

## Dinner in the Homeland: Memory, Food and the Armenian Diaspora

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In 2012, Stephan travelled to Anatolia to look for his mother's lost house in the Ottoman Armenian village of Goteh. In the genocide of 1915, his mother, Satenig, had been Goteh's sole survivor. Her husband had been taken away with the men and shot; one of her children was bayoneted in front of her, the other died on the death marches that were the fate of the rest of the village. Saved by missionaries, in 1919 an Armenian man brought her to Massachusetts as a wife for his brother, who had come to the United States (U.S.) as a sojourner and whose own wife and three children had been massacred. This brother would become Stephan's father. Stephan travelled on his 'pilgrimage' to Goteh with his wife Angele and three of his four children, whom his father had asked him to name after the children he had lost. However, Stephan had named his oldest daughter for his mother, that sole survivor of Goteh. On their pilgrimage to her village, the young Satenig, her sister, Sona, and her brother Stephan, stopped at the entrance to the village, where they were welcomed by women baking bread. With a rush of warmth, they accepted, and ate, the bread of the village of their grandmother. It tasted 'Armenian', and somehow familiar.



Figure 1: Sona eats 'hatz', the bread of her Grandmother's village. Photograph by Satenig Ghazarian. May, 2012.

This chapter explores the experiences of U.S. based Armenians who travel as self-described pilgrims to their ancestral homeland in Turkish Anatolia in search of their family's lost houses, and what they ate when they were there. It uses examples from an extensive archive that I have constructed, comprising over 400 travellers' accounts including videos, photographs, maps and memoirs that span a period of well over 40 years. Since the early 1990s, most of these visitors to Anatolia have travelled in small groups led by Armen Aroyan from Glendale, California. After a pioneering journey to his family's village in the late 1980s, Aroyan began to answer the pleas of fellow Armenians who longed to see their own family's village, but had not even dreamt it possible. By 2016, when Eastern Turkey was again becoming inhospitable, several thousand pilgrims had found him by word of mouth, to be shepherded in small, village-focused groups. One such group included Stephan and his family.

I was also on that trip. In fact, I travelled on twelve Aroyan led group pilgrimages in addition to accompanying several individual travellers to their home villages between 2007 and 2015. I began with no experience as an ethnographer, only with an interest in how, for the Turkish population of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, memory was deeply connected to place. This was a population with roots in the same time and place as the Armenian groups, but with very different memories. My intention was originally discursive and focused on the reading of written reports or creative responses (poems, plays, documentaries) to these trips. I soon realized that I could actually go on a pilgrimage myself to see how it operated. On my first excursions, I sat quietly on the bus, unsure of what I was seeing or where it would lead. I took notes on the back of envelopes. On later trips, I carried a notebook, also writing furiously and listening carefully, transcribing in the evenings. I took very few photographs, hoping to concentrate on what others were photographing, and many later shared their annotated photographic journals with me. I often assisted Aroyan, carrying luggage, relaying daily itineraries, or taking individuals on side trips. I felt very much a part of the later trips, and many of the pilgrims have become dear friends.

These trips allowed me to observe the emotional tenor and the variety of moods elicited by the physical experience of the diasporic homeland. I was introduced as an academic with the hope of publishing a scholarly interpretation of these ‘returns’. Sharing my own story, especially my academic background as a scholar in Turkish studies, sometimes made the building of trust precarious. Aroyan’s support here was crucial. On the other hand, the ability to relate my own grandparents’ history of Russian pogroms and exile created a sense of commonality. Almost everyone I spoke with soon seemed eager to have me tell their story as they felt it needed to be told and were comforted that a non-Armenian would take this on.

Given the way in which my research was conducted and evolved over the years, some of the conversations cited in this chapter had to be re-created from memory and notes, but all of these have been personally verified by the respective speakers and their use for this publication approved. Apart from personal observations and conversations, I draw extensively on what are essentially archival sources, namely the reflections composed by travellers themselves over the years. Hundreds of these have been collected by Armen Aroyan and will soon be published in a book (Aroyan 2018 forthcoming). I also draw on the many first hand travel accounts published in articles, books or web travelogues. I have, moreover, viewed many of Aroyan’s tour videos as well as the home videos taken by pilgrims and sent to me later, along with letters about their thoughts. It is in this larger context that I interpret what I saw and heard, beginning with the example of Stephan and his family’s vignette. I argue that the stories of the past, including food related associations, are part of a memory chain that ties exilic peoples and their subsequent generations to their lost home in a lost homeland (Bertram 2016; Gieryn 2000; Tuan 1990, 2014).

Certainly in the Armenian diaspora, homeland-food and ‘food-ways’ (food stories, preparation, tastes, recipes, and the social customs of eating and serving) associated with their Anatolian parents or grandparents stand as ‘memory’ in the inner circle of what are considered true markers of identity. During the travel to their Anatolian homeland, the descendants of Ottoman Armenians are continually confronted by familiar foods that they knew from their parents (or grandparents) in the United States or other lands of diaspora, and considered their own. This is

hardly surprising, especially if their mother or grandmother was born in an Anatolian village, and their father or grandfather in an Anatolian town. However, although the food they find on their homeland trip is decidedly both familiar and delicious, the circumstances and location make their experience fraught. Since their ancestors, whose lost homes they seek, left this place because of the fears and instability caused by 19th or early 20th century massacres, or as survivors of the genocide of 1915, they are now eating familiar foods in a land enveloped by a memory chain of pain, a land often thought of as that of the enemy. It is certainly difficult to conceive of a shared heritage in a country where the long history of the Armenian presence has been rewritten in official sources such as school curricula; where village churches have been turned to mosques, or more frequently, to stables; where the Armenian names of home villages have been Turkified; and where their monasteries and schools have been destroyed. This chapter examines this dilemma, and one approach to its resolution.

