput, Marinos had searched for her since their arrival. Such details are an important means of making connections between past and present, bridging the rupture caused by the Genocide. The fact that this bridging is structured around a *family* event is significant, as Hirsch explains: "*Familial* structures of mediation and representation facilitate the *affiliative* acts of the postgeneration. The idiom of family can become an accessible lingua franca easing identification and projection across distance and difference. This explains the pervasiveness of family pictures and family narratives as artistic media in the aftermath of trauma."[36] Thus in this case the story of one Armenian family can be imbued with the significance of a reunion of the *national* family.

Although the narratives demonstrate the complexity of paths taken by repatriates, connecting them to longer-term histories, the small repertoire of images and anecdotes that have come to be shorthand for repatriation in Armenian communities are also in evidence. In general, raising the issue of the repatriations with Armenians both in the Republic of Armenia and in the diaspora prompts two responses: first, mention of close or distant family members who were repatriates, and second, the recounting of brief anecdotes that are thought to embody the repatriate experience. The story of a photograph containing a hidden "code" to tell relatives whether or not to repatriate is repeated both in repatriate narratives and in popular anecdotes in the Republic and diaspora communities.[37] For example, the French repatriate Albert Andonian's version of the "photo story" is told with characteristic humor. He had told his cousin to send him a photo of her when she arrived. If she was sitting down in the photo it would mean that conditions were bad and he should not repatriate, but if she was standing, conditions were fine and he should repatriate. However, in the picture she sent him she was not sitting but lying on a couch. He claims he "didn't understand" how to interpret this, so he came to Armenia and, as he says, had to live with the consequences.[38] In a similar fashion the story of ships carrying repatriates to Soviet Armenia running out of soft

white bread and providing the repatriates with stale black bread instead also appears frequently, as shorthand for the realization that all was not well, that hardships lay ahead.[39] Such anecdotes and images are familiar to many Armenian readers as they are frequently shared in family and community settings. Their reiteration in these texts has the power to reinforce the sense of a shared past.[40]

This sense of a shared Armenian past is evoked powerfully through recurring reference to the Genocide and its aftermaths. As the authors were the descendants of survivors, born in the years that followed the Genocide, the experiences of their parents or grandparents loomed large. As Lorne Shirnian has noted, "As the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of the survivors of the Armenian genocide we are the inheritors of the stories and images of their traumatic experience."[41] The pervasive presence of the events of the Genocide in the narratives echoes Hirsch's observations of the postmemory of the children of Holocaust survivors: "To grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness is to risk having one's own stories displaced, even evacuated by those of a previous generation."[42] Strikingly, in *Les Pommes rouges* Jean Der Sarkissian explains that the Genocide was a continual presence in his childhood. The sufferings of his parents, he claims, were "inscribed" on him.[43] The implication is that these events have continued to shape his life, in particular determining the family decision to repatriate and its consequences.

The ways in which these narratives engage with "inherited memories" of the Genocide and its aftermaths vary. Most frame repatriation as part of a chain of events set in motion by the Genocide. Rebecca Batrikian's narrative *Jeff et Rebecca* takes this approach but also situates the repatriations within an even longer-term family history of migration, tracing the displacements and resettlements of her family from their villages in Eastern Anatolia to Bulgaria, then France, followed by "repatriation" to Soviet Armenia, on to Russia, then an eventual return to France.[44] Tom Mooradian's narrative meanwhile evokes the silences that frequently surrounded the Genocide during the first half of the twentieth century. His mother, he says, could not, or would not, talk about her past: "the stories came from Uncle Garabed in Canada and were never uttered by my mother." These "stories" not only frame the chapter describing his departure from America but recur at key points in the narrative. As Mooradian describes,

when the repatriate ships passed close to the Turkish shore he wondered, "how cruel a force was unleashed on those shores in that insane year of 1915 that survivors could not forget but refused to talk about it."[45] The passage through the straits functions as a link between past and present in a number of these accounts. Lazare Indjeyan describes how, as they entered the Bosphorus, "the old ones, who had managed to escape the Genocide, remained quiet, lost in their memories."[46]

The history and memory of Genocide also comes to the fore when these texts engage with the Soviet deportations of Armenian repatriates to Central Asia and Siberia in 1949. Some of the authors draw explicit parallels between the Soviet deportations and the Ottoman deportations almost fifty years previously. For many, the deportations felt like the final stage of the process that began as the ships carrying the repatriates to Soviet Armenia entered the Black Sea—the transformation of Soviet Armenia from a place of safety to a place of insecurity and threat. This transformation came as a great shock. In the words of Touryantz, "another banishment or exile was the last thing we could have expected to happen in our fatherland."[47] The framing of the events of 1949 in this way means that this part of the narrative is not simply a "witnessing" of the ills of the Soviet system. Rather, because of the connection that is made between the two sets of events, it serves as testimony of the ongoing trials of the Armenian nation, resonating with and reinforcing a dominant, overarching narrative of Armenian history as a story of suffering and survival.

In contrast to the emphasis placed on deportations in these repatriate narratives, recent analyses of oral history interviews with repatriates who remained in Soviet Armenia have highlighted a silence around these events. Maike Lehmann has argued that this silence was due to the fact that these repatriates had (unlike the authors of the memoirs) become part of a broader "post-Soviet culture" and subscribed to its "rules of remembering and forgetting."[48] Speaking of the deportations and connecting them to the Armenian Genocide may therefore be interpreted as a means by which the repatriate authors positioned themselves outside the conventions of late Soviet society and culture and staked their claim to a diaspora identity defined by a particular kind of memory and connection to history.

