

**The Bittersweet Taste of the Past:
Reading Food in Armenian Literature in Turkish**

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Abstract

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This dissertation investigates Armenian literature in Turkish through the two authors Takuhi Tovmasyan and Mıgırdıç Margosyan by analyzing their literary works with an emphasis on food. By putting the traumatic experiences and the memories of 1915 in the cultural contexts of daily lives such as through music, food, and art, Armenians in Turkey found alternative ways to speak about their silenced past and create spaces in which to be heard. These spaces in Tovmasyan and Margosyan's case are the kitchen, the table and the market place. Reading food in literary works written by Tovmasyan and Margosyan enables us to understand and articulate the Armenian experience in Turkey since the 1990s. Food might be considered one of the "safest" topics to talk about the "other", especially when the other is integrated into the dominant culture and safely visible to the dominant gaze by stripping off its traumatic past. However, food items with their sensual properties trigger the memories of the past through smell, taste and hearing and they become important tools to remember and reconstruct the past in present conditions.

This dissertation tries to answer questions such as: when a group of people continuously endure erasure and become voiceless in the face of mainstream culture, how does this group speak back in order to become visible? What are the cultural and literary tools that an ethnic community uses to reconcile with the past and get recognition in the mainstream culture? In order to find an answer to these questions, Margosyan and Tovmasyan's self narratives which are written in different literary genres are investigated. This dissertation project suggests developing an interdisciplinary approach to literature and food studies in contemporary Armenian literature in Turkish. In short, by analyzing the representation of their daily lives and its relation to the past through food performances I show how Margosyan and Tovmasyan speak back to the dominant culture in Turkey.

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Dedication:

In memory of my beloved mom

İnci Salmaner

Bir masaldı benim annem, bir vardı, bir yoktu...

The Bittersweet Taste of the Past:

Reading Food in Armenian Literature in Turkish

*“I may see myself as frightened as a pigeon,
but I know that in this country people do not touch pigeons”*

Hrant Dink January 10th, 2007¹

These were Hrant Dink’s last words in his weekly column article published nine days before he was assassinated in front of his own home. The next day, thousands of people from all ethnic backgrounds marched on the streets of İstanbul chanting, “We are all Hrant Dink, we are all Armenians.” His death sparked a reaction on an unprecedented level from various groups as people united against the relentless crime that was committed against a journalist whose purpose was to create a bridge between Armenians in Turkey and the Turkish people through the Armenian-Turkish newspaper *Agos*. Hrant’s last words of “living frightened as a pigeon” are symptomatic of the Armenian condition in Turkey. While the Armenian genocide experienced in 1915 is still freshly ingrained in the memories of community members and passes through generations; they have not been allowed to talk about these events in public, especially since the genocide is continuously denied by the Turkish state and by most people who are exposed to the dominant narratives of Turkish national history. Armenian schools and churches in Anatolia were continually annihilated over time, and the traces of the past were systematically obscured and denied by the Turkish state.² The denial of the genocide and

¹ Tulin Daloglu. "Nouvelles D'Arménie En Ligne." 01.23.2007. Web. Last Accessed 05.09.2014 http://www.armenews.com/article.php3?id_article=28665

² On the Armenian genocide and Armenians living in Turkey see: Akçam (2006) (2004) (2012), Ronald G Suny, Fatma M. Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark. (2011); Kevorkian, (2011)

the annihilation of the Armenian presence in public space (schools, churches etc.) in Anatolia forced Armenians to be confined to private spaces. The remaining schools and churches in İstanbul were restrained by the regulations of the Turkish state.³ The administrators of these institutions preferred to remain off the radar. The previously active role of Armenians in Ottoman intellectual life completely shifted and lost the power of their collective voice. As a result the Armenian culture was reduced to a “tolerable” minority group as long as it kept silent and the traces of the genocide were erased from the memories of people of the Turkish Republic. The desire of Armenian groups to be recognized as equal members of society gradually became more difficult to actualize until the early 1990s.⁴

This dissertation investigates Armenian literature in Turkish through two authors Takuhi Tovmasyan and Mıgırdıç Margosyan by analyzing their literary works with an emphasis on food. In doing this, my aim is to assess the significance of food in literary works in order to articulate the Armenian experience in Turkey since the 1990s. In other words, when a group of people continuously goes under erasure and become voiceless in the face of mainstream culture, how does this group speak back in order to become visible? What are the cultural and literary tools that an ethnic community uses to reconcile with the past and get recognition in the mainstream culture? These are the questions that I will tackle in this dissertation and in order to find an answer I will focus on the food narratives of two Armenian authors. The approach I take by studying

³ The regulations implemented on minority schools by MEB Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (National Education Ministry) see: Kanunlar ve Mevzuatlar elektronik, Last Accessed May 1, 2014 <http://www.ekanun.net/6581-sayili-kanun/index.html>

⁴ Other non-Muslim and ethnic minorities have had a similar experience in Turkey; as a result these problems are not exclusive to Armenians. However those groups are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Armenian food in literature instead of Armenian trauma in literature is a deliberate choice that I will explain further in this chapter. I am limiting my investigation to two Armenian authors, namely Takuhi Tovmasyan and Mıgırđıç Margosyan, writing from the same publishing house, and I am looking particularly at their self-narratives with a focus on food in specific. The self-narratives of Takuhi Tovmasyan and Mıgırđıç Margosyan scrutinized in this dissertation are one of the most relevant examples for evaluating the Armenian minority conditions in Armenian literature in Turkish. Thus far the studies were limited to genocide discourse, trauma and silence. This dissertation does not dwell on ontological questions such as whether there was a genocide or not but argues the subsequent generations' traumatic experience of 1915 from a literary perspective. This dissertation offers a methodology that transcends the limits of previous studies and offers a fresh angle in the field of comparative Turkish literature studies by adopting food as a literary device that creates meaning. Studying food in literature has been a developing field of study, which has yet to reach its potential in Turkish literature.⁵ My dissertation project suggests developing an interdisciplinary approach to literature and food studies in contemporary Armenian literature in Turkish by investigating Margosyan and Tovmasyan's self-narratives. In this introduction, I will provide a sweeping summary of Armenian literary culture in Turkey that enabled a historical and cultural context Margosyan and Tovmasyan have been writing and publishing their works and the reasons why I chose these two authors as my dissertation subject.

⁵ Sociologist Prof Zafer Yenel from Bogazici University has multiple publications of food production and its social implications but these works are limited to social sciences. See: Zafer Yenel, "Bir Arastirma Alanı Olarak Yeme-Icmenin Tarihi ve Sosyolojisi" [Food and Cuisine as a Field of Historical and Sociological Inquiry]. *Toplum ve Bilim*. n. 12, Winter 1996, pp. 195-228.; Review of S. Zubaida and R. Tapper (eds.), *Culinary Cultures of the Middle East*, 1994. *New Perspectives on Turkey*. n. 12, Spring 1995, pp. 157-164.; "The Changing World Food Order: The Case of Turkey." *New Perspectives on Turkey*. n. 9, Fall 1993, pp. 19-46

Writing from the Margins: the Contemporary Armenian Literature in Turkish Publishing Scene

On March 4th 2007, a Kurdish novelist Mehmed Uzun entitled his column in *Radikal* newspaper, “The narratives of those whose voice come from below,” referring to Mıgırdiç Margosyan’s autobiographical novel *Tespîh Taneleri* [Beads of Prayer Beads].⁶ This novel is Margosyan’s most successful novel. Published in 2006, it intertwines narratives of his childhood in the city of Diyarbakır with his adolescent years in İstanbul Armenian schools. It was written in the Turkish language and is specifically targeted a Turkish demographic. The question is what happened since the late 1980s in the Turkish literary scene and publishing circles that enabled authors like Margosyan to publish narratives, which talked about the Armenian experience in Turkey; the experience of minorities that has been silenced and marginalized since the foundation of the Republic. Why did certain publishing houses during this period start to encourage minority narratives which had thus far been confined to dinner tables among family members, whispered from lips to ears behind closed doors, murmured to babies in lullabies and how did these new texts become the means through which minorities became visible in a Turkish Republican context? Suddenly these topics about minority pasts were widely available in a manner that was not possible before. Their personal histories began to penetrate and challenge the dominant nationalist narrative that had ignored the sufferings of the minority before.

Armenian literature in Turkey has a long history that dates back to the Ottoman Empire. The contribution of non-Muslim authors to Ottoman literature is significant,

⁶ Uzun, Mehmed. “Sesi Alçaktan çıkanların Anlatısı.” *Radikal* Last Accessed. Web. 02 May 2014. http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek_haber.php?ek=r2&haberno=6807

particularly that of Armenians during the last decades of the empire. The spheres of Armenian and Turkish literature influenced each other greatly during the mid 19th century and Armenian authors also played an important role in the development of modern Turkish literature, specifically Turkish theatre.⁷ For instance, Hovhannes Hisarian (1827-1916) focused on the role of the novel in a society undergoing transformation in the introduction of his novel *Khosrov and Makruhi (İstanbul 1851)*, the first novel in Western Armenian.⁸ The end of this era coincides with the foundation of the Turkish Republic and the dispersion of a short-term Armenian literary movement initiated in 1922 called *Bardzravank*. This movement lasted for a year but ended abruptly because the founding intellectuals had to flee İstanbul.⁹

Even though Armenian literature in Turkey did not have a concrete movement after 1922, it continued to flourish mostly in the form of poetry, and was published in Armenian newspapers such as *Marmara* starting from 1955 when the *Marmara* newspaper added a section on literature. The *Jamanak* newspaper also enabled Armenian authors such as Zaven Biberyan to serialize their prose around the same time. The Armenian literature is mostly formed in the Armenian language through these short-lived Armenian newsletters. Many Armenian authors limited their writings to circulation within Armenian publications and most of the political weekly newspapers lasted for short periods of time either because of economic deficiency or ideological differences

⁷ Pars Tuğlacı, *Ermeni Edebiyatından Seçkiler* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1992) 5.
Mehmet Fatih Uslu. “Melodrama and comedy: Turkish and Armenian modern dramatic literatures in the Ottoman Empire” diss. Bilkent University, 2011

⁸ Tuğlacı 20.

⁹ For further readings on post-Ottoman era and Armenian intellectuals in Turkey see: R. Perroomian, *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey After 1915: The Metamorphosis of the Post-Genocide Armenian Identity As Reflected in Artistic Literature*, (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2008) 4.

with the Turkish government.¹⁰ There have been a limited number of studies and interest about Armenian literature in Turkey because of the marginalized nature of Armenians, as well as the language barrier that prevented Armenians communicate with the Turkish readership. The lack of interest in contemporary Turkish Armenian culture up to the late 1980s shows that the mutual influence in the initial period between Armenian and Turkish literatures had been interrupted. In addition to newspapers and newsletters from the Armenian community, there were Armenian authors and intellectuals who identified themselves more with leftist ideology rather than ethnic and religious associations. For the most part, they found space in leftist publishing houses during the 1970s. Regarding the Turkish literary scene before the 1980s, the literary market was mainly polarized between publishing houses that belonged to either rightist or leftist ideology. There was neither a concern about the existence of Armenians or their literature in the Turkish cultural and literary scene at that time. For instance, Ömer Türkeş determined that among 5000 novels he examined that were published between 1945-2006 there are only twenty-five novels in Turkish literature that mention Armenians. Most of these, with the exceptions of famous Turkish novelists Kemal Tahir and Yaşar Kemal, support the denial of Armenian genocide in 1915.¹¹ The absence of the topic demonstrates the lack of interest, concerning Armenians in Turkish culture and literature. Some Armenian authors (Vartan Ihmalyan, Hayk Açıkgöz, Sarkis Çerkezyan etc.) who focused on the leftist struggle in Turkey during the 60s and 70s eventually published their memoirs and novels through leftist publishing houses. For example Vartan Ihmalyan published from an

¹⁰ Levon P. Dabağyan, *Türkiye Ermenileri Tarihi*, (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2003)

¹¹ Other exceptional authors were Doğan Akhanlı, Ayşenur Yazıcı, İrfan Palalı, Arif Irgaç and Kemal Yalçın

underground publishing house called *Atılım* and wrote his short stories in Turkish. These authors allied with the communist party by stripping themselves of their ethnic identity and focused instead on the class struggle as a way to transcend the ethnic conflict.

Post 80s Armenian literature for a Turkish Audience.

During the 1980s and '90s, we witness a trend of ethnic expansion in the Turkish literary market with an increasing number of books written by authors who situated themselves in alignment with an ethnically marginalized perspective. Such an expansion in writing from different ethnic positions was not possible before the 1980s and the possibility of such narratives coincides with the post military coup era in Turkey. Minority discourses in Turkey appear at an unprecedented level after the 1980 military coup d'état as a result of multiple epistemological shifts in social and political space. Identity discourses emerged in the midst of questioning and challenging “Kemalist certainties”, nationalist historiography, and secularism while taking advantage of marginalization of “class” identity discourses.¹² Ethnic identity discourses appeared as a reaction to the state's homogenous identity politics and found an opportunity in the failure of Kemalist modernity. These discourses also took advantage of the military regime's suppression of class identities and leftist discourse.

The rise of genocide discourse both in Turkey and the diaspora grabbed the attention of Turkish intellectuals about Armenian culture and literature, as the political and cultural shift in Turkey after the military coup began to change Turkish literature. During the 1990s Armenian authors with the help of both political and literary change

¹² Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997)

began to express themselves through particular liberal publishing houses. These liberal publishing houses published authors, whose voices were heard as ethnically and politically marginalized, emphasizing a brotherhood of the people and geographic kinship in Anatolia during the late 1980s. It became possible to have questions about Armenians in the public space only after considering the aforementioned epistemological shift in Turkey. The focus has shifted from class identity to group identities such as ethnicity, gender etc.

The Belge (1977), Metis (1981), and Aras (1993) publishing houses were founded in the last handful of decades and have come to play significant roles in this process, particularly questioning previously suppressed ethnic identities in Turkey.¹³ Belge and Metis as founded in the wake of the 1980 military coup during the heavy censorship of leftist publications paved the way for breaking the silence of ethnically marginalized voices. A decade later Aras came to the literary scene as a publishing house with a distinct Armenian voice in Turkey in 1993, in which the authors that are subjected to examination in this dissertation have been publishing from Aras. However, it was not until 2004 that Aras gained remarkable visibility for the mainstream readership. It was only after the publication of “My Grandmother” by Fethiye Çetin, published by Metis that the question of Armenian-Turkish identity became the source of general anxiety within the Turkish population.¹⁴ In 2002 Rıfat Bali wrote in an article in *Virgöl* (a book

¹³ Belge as a leftist publishing house was established before the military coup of 1980. After the coup, it started publishing more on ethnic cultures and politics in Turkey.

¹⁴ Fethiye Çetin, *Anneannem*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2004) Fethiye Çetin’s autobiographical novel is symbolic for Armenian grandparents who converted to Islam during the genocide and hide this even from their own children and grandchildren until they were very old. Sometimes the children realize the situation after their parents and grandparents die when they find old birth certificates. It is significant in such cases; families that have never questioned their ancestral pasts start questioning their “Turkishness”.

review journal) that just by looking at the variety of publishing houses during the 1990s one can see the increasing interest in the writings of different ethnicities.¹⁵

The demanding question of “who are we?” as part of identity politics and the loss of an irrecoverable past because of the genocide became the basic approach that authors of Turkish Armenian literature used to create their own space to flourish.¹⁶ It is in this context that Armenian authors started to participate in Turkish literary production for Turkish readership from the early 1990s. As a result of this shift there has been a growing interest in challenging the homogenous official narratives about the Turkish past in the literary space, reflected in “memory narratives in the form of memoirs, oral history narratives or testimonials, and historical novels”.¹⁷

Post 90s Turkish Armenian literature is twofold and these two trends influence each other. On one hand there are Armenian authors who write about their own experience as an Armenian in Turkey. Authors in this group mainly publish their works through Aras publishing house. On the other hand there are Turkish and Armenian authors who does not necessarily publish in Aras or similar publishing houses, instead publish through more mainstream publishing houses. This includes scholars who do research on Armenians writing about Armenianness in Turkey. The most prolific Turkish

¹⁵ Rifat N. Bali, “Entelektüel Âlemin Yeni Dokunulmazları: Azınlıklar” *Virgöl* 48 (2002): 68-69.

¹⁶ For further readings on publishing houses and the nostalgia they create through multiculturalist discourses see: Catharina Dufft, *Turkish Literature and Cultural Memory: "multiculturalism" As a Literary Theme After 1980*. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009). Asli Iğsiz, "Documenting the Past and Publicizing Personal Stories: Sensescapes and the 1923 Greco-Turkish Population Exchange in Contemporary Turkey." *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 26.2 (2008): 451-87.

¹⁶ Laurent Mignon. *Ana Metne Taşınan Dipnotlar: Türk Edebiyatı Ve Kültürlerarasılık Üzerine Yazılar* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: İletişim, 2009)

¹⁷ Asli Iğsiz, "Polyphony and Geographic Kinship in Anatolia: Framing the Greek-Turkish Population Exchange." *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey* ed. Esra Özyürek. (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007) 165.

authors and scholars who began to pay closer attention to Armenian literature and culture and broke their silence in the first decay of 21st century, such as Kemal Yalçın, Fethiye Çetin, and İrfan Palalı helped accelerate the profusion of confession literature and testimonials about hidden Armenians in Turkey. By hidden Armenians I mean people who converted to Islam and took Turkish names in order to escape deportations during 1915. Turkish families sometimes discover that there are Armenians in their families many years later as in Fethiye Çetin's story.

Research about "hidden Armenians" and the interviews with them as well as collections of testimonials consists of memory narratives, which are oral historiographies in the form of self-narrations since 2000. As Hülya Adak and Ayşe Gül Altınay's works demonstrate, the paradigm shift that turned intellectuals' gaze to aforementioned testimonials and fictional works implies a denationalization of Turkish scholarship and a growing criticism of "official history". They argue that the official Turkish historiography consists of an absolute truth about the past.¹⁸ The "revelation" of hidden ethnic identities and the issue of Armenianness created a shocking effect especially after the publication of memoirs such as Fethiye Çetin's *My Grandmother* and unsettling the heavy truth of the official discourse on history. Questions such as "who are we?" "Is there a hidden Armenian or any other ethnicity among my ancestors other than 'Turk'?" began to circulate on a more popular level at the turn of this century in Turkish society.¹⁹

Yet, none of these above mentioned works became the focus of Aras publishing house, which claims to be an authentic agent of Armenian culture and literature.

¹⁸ Hülya Adak, and Ayşe Gül Altınay, "New perspectives on Turkey: Dossier on gender, ethnicity, and the nation-state" (İstanbul: Homer Kitabevi 2010)

¹⁹ Specifically, the group of people who would read publications from Belge and Metis are found mostly among liberal, middle class readers.

Armenian authors' narratives, publishing in Aras, appear to be more cautious than Turkish authors when it comes to speaking about the genocide. Aras's approach has been inclusive of translations from the late Ottoman era to today as well as personal narratives of Armenians living in Turkey who are closely connected to the Armenian community. Every publishing circle focuses on different aspects of minority experience and each of their approaches shows the agenda of that publishing house. Who is included as well as excluded from certain publishing circles becomes the focus of certain expectations from their authors. This is a question of positionality, which needs to be articulated by studying the authors' narratives coming out of a particular publishing house. What happens when Armenians seek for both recognition and visibility within the dominant culture while simultaneously resisting it? Aras Publishing House still remains in the margins of the publishing circles compared to others, but not because the authors coming out of it do not have anything to say about genocide or Armenian suffering. They certainly have more to say than their Turkish counterparts but the balance between recognition and resistance is difficult to maintain. It is important to note how ethnically Armenian Turkish citizens writing their self-narratives gain agency as minor ethnic subjects within the multiculturalist discourse in contemporary Turkey and how they appropriate their language in order to be published by speaking the language of hegemony. How is it possible to gain agency and power in order to speak out for one's perception of truth about the past while avoiding the taboo word "genocide"? Similar to when Mehmed Uzun refers to Margosyan as an author whose voice comes from below, the publishing house Aras's voice that Margosyan publishes from comes from below as well. It stems from a basement apartment in Taksim, in which authors and intellectuals participate in a

dialog that grows out of identity politics in Turkey. This dissertation looks at a very specific point in time in Turkish-Armenian narratives that are born from aforementioned conditions in the literary scene in Turkey. Studying Margosyan and Tovmasyan publishing from Aras in specific gives a hint about their level of comfort speaking about the past to the dominant reader. Their literary works are still in the margins of the literary scene attempting to become visible and recognized, with a result of telling the stories of the past on a level that the reader can sympathize with rather than feel disturbed by the trauma and the shock of genocide. That is why it is critical to look at the narratives of Armenian authors and the way they represent themselves to the dominant culture.

Why Food Instead of Trauma?

Food might be considered one of the “safest” topics to talk about the “other”, especially when the other is integrated into the dominant culture and safely visible to the dominant gaze by stripping off its traumatic past. When I started writing about Armenian culinary culture in Turkey, the most immediate response I received was a reference to Sezen Aksu’s song “Yine mi Çicek”, in which a famous Armenian dish “topik” is mentioned. Topik is a very famous appetizer served in a small plate in Armenian taverns in İstanbul. Through *topik* the Armenian identity is completely stripped of its “negative” connotations and became a part of “richness”/mosaic contributing to the dominant culture. Writing about food in Armenian literature in a Turkish context emerges from this seemingly available but reductionist space. As Ohnuki-Tierney thinks it is more understandable to see how a group of people can represent themselves as a single collective unit to the other people they encounter but she finds it puzzling how people

chose a particular mode of representation over another one since there are multiple contesting modes of representing multiple voices in any social group.²⁰ When considering food narratives as strategies for representing the self to the dominant culture it is important to analyze the underlying stories that the authors arrive at while speaking about their personal as well as their Armenian past in Turkey. In other words, although every family member has experienced personal loss and memories in their past that are very unique to them, some of these losses and memories are intertwined and ingrained very much into the stories of genocide and displacement of a generation of people. This dissertation undermines and rakes up such stories in Margosyan and Tovmasyan's self-narratives in relation to food.

Mıgırđıç Margosyan: An "Infidel" in the Homeland

Mıgırđıç Margosyan was born in Diyarbakır in December 23rd, 1938, in the Hançepök district, commonly known as the *Gavur Mahallesi* [Infidel Quarter]. He received his primary education and half of his secondary school education in Diyarbakır in Ziya Gökalp elementary school and then continued his education in İstanbul in Bezciyan Middle School and Getronagan High School. He received his college degree from the Philosophy Department at İstanbul University. His stories were published in the Armenian newspaper Marmara and some of these stories were turned into a book in 1984 called *Mer Ayt Gogmen* [Bizim Oralar – Our District]. Margosyan published *Gavur Mahallesi* [Infidel Quarter](1992), *Söyle Margos Nerelisen?* [Tell me Margos Where are you from?] (1995), and *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* [Our Ticket is Cut for İstanbul]

²⁰ Wimal Dissanayake, *Narratives of Agency: Self-making in China, India, and Japan*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 152.

(1998) in Turkish and in 1999 published his second book written in Armenian, *Dikrisi Aperen* [Dicle Kıyılarında – At the Shores of Dicle]. Gavur Mahallesi and Bizim Oralar were translated to Kurdish in 1999 and published by Avesta Publishing House. His last book, called *Tespîh Taneleri* [Beads of Prayer Beads], was published in 2006. The columns he wrote for Evrensel newspaper were published by Belge publishing house. He still writes for the Evrensel newspaper. He is the oldest of nine children, six girls and three boys. His mother is Haçhatun (Margosyan's father calls her Hano) and his father is Sarkis, however in the public space he goes with the Turkish name "Ali". Margosyan's father was separated from his mother during the long march at the age of four and found by a Muslim villager. He was raised by him, converted to Islam, and named as Ali. Sarkis's mother Saro found his son and daughter 13 years later, but her husband (Mıgırdıç Margosyan, the author, takes his name from his grandfather whom he had never known) and other children did not survive. With Saro Nene's determination, her children eventually converted back to Christianity. Since then Margosyan's father was determined to "prove" himself as a "true" Armenian Christian. This trauma plays an important role in the way Margosyan was raised. His father's determination of proving his "true" Armenian identity leads him sending his son to İstanbul to learn the language of their ancestors.

Takuhi Tovmasyan: Another "Infidel"; Another Story

Takuhi Tovmasyan was born in the Yedikule neighborhood in İstanbul in April 14th, 1952. She received her primary education at Samatya Anarad Hıgutyun elementary school and Bakırköy Dadyan Middle School and then completed her education in

Samatya Sahakyan-Nunyan High School, all of which are Armenian schools in İstanbul. She explains her motivation to write is primarily to get out of the maternal path that occupied her entire life. Due to lack of her job experience, she eventually found a job as a typesetter in Aras Publishing House and wrote *Sofranız Şen Olsun: Ninelerimin Mutfağından Damağımda, Aklımda Kalanlar* [May Your Table Be Jolly: those that remain in my palate and in my memories from the kitchen of my grandmothers].²¹ Her first and last cookbook/memoir received an unprecedented level of attention from readers. Compared to Margosyan, Tovmasyan has only one book published and she translated an Ottoman Armenian's cookbook to Turkish.²² Yet her cookbook memoir is a refreshing subgenre that needs to be studied in depth in order to open new perspectives on studying food, literature and ethnicity in Turkey.

The neighborhood where she was born and raised in Yedikule/Samatya is a neighborhood in İstanbul, which was predominantly occupied by non-Muslim minorities in Turkey (Greeks, Armenians, Jews), and Tovmasyan and her parents moved to Bakırköy during the late 1960s. The neighborhoods where she grew up mostly remained separate from the Muslim population in İstanbul and were confined to Armenian and other non-Muslim minorities. Her grandparents came to İstanbul from Çorlu during WWI, a time period during which Armenians were forcefully expelled from their homes and exiled during the long march.²³ Her immediate family first settled down in Çatalca

²¹ Takuhi Tovmasyan, *Sofranız Şen Olsun: Ninelerimin Mutfağından Damağımda, Aklımda Kalanlar* (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Aras, 2004)

²² Boğos Piranyan and Takuhi Tovmasyan, *Aşçının Kitabı* (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2008)

²³ The 1915 expulsion of Armenians is referred as, Long March, Death March, or in Margosyan and Tovmasyan's texts referred as Der Zor and Kafle. Kafle: Kafle, or in other words Kafile convoy is a term used among Armenians for the deportation of Armenians and the long march in

while some other family members were in Silivri. Eventually Tovmasyan's family moved to Yedikule Samatya. During our interview Tovmasyan mentioned that during the summertime they used to visit relatives in Çatalca, Çorlu and Silivri quite often.²⁴ Both her grandmothers were young when they left Çorlu. As Tovmasyan puts it, they lived as a *Çorlulu* wherever they went.²⁵ Tovmasyan is the younger of two children born to Mari and Bedros Tovmasyan. Her brother Yervant Tovmasyan occasionally appears in the her book as a child either helping their mother to carry food to Greek neighbors or a goofy character who attempts to drink all the extra liquor during the "Name Days" when cherry liquor was prepared for the guests.²⁶ It is understood from her book that the gatherings they have in Surp Nigoğayos Church that Tovmasyan's family's religious affiliation is with the Gregorian church, so they are Orthodox Armenians.

Chapters in this Dissertation

In the first chapter, the significance of food in literature is investigated in depth. This chapter lays the foundation of food studies and the literary genres analyzed in the corresponding chapters in this dissertation. There four parts in this chapter: (a) I show the development of food studies in multiple disciplines in order to give background information to the reader (b) Food's role in identity formation both in the individual and collective sense is investigated. There are multiple ways that one can study food's role in

1915. Der Zor: (Deir ez-Zor) was a designated area in Syria where the Armenian refugees were forced to go during the long march.

²⁴ Takuhi Tovmasyan Interviewed by Müge Salmaner Individual Interview 11.16.2011

²⁵ Takuhi Tovmasyan 15 – 16.

²⁶ Tovmasyan 103, 122.

our lives.²⁷ However for the purpose of this dissertation I am limiting my argument to food and identity formation since the dissertation is about the Armenian identity formation through collectively consumed and/or produced food as presented in Turkish-Armenian literature. (c) The food narratives are performative and that the senses other than sight (taste, smell, and hearing etc.) play an important role in remembering past events (d) Food narratives rely on certain literary genres that will be investigated in the first chapter such as gastrography, autobiographical series and autofiction. Overall, this chapter prepares the reader for what is coming: it legitimizes the usage of food as a tool in my analysis in the following chapters. The main purpose of this chapter is to create a bridge between food and identity reflected in self-narratives. The following chapters trace Armenian ethnic identities in Turkey through food manifested in rural and urban settings by examining Tovmasyan and Margosyan's self narratives.

The second chapter entitled "Traces of Loss and Displacement in Takuhi Tovmasyan's Cookbook Memoir" focuses on Takuhi Tovmasyan's *Sofraniz Sen Olsun*, a cookbook memoir categorized under the genre of gastrography. The chapter traces Tovmasyan's recipes and stories attached to each recipe in order to show the conditions of displacement and loss in the Armenian community in İstanbul. In other words, transmission of food recipes from grandmothers to daughters and granddaughters are the sites where we can trace the displacement and loss defining the Armenian "minority" subjectivity as a sensual experience that can be experienced through food in Turkey. The chapter starts with a study that asserts lullabies as markers of Armenian identities and

²⁷ My perspective on identity formation/construction is informed by Stuart Hall's works see: Stuart Hall, and P. Du. Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*. (London: Sage, 1996); *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. (London: Sage in association with the Open University, 1997)

sufferings of Armenians since the genocide. In a similar vein, I show in this chapter how food is a marker of Armenian identity in Tovmasyan's cookbook memoir. How the food is prepared and consumed, how food's performative nature is analogous to the performative nature of identity and how such performativity is manifested in a cookbook genre is shown in this chapter. The chapter is formed according to the temporal and spatial organization of the book. Spatial organization is divided into two categories. (1). The events that took place before Tovmasyan was born. These stories of migration and exile are told to Tovmasyan within the context of the kitchen. (2). The events that took place while Tovmasyan was growing up constitute her childhood memories, called sensescapes. The experienced events in relation to the recipes trigger the food memories that Tovmasyan narrates. Temporal organization of the book is divided into three categories: (a) everyday food habits, (b) seasonal (ritualistic) food habits, and (c) exceptional commensalities in which people gather for instance during an engagement or wedding event etc. All of these occasions are analyzed in relation to Tovmasyan's understanding of the Armenian identity in İstanbul.

The third chapter entitled "Food Memories and Subjectivity in Margosyan's Autobiographical Stories" focuses on Margosyan's earlier stories published between 1992-1998, in story books respectively *Gavur Mahallesi*, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen?* *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi*. Unlike Tovmasyan's writing of food as shown in the previous chapter, Margosyan does not intend to write exclusively about food but arrives at food as a result of associations that led him to remember his childhood. This chapter shows how food has an important role in shaping identities and furthermore analyzes the complexities of identity formation in Margosyan's food memories by looking at birth

rituals, organization of family, community, and religion networks around the food, seasonal food preparations and preservation of food as a way of preserving identities, culinary expressions that surrounds religious rituals, and women's daily life with food in Armenian communities in Diyarbakır. Even though Margosyan does not follow a linear temporal sequence, in this chapter I analyze the stories in a linear fashion to show the development of a child in relation to food. By organizing the investigated stories in a linear temporal unity, I show that the learned taste for certain foods such as “malez” correlates with ethnic identity formation as a learned behavior. As Margosyan grows up different tastes are included in his palate, which develops over time when he encounters with different types of food from İstanbul region. Different snacks and stories are attached to them in his memories.

The fourth chapter entitled “Exilic Sensibilities and Food Narratives in *Beads of the Prayer Beads*” examines contested identities and multiplication of identity formations in two different geographical spaces (İstanbul and Diyarbakır) by looking at Margosyan's autobiographical novel. While utilizing ‘food’, a reoccurring theme in Margosyan's works, I analyzed the author's shifting identifications with Armenian, Turkish and Kurdish communities. Margosyan's “voluntary” exile from the city of Diyarbakır to İstanbul for the sake of learning his ancestral Armenian language creates a split and a shift in his understanding of his surroundings, as well as his identification with multiple ethnicities. Food and foodways, among many others, is a medium that articulates Margosyan's allegiances to his homeland Diyarbakır, in which his ethnic identity is contested. The structure of the chapter shows the two functions of food in Margosyan's autobiographical writing a. Instrumental role of food in Diyarbakır b. Disciplinary role of

food in İstanbul. The first part of the chapter appears to be an extension of chapter three by investigating the role of food at “home”, in Diyarbakır, in which the performativity of food as an instrumental tool comes to the forefront. The second part of the chapter shows the institutionalized form of food consumption in an environment in which Margosyan negotiates his rural identity in the face of urban Armenian identity.

Overall, the narratives of the two authors who are at the center of this dissertation differ from each other on multiple levels yet the food in their narratives inescapably draw them back to their peculiar histories that were not represented in grand narrative of Turkish official discourse; nor in literary texts. My initial intention in looking at Margosyan’s literary works has shifted since I started working on Tovmasyan’s cookbook memoir and began considering Tovmasyan’s way of looking at food and Armenian identity. Reading the self-narratives by exploring food as a literary device shaped my methodology. Even though both narratives, which are at the center of this dissertation, are studied according to their representation of food, they differ greatly from each other. The first book, Takuhi Tovmasyan’s cookbook memoir *Sofraniz Sen Olsun* is filled with recipes as well as stories of her familial past whereas Mıgırđıç Margosyan’s stories and novel are not filled with food and recipes yet he constantly makes references to food while talking about the past. In other words Tovmasyan’s point of departure is food, which helps her recall and gain access to certain memories. Conversely, in Margosyan’s stories and novel food mostly appears while he is talking about certain stories. By performing from-the-inside Tovmasyan’s experience in the kitchen creates a more appropriate approach in a cookbook memoir genre whereas Margosyan’s experience as an observer of the kitchen by watching mother’s cooking from-the-outside

finds a body in autobiographical stories and novels. Margosyan talks about the food from a consumer point of view whereas Tovmasyan is the both the producer and the consumer. There are multiple comparative points to make between these authors, which will unfold throughout this dissertation.

The centrality of food in our daily lives is indispensable. However, the attention given to food is immensely negligible in comparison to other fields. Takuhi Tovmasyan and Mıgırdiç Margosyan's self-narratives through food are unique amongst Armenian literature in the Turkish language. This is especially so as minority authors speaking to the dominant culture from below and making the non-Muslim minority conditions visible to a mainstream audience while using food as a cultural mean that both unites cultures and also creates ethnic boundaries. The literature on self-narratives through food and its modified sub-genres are growing areas that need to be examined in detail before presenting how Margosyan and Tovmasyan's self narratives fit in this space. The next chapter opens a discussion and offers a literature review on food starting from the simplest definitions of food, gastronomy, cuisine and food studies to a more complex role of food in self and community making, memory, identity and in literature, particularly in self-narratives that are divided into sub-genres such as cookbooks, autobiographical stories, novels.

Chapter 1: Food as a Literary Device in Armenian Literature in Turkish

Methodologies

“Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed,
some few to be chewed and digested.”²⁸

This dissertation is designed to contribute to Armenian literature in Turkey by offering literary analysis on minority authors’ writing in Turkish. As explained in the introduction, it evaluates texts that seek reconciliation and recognition among the dominant readership and the focus is *how* they do it by talking about food, which is a geographically and culturally specific product. In the introduction, it is explained in detail *why* food enables an ethnic group to talk about the past in a more articulate fashion than narratives that focus on trauma of the past and it is explained why studying Takuhi Tovmasyan and Mıgırdiç Margosyan’s literary works has been the most appropriate choice as the subject of this study. This chapter takes it one step further and explains *how* it is possible to talk about food in literary works by approaching from an interdisciplinary angle and utilizing newly emerging studies on food.

What is food?