### **Memory**

Scholarship on memory burgeoned in the 1980s, making memory a ‘metahistorical category’ (Klein, 2000:138) that has subsumed the analyses of many formerly separate genres such as autobiographies, culinary memoirs, nostalgia cookbooks (Bardenstein, 2002; Salmaner 2014:1; 2006) ethnographies and oral histories, lost village/city memory books (Davis, 2011), personal and communal rituals and commemorations (Nora, 1989) and, especially, memoirs of return (Hirsch & Miller, 2011). Particularly productive for the study of diasporic memory is a focus (as is this chapter) on personal images of family food practices and food-related stories that create and support home and homeland as an affective, emotional - rather than political or national - place. This approach yields both a humanizing and nuanced understanding of what it means to ‘be’ say, part of a Jewish (Bahloul, 1992), Palestinian (Abu-Lughod, 1991; 2007), or Armenian (Bakalian, 2011; Pattie, 1999) diaspora. This is especially true when memory is investigated as the impetus for travels of ‘return’ and analyzed when memory actually meets the object of its desire. For the impulse of heritage or legacy travel flows from these place-related ‘memories’, becoming spatial extensions of identity, both for displaced natives and for their descendants (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Palmer, 2005; Stephanson, 2002). Some heritage tourists hope to find a material reality as a supportive scenography for their inherited stories of ‘the old country’ (Pattie, 1999). Travellers who are refugees, exiles, and displaced peoples may also wish to fulfil a vow to parents; others travel with an urgency to commune with family spirits; or to pray for their souls in the places where these spirits and souls are believed to reside (Bertram, 2017). Although there can be no closure to genocide, some travel for a type of closure to an inherited melancholia (Eng & Kazanjian, 2003). Because of these intensely personal yet spiritual quests, most of the travellers in my study - along with many others who travel to sites of loss - refer to themselves as pilgrims, prompting me to use the term here. Scholars of tourism and pilgrimage agree that the distinctions between heritage tourism and pilgrimage may be difficult to describe, but pilgrimage always includes travel to places that have the possibility of offering specific spiritual rewards. For the pilgrim, the reward may simply be felt as a psychological or somatic experience of “traces of some absent or ineffable quality of being” (Morinis, 1981:284) at the heart of their Armenian identity.

In this chapter, I address the psychological and somatic reactions to encountering foods or foodways that embody this ineffable ‘quality of being’ in a vulnerable setting; for here, the foods of their homeland, in their homeland, are being prepared and claimed by people whom the pilgrims

see as descendants of the perpetrators who exiled them. In fact, all of Turkey is seen as a landscape of denial, one in which the Turkish government has worked to erase the genocide from national memory (Çandar, 2017). Drawing on Bachelard's (1964) seminal *The Poetics of Space* and especially his insight that the poetic essence of one's childhood house is captured in adult daydreams, or *reverie*, I discuss how the encounter with familiar foods in this sensitive setting induces a home-centred reverie that serves to 'protect' against a variety of memories and emotions. It hence protects the pilgrim from being overwhelmed by negative emotions.

Following Hage (2012), I identify the affective meaning of home that these reveries strategically and poetically access. In Part One, I use Yervant as an exemplar of how encounters with familiar foods expose the affective components of the lost home for pilgrims who were born in Anatolia, that is, the native-born who autobiographically remember eating these foods in this place of their origin. I argue that their memories and experiences are distilled through reverie to provide a screen of security and wholeness in the face of loss. However, for the pilgrim-generations that did not personally experience either the life of 'the old country', or the brutality of its loss, and yet who feel this 'memory' as their own, that is, the 'postmemory' generation (Hirsch, 2012), reveries cannot call forth the ancestral village as they were never there. However, in response to their remembered stories of the village and why it is no longer theirs, the food encounters of the descendant generation **engender** protective images from their home in the host land, the autobiographical source of their sense of wholeness. To illustrate this, in Part Two, I discuss the experience of a 1.5 generation traveller, Alberta, and her cousin, Aurora, a descendant; and in Part Three, I return to the family from Goteh, adding other examples of descendant pilgrims to give a fuller account of the distinctive, protective effect of reverie when it evokes a home in the host land.

### **Part One: Yervant, the native-born pilgrim**

In 1951, Yervant Küçükian, under cover of his business credentials as a tobacco merchant, travelled the 300 miles from Beirut on Lebanon's Mediterranean coast to Antep (Armenian Aintab; today: Gaziantep) in south central Turkey in order to be close, once again, to his childhood home. He had left in 1916, at the age of 13, among the last of the Armenian deportees. Into the 1950s, post genocide return was made next to impossible by Turkish laws, which also stood behind the Ottoman appropriation of Armenian properties (Akçam & Kurt, 2015). The few who did return rarely wrote about it, making Yervant's published memoir extremely precious.<sup>2</sup> Writing in Armenian, in Beirut, he was no doubt certain that the history of the genocide, and its details in Antep, were fresh in the minds of his Armenian readers, so he went into no detail. Yet the genocide frames every moment of his trip, as he begins his article by writing how its events were engraved on his brain. Speaking to his readers as fellow exiles, he notes how they would understand how "a deep longing for my homeland" pulled him "toward Antep with an inexplicable force" (Küçükyan 1952, n.p.). On arrival, he sought and found all the houses of his past, some of which he visited several times: the house where he had been born in the Armenian neighbourhood of Kayacığa; his mother's family house (the Noraduryan house) and his uncle's house on Reyhan Street. But on first reaching Antep, he had headed first for his grandfather's home (the Gözükküçükyan house) in the Armenian neighbourhood of Kastel Başı. He and his family had lived there after returning to Antep in 1913, having first fled in 1910 from possible

repercussions of the Adana massacres of 1909. He found this imposing house easily, still resonating with his family's presence.



Figure 2: The Gözükcükyan House, Antep. Photo Murad Uçaner, June 2017

...with excitement and devotion, we stopped in front of [my] father's house. I raised my eyes, and in my view, through the four windows, my grandfather, Hagop Gözükcükyan, and his two much beloved sons, Arenag and Nezar, still lived.... just like in all my dreams (Küçükyan, 1958 n.p.).