Thus, memories and aftermaths of the Genocide play a number of different roles in framing the repatriations in these texts. References to the Armenian Genocide not only locate the repatriations within the broader

narrative of Armenian history, they also have an explanatory function—only in the context of Genocide and its aftermaths can the fateful decision to resettle in the Soviet Union be properly understood. Repatriation narratives are thus part of the structures of the postmemory of the Genocide, part of the work of Armenian diaspora communities to "*reactivate* and *reembody* more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression."[49] However their content also goes beyond the aftermaths of Genocide and engages directly with the many other factors that shaped Armenian experiences in the twentieth century.

Soviet stories?

Recollection of life "before" the fateful decision to repatriate is common to a number of these narratives. This part is often extended relative to the rest of the narrative, providing space for a powerful evocation of life in diaspora communities which recalls Genocide survivors' idealized recollections of their own former homes in the Ottoman Empire before the Genocide. Jean Der Sarkissian commences, "I was living in paradise, in a paradise of Armenians, rue Bouffier, a small street of Valence where those who had escaped the genocide lived together. I was six, seven, eight years old… childhood."[50] This evocation of idealized communities or childhoods opens up discussion of the conflicting feelings prompted by the repatriation campaign, revealing fractures within ostensibly united families and diaspora communities. This is followed by an account of the journey to Soviet Armenia. As the narratives progress the drama of embarkation followed by the long journey to Armenia is recounted, along with a gradual realization that the repatriation will not live up to expectations.[51] After the point of arrival in Soviet Armenia however, these narratives diverge significantly as the authors describe the various ways in which they carved out new lives for themselves and attempt to make sense of their experiences of repatriation in very different ways.

The divergent stories of repatriate experience which constitute the central part of these texts disrupt assumptions about repatriation as a wholly negative experience. Whilst they do not shy away from the hardships of living as a repatriate they present a more complex picture of the

social and political factors that shaped repatriate experiences. It is thus clear that the structures of postmemory were not the only factor shaping the ways in which repatriates framed their experiences. Repatriate narratives are also memoirs of the Soviet system and can be seen as part of what Irina Paperno has called "an overwhelming outpouring of memoirs, diaries, and other personal accounts of life under the Soviet regime," since the late 1980s. "The impulse to speak out arose with glasnost, with its demands to uncover the Soviet past, especially the Stalinist terror."[52] Published between 1987 and 2012, these narratives undoubtedly emerged as a product of increasing international interest in Soviet life arising from the crisis in, and ultimately collapse of, the USSR.

In the Armenian case the fall of the Soviet Union had a secondary significance. Since the interwar period diaspora attitudes to the Soviet Union had remained highly ambivalent, fracturing along lines of political affiliation. Whilst some of the hostility to Soviet Armenia was ideologically driven, others believed that a "true" Armenian homeland could not exist without the return of "lost lands" in Eastern Anatolia and thus that Soviet Armenia would always be second best. The failure of Soviet Armenia to live up to repatriate hopes meant that repatriation was rapidly adopted as evidence of both Soviet hostility to the Armenians and the ills of the Soviet system in general. This assessment was based, for the most part, on reports of personal experiences shared through family and community networks and diaspora press coverage (Dashnaksutiun-affiliated publications, in particular, drew on the experience of repatriates to support an explicitly anti-Soviet agenda). The arrival in diaspora communities of former repatriates from Soviet Armenia bearing tales of material deprivation and political oppression provided the final proof of the failure of the venture.

When repatriates left the Soviet Union they met with a complex response from the diaspora communities to which they returned. Anahid Ter Minassian explains that they were "unanimously condemned by the communist authorities, the religious authorities and the diaspora" and their actions were regarded as a "betrayal of the motherland."[53] This hostility was frequently coupled with a feeling that the repatriates had been changed by their time in Armenia, that they had become "Soviet." A respondent in Robert Arnoux's oral history of the repatriations, *Arménie 1947: Les Naufragés de la terre promise*, observed that when he returned to France, Armenians there called him "Hayastansi," meaning an Armenian

from "Hayastan" (Soviet Armenia), as opposed to one of the diaspora communities, implying linguistic, social and cultural difference.[54] Being "Soviet," in this context, seems to have been more to do with patterns of speech, social convention and modes of interaction with authorities than political conviction. The authors of these narratives were, like other returnees, caught between the Soviet Union and the diaspora, belonging fully to neither. Their memoirs may be read as an attempt to negotiate these two worlds. Thus, whilst these narratives are stories *about* life in the Soviet system, whether these repatriates could be said to have *become* "Soviet" remains in question.

In her recent research on repatriates who remained in Soviet Armenia Maike Lehmann has highlighted the ways in which these individuals had become "partially integrated":

> Repatriates, with time, have become Soviet, even if they were not to resemble the picture-perfect New Man. While describing themselves implicitly as the better citizens and adhering to local rules and narratives, they not only came (at least partially) to subscribe to Soviet rules, but in turn also inscribed themselves into the Soviet Armenian community by outlining their contribution to a national community in the Soviet realm.[55]

In these narratives, in contrast, the authors endeavor to position themselves outside of the Soviet system, although the attempt is not always fully successful. The contents of the memoirs demonstrate that the processes of integration that Lehmann describes had, to a degree, occurred. Nonetheless, it seems clear that the intention of the authors is to demonstrate through these texts that despite their knowledge of the Soviet world, they did not "speak Bolshevik."[56] If, as Igal Halfin reminds us, "regimes on both side of the divide were invested in the production of normative human biographies," then the repatriates were attempting to fashion biographies that fitted the norms of the "West" and the expectations of the Armenian diaspora, rather than those of the Soviet world.[57]