The simplest definition of food is that food is what we eat to live. Specifically, it “refers to the material substances we humans consume to meet the physiological requirements for sustenance”.²⁹ In addition people eat food for pleasure as well, not merely for nutrition. Solomon and Waiver claim that as a result the food we eat tells us something about our preferences and food customs that are socially determined and

²⁸ Francis Bacon, Richard Whately, and Franklin F. Heard. *Bacon's Essays* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1868) Internet resource, 73.

²⁹ Priscilla P. Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 3.

rooted in cultural codes.³⁰ Once the food is put in a cooking process it is transformed into a more edible and consumable state, which is called gastronomy. That is why Ferguson emphasizes that “Animals fill themselves, people eat; intelligent people alone know how to eat. From eating simply to live, *gastronomy* moves us into the realm of living to eat.”³¹ Only then does it become feasible to talk about gastronomical choices of people and groups. These choices come from different religious, ethnic, and national channels as well as class, economic, medical, and geographical conditions that are articulated and systematized with cuisines, which are stable cultural codes.³² Furthermore, cuisine is the manifestation of collective gastronomic choices. It shapes the food culture. People’s identification with types of food is confirmed on a daily basis by the choices they make. “As cooking makes food to fit to eat, so cuisine, with its formal and symbolic ordering of culinary practices, turns that act of nourishment into an object fit for intellectual consumption and aesthetic appreciation.”³³ That is to say, by turning food into a consumable state that is articulated and fixed through cultural mores, cuisine becomes a politically and culturally charged notion as well.

This dissertation benefits from food studies, which is a recently developed field and combines the methodologies of food studies with literary analysis in order to examine Takuhi Tovmasyan’s and Mıgırdıç Margosyan’s narratives. Food studies is a recently developed field even though food accounts and eating habits date as far back as the first written records came into being. Scholarly interest and investigation in the field

³⁰ Solomon H. Katz, and William W. Weaver. *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*. (New York: Scribner, 2003) xviii.

³¹ Ferguson 3.

³² Ferguson 3. “... [*C*]uisine refers to the properly cultural construct that systematizes culinary practices and transmutes the spontaneous culinary gesture into a stable cultural code”

³³ Ferguson 4.

is a contemporary development; food and foodways is a concern of multiple disciplinary fields.³⁴ As Jennifer Berg claims, food studies is interdisciplinary and relies on methods and approaches from other disciplines. In this sense she finds similarities between food studies and other disciplinary fields, such as American studies, women's studies, and performance studies.³⁵ Food is a primary concern of nutritionists because it has the most important role in health and bodily functions. In addition to that, the symbolic nature of food and eating practices is more of a concern for anthropologists and sociologists, which is why they tend to ask what food means in the context of a culture.³⁶ In other words, food studies is a sub-discipline that borrows multiple methodologies from major disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and history. Earlier studies exemplify that the scope of food studies was limited to the production and the distribution of food alongside the development of nutritional science. In other words, food practices are studied in multiple disciplines for the last two decades mutually benefits the newly establishing food studies and the other disciplinary fields. The lack of studies on food studies in conjunction with social sciences and humanities does cause scholars to miss the relation between food and cultural and social implications of such a mundane habit. This

³⁴ Foodways are defined as the intersection of food and culture. In other words foodways are “all of the traditional activities, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors associated with the food in your daily life. Foodways include customs of food production, preservation, preparation, presentation, gathering, marketing (both buying and selling), uses of food products other than for eating and food folklore.” Julia Darnton. "Michigan State University MSU Extension." *Foodways: When Food Meets Culture and History*. Last Accessed Web. 02 May 2014.

http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/foodways_when_food_meets_culture_and_history

³⁵ Jennifer Berg Marion Nestle Amy Bentley in Ed. Solomon, H Katz. *Encyclopedia of Food & Culture Volume II Food Production to Nuts* (Thomson, Gale, 2003).

Furthermore, Berg continues, “Food studies may be unusual, however, in the breadth of the disciplines on which it draws. Economists, historians, psychologists, nutritionists, agronomists, geologists, geographers, archeologists, environmental scientists, legal scholars, political scientists, and historians – culinary and otherwise – all bring distinct methods of research and analysis to bear on food themes.” 17.

³⁶ Deborah Lupton, *Food, the Body, and the Self* (London: Sage Publications, 1996) 7.

dissertation particularly contributes to the field of Turkish and Armenian literature and suggests food as a tool to understand both these literatures and cultures while investigating the daily life of Armenian authors as the way they chose to represent it to the reader.

Individual and Collective Selves in relation to Food

Ohnuki-Tierney suggests that once food is consumed, it becomes the part of the body and the self.³⁷ Similar to other cultural means, food can be utilized as a tool to create a coherent narrative of self. Bell problematizes this narrative of self as follows: “Thinking about food has much to reveal about how we understand our personal and collective identities. Thinking about food can help reveal the rich and messy textures of our attempts at self understanding, as well as our interesting and problematic understanding of our relationship to social Others.”³⁸ In other words, food choices play a significant role in articulating a person’s position in a given culture. Food narratives enable the narrator to organize and stabilize stories of the self, not necessarily in a progressive and linear manner (although that is possible as well), but they instead give voice to the narrator of this genre that would not be otherwise possible. Narratives of women, such as Tovmasyan’s, are especially good examples for this. When I asked her why she chose to write a cookbook memoir instead of a memoir that spoke about the stories of her family, her response was striking 1. Food reminded her of stories 2. Food empowered her. Without the food context Tovmasyan’s stories of family members were

³⁷ Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice As Self: Japanese Identities Through Time*. (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993) 5.

³⁸ David Bell, and Gill Valentine, *Consuming Geographies: We Are Where We Eat*. (London: Routledge, 1997) 2.

in flux and food organizes her stories both in her mind and most certainly in her cookbook memoir. Another significant point is that food and the space that the food inhabits (kitchen, dinner table etc.) make Tovmasyan feel the most empowered since she felt she has the most knowledge about the food in the house and has control over it.³⁹

Even though the very well known dictum “We are what we eat” is an overly used and limiting approach to food, it gives a clue about one’s relationship to food that is beyond the food’s nutritional value that has something to do with one’s subjectivity.⁴⁰

In addition to this, food has the power to enable a person to form the self. Once the food is being consumed together with others, it is called commensality.⁴¹ The food

³⁹ There are significant debates on women’s empowerment and food studies that are beyond the scope of this dissertation. For further readings see: Arlene V. Avakian, and Barbara Haber. *From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies: Critical Perspectives on Women and Food*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005); Carole Counihan, and Steven L. Kaplan, *Food and Gender: Identity and Power*. (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998)

⁴⁰ Self/identity/ subjectivity/identification are terms that are contested and the discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However it is a very important area to think about the definition of self. The Humanist definition of “self” is a unique, stable, progressive agent that is at the center. Moya shows in *Reclaiming Identity* that in Humanist tradition the identity has the essentialist structure that fixes one’s self-perception through only one aspect. (Paula M. L Moya, and Michael R. Hames-Garcia. *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*. (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2000). This is analogous to Saussurian structuralism in that one signifier signifies only the one signified, which is how the meaning is fixed. However, in Derridian *différance*, Derrida shows that the meaning is never fixed; it differs and defers continuously. There is no end to do signification. Poststructuralist theory enables us to understand the self as a subject that is part of the language structure; there are now possibilities to claim that the constructed self in western epistemology can be deconstructed. In the light of this explanation it is possible to talk about subject positions and their relation to the center and the strategies to challenge the hegemony of the center. See more on the discursive production of self/agency/subjectivity etc: “The recognition of the force of 'discursive practices', the ways in which people are 'positioned' through those practices and the way in which the individual's 'subjectivity' is generated through the learning and use of certain discursive practices are commensurate with the 'new psycho-socio-linguistics'” Davies Bronwyn, and Rom Harre. "Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves." *Positioning*. Last Accessed 02 May 2014. <http://www.massey.ac.nz/~alock/position/position.htm> Also see: Wimal Dissanayake. *Narratives of Agency: Self-making in China, India, and Japan*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996)

⁴¹ Sami Zubaida, and Richard Tapper, *A Taste of Thyme: Culinary Cultures of the Middle East*. (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2000) 12. “Commensal occasions range from normal family

becomes a metaphor for “we”, which leads to social groupings defined by what food items we agree or refuse to eat. “It is for this reason that ‘our food’ versus ‘their food’ become a powerful way to express ‘us’ versus ‘them’.”⁴² There is a binary position in this process: on one hand particular groups use food transactions to separate themselves as unique entities, and on the other hand some groups use food to eliminate that separation marking the boundary between the collective self and the other, for example, as a basis of discrimination.”⁴³

These boundaries usually manifest themselves particularly in national cuisines through the appropriation of certain dishes as a part of nation’s unique characteristics. French cuisine is a relevant example because it has monopolized the culinary world in the international arena as a manifestation of the entire French culture. However such exclusivity and pride is not particular to France as almost all national cuisines have a similar attitude in relation to their food. Appadurai examines how Indian cuisine is more inclusive of regional cuisines in the body of national cuisine than others such as France or Britain. He explains that Indian cuisine, unlike British and French cuisine, does not try to hide its “regional and ethnic roots”.⁴⁴ In the making of Turkish national cuisine one can observe very similar symptoms. Since the early 1980s there were multiple attempts to

meals to the entertainment of visitors and invited guests, to life-cycle and other ceremonial meals, to religious occasions. At all these, commensality is a demonstration of social solidarity among participants, bearing moral implications of mutual support in the future. Those who eat together implicitly mark their common identity and equality, particularly on religious occasions.” C. N. Seremetakis. *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory As Material Culture in Modernity*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994) 37. “Commensality here is not just the social organization of food and drink consumption and the rules that enforce social institutions at the level of consumption. Nor can it be reduced to the food-related senses of taste and odor. Commensality can be defined as the exchange of sensory memories and emotions, and of substances and objects incarnating remembrance and feeling.”

⁴² Dissanayake 169.

⁴³ Ohnuki-Tierney 5.

⁴⁴ Arjun Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 30.1 (1988) 5.

contextualize Turkish cuisine among scholars of history and anthropology in multiple food conferences and books in order to show the “multicultural” notion of Turkish cuisine.⁴⁵ Local cuisines and the cuisines of ethnic minorities under an overarching theme called Anatolian tastes come to the forefront in these food symposiums and books. Once they are “classified” as Turkey’s multiple tastes as a mark of multiplicity, they are marked as Turkish cuisine.

Armenian cuisine has found a niche in these narratives for the past 10 years in in the urban context especially in İstanbul. Defne Karaosmanoğlu explains that the rise of writings on minority cuisines in İstanbul is in proportion to the rise of the politics of multiculturalism, as “İstanbul is perceived as an extension of Ottoman imperial city with its highly multicultural character.”⁴⁶ When ethnic food is accepted within a multiculturalist discourse in some cases it is welcomed within the dominant culture although as Cozzi warns “... the consumption of other’s food is not just a demonstration of cultural dominance, it is also an attempt to absorb the Other, for the knowledge confers power.”⁴⁷ In some other cases food of the “Other” is not welcomed, such as in the case of Palestinian food in Israel according to Gvion the food is considered as being “inferior”.⁴⁸

Besides food having the power to give a sense of individual and collective connection and/or disconnection with others it also has the power to create nostalgia in

⁴⁵ Especially Feyzi Halıcı led this attempt through a series of conferences that bring together folklorists, literary scholars and historians. See: Feyzi Halıcı, *Üçüncü Milletlerarası Yemek Kongresi: Türkiye, 7-12 Eylül 1990* (Ankara: Konya Kültür ve Turizm Vakfı, 1991)

⁴⁶ Defne Karaosmanoğlu, “Remembering Past(s): The Construction of Cosmopolitan İstanbul through Nostalgic Flavors”, *Food As Communication: Communication As Food*. ed. Janet M Cramer, Carlita P. Greene, and Lynn Walters. (New York: Peter Lang, 2011) 40.

⁴⁷ Annette Cozzi, *The Discourses of Food in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 6.

⁴⁸ Liora Gvion, *Beyond Hummus and Falafel: Social and Political Aspects of Palestinian Food in Israel*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012)

distressful situations when identity needs to be reassured. Locher argues when people are physically disconnected from their families, communities or any primary group that they identify with, their sense of self occasionally become fractured. If that happens, consuming certain food items that are linked with the past may repair those fractures. In other words, in order to preserve the sense of cultural, familial and particularly ethnic identity, consumption of particular food items help with this process.⁴⁹ That is to say, the most immediate cases exemplified in food narratives are ethnic groups, especially when the group in question is a minority group. The narratives of ethnic minorities within the dominant culture are far more fragmented than the narratives of dominant culture because the past is easily dismissed, forgotten, or eliminated. As a result the scholars of food studies argue that food and foodways reinforce group identities not only among dominant groups but more so in suppressed groups. Immigrants, minorities and women find alternative channels to articulate their experiences within dominant cultures through certain sensual experiences (sound, smell, taste etc.). Food is one of these channels. For instance, as it will be shown in chapter three and four, Margosyan's stories have a strong "we" narrative, in which the food specifically becomes a metonym of the collective selves as Armenians. However, as Margosyan grows up and is removed from the location he was born and is exposed to Armenians in different geographical spaces, his "we" narrative as Armenian through the food, "we" goes awry and the taste and the smell of the food changes throughout his narratives.

According to Deborah Lupton there is a strong link between the senses of taste and smell and the emotional dimensions of human experience. The physical experience

⁴⁹ Julie Locher, William Yoels, Donna Maurer, and Ells J. van. "Comfort Foods: an Exploratory Journey into the Social and Emotional Significance of Food." *Food and Foodways*. 13.4 (2005): 273-297.

of touching, smelling, preparing, taking it into the mouth, chewing and swallowing it are all sensual experiences that evoke emotions on both the conscious and unconscious levels.⁵⁰ Lupton's approach to senses and emotional responses to those senses is remarkable as it suggests the link between the senses and the memory. How the memories are triggered by sensual experiences such as taste and smell is significant in the case of foodways. Even the hearing sense can be a trigger. For instance, the drizzling sound of frying oil in a pan sparks memories that may not be normally accessible as shown in the following chapter in which Tovmasyan remembers the house where she grew up upon hearing the frying oil. The anthropological study of senses is a much-contested field of study and in this respect it is similar to memory studies.⁵¹ Scholars of anthropology of senses claim that sensory perception is not only a physical act but also a cultural one and gustatory sensations are not any exception to this according to Classen.⁵² The relationship between memories and senses is undeniable. For instance, Proust's famous work *Remembrance of Things Past* sets a significant example between the food and the memory. Proust's madeleines become an iconic literary device that creates a

⁵⁰ Lupton 31.

⁵¹ Memory studies have been challenged especially in the face of "traditional" understanding of History as a discipline. Kerwin Lee Klein in his defense of history in the case of rise of memory studies claims that history is an objective, secular, empirical and modern discipline that has the ultimate authority to narrate the past. By defining history in the realms of such distinguished characteristics Klein pushes "memory" into the domain of "traditional", primordial, subjective. One may ask why Klein feels the need to make such a distinction between history and memory. By making memory appear to be a primordial, non-secular concept Klein reinforces conventions of history with claims of "modernity", "reason", "truthfulness" and by doing that he emphasizes the "empirical" nature of "history" in contrast to memory. However, his dismissive approach to memory studies does not necessarily make history more empirical, truthful or rational as scholars of various studies such as cultural history and genealogy argue differently. See: Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse." *Representations* 69 (2000): 127-150.

⁵² Constance Classen, "Foundations for an Anthropology of the Senses." *International Social Science Journal*. 49.3 (1997) 401.

bridge between the past and the present: the involuntary remembrance of a buried past.⁵³ Gidroy commenting on Proust's madeleines suggests that the memories are preserved in our bodily senses long after we consciously forget about them and he finds it ironic that our so-called fragile senses such as taste and smell are the ones that preserve the memories of past experiences.⁵⁴ Like Proust's experience with madeleines, we can trace food, eating, cooking in literature more often than not and food is the most zealous companion of self-narratives in particular.

Food in Self-Narratives

By focusing on food practices and self-narratives in three different genres (cookbook, autobiographical story, novel) this dissertation aims to show the discursive production of selves through food narratives. Takuhi Tovmasyan's book is a cookbook memoir whereas Migirdiç Margosyan's works are autobiographical story collections and a novel. Starting from the cookbook memoir, the functions of food in certain genres in relation to the genres Tovmasyan and Margosyan wrote in can be traced. How an author senses the world and transcribes those senses into narrative and how s/he negotiates representation of him/herself through food narratives will be the main focus of following chapters in this dissertation. Narratives of the kitchen, dinner table, and the courtyards where the women prepare food are the spaces in which the past is remembered, articulated, cooked and reinvented. The ethnic and cultural identities are reconciled in these realms as well. What is eaten, what is not eaten, how it is eaten, and commensalities

⁵³ Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, (New York: Random House, 1981) 48.

⁵⁴ James P. Gilroy, "Food, Cooking, and Eating in Proust's *La Recherche Du Temps Perdu*. (Marcel Proust)." *Twentieth Century Literature*. 33 (1987) 101.

are the points of reference in which groups' identification with certain cultural codes are reinforced.

As previously mentioned once the food is consumed it becomes the part of the body: it is a metonym for being the part of the self. Therefore, food narratives can be classified as self-narratives. Self-narratives are not limited to food narratives, but we cannot talk about food narratives without the self. Autobiography is a type of self-narrative that monopolized the genre as a self (auto), life (bios), writing (graphe) as the Greek roots of the word suggest. Moreover as a genre of self-representation and self-realization autobiography has been specific to a certain type of "man" in the West that was a representative of his time and has been a "historically important" figure according to Gusdorf and Marcus, who are the first scholars looking into autobiography.⁵⁵ During the 19th century, the genre gave the illusion of a life narrative that was progressive, linear, and factual of one's past. Such a definition of the genre is problematic when it comes to autobiographies of women, minorities and non-Western people, whose "self-creation and self-consciousness are profoundly different".⁵⁶ The difference in autobiographies of women, minorities and non-Western people rests on the styles employed in subverting the genre in order to enable writing about the self. In her autobiographical essay, called "Birth of a Writer", Zhor Uonissi says, "How hard it is for the writer to introduce *himself*? And even harder exercise for a creative person to present a statement about *himself* – near impossible that should be in the form of straightforward autobiography".⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Linda Anderson, *Autobiography* (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2010) 17.

⁵⁶ Shari Benstock, "Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice"; *The Private self: theory and practice of women's autobiographical writings* ed. Susan Stanford Freidman (UNC Press, 1988) 35.

⁵⁷ Zhor Uonissi, "Birth of a Writer" *In the House of Silence: Autobiographical Essays by Arab Women Writers* ed. Fadia Faqir, and Shirley Eber (Reading: Garnet, 1998) 141. (italics are mine)

By referring to herself as a male (himself), Uonissi attempted to show that women's writing about themselves in a language and a genre that is centered in a male dominated society creates challenges for a woman to narrate herself. In a similar vein, ethnic minorities' autobiographical writings face challenges when it comes to conventions of autobiography.

In "Reading Autobiography" Smith and Watson determined 60 types of sub-genre that come out of self life writing (self narratives). This dissertation focuses on only three subgenres namely *gastrography* (autobiographical cookbooks), *serial autobiography* (autobiographical stories), and *autofiction* (autobiographical fictions).⁵⁸ The narratives that are investigated in this dissertation centered on food memories, which gave the narrators voice about themselves which otherwise would not be possible. Hauck-Lawson and Deutsch call this: food voices and claim that what people do not eat reveal as much about their identity and culture as what they do choose to eat. More importantly, the food voice usually is more articulate in expressing certain feelings and experiences than the spoken voice.⁵⁹ What are heard in Tovmasyan and Margosyan's self-narratives are their food voices, the voice that would possibly not be heard if they were told otherwise.

Cookbooks as Self-Narratives

It is generally accepted that the cookbook genre is a textual compilation of food recipes with multiple courses of dishes listed. There is a tendency to organize cookbooks

⁵⁸ Sidonie Smith, and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). These terms are borrowed from Watson and Smith. However, many sub-genres of life writing overlap and intertwine with each other.

⁵⁹ Annie Hauck-Lawson, and Jonathan Deutsch, *Gastropolis: Food and New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) xiv.

according to their representation of national and ethnic cuisines emphasizing the authenticity of particular cuisines such as famous chefs' cookbooks or celebrity dishes, health conscious cookbooks, life style choice cookbooks (vegan, vegetarian, diet etc.), geographically specified cookbooks (Southern style), or gastronomic choice cookbooks (barbeque, egg dishes etc.). However, these categorizations within a genre fall short when we encounter the multiplicity of cookbooks that have so many different angles that it becomes ambiguous in a bookstore and/or in a library when deciding where to locate these books, whether in the "food", the "memoir" or even the "travel" section. Are they fiction or non-fiction?

Pilcher claims that the cookbook genre is very neglected by professional scholars while the authors of this genre attempt to achieve multiple tasks by using the cookbook as a literary medium by "constructing communities, asserting status, archiving the past and preserving historical memory, and achieving artistic fulfillment".⁶⁰ General definition of a cookbook does not do justice to or explain the affluence of cookbooks that are divided into multiple sub-genres. Bardenstein urges us to look for multiple genres or subgenres, since culinary books differ considerably in terms of their emphasis on individual or collective memory. They are also divided as narrative and recipe-based books.⁶¹ Narrative cookbooks are the ones that usually tell the stories of women, immigrants, minority communities, and other disenfranchised people.

Watson and Smith articulate that "gastrographies" are sub-genres that are described as "life writing in which the story of the self is closely linked to the production,

⁶⁰ Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 201) 47.

⁶¹ Defne Karaosmanoğlu, "Cooking the Past: the Revival of Ottoman Cuisine" diss., McGill University, 2006, 122.

preparation, and/or consumption of food.”⁶² However, even this definition is insufficient to describe the growth of this genre. Traci Mari Kelly identifies three types of culinary autobiographies: culinary memoir, autobiographical cookbook and the autoethnographic cookbook.⁶³ According to Kelly the culinary memoir may or may not provide recipes but it definitely tells a personal story intertwined with memories of cooking and dining. These stories have an emphasis on food but do not necessarily provide recipes for the food that is described.⁶⁴ The food theme in these works often reoccurs but does not overpower or control the whole narrative. Regardless of whether the recipes are provided or not, in cases in which the recipes are provided they are not indexed. Even though that is a very minor point, Kelly emphasizes that the author’s decision about not indexing the recipes is mostly likely to be a deliberate decision emphasizing the importance of the *story* in opposition to the recipes. This style leads the reader further into the author’s life and community.⁶⁵

Another type of culinary book Kelly discusses is the autobiographical cookbook. Autobiographical cookbook is defined as a sub-genre that is inclusive of autobiography and cookery books intertwined with each other. “Such texts do not necessarily favor one element or the other; rather, the authors try to balance and illuminate the inter-elemental nature of how the recipe reveals the life story.”⁶⁶ That is, unlike a culinary memoir, the narrative and the recipes are equally important since the food becomes a major trigger to remember the stories told in the narrative.

⁶² Smith, and Watson 271.

⁶³ Traci Mari Kelly. “If I were a Voodoo Priestess: Women’s Culinary Autobiographies” *Kitchen Culture in America: Popular Representations of Food, Gender, and Race*. Philadelphia ed. Sherrie Inness (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001)

⁶⁴ Kelly 255.

⁶⁵ Kelly 256.

⁶⁶ Kelly 257.

The third subgenre Kelly emphasizes is the autoethnographic cookbook and she says “In the autoethnographic cookbook, a culinary code is set forth that details both the food methods and the foodways of a particular culture, using the self and the family as the autoethnographic template for recipe sharing.”⁶⁷ The stories of families appear in many autoethnographic cookbooks, however the most intense examples of this sub-genre are the books that are written by community members and shared in social street fairs as exemplified in Anne L. Bower’s book *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories*.⁶⁸ In this scholarly work, Bower shows the production and dissemination of community cookbooks sold in festivals, charitable events and street fairs mainly in the United States. The examples in Turkey for this genre are the autoethnographic cookbooks of different ethnic groups. For instance “Kürt Mutfağında Ne Pişiyor?” published in 2010, is a collaborative work conducted by Ayşe Kudat who interviewed with Kurdish women and cooked with them in South East Turkey. It is a significant model for this type of sub-genre. It is no longer one person’s story or recipe but instead contains the food voices of many who had similar experiences in South East Turkey during the 1990s. More importantly the message from Kurdish women came forward in this work as Kudat underlines in her book “tell our stories [in your book], tell so that people know, so that these things never happen again.”⁶⁹

There are more to the cookbook sub-genres other than the ones Kelly assigned. For instance, David Sutton in his work on Kalymnian food voices in Greece uses the term “Nostalgia cookbooks” and in essence he claims that all cookbooks are more or less

⁶⁷ Kelly 257.

⁶⁸ Anne Bower, *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997)

⁶⁹ Ayşe Kudat, *Kürt Mutfağında Ne Pişiyor?* (Şişli, İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2010) 11.

nostalgic for the past.⁷⁰ Similarly, Defne Karaosmanoglu uses the term “nostalgic culinary cookbooks” when she talks about İstanbul’s non-Muslim culinary tradition during late 1990s.⁷¹ Bardenstein’s terminology (which I use through out this dissertation) is on the other hand, “cookbook memoir” and/or “memoirs with recipes”⁷² Even though some scholars make strict distinctions about these sub-genres; the characteristics of these sub-genres are more fluid than fixed. Despite the fact that these cookbook memoirs are mainly written by female authors there are exceptions to this. For instance Bardenstein writes about Aziz Shihab’s *A Taste of Palestine: Menus and Memories* (1993); a Palestinian immigrant’s reminiscence of food and memories of Palestine retrospectively written in the USA. Bardenstein argues how immigrant and minority writings, similar to women’s writings, show the symptoms of challenging the dominant genre (autobiography – cookbook) by subverting the limits of writings.⁷³

Generally, cookbook memoirs are analogies to matrifocal narratives in which the information passes on through generations of women, from grandmother to mother to daughter. This is an oral transmission of knowledge. Tovmasyan’s cookbook memoir is the best case to study to understand the matrifocal nature of cookbook memoirs. Even the subtitle of her book says “the taste that remain on my tongue and in my memories from the kitchens of my grandmothers”. As it will be argued in the next chapter Tovmasyan

⁷⁰ David E. Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford: Berg, 2001) 142.

⁷¹ Karaosmanoglu 40.

⁷² Carol Bardenstein, "The Gender of Nostalgia - Transmissions Interrupted: Reconfiguring Food, Memory, and Gender in the Cookbook-Memoirs of Middle Eastern Exiles." *Signs*. 28.1 (2002): 353.

⁷³ The example from modern Turkish literature is Selim İleri. He is a male writer writes about food by subverting the limits of cookbook genre. Even though his style differs from Tovmasyan’s, he shows the male perspective as Bardenstein argues: Selim İleri, *Evimizin Tek İstakozu*. (İstanbul: Oğlak, 2000); *Oburcuğun Edebiyat Kitabı*. (İstanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık A.Ş, 2002); *Rüyamdaki Sofralar*. (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2003)

writes about the food that her grandmothers cooked and passed on to through her mother. Compared to written recipes, learning how to cook as an apprentice in the grandmother's or mother's kitchen is part of the oral tradition and the way it is passed on is more performative than not. When the dynamics of the kitchen change (fast-food, frozen food, time management) how is it possible to transfer the food information, especially with the memories that accompany them? This is when the cookbook genre and its subsequent sub-genres come into play. When it comes to writing about food the performative nature of cooking and dining dissolves into a unique performative text, which is why it is not surprising that the cookbook genre is divided into multiple forms and shapes in a manner that reflects the performative notion of cooking and dining. The narratives are highly performative as the author attempts to create a scene in which the reader re-creates the dish in question. As Spurlock summarizes: "Because of their ability to signify, mediate, contest and represent 'nature' and 'culture', foodways are deeply rhetorical and performative."⁷⁴ Food narratives are an extension of oral narratives empowering these women who participate in writing gastrographies. As Kelly furthermore explains "Using recipes as a framework for a discourse of the self that allows the author to construct milieu for others as she sees fit. It allows her to present heritage as she knows it (whether that would be a rewriting of generally known history or a challenge to cultural practices), and it gives a place to articulate alternative voices and viewpoints."⁷⁵ What is known to the author challenges multiple layers of hegemonic discourses, from subverting the limits of a genre such as autobiography to the prevailing narratives of dominant culture as well

⁷⁴ Cindy M. Spurlock, "Performing and Sustaining (Agri)Culture and Place: The Cultivation of Environmental Subjectivity on the Piedmont Farm Tour." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 29.1 (2009): 5-21.

⁷⁵ Kelly 266.

as the patriarchal norms that confine her within the space of a kitchen.

When cooking, preparing food, or talking about food the kitchen is the space in which women perform their daily routines. The kitchen may become the only space that some women claim partial authority in a patriarchal society. The meals are heavily gendered. The preparation and the consumption of food, with men's certain help in the cooking process, lies on the shoulders of women. Janet Theophano identifies a Chinese woman's cookbook as a "... stage on which the author unfolds a personal, family and cultural drama."⁷⁶ The kitchen is the place where not only is the food cooked, the dinner table is the place where not only do the people eat, courtyards are not only where the women prepare food; but all these foodscapes⁷⁷ are the places where the past revives and passes on and the only way to pass them on through writing is to recall the memories attached to those foods.

Autobiographical stories and novels in relation to food narratives

When Anne L. Bower decided to write her book on film and food, the first response she has received from her friends regarding the relationship between food and film was the list of famous cooks in the films they have watched. However, as Bower tells the story "As our conversations continued, it was clear a few of them realized how often filmmakers in all film genres turn to food to communicate important aspects of characters' emotions, along with their personal and cultural identities; nor did my friends necessarily perceive the intricate ways in which ethnic, religious, sexual and

⁷⁶ Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives Through the Cookbooks They Wrote*, (New York, N.Y: Palgrave, 2002) 1.

⁷⁷ For more information, see: Pauline Adema. "Festive Foodscapes: Iconizing Food and the Shaping of Identity and Place" diss., Austin, Tex: University of Texas Libraries, 2006.

philosophical aspects of narratives are communicated through food.”⁷⁸ In a similar vein, the first thing that comes to people’s minds concerning the relationship between food and literature is the cookbook. Despite the cookbook genre being the main part of the literary trend, the role of food in literature is indeed common but more implicit. The role of food in relation to senses, emotions, and identities appear in self-narratives as mentioned before; fictional works are no exception to this. In other words, food and eating appears in other genres besides cookbooks more than one would expect, especially in self-narratives including memoirs, autobiographical stories and novels as well as fictional works.⁷⁹ Also in some fictional writings food is occasionally used as “reality-effect”.⁸⁰ As Biasin argues food in a novel is a representation of reality and is a neglected topic that begs for exploration.⁸¹ Besides creating a “realistic effect” and/or setting the scene, food stories in fictional works set the tone of the time period and geographical conditions as well as the social conditions of the people that are depicted in the novels.

As examined previously Tovmasyan’s cookbook memoir is part of a genre called gastrography. Margosyan’s works can be categorized as *serial autobiography* (autobiographical stories), and *autofiction* (autobiographical fictions). Serial autobiography refers to the autobiographical works published in multiple volumes.

⁷⁸ Anne L. Bower, *Reel Food: Essays on Food and Film* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 1.

⁷⁹ There is even sub-genre called “gastronomic fiction” in which the food overpowers the fictional narrative.

⁸⁰ The term is borrowed from Roland Barthes see: Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986)

⁸¹ Gian-Paolo Biasin, *The Flavors of Modernity: Food and the Novel* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993) 4. Furthermore Biasin explains: “Usually meals are social occasions in extratextual reality, and novelists rightly use them, in the possible worlds they create, in a narrative function, that is, to introduce characters on the scene of narration, to make the characters meet, to follow them in their movements or in passing of time. At times it is not even necessary to have entire meal in order to fulfill the narrative function successfully.... In all these cases, even if it is present, the realistic function is in the background, and the building mechanism and the dynamism of the action are highlighted – one can say that food is also a vital element for the story being told.”

Although some writers may consider this as ‘chapters’ in an ongoing life story, many writers significantly revise their narratives from the perspectives of different times of writing.⁸² These stories often cover youth and middle age. For instance Mıgırdıç Margosyan’s autobiographical stories fit in this category perfectly since he serialized his stories of childhood in three volumes after he serialized them in the Armenian language in the newspaper *Marmara* before translating them to Turkish. Every time he re-writes the stories the author revises them and makes adjustments according to his target audience. Some of the stories were later on re-iterated in his autobiographical novel.

Some self-narratives are called autofiction (autobiographical novel) and Margosyan’s latest novel is an example of this genre. Smith and Watson describe autofiction in this way: “Despite the difficulty of fixing the boundary between fiction and autobiography, the reader comes to an autobiographical text with the expectation that the protagonist is a person living the experiential world, not a fictional character, and that the narrative will be transparent, truthful view of the world.”⁸³ Truthfulness and fictionality of a narrative especially in self-narratives is a contested field.⁸⁴ Both Tovmasyan and

⁸² Smith, and Watson 280.

⁸³ Smith and Watson 260.

⁸⁴ Truthfulness of autobiographical text is a very contested field and it is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However it is a very important area to think about especially when we think about truth claims made by the dominant culture. Phillipe Lejeune claims there should be an autobiographical pact between the author, narrator and the protagonist that designates an “honest” signature of the author’s intention to be truthful about what he is saying. However, Gilmore claims “... Lejeune’s system cannot interpret autobiography except as a part of the record of what really happened, neither can he distinguish it from fiction” (Leigh Gilmore. *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) 76. Truthfulness of autobiographical text is called into question by these critiques. Furthermore, they have developed strategies to undermine the “truth politics” as socially constructed phenomenon. Gilmore claims “If we then also regard autobiography more broadly as a part of a historically and formally changing discourse of self-representation, it is possible to interpret it as a political site on which human agency is negotiated within and against institutions on grounds of truth” (Gilmore *Autobiographics* 80). This “truth” is determined by the given culture that is expressed consists of either confirmation or resistance. Eventually, the text of the repressed finds strategies

Margosyan are conscious of mixing genres and deliberately adding fictionality to their stories. When the (hi)stories of minorities are “easily” dismissed in the face of official history, mixing truth and fiction is a strategy to speak about the past. The author of an autobiography may seek alternative modes of writing about the self by fictionalizing the narrative-I. Sub-genres usually appear as a way to resist the boundaries that are drawn to define the main genre. When remembrances food items appear in an autofiction, just like in an autobiography, it is used as a tool to recall sensual experiences and memories attached to them. Food consists of the bodily memories recalled by our senses that organize the autobiographical narrator’s stories. Considering that food has one foot set in daily mundane life and the other foot set in the calendric rituals, it is a matter of questioning what kind of importance the role food plays in an author’s life story as a medium to remember that past.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the relationship between food and the self in multiple self-narratives is observed. More importantly, this chapter showed the significance of how to

to challenge the conventions of autobiography as well as the “conventional truth” and self. Gilmore shows that even “how not writing an autobiography can be an achievement” in case of limit-cases (Leigh Gilmore. *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*. (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2000) 15. By limit-cases, Gilmore explores autobiographical fictions, which attempt to create an alternative mode of self-representation that challenges the legalistic demands of truth-telling of a given culture. Renza argues so-called “truth” in an autobiographical text represents author’s present identity instead of the past (Renza, Louise A.; “The Vote of the Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography” *New Literary History* Self-Confrontation and Social Vision 9:1 Autumn, 1977, 3. I find Gilmore’s approach the most useful in the case of autobiography’s limit on representing subaltern text. Gilmore in both of her works “Autobiographics” and “Limits of Autobiography” shows that limit-cases as in witnessing a trauma and in texts of marginalized groups, whose world-view are fragmented and distorted in the face of this “unified I”. These texts find strategies to define themselves on the margins of this genre. I believe it is possible to argue for constructiveness of autobiographical self, which is the agent of the cultural and social implications of a given society.

approach food in literary works, as examples from Tovmasyan and Margosyan will unfold in the following chapters. Food centered self-narratives serve not only as bearers of food culture, as well as the past and the memories attached to them but they also create prospective memories for future references. On one hand David Bower suggests that remembrances of food items through narratives offer a sense of continuity in a domestic realm.⁸⁵ That is to say, daily chores around food organize everyday life and give a sense of structure and continuity by reproducing the past in the kitchen and the dinner table. On the other hand, as David Sutton claims, food habits create *prospective memories* for the future through calendric repetitions, that is to say ritualized commensalities (religious, cultural etc.). Paul Connerton asserts “If there is such thing as social memory, I shall argue, we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies; but commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as they are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept of habit; and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automatisms.”⁸⁶

Following Connerton’s claim it is possible to argue that commensality is a type of commemorative ceremony both in everyday context (with immediate family) as well as a ritualistic event (with extended family, community etc.). Writing about food, similar to writing about the self, is performative. This is especially so when the case is the food and narratives of minorities as investigated in this dissertation by Armenian authors in Turkey who are speaking from a marginal position in order to become visible in the gaze of dominant culture. These authors developed strategies and chose certain parts they wanted to represent. It is a matter of remembering and forgetting as well what is

⁸⁵ Bower 120.