This dreamlike state was revived at lunch at the home of the son of one of his father's former business partners. Unlike his other encounters, which were full of conversations and impressions, it seems that all he remembered of this lunch was the food, which he itemized: köfte (meatballs), dolma (stuffed vegetables), and two specifically Antep specialties, the Güllü family's baklava and pistachio soup. Everything else seemed to come and go from his consciousness, where, seated "around that magnificent table, I am in a dream". In fact, instead of engaging with his Turkish host, or describing the foods made by this Turkish family, this meal elicited a reverie that transported him to another meal, one in the paternal family home of his Armenian childhood, which was at the centre of all his Antep thoughts.

It seems that I am at our old Armenian house. It's snowing outside. We are sitting on a rug (savan) around the coal-brazier (tandır). In that warm room my grandmother and my grandfather, with their heads uncovered, are eating together with their children, all spooning soup from a giant pot, eating as a whole family in that house that was inherited from generation to generation (Küçükyan, 1958:n.p.).

### **Reverie**

Yervant's memoir introduces and explores the 'dream state' that Bachelard (1964) calls a reverie, and which, unlike nocturnal dreams, involves the conscious mind. In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard shows how, when directed toward the house of childhood - which I expand here to include the family home in general - the substance of reverie is the archetypical 'felicity' of home. In other words, although the substance of reverie is spatial, it is not architectural but affective, and although it seems to take place in a nostalgic past, it is not specific to a time; rather, it is timeless. Thus, the archetypical quality of this 'reveried' or daydreamed house (Bachelard's *oneiric* house), comes not from the specific stories or memories or even the

emotions that the dreamer superimposes on a place, but, instead, from the deepest qualities of that space, which are the actions and activities that perform home, and thus bring the space of house to life. When reverie calls forth practices and embodied relations with home, the dreamer 'inhabits' the house's archetypical qualities, summarized by Game and Metcalfe (2011:44) as well-being, felicity, tranquillity, and love. By tying together the 'immemorial and recollected', reverie allows for a spiritual return to "the fullness of the house's being" (Bachelard, 1964:8).

Tellingly, however, - as Yervant found when the new owners of his grandfather's house invited him in - reverie's spiritual return cannot function among intruders; and the house, once a 'structure of feeling' (Bertram, 2008:184) reverted to its architecture.

With searching eyes I examined the modest, dusty building of my father's house, and its garden; these strangers in our old house are not my family, and the house under its roof is not our home, but just an ordinary stone building. ...what I wanted from that house was to go inside and to sit in the corner where I had done my lessons, where my dear mother had prepared bread by the stove, where I had savored homemade cheese, raisins and figs (Küçükyan, 1958: n.p.).

Foods were central to reliving his past in reverie. But it was not the taste of the food that Yervant was after; the homemade bread and cheese and the raisins and figs were available in Antep, and probably in Aleppo at that time, and perhaps even Beirut, too. The longing was to relive the *experiencing* of these foods in the family setting, to re-experience the act of their preparation, which gave meaning to the act of savouring. He knew - or hoped - that by 're-experiencing' these actions in the old house, "traces", at least, "of some absent or ineffable quality of [his own] being" (Morinis, 1981:284) would be restored. His impulse then, was for a desire for wholeness as protection against a feeling of existential discontinuity and loss. If this happened, his reverie might become satisfying. Yervant planned to (and did) return to his house several times to 're-experience' it alone.

I will lean against my father's house and stroke the walls, I will knock with the door's iron doorknocker; and the faces of my mother and my sisters will come alive in the eyes of my soul; and I'll meet with them again and, saying welcome to those names I cannot forget, I will visit once again the stories that my father always told us, about his father's and his grandfather's life, and about the markets, the schools, the places where my ancestors led their ordinary lives (Küçükyan, 1958: n.p.).

Here we see how reverie is active dreaming and how participation in it makes it performative: the activities of reverie restore the house to life - at its essence. We might then say that in the selected traces that make up reverie, one inhabits the deep structure of the house as "an allusive and fragmentary story whose gaps mesh with the social practices it symbolizes" (De Certeau, 1984:102).

### **The Protective Power of Reverie**

Even as fragments and traces, such as Yervant's mother's baking of the bread that he will soon eat, or perhaps because of these fragments' ability to evoke one's own place in the archetypical, the house that is brought to life elicits security and protection. Experienced as a timeless cocoon,

the house as it appears in reverie might be the only refuge that allows the pilgrim-dreamer to be safe from the entirely real anguish and anger of a place that might otherwise only be experienced as loss. Certainly, the impulse for protection is clear; yet, although Yervant's reverie seems not to be clouded by memories of eviction, when the family was forced to sell everything on the street before leaving, the success (of this performative reverie) is not clear at all. As Hage would suggest, when an exile's memories of the homeland are triggered by what is emotionally missing and emotionally *irreplaceable*, that is, beyond the existential irreplaceability of lost childhood or losses due to time, nostalgic memory is essentially depressive (Hage, 2010:42).

Although Hage (2010) only addresses experiences in exile rather than, as here, on journeys of return, he relates the preparation or eating of foods from the homeland to an attempt to re-create the sense of security associated with 'back home'. For Hage, creating security (through nostalgic food preparation for example) is an affective building block of the diasporic home, which, when successful, can be considered an aspect of *positive* nostalgia. Along with security, additional 'affective building blocks' are, according to Hage, a sense of familiarity and a sense of community. Nostalgic activities that do not contribute to security, familiarity, and/or community leave the exile feeling lost and disconnected, or, as Bachelard (1964:7) would say, a 'dispersed being'. This defines what Hage (2010) calls a '*negative* nostalgia'; in fact, what the pilgrim's reverie guards against.

Thus, Hage's affective building blocks are useful to us in defining the positive aspects of home activated by the pilgrim for protection, as well as in identifying what causes a sinking feeling of loss. They also help us understand how descendant pilgrims who are able to situate their reveries in the host land, unlike the native-born, also gain from reverie's protective power, but by conflating a living host land's warmth with the lost village home.