Paperno observes that "life stories from the Soviet Union tend to derive their claim to significance from their catastrophic experience," and the narratives of repatriates are no exception in this regard, as they relate to two kinds of "survival."[58] The process of sharing stories of Soviet life that had been suppressed or silenced intersects with the sharing of Arme-

nian histories that had been contested or denied, bringing together two facets of twentieth-century history that are usually addressed in isolation and imbuing both with an additional layer of complexity. Maloumian's memoir, *Les Fils du Goulag* is, as the title suggests, principally a "gulag memoir" and as such engages with issues of Armenian history and identity in a rather different way. Maloumian was arrested in October 1948, before the wave of Soviet deportations of Armenians in 1949, accused of being a traitor and imprisoned in the Soviet Union until February 1956. When Maloumian mentions the Armenian Genocide in his preface he situates it within a global history of genocide and "crimes against humanity" rather than as a particularly Armenian story.[59] The deportation of repatriates is frequently incorporated into overarching narratives of Armenian "national suffering," and Maloumian does describe the fate of other Armenians he encounters in the prison system, such as a "poor man who had believed in returning to the land of his ancestors to give his children and grandchildren the chance to learn Armenian and to have an Armenian education."[60] However, his response to his own experience goes beyond a consideration of the fate of the nation, and in his prologue he launches a strident critique of the Soviet Union, "a land where what is true today was false yesterday and will be false tomorrow," railing against both the Soviet regime and the failure of the rest of the world to take action against its crimes.[61] His 1976 narrative, written before the Gorbachev era of *glasnost'* and *perestroika*, makes explicit a political, or perhaps moral, purpose—to reveal the truth of the Soviet Union and to give hope and courage to others.

Fate and family

Despite frequent evocations of the ills of the Soviet system, the authors of the majority of these narratives clearly do not understand themselves simply as passive in the face of Soviet "betrayal" or as pawns in an all-encompassing Armenian narrative of national suffering and survival. Rather, these narratives reveal a complex interaction between feelings of helplessness and being "at the mercy of fate" and active attempts to take control or shape one's own life in the face of great hardship. This attempt to "take control" may be understood on two levels, both in terms of the actions taken at the time by repatriates in order to change or improve their

situation and in terms of the endeavor to impose some kind of order and coherence on a life of dislocation and upheaval through the production of a biographical narrative.[62] The sense of being "at the mercy of fate" is most explicit in Andonian's memoir, tellingly entitled *À chacun son destin*. Andonian's experience was unusual and his narrative reflects this, presenting his story of an extraordinary life as a series of twists of fate or chance encounters with a strong sense of humor and irony. In a similar fashion, Armand Maloumian, the French repatriate who found himself incarcerated in the gulag system, also presents himself as an "ordinary" person whose life was changed in entirely unpredictable ways by the repatriations.[63] Lazare Indjeyan meanwhile engages with this "ordinary person in extraordinary times" trope by recounting his naive belief that he would be able to obtain a two-year visa so that if he was not happy he could return to France before the visa ran out.[64]

"Fate" is counterbalanced in a number of ways in these narratives, for example through reference to acts of resistance or transgression—however minor. Thus, Albert Andonian recounts an attempt to visit his mother in Leninakan (Gyumri) to retrieve some of his belongings from her. Leninakan was, however, close to the Turkish border and it was near impossible to receive permission to travel there. Andonian got around this problem by dressing as a local Armenian and boarding a workers' train from a nearby village. He also describes the role of the "garden of tears" (Shahumian Park) where French repatriates would meet and share illicit information about "escape" attempts, or tell the stories of people who had found a way to live.[65] Rumors of escape attempts figure in a number of other narratives and success or failure seems less important than providing evidence that repatriates did not simply resign themselves to their fate, but continued to resist.[66] Not only do such elements illustrate the ways in which repatriates were actively engaged in shaping their own lives, they also provide a way for the authors to demonstrate that they had not been complicit in the Soviet system, countering the aforementioned perception in the diaspora that repatriates were no longer authentic Armenians because they had become "too Soviet."

A similar sense of the ability to take control of individual lives is also evoked through recollection of more positive engagements with the Soviet system, such as the recounting of achievements, either success in the minor struggles of daily life, progress through the Soviet education system, finding

employment or finally being able to construct the family homes promised in repatriation propaganda. Although the desire to eventually leave the Soviet Union gives all of these narratives a central purpose, the authors' descriptions of their lives in the Soviet Union reveals the extent to which they became a part of Soviet society and, in the short term, shared in the experiences of local Soviet Armenians. After the initial shock of repatriation and the extreme hardship of the immediate postwar years, attaining a comfortable standard of living or the trappings of relative affluence in Soviet society became important. Thus, for example, Sona Meghreblian explains how her eventual financial success as a language teacher allowed her family to take vacations on the desirable Black Sea coast.[67]

Jeff and Lucie Der Sarkissian's and Rebecca Batrikian's narratives also engage with the theme of being at the mercy of "fate" or "history," but differ in that they present repatriation as a fateful dimension of a family history that was "bigger" than them.[68] Family is in fact central to these narratives, both of which trace the development of romances and marriages between repatriates and chart the progress of their families in Soviet Armenia. Batrikian begins her narrative by recounting the six centuries of her family's presence in Cilicia (southeastern Turkey) and explaining the preservation of the family name through time. This provides a sharp contrast to the dislocations of the twentieth century which are evoked in the rest of the text and, in the context of genocide and denial, functions as an assertion of an Armenian right to exist: "Now, there are many of us. In Armenia, France, Bulgaria, Greece and in America."[69] This opening creates a sense of continuity and "rootedness" facilitating the connections that are central to the work of postmemory in the aftermath of rupture. It also, however, locates the repatriations within an encompassing and inevitable family history, a strategy that detracts from individual decisions to repatriate and thus circumvents the question of blame or responsibility.