⁸⁶ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (England: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 4-5.

remembered. Remembering is a continuous effort to stabilize and organize in order to make a meaningful narrative sequence and it is a continuous effort to maintain and reconstruct the past. As Mistzal argues while remembering we continuously recover and create a stable pattern of the past in our ever-changing present.⁸⁷ The following chapters exemplify the relationship between the food and remembering, memories of the past articulated in different genres of self-narratives.

⁸⁷ Barbara A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*. (Maidenhead, Berkshire, England: Open University Press, 2003) 10

Chapter 2: Traces of Loss and Displacement in Takuhi Tovmasyan's Cookbook Memoir

“The world’s earliest archives or libraries were the memories of women. Patiently transmitted from mouth to ear, body to body, hand to hand... The speech is seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched... Every woman partakes in the chain of guardianship and of transmission.”

Trinh T. Minh-ha⁸⁸

Armenian lullabies reflect the displacement and loss that define the sense of being an Armenian in Turkey. Armenian lullabies are transmitted through generations of women in order to remember the loss and the displacement that the Armenians endured during the long march in 1915.⁸⁹ In a similar vein, it is possible to claim that the food recipes transmitted from grandmothers to daughters and granddaughters are the sites through which we can trace the displacement and loss defining the Armenian “minority” subjectivity through sensual experiences such as foods that are produced, consumed and exchanged. The food recipes in Tovmasyan’s narratives create the possibility to talk about the Armenian experience in İstanbul as a minority without alienating the reader, especially when the reader in question is registered to the dominant culture.

Every family experiences a certain level of loss as the members of the family pass away, and such experience is unique to those who lose their loved ones. The memories of the people who die remain among the living members and pass along the generations. Tovmasyan’s family experiences the same type of loss; however, the experience of

⁸⁸ Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1989) 121-122.

⁸⁹Melissa Bilal, “The Lost Lullaby and Other Stories About Being an Armenian in Turkey” MA Thesis, Bosphorus University 2004

genocide among Armenian communities adds another level to the loss. Even the natural death of some members in the family is tied to the genocide narrative in Tovmasyan's stories. Some of them died with a broken heart Tovmasyan says; some of their graves were lost in other cases. The Armenian condition in Turkey, especially during the time period Tovmasyan covered in her book (1950s-1960s), was not complacent. Personal loss was attached to the trauma of collective loss that the Armenians experienced in Turkey during 1915. Among the generations, who did not experience the genocide in the first place like Tovmasyan, the memories of genocide were still fresh in the confinement of the households. Tovmasyan's narratives surrounding food are evidence that is shown in this chapter that the memories of genocide regardless of whether or not they are experienced by all members in the family are attached to what it means to be an Armenian in Turkey on a daily basis. The act of commemoration through food becomes a tool of reconciliation with the dominant culture, in which the reader relates to the author and, as a result, to the community. In short, what I am attempting to demonstrate in this chapter is that Tovmasyan's personal memories in a genre of gastrography speak the collective memories and loss of a community.

As comprehensively argued in the previous chapter, the genre of gastrography is complicated due to the multiple subgenres that come out of gastrography. This chapter focuses on a particular sub-genre that I chose to call *cookbook memoir* as formerly mentioned since the text that is analyzed here is a narrative cookbook instead of a recipe-based cookbook. Although it includes recipes, the author does not follow a sequential temporal structure nor are the recipes indexed according to the use or the function of the food (e.g. appetizers, main dishes, desserts etc.). Essentially Tovmasyan writes a memoir

with a strong focus on food. This chapter questions and articulates the ways of reading Tovmasyan's cookbook memoir. It is significant to emphasize that the author in her book neither follows a sequential temporal structure from birth to death nor sustains a linear spatial structure that follows a map of migration after 1915. However, close reading shows that there are temporal and spatial sequences within the chapters once the narrative text is examined with a focus on food and remembrances. The analysis of the book in this chapter will consist of the three interrelated structures: characters, space and time, since these three layers of analysis will give a complete picture of this cookbook memoir revealing the particular expressions of subjectivity that pulses beneath the text.

After getting married Tovmasyan remained a housewife for years until Aras Publishing House was established in 1993, and she started working at there as a typist. One year before the publication house was established Tovmasyan had her friends from the publishing house over for dinner, and they were having one of their usual gatherings and eating when some of them recommended that she write down all the recipes she knew.⁹⁰ She had already written them down for her children without the intention of having them published. Eventually Aras Publishing's editors started to look for a cookbook that would represent Armenian cuisine because of the increasing popularity of ethnic cookbooks in Turkey during the late 1990s and early 2000s. They consulted Tovmasyan concerning whether she would be willing to publish the cookbook she had written. Tovmasyan refused this proposal at first thinking that her style of writing did not fit within the confined limits of popular ethnic cookbooks and food journals (such as

⁹⁰ This section relies on my interview with the author. (11.16.11). See the transcript of this interview in the Appendix.

Sofra dergisi), which have a more polished outlook on food.⁹¹ Tovmasyan refers to the treatment of food in such journals, saying that they use beeswax on food so that it shines when photographed. Actually she resents that style (waxed photos of food ingredients in food journals) because her understanding of food conflicts with their view. Tovmasyan claims that food is primarily meant to be eaten. It is not merely to be photographed in order to become part of a showcase. Consequently her work was peer-reviewed but not accepted by all editors because it was more like a memoir than an ethnic cookbook. Hesitation toward this genre is very common, as mentioned in the previous chapter, due to multiple sub-genres being born, and it is hard to identify these sub-genres within an overarching definition since they serve as different modes of articulation for different groups. Tovmasyan delayed the publication of her work until 2004 due to conflicting expectations from editors in the publishing house. She eventually decided to publish her book the way she wrote it, as a cookbook memoir.

Structure of the Book

Takuhi Tovmasyan's *Sofranız Şen Olsun* is a cookbook memoir 150 pages in length containing 34 recipes, which was published in 2004. The book is presented in twenty-eight chapters including the introduction and conclusion. There is also a preface written by Oşin Çilingir⁹² that sets the tone of the book and suggests that the book is meant to be read as a family history more than a cookbook.

⁹¹ During our interview (11.16.2011) Tovmasyan mentioned *Sofra Dergisi* (1995) as an example for the food journal genre. A popular genre for magazine publishers there are various titles being published today in Turkey, such as *Yemek Zevki* (Part of İhlas Magazin Grubu, founded 1981), *Yemek ve Kültür* (2005), *Mutfak Rehberi* (2011), *Beslenme ve Diyet Dergisi* (2008) (Türkiye Diyetisyenler Derneği), *Tuzbiber Dergisi* (2009), *YemekName* (2007, first internet food journal)

⁹² Oşin Çilingir is a journalist in the well-known Armenian newspaper *Agos* and another author who published from *Aras*.

Most of the characters Tovmasyan introduced in this book have passed away, and Tovmasyan considers this work a book of commemoration. The analysis indicates that the book is divided into two sections of recipes and stories from her paternal and maternal grandmothers. Although Tovmasyan does not clearly state such an organizational structure, it is only implied. Looking at the character organization in this fashion enables us to see the stories that took place before Tovmasyan was born and were transmitted to her either from her mother or the father. As a result, it is easier to trace the migration and displacement stories in the family signifying the spatial organization of the book. Also, analyzing character structure from the two perspectives of immediate family members and distant relatives/friends suggests that the temporal organization of the book is very much related to the time spent with people on a daily basis that organizes the mundane role of food in everyday life. The time spent with extended family members and communal friends constitutes the time of seasonal and religious events that take place in relation to food. Spatial organization of the book is not structured in a linear fashion according to Tovmasyan's growth from childhood to adolescence or her family's migration story since 1915. Instead within each chapter the reader encounters stories told to Tovmasyan that happened before she was born (unwitnessed stories) and the food item that is in question in that specific chapter triggers the memories of a particular place about which Tovmasyan talks. In some chapters Tovmasyan discusses stories from her childhood or youth (witnessed stories) in places she once lived. The stories are divided spatially into two parts as unwitnessed and witnessed stories since the places discussed were either heard about or lived in by Tovmasyan.

Also, the temporal organization of the food will be analyzed in this chapter. Similar to the spatial the temporal organization does not follow a sequential structure. Instead Tovmasyan remembers food that is written in a temporal context (everyday, religious, seasonal, etc.), in which the food is eaten with the family (mundane), extended family (exceptional), people from the church (religious), during family meetings in a couples' engagement ceremony (exceptional), etc. Even though there are a lot of leaps in the temporal organization of the book, by using food as a tool of association, Tovmasyan creates a temporal organization within each chapter/story.

Since the book's composition reveals important points considering how Tovmasyan shapes her memories around a set of 34 recipes, it deserves description. In the table of contents, recipes are listed as chapter headings without a specific orientation in that the meals are categorized in a particular logic. Instead, each chapter/recipe is usually connected to another through Tovmasyan's relation to people or events. On the contents page there are twenty-six recipes listed, and chapters are titled by the names of dishes, yet Tovmasyan gives additional recipes within chapters for different reasons. For example, in Chapter 10, "Midye Salması" [Mussel Broth], "Midye Pilakisi" [Mussel Stew], and "Midye Tavası" [Fried Pan Mussels] are presented in the same chapter since the main ingredient, mussels, recalls other dishes. In Chapter 21, "Patlıcan Kızartması" [Fried Eggplants], "Peksimet" [Hard Biscuit], and "Salyangoz Yahnisi" [Snail Stew] are in the same chapter and related with each other because they evoke a particular spatial context since these are the dishes her family cooked when they went to Silivri to visit Toros Dede. In Chapter 25 on the other hand, "Vişne Likörü" [Cherry Liquor] and

“Çevirme Tatlısı” [Turn-up Dessert] appear together because they are specific to a ritualistic event, the Name Day.

However in two other chapters there are additional recipes which are not listed in the content list or the chapter titles. Nevertheless, Tovmasyan presents them while describing the listed recipes. In these two exceptional cases there are associated memories of events that enable Tovmasyan to recall them while writing about the main dish. In seventh chapter, the description of “Ciğer Bohçası” [Liver Bundle] brings about the descriptions of “Ciğer Izgarası” [Grilled Liver] and “Ciğer Kebabı” [Liver Kabab]. In eighth chapter, “Fasulye Paçası” [Bean Trotter] and “Yalancı Ekmek Kadayıfı” [Pseudo-Bread dough soaked in sugar syrup] are together since they are easy to make. In eleventh chapter, titled “Dalak Dolması” [Stuffed Spleen], Tovmasyan remembers “Dalak Çorbası” [Spleen Soup] while describing Stuffed Spleen, recommending the reader not to throw away the broth of the Stuffed Spleen so they can make a soup out of it.

There are two major transition themes between chapters. The transition from one chapter to another can be generally categorized as follows: (a) Association through ingredients: one ingredient in the previous chapter is used in the next chapter’s recipe, (e.g. meat; fish; dolma); (b) Association through personal relations: One person’s story in the previous chapter connects with next chapter’s character and/or story, or certain connecting themes.⁹³ In some chapters there are no connections between the previous

⁹³ One chapter finishes with a talk on a religious feast and the next one starts with another religious feast; the connection between the two chapters is made from Tovmasyan’s father to grandfather; at the end of one chapter Tovmasyan talks about economical dishes and starts the next chapter with an economical dish; two chapters are connected by a discussion of Akabi Yaya (Grandmother); two chapters are connected by a discussion of Armaş Dede (Grandfather); one chapter finishes with Partuh Dayı (Uncle) and the other one starts with Partuh Dayı’s father-in-law Toros Dede.

chapter and the next chapters start with a recipe instead of a story.⁹⁴ Not having a link with previous chapters does not necessarily interrupt the continuity and the unity of the book since the author does not promise a linear progressive narrative.

Tovmasyan claims that she wrote this book as she remembered things. Recipes are not organized in a standard cookbook format (appetizers, meats, vegetables, desserts, etc.). At first glance they appear to be random choices. In her introduction Tovmasyan waives any kind of standardization or principle of regularity that is found in other cookbooks: “I wrote without making any distinction between must-have foods of our wedding-feast tables and ordinary salads, between salty and sweet foods, between meat and dairy products, without worrying about an order, I wrote the way I felt. I neither made a distinction between food that is made with olive oil or butter, nor did I think of a heading such as: Anatolian or Thracian foods, I just tried to depict pictures from our tables. I don’t how much Armenian, Greek, Turkish, Albanian, Circassian, Patriyot or Gypsy foods these are. But there is one thing that I know and it is that these are the foods I learned from my Çorlulu Akabi yaya and Takuhi yaya, so to speak my grandmothers.”⁹⁵

Just by judging the book from the cover and the contents page, we already sense something “off” about the book that cannot be defined or confined within the limits of the “traditional” cookbook genre. Tovmasyan makes clear in the preceding quotation that while it functions as a cookbook since it gives detailed accounts of description about how

⁹⁴ Tovmasyan Chapters 4, 7, 11, 13, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24

⁹⁵ Tovmasyan 13. “Düğün-bayram sofralarımızın vazgeçilmezlerinden sıradan salatalara, tatlıdan tuzluya, etliden sütlüye, herhangi bir ayırım yapmadan, bir düzen kaygısı gütmeyen, öylesine, içimden geldiği gibi yazdım. Ne zeytinyağlılar-tereyağlılar diye ayırım yaptım, ne de Anadolu veya Trakya mutfağı diye bir başlık düşündüm, soframızdan resimler çizmeye çalıştım sadece. Ne kadar Ermeni, ne kadar Rum, ne kadar Türk, ne kadar Arnavut, ne kadar Çerkez, ne kadar Patriyot, ne kadar Çingene yemekleri bunlar, bilmiyorum. Ama bildiğim bir şey var; o da, bu yemekleri Çorlulu Akabi ve Takuhi yayalarımın, yani ninelerimden öğrenmiş olduğumdur.”

to cook with listings of ingredients of each recipe at the end of each chapter, the book is composed in order to be read primarily as a memoir.

The book includes 66 photographs in black-and-white, some of which are taken out of Tovmasyan's family album.⁹⁶ There are two ways to interpret the domination of family photos in this cookbook memoir: (a) On a spatial level the author yearns for a particular place that does not exist anymore; places that the grandparents lived and the places she lived when she was a child. (b) On a temporal level the author shows the symptoms of a "cheerful" nostalgia. As Bardenstein suggests, this signifies a continuity and affirmation of life even after the displacement. The photographs re-inscribe this narrative of continuity through visual means according to Bardenstein.⁹⁷

In 45 of these photos, Tovmasyan's various family members and their friends are depicted. Ten photos present places, which are either the streets of Yedikule in İstanbul or other places, such as the location of Surp Nigoğayos Armenian Church, the coast of Samatya, or Topkapı where her uncle Partuh resided.⁹⁸ Tovmasyan talks about these places in the chapters where the photos were placed. Seven photos are representative of communities Tovmasyan talks about: Greek neighbors, fish sellers on the street, and Armenian religious gatherings.⁹⁹ These photographs generally are placed along with the text, except for four small size photographs lined one under the other.¹⁰⁰ These four photographs are visual guidelines to prepare a particular dish, *Petaluda*. However, Tovmasyan does not necessarily care about photographs of the dishes since the point is to tell a family history through photos instead of food photographs. More importantly the

⁹⁶ Takuhi Tovmasyan Interviewed by Müge Salmaner Individual Interview 11.16.2011

⁹⁷ Bardenstein 353.

⁹⁸ Tovmasyan 14, 21, 52, 54, 88.

⁹⁹ Tovmasyan 21, 28, 73, 106.

¹⁰⁰ Tovmasyan 70.

first few pages of the book before the title page present a two page spread showing her paternal grandmother Takuhi Tovmasyan (who carries the same name as the author) and grandfather Ğazaros Efendi at the garden of Yedikule Gazinosu with their friends sitting around a table and posing for the camera. This is a “visual impression” that dominates the reader’s first contact with the book.¹⁰¹ As the reader is exposed to the photos from Tovmasyan’s family album that are carefully selected by the author according to the characters she introduces in each chapter, the reader’s first encounter with the book before the text is the people who are long gone, giving the sense of loss before talking about it.

Characters: People Long Gone...

“And today, when you open and look at that book [Sofraniz Sen Olsun], that book is kind of like a ‘can yemeđi’ as we say it, something like a ‘mevlit prayer’ for the dead ones, it is like a mevlit candy. I mean 90% of the people in that book are dead. Helva is made for souls of the dead; do you know what I mean? Something like that. Maybe something very emotional, something that I cannot name, that I cannot describe, something I just feel.”

Takuhi Tovmasyan¹⁰²

Tovmasyan defines herself as a person who is “traditional” in the sense that her allegiance to the past is mediated by love for her ancestors¹⁰³. Her grandmothers, both

¹⁰¹ See more on visual impressions of photography in cookbook memoirs: Bardenstein 353.

¹⁰² Tovmasyan Interview 11.16.2011 “Ve bugun de o kitabı acıp baktıđınızda bir esit yani, bizde Őyle birŐey sylenir, can yemeđi, llerin ardından verilen okunan bir mevlut duası, mevlut Őekeri gibi birŐey o kitap benim iin. Yani iindekilerin %90’i l. llerin canına da bir helva kavrulur, anlatabiliyor muyum? yle birŐey. Belki de cok duygusal birŐey, adlandıramadıđım, anlatamadıđım, tarif edemediđim, sadece hissettiđim birŐey bu.” See the complete interview transcript at Appendix p 165 in the original language (Turkish)

¹⁰³ Tovmasyan Interview 11.16.2011

maternal and paternal, play a great role in her cookbook memoir. In this part I will show the relationship between the people who are long gone and how their lives are reconfigured in Tovmasyan's memoir through the remembrances of food narratives.

Overarching recipes: The Kitchen of Grandmothers

At the beginning of the book Tovmasyan claims that all the recipes in this book were passed down to her by her grandmothers. Even the subtitle of the book suggests the same: "those that remain in my palate and in my mind from the kitchen of my grandmothers". The title summarizes the intention of the author and suggests that the book is about both the remembrances of past stories and the taste of past meals. Sometimes the memories of particular people remind Tovmasyan of certain meals, and at other times the taste or smell of past meals remind her of certain people and incidents. As she directly promises, the book presents what remains in Tovmasyan's palate and memories. Because most of the people in this book were not live by the time Tovmasyan wrote it, it appears in the form of a eulogy, a commemoration of their names and stories through recipes. Just as Tovmasyan puts down the recipes in order to remember them, she reconstructs the stories of important people as the way she remembers in order not to forget them. Her attempt to capture the intertwined recollections of food and people gives the book the shape of a memory log, where food and memories of people long gone bring up each other. Those that remained in Tovmasyan's sensorial memory (memory by taste) and cultural memory (stories of people) turn into a narrative; thus Tovmasyan's stories/recipes bear witness to the things remaining as well as those lost, and the ambiguity between what remains when the loss is recovered and what is lost when people in the book do not live anymore. The

recipes are on a metaphorical level the things that remain when the recipe giver/doer does not live anymore.

Tovmasyan's recollections revolve around what she heard or experienced through her relationship with older members of her extended family. There are many instances when she directly refers to her grandmothers' words and her experiences with them in the kitchen, which establishes one of the major sites for the memories collected in this book. Considering that Tovmasyan's paternal grandmother Takuhi Tovmasyan passed away when the author was only 5 years old, it is not possible that she learned how to cook her recipes by practicing them with her in person; thus the recipes are performed in the household by either of her parents. Likewise, the stories of her paternal grandmother usually refer to times when either Tovmasyan was a little child or before she was born. These stories were mostly passed on to her by her father¹⁰⁴.

One might say that the book is divided in two between the stories of the paternal side of her family and the maternal. Her maternal grandmother Akabi yaya, i.e. Grandmother Akabi, lived longer than her paternal grandmother Takuhi yaya, and as a result she appears in the later stages of Tovmasyan's life and her book. The stories about her are more detailed and her childhood memories are clearer, or at least she has more memories about her and practicing cooking together. The second half of the book starting from the Chapter 13 is reserved more for Akabi's stories and relatives on the maternal side of the family. The stories in these chapters are more sophisticated because Tovmasyan had more chances to spend time with her mother since her father died in 1974 when Tovmasyan was 22 years old.

¹⁰⁴ During our interview Tovmasyan mentioned that she and her father were very communicative and whatever she learned about her grandparents was passed on to her by her dad. Takuhi Tovmasyan Interviewed by Müge Salmaner Individual Interview 11.16.2011

Immediate Family: Parents

Most of the stories are transmitted to Tovmasyan through her parents. During the interview, Tovmasyan admitted that she owes the stories of her relatives to her father. Tovmasyan says the relationship between father and daughter was apparently very communicative and almost everything was discussed in their household, unlike other Armenian households. Surely there were some members in Tovmasyan's family that never talked about the past because of the severe results of genocide, displacement and loss.

“Some of the heroes of this life story that extended from Çorlu Muratlı to İstanbul forgot what had happened on the roads of exile, some of them never talked about it, came to terms with it or pretended to come to terms with it. My uncle Yeğya had never forgotten it, never come to terms with it and left this world just like that.”¹⁰⁵

Kravva, in her work on Holocaust survivors migrating to Thessaloniki, suggests that there are unspoken memories in individuals' lives or, in other words, unsettled spaces of memories. Kravva examines food narratives as a starting point for expressing these individuals' experiences at concentration camps and focuses on the way they mourn the lost members of their families.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Tovmasyan's food narratives can be evaluated as a response to the lost members of her ancestors both because of the genocide and/or natural death. The experience of displacement, starvation during the long march,

¹⁰⁵ Tovmasyan 87. “Çorlu Muratlı'dan İstanbul'a uzanan bu hayat hikayesinin kahramanlarından kimi sürgün yollarında yaşananları unuttu, kimi hiç konuşmadı, hazmetti ya da hazmetmiş görüldü. Yeğya dayım hiç unutmadı, hiç hazmedemedi, öyle de gitti öbür tarafa.”

¹⁰⁶ Vasiliki Kravva, “Food as Vehicle for Remembering: The Case of Thessalonkan Jews” *Food and the Memory: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cooker*, ed., Harlan Walker. (Devon England: Prospect Books, 2001) 141

and food that does not exist in the new place after the displacement becomes the marker of loss.

The long march, displacement, and trauma played a great role in the Armenian experience in Turkey in shaping the way of life as a minority. Tovmasyan's narrative is not limited to this trauma but is informed by it. Convivial table gatherings are shaped by good memories of people as well as interrupted with the stories of people who died and were lost during the long march. Tovmasyan's remembrance of people through the food they enjoyed the most or cooked the best is a way of depicting a community that survived the genocide and of a community that "remained alive" against all odds. According to Kravva, food serves as an important marker of creating and recreating shared histories, especially among traumatized members of a community¹⁰⁷. The shared histories in an Armenian family household like Tovmasyan's are articulated in dinner tables and kitchens, in places the food is produced, consumed and shared, which evoke memories through the sensual experiences of everyday life. Since food is part of our daily ritual, the manifestations of stories can come up at any given time during a family meal. Tovmasyan says that surely this is not the case for every family meal. The sad remembrance of the past occurs usually when they eat some family member's favorite dish and start talking about their stories. The bigger the dinner table is, it is more inclusive of extensive family members, and there are more stories to be told as the next part shows.

Distant relatives and Friends

David Sutton's ethnographic work on Kalymnian villagers' food habits raises certain questions about why and how people eat beyond the mere nutritional value of

¹⁰⁷ Kravva 140.

food. One of the interviewees says, “I eat in order to remember”¹⁰⁸ implying the taste and smell of food reminds him of the past. Tovmasyan says, “In some households people eat to live, in some of them people live to eat. In our household though, we used to eat for love/talk. We used to set the table for conversations, cleaned it up with conversations.”¹⁰⁹

The food becomes a medium, a template to construct the communication between people. For instance Deborah Lupton gives an example from a family meal, where the meal tables were the sites for confessions, jokes, stories of catastrophes, and in this context the dinner table and the family meal were potent symbols for family, even a metonym of the family itself.¹¹⁰ It is possible to see the same pattern in Tovmasyan’s approach to food when she says in another chapter: “We cooked all together and ate all together. We loved sharing with the people we loved. If we could not share, we commemorated the ones who loved the dish we were eating at that point”.¹¹¹ This act of commemoration enables Tovmasyan in her writing to make associations between recipes in her book. There are strategies Tovmasyan develops to arrive at a story she wants to tell: (a) She lists the names of the person/people that like that particular food the most: Yeğya Dayı likes Çullama, Aram gıncakayr (godfather) likes bottom burned lentil dolma (dibi tutmuş mercimek dolması), Krikor enişte likes eggplant kebab with garlic yogurt (sarımsaklı, yoğurtlu patlıcan kebabı), Şahan likes Kaymaklı Kadayıf (creamy kadayıf desert), and Larosyan Ardaşes likes Topik. Thus whenever these meals are served the

¹⁰⁸ Sutton 12.

¹⁰⁹ Tovmasyan 13. “Kimi evde, yemek, yaşamak için yenir. Kimi evde, yemek için yaşanır. Bizim evde ise yemek, muhabbet olsun diye yenirdi. Sofra muhabbet için kurulur, yine muhabbetle kaldırılırdı.”

¹¹⁰ Lupton 38-39.

¹¹¹ Tovmasyan 33. “Hep birlikte yapar, hep birlikte yerdik. Sevdiklerimizle paylaşmayı da çok severdik. Paylaşamadığımız zamanlarda da yediğimiz yemeği seven yakınlarımızı anmadan geçemezdik.”

aforementioned people names come up, and their stories are shared. (b) People who cook a particular dish the best become the topic of a dinner meal, and, as a result, people in the kitchen or around the table start talking about their stories and commemorate them while eating those particular dishes: Gölunya cooks Ciğer Bohçası [Liver Bundle], Akabi yaya cooks kocagörmez böreği, Ani cooks Uskumru dolması [Stuffed Mackerels], Lusi cooks Ayvalı Patlıcan Tatlısı [Quince Eggplant Desert].¹¹² “We remember the names of the dishes with the names of the people we love. Or rather, we remember a dish with someone’s name who cooks it the best” says Tovmasyan.¹¹³ (c) Also certain dishes enable Tovmasyan to remember certain people. A story about the food and the person creates a context for the recipe: Fasulye Pilakisi [Bean Salad] reminds her of Ğazaros Efendi, Kuzu [Lamb dish] reminds her of Armaş Dede; Kocagörmez reminds her of Akabi yaya; but overall she remembers everybody, and especially one particular person, Mardik Amca (i.e. Uncle Mardik), every time she makes İrmik Helvası [Semolina Dessert]. Nobody knows Mardik Amca in person except Takuhi Yaya and Ğazaros Efendi, however everybody knows his story in the family, because finding Mardik Amca was Grandmother Takuhi’s legacy to her family.

When Takuhi yaya accepted a marriage proposal from Ğazaros Efendi she was told that he had two children. However, she realized that he had a third child that they didn’t tell her about in case she wouldn’t accept his proposal because of it. Takuhi yaya was offended because of being tricked. “You said you had two children and I accepted them. If you said three, I would accept that too. But I wish you did not trick me. I will

¹¹² Kocagörmez is made up name for the dish, literally means the dish that does not see the husband. I will explain the context of this dish later in this chapter.

¹¹³ Tovmasyan 80. “Yemek adlarını sevdiklerimizin adlarıyla anarız. Daha doğrusu o yemeği en iyi yapanın adıyla anarız da denilebilir.”

take care of these as if they are my own but I don't want the third".¹¹⁴ As a result Mardik was sent to Çorlu to live with other relatives, but in the mean time the deportations of Armenians began and nobody heard from the child again. Takuhi yaya's remorse haunted her for the rest of her life according to Tovmasyan's account, and she looked for him for many years.

Tovmasyan remembers Mardik Amca in particular, an uncle she has never met, while cooking ırmik helvası, a dish for the souls of others who had passed away. Mardik Amca's haunting absence is a metaphor for the whole book. As Tovmasyan emphasized in the interview, the book itself is a "mevlit" for those who are all gone. I believe one of the reasons Tovmasyan reserved the last recipe for the semolina dessert in her book was because it is cooked after somebody dies. It is a common tradition among the Muslim Turkish population as well. This recipe brings the story of Uncle Mardik to the forefront. Grandmother Takuhi passed away wishing that Mardik would be found one day and left the legacy of looking for him. Mardik's stories passed through generations. Takuhi Tovmasyan knows that even if Mardik survived the deportation, he is probably deceased by now. She commemorates Mardik every time she cooks semolina dessert along with other people she has lost. The stories of characters take place in a specific spatial context that enables Tovmasyan to talk about the family's migration and the dispersion along the way.

Spatial Organization: Stories of Displacement

¹¹⁴ Tovmasyan 128. "İki çocuk dediniz kabul ettim, üç deseydiniz de kabul ederdim, yeter ki beni kandırmasaydınız. Bu ikisine kendi evladım gibi seve seve bakarım ama üçüncüyü istemem."

There are multiple spaces Tovmasyan introduces to the reader. It is best to analyze the spatial organization of the book by dividing the stories into two groups: (a) The events that happened to family members before Tovmasyan was born but transmitted to her are the unwitnessed stories of places. Çorlu and Çatalca are the primary places where the family lived before they relocated to İstanbul from these areas. There is a mention of Damascus since one of the uncles took refuge there. (b) The events that happened during Tovmasyan's childhood are the witnessed stories that are re-constructed in the present and the places where Tovmasyan lived. Yedikule and Bakırköy neighborhoods come to the foreground in these stories as well as Silivri where some family members lived.

Unwitnessed Stories: Displacement and the Family Past

Çorlu, the place where her grandparents come from, dominates Tovmasyan's identification with a place where she has never lived but visited occasionally. When her religious identity (being an Armenian in Turkey) is marginalized it does not come as a surprise that Tovmasyan attempts to create a tangible connection with the reader to show that she belongs to the same place as much as the reader does, since her ancestors were there for a long time. As a result, the *Çorlulu* identity becomes the source of pride and a template for the recipes and their origin, like her grandparents. Breaking from Çorlu as a result of exile, moving to Çatalca and then Yedikule İstanbul is a migration story of the family that is talked about among family members, and Tovmasyan's remembering them within the context of food brings these places to her mind. For instance Yeğya Dayı's migration story in Chapter 17 reconfigures the recipe of *Çullama* because *Çullama* was Yeğya Dayı's favorite dish. The connection between the food and the exile is fixed

through Tovmasyan's writing based on Yeğya Dayı. *Çullama* signifies a displacement of a generation of people. She talks about Yeğya Dayı's exile from Çorlu to Şam (Damascus), then back to Çorlu. Almost all of his family members die on the long march, and he finds his house in ruins when he goes back to Çorlu. He goes to Çatalca and finds his older sister Akabi, who got married in 1905 before the exile and moved to Çatalca before the family ended up in Yedikule İstanbul. The story of Yeğya Dayı can be read as an overarching story of displacement of the Armenians at the beginning of 20th century in Turkey. The stories of displacement are part of the stories of dinner talk; food, particularly Çullama, keeps their memories of the long march fresh because it has the power of triggering memories and embodies the taste, smell, preparation and eating of Çullama within the story of the long march.

In another example, Tovmasyan's mother Mari talks about their life in Çatalca while cooking "Petaluda" in Chapter 14. It is significant because Tovmasyan's remembrance of the stories go hand in hand with the transmission of food narratives. She remembers them in a food context. In other words, Tovmasyan's food narratives appear to be an extension of an oral culture of recipe sharing and story telling, mostly dominated by women in the kitchen¹¹⁵. She not only writes as if she is talking to the reader, but also shows how cooking and story telling are connected to each other in her performative style of writing. Tovmasyan says that in the past by the time her mother finished the story of Çatalca, "Petaluda" would be cooked. However since she is older now, it takes a longer amount of time for her to finish the story. In her stories, Mari depicts the ethnic environment in Çatalca: what ethnicities lived there, and how they lived. The majority of the population was Muslim, and nine Armenian families lived there in total after

¹¹⁵ For more information see: Kelly 252.

migrating from Ermeniköy, Everek, Çorlu, Silivri, and Tekirdağ. Yet again, the underlying story of Çatalca shows the loss of the Armenian people and culture in Turkey. The population decrease and the loss of people become apparent. Mari says that they were shy about talking in Armenian on the streets of Çatalca, which tells the reader a lot about their living conditions as a minority after the genocide. At the end of the chapter Tovmasyan recommends to the readers not to cook this recipe by themselves and to get some help since it is difficult to do alone. She even tells the reader to invite her for help if they cannot find someone to cook with, so that she can tell the stories of other people in Çatalca that she did not mention in the chapter, implying that the stories of displacement and loss are not limited to the ones that she wrote in this chapter but that there are more to be told while cooking “Petaluda”. The performative style of writing her cookbook memoir shows the limits of transmitting information through writing. There is more to tell according to Tovmasyan, and maybe there are stories to tell that she could not depict in her writings. She finishes the chapter with an open-ended invitation to the reader that is almost tangible.

Stories of loss and displacement continue in each chapter, even extending to the graveyards of Armenians in some places. For instance in Chapter 15, Tovmasyan tells the reader the story of Armaş Dede in Çatalca, while remembering his favorite dish called Kuzu Kapama (Slowly cooked lamb dish). This particular dish reminds her Armaş Dede, Akabi yaya’s husband. He was Tovmasyan’s maternal grandfather who was buried in Çatalca after his death according to his will. However, there were no Armenian priests left in Çatalca when he died. As a result, he was buried by a Muslim imam in a small

Armenian graveyard in Çatalca. However that graveyard does not exist anymore, so his grave has disappeared.

“Armenian Alev Master’s (the name given to Armaş Dede by Turks) coffin had been taken to the Armenian graveyard, which existed back then next to the Muslim graveyard in Çatalca, on the shoulders of his relatives and friends with the Muslim imam’s participation and buried there. Even though where his grave is unknown, still lying somewhere in Çatalca. We cannot visit his grave, but twice a year we cook *kuzu kapama* (slowly cooked lamb dish) in remembrance of him. We, his grandchildren, gather and eat together. If you wish, let’s get together and cook this dish and eat together, as if it is semolina dessert made for the soul of the passed ones.... Every time we eat kapama in the spring, we commemorate Armaş Dede. He shall rest in peace. The important thing is to commemorate, either at the grave side, or at the dinner table, it does not matter.”¹¹⁶

When the traces of a graveyard are lost and one cannot find the marker of the dead to visit, it is possible to develop different patterns of commemoration. In this case Tovmasyan and the other grandchildren gather around the table every spring when it is the most suitable time to eat Kuzu Çevirme [Spit Roasted Lamb] and commemorate him while eating his favorite dish. Food becomes a medium for the recovery of loss – the book itself becomes the site of the recovery of loss via remembrance. Tovmasyan’s cookbook memoir is a site of loss and the food is the medium to recover the memories.