## **Part Two: Descendants of Survivors**

In 2007, Alberta,<sup>3</sup> shepherded by Armen Aroyan, made a pilgrimage to Bitias, one of the six villages of Musa Dagh ('Mt.Moses'), the mountain of villages made famous by Franz Werfel's 1933 historic novel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. That story chronicles how two thirds of its villagers resisted the 1915 Ottoman deportation orders by hiding on the mountain, finally to be rescued by the French Marines. Alberta's mother and her family, however, were part of the other third, those who were sent on an enforced march to Syria, the survivors ending up in Hama. In 1920, Alberta's grandmother, her mother, and her mother's sister, the only three to survive of a family of ten, returned to live in Bitias, which, as part of the former Ottoman Syrian province of Iskenderun/Alexandretta, had come under the protection of France. Thus, after the genocide, the Armenian villages of Musa Dagh, now outside of Turkish control, began to revive. The man who would become Alberta's father returned to Bitias in 1924. He and his brother had been sent as sojourners to America in 1910 by their father, who feared that the all-too-close Adana pogroms of 1909 would be repeated. On his return, he found that only two of his seven immediate family members had survived. Alberta's parents met in Bitias and married that year, and Alberta was born a year later, in 1926; a second daughter arrived in 1929. But in 1939, with the loss of safety due to the immanent transfer of the area from a French protectorate to the new Republic of Turkey, all the Armenians of five of the villages of the Musa Dagh left as refugees, most to

resettle in Lebanon. The villagers of the sixth village, Vakef, chose to stay, and Vakef is now the only Christian village left in Turkey (Magzarian, 2008; Shemmassian, n.d.).

In 1939, Alberta was 13, the same age that Yervant had been when he left Antep in 1916. In 1951, when Yervant was making his 'pilgrimage' at age 48, having been away for 38 years, Alberta, at age 26 was moving with her family from Lebanon to New Jersey. She did not return to Bitias until she was 82, not having seen it for 68 years. Although both Alberta and Yervant longed to see the houses of their youth, another reason for Alberta's trip was that she was in the process of writing a Musa Dagh cookbook, together with her two younger sisters: Anna, who had also been born in Bitias, and Louisa, who had been born three years after the exile. Anna did not accompany Alberta on this pilgrimage, but Louisa and her husband Richard and their son Alex came, along with another relative, Aurora, whose grandparents were from Bitias, but whose parents were from the Musa Dagh village of Kheder Bey, and who had been, herself, born in America. This group, whose story is chronicled in the Magzarian (2008) cookbook or captured on video, acts as a cross-over between the experiences of native-born pilgrims who return to their birthplaces and the experiences of pilgrim descendants. Like Yervant, Alberta may be considered a part of what has been termed the 1.5 generation, those who immigrate as children or adolescents, and thus have autobiographical memories of the homeland, yet whose young adulthood and maturity is part of the diaspora (Rumbaut, 2012).

### **The Affective Components of Home**

A sense of familiarity and community were a component of what had made Yervant's neighbourhood 'home' in Antep, made clear as he walked through the town identifying Armenian churches and schools as well as each house by its Armenian owner. But, noting that these places were all emptied of Armenians, he lamented "We were still foreigners in the place where we were born" (Küçükyan, 1958:n.p.). Alberta remembered the cohesive social life of her entirely Armenian village, which resembled Yervant's neighbourhood when it was thriving. On village paths, Alberta, too, had identified houses by their former Armenian occupants. Furthermore, for her, an entire section was made up of her own relatives, such that she could even identify the house of her "dad's aunt's granddaughter's cousin's son" (Aroyan [video], 2007). This awareness gave a homey sense of security as well. As Alberta remembered it, the 'homeyness' of this cohesive life was epitomized by the food-ways that connected its houses to each other and to Chaghlaghan, the orchard that supplied it with food. Her mother's morning chores were interrupted by daily visitors, many of whom were relatives who visited frequently, even daily, often for a cup of 'Kahfo', the word used for thick, sweet coffee in the Musa Dagh dialect of Kristinik. Alberta attributed many of these comings and goings among households to her family's relative wealth, although they also reflect the way in which food-ways, as a performance, solidify ties, and, as "a lived space that is 'embracing and embraced'" (Game, 2011:43, paraphrasing Bachelard, 1964:8) performs home.

Because we were one of the families whose larder was always full, we helped those less fortunate when they came to our door. Some visitors asked for a favor or for much-needed items that we readily fulfilled; "Auntie" (every married woman in Bitias was everyone's auntie), "could we borrow a cup of sugar?"; "a loaf of bread?"; "how about a bowl of pickles?"; "do you have any leftover fruit from Chaghlaghan?" (Magzarian, 2008:155).

The sense of Bitias as a community was punctuated by a sense of separateness from town-folk (in this case, also Armenians) who came by the thousands from Aleppo to spend the summer holidays in the cool mountain air, but who looked down on village ways, including, or perhaps especially, its food. On her pilgrimage, while standing near her own Bitias house, Alberta related the story of how two such visitors had been received as unexpected guests by their Bitias classmate.

The young host cautiously asked his Aunt, “what have you made for dinner?”

And she said, “Turkhanoom Shoorbo”. Well, they’re city folks, they are not going to eat what is called Turkhanoom Shoorbo. She said, “don’t worry, I will serve it to them and they will gobble it up.” So she brought a big bowl of the Shoorbo and said, this is called *Soup de Paris!* And they gobbled it up, sure enough! (Aroyan [video], 2007 and see Magzarian, 2008:48).

Apart from speaking of the quality and taste of a ‘homey’ cabbage soup, recalling this oft told local story in the place where it happened communicates a sense of pride in local cleverness, even the educated-ness of the verbal ploy (this aunt worked as a cook at the French Consulate in Aleppo during the winter). It also identifies this place as one of loss. It was the loss of a parochial childhood in houses safely separated from a larger world, where, in winter Alberta’s mother took part in a monthly book club, and her daughters would sit in the corner and listen to Victor Hugo’s *Les Miserables* (Magzarian, 2008:155). But now, standing in Bitias, the story was like the useless house-deeds that other pilgrims carried. Thus, I suggest that for Alberta, any protection afforded by this reverie - of how Turkhanoom Shoorba performed home - was in its connection to the diaspora, where it had become a part of diaspora life, an active building block of positivity. There, Louisa, the descendant, had demanded that not only the recipe of a food she loved, but its story become a part of the cookbook to assure that ‘home’ would be kept alive.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Diasporic Home**