Both Batrikian and the Der Sarkissians distance themselves from the decision to repatriate, speaking of their youth at the time of repatriations and suggesting that the "final" decisions lay with their fathers. Rebecca Batrikian nonetheless recalls the family conflict caused by repatriation. Her father wanted to repatriate and her mother to remain in France: "I will say to you again, my heart is French and I will stay here until I die!"[70] The use of both "destiny" and "family" as explanatory frameworks for repatriation provides another means for the authors to negotiate the difficult

issue of blame. They provide a way of acknowledging but not attributing responsibility for their own participation in an episode of Armenian history that is commonly perceived as a failure and that does not fit an overarching cultural narrative which frequently posits "homecoming" as an ideal. Despite these techniques, the issue of justifying family decisions to repatriate still poses a problem within these narratives, especially because family ties are at the heart of many of these narratives and, more broadly, the family has been, and remains at the heart of Armenian conceptions of national identity.[71] The explanation is usually framed in terms of the difficult times brought about by the war and, for the French authors, by the hardship of living as an "apatride" (stateless person) in France.[72] This is coupled with reference to seductive propaganda issued by the committees responsible for organizing the repatriation. In some cases, being swayed by repatriation propaganda is presented as naive idealism or misguided patriotism. Touryantz, however portrays his experience with the repatriation committee of Lebanon in a much harsher light, as trickery or the manipulation of the Armenian people, and even as a personal betrayal by members of his own family.[73]

The political factors that shaped the decision to repatriate are rarely raised in popular discourse regarding repatriation. The importance of commitment to communism for repatriation does, however, come to the fore in several of these narratives, where it explains family decisions to repatriate. Andonian, for example, recounts the disappointment of his mother, a communist, with the reality of life under Soviet rule, whilst the two narratives by repatriates from the United States, Meghreblian and Mooradian, describe how their parents' political persuasions helped shape their decision to repatriate. Through addressing this political context of repatriation in a way that moves beyond describing the accepted division of Armenian diaspora communities into those affiliated with the Dashnaksutiun and "liberals," these narratives highlight both the diversity of the diaspora and the need to address the place of communism in the history of Armenian diaspora communities in greater depth.

Of the authors of these narratives only Tom Mooradian and Hagop Touryantz, describe a personal commitment to communism. Touryantz describes himself as a "nationalist" and a "communist," while at the start of his account Mooradian reveals his own and his father's commitment to communism as well as to the Armenian nation. Touryantz's hostility to

Soviet communism quickly becomes apparent in his highly critical description of the recruitment process, and Mooradian's account is structured around his discovery of the realities of communism. His reaffirmation of American values gives his narrative meaning. In his preface he states "I was born an American. Raised an American. Will die an American."[74] Mooradian makes sense of his experience as much through reference to the rhetoric and symbolism of the Cold War as through reference to Armenian history. In describing his doomed romance with "tantalizing Tatiana," he explains, "Tatiana and I decided that we would not allow the invisible lattice of Cold War missiles allegedly placed strategically around the world to destroy our love for each other. If anything, it intensified it."[75] His narrative, unlike the others addressed here, is therefore very much a "Cold War" story. As such it provides an important reminder that the experiences and perceptions of the repatriates were not only a facet of "Armenian history" but were also embedded in the wider geopolitics of the late twentieth century.

Whether structured around romance, family or Cold War politics, it is the quest to leave the Soviet Union that ultimately gives these narratives their central purpose and provides the ultimate symbol of mastering control of personal and national destinies. The point at which permission to return home is received is therefore the crux of many of these accounts and is achieved only after years of struggle with the Soviet authorities. Most of these texts conclude with "reverse homecomings" of different kinds through a return to life in the diaspora, a step that turns conventional logic regarding "homeland" as a solution to the "problem" of diaspora life on its head.[76] This move from homeland to diaspora challenges idealized diaspora rhetoric and imagery about the importance of a "national home." Touryantz describes his family's departure from Soviet Armenia not as a triumphant escape but in terms of regret. After years of striving to escape, return to Lebanon did not live up to expectations. "the period of our re-adaption was a long and painful process, harder than we imagined."[77]

For many of the repatriates, it seems, the return "home" to diaspora was as much a beginning as an end. Like Touryantz, many repatriates from Syria and Lebanon could not feel at home again in the Middle East, instead moving on to the Armenian diaspora communities of California. In some cases the problems of return to the Middle East would be less to do with questions of "belonging" than with the way in which their former

"homes" had been transformed through social and political upheaval or conflict. Those who went back to France also found the experience of return unexpectedly testing, especially those who had remained in the Soviet Union for many decades. Not only had diaspora communities changed in their absence, but the transition from the communist to the capitalist world meant that they faced unanticipated challenges. Rebecca Batrikian observed soon after her return, "I understood why Jeff [her husband] had told me I would have to live a new life. I was only at the start, I was surely going to have more surprises."[78]

Conclusions

It is tempting to approach repatriate memoirs as a means of filling "gaps" in a dominant narrative or providing a more authentic version of repatriate experience. But whilst these narratives provide a range of perspectives, "hearing" repatriate voices, like those of other groups who have been excluded from mainstream historical narratives, is not without its problems. Although they tell a "different" story, these narratives are inflected by (and part of) Armenian collective memory. They are selective and necessarily impose an order on a chaotic past that is as much determined by the present context as the events that they describe. Like all narratives of the personal past they, in the words of Vieda Skultans, "both reach out to past worlds and in the course of their telling construct new worlds of meaning."[79] They might then be best addressed less as a means of accessing an authentic and unproblematic "truth" of repatriation and more as a means of exploring the tensions between dominant modes of representing Armenian displacement and exile and the ways in which they are experienced and interpreted on individual and family levels.[80]

These narratives are therefore a potent reminder that although modern Armenian history does not start and end with the deportations and massacres of the First World War period, forced migrations, have, according to Peter Loizos, long "half-lives." Their effects continue to resonate long after they are over, affecting the lives of the next generations as well as those who were initially displaced.[81] Direct reference to the fate of parents and grandparents who experienced or escaped the Genocide recur throughout these narratives. In addition their content and structure frequently engage

with a post-Genocide national narrative structured around suffering and survival. Reading the narratives of those who repatriated between 1945 and 1949 offers insight into the structures of postmemory of the Armenian Genocide and the way they have shaped not only Armenian experiences, but also the ways that Armenians understood and represented these experiences throughout the twentieth century.