¹¹⁶ Tovmasyan 76-77. “Ermeni Alev Usta’nın tabutu, akrabalarının ve dostlarının omuzunda, imam efendinin de iştirakiyle Çatalca’da Müslüman mezarlığının yanındaki, o zamanlar var olup sonradan yok olan Ermeni mezarlığına götürülmüş, oracığa gömülvermiş. Dedem, yeri belli olmasa da, orada Çatalca’da yatıyor hala. Bizler mezarını ziyaret edemiyoruz ama en az yılda iki kere terbiyeli kuzu kapama pişiriyoruz onun anısına. Torunları bir araya gelip hep birlikte yiyoruz. Dilerseniz, bir kez de gelin beraber yapıp yiyelim bu yemeği, can için yapılmış helva niyetine.... Biz her bahar, kapama yediğimizde rahmetle anarız Armaş dedemi. Nur içinde yatsın. Önemli olan anmak, ha mezar başında, ha masa başında.”

Besides recovering the memories of others as they are internalized by Tovmasyan as her own, her childhood memories are recovered through remembering and contextualizing them within the cookbook memoir. The following section examines how Tovmasyan's memories of her childhood are very much embedded in specific places and how the taste and smell of certain foods are associated with them.

Witnessed Stories: Sensescapes and Childhood Memories

There is a shift in remembrance of past stories and meals when the events are experienced and witnessed. Yet even when they are witnessed it is important to note that these stories are reconstructed. Previously, memories of places were investigated as they were transmitted to Tovmasyan. In this part, it is significant to show how her own experience with food and senses plays a role in remembering past meals and places. Karaosmanoğlu claims in nostalgic cookbooks one way to create a sensorial geography of the past is to describe streets and places through aromas.¹¹⁷ Yedikule, a district in Istanbul where she lived for 15 years, in Tovmasyan's case becomes a sensorial landscape, in which she recalls the scent of things that trigger her memories of childhood. She begins the first recipe with a reference to the smell of Yedikule streets during Christmas. "During my childhood, the streets of Yedikule were full of the smell of onion three or four days before the New Year."¹¹⁸ Likewise, the third recipe refers to the feast days in a similar sense of smell. "The days that the Armenian kitchens celebrated feasts, the smell of onions and spices would permeate the whole furnishings of the house. Especially,

¹¹⁷ Karaosmanoglu 53.

¹¹⁸ Tovmasyan 15. "Çocukluğumda, yılbaşına üç dört gün kala Yedikule sokakları soğan kokusundan geçilmezdi."

those days when we cooked midye dolması [stuffed mussels] or as we say midya dolması...”¹¹⁹

In the following chapter she remembers the abundance of fish in the sea. “Here! There used to be fish called mackerel from that sea in those years. There used to be a sweet skillet dish that one could do with that fish. When the mackerel got fatty, the smell of barbecued grilled mackerel spread throughout the whole neighborhood of Yedikule. Dried mackerel would be strung along at fishermen’s houses from Kumkapı to Yeşilköy.”¹²⁰ These examples show that smell has a significant role in remembering places for Tovmasyan. The smell of onion and fish is associated with Armenian households and neighborhoods, creating a nostalgic longing for a place and time that once existed and was then reconstructed in a cookbook memoir as part of a “harmonious” past. David E. Sutton claims that cookbooks can be easily categorized as nostalgia texts: nostalgia for an imaginary lost Eden, nostalgia for that which was destroyed as a part of modernization, and nostalgia for the immigrant/regional extended family at the table at a time when everyday life seems increasingly fragmented and atomized.¹²¹ At first glance it is possible to mistake Tovmasyan’s cookbook-memoir as simply an expression of nostalgia for a harmonious past that was destroyed as a part of modernization, evoking sentiments for familial gatherings and a longing for times that do not fit in modern lifestyles. In other words, Tovmasyan’s memoir is not only a mourning for displacement

¹¹⁹ Tovmasyan 19. “Ermeni mutfaklarının bayram yaptığı günlerde, soğan ve baharat kokusu evin tüm eşyasına siner. Hele midye dolması, bizim deyişimizle “midya dolması” yaptığımız günlerde...”

¹²⁰ Tovmasyan 24. “İşte o denizden uskumru diye bir balık çıkardı o yıllarda. Mis gibi tavaşı olurdu. Yağlandığı dönemlerde mangalda ızgarasının kokusu bütün Yedikule’yi tutardı. Çirozluk uskumrular, Kumkapı’dan Yeşilköy’e kadar, ipe dizilip balıkçı evlerinin taraçalarına dizi dizi asılırdı.”

¹²¹ Sutton 146.

and loss for a community that was eliminated during the 1915 deportations but also reflects her experience of transition from traditional to modern life.

Tovmasyan's personal experience with moving from one place to another is limited to changing neighborhoods in İstanbul from Yedikule to Bakırköy. Moving from Takuhi yaya's house in Yedikule to an apartment building in Bakırköy during the 1970s shows a discomfort in Tovmasyan's narrative. Yedikule life seemingly represents a traditional past in which the fish were plenty and the people were friendlier. As Tovmasyan puts it, however, it was disrupted by a modern lifestyle.

“When we moved to an apartment building from Yedikule to Bakırköy by keeping up with the latest fashion, the fish began to enter our household with Fisherman Hayg Çavuşyan's scales instead of in a tinplate. Hayg, like his fisherman brother Hagop, would go from door to door and would fill the streets of Bakırköy with fish”¹²²

However while living in Yedikule, “It would be very proper to say that we never lacked fish in our house. My Uncle Garbis's wife Ankine's relatives were fishermen; that is why we had plenty of fishermen friends. I do not know whether the smell of fish permeated our house located at Yedikule Gençağa Street during my childhood or our smell permeated the fish, I cannot answer this question still to this day. Today, when the smell of fried fish occasionally penetrates our apartment from the airshaft, I remember my parents' quarrels: Oh! You Bedros! Are we going to feed the whole neighborhood with this tinplate full of fish?”¹²³

¹²² Tovmasyan 28. “Modaya uyup Yedikule'den Bakırköy'e, apartmanlı yaşama geçtiğimiz yıllarda balık da artık evimize tenekeyle değil, Balıkçı Hayg Çavuşyan'ın terazisiyle girmeye başladı. Kardeşi Hagop da balıkçı olan Hayg kapı kapı dolaşır, Bakırköy sokaklarından balığın kokusunu eksik etmezdi”.

¹²³ Tovmasyan 27. “Balık evimizden hiç eksik olmazdı desem yeridir. Garbis amcamın eşi Ankine yengemin akrabaları balıkçıydı, bu nedenle çok balıkçı dostumuz vardı. Çocukluğumun

Once upon a time, in Yedikule the smell of fish permeated the household and people according to Tovmasyan as she reimagines and reconstructs her memories. After moving to Bakırköy, Tovmasyan retrospectively remembers her parent’s argument about fish by smelling the fried fish through the airshaft of the apartment building. The smell coming from the airshaft reminds her of earlier times. Tovmasyan’s personal relationship to the past through sensorial memory is a witnessing account of absences: the absence of home in the case of Yeğya Dayı who could not go back to Çorlu, the absence of Armas Dede’s graveyard, and the absence of the fish recalled through a void from the airshaft. In the following example, Tovmasyan remembers her childhood tastes in Toros Dede’s ranch house in Silivri: “In that bond house at Silivri, how Grandfather Toros’s stories left marks in my memories, in a similar fashion Grandmother Surpik’s delicious food left unforgettable tastes on my palate. ... (Grapes) Some bunches are yellow, some bunches are henna colored, some bunches are dappled, seedy, sweetly, as sweet as our lives in Grandfather Toros’s ranch house.”¹²⁴

Tovmasyan’s cookbook memoir sheds light on the Armenian experience in Turkey by narrating her everyday life of food narratives on a micro-level. The smell of food is analogous to the stories of people told that are remembered by smelling, tasting, eating and all of these are in flux with Armenianness in her writing.

geçtiği Yedikule Genççağa Sokağı’ndaki evimize mi balık kokusu sinmişti, yoksa bizim kokumuz mu balıklara, bunun cevabını bugüne kadar verebilmiş değilim. Günümüzde nadir de olsa, apartmanımızın aydınlığından burnuma balık kızartması kokusu geldiğinde, anamla babamın o klasik atışmalarını hatırlarım: “A be Bedros, bir tenke balığı mahalleye mi yedireceğiz?”¹²⁴ Tovmasyan 99 – 100. “(Üzümler).. Kimi salkımı sarı, kimi salkımı kınalı, kimi salkımı benekli, çekirdekli, tatlı mı tatlı, en az o bağ evindeki, Toros dedemin çiftliğindeki yaşantımız kadar tatlı.” “Silivri’deki o bağ evinde Toros dedenin öyküleri belleğimde nasıl yer etmişse, Surpik yayamın pişirdiği o güzelim yemekler de damağımda unutamadığım tadlar bırakmıştır.”

Temporal Organization: Time to Eat

Temporal organizations around food play an important role in organizing and reconfiguring the group identity. “What we do, when and how we do it” is crucial in determining how the groups define themselves. There are three modes of temporal organization investigated in this part of the chapter according to the times that people gather to eat. (a) Everyday Commensality (b) Seasonal Commensality (c) Exceptional Commensality. As explained in the previous chapter commensality is “a gathering aimed to accomplish in a collective way some material tasks and symbolic obligations linked to the satisfaction of a biological individual need.”¹²⁵ Commensalities take place on a daily basis as well as weekly, monthly or yearly according to the customs of the groups. It enforces group identities when people are gathered around the food.

Everyday commensality

Food studies usually focus on exceptional commensalities since they are more memorable; as a result they are examined more often in order to understand the social structures of certain groups. However, as Sutton emphasizes, everyday commensalities, the mundane aspects that create the routine are important spaces to look at for understanding the structures of group identities. How ordinary days are organized is a reaffirmation of life cycles; organization of days, weeks, seasons and years that are to come reaffirms the group’s orientation towards future memories. Even though eating is a quotidian activity since it seems to occur without ritual, in actuality, it is highly ritualized

¹²⁵ Claude Grignon, “Commensality and Social Morphology: An Essay of Typology” ed., Peter Scholliers. *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe Since the Middle Ages*. (Oxford: Berg, 2001) 24.

activity.¹²⁶ Thus even the mundane is a ritual when it comes to eating. According to Tovmasyan’s description in her book the dishes that are eaten everyday consist of easy dishes, mostly focused on utilizing leftovers (economic value) and cooking quickly (time value). Also there are certain dishes that are cooked on certain days; such as Sunday meals (Chapter 12) “Mercimekli Yaprak Dolması” [Lentil Stuffed Grape Leaves] and laundry day meals (Chapter 8) “Fasulye Paçası” [Bean Trotter], (Chapter 16) “Kocagörmez”, eaten only by women since it needs to be eaten while it is hot then and there, right after the rolled out dough is fried.

Bean Trotter is a dish that Tovmasyan’s family would cook on laundry days. The reason to cook it is that the dish is easy to make while the hassle of doing the laundry takes all day and is a difficult process. Even the father Bedros participates in helping the mother Mari and the grandmother Takuhi by grinding the soap for them. Laundry specific food is part of the mundane ritual in Tovmasyan’s household yet when she hears that another Armenian family (Masis Kürkçügil) did the same dish on a laundry day it comes to her as a surprise at first because she thought that such a dish was specific to her family on laundry days. “Why would the Masis family who lived in the same era, same geography, and same conditions as we did, eat red caviar on top of fried bread? What was their difference? Nothing.”¹²⁷ Even though there are differences in the socio-economic and political trajectories of these two families, meal patterns are notably similar. Tovmasyan’s Masis hoca is Masis Kürkçügil who is known in Turkey for his leftist ideologies. Even though Tovmasyan is surprised at first, her realization of “sameness” with another Armenian family who is making the same dish for the same mundane

¹²⁶ Sutton 3.

¹²⁷ Tovmasyan 47. “Bizimle aynı tarihte, aynı coğrafyada, aynı şartlarda yaşayan Masisler, olmaya ki kızarmış ekmeğe kırmızı havyar sürüp yiyelerdi! Bizden farkları neydi? Hiç.

activity reaffirms her pre-existing social identity as an Armenian through an everyday commensal event.

Tovmasyan writes from an ethnically marginalized position and speaks to the dominant culture by articulating what it means to be an Armenian in a Turkish context.¹²⁸ The strategy she develops on one side is to show the difference of being an Armenian in Turkey by narrating the everyday rituals of Armenians that are different from her reader. On the other side by inviting the reader to participate in her cooking an Armenian dish, she attempts to create sameness with the reader as if she is trying to override the difference that marks Armenians in the gaze of Turkish readership. For instance, Lentil Stuffed Grape Leaves is a dish that the Tovmasyan family cooks every Sunday. This Sunday specific food is cooked with the collaboration of every family member including the father Bedros. At the end of this recipe Tovmasyan invites her readers to try this dish: “If you wish, on a Sunday morning, you can make stuffed lentils like we do, or eat them as lunch while they are warm. Give it a try, what would you lose?”¹²⁹ This cookbook memoir with its performative nature gives a flexible space to the author to communicate with the reader to a great extent.

¹²⁸ Melissa Bilal’s insights on being an Armenian in Turkey are significant. “Armenians in Turkey feel displaced at their home very much by the exclusion of Armenians from the history, the memory and the culture of Anatolia, the land where they lived for thousands of years with other ethnic groups. Armenians feel obliged to constantly rearticulate their belonging to this land through an emphasis on their history, for all the things reminiscent of their presence in Anatolia do not suffice to make them visible in this home. Not only the invisibility and exclusion from the representations of culture and history in the land and the restrictions on producing cultural material about Armenians, but also the double standards that they have to experience in terms of citizenship rights robs them of the true comfort of being at home in Turkey.” Melissa Bilal, “The Lost Lullaby and Other Stories About Being an Armenian in Turkey” MA Thesis, Bosphorus University 2004

¹²⁹ Tovmasyan 63. “İsterseniz bir pazar sabahı bizim yaptığımız gibi yapabilir, mercimek dolmasını sıcak sıcak öğle yemeği niyetine de yiyebilirsiniz. Bir deneyin, ne kaybedersiniz?”

Seasonal Commensality

Seasonal foods are only cooked during certain seasons or when certain seasonal events happen. For instance, lamb dishes are recommended to be made during spring because after the spring the lamb meat gets too fatty. Occasional events enable people to eat certain foods during certain seasonal events, such as eating snail stew (salyangoz yahnisi) if it rains the previous night. The fish are more abundant in particular seasons. By the end of the summer, grapes are one of the most favorable fruits eaten by Armenians. Grapes also have connections with religious feasting because during the fasting period, Armenians are not allowed to eat grapes¹³⁰. Tovmasyan unfolds the logic behind fasting for grapes as: “According to the rumor, the tradition of not eating grapes until mid August is invented by a priest who had vineyards. So that the village children would not snatch them out of season.”¹³¹ The invention of a tradition surrounding food can sometimes be arbitrary as shown in this example, or it can be the product of seasonal cycles. These seasonal food cycles not only help to recall past meals but also create life cycles and expectations for the future. Like food, these life cycles remain the same once they are traditionalized, even though people’s lives change.

“My grandmother Akabi had an unchanging recipe for Asdvadzadzin (the anniversary of Virgin Mary’s acceptance to the sky): Stuffed red lentils, eggplant with chicken, and dough dessert we call ‘petaluda’ which is put on top of the upper shelves as soon as it is cooked so that we children cannot reach it. And on top of it, the fruit of the day, grapes

¹³⁰ "The Blessing of Grapes." *Armenian Church*. Last Accessed Web. 02 May 2014.

<http://www.armenianchurch-ed.net/feasts/annunciation/the-blessing-of-grapes/>

"HyeTert: Ermeni Bayram Ve Yortuları!" *HyeTert: Ermeni Bayram Ve Yortuları!* Last Accessed Web. 02 May 2014. <http://hyetert.blogspot.com/2011/08/ermeni-bayram-ve-yortular.html>

¹³¹ Tovmasyan 66. “Söylentiye göre, ağustosun yarısına kadar üzüm yememe adetini, üzüm bağları olan bir papaz, tam olgunlaşmamış üzümlerinin koyun çocukları tarafından zamansız koparılıp heder edilmesini engellemek için çıkarmışmış.”

which are missed for a while.... On the second Sunday of August, we bring these sanctified grapes to our tables and we treat them as the guest of honor. Then the longing ends and the grapes begin to boil to the stomachs of those lovers who long for them.”¹³²

Akabi yaya’s “unchanging” recipe is important to consider because even though the people change and pass away, the seemingly unchanging nature of recipes enable people to imagine that their lives are unchanging or uninterrupted. The recipes give a sense of continuity in the face of continuous change in their lives. In our interview Tovmasyan admitted that this is another reason she wrote the recipes down, to save them from oblivion. The recipes are fixed but at least not forgotten. The very same reasoning applies to her writing about the people who have passed away. Tovmasyan remembers the dead while writing this book, rescuing them from oblivion.

Exceptional Commensality

As shown above, grapes are an example that have one foot in seasonal commensality and the other in religious commensality; sometimes it is not possible to separate them from each other since the religious calendar goes hand in hand with seasonal cycles. According to Zubaida commensal occasions range from normal family meals to the entertainment of visitors and invited guests, to life-cycle and other ceremonial meals, to religious occasions. At all these, commensality is a demonstration of social solidarity among participants, bearing moral implications of mutual support in

¹³² Tovmasyan 66. “Bizler ağustos ayının ikinci pazar günü kilisede okunan üzümü alıp evlerimize getirir, o bir salkım okunmuş üzümü sofralarımızın baş misafiri ederiz. İşte bundan sonra özlem biter ve üzüm kendisini hasretle bekleyen sevgililerinin midelerine iner inmez onların kanını fokur fokur kaynatmaya başlar”

the future. Those who eat together implicitly mark their common identity and equality, particularly on religious occasions.¹³³

Exceptional commensalities are the ones that are studied the most in anthropological works because their memorable value differs from mundane activities and the group identities are both articulated and reinforced through such rituals. As Grignon asserts, it is “manifestation of a pre-existing social group,”¹³⁴ and it is exclusively for those who do not fit in the given context (religious, ethnic, gender, etc.) that the event is performed.

“We did not need to ask to our elders what did *Pareganten*, *Zadig*, *Dzinunt*, *Asdvadzadzin*, *Boğos-Bedros*, *Surp Garabed*, *Tateos-Partoğimeos*, *Surp Sarkis*, *Surp Hagop*, *Surp Hovhannes* (all Armenian religious feast days) mean when we were kids. ... [In those days] everything was going to ‘feast’”¹³⁵

As Tovmasyan shows in this paragraph, religious days are embedded in the cultural memories of Armenians, or at least in their family, from very early on in life. It is not very likely for an “outsider” to recognize the symbolic value and the significance of these days. The meaning of these days are shaped and understood within a specific cultural context that is embodied in the person from early childhood. In this case, Tovmasyan tells the reader that an Armenian would understand what these names signify and that the children would not feel the need to ask their elders what they mean. Cleaning

¹³³ Zubaida and Tapper 12.

¹³⁴ Grignon 24.

¹³⁵ Tovmasyan 23. “*Pareganten*, *Zadig*, *Dzinunt*, *Asdvadzadzin*, *Boğos-Bedros*, *Surp Garabed*, *Tateos-Partoğimeos*, *Surp Sarkis*, *Surp Hagop*, *Surp Hovhannes*’in ne olduğunu, ne anlama geldiğini çocukluğumuzda büyüklerimize sormamıza gerek yoktu. ... [Bu günlerde] her şey ‘bayram’ yapacaktı.”

the house, cooking and people gathering in these days constitute a habitual identification of Armenianness in Tovmasyan's narrative.

Furthermore, Tovmasyan's second recipe gives clues about how Armenian communities used to gather and have potlucks under the name of the "Can/Sevgi Yemekleri" [Soul/Love Dinners] event when Tovmasyan was younger. At one of these gatherings in Surp Nigoğayos Church, the priest gives women some suggestions for making Midye Dolması more delicious than the way they do it. However, neither that community nor those gatherings, nor the priests who know the tips of making good Midye Dolması exist anymore as Tovmasyan puts it. In a similar vein Tovmasyan talks about their Greek neighbors in Yedikule with the same resentful approach since those neighbors had to leave during troubling times for Greek minorities in İstanbul. The relationship between the neighbors is highlighted especially in the 22nd chapter/recipe: Anuşabur. She talks about their Greek neighbors and how they exchanged food with her family during Christmas. It is important to note that Tovmasyan calls this "new year" instead of "Noel/Christmas" possibly in order for a Turkish/Muslim reader to relate to the time period since the dates are very close to each other. "Whenever the blessings/abundance of Apostolaki left our tables, the taste of everything has changed... There is wealth but not abundance. Conversation is not fashionable anymore. As if people had nothing left to tell each other."¹³⁶

Every Christmas when they exchanged food, the Tovmasyans sent their Greek neighbors "anuşabur" and Apostolakis sent them "Ayvasil pidesi". In Madam Fofu's words they have exchanged "bereket/wealth" and stories during their dinner table

¹³⁶ Tovmasyan 103-104. "Ne zaman ki Apostolaki'nin bereketi yok oldu bizim masamızdan, her şeyin tadı değişti.... Bolluk var ama bereket yok. Muhabbet ise artık moda değil. Sanki insanların birbirlerine anlatacak birşeyleri kalmadı."

conversations. Greeks leaving the neighborhood is another rupture in the daily cycle as well as the sense of community in Tovmasyan's childhood. Both "Can Yemekleri" and the exchange of food in the neighborhood are the accounts that show the reinforcement of communal identity as Armenians and non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. The loss of those times is symptomatic of the loss of the past and people. Tovmasyan attempts to recover these losses by reconstructing the past stories in her narrative. Temporal continuity of exceptional commensalities was disrupted as time passed. The Greeks of İstanbul slowly diminished in the city as a result of political distress against Greek minorities; as Armenian Church gatherings also greatly diminished according to Tovmasyan's account.

Conclusion

This chapter examined Tovmasyan's book from three perspectives: characters, space and time. Characters appear and disappear in each chapter tying the stories each other. Even though there is no temporal or spatial sequence in the book from the beginning to the end, there are implicit temporal and spatial sequences within chapters by the associations she makes with food. In other words, space and time appear, as the stories are unraveled while she remembers the past. The places she describes are either the ones that her grandparents lived and she heard the stories of these places from her parents mostly in a food context: while cooking in the kitchen, talking about places and people while eating etc. These stories are not experienced by Tovmasyan but internalized. She remembers the places she has grown up in food context that is more sensual since the experienced memories are more likely to be triggered by smells, tastes and sounds.

Certain dishes come forward in Tovmasyan's narrative, particularly semolina dessert as a eulogy for the dead, and *çullama* as a metaphor for displacement. Everybody in the family according to Tovmasyan, think of Yeğya Dayı while eating Çullama since it is his favorite dish, and the dish itself is attached to Yeğya Dayı's unfortunate life story. Tovmasyan successfully intertwines people and the food in her book: people are remembered either according to their favorites dishes or the dishes they cook the best. Furthermore this chapter showed the temporality of food by investigating everyday commensality, seasonal and exceptional commensalities in Tovmasyan's narratives. As a result, it is argued that not only ritualistic aspects of food during the change of season or religious events enforce the group identities but also everyday commensalities when family members sit around the table and repeat the "same" every day. The next chapter investigates another author, another geographical location, and another way approaching to food through Margosyan's autobiographical story collections.

Chapter 3: Food Memories and Nostalgia in Margosyan's Autobiographical Stories

“Now I am seeking for those days that I was happy; the mud brick walls of our clay roof, the broken handled cups, our water jar, the frozen smile of Miss Universe of 1930s that is on our coffee tray, the stuffed couch pillows ornamented with bird figures, stone courtyard where I used to crawl, all those people who since then returned back to a heap of earth: my grandmothers, my grandfather Halo, my father Siko, my mother Hino who always kept in my mouth her nipple, bearing abundant milk like the water of Dicle river. Those days began in Diyarbakır, in Hançepek, in the Infidel Quarter with Kure Mama's rusty scissors and with voices ingaaa!!! 'gaaattt!!!', 'maleeez!!!, I am seeking for the childhood that I lost after all those years.”

Mıgırđıç Margosyan¹³⁷

This chapter explores the theme of food as a vehicle to remember and reconstruct the past and to reconcile the Armenian identity within the dominant culture through Mıgırđıç Margosyan's three consecutive autobiographical storybooks, published between 1992-1998: *Gavur Mahallesi* [Infidel Quarter], *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* [Tell Me Margos, Where are you from?], *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* [Our Ticket was Cut for İstanbul], in which he narrates his childhood stories in Diyarbakır located in the southeast of Turkey.¹³⁸ It is argued that by looking at the temporal and spatial organization of mundane life through food narratives, it is possible to see that Margosyan's

¹³⁷ Mıgırđıç Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* (Beyođlu, İstanbul: Aras, 1995) 81.

“Şimdi yılların ardında kalan, mutlu olduđum o günleri, toprak damımızın kerpiç duvarlarını, saç sobamızın ılık sıcaklığını, kulpu kırık fincanlarımızı, su testimizi, kahve tepsimizdeki donuk gülüşlü 1930'ların dünya güzelini, kuş figürleriyle süslü kıtık dolu sedir yastıklarını, emekleyerek dolaştığım taş avlumuzu, hepsi de birer toprak yığını olan nenelerimi, Halo dedemi, babam Siko'yu, Dicle'nin suyu gibi çağıl çağıl sütüyle memesini ağzımdan eksik etmeyen anam Hino'yu, Diyarbakır'da, Hançepek'te, Gavur Mahallesi'nde, Kure Mama'nın paslı makasıyla başlayan, 'ingaaa!!!', 'gaaattt!!!', 'maleeez!!!' sesleri arasında yitirdiđim çocukluđumu arıyorum.”

¹³⁸ Mıgırđıç Margosyan, *Gavur Mahallesi*. (İstanbul: Aras, 1993), Mıgırđıç Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen?* (İstanbul: Aras, 1995). Mıgırđıç Margosyan, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi*, (İstanbul: Aras, 1998)

reconstruction of his childhood memories is significantly related to the struggles of being an Armenian in Turkey. His stories are examples of nostalgic longing for childhood and an attempt to recover a past that is long gone. His recalling of “happy memories” of childhood conflicts with heavy conditions of being a minority in Southeast Turkey, and he adopts a satirical approach in his writings in order to play between the naive happiness of childhood and the difficult conditions of being a minority. As Margosyan discusses in one of his interviews, his stories tell the “unwritten history” of Turkey.¹³⁹ Margosyan attempts to reconcile the memories of past as well as the reader, particularly Turkish reader, by writing heavily on his childhood in Diyarbakır.

Gavur Mahallesi is Margosyan’s introduction to the social life and struggle of Armenians living in Diyarbakır during the first half of the 20th century. One can observe from the stories included in *Gavur Mahallesi* that Margosyan’s early stories mostly feature descriptions of places and people, drawing a social and cultural history of Diyarbakır. These stories lay a foundation for those in following autobiographical storybooks *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* and *Biletimiz İstanbul’a Kesildi*. His first story collection reflects Margosyan’s first observations of the world from the perspective of “naïve” child. In his later story collections collected in *Söyle Margos Nerelisen?*, *Biletimiz İstanbul’a Kesildi*, Margosyan gradually develops more of an autobiographical narrative style that eventually leads him to write his first autobiographical novel in 2006, called *Tespîh Taneleri* [Beads of Prayer Beads], which will be focused in the next chapter.

¹³⁹ Mıgırđıç Margosyan, Interview by Bask Deniz Ozdogan. “Rüyalarımızı Hangi Dille Görüyorsak O Dille Yazarız” *Yeni Yazı* 7: (2010), 27.

Margosyan's stories progressively become more complicated and enriched by combining the cultural panorama of Diyarbakır through his stylistic experiments in the autobiographical genre. If *Gavur Mahallesi* is this author's multicultural celebration of Diyarbakır, his later book *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* is charged with loss and the realization of that loss along with the standard childhood naivety. *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* is marked by the struggle of retrieving that loss not only for a long gone childhood but also the loss of the Armenian people and their ancestral lands after 1915. Thus in his later story collections, Margosyan complicates the harmonious sensibilities of Diyarbakır growingly focusing on struggles of Armenians. Ethno-religious segregations in Diyarbakır and loss in the Armenian community are depicted in a more apparent manner in *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* and *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi*.

There are multiple ways of narrating the self since there are multiple layers to one's understanding of the self. In each of Margosyan's autobiographical storybooks the food narratives are not equally distributed. In some of the stories food occupies a more marginal space whereas in others food becomes the dominant theme of the story. This chapter highlights food narratives regardless of whether the food is a marginalized or a central theme in three story collections by Margosyan, depending on their applicability to the analysis of food as a literary object in remembering and reconstructing the past in Margosyan's writing. As argued in the first chapter in detail, the power of food in retrieving memories is undeniable and there is a relationship between how a person's memories about the self construct the person's identity. For instance, Kravva suggests that the food has a role in constructing identities through mnemonic devices, particularly

taste and smell.¹⁴⁰ I argue that Margosyan's food narratives are significant to analyze since food items and senses triggers the memories of the past and food memories play an important role as an active agency for constructing Armenian identity in Diyarbakır. Not only Armenianness as an ethnic identity emphasized in his food narratives but also being a *Diyarbakırlı*, i.e. Diyarbakirite, is underlined as a part of geographical rural identity.¹⁴¹

Unlike Tovmasyan's writing on food, Margosyan does not intend to write exclusively about food but conjure up memories that link food, cooking, kitchen, and festivities of his childhood. At first the world of food in his writings is the maternal world that disciplines the child's body, nourishes it, and triggers sensorial memory that recalls, recollects, and reconstructs the childhood in which the author longs for an irreversible past. Furthermore the world of food has social and cultural implications that support and reaffirm collective identity in various performative ways. It also has the power of separating communities from each other and marking subjectivities. The ways Margosyan treats food shapes his perception of identities in Diyarbakır. Food is used as a medium in Margosyan's stories to create a coherent narrative of self and identity. Since Margosyan chooses to use an associative method to recollect and reconstruct his childhood stories without a linear temporal sequence, by analyzing his food stories the intention in this chapter is to put a temporospatial organization to his narratives.¹⁴² In other words by looking at birth rituals, organization of family, community and religion,

¹⁴⁰ Kravva 141.

¹⁴¹ Local identity is further problematized in the next chapter (Chapter 4), in which Margosyan's autobiographical novel *Tespîh Taneleri* [Beads of Prayer Beads] will be examined. In this novel he writes about his exilic experience in İstanbul. His "realization" of his identity as a rural/Kurdish persona comes forward in this work due to the fact that it is imposed to him by İstanbulite Armenians.

¹⁴² See the footnotes in this chapter 145, 147, 150, which show how themes are associated with each other. Freud's free-association method is useful to consider while speaking of associative method.

network around the food, seasonal food preparations and preservation of food as a way of preserving identities, culinary expressions that surround religious rituals, and women's daily life with food in the Armenian community in Diyarbakır, this chapter shows the complicated relationship between food narratives and the cultural life of Diyarbakır in Margosyan's literary works.

The Structure of the storybooks

In these three consecutive autobiographical storybooks, there are 26 stories in total.¹⁴³

Margosyan narrates the stories in which the events took place between 1938 and 1953.¹⁴⁴

There are no clear-cut distinctions between themes in these books; yet there is a continuous dialogue with the audience introducing childhood, locality, and Diyarbakır. Overall, it is possible to evaluate these three consecutively published autobiographical storybooks as a trilogy by Margosyan since they are fragments about his childhood, similar to Tovmasyan's cookbook memoir, without any chronological order. Themes and narrative styles in each book are also similar to each other. The only way to distinguish these books from each other would be to examine the stylistic and thematic experiments he executes. Even though these three books are self-narratives and they contain autobiographical elements, Margosyan tries different types of narrative modes and narrative styles from testimonial narrative to fictional narrative. Even more importantly it

¹⁴³ *Gavur Mahallesi* has eleven stories; *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* has eight stories; *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* has seven stories

¹⁴⁴ There are two stories that exception to this time period: "Şişli'de Yağmur" [Rain in Şişli] in *Gavur Mahallesi* takes places in 1973 and it is about his mother's death in İstanbul. Even though this story ends in İstanbul, Margosyan begin this story with his memories in Diyarbakır and associates this memory to his mother's allegiance to food in Diyarbakır. Another story is in his third book *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi*, called *Allah!...* [God!...], is a stylistic experiment. In this story Margosyan reflects his observations in İstanbul while he is traveling from one place to another. He narrates it as an omniscient narrator who sees and knows all characters' thoughts.

is possible to follow Margosyan's thematic structure in these books developing from childhood naivety towards an actualized social and cultural positionalities as a member of an Armenian group. Margosyan re-conceptualizes the world around him as an adult while narrating his childhood memories. As a result *Gavur Mahallesi* is author's ethnographic gaze at Diyarbakır and people, whereas *Söyle Margos Nerelisen?* is author's realization of his subjectivity and becoming an agent. His last autobiographical storybook *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* reflects author's struggle to survive as an ethnic minority. This book prepares the reader to Margosyan's next literary work *Tespîh Taneleri*.

Gavur Mahallesi

Some of his stories in *Gavur Mahallesi* were previously published in the *Marmara* newspaper in Armenian, and its Armenian version *Mer Ayt Goğmeri* was awarded the Eliz Kavukciyan Foundation Award in France in 1988. Later Margosyan translated these stories to Turkish himself and they appeared in 1992 from *Bebekus* Publishing, one year before Aras Publishing was established.

Margosyan primarily introduces the people of Diyarbakır, particularly in the Armenian community in *Gavur Mahallesi*. Since it is limited to the introduction of Armenians in Diyarbakır and carry the features of a descriptive work that underlines the social and cultural panorama of Diyarbakır, when the stories in *Gavur Mahallesi* are read and analyzed retrospectively, scope of this book can be interpreted as a general framework for forthcoming books. There are temporal networks among people that link them to each other, such as stories and rituals. There are also spatial networks such as churches, market places, and courtyards where people gather to worship, conduct business, or prepare and eat food together. Margosyan raises certain themes such as food,

birth and death in *Gavur Mahallesi* in order to link stories together. *Gavur Mahallesi* consists of eleven stories and each story revolves around a certain theme that is complicated through associative narration. Associations in each story are usually made through a cast of characters Margosyan met or heard about, and particular themes (such as death, birth, change of seasons, religious rituals, occupations eating, cooking and naming). Transition from one chapter to another is also made through these associations.¹⁴⁵ By writing these stories Margosyan is clearly attempting to shed light on life in Diyarbakır; he depicts a harmonious multiculturalism in *Gavur Mahallesi* unlike his following stories in his latter books. In *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* and *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi*, Margosyan talk about an atrocity towards non-Muslim groups in Diyarbakır. The focus of the stories in *Gavur Mahallesi* is predominantly the people discussed therein; that is why in *Gavur Mahallesi* Margosyan is more of an autoethnographer than an autobiographer.¹⁴⁶ There is an overpowering “we” narrative in this first book, “we” is sometimes “we Armenians”, “we people of Diyarbakır”, or both.

Söyle Margos Nerelisen?

Söyle Margos Nerelisen consists of eight stories and each story tells a story about Margosyan’s childhood in Diyarbakır. Similar to his first storybook, Margosyan adds stories together in an associative manner according to their themes.¹⁴⁷ It is possible to

¹⁴⁵ Generic thematic schemes of the eleven in the order they appear in *Gavur Mahallesi*: death, birth, death, poverty, naming, childhood, who we are, food, tradition, who we are, and uncle Haço

¹⁴⁶ The term is used by Sweet Wong in her article explaining how feminist scholarship view native woman’s writing as autoethnographers. Hertha D. Sweet Wong. “First-Person Plural: Subjectivity and Community in Native American Women’s Autobiography.” *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, ed. Smith and Watson (Madison : University of Wisconsin Press, 1998) 168–78.