In fact, to some extent, the Magzarian home in New Jersey attempted to replicate Bitias: the food items their mother prepared were the ones she had made in Bitias; their father had terraced and planted their garden to allow him to still ‘feel’ the beauty, tastes and homeliness of their Bitias orchard, Chaghlaghan. As another resident put it, “Living in Paterson, NJ during the 1940s was like living in Musa Dagh, and not in the US” (Shemmassian, n.d.:211). When Alberta and her parents moved again, from New Jersey to Maryland to be near Louisa, their mother, at age 75, continued to cook her ancestral foods, and her father, at age 93, designed a new, terraced Chaghlaghan. Louisa called the old village skills (and chores) that were part of her Paterson NJ life, such as making yogurt, ‘maintenance’ (Magzarian, 2008:152). “Each meal we prepare dates back to Bitias and the region of clustered villages on Musa Dagh” (ibid.:164). Here, Turkhanoom Shoorba, and the elements of Bitias life that it represented, were now associated with its cooking and retelling in America, where their sister Anna learned it from their mother, teaching it to her sisters who would make it a part of their cookbook. Their immediate hope was that the book would preserve the food and life of Bitias for Louisa’s son, Alex, who, at age 26, travelled to Bitias as a 3rd generation pilgrim; in fact, in the book, Alberta reports proudly that he could make the flaky, coiled bread called baghash (ibid:164). But a second goal was to preserve these food-ways for other descendants of Musa Dagh. It would be safe to say that every

Musa Dagh villager had relatives in other Musa Dagh villages, where all spoke the same dialect of Armenian and even ate, as the three sisters would say, in the same ‘dialect’ of food. Their cookbook’s subtitle was, *An Armenian Cookbook in a Dialect of its Own*. Their life in their home in the diaspora now represented hope for the future, and all three sisters’ agency in it. In fact, Hage (2010) suggests that when the needs of security, familiarity and community are met by exilic home-builders, a fourth building block of home becomes possible, and that is a sense of hope, or positive expectations for the future.

### **Positive and Negative Reveries**

I suggest that the protection afforded to pilgrims who inhabit reveries grounded in their diasporic host land home are more successful than the protection grounded in the homeland because it includes this positive aspect of future. Reveries that call forth the violently and forever lost home are like negative nostalgia, they cannot have this sense of hope unless they are expanded to include the diasporic home. Thus, for first, and certainly 1.5 generation pilgrims from the diaspora, local foods, and food-memories have the potential of inducing reveries rooted in overlapping places. Turkhanoom Soup identifies Bitias, but its preparation continued in the Magzanian home kitchens in Syria, Lebanon, New Jersey and Maryland. Returning to Bitias to tell this story cements this link. The expanded space is a corrective that may even protect against what might be called a negative reverie. Instead of associating foods only with homes that had been wrenched away, food reveries now include those homes built by exiles to promote a sense of an affective Bitias that was on-going in the future, with a continuing protection, agency, and happiness.

A counter example is Alberta’s associations with the water of Bitias, which evoked a negative reverie related to an inherited memory, passed on by her mother. The waters of Bitias and Chahglayan were part of the familiarity that made Bitias ‘home’. As a village child, Alberta had learned the sources of the four major springs, and how blue faucets indicated ‘mother water’, or water that came straight from the springs, without accumulating. Standing by one of these springs, Alberta said, “I just drank some of it, I’m going to drink some more”. (Aroyan, [video] 2007). Then she told this inherited story:

My sister [Anna] told me that I should have two drinks of water here. One for me, and one for my grandfather who died in Hama, [according to our mother], soon, within a few months after they got there. And his observation was, “I would be OK if someone could bring me a glass of cold water from my favourite orchard,” which was Chaghlaghan (Aroyan [video], 2007).

Although her reverie, induced by drinking the beloved, life-giving water of Bitias, could be considered an attempted spiritual healing of her grandfather’s anguish, and even of her family’s inherited memory of his anguish, it could provide no emotional protection from the loss that had caused it, as the water she was drinking was undeniably still not hers. Even if her reverie of the spring waters of her childhood included an immemorial happiness, the taste of this water had lost its ‘felicity’, as her grandfather had died when its loss began.

Pilgrimage itself is a way to connect the next generation to the homeland, which Alberta understood when her familiarity with the landscape opened a reverie for her cousin, Aurora.

Alberta had, in fact, been hunting for a wild pistachio bush, with crunchy shells that enclosed a spicy berry called ‘peevig’ [terebinth; menengiç in Turkish]. For Alberta, it called forth memories of eating these as a child, especially when roasted as a treat for guests... and children. But *Aurora*’s memories of peevig were from the United States, when her Bitias grandmother’s sister would send this ‘taste of home’ from Lebanon. Unlike exilic or survivors’ food memories, a descendant’s ‘memory’ of the ancestral home is always inherited, and can only be known from stories and mediated sources. For Aurora, then, as with other inherited stories, finding and eating this berry would induce a reverie of a home in the diaspora, where her grandmother’s nostalgic stories of eating peevig in Bitias seemed to emerge with their scent from a box that was opened in New Jersey.

In both cases, food induced reveries may be analogous to Proust’s, whose taste of a madeleine in Paris sent him into a surprising reverie about eating madeleines in his childhood. Unlike Proust, who then forgot about the madeleine he was actually eating in the present, the pilgrim’s food-invoked reverie is neither unconscious nor unexpected. In fact, it is searched for in order that the pilgrim may consciously participate in the authenticity of their ancestral place. The searched for authenticity that grounds the pilgrim in this place is arguably best served by the senses, which go deeper than collected narratives, as the sensual experience of food, or even sensual memories of food, may bequeath a ‘culinary citizenship’ (Mannur, 2007:13) that allows the pilgrim the possibility of imagining themselves living or inhabiting fragments of their ancestral stories. Furthermore, unexpected and probably unnoticed, but absolutely inherent, are the new connections to the diaspora made by these authenticating senses: *Soup de Paris*, once served by its simpler name in Bitias, is imagined on a table in New Jersey, where the cookbook writer calls on it to perform the work of legacy. This process of tying visceral reactions in the homeland to a home in the host land creates a new, enlarged imaginative space. Preparing Bitias foods in New Jersey is an act that performs the lost Bitias house, but the eating of Bitias foods in Bitias also performs a New Jersey home. Although this arguably gives the two homes a new, common memory, for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations it also, as we will see below, irrefutably displaces memory to a protective space in the diaspora.