In acknowledging the origin stories of repatriate families and making reference to events of the Genocide, these narratives may be understood as a form of "testimony." In taking for granted the fate of the Armenians they may also play a part in challenging narratives of denial emanating primarily from the Turkish authorities. Nonetheless, repatriation narratives are not an easy "fit" with dominant Armenian cultural narratives of the Genocide and its aftermaths. They reveal divisions both between homeland and diaspora and within the diaspora. They expose the realities of, and thus "de-mythologize," return. In the memoirs I have discussed there is a recurrent tension as the account repeatedly reaffirms and then deviates from narratives of Armenian identity, history and belonging. In some cases, the purpose of these memoirs seems to be to reclaim or represent the repatriations as a valid part of these broad cultural and social narratives.

Of course, the significance of these narratives, and of repatriation for Armenian identities more generally, has changed since the publication of the first memoir, Maloumian's *Les Fils du Goulag*, in 1976. The rearticulations of Armenian identities that have occurred during the post-Soviet period have also entailed rearticulations of social memory. During the late Cold War, repatriate narratives could stand as evidence from behind the iron curtain of the deficiencies of the Soviet regime. For certain sectors of the diaspora these critiques offered proof that their refusal to espouse a Soviet state as homeland was correct. In the post-Soviet period, where relations between a "new" homeland and the diaspora have changed somewhat, narratives of repatriation take on a rather different significance. Currently, even the government of the current Republic of Armenia has been keen to frame the repatriations of the 1940s as a "mistake."[82] As mobility between the diaspora and the homeland increases, the paths followed by the repatriates of the 1940s may seem less exceptional.

In the post–Cold War period, designating repatriation as "success or failure" has lost its significance in the diaspora and beyond. However, repatriate narratives still provide an insight into the complexities of

Armenian experiences in the twentieth century. They demonstrate that post-Genocide Armenian lives have not been characterized by a static state of victimhood in the diaspora. On the contrary, the lives of Armenians, like other migrants in the late twentieth-century world, have followed complex trajectories marked by displacement, border crossing and resettlement. These trajectories reveal the interplay between the postmemory of the Armenian Genocide and the wider context of late twentieth-century history, notably the Cold War and eventual fall of the Soviet Union. They suggest that members of the Armenian diaspora have been able to actively recast their own lives, forging narratives that are shaped by, but also go beyond, the experience and memory of the Genocide.

Notes

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1. The Soviet Armenian committee created to organize repatriation reported that, by January 20, 1948, 86,364 repatriates had arrived in Armenia: 32,238 from Syria/Lebanon, 4,383 from Bulgaria, 20,997 from Iran, 1,783 from Romania, 18,215 from Greece, 5,260 from France, 1,669 from Egypt, 1,250 from Palestine, 856 from Iraq, 151 from the United States (a further 162 left the United States in January 1949) and 16 from China. Hayastani Azgayin Arkhiv (Armenian National Archive), Yerevan (hereafter HAA), f. 362 Committee for the Reception and Resettlement of Armenians from Abroad, op. 2 d. 25, l. 7. A summary report suggested that in total 110,000 repatriated: "Repatriation of Armenians to the Homeland," HAA f. 362 op. 2 d. 50 l. 7–10, Maike Lehmann quotes a figure of 89,673 repatriates in total based on 1962 statistics from the Armenian MVD, "Spravka o pervoi i vtoroi massovykh repatriatsiakh armian v 1922–1936 i 1946–1948 gg." (Information on the first and second mass repatriation of Armenians in 1922–1936 and 1946–1948), HAA. f. 207 op. 26 d. 91 l. 1–2. See Maike Lehmann, "A Different Kind of Brothers: Exclusion and Partial Integration after Repatriation to a Soviet 'Homeland,'" *Ab Imperio* 3 (2012): 184.

2. Use of the term "repatriation" to describe this mass resettlement is common in the Armenian diaspora and in the limited scholarly literature, even though the vast majority of "repatriates" had never before set foot in Soviet Armenian

territory. In Armenian the terms *nerkaght*, which implies "gathering in," or *hayrenadartzrutiun* (return to the homeland) are often used. In their plans for the program Soviet Armenian authorities often referred to the repatriation as the return of "Armenians from abroad." I use repatriation throughout for consistency. For background to the repatriations, see Claire Mouradian, "L'Immigration des Arméniens de la diaspora vers la RSS d'Arménie 1946–62," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 20, no. 1 (1979): 79–110; and Jo Laycock "Repatriation in Post-War Armenia," in Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron, eds., *Warlands: Population Resettlement and State Reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2009).

3. The First Republic of Armenia was founded in May 1918 after the failure of attempts to form a regional government with Georgian and Azerbaijan. The fragile republic survived until December 1920 when, in the face of renewed Turkish advances, the government handed over power to the Soviets. See Richard Hovannisian's definitive four-volume study, *The Republic of Armenia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971–1996).

4. On the early years of Soviet rule, see Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1993); and Mary Kilborne Matossian, *Impact of Soviet Policy in Armenia* (Leiden: Brill, 1967).