¹⁴⁷ The themes that dominate the eight stories in the order they appear in *Söyle Margos Nerelisen?* are: Language, food; Giving birth to boys, naming, language; Death, nostalgia, ethnoreligious

claim that Margosyan deeply scrutinizes his surrounding by stepping ahead from the childhood naivety. He is more critical and conscious of his subjectivity when living as a minority in the city of Diyarbakır. Throughout this book he is more aware of the positionality as a minority and steeped in the social construction and the language. The following quote in the last story with the same title of the book “Söyle Margos Nerelisen” exemplifies his relationship to his parents in regards to food and language.

“When I was two or three years old, a third word came and settled in my limited vocabulary. It was my father Sıke who taught me this word, whereas it was my mother Hıno who taught me the words bread and water. When I was two feet tall or something, my dad put me on his lap, caressing my hair and cheek. He asked me: “Come on my son tell me, where are you from?”¹⁴⁸

Margosyan in this quote gives an account of his childhood memory about the first words he learned. His mother teaches him how to say “bread” and “water”, essential vocabulary for his survival. His father teaches him a third word “nerelisen, i.e where are you from, the knowledge of where his origin is, where he is from, the framework in which he positions himself as the subject of his ethnic identity. Against the impossibility of knowing the first words a child can speak Margosyan shows the construction of social subjectivity through language by showing the split between the mother and the father, between the individual self and the social self. The construction of identity as an ethnic self is embedded within the self-representation in Margosyan’s autobiographical fictions. Eventually his autobiographical stories are situated between the self and the social. They neither claim to be factual or fictional but are instead a combination of both. The harmony previously depicted in *Gavur Mahallesi* is disrupted in this book. It is possible

locality, neighborhood, order; Ethnicities, dominant religions, labor divisions; birth, nostalgia, food; Food, occupation, collective labor; childhood naivety, language, food, daily routine, nostalgia, traces of genocide.

¹⁴⁸ Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen?* 100-101. “Benim iki veya üç yaşındaki sözcük dağarcığıma, kelime hazneme, yani ekmek ve suya, hemen hemen aynı günlerde, bir üçüncü kelime daha gelip yerleşti. Bu kelimeyi ilk kez babam Sıke öğretti. Oysa suyu ve ekmeği anam Hıno öğretmisti. Boyum iki karış falanken, babam beni kucaklar, dizlerinin üstüne oturtur, saçlarımı, yanaklarımı okşayarak sorardı. “De hele oğlum, sen nerelisen?”

to interpret this storybook as self-realization and a means of stepping forward into the order of the world, into the language of the father. The emphasis on language and spatial belonging in *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* is evidence of the author's desire to remember a world constructed by memories of others and self. A social construction that vibrates in names of people, celebrations and food.

Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi

Margosyan's third book, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi*, begins with a letter to Hagop Mintzuri, which presents a new stylistic attempt for him.¹⁴⁹ The letter/story opens with Margosyan's struggle to write an answer to Hagop Mintzuri's eulogy to his work. Margosyan feels overwhelmed by Mintzuri's compliments about his stories in part because he views him as his master, and thinks the best way to reply his letter is to write in the same language that Mintzuri uses, by which he means their shared ancestral language: Armenian. However, since Margosyan learned Armenian later on in his life as mentioned previously, it is more difficult for him to fully express himself. From this point on, he links together the difficulties of being an Armenian in Diyarbakır: being a child from a minor ethnic and religious community and being a doubly marginalized child. That is he was ethnically mistaken as a Kurd and racially discriminated by his peers of same ethnic background because of his darker tone of his skin, as well as his social status was considered to be lower since he was coming from a lower income background.

In *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi*, similar to his previous books, Margosyan is consistent with the way he structures his stories by creating associative themes to link stories with each other; in a way to create a narrative a space in which he can best narrate

¹⁴⁹ Hagop Mintzuri (1886 – 1978) Ottoman Armenian author. Margosyan considers him to be the master of Armenian literature in Turkey.

himself and his surroundings.¹⁵⁰ The more he writes about himself, the more he establishes a clear and fixed notion of himself as an Armenian, as a man from Diyarbakır. The changing themes when they are analyzed chronologically from the first storybook to the last one show the symptoms of change in his understanding of himself as an Armenian from Diyarbakır. His approach to “harmonious” lives in Diyarbakır in *Gavur Mahallesi* is shattered into pieces by the time the reader encounters struggle stories of Armenians in Diyarbakır in *Biletimiz İstanbul’a Kesildi*.

Spatial Organization

A child narrator, Margosyan involves both in the private and public sphere. In other words these narratives include both domestic and public perspectives. Even though they were experienced by a child, they were reconstructed by the author from an adult perspective. The inner space belongs to women and children and in this domestic realm it is usually the mother and neighboring women who attend to their daily chores such as cleaning and cooking.¹⁵¹ Food and cooking mostly appear as a part of his mother’s daily routine. In addition, preparation of large amounts of food in the fall for the winter months is important since a shortage of food in winter can only be prevented by this preparation. Margosyan gives initial information about how the food is prepared for winter in *Gavur*

¹⁵⁰ The themes that dominate the seven stories in the order they appear in *Biletimiz İstanbul’a Kesildi* are: Language, childhood, ethnicity, religion; children’s games, occupations, ethnicities; Location, time, ritual, myths; Death, ritual, 1915, cemetery; Class distinctions, urban environment; Myths, fantastic; food, daily routines, conversion (religious), language, naming.

¹⁵¹ For instance in “Guvercin” [The Pigeon] from *Gavur Mahallesi* food appears as a part of ritual; in fourth story “Şişli’de Yağmur” [Rain in Şişli] food is related to mother’s death; in fifth story “Ne Mutlu o İnsanlara ki Bu Dünyada Fakirdiler” [How Happy Those People who in this World Were Poor] food that Margosyan desires as a child; the eight story “Bizler” [Us] food preparation for winter; ninth story “Ekmek Ekmek Ekmek” [Bread Bread Bread] the significance of bread in their family and community; first story “Pist, Bemurad, Pist” in *Söyle Margos Nerelisen*; food preparation for winter, particularly yogurt, “Bozanlara Gittik” [We Went to Bozans] in *Söyle Margos Nerelisen*, collaborative work among women preparing the food come to the foreground, particularly preparing dolma

Mahallesi; in his later book *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* he specifies the rituals and collaborative work that is involved in this procedure.¹⁵²

The public sphere usually appears in children's plays or in the market place where men work. Margosyan shows up in these places either playing with his peers or as a young boy who works as an apprentice in his uncle's blacksmith shop, forging iron or dealing with customers using broken Kurdish.¹⁵³ Since he tells the stories as a third person omniscient narrator he usually prevails over both the private and public space. Even though Margosyan portrays a multicultural community in Diyarbakır with people from different religions living side by side, he also shows that there is atrocity coming from the majority towards minority and apparent hierarchy among religious communities. The neighborhoods are isolated from each other according to ethno-religious segregation. The market place is the only space that embraces all ethnic groups but this space is linguistically dominated by Kurdish. There is a tendency for people to buy food from their "own" religious group.

In his stories Margosyan describes spatial organization in Diyarbakır and hints at ethnoreligious divisions among groups in particular. He elaborates on these divisions further in his other stories.¹⁵⁴ For instance, his first story begins in *Gavur Mahallesi* with church bells. While Deli Uso, i.e. crazy, the bell-ringer, is ringing the bells, the reader senses bitter sweet competition between Deli Uso and Muezzin Nusret, i.e. the officer for call for prayer from a mosque, (metaphorically between Christianity and Islam) even though the reader does not know the level of bitterness or the sweetness of this

¹⁵² Margosyan, *Gavur Mahallesi* 58; *Söyle Margos Nerelisen*, 17.

¹⁵³ Margosyan, *Gavur Mahallesi* 7th story "Tumas'ın Kızı" [Tumas's Daughter] & 11th story "Haço"

¹⁵⁴ Margosyan, *Gavur Mahallesi* the second story "Güvercin" [Pigeon] and eleventh story "Haço"

competition since Margosyan only gives Uso's account. The sound of call for prayer and the bells of the church mix with each other. Uso secretly feels happy that his bells last longer than the prayer. By placing the mixing of sounds at the very first story Margosyan not only draws close attention to the multicultural panorama of Diyarbakır but also gives tips about the distance between these two religious institutions. Uso feels the need to walk to Gavur Mahallesi, i.e. Infidel Quarter, spatially close by, in order to spread the news of Meryem's death, so it is implied that the church is far enough from the Infidel Quarter that the ringing of bells cannot be heard. Furthermore, in the last story Margosyan describes the city walls and how to enter into Diyarbakır from the four gates placed in them. He is more explicit in his following books about the organization of the city, but it is meaningful that he starts his first story collection with a story about Uso leaving the church at the center to go to the periphery in the Infidel Quarter. Then Margosyan finishes the book with people from the peripheries coming to the center through the gates that surround the city. People coming to the city from villages in order to do their shopping and trade.

For instance in his fourth story "Alo... Santrol!" [Hello... Operator!] in *Söyle Margos Nerelisen*, Margosyan describes a series of small houses surrounding a courtyard in Infidel Quarter that belongs to Ağacan Dayı. Margosyan's family is one of the tenants in this location. The courtyard is the place in which women gather and do their collaborative chores such as cracking large amounts of wheat. Margosyan calls this area the "kingdom of Ağacan Dayı", as a place that he remembered before he had to leave Diyarbakır. In the following fifth story "Kaltak" [The Whore] in *Söyle Margos Nerelisen*, Margosyan extrapolates further on his description of locations and writes about the ethno-

religious segregation in Diyarbakır according to which religious groups are divided in separate quarters. Since entrance to the main city (Diyarbakır) is made available through certain gates (kapı) (Urfa Kapısı, Mardin Kapısı, Yeni Kapı, Dağ Kapı) Margosyan describes where each specific religious group resides according to the locations of the gates. “Kaltak” is the story that gives the most allusive description of ethno-religious segregation in Diyarbakır. In the third of the trilogy, *Biletimiz İstanbul’a Kesildi*, Margosyan takes the reader further into the streets of Diyarbakır and describes the roads he takes in order to get to the market. There are no street names or door numbers but only touchstones, such as gates, religious buildings, or particular houses that one must follow if they want to find their way.

Furthermore in the story “Kan Kan Kan” [Blood Blood Blood] in *Biletimiz İstanbul’a Kesildi*, he describes the communal walk to Satıköy in order to take a vow to the saints next to the ruins of an old Armenian Church, Surp Giragos. This ritual takes place every fall and people usually walk there from the previous evening as a whole community to sacrifice animals, and during the night while they are resting, the tripe soup is slowly cooked in order to be distributed to people for breakfast. On the next day women cook while children play and men drink. The importance of this story regarding the description of location is its emphasis on how people from different areas pass through the four gates of Diyarbakır in order to arrive to this place.

Temporal Organization

Margosyan does not follow a chronological order while talking about his childhood. Even though the stories have a temporal sequence within themselves, he interrupts the narrative with flashbacks and flash-forwards, as well as side stories of

people who are relevant to the main story. Changes of season play an important role in determining the temporal organization in Margosyan's stories. Season-oriented rituals focused around food help to determine the temporality. Daily and weekly chores that are specific to Christian Armenians signify what time of the day or what day of the week Margosyan is talking about in his stories. In a few stories, Margosyan clearly announces his age saying that he was six years old; by eleventh story in *Gavur Mahallesi*, he mentions that he was nine years old when he started working as an apprentice in his uncle's blacksmith shop every summer for six years until he was sent to İstanbul.¹⁵⁵

In *Gavur Mahallesi* he creates a temporal organization parallel with a child's development in seventh story "Tumas'ın Kızı" [Tumas' Daughter]. In this story it is possible to follow roughly how old Margosyan is according to the games he was playing with his friends. In the eighth story "Bizler", he gives a greater time frame and describes what they traditionally do in each season. Transition from one season to another one is crucial since the transition makes a difference in food consumption according to the resources that are available to them in a village lifestyle. In the fourth story "Şişli'de Yağmur" in *Gavur Mahallesi* Margosyan associates his mother's death to food and skips ahead to 1974 by interrupting temporal organization of the book, which is limited to the time period before he left Diyarbakır for further education in İstanbul. Since *Gavur Mahallesi*, like his other storybooks, is set between 1938-1953 skipping ahead to 1970s may seem like an interruption in the book. This is because Margosyan's above mentioned association between his mother's death with food consumption in Diyarbakır during his childhood. The cellar of the home is an important location in which the food is prepared and preserved in big jars. When they move to İstanbul the mother does not have such a

¹⁵⁵ Margosyan, *Gavur Mahallesi* 42.

big space to preserve the food. Being cramped in the small jars is a metaphor: neither the food nor the mother could survive the confined lifestyle in the city.

Margosyan rarely gives the exact years that things take place or tells his age at the time specific events occur. When he does it is easier to determine a chronological order in his life. One can tell the winter has come when the area is covered with snow from metaphors such as “the surrounding were white like a white beard”¹⁵⁶; they would sleep on the roof of their house during the summer until “Surp Haç, Aziz Haç” [Saint Cross] yortusu/ feast (this feast was celebrated in September 14th) because by then the weather would get colder. “Haç, damdan kaç...”¹⁵⁷ was a commonly used expression at this time. The seasons are determined according to the routines that take place in the stories. His childhood development can be traced sometimes according the number of teeth in his mouth, or according to his height compared to certain objects such as the “needle of a quilt”. Overall rituals and seasonal changes become signifiers of temporality in Margosyan’s stories.

Examining food narratives within the spatial and temporal organizations of the stories Margosyan constructs is significant because food narratives manifest themselves within certain ritualistic, mundane and often location specific contexts. Therefore I will first investigate how *malez* and bread fit in Margosyan’s stories. Then I will look at food’s role in organizing the family and community through rituals and seasonal changes.

Malez and the Maternal World

¹⁵⁶ Margosyan, *Gavur Mahallesi* 9. “...ortalık ak sakal kadar beyazdı”

¹⁵⁷ Margosyan, *Gavur Mahallesi* 69. “Cross, escape the roof”

“It is probably in tastes in food that one would find the strongest and most indelible mark of infant learning, the lessons which longest withstand the distancing or collapse of the native world and most durably maintain nostalgia for it. The native world is, above all, the maternal world, the world of primordial tastes and basic foods, of the archetypal cultural good, in which pleasure-giving is an integral part of pleasure and of the selective disposition towards pleasure which is acquired through pleasure.”

Pierre Bourdieu¹⁵⁸

Birth

Bourdieu suggests that the infant’s relationship with the food is the basis for taste and the memories attached to that taste. Those memories naturally have a connection to the mother as the first nutrition provider. Margosyan’s profound relationship with food starts from the moment of his birth and determines his relationship with his mother and the women in his community.

Malez, a type of food based on flour, is served among women right after the baby is born. The women gather around a pot full of *malez*, which sits on the floor, and eat the lightly sugared food with their spoons until they are full. Recalling his first naïve experience as a baby, Margosyan reconstructs the memory of his birth and narrates how he craved for *malez*. However, the women were so occupied with their festivities that they did not “hear” him ask for it. Eventually his mother stuffed his mouth with some kind of meat while he resisted. Margosyan assumes that he is being choked by his mother but then tastes the first drops of milk and likes it. Birth rituals among women, which include the use of food that the baby craves for but cannot have, signify (a) the disciplining role of food on the body. In other words the mother’s dominating

¹⁵⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), 79.

involvement in the child's feeding and eating habits shape the children within a specific cultural and social context (b) cultural specific rituals surrounding the birth of a child and nurturing him/her.

Disciplining the body and the taste for food begins from the baby's birth and Margosyan demonstrates that during the episode of his life while he craved for *malez*, he was force fed with breast milk and as a result when he was old enough to have *malez*, he resisted it. According to Lupton "The child learns what food is considered appropriate to eat and what is not and how to eat it as part of his or her entry into the social world."¹⁵⁹ Also, the boundaries between what is considered socially acceptable or unacceptable are drawn starting in the familial context through food. Children's behaviors related to food extend to table manners as they develop and speak the language of the culture they are growing into. For instance unlike Tovmasyan's dinner table tradition which is discussed in the previous chapter, Margosyan's dinner table in his childhood is full of silences, particularly for children. "Oh let me tell you before I forget, we don't talk while eating, it is considered a sin if children talk during the meal" says Margosyan.¹⁶⁰ However, the silence of the dinner table does not prevent Margosyan from remembering the meals of his childhood that arguably make him (or them) who he is. Instead the past is remembered through the sensorial affect of food (taste, smell etc.). Society's influence on how to behave around food events and food itself determine Margosyan's understanding of his familial past and silence at the dinner table. It is an important example of how to understand that the individual's development of taste embodies the subjectivity of a person.

¹⁵⁹ Lupton 52.

¹⁶⁰ Margosyan, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* 28. "Ha unutmadan söyleyeyim, bizler yemek yerken pek konuşmayız, çocukların konuşması ise günah sayılır!"

Women and Community

Margosyan's primary relationship to his mother and the women of the community is significant and needs to be examined furthermore. As Lupton argues "... [T]he emotions and desires associated with food are inextricably intertwined with individuals' relationship to their mothers (or other primary caregivers). In making sense of the world in infancy, the child is engaged in a mutual and active process of creating meaning and subjectivity with its caregivers."¹⁶¹ Margosyan creates a similar intimacy with his mother and other women in the Armenian community through food on several levels. Even the breast milk becomes a source of communal solidarity that creates a link between the baby Margosyan and the Armenian women.

My mother's getting sick and lying down was not a sufficient reason for me to be devoid of milk. I would never be hungry in these situations. If my mom was sick, our next-door neighbor Sister Verto was sick too? Let's say she is sick as well or maybe not, she just went to the Deve Hammam to take a bath in this infernal hot weather, was there no other "sister" that would stuck her breast in my mouth? Would Mestan's (the cat's) mother's breasts compete with all other sisters' in our neighborhood? Also if I managed to scream and woke the whole neighborhood up, if I managed let my voice reach to the most deaf 'sisters' at the Infidel Quarter, the Infidel Square and if I do this quite often, wouldn't I end up as fat and round as a ball?¹⁶²

As shown in the example, Margosyan establishes a sense of meaning in his existence not only through his mother but also through other sources of milk such as the

¹⁶¹ Lupton 44.

¹⁶² Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* 11. "Anamın hastalanıp yatması, benim sütsüz kalmam için yeterli bir neden değildi. Ben bu gibi durumlarda hiç aç kalmıyordum. Anam hasta idiye, kapı komşumuz Verto Baco da mı hastaydı? Hadi diyelim ki o da hasta veya hasta değil de, bu cehennemi sıcakta yapacak başka işi yokmuş gibi kalkıp Deve Hamamamı'na yıkanmaya gitmiş! Peki ama başka 'baco' yok muydu memesini ağzıma tıkayacak? Mestan'ın (the cat's) anasının memeleri mahallemizin tüm bacolarının memeleriyle yarışabilir miydi? Hem ben avazım çıktığına ciyaklayarak bütün bir mahalleyi ayağa kaldırmayı, sesimi Gavur Mahallesinin, Gavur Meydanı'nın en sağır 'baco'larına bile ulaştırmayı bile başarabiliyor ve bunu sıkça yapıyorsam tostoprak olmaz mıydım?"

sisters of the community as caregivers and his family-like attachment to them. Solidarity of food is one of the most important elements in both communal life and establishing identity that comes up often. In her anthropologic work Kravva determines that the connection between taste and childhood memories is a significant issue to work on since what is remembered as tasty is associated with the familial one that is connected with the childhood and environment in which one grows up. The same is the case with food items which one does not find “tasty”; it is still part of the familial one even though it is the bittersweet reminder of the past. “The power of food/memory/emotion link is such that fragrances have been especially created to encapsulate our emotional responses to food tastes and smells”.¹⁶³ Margosyan’s stories have intertwining connections between the first response to tastes/smells and the emotional responses associated with them. These associations are decisive of his longing for a long gone past, which he reconstructs and identifies as his ethnic origins.

As mentioned above, another aspect of the birth ritual is the serving of a specific food, *Malez*. The food comes after the birth of a baby and is only eaten by women who participated in and contributed to the process of birth. Even though the protagonist Margosyan wanted *malez* when he was first born, his encounter with *malez* a couple of months later does not happen without aggravation. There was a tension between the baby and the caregiver because Margosyan does not like the taste of *malez* at first.

“Were there any Malez in France, America, England, China, Egypt as well? Or was it only in Malaysia? Were those kids raised with ‘malez’ there too? Or is this awful

¹⁶³ Lupton 33.

food called ‘malez’ was specific to Armenian infidels? Did I torture myself in a manner only an infidel would, by being born as an infidel? I did not know.”¹⁶⁴

Margosyan associates his “unfortunate” destiny eating *malez* with being an Armenian. He creates an irony between his infidelness/Armenianness and food. Locally and culturally specific food production and consumption mark the Armenianness in this passage and how a sensorial memory of food is embedded in child. The “bad” taste of *malez* became a determiner in the author’s realization of his own ethnic identity. As Kravva argues “... food functions as a mnemonic device, as a basic ingredient in the process of creating sameness and solidifying the sense of belonging to a group.”¹⁶⁵ Following his argument, it is possible to demonstrate Margosyan’s irony of “infidelness”, which is his so-called “destiny”, as a way of embracing certain foods in his mnemonic repertoire as part of a unique Armenian identity. Furthermore, the sameness and belonging to a group also implies difference. Not eating certain foods shows how food not only forms groups but also separates them from each other as will be shown below. If *malez* is the food that shapes Margosyan’s memories of his childhood, bread is the type of food that shapes his world outside of the maternal world. The following section shows the significance of bread in the community while showing the use of rituals surrounding bread.

Bread and the Social World

¹⁶⁴ Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* 79. Margosyan uses an expression “Gavur işkencesi” [Torture of the infidel] in this sentence; it is a discriminative term implies the torture that is done by a non-Muslim is very bad. Margosyan uses the term with an irony. Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* 79.

¹⁶⁵ Vassiliki Kravva, “Food as a Vehicle for Remembering: The Case of the Thessalonikan Jews” Harlan Walker. *Food and the Memory: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, 2000*. (Devon, England: Prospect Books, 2001) 138.

“After eating our dinner, we were fully satisfied. We say to ‘eat bread’ instead of to eat (food)’. Because we eat bread. We only get full by eating bread. We don’t know if we are full if we don’t eat bread. That night after having our tail fat soup called ‘boçov şorba’ with bread, in other words after filling our soup with bread and spooned it up, we were completely full and thanked our god.”¹⁶⁶

Some food items, such as bread, are especially significant due to their symbolic power in everyday and ritual contexts. As Sutton illustrates, in the Orthodox Christian tradition bread is regarded as one key food item that sets one foot on the mundane and the other one in the sacred.¹⁶⁷ In this part, bread’s daily as well as sacred function will be investigated. There is a network that surrounds bread making in Diyarbakır. Bread will be examined within the context of this social network from preparation to consumption. Such analysis will show that the utilization of bread as nourishment in different contexts (such as church and home) consists of an illustration of multilayered and intertwined identities in Diyarbakır.

It is important to underscore that the labor division regarding bread signifies an ethnic division in the social context. It starts with women buying their wheat and communally cracking them. Afterwards, Kurdish Uso comes into the picture and takes the wheat to his mill to grind. Uso has “mysterious resources” that allow him to know when women have purchased their wheat, whether they have gotten the good or bad quality, and he knows the approximate time that they will call him for grinding the wheat.¹⁶⁸ Women speak to him in Kurdish hoping that if Uso hears an order in his native language, he may rush their

¹⁶⁶ Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* 82. “Akşam yemeğimizi yedikten sonra, daha doğrusu ekmeğimizi yiyince bir güzel doyduk. Biz “yemek yemek” yerine “ekmek yemek” deriz. Çünkü biz ekmek yeriz. En çok ekmek yiyerek doyarız. Zaten ekmek yemeden doyduğumuzu bilmeyiz. O akşam da “boçov şorba” dediğimiz kuyruklu çorbamızla ekmeğimizi yiyince, yani kuyruklu çorbamızın içine ekmeğimizi doğrayıp afiyetle kaşıkladıktan sonra, tıkabasa doyduk. Tanrı’ımıza şükranlarımızı sunduk.”

¹⁶⁷ Sutton 16.

¹⁶⁸ Margosyan, *Gavur Mahallesi* 37.

order. The multiplicity of languages in Diyarbakır is repeated throughout the stories mostly through Margosyan's mother's linguistic skills. People know in which language they should talk to each other in an interlingual and interethnic environment for practical purposes and unwritten communal agreements.

After women receive their wheat from Kurdish *Uso* and after they turn their flour into dough, they send it to the bakery in the market place at the center of Diyarbakır. As the oldest son of the house (even though he is as young as four or five years old), Margosyan has the responsibility to transport these goods between the house and the town.

“The bakery was very crowded as if the inside was like Babel. All the women of the city from Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, Jewish, Assyrian, Chaldean, to Alawite communities were all at the bakery as if they made an agreement to knead their dough the very same day. The baker kept himself busy, he was going out, grabbing the narrow shovel next to him, sliding the thin bread and cooked *lavash* out of the oven and throwing them proudly in front of those people who are waiting impatiently calling either in Turkish or Kurdish.”¹⁶⁹

Even though the market at the center of Diyarbakır is dominated by Kurdish speakers, people from different ethnolinguistic backgrounds still manage to communicate in each other's language. Although there is a seemingly harmonious interaction between groups, there are moments, as Margosyan shows, when separation emerges. It can be perceived initially as a business competition but through further analysis there is an

¹⁶⁹ Margosyan, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* 34-36. “(fırının) İçerisi çok kalabalıktı. İçerisi ana bana günüydü. Şehrin tüm kadınları, Türkü, Kürdü, Ermenisi, Yahudisi, Süryanisi, Keldanisi, Kızılbaşı, hepsi sanki söz birliği etmiş gibi aynı gün hamur yoğurmuş, hep beraber fırının yolunu tutmuşlardı. “(Fırıncı) [a]rdından da boş durmuyor, hemen yanındaki dar küreği kapıyor, pişmiş *lavash*ları, ince ekmekleri dışarı çıkarıp tezgahın üzerinde kaydırarak, sabırsızlıkla bekleyenlerin önüne, kimine Türkçe, kimine Kürtçe seslenerek, gururla fırlatıyordu.”

apparent ethnic tension that undermines the market place, which will be argued below in the section Food that Separates “Us”. But before getting into that part of the discussion, it is necessary to show the other functions of bread in the community.

Bread in Religious Context

In the autobiographical stories by Margosyan, bread appears particularly important in a religious context because of the symbolic significance of bread in Christianity as the body of the Christ. Der Arsen, the priest of the Armenian community, accepts the donation of bread from women in the community, which they elaborately make and present to the priest, hoping that they will be blessed with the priest’s prayers. “I swear to God, back in the day I did not know that Der Arsen was accepting this bowl of flour, that my mother brought, with pleasure by blessing it, and by preparing the holy bread, he was going to distribute it after the Sunday ceremony, and my father was going to eat a piece from this holy bread and get rid of all of his sins!”¹⁷⁰ Margosyan notes how surprised he was as a child, when he learned that his mother’s bread became a medium in the hands of the priest, who then turned it into something holistic to erase his father’s sins during Sunday ceremonies. These ceremonies can be analyzed as communal and religious disciplining of children. Margosyan complains about the long hours of ceremony that took place and that children had no place to sit but instead had to wait on their feet for hours and listen to a language (Armenian) that they did not understand.¹⁷¹ Instead, he watched the priest’s performance as if it were a theatrical play. This approach to bread

¹⁷⁰ Margosyan, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* 87. “Der Arsen’in de anamin getirdigi bu bir tas dolusu unu kutsayarak sevincele kabul edecegini, kutsal ekmeğ hazirlayarak pazar ayininden sonra kilisede dagitacagini, babamin da bu kutsal yufkadan bir parca tadarak tum gunahlarindan kurtulacagini bilemedigimi de yemin billah bilmiyordum!”

¹⁷¹ Margosyan claims since there was no Armenian school in Diyarbakır and the language began to die out.

and religious ceremony can be examined as food's performative role. As Spurlock argues "[b]ecause of their ability to signify, mediate, contest, and represent 'nature' and 'culture', foodways are deeply rhetorical and performative."¹⁷² Performance implies an action that shows one's commitment to act in certain related or implied ways and Loyle Shannon Jung suggests "eating has a performative character for Christians".¹⁷³ Surely such performances cannot be limited to one religion, or even just religions in general but other cultural contexts as well. It is still important to see that performative notion of food in Margosyan's narratives. In the next section it will be shown how performance via bread marks the Armenian identity among women in an unconventional way.

Bread in Unconventional Religious Context - Prayer of the Insane

Giving birth to a "boy" has an overpowering importance in the social and cultural context that Margosyan draws. For a woman or man of having a daughter is an "unfortunate" event and the family is marked among the community. Women in particular partake in various processes (advising, praying, ritualizing) in order to give birth to a boy. There are times that those efforts fall short such as in Haçhatun's story. In order to help Haçhatun who cannot bear a boy, other women in the Armenian community decide to seek the help of another woman, Agavni. Agavni lost her husband and children during 1915 and took refuge in Diyarbakır. According to the story one day while she was having a bath in the *hamam*, the women's public bath, she snapped and fled naked out of the *hamam* shouting "Where is my metal bowl (used for dousing oneself with water while

¹⁷² Janet M Cramer, Carlita P. Greene, and Lynn Walters, *Food As Communication: Communication As Food* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011) X.

¹⁷³ Loyle Shannon Jung, *Food for Life: The Spirituality and Ethics of Eating*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004) 51.

washing oneself), where is my comb, where is my home?”¹⁷⁴ From that day on, she was called Deli Agavni [Crazy Agavni] and every Armenian’s home was her home from that day on, meaning that she was living as homeless but was spending the night in an Armenian’s house or cellar.

Women in the community decided that after she gave birth to six daughters their prayers were not enough for Haçhatun to bear a boy and God might listen favorably to the prayers of an insane person instead. Agavni proudly accepts the offer to pray for Haçhatun and makes up her own ritual in order to help her bear a son. Taking such pride in this process shows that as a person who is marked as “crazy” in the community, Agavni revives a degree of power by performing a ceremony in order to support a cause. Food becomes the medium in this performance. During the ceremony Agavni uses certain household items including salt, bread, fire, onion, knife etc. Even though longstanding ceremony bores the women, they still believe that an insane person’s prayer will help Haçhatun so they bear with Agavni’s ceremony. The exception is one woman who believed that the prayer would not work because Agavni threw away the fresh bread and asked for stale bread. Since bread has sacramental connotations and Agavni disrespectfully threw it away, the dissenting woman came to a conclusion that the prayer would be ineffective. Towards the end of the ceremony, Agavni makes the women eat small pieces of the bread and by then they began to realize that Agavni was imitating Der Arsen’s Sunday ceremony in a “subverted” way. Margosyan says “Since the service has finished with this ritual in the church, the service in here was finalized the same way as

¹⁷⁴ Margosyan, *Gâvur Mahallesi* 30. “Nerede benim tasım, nerede benim tarağım, nerede benim evim?”

well. Everyone who is Armenian would know this.”¹⁷⁵ Margosyan’s assumption of the knowledge about how the ceremony ends is a very specific knowledge that is inclusive to Christians, or in this context Christian Armenians. Not knowing how the ceremony ends draws the lines of ethno-religious identity and excludes those who are not familiar with the process. Within this context it is important to see as previously mentioned that food’s religious/ceremonial function plays a significant role in expressing Christian and Armenian identities; especially bread becomes the body of Christ once the priest Arsen blessed the bread. In daily life bread is the most commonly consumed product; from its preparation to consumption, it is part of a large network. Agavni insists that the women bring her stale bread instead of fresh. They went to a chicken coop in order to find some and they were willing to taste it at the end of Agavni’s ceremony so that her prayer would be accepted. Armenianness is marked by this consumption and the level of respect given to the bread. Even though the bread used was unsanitary, through Agavni’s “cleansing” ritual of the bread it was imagined that eating the bread would help Haçhatun to bear a boy. The women accepted to eat the bread as if it is the holy bread given to them by the priest. Not accepting it would be not accepting the holiness of the bread.

In addition, there are other celebrations that need to be examined in order to understand how food other than bread is also interrelated with founding identity, particularly Armenian identity in the story called “Kan Kan Kan”. As Karaosmanoğlu claims, cuisine and culinary activities both represents an existing community and create one. By utilizing food, people transcend social barriers, cultivate relationships and

¹⁷⁵ Margosyan, *Gâvur Mahallesi* 32. “Bu törenle kilisede ayin bittiğine göre, buradaki tören de bitmişti. Bunu Ermeni olan herkes anlardı.”

mobilize communities.¹⁷⁶ In the story “Kan, Kan, Kan” the Armenians of Diyarbakır set off to a ruined Armenian church in Satıköy with bare feet in order for their wishes to be granted. Since the ruined church is in the middle of a Kurdish village, it was expected that there would be a certain level of communication and understanding between the villagers and “infidels” during the festivity. Village women give them cracked wheat and Kurdish children ask for tripe soup that has been cooked all night long. After having their soup, people take vows and light candles for the saints, and then the festivity begins with multiple courses of dishes and end with drinking and playing music among men. Margosyan draws a harmonious picture of this particular religious event without deciphering the connotations that lie behind the ruins of the church. The reader is not informed why the church is in ruins or why the geographical location is now a Kurdish village. He instead focuses on the festivities and the commemoration of the saints, even though the Armenian Church is in ruins.¹⁷⁷

Food’s Role in Organizing: Family - Community

It is broadly argued that the context of food, whether eaten by a group of people on a daily basis in familial gatherings or eaten at less frequent festive occasions by larger groups of people, has an organizational role.¹⁷⁸ By showing the food’s organizational role in families in particular and in groups more generally, it is possible to decode how “...

¹⁷⁶ Janet M Cramer, Carlita P. Greene, and Lynn Walters 40-41.

¹⁷⁷ For Kurdish role in Armenian deportations and appropriation of Armenian villages see: Akçam. *A Shameful Act*, 43-44; Janet Klein. *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011); Stepan Astourian "The Silence of the Land: Agrarian Relations, Ethnicity, and Power," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman Naimark. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

¹⁷⁸ Monica Janowski, and Fiona Kerlogue. *Kinship and Food in South East Asia*. (Copenhagen: NIAS, 2007) 4.

food is instrumental in marking differences between cultures, serving to strengthen group identity.”¹⁷⁹ Margosyan’s stories show multilayered functions of food starting from the smallest unit: the family. In a broader sense this is the Armenian community as well as the *Diyarbakırlı* identity, but it also includes the provincial identity that he associates with Anatolian identity.

Family

“My mother cooked our bread on the tin stove; prepared our shepherd salad filled with lots of tomatoes, hot green pepper, parsley, cucumber; placed the angel hair bulgur pilaf on the grill; laid out the table cloth in order to welcome my father who was about to come from the coffeehouse; and placed our copper tray (on the table).”¹⁸⁰

As Lupton argues “Food beliefs and behaviors are absorbed from early childhood, and are closely tied to the family unit and sub-cultures. In childhood and adulthood, food is inextricably interlinked with group membership as well as kinship... [C]ooking for women is an intensely social undertaking, performed for others.”¹⁸¹ Margosyan is an observer while his mother is making her daily chores of food preparation and he is a participant in his mother’s performance by helping her. His participation usually entails being a mediator in his mother’s performance between the public and private space. By doing so he becomes the active agent in creating meaning for the family as a cohesive social unit. As Douglas argues a meal both articulates social relations in the household,

¹⁷⁹ Lupton 25.

¹⁸⁰ Margosyan, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* 28. “Anam yufka ekmeğimizi kızgın sacın üstünde pisirmiş, bol domatesli, soganlı, acı sivri biberli, maydanozlu, hiyarlı coban salatamızı hazırlamış, şehriyeli bulgur pilavının tenceresini habese, maltıza yerleştirmiş, kahveden neredeyse gelmek üzere olan babamı kasilamak için yere sofraya bezini sermiş, onun üzerine de bakır sinimizi koymuştur...”