It is true that Yervant’s reveries, which returned him to what Bachelard calls the ‘fixations of happiness’ of childhood, offered some protection from a world that had erased that life so brutally. As Bachelard (1964:6) reminds us, when we enter reveries of our childhood house, “we travel to the land of Motionless Childhood, motionless the way all Immemorial things are. We live fixations, fixations of happiness. *We comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection*” (my emphasis). But the dead-end quality of that protection seems obvious when compared to reveries that call forth the protection of an ongoing chain of memory that keeps one’s values alive. As the pilgrim, Carolann wrote on finding family foods in her ancestral Kharpert (Harput/Elazığ), food that she knew from Massachussets,

[These foods] validated the values [that the survivors] brought from the yerkir [homeland]: of hard work, honesty, hospitality, and devotion to community, family, church, and nation. They carried these values with them as they journeyed on foot over mountain ranges, through valleys and across rivers - and passed them on to their new families. They suffered but they managed to survive. Their food connected them to the yerkir and all the yerkir meant to them (Najarian, 2005:n.p.).

Clearly, what the pilgrim understood was that the survival in the host land of the food of the homeland was more than a symbol of an ideal past; it was a symbol of a strong future.

### **Part Three: Descendants: ‘inherited memory’ in a hostile environment**

The 2nd and 3rd generation descendants of survivors inherited deep connections to their family villages through a heritage preservation culture, and, especially, from beloved family members who had endured exile. This is the ‘postmemory’ generation who, as the poet pilgrim Alidz expressed it,

--- grew up

With the idea that we should go back to this land.

The vision of the land, the homeland

was, from my childhood, inscribed on my soul (Agbabian, 2018:n.p).

Yet, the sense of homecoming that food engenders in the pilgrims is shared with an unending bombardment of other emotions generated not just by family genocide stories, but by either a tenuous welcome or a continuing hostility to their presence.



Figure 3: Pilgrims eating “Armenian Food” at a Turkish restaurant. Photograph by Sona Gevorkian, May 2012

We see this, for example, with Stephan and his family in *Goteh*. As the family searched for traces of their ancestral house, Stephan carrying a hand-drawn map and his two daughters their ‘hatz’, the bread of their grandmother’s village, they were followed by locals. These villagers were not unfriendly, yet they were certain that Stephan’s map would lead to the gold that most Turkish citizens have been trained to believe was stashed by ‘the wealthy Armenians’ as they were sent to death; and they kindly offered to help for a percentage of the find. At a restaurant in Kharpert, as another group of pilgrims ate a meal made of the Kharpert specialties that they knew from home, I watched as a friendly local family at an adjacent table asked who they were and where they were from. When they heard the answer, “We are Armenians, we are from Kharpert”, they offered a confusing welcome: “We are glad to see you here! But... why did you leave?” This common response cut more deeply than the almost farcical certainty that the Armenians had returned for their gold; and the pilgrims could only answer with dismay: “we

were deported”. What made up the pilgrims’ deepest reality was often unknown in their own homeland, or, more frequently denied. But for the pilgrim at dinner, the events were fresh: before dinner in this same restaurant, Carolann wrote that she had stood looking up at the hillside where the famous Euphrates College once stood, and where, she was certain, several women in her family had been educated.

We held a photo of what was once Euphrates College taken from the point where we now stood and with the empty hillside behind us... In my mind’s eye I saw yet another photo, one I had seen in books about Kharpert and in various exhibitions, of Armenian men being marched out of the town, most likely along the street where we were standing. It was here where we would be eating dinner tonight, in a small restaurant overlooking Mezireh [Elazig] (Najarian, 2005, n.p.).

Hirsch’s work (2012) suggests that this postmemory generation feels the anguish of genocide as if they had experienced it themselves; that is, *as if it were the pilgrims’ personal history*. This may or may not be true. However, I suggest that the actual, autobiographical pain of hearing the genocidal stories from one’s own parents or grandparents is pain enough. Added to this is the anguish the pilgrim feels on their journey when they visit other pilgrims’ villages and hear their stories, or see collective sites of Armenian culture, with a ravaged history still raw almost 100 years later. In 2004, Isabelle, whose father was from Jerman (Yedisu) a village of Keghi (Erzerum), wrote,

Along our way, we visited many villages. We were hospitably received by the Kurds, who now dominate the region. They offered us tan [a cold, diluted yogurt drink; Turkish “ayran”] and madzoon [yogurt], tea, bread, and even Keghetsi beorag [local Keghi pastry]. In village after village, we saw ruined churches and monasteries. Some had been converted to mosques; others, partially standing, served as stables or garbage dumps. Still others were totally laid waste, their stones littered about as if being reclaimed by the mountains (Kaprielian-Churchill 2006:n.p.).

It is a credit to their ancestors’ memory that, in a landscape of denial and erasure, the food they ate did not stick in their throats. Perhaps in part this was because of those Turkish citizens who welcomed them; those who remembered or knew the truth; those who said, “I am not the government”; or those who lamented, as had the woman in the Musa Dagh village of Yoghunluk, encountered by the poet pilgrim Alidz:

Aghhh, she says  
When the Armenians left this area  
They took its Bereket [blessedness] with them.  
(Agbabian, 2018:n.p).

In fact, when meeting sympathetic Turks or Kurds, pilgrims often felt a puzzling sense of brotherhood, especially with those who expressed a kinship because their own grandmothers had been Armenian - daughters left behind for protection, or grabbed as booty from the death marches of the genocide.