5. For example, between 1921 and 1925 13,539 refugees from Turkey, Mesopotamia, Persia and Greece settled in Soviet Armenia. *Scheme for the Settlement of Armenian Refugees: General Survey and Principal Documents* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1927), 70. On AGBU involvement see Vahé Tachjian "The AGBU and Soviet Armenia: The Difficult Task of Working with the Soviet regime to Reconstruct Armenia," in Raymond H. Kevorkian and Vahé Tachjian, eds., *The Armenian General Benevolent Union: One Hundred Years of History*, vol. 1, *1906–1940* (Paris: AGBU, 2006).

6. On homeland-diaspora relations and the question of "homecoming," see, for example, Susan Pattie, "New Homeland for an Old Diaspora," in André Levy and Alex Weingrod, eds., *Homelands and Diasporas: Holy Lands and Other Places* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 48–68; for "homeland" in the 1945–49 repatriations, see Jo Laycock "Homelands and Homecomings: The Repatriation of Diaspora Armenians to the Soviet Union, 1945–1949," *Cultural and Social History* 9, no. 1 (2012): 103–23.

7. The Dashnaksutiun soon revoked their initial support for the scheme, claiming that those affiliated with the Dashnak party were discriminated against in the selection process. Precise numbers of repatriates are difficult to establish.

8. Hagop Jack Touryantz, *Search for a Homeland* (New York: Touryantz, 1987), 8.

9. Anahid Ter Minassian, *Histoires croisées: Diaspora, Arménie, Transcaucasie 1890–1990* (Paris: Éditions Parenthèses, 1997), 94.

10. For one example of renewed diaspora engagement, see Hazel Antramian Hofman, http://hazelantaramhof-com.webs.com/about (accessed February 23, 2016).

11. Changes in the late Soviet period are discussed in Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat,* chap. 11. On post-Soviet changes in the homeland-diaspora relationship, see Tsypylma Darieva, "Rethinking Homecoming: Diasporic Cosmopolitanism in Late Soviet Armenia" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 3 (2011): 490–508.

12. The organization Repatarmenia was been set up to support diasporans who wish to resettle in the Republic of Armenia. See www.repatarmenia.org.

13. Irina Paperno states that "What distinguishes memoirs from autobiographies (scholars maintain) is their emphasis on negotiation between self and community." Whilst the wider debates regarding the nature of memoir and autobiography are beyond the scope of this article, it is clear that these narratives, in which the negotiation of the relationship of the author to family, local community and Armenian national "community" is central, fit this characterization of memoir. Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), xiii.

14. Lehmann, "A Different Kind of Brothers," draws on oral history interviews with repatriates who remained in Soviet Armenia, whilst Armenuhi Stepanyan, *XX dari hayrenadardzutyune hayots inqnutyan hamakargum* (Twentieth-century repatriation in the system of Armenian identity) (Erevan: Giutyun, 2010), uses ethnographic methods to address the experience of repatriates in Soviet Armenia.

15. Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (London: Hurst, 2006), 228. There is a growing body of literature on the denial of the Armenian Genocide. For recent perspectives see the essays collected in Norman Naimark, Fatma Müge Göçek and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

16. Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (2008): 103.

17. See Marianne Hirsh, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). Lorne Shirinian, *The Landscape of Memory: Perspectives on the Armenian Genocide* (Kingston: Blue Heron Press, 2004), stresses the importance of the structures of postmemory for making connections between generations of Armenians.

18. A large-scale oral history project was overseen by Professor Richard Hovannisian at UCLA. See also Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller, *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Based in Soviet Armenia, from 1955 Verjine Svazlian collected

oral testimony of survivors, many of them repatriates. See Verjine Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors* (Yerevan: Gitoutyun, 2011). Robert Arnoux's *Arménie 1947: Les Naufragés de la terre promise* (Aix-en-Provence, 2004) is based on interviews with repatriates from France.

19. See the website of the Gomidas Institute for the range of publications: http://www.gomidas.org/books. The proliferation of these texts might be related to the popularity of what Michael M. J. Fischer has termed "ethnic autobiography" in the diverse, highly globalized societies of the late twentieth century: "Just as the travel account and the ethnography served as forms for explorations of the 'primitive' world ... and the realist novel served as the form for explorations of bourgeois manners and the self in industrial society, so ethnic autobiography and autobiographical fiction can perhaps serve as key forms for explorations of pluralist, post-industrial society" Michael M. J. Fischer, "Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory," in James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Politics and Poetics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 195.

20. Victoria Rowe, *A History of Armenian Women's Writing: 1880–1922* (London: Cambridge Scholars' Press, 2003), 243.

21. Khachig Tölölyan, "Elites and Institutions in the Armenian Transnation," *Diaspora* 9, no.1 (2000): 107–36. See also Talar Chahinian, "The Paris Attempt: Rearticulation of (National) Belonging and the Inscription of Aftermath Experience in French Armenian Literature between the Wars" (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 2009), 12. This shift might be understood in Jan Assmann's terms, as a shift from a purely "communicative" memory, associated with the family or household and everyday communication, towards "cultural memory," which is "characterized by its distance from the everyday" and transmitted through "the culturally institutionalised heritage of society." Jan Assman, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, no. 65 (Spring–Summer 1995): 126–30.

22. Peter Balakian, *Black Dog of Fate: A Memoir* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Michael J. Arlen, *Passage to Ararat* (New York: Farar, Strauss and Giroux, 1975). See also Garin K. Hovannisian, *Family of Shadows: A Century of Murder, Memory and the Armenian American Dream* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010). Markar Melkonian's *My Brother's Road* (London: Tauris, 2005) provides a rather different account, describing his brother's journey from the United States to fight in the Karabagh conflict.

23. Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," 106. Hirsch has stressed the importance of photographs, especially family photographs, in this process. For the place of Armenian family photographs (which feature on the covers of many of these narratives) in this process of "remembering," see Nefissa Naguib, "Storytelling:

Armenian Family Albums in the Diaspora," *Visual Anthropology* 21, no. 3 (2008): 231–44.