¹⁸¹ Lupton 40.

and define the boundaries between household members and ‘outsiders’.¹⁸² Margosyan as a child lives more in fluid boundaries than fixed ones. As a boy, he is welcomed in the women’s community while still participating in his father’s world by doing chores for the house. Reading about Margosyan’s childhood is a reading of both spaces, so the reader observes everything from dinner table to the market.

“In our neighborhood, in our lands, we did not have long pursuits such as ornamenting the table. On our tables, I mean on our trays, we did not have rubbish such as water glasses, plates, water jug, forks, knives, napkins, salt shaker, pepper shaker, toothpick, chandelier, candle, flower.”¹⁸³

Margosyan writes retrospectively at his later stages of his life after he experiences life in İstanbul and as a result his writing shows a point of comparison between the urban and rural settings for the dinner table. What is defined in the household as the proper mealtime arrangement marks Margosyan’s position as an Armenian in Diyarbakır. He only realizes how table manners and settings define and construct his sense of identity after he experiences exile in İstanbul. Furthermore, defining the setting of the table becomes even more important in Margosyan’s experience in İstanbul described in his autobiographical novel because table setting in Diyarbakır life gives a sense of Anatolian identity to Margosyan’s works. In other words, the floor table becomes an identical marker of Anatolianness and Diyarbakırlı identity only after he experiences so called “proper” dinner manners in İstanbul among the urban Armenian community.

¹⁸² Mary Douglas, *Food in the Social Order: studies of food and festivities in three American Communities*. (New York. Russell Sage Foundation, 1984) 62.

¹⁸³ Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* 84. “Bizim oralarda, bizim diyarlarda, masa donatmak, masa toplamak gibi uzun boylu ugrasilarimiz yoktu. Bizim masalarimizin yani sinilerimizin ustunde su bardaklari, yemek tabaklari, surahi, catallar, bicaklar, peceteler, tuzluk, biberlik, kurdan, samdan, mum, cicek gibi iviz zivirlar bulunmazdi. Ailede kac kisinin eli kasik tutuyorsa o kadar kasik bulunurdu.”

In another story, titled “Bizler” [We], Margosyan takes a step further and asks the implied reader whether they would know the taste of a meal eaten with a wooden spoon:

“As soon as my father sit at the table, my mother would understand that everybody is ready and she would prepare the dinner table. My mother would bring the food.

Usually our food was cold yogurt soup, bread (cooked in a brick oven), bulgur pilaf, and diluted molasses. We would eat from the same pot. In the midst of spoon noises my father would say ‘Spoon noises give me pleasure, eat! Eat a lot! Eat beautifully! Eat abundantly!’ we would listen to his words, in order for our father to eat with pleasure; we would dig into the pilaf in front of us with our wooden spoons. Do you know the taste of a food eaten with a wooden spoon?’¹⁸⁴

Both of these examples show that while Margosyan is reformulating his childhood he is at the same time comparing the way “they” perform their life in Diyarbakır with an audience in mind that is most probably unfamiliar with such a lifestyle. Thus, food not only gathers or separates ethnic communities in the context of Diyarbakır during Margosyan’s childhood, but also enables him to speak to another community that is the implied readers of his stories. In the last chapter of his dissertation on Hagop Mintzuri, Margosyan’s role model as an author, Erdağ Gökner argues that “[t]hough he (Mintzuri) writes about the periphery, he expresses himself through the power of the center and for

¹⁸⁴ Margosyan, *Gâvur Mahallesi* 67. “Babamin yerini almasıyla, anam, artık herkesin hazır olduğunu anlar, sofrayı kurardı. Yere bağdas kurar otururduk. Anam yemegimizi getirirdi. Genelde, ayran corbasi, tas ekmeği, bulgur pilavi, sulandırılmış pekmez. Aynı kaptan, aynı tencereden yerdik. Kasik gurultuları arasında babam derdi; ‘Kasik sesleri, bana keyif verir, yeyin! Bolca yeyin! Guzel, guzel yeyin! Doyasiya yeyin ha!’ bizler de uyardik sozlerine, babamizin keyifli yemek yemesi icin bizler de keyifle ve bitmeyen istahimizla tahta kasiklarımızla calakasik dalardik onumuzdeki pilava. Tahta kasikla yenen yemegin lezzetini bilir misiniz?...”

an urban audience.”¹⁸⁵ This claim is applicable to Margosyan as well since he writes about the periphery of village life in Diyarbakır and his comparisons show that he speaks to an urban audience. That is why Margosyan relates to his writing and his life to Mintzuri’s. The following example shows Margosyan’s method in talking to the reader about how “we” as Armenians in Diyarbakır eat, live and conceive life.

“We would eat the bread with crushed walnut as well. ... We would not break off our bread with our hands; we would bite into it. Then later on, here, in İstanbul, we’ve heard that it is shameful to eat bread by biting it, we were astonished... However, the most delicious bread is the one that is eaten by biting it. Yes, the bread is eaten by breaking off as well, we would do that too, but we would do that only while we are putting our bread in foods such as cold yogurt soup, cold yogurt food, lentil soup, chickpea, dried beans and then we would eat them with our wooden spoons.”¹⁸⁶

As in this example, Margosyan creates a very strong ‘we’ narrative that excludes any type of eating or meal style. Comparing their eating style with what is learned in İstanbul arguably supports Margosyan’s provincial identity in the face of urban audience. How the food and the habits around food shapes the notion of Armenianness in Diyarbakır is not limited to a familial context but to the community as well.

Community

¹⁸⁵ Erdag Goknar, “Between 'Ottoman' and 'Turk': Literary Narrative and the Transition from Empire to Republic.” diss., University of Washington, 2004, 199.

¹⁸⁶ Margosyan, *Gâvur Mahallesi*, 76 “Biz ekmeği ceviz içiyle de yerdik. --- Ekmeği elimizle koparıp yemezdik, isirirdik. Sonra, buralarda, İstanbul’da ekmeğin isirilerek yendiğinde ayıp olduğunu duyduk, hayretler içinde kaldık... Oysa en lezzetli ekmeğin isirilerek yenmesi ekmeğindir. Evet, ekmeğin elle koparılıp yenmesi, biz bunu da yapardık, ancak ayran corbası, ayran asi, mercimek corbası, nohut, kuru fasulye gibi yiyeceklerin içine doğrar sonra da kasıklayarak yerdik.”

“After we brought in baskets the small eggplants that we name “to-be-stuffed,” the first thing we did was to call the neighbors. Everybody would correspond to this invitation, nobody would think of an excuse to avoid the job. Because every lie would have a reaction the next day, all ‘sisters’ would participate willingly or unwillingly to this eggplant carving job”¹⁸⁷

As Sutton claims time-consuming duties such as peeling vegetables or picking through beans, or in older times grinding wheat usually take place outside, in courtyards or other “public” sociable places, where women can share tasks, talk and follow the flow of daily life.¹⁸⁸ Margosyan describes in his story called “Alo Santro!” how their communal living arrangement as renters’ of Ağacan Dayı consists of such a spatial organization that it allowed women to gather in the courtyard and do collaborative work.¹⁸⁹ Their fathers could play backgammon in this space as well, and children would also play together. Sometimes they shared the same food and took care of each other when they were sick. Fathers drank wine together and sang. Especially the song “Burası Muş’tur, yolu yokuştur”¹⁹⁰ for a reason unknown to Margosyan, made them cry. However, this is a well-known song for Armenians who lost their relatives on the long march in 1915. The unexplained silences by Margosyan coupled with a lack of commentary on certain events are the ones that speak the voice over their liminality as Armenians in Diyarbakır.

¹⁸⁷ Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* 83. “Dolmalık tabir ettiğimiz minik patlıcanları küfeler içinde eve getirdikten sonra, ilk işimiz konu komşuya haber salmaktı. ... Herkes çağrıya uyar, işten kaçmak için bahaneler uydurmak kimsenin aklından geçmezdi. Her yalanın yarın aynen karşılığı da olacağından, tüm “baco”lar bu patlıcan oyma işine ister istemez koşarlardı”

¹⁸⁸ Sutton 130.

¹⁸⁹ Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* 39.

¹⁹⁰ Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* 68.

The fact that people recall the emotions they feel around food events suggest the importance of gustatory experiences. The emotions evoked around food or drink such as in father's case, drinking wine and singing with other people from the same group evokes the sense of loss that is buried in the memories of Armenians. Margosyan intentionally reflects on his naïve observation from a child's perspective, even though this perspective is appropriated by the adult author. The sources of trauma experienced by the elder members of the family are unknown to him at the time when he was a child. A child's witnessing of parents and others' crying for an "unknown" reason is a metaphor for silence and secretiveness of a community and makes the silence of the community even stronger. Silent memories surrounded with food events reaffirm the boundaries of the Armenian condition as a minority.

Commensality and collaborative food preparation create a social connection, in which not only the food is shared but also the stories through repetition endorse the remembrance of the past. The symbolic significance of food comes to the forefront particularly on special occasions, as well as random gatherings of the families. Furthermore, it is not only the edible foods that trigger the sensorial memory but also the smell and taste of things. In one of his stories Margosyan remembers the day of Rıŝeŝ/Vartavar, which starts with throwing water at each other early in the morning and continues with a communal march to the graveyard. As a result of visiting the graveyard and remembering the deceased, Margosyan comes closer to narrating the traumatic Armenian past and a remembrance of the genocide.

"I immediately understood from my mother's saying 'today is Rıŝeŝ!' that it is a holy day for us Armenians today. Yes! Rıŝeŝ was a day that we inherited from our

ancestors who celebrate it by making each other wet with water and joking with each other. Our ancestors had passed away a long time ago but in every RıŖeŖ we were remembering and bowing in front of their memory and visiting their graves following the tradition, like we do in every other festivity.”¹⁹¹

Even though the day begins with jokes and sensual enjoyment of water on the body, which is a metaphor for the rain, it turns out to be a communal mourning mixed with tears via remembering the ancestors and their loss. In a graveyard where the stones are ruined, people determine whose grave belongs to whom by determining the point of bearing from a big stone in the middle of the graveyard. From that point, each person develops their own strategy to find their ancestors’ grave. Margosyan’s mother and his maternal aunt bring *günlük*, a type of incense, to this ritual.

“In the midst of this *filla* graveyard, in which the smell and smoke of *günlük* spread all around, my eyes were meeting with shabby, barefoot, Kurdish peers who were watching us with curiosity. ¹⁹² When I turned my gaze away, I was looking at my grandmother’s, then my grandfather’s grave and spacing out.”¹⁹³

The smell of *günlük* has a very specific symbolic significance pertaining to Armenian grave visiting and Margosyan performs this ritual in İstanbul in front of his

¹⁹¹ Margosyan, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* 45. “Ben ananın ‘bugün RıŖeŖ!’ deyiŖinden Ŗıp diye anladım ki, bugün, bizler Ermeniler için kutsal bir gündü. Evet! RıŖeŖ atalarımızın birbirlerini ıslatarak, ŖakalaŖarak eđlendikleri ve bizlere miras bıraktıkları gündü... Atalarımız çoktan öteki tarafı boylamıŖ, çoktan göçüp gitmiŖlerdi ama, bizler her bayramda olduđu gibi, her RıŖeŖ gününde de onları anımsayıp, onların anıları önünde saygı ile eđiliyor, geleneklere uyararak mezarlık ziyareti yapıyorduk.”

¹⁹² *Filla* is discriminative term used by Kurds for Armenians in Diyarbakır.

¹⁹³ Margosyan, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* 52-53. “Günlük kokularının, günlük dumanlarının yeri göđu kapladıđı bu *filla* mezarlıđında ađlaŖan, gözyaŖı döken bizleri, tünedikleri mezarlık duvarından merakla seyreden üstü baŖı periŖan, yalınayak, yaŖıtım Kürt çocuklarla zaman zaman gözlerim birleŖiyordu. Onların gözlerinden gözlerimi kaçırdıđım zamanlarda da, bir dedemin, bir nenemin mezarlarına bakarak, dalıp gidiyordum.”

mother's grave in the future, hoping for rain. However while remembering her, his tears become the RıŖeŖ itself. "I am living in İstanbul, every time I leave the house early in the morning on every Vartavar (religious day) to go to my mother's grave ... I take two pieces of gnlk with me and whisper 'rain, rain, rain' inwardly, both in İstanbul and Diyarbakır, until my eyes make RıŖeŖ..."¹⁹⁴

During this visit in his childhood Margosyan remembers her grandmother in various different ways, but most often through food. It is important to note that Margosyan's remembrance of his grandmother is multilayered and all of these layers are intertwined with each other while he is describing her. On one level he remembers her as a survivor of the genocide. Her story is the one that is passed on to him through family conversations without Margosyan witnessing the events. Another level of remembrance comes from his personal interaction with her, mostly through food. In his narrative Margosyan respectively describes her as the *afflicted* woman who lost her family during the long march; as a *long-suffering* woman who fed her grandchildren with rice before anybody else; as a *savior* woman who saved Margosyan from carrying the heavy dough to the market place; as a *story teller* who combed Margosyan's hair while feeding him with walnut pulps and telling him stories; as a *laborer* who earned her "bread" by working in construction after she lost her husband during the genocide; as a woman who cooked sparrows, dut kuŖu that they hunted, and fish that they brought to her after they went fishing in Dicle river; as a *wretched* woman who protected Margosyan from his

¹⁹⁴ Margosyan, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* 56. "İstanbul'da yaŖıyorum, her Vartavar'da erkenden çıkıp anamın mezarına dođru yola koyulduğumda, ... yanıma iki parça gnlk alıyor, içimden de 'yađmur, yađmur, yađmur' diye sesleniyorum, hem İstanbul'da hem Diyarbakır'da... Gzlerim RıŖeŖ yapana kadar."

parent's spanking or scolding.¹⁹⁵ Margosyan describes his grandmother on two different levels both as a survivor and a provider of care for him. Intertwining stories of his grandmother come to the surface during the ritual that is accompanied by the smell of *günlük*. Stimulation of sense of smell in Margosyan's stories as Sutton argues "is marked as a cultural site for the re-imagining of 'worlds' displaced in space/or time".¹⁹⁶ As a result Margosyan reiterates his grandmother's stories and his experiences with her by combining what he heard of her and what he experienced with her. In his intertwined reconstruction of his grandmother, he manages to establish a complete picture of her.

Identity In Question

It is also possible to see the opposite function of food as a means of separation of one group from another rather than uniting. According to Anderson food marks social class and ethnicity. Food transactions define families, networks, religions, and other socially institutionalized group. There is a double bind in which, one group can try to use food to separate itself, while the other is trying to use food to eliminate that separation.¹⁹⁷ In some cases a group of people is stigmatized in the social hierarchy through certain food.

"Why would we fight? Even though the amount of Muslim kids who resided in the Infidel Quarter were few, we would ally our power with them and why would we make war against Moşes, Cehüs (Jews)? Why would we in their own streets, in their own neighborhood stone them until they escaped their houses? Yes, we were always

¹⁹⁵ All adjectives that Margosyan used in this story describing the grandmother are italicized by me. Margosyan, *Biletimiz Istanbul'a Kesildi* 33. Also the type of bird mentioned in this sentence is Dut Kuşu. It is a type of bird that is specific to South Eastern area in Turkey; also known as Çükütüya

¹⁹⁶ Sutton 102.

¹⁹⁷ Eugene N Anderson, *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture*. (New York: New York University Press, 2005) 125.

supposed to win! Because they were bad people! Because they had needled barrels! Because they captured children, threw them in their needled barrels and shook them! As a result they were gulping down the blood of children they killed! That is why the children should listen to their mothers, and should not go to Jewish neighborhoods that were so far away.”¹⁹⁸

In this context, anti-Semitic fantasies of Jews drinking the blood of children create a myth that impels Jews to occupy the bottom of the social hierarchy from the perspective depicted in *Gavur Mahallesi*. By uniting their force with Muslim children who are at the top of the socio-religious ranks in Diyarbakır, Margosyan gets a sense of victory as an Armenian, whose liminal identity is already in conflict with the dominant order.

“Then Moşes (Jews), our classmates, migrated hurriedly even without being able to take their needled barrels. The neighborhood of Moşes completely emptied. But their needled barrels were passed onto us, the infidels, us the Filles. This time we were the Cehüs, both Cehü and infidel!”¹⁹⁹ Once the Jews left, Armenians were at the bottom of the hierarchy. In his later storybook *Biletimiz İstanbul’a Kesildi*, Margosyan writes slightly removed from the image of harmonious life in Diyarbakır. He begins to talk about Muslim children’s insults towards them in order to convert them to Islam. The Muslim children’s

¹⁹⁸ Margosyan. *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* 94. “Biz neden harbederdik? Biz neden savaşırdık? Biz Gavur Mahallesi’nde sayıları az da olsa bizlerle komşu yaşayan Müslüman arkadaşlarımızla birleşip, kuvvetlerimizi daha da güçlendirerek neden hep Moşelere, Cehülere savaş ilan ederdik? Neden onları kendi sokaklarında, kendi mahallerinde taşu tutarak evlerine girinceye kadar kovalardık? ... Evet biz hep kazanmalı onlara derslerini vermeliydik! Çünkü onlar kötü insanlardı! Çünkü onların iğneli fiçileri vardı! Çünkü onlar çocukları yakalayıp evlerindeki iğneli fiçilere atıp sallıyorlardı! Böylece öldürdükleri çocukların kanlarını lıkır lıkır içiyorlardı! Onun için çocuklar analarının sözlerini dinlemeli, taa uzaklardaki Yahudi Mahallesi’ne gitmemeliydiler.”

¹⁹⁹ Margosyan. *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* 94. “Sonra Moşeler, sınıf arkadaşlarımız, günün birinde iğneli fiçilerini dahi toparlayamadan apar topar kalkıp göç eylediler. Moşelerin mahallesi tamamen boşaldı. Ama onların iğneli fiçileri bu kez de biz gavurlar, biz Fillelere miras kalmıştı. Bu kez Cehü olan bizlerdik, hem Cehü, hem gavur!”

atrocities are not limited to their peers but also oriented towards the Armenian priest Papaz Arsen as well. The children throw watermelon rinds and smashed tomatoes at him.

Another example that shows insults coming from Muslim children that disrupt Margosyan's harmonious depiction of his childhood comes to the forefront in the market place. It is the story of Mahmut abi [brother Mahmut], whose family converted to Islam during the deportations. Margosyan's mother believes that cooking *meftune* is the easiest meal and very much marks one's identity as a *Diyarbakırlı*. "If you asked my mother, it was very easy to cook *meftune*, it was not even a job. You will be a Diyarbakırlı and you will not know how to cook Meftune... Is it possible? If such a thing happens, to hell with that Diyarbakırlı!"²⁰⁰

Here it is important to emphasize how ethnic and geographical identities are overlapping in Margosyan's stories, that of being an Armenian and the sense of being *Diyarbakırlı*.

Such an overlap serves as an evidence for the complexity of identity formation and negates the myth of a singular unified notion of identity and community. The mother sends Margosyan to the town center to purchase meat from the butcher, Mahmut abi. However, when Margosyan reaches the market he finds that Mahmut abi has closed the store to go to the mosque for daily prayer. The other butchers try to convince him that they are better butchers than Mahmut since they have been doing this job for so long and also since they are Kurds, they are the farmers and their knowledge of animals is passed to them from generation to generation and therefore their meat is better. But furthermore they warn Margosyan with a whisper, without knowing that Margosyan was an

Armenian, that Mahmut abi's grandmother was an Armenian so Mahmut abi was a

²⁰⁰ Margosyan, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* 89. "Anama soracak olursanız meftune pisirmek çok kolaydı, isten bile sayılmazdı. Hem Diyarbakır'lı olacaksın hem meftune nasıl pisirileceğini bilmeyeceksin... Hic olur mu! Olursa, o zaman da yerin dibine girsin böyle Diyarbakırlı!"

convert as if that would make him inferior to others. In an internal dialogue with his mother Margosyan explains why he was late coming back home from the marketplace.

“Moreover and most importantly, they whispered this to my ear: Mahmut Abi’s grandmother was originally an Armenian, namely infidel! She was a convert and Mahmut abi was hiding this. That is why I shouldn’t buy meat from a “convert”, while there are naïve Muslims to buy meat from! Then they asked me whose son I am. So I told them that my father’s name is Ali and deceived them. I did not tell them that I, you [towards his mother], my father, my grandfather, my grandmother is also ‘haço’, ‘infidel’.”²⁰¹

Armenians in Diyarbakır during 1940s were living in a liminal space where their otherness surfaced on occasion, yet was determined by silenced remembrances and erosion of life around them.

Preserving Food - Preserving Identity

Preservation of food needs to be scrutinized on three levels: (a) preservation of Armenian ethnic identity in Diyarbakır (b) preservation of provincial identity in Diyarbakır (c) demarcation and preservation of class identity (e.g. the level of wealth). A generation that was wiped out during the long march in 1915 during the genocide is remembered in multiple ways and one of them is the starvation and poverty that took place during this time period. According to DiCanio, constant hunger during the long march that led to exile created a preoccupation with food but also preserving the food

²⁰¹ Margosyan, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* 96. “Dahası ve en önemlisi, kulağıma gizlice şunu fısıldadılar: Mahmut Abinin nezesinin aslı Ermeniymiş, yani gavur! Dönmemiş, Mahmut Abi bunu gizliyormuş. İşte bu nedenle de saf Müslüman dururken ‘dönme’den, ‘mühtedi’den et almamalıymışım! Sonra da bana kimin oğlu olduğumu sordular. Ben de bunun üzerine babamın isminin Ali olduğunu söyleyip onları kandırdım. Babamın asıl adının Sarkis olduğunu, benim de, senin de, babamın da, dedemin de, nenemin de ‘haço’, ‘gavur’ olduğunu söylemedim”

became an act of preservation of culture. As a result Armenian food served as a connection not only to the Armenian culture but also to the land that had been left behind.²⁰² In addition to preserving food in order to prevent starvation in an unexpected catastrophe, preservation of food is very much interlinked with provincial conditions regarding the seasonal change. “Fall meant cramping the pantry to the fullest”²⁰³ recalls Margosyan. The limited access to food in the wintertime in Diyarbakır requires people to gather and dry their food in their cellars.

“Where we come from, in those regions, in Diyarbakır, most of the winter food was prepared in the summer. Almost all of the vegetables that are frequently available in the summers were dried up and saved for the winter”²⁰⁴

It is important to note that one’s wealth in Diyarbakır was dependent on the fullness or emptiness of their cellars and the number of large jars in those cellars. “Where we come from the level of wealth were determined according to the size of pantries and the amounts of jars people have, as well as whether the jars are paunchy or skinny. If the jars are empty, that house’s situation is the worst; it is miserable, sorrowful. We say this in our prayers. God shall not leave anybody’s jar empty.”²⁰⁵ As a result preserved food in the cellars not only signifies one’s ethnic identity but also their class identity.

²⁰² Margaret DiCanio, *Memory Fragments from the Armenian Genocide: A Mosaic of Shared Heritage*. (New York: Mystery and Suspense Press, 2002) 52- 53.

²⁰³ Margosyan, *Gâvur Mahallesi* 69. “Sonbahar demek, kilerlerin agzina kadar doldurulmasi demektir.”

²⁰⁴ Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* 83. “Bizim oralarda, o yörelerde, Diyarbakır’da kışlık yiyeceklerin çoğu yazdan hazırlanırdı. Yazları pek çok bulunan, bolca yetistirilen sebzelerin hemen hepsinden kurutularak kış için saklanırdı.”

²⁰⁵ Margosyan, *Söyle Margos Nerelisen* 71. “Bizim oralarda zenginlik ölçüsü, kilerlerin büyüklüğü, kilerlerdeki kupelerin sayısı ve onların da gobekli ve siska oluşlarıyla ölçülür. Evin kupeleri tumden bos ise, o evin durumu berbattir, kotudur, hali perisandır, aciklidir. Biz dualarımızda bunu belirtir, soyleriz. Tanrı kimsenin kupunu bos bırakmasın.”

When Margosyan’s family migrates from Diyarbakır to İstanbul, the change in food habits and the impossibility of preserving large amounts of food caused the death of Margosyan’s mother on a metaphorical level.

“The Halil Ibrahim (metaphor for fertility, abundance) of our neighborhood, the Halil Ibrahim of Anatolia could not keep up with the basement of our new house.²⁰⁶ How could the Halil Ibrahim, that could not fit in pantries, in paunchy jars [in Diyarbakır], fit in small, plastic jars [in İstanbul], how could it live? Could you live? It did not. It (abundance) migrated from our house. Then my mother beat the air in order to cook malez for us, malez began to taste like cake. Halil Ibrahim’s buttered sweetened malez with molasses began to taste like layered cake, and my mother couldn’t live with that. She did not live. She died.”²⁰⁷

In mother’s case moving to the big city, she could not preserve any of the food items listed above because *malez* lost its taste because of different ingredients, and it began to taste like a cake instead of an Armenian dish that they cooked for birth rituals. Secondly, the jars in the house were not large enough to give a sense of abundance and wealth anymore; and thirdly the local food is very much embedded to the region as the source of the production. Therefore particular foods, drinks, even whole cuisines, are attached to places. Since his mother loses her sense of ethnic and provincial identity in an urban environment, Margosyan relates her death to inability to preserve her identity that was essential in order for her to survive. Once the products his mother brought from

²⁰⁶ Margosyan uses Halil Ibrahim, a legendary character famous with his generous feasts, to imply abundance in this passage.

²⁰⁷ Margosyan, *Gâvur Mahallesi* 39. “Bizim oraların Halil Ibrahim’i Anadolu’lu Halil Ibrahim yeni evimizin bodrum katına ayak uyduramadı. Kilerlere, maranlara, büyük, kocaman göbeklere sığmayan Halil Ibrahim küçücük, minicik, bir plastik kavanoz icinde yasayabilir miydi? Siz yasayabilir miydiniz? Yasamadi. Kalkip goc eyledi yeni evimizden. Ondan sonra anam bizlere malez pisirmek icin bosuna caba harcadı. Malez pasta tadi vermeye basladı. Halil Ibrahim’in tereyagli pekmezli malezi, cikolata soslu kremali pasta tadi vermeye baslayınca anam artik yasayamazdı. Yasayamadi da. Anam öldü.”

Diyarbakır were all consumed, she lost the sense of smell that helped her remember. It is not necessarily that the mother died because of a loss of identity but it is important to see that the author attempts to connect these within the context of his narrative.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the chapter, I argue that Margosyan attempts to create a coherent self in his stories and that his narratives around food give a strong foundation for such articulation. The more food narratives are explored the more complexities related to identity formation come to the foreground. There are two types of food narratives that separate Margosyan's writing of his stories from his autobiographical novel: (a) His stories are examples of a nostalgic longing for childhood and the author attempts to reflect on a constructed harmony. (b) His autobiographical novel is further shows the relationship between the displacement of food and location. In the next chapter his exile from Diyarbakır to İstanbul is analyzed. *Tespîh Taneleri* (Beads of Prayer Beads) is stylistically different from his stories. The time period the novel covers also differs from his stories' timeline as it focuses on the first three years of his life in İstanbul after he left Diyarbakır, but Margosyan often revisits his childhood in Diyarbakır through flashbacks. *Tespîh Taneleri* starts in 1953, when Margosyan was 15 years old and sent to İstanbul to an Armenian orphanage to learn his ancestral language.

Margosyan focuses on memories of good times in his works, particularly in his stories. However, the concept of good times is full of contradictions and conflicts once it is carefully analyzed. Most if not all of his stories are an attempt to retrieve a good memory that is lost as he seeks for that lost home. Even though there are multiple events

that surround Margosyan's stories that exhibit being an Armenian, or 'infidel' as Margosyan puts it, growing up in Diyarbakır among harsh economic conditions is far fetched from a happy childhood so Margosyan reconstructs a fiction of it. This chapter focused on Margosyan's first encounter of food at home (in Diyarbakır) whereas the next chapter will dwell on the exilic aspect of food narratives.

Chapter 4: Exilic Sensibilities and Food Narratives in “*Tespîh Taneleri*”

“My life began in Diyarbakır, Hançepék, in a district called the ‘Infidel Quarter’, but after I was sent to İstanbul without my opinion asked. Just for the sake of learning my ancestral language my life turned in a different direction. For that journey I thought I left those words behind me (in Diyarbakır): “infidel” in Turkish, “filla!” in Kurdish.

However, the rest of my life was shaped in that very moment as soon as I set foot in İstanbul, in Karagözyan Armenian Orphanage in Şişli. Those words (infidel) I left behind turned into a mocking sentence in the mouths of Armenian children:

“Ruuuun! Ruuuun! There, Kurds arrive from Anatolia...!”

Mıgırđıç Margosyan²⁰⁸

In his review article Mehmed Uzun, a renowned Kurdish author, refers to Mıgırđıç Margosyan’s autobiographical novel *Tespîh Taneleri* [Beads of Prayer Beads] as “a narrative, with a voice that comes from below”²⁰⁹ What he means by the voice coming from the below is an allusion to the writings of minority authors and how these authors, such as Margosyan, challenge the dominant narratives of ethnic identities in Turkey. As argued in the introduction chapter in detail, the Turkish nationalist historiography failed to reconcile the traumatic past and silenced the narratives/memories of ethnic minorities until the 1980s. As a result of changing discourses in the political arena since the 1980

²⁰⁸ Mıgırđıç Margosyan. *Tespîh Taneleri* (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2006), 31. “Diyarbakır’da, Hançepék’te, Gavur Mahallesi’nde başlayan, ancak benim fikrim dahi alınmadan alalecele sadece ve sadece anadilimi öğrenmem için İstanbul’a postalanmamın ardından, geriye kalan yaşamımı, benim için hiç de hayal edemeyeceğim şekilde etkileyen o anın, o yolculuğun gerisinde bıraktığım Türkçe “gavur!”, Kürtçe “filla!” sözcüğü, daha İstanbul’a ayak basar basmaz götürülüp yerleştirildiğimiz Şişli’deki Karagözyan Ermeni Yetimhanesi’ndeki Ermeni çocuklarının ağzında bu kez alaylı şu cümleye dönmüştü: “Koşuuun! Koşuuun! Anadolu’dan Kürtler gelmiş...!”

²⁰⁹ Uzun, Mehmed. “Sesi Alçaktan Çıkanların Anlatısı.” *Radikal*. Web Accessed. 02 May 2014. http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek_haber.php?ek=r2&haberno=6807

military coup there has been an increase in discussing in writing the memories among minority groups that were so far excluded from nationalist historiography. These changes occur in civic life parallel to their European counterparts concurrent with the “discovery” of multi-ethnic populations in Turkey. There are multiple memoirs that constitute dialogical narratives that create possibilities of representation that are not fixed by agents of certain competing nationalities, ethnicities and identities. I assert in this chapter that Margosyan’s autobiographical novel is one of them. It is one that challenges the fixed notions of identity, and speaks “from below”. As an Armenian author who writes in the Turkish language, the language of the majority, Margosyan speaks from a marginal position to a Turkish readership that dominates the literary market. Studying Armenian literature in a Turkish context requires transcending the limits of Turkish national historiography and conducting an approach that will facilitate discussion of alternative historiographies on Armenian massacres of 1915 that have been denied or suppressed.

A superficial reading of Margosyan may be a story about an underprivileged young boy's achievement of advancing his social status by getting an education and learning his ancestral language despite the lack of resources in his home town by going to İstanbul and eventually becoming a source of pride for his family and the Armenian community in Diyarbakır. Such a reading overlooks the complications in Margosyan’s writing concerning how identities are contextually and geographically situated. As Stuart Hall argues "Identity is not an essentialist, but a strategic and positional one and it operates under erasure in the internal between reversal and emergence."²¹⁰ This chapter examines contested and shifting identities, and multiplication of identity formations in two different geographical spaces (İstanbul and Diyarbakır) by looking at food narratives.

²¹⁰ Quoted by John Rajchman, *The Identity in Question* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 2-3.

In other words, while utilizing ‘food’, a reoccurring theme in Margosyan’s works, I will analyze the author’s shifting identifications with the Armenian, Turkish and Kurdish communities. Margosyan’s “voluntary” exile from the city of Diyarbakır to İstanbul for the sake of learning his ancestral Armenian language creates a split and a shift in his understanding of his surroundings as well as his identification with multiple ethnicities. Food and foodways is one of the media that articulate Margosyan’s allegiances to his homeland Diyarbakır, in which his ethnic identity is contested.²¹¹ According to Arjun Appadurai and Warren Belasco, food represents the collective identities and manifests who we are, where we come from, and who we want to be. In short, ethnicity is constructed through food as a cultural product.²¹² There are multiple paradigms that constitute allegiances with different identities: urban-rural, ethnic, religious and national identities. Margosyan’s autobiographical novel is composed of different combinations of these identities. Even though these are distinguished identities, they also overlap.

Being an Armenian in Diyarbakır has a unique set of difficulties and anxieties because of being marked as the “gavur” [infidel] among the majority group of Kurdish and Turkish Muslims. When the protagonist/narrator Mıgırdiç Margosyan goes to İstanbul with great expectations about learning his ancestral language he is excited to be in an environment that he believes will allow him to feel as if he is an “Armenian” among Armenians. Instead he feels even lonelier and agitated among the people who treat him as a Kurdish, villager, basically less of an Armenian. Not being able to find comfort in either of these two geographical spaces, Margosyan’s autobiographical novel depicts the marginal position of a young boy whose identifications ally with multiple ethnic groups

²¹¹ See Chapter 1 on discussion of *foodways*.

²¹² Gvion 31.

that are continuously challenged. The cultural gap between Anatolian Armenians and İstanbul Armenians by the 1950s (autobiographical novel covers 1953-1955) appears to be quite wide. There is almost nothing in common between the two groups, except for their religion, ethnic identification, and the trauma of 1915. The Armenian patriarchy attempts to fill this gap by bringing Armenian children from Anatolia to İstanbul to teach them their ancestral language and history. It is an attempt to save people from oblivion. Margosyan enters into a world in İstanbul in which Armenianness is defined by language proficiency and performance of social etiquette including table manners and the food that is eaten.

Although *Beads of Prayer Beads* is different from Margosyan's previously examined stories in the former chapter and Tovmasyan's cookbook memoir in chapter two in terms of its genre, food and foodways remain in the periphery in Margosyan's autobiographical novel but do not completely disappear. After briefly giving the structure of the novel, I will show the contexts through which food appears the most in relation to the author's identification with Armenian communities both in Diyarbakır and İstanbul following two main themes: (a) Instrumental role of food in Diyarbakır: In the context of Diyarbakır, the food is addressed and examined as a part of daily life of the community. The instrumental role of food in women's life and organization is emphasized. Margosyan is the medium between the home and the market. This part can be read as an extension of Margosyan's stories examined in the previous chapter. Since there are multiple reiterations of stories addressing Diyarbakır life in this autobiographical novel, this chapter addresses the similar elements that were already brought to light in the previous chapter. (b) Disciplinary role of food in İstanbul: In the context of İstanbul on

the other hand, Margosyan is taken out of the food equation as a mediator. The food is served to him by elders in the institutions where he stays (orphanage, patriarch, and restaurant). Food is a reflection of his sensibilities on displacement as an outsider. The unfamiliarity of the food alienates him from his environment even more.

The Structure of the book

First published in 2006 from Aras Publishing, Mıgırdiç Margosyan's *Beads of Prayer Beads* is an autobiographical novel and it can also stylistically be categorized as Bildungsroman. The novel is Margosyan's first attempt to write a novel, different from his usual genre of short story. It also differs from his other works since it is his first work written in Turkish from the beginning to the end.²¹³ The title of the novel *Beads of Prayer Beads* is a metaphor for the Armenian community in Turkey after the events of 1915. It is a metonym for how the community is dispersed like beads of a broken prayer bead.