## **Enlarging the Imaginative Space of Home**

Whether or not there were signs of denial or erasure, or possibilities of brotherhood, a sense of rootedness was frequently established by identifying as ‘Armenian’ the many Turkish foods that were recognized from homes in the Armenian diaspora. In 2012, Barlow walked into a cheese market in his ancestral town of Van and said, “it’s full of Armenian cheese!” at which point, stories of his own family became linked to it:

My grandmother used to make this cheese, which is a cheese made with vegetables, panchareghen, which is greens, basically. And it’s called jajig in Armenian, and it’s a cheese that she made that I remembered, and they’re still eating it and they are known for it in Van today (personal communication with author, Dec. 2012).

For 2nd and 3rd generation pilgrims, this ‘Armenian food’ elicits a wellspring of memories and associations that flow not from the ancestral village itself, but from their homes in the *diaspora*. Typically, this generates friendly arguments among pilgrims about whose recipe is truly authentic; yet the warmth of the memories from their diaspora source come less from ingredients and flavours than from their performative power to evoke home and family, i.e., they centre on the activities of making or enjoying the food.

When Carolann and her aunt (her mother’s sister) Hasmieg entered the restaurant in Kharpert, they were anticipating a treat that Armen Aroyan had ordered for them:

Armen had already told us two local specialties would be served: Kharpert kufteh [stuffed meat balls] and surum [a dish of flatbread baked with butter and garlic flavored yogurt]! Surum! My aunt Hasmieg and I couldn’t wait! For years we have enjoyed surum (or serim) in our family [in the US], but today, few people are familiar with this dish - it is not in any recipe book or on any menu. It is a forgotten food! Hasmieg and I simply could not believe that surum was here, in this desolate town. During the summer, on the days our grandmother baked the flat round bread on the sheet of zinc - the sahje - over the outdoor fire, she would make surum for lunch. Some of the flat rounds of bread would be cooked until thoroughly dried and hard, making it possible to store the breads for weeks while others were taken off the sahje while still soft. These she rolled and placed in a large baking pan layered with garlic, butter, and with her own madzoon [yogurt], and then baked. This is surum! (Najarian, 2005:n.p.).

It was these *processes* of the old country that were handed to the new, which would become the performance of what family meant. That is, as a reified positive nostalgia, or ‘maintenance’, as Louisa had called it, these food performances would become the affective building blocks of home in the host land. Carolann understood well that this performance was a part of a chain of memory that linked each generation to the other.

Maybe my grandmother had those thoughts about her own mother, her village, her other life, each time she rolled out the dough for ‘hatz’ [bread]. I can see her bent over the floured board, rolling the thin dowel back and forth over the dough, shaping to the right thickness and size, then flipping it over the dowel and taking it to my grandfather, who would take the dowel from her and slide the round of dough onto the sahje over the hot

wood fire. It was our family's ritual; my grandmother and grandfather performed it, then my mother and father, and now my nephew and niece (Najarian, 2005:n.p.).

Carolann's narrating or conceptualizing this performance brought her diaspora family to life on her visit in the homeland, expanding the imaginative space of home to include both places. In fact, her images and narrative operate in a way similar to cookbook writing in which the "narratives are highly performative as the author would attempt to create a scene in which the reader actively, yet imaginatively, re-creates the dish in question" (Salmaner, 2104:38), but also allowing Kharpert and Massachussets to merge into one affective place.

Anto was also transported by the taste of surum to the process of making it: On the bus, he told me, "I make it the way that I learned it from my mother from Sepastia, [Sivas]. My mother used to make the bread early in the morning [in Providence, RI] and dip it in the coffee. What was left at night was used for the surum". He then relived the experience, describing how he would replicate his mother's actions.

You roll the lavash [Armenian flat bread] into a long coil and cut into one inch small coils [pinwheels]. Put them in a pan and put it in the oven for a couple of minutes. Then you heat madzoon [yogurt], a big container, or more, on low. Add some water to the madzoon and keep stirring. Then you get the butter and melt it separately. If you like garlic, chop it in. I put garlic on the side. Pull the bread out of the oven and ladle the whole madzoon over it. Fill the cracks! Add the butter and garlic and put it back in 2-3 minutes; if it's too hot it boils and curdles.

Watching his mother in Providence brought Sivas to life. Eating surum in Kharpert brought Providence to life in Anatolia. It was surprising to have a non-local (Anto was not 'from' Kharpert, he was 'from' Sivas) claim a Kharpert dish; for pilgrims' memories and attachments to foods are village and town specific, and linked to strongly held local identities that are linked, in turn, to the reason they came. Perhaps Sivastzies claim surum, too.

In Kharpert, Carolann ate "Kharpert kufteh that were close seconds to my Mom's". (Najarian, 2005:n.p.). Kharpert Kufteh/kuftah, lamb and bulgar meat balls that are hollowed out so that the walls are evenly thin and strong, then stuffed with a meat, onion, and pine-nut mixture and boiled in broth, are a prized dish that takes skill to make. Another pilgrim pronounced her dinner in Kharpert as "authentic", "with Kharpert kufteh and the works" (personal correspondence with author, Jan, 2012). It was authentic because the food was prepared just as her grandmother had prepared it, and eating it, she felt the presence of her grandmother and grandfather whom she had known in the United States. In fact, many meatball flags of identity were raised. In Lidge, in the province of Diyarbakir, Zaven's thoughts about kuftah were different. As he explained to me in Lidge, first of all, they had a flat bottom.

They'd start with a ball like this, and then they'd put a hole in it, and they'd take the insides and they'd stick it in this way, so the bottom was flat and [gesturing to his mother's cultural prowess, or her 'maintenance'], if you weighed them, they were all *exactly* the same.

Zaven had come several times to the Diyarbakir village of Lidge, eventually finding the spot where the family house had stood. Standing there, Zaven mused on his family, the survivors of the Lidge family house, and their American children, who had gathered on weekends either in New York or in Rhode Island.

They were all first cousins, and they were all from this same house [in Lidge]. It was like that every week. Every Sunday, for years it was like that, together. They rotated houses. But every Sunday it was all the same people. All the women would cook; the men would eat first.

Thus, as we have seen, associating food in Turkey as ‘Armenian’, and connecting it to the places and people in the diaspora who keep or kept it alive, works in two directions: First, while eating or making ancestral foods in the diaspora, an exile or descendant imaginatively ‘inhabits’ the lost home as a method of building a successful new home. There, foods from the homeland act as ‘imagined metonymies’ in that these “tastes and actions are fragments or traces of an equally imagined homely whole, the imagined past ‘home’ of another time and another space” (Hage, 2010:422).