24. Verjine Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide and Historical Memory* (Yerevan: Gitutiun, 2004), 125.

25. Marc Nichanian has argued that "among Armenian survivors of the Catastrophe archive fever has raged for eight or nine decades without fault, dominating the entire landscape, forbidding any reflection on the very status of testimony." Marc Nichinian, *The Historiographic Perversion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 93. Although the emphasis on the witness or testimony has a particular motivation and resonance in the context of the denial of the Armenian Genocide, it can also be seen as part of what Jay Winter has termed the "memory boom" of the 1970s and '80s in which witnesses to the Holocaust took on a "mediating, semisacred" status. Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 30.

26. Razmik Panossian, "The Past as Nation: Three Dimensions of Armenian Identity," *Geopolitics* 7, no. 2 (2002): 121–46. On Armenian national narratives and identity, see Ronald Grigor Suny, "Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations," *Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 4 (2001): 862–96.

27. Chahinian, "The Paris Attempt," 8. Numerous aspects of the Genocide and its aftermaths are excluded from this dominant national narrative, the story of "hidden Armenians" in Turkey being a good example of this. In her reflections on her recent collation of oral histories of "hidden Armenians," Ayşe Gül Altınay states, "one can argue that this shared primordialist nationalist framework in both Armenian and Turkish scholarship has made it difficult to address the issue of converted Armenian survivors, who challenge the purity of both national narratives." Ayşe Gül Altınay and Fethiye Çetin, *The Grandchildren: The Hidden Legacy of "Lost" Armenians in Turkey* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 2013), 207.

28. The classic articulation of the centrality of "homeland" to diasporas is William Safran's "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora*, 1, no. 1 (1991): 83–99 For a perspective that challenges Safran's understanding of the place of homeland and homecoming in diaspora identities, see, for example, Alex Weingrod and André Levy, "Paradoxes of Homecoming: The Jews and Their Diasporas," *Anthropological Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (2006): 691–716; and James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 302–38.

29. Notably Lehmann, "A Different Kind of Brothers," and Stepanyan, *XX dari hayrenadardzutyune*.

30. As Nona Shahnazarian, observes, "This negative attitude became crystallized in the personal experience of Western Armenians seduced by the blandishments of the Soviet propaganda machine and then cruelly deceived by the State on repatriation." Nona Shahnazarian, "Letters from the Soviet 'Paradise': The Image of

Russia among the Western Armenian Diaspora" *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2013): 16.

31. Lazare Indjeyan, "Les Années volées," *Cahiers d'Histoire sociale* 16 (2000): 119–33; Armand Maloumian, *Les Fils du Goulag* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1976).

32. Sonia Meghreblian, *An Armenian Odyssey* (London: Gomidas Institute, 2012), 118.

33. Tom Mooradian, *The Repatriate: Love, Basketball and the KGB* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 177.

34. Ibid., 97.

35. Jean and Lucie Der Sarkissian, *Les Pommes rouges de l'Arménie* (Paris, Flammarion 1987), 24.

36. Hirsch, "Generation of Postmemory," 115.

37. On Soviet anecdotes about repatriates, see Shahnazarian, "Letters from the Soviet 'Paradise,'" 12–13.

38. Albert Andonian, *À chacun son destin* (Paris: Maisons des Écrivains, 2000), 30. The "cryptic" warning letter sent by relatives from Soviet Armenia is also described in Meghreblian, *Armenian Odyssey*, 64.

39. See for example Indjeyan, "Les Années volées," 122. Maike Lehmann draws attention to the story of the black bread and argues that patterns and practices of food consumption "are a central means of demonstrating the unity of a community as well as delineating lines of distinction within it." Lehmann, "A Different Kind of Brothers," 187–88.

40. For the notion of capturing the essence of modern Armenian experience in an anecdote or short story, see also Susan Pattie, *Faith in History: Armenians Rebuilding Community* (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 1997), 2–3.

41. Shirinian, *The Landscape of Memory*, 35–36.

42. Hirsch, "Generation of Postmemory," 107. See also Marianne Hirsch, "Past Lives: Post Memories in Exile" *Poetics Today* 17, no. 4 (1996): 662.

43. Der Sarkissian, *Les Pommes rouges*, 24.

44. Rebecca Batrikian, *Jeff et Rebecca* (Paris: Thélès, 2005).

45. Mooradian, *The Repatriate*, 21, 93.

46. Indjeyan, "Les Années volées," 123.

47. Touryantz, *Search for a Homeland*," 87. The parallel between the deportations that followed repatriation and the Genocide has also been drawn in Armenian literature, for example in Kevork Ajemian, *A Perpetual Path* (Aleppo: Giligia, 1975). As Kari Neely has explained, this text (not in wide circulation) is also highly critical of the Armenian community. See Kari Neely, "Diasporic Representations: A Study of Circassian and Armenian Identities in Greater Syria" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), chap. 6.

48. Lehmann, "A Different Kind of Brothers," 208. Surprisingly little has been published on the remembrance of the Genocide in the Soviet Union. Maike Lehmann's recent work addresses the protests marking the fiftieth anniversary of the genocide in Yerevan: "The National Past, the Soviet Project and the Imagining of Community in Late Soviet Armenia," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 1 (2014): 9–31. Thomas de Waal's *Great Catastrophe: Armenians, Turks in the Shadow of Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) engages with the aftermaths and memory of genocide in Soviet Armenia to a greater extent than most other surveys. In her analysis of memories of the terror, Polly Jones highlights the significance of managing memory of traumatic pasts in the Soviet Union, "precisely because memory had such mobilization power it also necessitated intensive, intrusive state controls to ensure its 'health.'" Polly Jones, " Memories of Terror or Terrorizing Memories? Terror, Trauma and Survival in the Soviet Culture of the Thaw," *Slavonic and East European Review* 86, no. 2 (2008): 346–71. The public memory of the Armenian Genocide was similarly subject to such state intervention.