The novel starts with Margosyan's arrival at Karagözyan Orphanage in İstanbul at the age of fifteen on the very first day of September. Under the "mocking" gaze of his peers in the orphanage Margosyan questions the reasons that led him to his "exile" from Diyarbakır to İstanbul.²¹⁴ The reasons were primarily lack of better living conditions, lack of food, and lack of an Armenian education or resources in Diyarbakır. The novel has ten chapters with 512 pages in total. However, these chapters were not divided equally: the first chapter is 188 pages and there are 23 flashbacks to Diyarbakır. This is the largest part of the book, yet the chapter covers a very short span of linear time; Margosyan's first day and night in the orphanage. The novel, on the other hand, covers

²¹³ Even though he translated his stories himself into Turkish, his stories were originally in Armenian and were originally serialized in *Marmara Gazetesi* during the 1970s.

²¹⁴ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 9.

two years starting with September 1st 1953 and ending in September 7th 1955 marked with the events of September 6-7.²¹⁵

Multiple flashbacks to pre-İstanbul life in Diyarbakır enrich the novel and give a comparative sense between the life in Diyarbakır and İstanbul. The two years that Margosyan spent in İstanbul in order to learn his native language, Armenian, along with multiple flashbacks to Margosyan's pre-1953 life during his childhood and life in Diyarbakır are heavily visited. There are thirty-three flashbacks to Diyarbakır in the book in total (mainly the first two thirds of the book) that interrupt the linear progressive narrative of his adventures in İstanbul. Even though his narrative of the present time in İstanbul develops in a sequential manner, his flashbacks to Diyarbakır correlate with associations he makes with the main story line and these stories do not have a temporal sequence. Memories are triggered either by the name of a person in the main story, a feeling or an event.

Instrumental role of food in Diyarbakır

“My grandmother Saro on that very year when she prepared tarhana to put it on the roof, the same day when she collected vegetables from the garden to make pickles, both those tarhana at the roof and pickles at the cellar were infested with worms as that dark news reached the village:

“Armenians will evacuate their villages and will go to Kafle”²¹⁶

That year, after losing each other on the roads of Kafle and finding her daughter Mirye

²¹⁵ September 6-7 events (also known as Istanbul Pogrom) was an organized attack particularly on Greek ethnic minorities in Istanbul. It was allegedly orchestrated by the government of the time under the Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. Armenians in Istanbul had their own share of the attacks as well during these days. For more see: Rıfat Bali, *6-7 Eylül 1955 Olayları: Tanıklar, Hatıralar*. (Osmanbey, İstanbul: Libra Kitapçılık ve Yayıncılık, 2010)

²¹⁶ Kafle, or in other words Kafile convoy is a term used among Armenians for the deportation of Armenians and the long march in 1915.

and her son Sarkis after so many years, grandmother Saro made her children swear on the Bible in order to keep their promise, and cautioned them two things: “My son! Don’t you dare to set foot in Haredan ever again! If you go, they will say “He came back to claim his land,” and they will kill you! Also, do not make tarhana and pickles at our home, it brings bad luck, know this! Don’t prepare pickles and tarhana at home!”²¹⁷

Margosyan’s grandmother Saro Nene’s admonishment of drying *tarhana* and making pickles at home as a sign of misfortune turned into a tradition in Margosyan’s household that could be only recognized within the context of Kafle.²¹⁸ Making of tradition in foodways sometimes can be very arbitrary and instrumental. As Krögel suggests, the narrators or writers of food instill and reinforce cultural mores and discuss the role of food as a communicator in culturally specific contexts, in which the food sets the tone and meaning. Food references in oral narratives are especially symbolically transmitted.²¹⁹ In other words, particular performances arise in certain contexts and those performances can be recognized depending on people’s familiarity with the codes/contexts/experiences within that community. Food has a symbolic value that transcends speech at times and creates a meaning in familial and communal contexts. In this context Grandmother Saro’s warning to her children is only recognizable in

²¹⁷ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 378. “Saro nenem Haredan’daki evlerinde tarhana hazırlayıp dama kuruması için serdikten sonra, aynı gün bahçeden topladığı sebzelerden turşu kurduğu o yıl, hem damdaki tarhana hem de kilerdeki turşu kurtlanıp ardından da o kara haber köye ulaşmış: ‘Ermeniler köylerini boşaltıp Kafle’ye çıkacak!’

İşte o yıl köyü boşaltıp ‘Kafle’ yollarında birbirlerini kaybettikten sonra ölen oğullarının ardından kızı Mirye ile oğlu Sarkis’i yıllar sonra bulduğunda İncil’e el bastırıp, öğüdünü tutacağına dair yeminini alarak, babama iki şey tembih etmiş: ‘Oğlim, sen sen olasan, Haredan’a bi daha ayağ basmıyasan! Getsen diyerler ki gelmiş toprağhlarına sehab çığhacağ, seni öldirirler! Bi de, bızım evimize tarğhana yapmağ, turşi kurmağ oğırsızlığ getiri, bilesiz! Evde turşidir, tarğhanadır, yapmıyasız!’”

²¹⁸ Tarhana is a dried foodstuff (yogurt, tomato and pimento) to make soup

²¹⁹ A. Krögel, "Dangerous Repasts: Food and the Supernatural in the Quechua Oral Tradition." *Food and Foodways*. 17.2 (2009): 104-132.

Margosyan's family. Not every Armenian who experienced Kafle bans drying tarhana or pickling in the household; possibly none but Margosyan's. There is a connection between food and the memories that are sometimes arbitrary.²²⁰ The associations that are made manifest themselves and become tradition and/or a trigger of past memories. As shown in this example, food is one of the strongest channels for such manifestations.

It is possibly only Margosyan's family who cannot dry tarhana and pickle in the house but almost every Armenian family had a story of Kafle in Diyarbakır during the 1940s when Margosyan was child. They talked about those stories usually on winter nights when they were having house visits: where they were originally from, how many people in their families died, how many people survived, how many people were missing.²²¹ While women were knitting socks and men were sipping their homemade wines, and children were eavesdropping on the adult conversations while eating their snacks such as *pestil* [dried fruit pulp], *ceviz* [walnuts] etc. Margosyan grew up with these stories, trying to make sense of why his parents had their eyes full with tears when they sang "Burası Muştur yolu yokuştur," [This place is called Muş and its path is steep] or why townspeople would call his father Ali instead of Sarkis.²²² More importantly why would his father want Margosyan to learn their native Armenian language more than anything in the world so much that he would go to the great extent of sending him to an

²²⁰ See more on the arbitrary choices of food traditions: Carole Counihan and P. Van Esterik, *Food and Culture: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 50-51.

²²¹ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 386-387.

²²² Burası Muştur yolu yokuştur is a very well known folk song in Turkey among Turks and other ethnic groups. In a review article on how ethnic minorities in Turkey share similar or same folk songs with the majority. Meryem Dilekçi refers to Mıgırđıç Margosyan's autobiographical novel in order to exemplify her claims. Meryem Dilekçi. "Üç Ermeni Yazarın Bakış Açısıyla "Türk Kültürü ve İslam"." *Yağmur Dergisi*. Web Accessed. 02 May 2014
<http://www.yagmurdergisi.com.tr/archives/konu/uc-ermeni-yazarin-bakis-acisiyla-turk-kulturu-ve-islam>

orphanage in İstanbul? Margosyan's father was separated from his mother during the long march at the age of four and was found by a Muslim villager. He was then raised by him, converted to Islam, and named as Ali. Sarkis's mother Saro Nene found his son and daughter 13 years later, but her husband (Mıgırdiç Margosyan, the author, takes his name from his grandfather whom he had never known) and other children did not survive. With Saro Nene's determination, her children eventually converted back to Christianity. Since then Margosyan's father was determined to prove himself as a "true" Armenian Christian. This type of trauma plays an important role in the way Margosyan was raised. The father's determination of proving his "true" Armenian identity leads to his decision to send his son to İstanbul to learn the language of their ancestors.

Saro Nene would tell the stories of the Kafle while feeding her little grandson Margosyan with *ceviz*, *pestil* and other snacks. Margosyan reflects on these stories today as stories he did not understand at the time he heard them. He would just enjoy eating the snacks that were offered by his grandmother but he admits that when he was older, Saro Nene's stories made sense to him. What makes sense to Margosyan in his later life is his understanding of how being an Armenian in Turkey came with a certain "burden" about the past that was whispered in each other's ears, talked about with friends in closed circles, reflected onto cultural mores about how to do or not to do things, but never really talked with the "outsiders" back in 1940s and '50s.²²³ It is important to understand the context within which these stories are told; they are not didactic stories that are taught to children but are stories brought up in passing, inferred between the lines while eating,

²²³ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 444. When Margosyan is in İstanbul, he encounters a man on the street, who pretends to be an Armenian and asks him questions, with particular interest in what they teach children in Armenian schools about history. Margosyan eventually realizes the man was part of the secret police.

snacking or playing.

How Armenian identity is performed in Diyarbakır has a correlation with the past experiences of people. For instance some habits such as putting a cross [haç] on the bread that will be sent to the bakery reinforces the Armenianness of that family. Margosyan perceives this act as the way his grandmother got back at history²²⁴. For Saro Nene teaching her children how to be “true” Armenians is one of the most important missions of her life in order to make up for the lost time away from them. As a result, once her daughter decided to dress like an Armenian woman and take the dough that her mother put a cross on to the bakery wearing her Armenian dress, Saro Nene felt accomplished in her mission. As in this example, cultural codes that define one’s identity is not limited merely to the way they dress, eat or talk but also as shown in those cultural codes are occasionally manifested in ways like a cross on the bread loaf.

In a similar vein, Margosyan’s father has the same symptoms of getting back at history just like his mother but the manifestation of it differs from Saro Nene’s instrumental ways of food making. Margosyan’s father compels his son Mıgırdiç to learn his ancestral language from a very early age even though the father himself cannot speak it. He makes sure that his son is involved in the Armenian community in İstanbul. That is how when the opportunity came up Margosyan’s father did not even blink an eye about sending his son to İstanbul, whereas his mother Haço was heartbroken and did not want to let her son go.

The story of Exile

²²⁴ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 278. “tarihle hesaplaşarak bir nebze de rahatlıyor muydu?” (Getting back at the history – comes to terms with -- Retaliation)

“Was this a new type of apprenticeship under the name of student in this orphanage in İstanbul? Instead of becoming a flat-hell shoe/head scarf maker, tinsmith, molder, blacksmith, stove repairer, tailor, and goldsmith like our fathers and grandfathers, were we sent to İstanbul, to the big city, in order to be raised with better living conditions, while on one hand, learning our ancestral language and acquire our own personality, on the other hand, maybe instead of becoming a bricklayer we could become certified engineer, certified doctor, lawyer, dentist, teacher, or unlike our self-trained priest Papaz Arsen, a higher rank, knowledgeable priest?”²²⁵

The program that was conducted by Armenian patriarchs in İstanbul attempted to gather Anatolian children from lower income families in order to bring them to İstanbul for an Armenian education, due to the lack of Armenian schools and churches in Anatolia. As a result these Anatolian Armenian children would become beneficial “human capital” for the Armenian community in the future. When the Armenian priests came to Diyarbakır, the first response to their attempt to “take away” their children was unfavorable to parents. “What kind of good would education do to anybody? Especially if you are Armenian, Syrian or Chaldean Orthodox, you cannot become municipal sergeant, civil registry manager, judge or district governor...!”²²⁶ For ethno-religious minorities in Turkey, access to political power is highly challenged. Armenian minorities were not allowed to work in governmental institutions and as a result most of them in Anatolia became experts in certain occupations such as “tinsmith, molder, blacksmith, stove

²²⁵ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 66. “... İstanbul’daki bu yetimhanede bu kez öğrenci adı altında yepyeni bir çırağlığın başlangıcında mıydım? Ben ve arkadaşlarım günün birinde babalarımız, dedelerimiz gibi yemenici, kalaycı, dökmece, demirci, sobacı, terzi ve kuyumcu olmaktansa, büyük bir şehirde, iyi olanaklarla yetişip, bir taraftan anadilimizi öğrenip kendi benliğimizi kazanırken, diğer taraftan belki de duvarcı ustası yerine diplomalı yüksek mühendis, diplomalı doktor, avukat, diş tabibi, öğretmen ya da papazımız Der Arsen gibi alaylı bir papaz değil de, üstün rütbeli, bilgili bir rahip olmak için mi buralara gelmiştik?”

²²⁶ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 58. “Okumanun kime ne faydası vardı ki! Hele hele Ermeni, Süryani, Keldani, belediye çavuşu, nüfus müdürü, hakim ya da kaymakam olmadıktan sonra...!”

repairer, tailor, and goldsmith” etc.²²⁷

However, the story of İstanbul is different. Children are educated with an emphasis toward occupations that will lead them to positions in an urban environment that are socially more “valid” in order to gain power through their “social significance” by occasionally overriding their ethnic identities. Even though such an education would not allow Armenians to gain access to governmental or military jobs, the opportunities extend by getting a higher education diploma that may lead to university education. As a result, it is important to understand how the power relations are conducted in a domain in which the ethnic identities are articulated in İstanbul among Armenians. Margosyan’s language education covers not only his lingual comprehension of the language in question, but also his subjugation to a system of carefully carved Armenian subjectivity that requires him to be stripped of his Kurdish, rural, and so-called “backwards” habits. Only then could he become an individual that would be advantageous for the Armenian community, who then could become a pastor, certified doctor, or teacher.²²⁸ By keeping this in mind, it makes sense to observe the education these children go through and how they are subjected to certain disciplinary methods.

Margosyan and his peers arrive at Karagözcüyan Armenian Orphanage, an institutionalized domain that is very different from a family environment. One of Margosyan’s first encounters with İstanbulite Armenians was marked with shame for not knowing his ancestral language, for speaking “vulgar” Turkish, for getting his hair shaved in a military style hair cut, for being washed by older women in the common bath,

²²⁷ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 66

²²⁸ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 188. It is important to note that Margosyan’s father rents a certified dentist’s diploma to perform his dentistry. Papaz Arsen becomes the priest in Diyarbakır because there was no one else “brave” enough to take this mission in this geographical space, indeed he was a music instrument player in festivals.

for his eating habits, etc. As Margosyan shows in his novel, the reactions of Istanbulite children toward him are significant. “Apparently brother Karaekin talked to you in Armenian but you did not understand. Your Turkish is very vulgar he said. Brother Karaekin said that you do not know Armenian because you all are Kurdish villagers.”²²⁹ Becoming an “educated” Armenian who can speak his own language starts by stripping off the “differences” that these children bring from Anatolia. The process manifests itself in the way the children are dressed, eat, speak etc. anything that is not “proper” in İstanbul Armenian culture, especially as defined by the orthodox Christian environment like the patriarchate.

In other words, such a case is the “government of children” in the Foucauldian concept that creates docile bodies in a disciplinary society.²³⁰ Foucault considers schools (as well as other institutions such as the hospital, the army, and prison) as domains that conduct methods to control and correct bodies so that “[a] body that is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved.”²³¹ Margosyan’s displacement from home to an orphanage, then to patriarchate housing later on is not limited to displacement from one city to another, from rural to urban; it is also marked by moving from one disciplinary domain to another. Spatial distribution and individualization of bodies play a significant role in the process of disciplining Armenian children, as well as temporal organization of the day as a disciplinary method to create a mundane routine for

²²⁹ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 39. “Karaekin Agparig sizinle Ermenice konuşmuş, anlamamışsınız. Türkçeniz de kabaymış. Karaekin agparig köylü Kürtler olduğunuz için Ermenice de bilmediğinizi söyledi.”

²³⁰ Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power." In Michel Foucault: *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, edited by H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, pp. 208-226. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983

²³¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of Prison*. (New York Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1995) 136.

Margosyan different from the one at home. The next section of the chapter part, “The disciplinary role of food in İstanbul”, will show how food plays a role in this disciplinary process and how Margosyan’s daily life in İstanbul is shaped.

The disciplinary role of food in İstanbul.

“I wonder, if our journey to (İstanbul) began with a desire to break free from the words “Infidel” “Filla”, “Ghaço” that were attached to us from the very first day in the lands where we were born. Because of the words that were fermented in us for years, susceptibility settled in us. Those words abruptly exploded next to our ears and twisted our hearts; those words were hanged around our neck like a label; those words left marks on the tips of our noses, like a red mole on our cheeks, chins, at the curve of our upper or lower lip, from the very first day we were born, those words were a black mark on our foreheads.”²³²

The pejorative image that people in Diyarbakır hold of Armenians creates a strong ethnic awareness among Armenians and it therefore leads to isolation from the majority group in Diyarbakır. Such an awareness of the negative image portrayed in Diyarbakır reinforces Armenians’ attachment to their ethnic identities. Armenianness as a response to major ethnic groups re-organizes every aspect of daily life in order to mark its existence when the existence is under the threat of erasure. In particular the communal and cultural institutions such schools and churches in Anatolia are annihilated over the years by the Turkish state. Margosyan leaves Diyarbakır with a strong sense of Armenian

²³² Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 8. “Acaba bizim oralarda, bizim ellerde, doğduğumuz o diyarlarda, daha ilk günden itibaren alnımıza kara leke gibi sürülen, sanki kızarmış bir et beni ya da kimimizin yanağında, çenesinde, üst veya alt dudağının kıvrımında, burnunun ucunda bir şark çibanı gibi derin izler bırakan, boynumuza yafta gibi asılan, arada bir kulaklarımızın dibinde ansızın patlayıp yüreklerimizi burkan acısıyla “Gavur”, “Filla” ya da “Ghaço” sözcüklerinde yıllar yılı mayalanıp gizlenmiş, içimizde yuva kurup çöreklenmiş bir alınganlıktan bir an önce kurtulmanın özlemiyle mi başlamıştı bu yolculuk serüvenimiz?”

identity that is on the negative side of the spectrum among the majority of the population.

With the desire to escape from such a pejorative image, Margosyan's story of exile begins. However, outside of Diyarbakır Margosyan's encounter with other urbanite Armenians in İstanbul shakes his understanding of Armenian identity to the core. This shows the fluidity of identity formation, how identities are reshaped and negotiated. In other words, ethnic and class identities shift according to the conditions. In İstanbul, a painful process begins for Margosyan as he re-evaluates the meaning of Armenianness. In Diyarbakır he is an Armenian Christian minority. In derogatory terms he is an "infidel" among Turkish and Kurdish Muslims. On the other hand he is perceived as Kurdish or Anatolian by Armenians in İstanbul, which has derogatory connotations to define someone from South East Turkey. The latter has more class and urban/rural dichotomy connotations whereas the first one is more related to ethno-religious discrimination.

Ironically, Margosyan admits that he has perceived himself as an urbanite in the city of Diyarbakır since many Armenians lived in the center of the city and most of them were artisans unlike the villager Kurds, who lived in the peripheries and dealt primarily with the land and farms. It was not until he came to İstanbul and encountered urban Armenians that his perception of himself was shaken to the core. His Diyarbakırlı identity overlapped with Kurdishness and rurality in the face of the İstanbul urbanite perception of Anatolia as the periphery. In addition to learning his ancestral language, what awaited him was to learn to become a "proper" Armenian. Education and disciplining methods in Armenian schools and the patriarchate went beyond developing language skills but penetrated every aspect of his identity formation in İstanbul.

Margosyan's first response to the discomfort of displacement and encountering Armenian orphan children was to imagine how life in Diyarbakır would be simultaneously on that very evening. While waiting in the hallway for the principal, he imagines his mother cooking before his father's arrival home from work. He pictures in his mind's eye that his mother is doing the daily routine.

"In the kitchen that opens into the courtyard, is my mom cooking pilaf or keşkek for the dinner? Whether it is garbanzo beans with meat or red lentil soup boiling up in the pot? No, no, if we pay closer attention we will see that she is roasting eggplants on the portable stove, dipping her fingers in a stone plate that she puts next the stove so that she can carefully peel them; this means we will have 'bebekanuç' tonight..."

"Bebekanuç"

After you make the roasted and peeled eggplants go through the wringer by beating them in a tin pot, the rest is easy!.. Take two spoonful of Kacadağ butter from the cellar and put it in the pot and place it on the portable stove. The two eggs you grabbed from the coop, in which the chickens keep cackling and cracks those in the hot butter that is dancing in the pot. Then put those eggplants in the pot, which are acting insolent even though they have been beaten up heavily. Afterwards baptize those eggplants with a name called "Bebekanuç" and mix them in the pot with a wooden spoon. Come on, don't fool around, there Dentist Sarkis is knocking the door knob, run, open the door."²³³

²³³ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 19. "Avluya açılan mutfakta anam akşam için bulgur pilavı mı pişiriyor, yoksa keşkek mi? Tencerede fokurdayıp kaynatan etli nohut mu, yoksa kırmızı mercimek çorbası mı? Hayır, hayır, çömelip oturduğu hamam tahtasının hemen yanbaşındaki maltızın, 'habeş'in üzerinde, kor ateşte evirip çevirerek közlediği ve yanına koyduğu bir tas soğuk suya arada bir parmaklarını daldırıp iri, tombul bostan patlıcanlarının yanmış, iyice karışmış kabuklarını özenle soyduğuna bakılırsa, demek ki bu akşam 'bebekanuç' yiyeceğiz... 'Bebekanuç'..."

Cehennem ateşinde közleyip kabukları ayıklanan patlıcanı kalaylı bakır tencerede tokmakla döve döve, anasından emdiği sütü fitil fitil burnundan getirdikten sonra, gerisi artık kolay!.. Kilerdeki yağ küpünden, tavanın içine halis Karacadağ tereyağından iki kaşık koyup 'habeş'in üstüne yerleştirin, deminden beri avluda, eşikte, bahçede, toprak damda eşelenip dururken bir taraftan da gıcıklayıp duran tavukların 'pin'inden kapıp geldiğiniz iki yumurtayı çıt çıt tokuşturup, 'habeş'in ateşiyle tavada dansa başlayan kızgın yağın içine kırın. Sonra da onca tokmağa rağmen hala akli başına gelmeyip ukalalık, dik kafalılık eden o küstah patlıcanları 'bebekanuç' adıyla vaftiz edilmek üzere tavanın içine boca ederek tahta bir kaşıkla iyice karıştırın. Hadi oyalanmayın, işte Dişçi Sarkis sokak kapısının 'şakşako'sunu şak şak şaklatıp duruyor, koşun kapıyı açın..."

By reimagining/remembering his mother's cooking *Bebekanoç* as an event, Margosyan finds comfort in an environment where he feels completely alienated. Even though he is disconnected from the geographical space, he attempts to create a temporal relation and resemblance to that space by remembering and re-imagining mother's comforting daily routine. As Gvion claims "On a cultural level, the meal is not simply food, but an event that requires effort and thought, created to present to the head of the household."²³⁴ Margosyan remembers the food that the mother prepares before his father's arrival to home; he imagines an event, a context that concatenates the family, which is crucial in an environment, in which he feels threatened as an outsider. It is not coincidental that the first image of home is related to a food event by recreating past events that are part of everyday life. Sutton shows that the experience of food evokes recollection, which is not simply cognitive but also emotional and physical.²³⁵ Retrospective imagining and reenacting the event in one's mind gives a temporary resolution, as in Margosyan's case, in an ominous environment that the child feels threatened. Clearly remembering *Bebekanoç*, which involves submission of eggplants, which are described as 'insolent' to the wooden spoon reflects some sort of identification of this process and his own condition. Margosyan, who was shaped as a witness of the process of cooking this particular dish, remembers in a straining condition nothing else but that event in specific.

Shifting Tastes in Institutionalized Commensalities:

In the context of Diyarbakır, Margosyan's participation of food process is very much embedded in the daily life; he is part of the production of food by being the

²³⁴ Gvion 80

²³⁵ Sutton 365

mediator between the home and the market by carrying mother's orders. As a young child, he watches his mother and his neighbor women gathering and collectively preparing food at the common area, the yard as examined in the previous chapter and reiterated by the author multiple times in this novel as well. However, in İstanbul, the food is detached from the participation process of daily life and becomes a temporal organization for effectiveness of one's body and the food is reserved to refectory in the orphanage. Margosyan loses touch with food production. Familiarity and homeliness of the food disappear and food process becomes invisible and it turns into smell of onion escaping from the refectory kitchen.²³⁶ In other words, organization of foodways and its symbolic significance delivers cultural norms in an Armenian household in Diyarbakır context; whereas in the orphanage and the patriarch, temporality of food (when to eat and when not to eat) and table manners serve to reproduce order and social status.

According to Grignon, unlike the domestic commensality, the institutional commensality is associated with hospitals, barracks, nursing homes, jails and convents and boarding schools. Grignon defines institutional commensality as such: "Institutional commensality is characterized by the occlusion of the group, which is all the more severe as the enclosure of the institutions to which the partners belong is hermetic ... Hierarchical in its principle and dominated by the rule of the institution, this commensality reflects and reinforces the classifications, groupings and discriminations which the institution carries out according to gender, age (school), rank (army) and opposition of status (masters and pupils, guards and prisoners)."²³⁷ Even though, there is a sense of order and hierarchy in the household with production and consumption, in an

²³⁶ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 115.

²³⁷ Grignon 25.

institutional context such as in Margosyan’s case in İstanbul, the hierarchies are reflections of institutions in order create docile bodies. Not being used to such disciplining, Margosyan struggles with this rule-bound environment that restricts, and as such order his life on top of his perplexity with being an Armenian in İstanbul.

Margosyan admits that the very first day of school he encountered multiple rules that troubled him. He quickly realizes that he had to sleep in an individual bed unlike in Diyarbakır, which he would share the same floor mattress with his siblings. He had to have an individual plate to eat from unlike one big pot in the middle of the table, in which every member of the family eats from in Diyarbakır. There is a shift from communal living conditions into individual living conditions that are monitored and regulated. The comprehensive list of rules to be obeyed is as follows: One was not supposed to drink water on top of their soup dish and when Margosyan did without knowing this rule, the warning of the teacher turned his face into red because of embarrassment. One was not supposed to dip their bread into the meal’s juice. One was not supposed to smack their lips while eating; one was not supposed to eat the rice dish with spoon; one was not supposed to bite a piece off the whole bread; one was not supposed to make noise while drinking water; one was not supposed to add salt to their food without tasting it!²³⁸....

“While encountering with new eating habits, worrying about making a mistake and observing people around me how they were using the fork, the spoon, the knife, the napkin and the salt shaker, eating was turning into a torture.”²³⁹ Margosyan says. His experience in becoming a “proper” Armenian is regulated to a great extent. He was

²³⁸ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 258 – 259.

²³⁹ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 259. “Yepyeni yemek yeme kurallarıyla tanışırken, bir hata işlemek endişesiyle etrafımdakilerin çatal, kaşık, bıçak, peçete ve tuzlukları nasıl kullandıklarına dikkat kesildikçe tabağımdakileri yemek bir azaba dönüşüyordu!”

continuously anxious about not being able to fit in and sent back to Diyarbakır as a “failure” and the fear of failing pushed him to endeavor more.

Such education transcends the boundaries of ethnic identities and determines the social status. In “The Civilizing Process”, Elias dates the emergence of “civilizing process” back to seventeenth-eighteenth century Renaissance Europe. Tying with Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power, Elias’ argument shows that individuals by constraining their bodily behaviors around food enter into a culture that define their social identities. Susie Scott paraphrases it as follows “Table manners were central to this display of self-restraint, Elias said, symbolizing that not only did people understand the codes governing which knife to use, how to hold one's cup, and so on (signs of 'good breeding'), but also that they were able to put social norms before their raw appetites.”²⁴⁰ Participating in meals with other students first in the orphanage, then in the patriarchate with religious leaders and in “love” [sevgi] gatherings as a convivial act with İstanbulite Armenians, Margosyan feels the same anxiety over and over towards the food that is served.

Unfamiliarity with the ingredients and the table manners that makes a person “proper”, Margosyan shows resentment towards Armenians in İstanbul as well as he experiences “shame” for who he is. One was not allowed to leave food in their plate even though this food as Margosyan describes look like worms. He describes his first encounter with spaghetti as a noisome experience, in which he did not want to eat but too afraid to go against the rule. Fischler identifies such resentment towards food as ‘omnivore’s paradox’, which he defines as continuing tension between the human biological need for, on the one hand, variety, diversity and innovation, but on the other

²⁴⁰ Susie Scott, *Making Sense of Everyday Life* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2009) 98.

hand, the imperative to maintain caution because any unknown food is potential danger. As Fischler explains this paradox, omnivores must continually search for new forms of food so as to maintain a widely ranging diet, but also must be wary of new foods because of the potential danger of the unknown. “Fischler sees this ‘double bind’ as creating tension and anxiety in humans’ relationship with food, related not only to the fear of poisoning, but to ontological issues around subjectivity. As he points out, if one does not know what one is eating, one’s subjectivity is called into question. It is not only the life and health of the eater that are challenged by the incorporation of food, but also that individual’s place in culture. Thus the incorporation of the wrong type of substance may lead to contamination, transformation within, a dispossession of the self”.²⁴¹ Margosyan’s disgust with unfamiliar food can be read as rejection of the new environment, a futile resistance to food displays a step in identity formation.

The self that is called into question in Margosyan’s case is the “rural” Kurdish identity stamped on him explicitly by his peers on the first day of his arrival to the orphanage and implicitly by his teachers who view him as a “villager”. This “villager” Kurdish self contradicts with his desire to prove that he is as Armenian as the ones in İstanbul. How he is perceived in the eyes of others in İstanbul force him both to be like them and resent them simultaneously.

From Refectory to an Armenian Restaurant

During their temporary stay in the Patriarch building, a few students including Margosyan were eating their meals with other priests; however, eventually the elders decided to arrange them to have their lunch in the Armenian restaurant until the students

²⁴¹ Lupton 17.

moved to the school in Üsküdar.²⁴² This was a much welcome change for the students who appreciated the more relaxed environment of the restaurant, particularly in comparison with the eating experience under the judging gaze of their teachers. Margosyan's remark about the restaurant is significant to contemplate since Margosyan calls this place a "school of life": "Vahram's restaurant was not only a place where we ate, but it was also like a school of life. Most of the customers were Kumkapı's famous fishermen and captains... In Vahram's restaurant, the pleasure of breathing the same air with different types of people began to outweigh eating delicious food. The restaurant started to turn into a theater for us."²⁴³

The restaurant gives a sense of community to Margosyan, as it resembled his communal life in Diyarbakır with familiar faces and people who knew each other. The constraining sense while eating with teachers began to diminish, instead Cook Vahram's insistence of feeding them with "different" types of food comes forward. In this case, it is not about the obligation of the child to eat what is put in front of him, but to participate in the Armenian culture in İstanbul. The restaurant owner/cook Vahram attempts to develop these children's appreciation for a variety of tastes by offering them new dishes, even going to such an extent to forcefully feed them with a paternal attitude.

"After the first couple of days, we did not have a problem in becoming adapted to the restaurant; actually it was Vahram himself made this easier for us. Thanks to his easygoing, paternal personality, we felt like we were at home. We did not immediately sit at the corner table anymore; like other customers, we glanced at the olive oiled dishes

²⁴² Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 364.

²⁴³ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 367 – 368. "Vahram'ın lokantası karın doyurmakla kalmadığımız bir **yaşam okulu** gibiydi. Müşterilerin çoğunluğu Kumkapı'nın meşhur Ermeni balıkçı reisleri ya da tayfalarıydı... Vahram'ın lokantasında değişik insanlarla aynı havayı teneffüs etmenin keyfi giderek lezzetli yemeklerden sanki daha ağır basmaya başlamış, bizler için bu lokanta adeta bir tiyatro sahnesine dönüşmüştü."

lined up on the counter for no particular reason. Even though we were curious about these dishes that we did not know anything about, we still stuck with the dishes that we knew such as dried beans, chickpea, potato with meat, stuffed pepper, and certainly, pilaf with vermicelli. When Vahram saw us standing next to trays of food, he wouldn't miss the opportunity to stick a spoonful of food in our mouths in order to enrich our food culture. He would not care if our faces turned sour, in fact he would praise these dishes so that we would get used to them: 'This is an excellent leek dish cooked in olive oil. Eat! So that you can get used to it my son...'”²⁴⁴

The dishes Margosyan encounters in the Armenian restaurant are the ones that are similar to the dishes Tovmasyan mentioned in her cookbook. What is known as Armenian dish in the mainstream knowledge though is the ones that are mainly cooked in İstanbul. In this case it is possible to claim that the Armenian dishes are not necessarily defined by ethnic identity but by geographical identity according to climatic conditions. Such approach to the "Armenianness" of food further complicates the myth of ethnic boundaries of a dish that is defined and assigned to an ethnic group. In a similar vein, when Margosyan imagines his Anatolian roots as a source of pride when he encounters his peers' mockery of his Kurdish identity, the first dishes he imagines are the ones that are locally famous in Diyarbakır, but not identifies, or rather known among Western Armenian communities who represent the Turkish Armenian mainstream culture.

²⁴⁴ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 370. "İlk günlerin ardından bizler de lokantanın havasına uyum sağlamakta fazla zorluk çekmedik; aslında bunu kolaylaştıran yine Vahram'ın kendisiydi. Onun babacan tavrı sayesinde kendimizi evimizde gibi hissediyorduk. Artık gidip hemen kuytadaki yuvarlak masamıza oturmuyor, diğer müşteriler gibi önce tezgaha yönelip, yan yana dizilmiş çoğu da zeytinyağlı soğuk yemeklere, mezelere laf olsun kabilinden göz atıyorduk. Ne olduğunu pek de iyi anlamadığımız bu değişik yemeklerin tadını merak etmekle birlikte yine de kendi bildiğimizden şaşmayarak kuru fasulye, nohut, etli patates, biber dolması, ve illa da şehriyeli pirinç pilavında karar kılıyorduk. Vahram yemek kültürümüzü kendince zenginleştirmek için olsa gerek, bizi tepsilerdeki yemeklerin başında görünce fırsatını kaçırmaz, hemen bir kaşık ya da çatalın ucuyla aldığı bir lokmayı ağzımıza zorla sokardı. Suratımızı ekşitememize aldırılmaz, bu tatlara alışmamız için yemeği överdi: 'Zeytinyağlı mis gibi pırasadır dzo! Ye ki alışasın evladım...'"

Childhood Dishes Do Not Taste the Same Any More

At the end of the first year in İstanbul, none of the students from Anatolia were allowed to go back to their homes, as teachers were concerned they would forget their newly learned language skills if they did. As a result, some of the family members who could afford the trip came to İstanbul to visit them; and one of the most important things they brought along was the food from home.

“Our very first summer break, we had to spend it in İstanbul. Our happiness was incredible when some children’s family came to İstanbul to visit us with their bundles and baskets. While we were sharing pastrami and sausage brought by those from Kayseri, apricots from Malatya, big watermelons from Diyarbakır, as if we were sharing our longing to our homelands. In order to console my teary-eyed mother, my uncle and my youngest sibling, who can barely walk, also came to İstanbul. But the walnuts, dried fruit pulps, dried mulberries, raisins, roasted chickpeas, and watermelon seeds tasted very different!”²⁴⁵

The same meal without the family context did not have the same emotional significance; as a result Margosyan and his peers had a sensation that the food coming from the homeland did not taste the same. The experience of exile articulated in this quote shows that it is not the ingredients but the context of its consumption that marks how the food is perceived. As Bardenstein claims, exilic authors of food write from a world that is disrupted, as a result their narratives show symptoms of ambiguities and

²⁴⁵ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 420 – 421. “İstanbul’da geçirmek zorunda kaldığımız ilk yaz tatilinde kimimizin ailesi hasretine dayanamadıkları çocuklarını görmek için çıkınlarını ya da sepetlerini yüklenip geldiklerinde sevincimize diyecek yoktu. Kayserililerin pastırma ve sucuğundan, Malatyalıların kayısısından, Diyarbakırlıların kocaman karpuzundan bir dilimi aramızda paylaşırken sanki biraz da kendi diyarlarımızın hasretini birbirimizle bölüşüyorduk. Anamın dinmeyen gözyaşlarına biraz derman ya da teselli babında dayımla beraber henüz yürümeye başlayan en küçük kardeşimi de alarak İstanbul’a gelişlerinde beraberlerinde getirdikleri ceviz, pestil, dut kurusu, kuru üzüm, leblebi ya da karpuz çekirdeklerinin tadı ne kadar da başkaydı!”

contradictions; they are fragmented.²⁴⁶ It is not that the food coming from Diyarbakır tastes different but it is a metaphor for Margosyan's lost sight of "pejorative" image of Armenianness in Diyarbakır context: His understanding of what constitutes Armenian identity has shifted in İstanbul. According to Bardenstein, identities implicitly assumed to have been previously intact, authentic and unproblematic, become complex once the author of food is in exile. In other words, it is not that the taste has changed but the Armenian identity in Diyarbakır context Margosyan once hold strongly has shifted. The negative ethnic image he internalized in Diyarbakır transformed into an image that depicts him as a member of lower class and a rural identity in İstanbul among İstanbulite Armenians. The novel predominantly focuses on Margosyan's struggle with this new identity in İstanbul. As a result it does not come as a surprise that he is resentful towards the food that is served to him in İstanbul. At the same time, he feels distanced from his homeland and starts reevaluating Armenianness in both geographical spaces.