### **Protective Reveries in a Space of Hope**

Second, however, while eating or relating to Armenian/Turkish food, especially in proximity to one’s ancestral house, descendent pilgrims open a realm of reverie that takes them back to their home in the diaspora. This is a protective reverie because it completely removes the dreamer from a place that is the source of pain to a place that is a source of pride. Whereas Yervant’s protective cocoon, sitting, as it were, on the edge of eviction, could never provide full security, those that take place in the diaspora can offer a productive sense of wholeness. As Hage suggests for exiles, a positive nostalgia is possible when new homes are made up of the affective building blocks that make one “feel at home where they actually are” (2010:419). In the case of the pilgrim, a reverie of the host land that takes place in the homeland is not just autobiographical and real, it recalls the building blocks of the Armenian home that serve the possibilities of an Armenian future.

Thus, Zaven’s Lidge-conjured family in Providence contains his mother and aunts in the kitchen making Lidge-perfect koftah, Sunday after Sunday; his father and uncle singing Lidge-learned Armenian and Kurdish songs that Zaven loved but could not always understand; the raki [a clear, liquorice liquor] being passed in the living room; the children under foot who will absorb and continue their culture, albeit in their own ways. All hover in his reverie as he stands with his cousin, or one of his daughters, at the top of the hill, where nothing remains except the view that his father remembered seeing from his grandfather’s house.

### **Conclusion**

To paraphrase Ruth Kluger (2012), a recipe for Kharpert Koftah is not a recipe for dealing with the genocide;<sup>3</sup> and the stories, recipes and food-ways that come to life during dinner in the homeland are not an avenue or a strategy to bring the genocide’s political or ethical repercussions to the table. But they *are* relevant to the discussion of its continuing pain. Clearly, exilic communities have used the preservation and presentation of ‘old country’ foods as affective building blocks in the successful construction of a secure sense of home in their host

lands. I have explored here how this productively affectionate relationship between home, food and food-ways can re-surface as solace and protection when exiles are exposed to the sources of that painful fracture as they travel to the home that was lost. This is because food-related stories are almost always ones of wholeness; they speak to the sympathetic and emotion laden values of the life that was lost rather than to the loss itself. Finding the foods and food-ways of their families in this ancestral setting could have several additional outcomes. Because this is their homeland, the foods that are encountered might be considered a wellspring for authenticating or rejuvenating their repertoires when they return. This does not happen, however, because what might seem an encounter feels like a confrontation with a perpetrator culture. I know of no pilgrim who collected Turkish cookbooks. When Priscilla compared the foods that she found in the Republic of Armenia to the foods that she found in Turkey, she said, “here, in Turkey, we are going back to our childhoods, and that makes me feel happy. It’s true, we don’t eat the same food as in Armenia. *This* is our food, and *this* is our culture. But what they did to us changed everything. Our culture turned on us” (personal correspondence with author, March 2014). Hers was a sober assessment that did not attempt to erase affinities that could not be celebrated. Thinking that “we are the same because we eat the same” does not happen (Mannur, 2007:27). Instead, these foods generate a protective urge: if only in reverie, the pain of loss becomes a way to restore the wholeness of this place in the wholeness of one’s real or imagined past. Dehistoricized in the timelessness of reverie, the foods become solely Armenian, prepared in a time of rootedness. With this established, the foods reclaim the land as the wellspring of homey values at the heart of self and culture. At the heart of this reclamation is reverie, the creative day-dreaming that takes the dreamer to their own remembered home, the place that allowed them to dream in the first place, consolidating experiences into an archetypal image of home as security, felicity, and wholeness. Without this reverie

man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul. ...Therefore, the places in which we have experienced daydreaming reconstitute themselves in a new daydream, and it is because our memories of former dwelling-places are relived as daydreams that these dwelling-places of the past remain in us for all time (Bachelard, 1964:6).

For the native-born pilgrims, reverie is a return to the original house, becoming a protective cocoon that shields them momentarily from the realities of the present. In a still hostile environment associated with an era of near ethno-cultural annihilation, pilgrims from the next generation are also in need of protection. But never having lived in Turkey, familiar foods generate reverie-images of a home in the diaspora where these foods were essential components of their deepest ‘sense of being’, as well as of their identity (Bakalian,1994; Hirsch, 2012; Pattie, 1999). Because the diasporic home of this second group (along with that of the 1.5 generation) is one that was not cut off, but is still alive, its distillation in reverie supports the pilgrims’ agency in valorising and nurturing their fundamental values, providing an unequivocally protective, spiritual strength. Called into play through the essential tie between food and the deepest meanings of home, the performative nature of this reverie brings this spiritual essence to life. A reverie, then, is not a withdrawal into memories of the past as a refuge (Game, 2011). Rather, as an ongoing creation of an intimate yet idealized place of the past that nurtures their deepest sense of being, it is able to provide the pilgrims with a persistent and protective spiritual strength. This is the larger spiritual reward that the pilgrims can take home, allowing them, perhaps, to

experience dinner in the homeland as an integration of the values of a lost past with gratitude for the present and confidence in the future.

## Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup> I am deeply grateful to the Antep architect Murad Uçaner for sharing his translation of Yervant's article from Armenian into Turkish and for information about Yervant's neighborhoods and houses.

<sup>3</sup> All names associated with published sources are as they appear in the publications. For others, when permission was granted, those with whom I have corresponded, personally interviewed, observed on trips, or watched in videos, are identified only with their real first name. Those whom I was unable to reach for permission may be referred to as "one pilgrim said," or "~~her~~ cousin", remain nameless.

<sup>4</sup> See Salmaner (2014:18) for "how food's performative nature is analogous to the performative nature of identity and how such performativity is manifested in a cookbook genre". See Hass (2011) for thoughts on how, for the native-born at least, the diaspora complicates the meaning of the real home.

<sup>5</sup> "Recipes for gefilte fish are no recipe for coping with the Holocaust" (Kluger 2012:30).

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