49. Hirsch, "Generation of Postmemory," 111 (emphasis in the original).

50. Der Sarkissian, *Les Pommes rouges*, 13.

51. Maloumian's *Les Fils du Goulag*, which focuses on his experience of incarceration and was published much earlier than the other memoirs discussed here, is one of those that deviate from this pattern.

52. Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience,* 577. Vieda Skultans states that the publication of life histories and particularly survivor stories in Latvia since 1990 is related to the independence movement and the need to establish a national identity. Skultans, "The Expropriated Harvest: Narratives of Deportation and Collectivization in North-East Latvia," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 44 (Autumn 1997): 173. However, in the Armenian case, and especially with regard to repatriation memoirs, it seems to be also related to the need or opportunity to redefine relations between "homeland" and diaspora.

53. Ter Minassian, *Histoires croisées,* 95.

54. Arnoux, *Arménie 1947*, 189.

55. Lehmann, "A Different Kind of Brothers," 210.

56. The significance of biographical practices in the construction of Soviet subjectivities and the potential of biographies for understanding the nature of subjectivities has been the focus of a great deal of debate over the last two decades. See, for example, Jochen Hellbeck, "Galaxy of Black Stars: The Power of Soviet Biography," *American Historical Review* 114 no. 3 (2009): 615–24. Through biographies, it has been suggested, it is possible to understand the processes of "self-fashioning" at work in Soviet society. On subjectivities, Kotkin's notion of "speaking Bolshevik" and its critics, see Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and Igal

Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck, "Rethinking the Stalinist Subject: Stephen Kotkin's 'Magnetic Mountain' and the State of Soviet Historical Studies," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, n.s., 44, no. 3 (1996): 456–63.

57. Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 624.

58. Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience*, xi.

59. Maloumian's family had arrived in Armenia in 1946 because of his father's work as a professor of "traumatologie." He soon decided he wanted to leave the Soviet Union. His family was allowed to return to France in 1954 but he himself was able to join them only after his release in January 1956. For a different perspective on Armenians imprisoned during the Soviet period, see also Jacques Parvanian, *Au-delà de l'espérance*, vol. 2, *L'Engrenage* (Maisons-Alfort: Éditions Kirk, 1987).

60. Maloumian, *Les Fils du Goulag*, 46.

61. Ibid., 15. Maloumian makes links between his work and other narratives of the gulag that were circulating in the West during this period, such as the work of Solzhenitzyn; ibid., 21–29.

62. In Marita Eastmond's words, "In the dynamic interplay between experience and expression, experience gives rise and form to narratives, but it is also organized and given meaning in the telling." Marita Eastmond, "Stories as Lived Experiences: Narratives in Forced Migration Research," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 2 (2007): 249.

63. Maloumian, *Les Fils du Goulag*, 28.

64. Indjeyan, "Les Années volées," 120.

65. Andonian, *À chacun son destin*, 27, 28.

66. Ibid., 30–35; and, for example, Der Sarkissian, *Les Pommes rouges*, 58.

67. Meghreblian, *Armenian Odyssey*, 118.

68. A parallel may be drawn here with Pamela Ballinger's account of the ways that Italian refugees from Istria reconstituted "broken lives" by inserting their specific histories into a larger framework." Ballinger, *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Border of the Balkans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 183. In the Armenian case this may be family history or the larger framework of the narrative of the suffering and survival of the Armenian nation.

69. Batrikian, *Jeff et Rebecca*, 14–17. This information is provided in a separate section entitled "Origines de mon peuple."

70. Ibid., 140. Cf. Der Sarkissian, *Les Pommes rouges*, 22.

71. See Stephanie Platz, "The Shape of National Time: Daily Life, History and Identity during Armenia's Transition to Independence," in Daphne Berdahl, Matti Bunzl and Martha Lampland, eds., *Altering States: Ethnographies of Transition in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 117–18.

72. Maud S. Mandel, *In the Aftermath of Genocide: Armenians and Jews in Twentieth-Century France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

73. Touryantz, *Search for a Homeland*, 8–14.

74. Mooradian, *The Repatriate*, 16, xv.

75. Ibid., 423.

76. Albert Andonian appears to be an exception and a reminder of the complexities of the trajectories followed by some repatriates. His job as a translator allowed him to travel between France and the USSR for many years. Armand Maloumian's departure following release from the prison system is also obviously rather different.

77. Touryantz, *Search for a Homeland,* 175, 211.

78. Batrikian, *Jeff et Rebecca,* 431.

79. Skultans, "The Expropriated Harvest,"173.

80. This approach echoes Tony Kushner's argument that "it is in refugee self-expression that the contrast between outer perceptions and inner experiences is made blatantly clear." Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 44.

81. Peter Loizos, "Ottoman Half-Lives: Long-Term Perspectives on Particular Forced Migrations," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 12, no. 9 (1999): 237–63. This phenomenon is not of course unique to the post-Ottoman context. As Ilana Feldman has demonstrated, similar processes and patterns can be observed in Gaza, where the memory of *al-Nakba* has continued to play a significant role in shaping Palestinian understandings of both past, present and future: "Displacement, like home, is a process marked by repetition. It accrues in memory, shaping people's recollections of times before and of experiences since." Ilana Feldman, "Home as a Refrain: Remembering and Living Displacement in Gaza," *History & Memory* 18, no. 2 (2006): 12–13.

82. The new Armenian Ministry of Diaspora held a conference on repatriation in December 2008 where an official apology for the previous repatriation was issued, even though it had been conducted under the auspices of the previous Soviet government. The conference report is available at http://www.mindiaspora.am/en/Conferences/776 (accessed February 23, 2016).

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