Little Anatolia in İstanbul

"Because of the summer vacation, the students went back to the various parts of Anatolia, and then we gathered together back under the roof of Surp Haç Tibrevank that opened its doors to us for the past two years. Of course, the blessings of our homelands came with us to the refectory and became Hayr Apraham, in other words the table of Halil Ibrahim where everybody shares the food. Dried apricots of Malatya, apples of Amasya, oranges of Hatay, tangerines of Hatay, pastrami and sausage of Kayseri, cantaloupes and watermelons of Diyarbakır, peanuts, dried apples, dried mulberries, walnuts, strings of grapes that smelled like the soil of Anatolia from Samsun, Sivas, Tokat, Yozgat, Kastamonu, Elazığ joined with the scones, pates, lavash bread, cookies that are made with the very own of our mothers', grandmothers' hands at the table. While we were

²⁴⁶ Bardenstein 353.

eating, there was no other pleasure like that, and knowing that the Haç feast is approaching so that we had to fast soon, we were even hungrier.”²⁴⁷

Contrary to his previous feeling towards the food items coming from Anatolia that do not *taste the same*, the sense of “not belonging” among İstanbulite Armenians in some way is restored through a celebration of each student’s local food. It gives a sense that at the end of the second year in İstanbul, Anatolian Armenian children began to feel like they fit in İstanbul, while they are celebrating their “origins” with the variety of food they brought from their homes. The refectory of an Armenian school becomes home for these children while sharing their food. Such scene gives a sense of closure to the audience at the end of the chapter through this unification. While the feeling of not belonging was restored with an image that the Anatolian Armenians united in İstanbul within a multiculturalist space however, it was also, at the same time, disrupted with September 6-7 events (1955) at the end of the novel. Margosyan shows the reader that his ethno-religious identity in the face of majority is more problematic than his struggle with social identity he has been facing among İstanbulite Armenians. Such emphasis at the end of the novel gives a sense that Margosyan goes back to the understanding of “pejorative” image he had before his exile to İstanbul. In other words, the ugly attacks that the Armenians and Greeks face in major cities like İstanbul show Margosyan, in spite of their existence

²⁴⁷ Margosyan, *Tespîh Taneleri* 495. “Yaz tatili nedeniyle Anadolu’nun çeşitli kentlerine giden öğrenciler hep beraber Üsküdar’ın tepesinde bizlere iki yıldan beri kucak açan Surp Haç Tıbrevank’ın çatısı altında yeni baştan toplanmıştık. Tabii, memleketlerimizin tüm nimetleri de bizimle birlikte gelip yemekhanede beraberce paylaşılan Hayr Apraham, nam-ı diğeriyle Halil İbrahim Sofrası’na dönüşmüştü. Malatyalıların kuru kayısıları, Amasyalıların elması, Hataylıların portakalı, mandalinası, Kayserililerin pastırması, sucuğu, Diyarbakırlıların kavunla karpuzu, Samsun, Sivas, Tokat, Yozgat, Kastamonu, Elazığ yörelerinden gelen yerfıstığı, elma kurusu, dut kurusu, ceviz, hevenk üzümü, ‘gilabulu’, alıç gibi her biri ayrı ayrı Anadolu toprağı kokan tüm bu bereketle beraber aynın masanın etrafında, bir de analarımızın, nenelerimiz kendi elleriyle hazırladıkları çörek, kete, börek, lavaş, ‘şekerışı’, kurabiyeleri keyifle yerken, yaklaşan Haç Bayramı’nın perhiz günleri arifesinde olduğumuzun bilinciyle iştahlarımız sanki daha da mı açılmıştı ne!”

as Armenians seemingly far more accepted in urban context, that they still face with same ethnic discrimination. Identities are not fixed; they all shift once Margosyan encounters resentment towards ethno-religious minorities in İstanbul from the majority and he is “reminded” of pejorative ethnic image of Armenianness he experienced in Diyarbakır.

Conclusion

This chapter attempts to show Margosyan’s shifting identifications with various ethno-religious groups in two geographical spaces. The first part of the chapter, an extension of the previous chapter, focuses on instrumental role of food in Diyarbakır, continuously reiterated in the stories about his mother and grandmother. This part shows how daily life, the mundane, is a part of shared, tacit background knowledge that is embedded in certain cultural contexts. Identities that are produced in these contexts have cultural codifications that are only recognized by the members of a group (ethnic, religious, local, gender etc.). Once Margosyan is separated from this group, he is faced with different codes in İstanbul, in which Armenianness is defined and shaped differently from what he knew. The examples for these differences vary from language to dress code, from table manners, to food etc.

The second part of the chapter focuses on Margosyan’s journey to İstanbul and how food is treated and plays a role in different environments such as school, patriarch, Armenian community gatherings, and restaurant. At first, Margosyan feels completely alienated in İstanbul, however by time, he comes into terms with his surroundings by negotiating his Armenian identity in various ways in different contexts. The pejorative images imposed to him in Diyarbakır because of being an Armenian shifts to another type

of derogatory image imposed to him in İstanbul because of being rural, Kurdish, and thus “backward.” As he “improves” himself in İstanbul by acting like İstanbul Armenians, learning to talk like them, eat like them, and become like them, the dilemma between knowing what it means to be Armenian in Diyarbakır and becoming an Armenian in İstanbul tears Margosyan apart. He neither likes the food in İstanbul nor feels that the food coming from home tastes the same anymore.

However, Margosyan quickly restores such dilemma by skipping ahead to the end of the school year at the end of the novel and show the pleasure that students get from coming back to İstanbul with baskets of food from their homelands. Coincidentally, this event clashes with September 6-7 events, eventually forces Margosyan face with his condition as an Armenian in İstanbul. Reading Margosyan’s text is reading the history of Armenians in Diyarbakır during the 1940s and ‘50s as Margosyan represents and reconstructs his childhood memories. This last chapter shows Margosyan’s experience of Armenian lives during that time from a comparative perspective since he compares İstanbul to Diyarbakır, not only geographically but also culturally.

Conclusion: Food and its consequences

This dissertation has investigated the significance of food in works of two Armenian Turkish authors, Takuhi Tovmasyan and Mıgırdıç Margosyan through an analysis of their works. In doing this, my aim was not only to assess the significance of food in literary works of Tovmasyan and Margosyan, but also to investigate how their focus on food deliver a reconciliatory message. In order to communicate their cultural visibility and minority experience to the dominant culture these two authors chose to write self-narratives. As discussed in detail in the introduction, after a longstanding silence, Armenian authors developed strategies to speak out in order to articulate their peripheral condition within Turkish society by writing in Turkish in order to represent themselves.

If writing in subsequent genres of self-narrative is one strategy, they employed another strategy by writing about the mundane aspects of life through the lens of food. I claimed that remembered and reconstructed memories around food items enabled Tovmasyan and Margosyan to tell their stories without alienating their readers. My main questions were as follows: When a group of people continuously go under erasure and become voiceless in the face of the mainstream culture, how does this group speak back in order to become visible? What are the cultural and literary tools that an ethnic community uses to reconcile with the past and how do the members of this community represent themselves in order to be recognized in the mainstream culture?

Armenian authors writing their self narratives in the Turkish language gain agency as ethnic minor subjects within the multiculturalist discourse in contemporary Turkey and these autobiographers I am studying appropriate their language for means of publications by speaking the language of hegemony. Thus, this is a matter of gaining

agency and power in order to speak out for one's truth about the past. Yet, it is still very difficult to speak of the Armenian genocide in Turkey without consequences. By avoiding the word genocide itself as a taboo word, by self-censoring, by referring to it with alternative words such as the long march, Kafle, Der Zor and by putting the traumatic experiences in the cultural contexts of daily lives such as music, food, and art, Armenians in Turkey found alternative ways to speak of their silenced past and create a space to be heard. This space in Tovmasyan and Margosyan's case is the kitchen, the table and the market place.

Through a particular focus on food, I evaluated the ways in which authors explicitly or implicitly talked about 1915 in relation to food. By showing the relationship between food and senses (smell, taste, and hearing) and the ability of senses to trigger memories, I argued that the remembrances of the past (even though they may be highly reconstructed, which, on the other hand, provide a space for alternate strategies to the authors from a marginalized community enabling them to speak to the majority) are transmitted through food narratives and around food performances. By focusing on the act of eating, cooking, and tasting food items, it is possible to see how food plays an important role in transmitting past knowledge in unconventional ways since food narratives are highly performative. The identifications people make through food performances (eating, tasting, preparing etc.) on a daily basis create allegiances that are contextually binding among group members. In short, by analyzing the representation of their daily lives and its relation to the past through food performances I showed how Margosyan and Tovmasyan speak back to the dominant culture in Turkey.

This dissertation limits itself to two contemporary Armenian authors and their works in order to fully to analyze their self-narratives in relation to food in detail. Each chapter is designed to investigate one type of sub-genre written as a self-narrative. Not only are ethnic identities studied but also gender, class and geographical identities are questioned in relation to food. While the first chapter gives a comprehensive framework for the rest of the dissertation by introducing the applicability of food studies as a method in literary analysis, it also introduced different sub-genres that emerged in self-narratives. The following chapters analyzed each genre respectively: cookbook memoir, autobiographical story and autobiographical novel. Even though none of these texts are conventional autobiographies following temporal sequences from birth to older age with an accompanying success story, by analyzing them closely with food as a theme in mind I showed how food events and items organize the temporal and the spatial unity in these texts. While both authors are heavily influenced by their grandparents' and parents' stories of the genocide, the after-effects of the genocide and their personal experiences as minorities are more apparent in their narratives. Their narratives are fragmented not because the trauma of the past prevents them from creating a coherent narrative (although this is true for traumatic and testimonial texts), but because of their minority condition in Turkey and their reaction to it. They deliberately subvert and challenge the norms of genres as well as conventional histories in their time. This is why it is significant to point out why in his letter to Hagop Mintzuri, Margosyan questions Mintzuri's reasons for writing about his life during the genocide. "Was this a lesson that you have given to history and historians? Or was this an act of whispering a folk song to deaf ears and hearts of stone?"²⁴⁸ Margosyan comes to his conclusion about Mintzuri's motivations for

²⁴⁸ Margosyan, *Biletimiz Istanbul'a Kesildi*, 11 "Bu, tarihe, tarihçilere verilen bir ders miydi?

writing precisely as an act of resistance to the official historiographies and as a challenge to those who do not want to hear about what happened during the genocide. If Mintzuri's stories tell the story of annihilation of Armenians as he witnessed them, Margosyan's stories are the stories of those who are left behind and they are the stories of existence, the desire of cultural visibility.

There are multiple texts waiting to be studied in a similar vein to the way I introduced in this dissertation. There are multiple angles through which minority literature can be analyzed in Turkey in order to understand the various ways (visual arts, music, literature etc.) in which they represent themselves. Laurent Mignon questions where to situate non-Muslim authors who write in Turkish in the Turkish literary canon and he argues that just like women writers, these non-Muslim authors are situated in the literary ghetto. As he examines, "Reading literary history from the footnotes means to write an alternative literary history. Researching excluded texts from the main literature is a way of questioning the official literary history."²⁴⁹ In a way, this dissertation is the result of a research project tracing the texts that question the official history and it contributes to modern Turkish and Armenian literature in Turkey by using an interdisciplinary approach in order to analyze self-narratives of minority authors while introducing food studies to the field of Turkish cultural studies. Prospective studies should transcend the limits of conventional genres and topics and start asking questions about the performative role of self-narratives and how these narratives play an important

Yoksa taşlaşmış yüreklere, özellikle de sağır kulaklara fısıldanan yanık bir türkü müydü?"

²⁴⁹ Laurent Mignon, *Neither Shiraz nor Paris: Papers on Modern Turkish Literature*. (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2005) 33.

role in shaping communication between the author and the reader, as well as the cultures in a given context.

Although this study answers many questions about how contemporary Armenian authors writing in Turkish challenge and subvert the conventions of genres and official Turkish historiography, there are many other questions that need to be addressed and answered with further studies. A bilingual study comparing the Armenian and Turkish texts of Margosyan who wrote in both languages would be an indispensable contribution to the field that will answer some of the questions I raise here. There should be more studies focusing on the Armenians' present condition in Turkey through cultural and literary representations rather than focusing merely on the political questions that at times turn into futile scholarly battles about the proving Armenian genocide or denying it.

I began this dissertation with Hrant Dink's last words. He defined himself "living frightened as a pigeon" to express his feelings as an Armenian citizen of Turkey. The memories of the Armenian genocide experienced in 1915 are still freshly ingrained in the memories of community members and passed through generations, yet the genocide is continuously denied by the Turkish state. Most people in the dominant culture who are exposed to the dominant narratives of Turkish national history are not exposed to the stories of Armenians living in Turkey. Hrant Dink attempted to make the *Agos* newspaper a bridge between Turks and Armenians to be used as a tool for Armenian intellectuals to "explain" themselves to the dominant culture they live in and become visible. In a similar vein Armenian authors in Aras publishing house including Margosyan and Tovmasyan in particular attempted to do the same with their literary works: to represent themselves to the dominant culture through the medium of literature. How much they are being heard

and able to make a difference will be decided over time. We will all see and remember Hrant Dink in the meantime who is understood only after his death.

Appendix

Tovmasyan Interview Transcription in Turkish (Interviewed 11.16.11)

The relevant part of the interview transcribed here and I translated the parts that are quoted in the dissertation in the dissertation.

Müge Salmaner: Neden yemek anı kitabı?

Takuhi Tovmasyan: (laughs) Gerçekten bir tesadüf, böyle birşey yapmak için yola çıkılmamıştır. Kitap olması için de yazılmamıştır. Sofranız Şen Olsun adını aldı tabii, o 1992 yılında başladığım, çocuklarıma bırakmak niyetiyle yazmaya başladığım anı defterimdi. Yani günlük gibi değil, çünkü böyle günlük disiplinine sahip bir insan değilim ve ilk olarak da yazmaya başladım çünkü şöyle birşey oldu; oradaki yazış şeklimi hiçbir şekilde editörlerim değiştirmediler, konuşur gibi, çünkü o sofraya muhabbetlerimizdi, yine öyle bir sofraya muhabbetimizde anneme birşeyler soruldu, annem biraz karıştırdı, ben de düzelttim, yok öyle değildi de böyleydi diye. İçimizden, yine buradan (aras yayıncılık) da biri o, her zaman birlikte yaşadığımız arkadaşımız, can kardeşimiz diyeyim, bana dedi ki “bak” dedi, “annen başladı karıştırmaya, sen doğrultturuyorsun” dedi, “senin kızın yok” dedi, ondan sonra “sen bunları otur yaz” dedi, “gitgide unutulacak” dedi. İşte o zamanlar da annem de 70’li yaşlarda. “Unutulacak bunlar” dedi, “bak şimdi siz birbirinizi doğruluyorsunuz, hani böyle bir yardımlaşmayla da sen bunları otur yaz” dedi. Bu böyle başladı, ve ben söz dinledim, genelde de söz dinleyen bir çocuktum (laughs), hoşuma da gitti, dediği doğrudu ve başladım yazmaya. Böyle, yani maksadım şuydu, hem yemekler unutulmasın, çünkü günümüzde çok farklılaşmaya başlamıştı, yani o tarihte içime bir korku girmişti, şimdi daha da yaygınlaştı o farklı beslenme şekilleri, yani hazır yemekler, artık mutfakta çok az vakit harcayarak, kısıtlı insanların (zamanı) çünkü. Yani bir dalak

dolması nedir bilsinler, yani hayal edebilirler çocukluklarında biz böyle birşey yemiştik, ama neydi onun adı falan gibi ileride konuşmasınlar diye tam bir tarifi olsun ama istedim ki yani ailemin de hikayesi içinde olsun. Bizim evde hep böyle olur, yani sofrada muhabbetlerinde aile hikayeleri, o gün bir laf açılır veya birinin düğününden gelmişizdir, oturmuşuzdur bir yemek yiyoruzdur, mütevazî bir masa yani, gündelik 4 kişilik çekirdek ailenin yemek yediği sofrada ama o evlenen kişinin anası babası, ne iş yapardı, işte büyükannesi nereden gelmişti falan böyle, yani bugün adını sözlü tarih diye akademisyenlerin çalıştıkları bir tür olarak yaptıklarını biz böyle doğaçlama evde yapardık bu muhabbetlerde. Onun için ben bir yemeğin tarifini anlatırken, ya onu çok seven birini anlatıyorum, ya onu en iyi yapanı anlatıyorum, veya o ne zaman yapılırdı o yemek, hani bir de onun bir dini-kültürel bayram falan fıstık birşeyleri vardır, bağlantıları vardır, veya günlük bir yiyeceği nasıl iştahla yediğimizi, yaptığımızı anlatıyorum o şekilde. Yani anılarımla yemekleri birbirinden ayırdedemedim çünkü böyle yaşamışım, böyle gelmiş. Yani sofrada hep muhabbet edilir, sofraya muhabbet etmek için oturulur yani alelacele öyle karın doyurmak için değil. Bu hep akşam sofraları ama, yani akşam yemeğimiz hep böyle. Sabah bir dağınıklık yaşanıyor, öğlen kimse yok evde, ama akşam mutlaka bir araya gelinecek, herkes ne yaptığını anlatacak, ona bağlı laf lafı açacak, birşeyler konuşulacak. Kimi zaman çok derin mevzulara inilir, kimi zaman da daha güncel, yüzeysel mevzuular konuşulur, kapatılır, genelde de ertesi gün de ne yenileceği sorulur (laughs). Veya o gün onu (o yemeği) yaparken neler yaşandığı konuşulur, kimden aldığımızı, bütün bunların isimleriyle; hani çünkü yaşam şekli öyleydi. Yani işte bakkal Zoto'dan fasulyeyi alıyorsunuz, ondan sonra mezeci Musiyani'den peynirinizi, zeytininizi alıyorsunuz; şimdi markette böyle bir kültür kalmadı, yok

MS: Migroslar var şimdi.

TT: Hah migroslar var şimdi. Yani o zaman da migros vardı

Cafer Sarıkaya: Bu kadar mahalle içlerinde yoktu herhalde

TT: Değil değil, kamyonu migros. Bizim sokağımıza kamyon gelirdi. Çok enteresandı ve yaşlı bir kadın vardı. O Migros'u firma adı olarak değil de oradaki adamın adı olarak... "Migros oğlum, bir paket kahve ver" derdi (laughs) Buna yani anektod olarak da gülerdik yani. Yaşlı kadın ya, onun, yani camına çok yakın park eder otobüs, o da camdan seslenir "migros, oğlum" (laughs) Öyle bir de anımız var, sokağın başına migros gelir. Kamyonlar zinciriydi yani migros önce, yani 1950'li yıllarda. Yedikule'ye migros kamyonu gelirdi. Kepenklerini açar böyle, bir kepenklerinin ortasını düşünün, nasıl şimdi böyle valizlerimizi koymak için büyük otobüslerde bir yer var kapakları açılıyor, o böyle tümü kapalı bir kamyon düşünün kutu gibi, kepengin yarısı yukarı doğru açılır, yarısı aşağı doğru açılır, aşağı doğru açılınca da orası tezgah gibi düzülür, içinde de bir görevli, bazen bir şöför bir görevli olur, bazen de şöför sadece park eder kapatır gelir kepenkleri açar satışını yapar, belli bir saati vardır, sonra çeker gider başka bir mahalleye. Böyle bir migrosumuz vardı.

MS: Şimdiye kadar anlattıklarınız sormak istediğim pek çok soruya cevap veriyor. Ama şu anda bu aile sofraları hala devam ediyor mu?

TT: Çok gayret ediyoruz. Ama bu böyle bir alışkanlık meselesi. Mesela bizde, cenemiz durmuyor yani, anlatabiliyor muyum? Yani hani bir yemek yerken mutlaka yine etrafımızdakilerle konuşuyoruz. Bu ille de aile fertleri olmayabiliyor. Dedikodu da olabiliyor. Yani işte burada yayınevinde yemek yiyoruz. Şu

içerideki masada oturuyoruz öğlenleri. Yine birşeyler konuşuyoruz yani. Sadece böyle, hani masamıza, bilgisayarımızın yanına bir sandöviç alıp geçistirmiyoruz. Yediğimiz yine sandöviç türü şeyler. Yani salata, yani domates, peynir, ekmek böyle birşeyler. Tencere yemeği pişmiyor burada. Ama böyle bir kahvaltı sofrası düzüyoruz, çayla ama bu masada yine, toplanıyoruz, oturup yiyoruz. İş konuşuyoruz, bazen işte ne bileyim, gençlere takılıyoruz bu haftasonu hangi kızla gezdin, n'aptın falan (laughs), muhabbet ediyoruz, yemek muhabbeti ediyoruz, şarkı konusu olabiliyor, müzik konu olabiliyor, konser konu olabiliyor. Yani bir soluk alma yeri bizim için sofrası.

MS: Yani masada işi olan varsa da kalkıp...

TT: Hepimiz, hepimizin masada işi var ama ben olduğum sürece masayı düzmek benim vazifem, onu ben kendime vazife edindim, kimse vermedi yani..

MS: Toplamak?

TT: Çocuklar hep beraber toplayıp gidiyoruz. Ben onlara haydi diyorum, çayları doldurdum, masa hazır gelin, işte hepsi bırakıyorlar bilgisayarlarını gelip hep beraber yiyoruz, dağılıyoruz gene masalarımıza dönüyoruz.

MS: Anladım. Bir de şeyden bahsettiniz, bu tarifleri yazdım ki unutulmasın, bir unutma kaygısı...

TT: Var tabii..

MS: Hem hatıralarda, hem yemeklerde

TT: Tabii, tabii! Yani hep diyoruz ya, biz çok çabuk unutan bir toplumuz, evet ben kendimi, çevremdeki insanlardan, hatta akrabalarımın, yani aynı ailenin kuzenlerinden daha şanslı hissediyorum. Nedeni, babamın benimle çok

konusması, anlatabiliyor muyum? Her ailede bu kadar çok konuşan büyükler yok. Hatta bazıları sordukları soruların cevaplarını bile alamıyorlar. Bizde öyle değildi. Çok konuşkan olan adımın sahibi babaannem Takuhi Tovmasyan, ben onun adını ve soyadını taşıyorum. O babamla, yani büyük oğluyla çok sıkı muhabbetli bir ana oğul olmuşlar ki başka evlatları da var. Ben de babamla aynı geleneği sürdürüşüm, yani farkına varmadan, bu yani çünkü 37 sene önce kaybettim babamı, Takuhi babaannemi de 5 yaşındayken kaybettim. Bazı fotoğraflar var gözümün önünde, ondan ötesi hep babamın bana anlattıkları.

MS: Yoksa Takuhi hanımla ilgili yazdıklarınız bu kitapta olmayacaktı babanızla bu kadar çok konuşmasaydınız

TT: Babam aktarmasaydı bana, evet, babam, yani babama borçluyum. Hani zaten şöyle birşey, işte bu kitabı yazdım, yazar oldum gibi böyle bir algı var insanlarda ama bu ben onu hiç üstlenmiyorum. Çünkü benim için o kitapta sesler var. Babamın sesi, annemin sesi, dayımın sesi, büyük dayımın sesi, yani annemin dayısının, Yarya dayımın sesi, Arsovis yengenin sesi, Lusi yengenin, Toros dedenin sesi, anlatabiliyor muyum? Onların söyledikleri ben duyuyorum okurken, ama siz elinize alıp okuduğunuzda bunların hepsini tanıyorsanız da işte bunu Takuhi yazmış diye okuyorsunuz. Ama ben sizin gibi okumuyorum, onların sesini duyuyorum. Böyle birşey bu.

(after checking if the recorder is working)

MS: Kontrol ettik, çalışıyor. Teknolojiye de güven olmaz, pat diye gider

TT: Çok haklısınız. Benim de öyle güvensizliklerim var.
Çocuklar işte mesela depoyu yapıyorlar, depo bilgileri, ben gene de eski defterime devam ediyorum el yazısıyla. Bir gün ne olur ne olmaz.

MS: Sizde geleneksel bir yapı var gibi görünüyor. Yani şöyle düşündüm, modern hayat pek çok yaşadığımız şeyleri kesintiye uğrattı. Bu bir yemek sofrası olabilir, hazır gıdalar, ya da bilgisayara güvenmeyip elde yazmak gibi (laughs) Bu konuda ne diyebilirsiniz? Yani geleneğe bağlılık, bu kitapta da hissediliyor. Mesela konserve domates almayı yine domatesi pazardan alıp onunla mi yemek yapmayı tercih edersiniz mesela?

TT: Yani şöyle söyleyeyim, geleneklere bağlılık, hani bu bağlılık duygusu, belki genetik bir duygu, bağlılıklarına çok sadık bir insanım, anlatabiliyor muyum? Geleneklerime çok bağlıyım, bunun en altındaki kendimi analiz ettiğimde şimdi şu yaşımda nereden kaynaklanıyor diye sevgi çıkıyor ortaya. Yani babaannemi çok sevdiğim için onun yaptığı şekilde “topiği” yapıyorum. Başka şeyler de duyuyorum, işte şunu da koyuyoruz, güzel oluyor, bunu da koyuyoruz güzel oluyor, evet güzel oluyor onları da kabul ediyorum, ama bazı böyle birşeyleri de saklamak istiyorum o şekilde, onun yaptığı şekilde, onun söylediği şekilde, babamın bana anlattığı şekilde. Yani evet gitgide güncelleşiyoruz, çağdaşlaşıyoruz, günün yeniliklerine uyuyoruz, ayak uyduruyoruz, uydurmuyoruz değil, hiç kullanmıyoruz da değil, kullanıyoruz ama bu benim geleneklere bağlılığımın kökünde büyük bir sevgi var. yani sevgisiz bağlılık olmuyor diye düşünüyorum.

MS: Bir de bir tarif yazıldığı andan itibaren onun değişmesi de engellenmiş oluyor. Bundan sonra gelecek kuşaklara geçerken o yazılı metin halinde

gececek. Çünkü sözlü geçtiği zaman bir şekilde değişime uğruyor. Siz bir kere yazdıktan sonra o artık babaannenizin topiği.

TT: Evet, evet!

MS: Bunu ilk yazmaya başladığımız zaman, çocuklarıma kalsın diye yazdım dediniz peki basma fikri ortaya çıktığı zaman üzerinde değişiklikler yaptınız mutlaka.

Tovmasyan giggles

TT: Hayır yapmadık. Bir kere şöyle söyleyeyim, ben 1992’de yazmaya başladım, Aras yayıncılık, yani yine aynı o masanın etrafında oturan insanlar hani bana yaz dedilerse yine aynı takımla diyeyim Aras yayıncılık kuruldu. 1993’te, yani bir yıl sonra, ve biz hummalı bir şekilde böyle bir yerde de değil, böyle bir kadroyla da değil, Mıgırdiç Margosyan’ın çatır çatır daktilosu vardı, böyle evden idare ederek, yani işleri, dışarıda dizdirerek, başka yerlerde falan, ama editörlüğünü yine bizim editörümüzün evinde geceleri, çünkü yani gündüz başka bir işte geçimini sağlamak zorunda, hepimiz öyle, geceleri evde çalışarak yani Aras yayıncılık kuruldu. 1-2-3-4 sene sonra, şöyle bir masanın üstünde sergileyecek kadar kitaplarımız oluştuğunda biz de niye kitap fuarına katılmıyoruz dedik. O zaman burada Tepebaşı’ndaydı, şimdi TRT’nin bulunduğu binanın alt katındaydı, müracaat ettik, 1-2 sene alnamadık, yer yoktu çünkü, çok küçük bir yerdi. Sonra bir yıl, biraz da tanınmaya da başladık, tabii Gavur Mahallesi’yle Mıgırdiç Margosyan çok sevildi, çok tanındı, yani işte TÜYAP’ın idarecileri herkes bir şekilde tanışıklığa ahabplığa dönüştü, neticede bize böyle bir kirişin de bulunduğu, tam 1 m2 değil de böyle girintili çıkıntılı kimsenin tutmadığı bir duvar kenarı altında bize bir stand verildi ve biz başladık kitap fuarlarına gitmeye. O tarihlerde

Türkiye’de de başladı böyle, yemek kitaplarına ilgi, biraz biraz da Ermenilere ilgi, tabii okuyan kesim tarafından, bunu genelleyemeyiz bütün Türkiye için. Bize sormaya başladılar, Ermeni yemekleri tarifleriyle ilgili bir kitabınız yok mu diye. Başladılar bizimkiler bana bakmaya (laughs), çıkar onları ortaya diye, ‘Tısk’ dedim yani benimkisi yemek kitabı değil, öyle bir tarif kitabı falan değil yani, gözümün onune tabii yani böyle Sofra dergisinin kuşe pırıl pırıl resimleri geliyor ve onların nasıl yapıldığını biliyorum, çok duymuştum ve de çok rahatsız olmuştum. Çünkü yemeklerin üstüne vernik falan sürüyorlarmış ki pırıl pırıl çıksın diye. Böyle birşeyler duymuştum. Olan o görüntülerin hepsinin ziyan olduğunu ben düşünüyorum ve üzülüyorum. Ben böyle bir pirinç tanesini bile yıkarken lavabonun deliğinden mazgala gitmesine üzülürüm yani. Cimri değilim, ama ziyankar değilim. Ziyan edilmesini, hiçbir şeyin ziyan edilmesini, en ufak bir paket kağıdının bile ziyan edilmesini istemem. Evimde katlanmış bir sürü paket kağıdı, işte sicimler, paket fiyonkları falan (laughs) bulunur. Ben de bir gün paket yaptığımda onları kullanırım veya başka böyle birşeyle.. Hani bu ziyan edilme duygusuyla hani yok benim yazdıklarım öyle şeyler değil dedim. Sonra işte bir iki sene daha geçti, yine böyle sorular çıktı, bu sefer o el yazılarımı sen bir bilgisayara geçir de bakalım falan dendi. Böylece tam dört sene geçti üstünden. Yani yapalım edelim derken. Bilgisayar çıktılar, bizim akıl hocalarımız var, danışma kurulumuz gibi, hani böyle bir sıfatı yok ama dostlarımız var, onlara okutuldu, onların büyük bir kısmı çok heyecanlandılar. Böyle birşey hiç yok ama olağanüstü güzel birşey, yani hiçbiri değiştirilsin demedi. Zaten değiştirilsin dendiğinde de ben karşı çıktım. İlk değiştirilsin dedi içimizden biri, doğru düzgün yaz dedi, yani yemek tarifi şeklinde..

MS: Öyle olsaydı sanırım ben şu an sizinle röportaj yapıyor
olamazdım

TT: Olamazdı, çoktan unutulmuş olurdu. Bütün bunları
düşünerek değil, ben gene bağlılığımdan, babama sevgimden, büyük annelerime
bağlılığımdan. Ben bunları evlatlarım için yazdım yani. Ben niye yemek tarifi yapayım
ki? Bir sürü öyle şahane kitaplar var, yani olağanüstü güzel kitaplar var.

MS: Kitaptaki fark sizin samimiyetiniz

TT: Evet, benim kitapta arzum yemek kitabı yazmak
değil veya kitap yazmak değil, anlatabiliyor muyum? İşte o benim özel çizittirttiklerim
diyelim ki birileri tarafından çok beğenildi, aman bu kitap olsun, iyi peki olsun... Yani
biraz zorlandım. Çünkü çok özeldi, hiç birşeyi silmek istemedim. Sadece irmik helvasını
ve biyografimi, yani kitap olacak diye hazırlandıktan sonra yazdım. Yani o yoktu onlar,
bu laflar çıkana kadar onlar (irmik helvası ve biyografi) yoktu.

MS: Onu soracaktım ben de size, irmik helvası.. Şimdi
tariflerin sırası ilk yazdığımız gibi mi?

TT: Hı hıh, herhangi birşey yok, bir sıralama yok,
içimden geldiği gibi yazdım.

MS: Peki irmik helvası?

TT: Evet işte onu en son yazdım. Bir de biyografiyi en
son yazdım.

MS: Ben şöyle yorumladım. İrmik helvası ölülerin
arkasından yapıldığı için kitabın bu tarifle bitmesi bana çok anlamlı geldi.

TT: Çünkü şöyle birşey yani o kitabı açtığınızda bir kere benim yakın tarih yaşantım yok, sınırladım kendimi, 17 yaşıma kadar, 18 yaşıma kadar tanıdıklarım var o kitapta, yeni tanıdıklarım, yani yeni değildir tabii onlar da daha bir 40 sene var ötede, ama zaten o tanıdıklarımı çocuklarım da tanıyor, anlatabiliyor muyum? Ama benim çocukluğumda tanıdıklarım, benim eniştelere, benim yengelerim, benim annemin kuzenleri, onlar artık yoklar. Veya çocuklarım 20 yaşına, 30 yaşına, 40 yaşına geldiklerinde onların hiçbiri olmayacak. Ve bugün de o kitabı açıp baktığınızda bir çeşit yani, bizde şöyle birşey söylenir, can yemeği, ölümlerin ardından verilen okunan bir mevlüt duası, mevlüt şekeri gibi birşey o kitap benim için. Yani içindekilerin %90'i ölü. Ölümlerin canına da bir helva kavrulur, anlatabiliyor muyum? Öyle birşey. Belki de çok duygusal birşey, adlandıramadığım, anlatamadığım, tarif edemediğim, sadece hissettiğim birşey bu.

Müge Salmaner: Belki ilk geldiğimde size anlatmıştım ben irmik helvasını sizin tarifinize göre yapmaya çalıştığımda siz orada diyordunuz ki ölümlerinizin isimlerini sayon, bittiğinde o da (irmik de) kavrulmuş olacak. Bu çok subjektif birşey, kavrulma işlemei 7-8 dakikayı alıyor

TT: Tabii tabii daha fazla

MS: Şöyle düşündüm, bu insanın hayatında o kadar çok insan ölmüş ki bunların isimlerini saymak, onları hatırlamak bu kadar vakit alıyor. Yani bildiğimiz kalıplaşmış bir yemek kitabında bu nuans silinir gider, orada belli bir dakika söylenir

TT: Evet, evet, hep pişirme süreleri vardır. Kaç kişilik yapıldığı söylenir.

MS: Midye dolması için soylemissiniz, 50 taneden az yaparsanız emeğinize yazık olur.

TT: (laughs) evet

MS: ama işte bu kitapta dilin farklılığı, samimiyeti insanların ilgisini çekiyor. Bır de değınmek istediđim başka birsey var irmik helvasında. İrmik helvası tarifinde bir pişmanlık hikayesi var.

TT: Evet çok büyük bir pişmanlık. Bütün ömrüne yayılmış, bir vicdan muhasebesi, pişmanlık, bu yükü taşımak çok zor birşey.

MS: O çok etkiledi beni, bunu ben daha çok toplumsal düzeyde düşündüğümde bunu Türk toplumunun vicdani ve olması gereken pişmanlığı olarak düşündüm. Siz orada Takuhi yayadan bahsediyorsunuz ama çok daha büyük bir pişmanlık var aslında orada.

TT: Evet

MS: Çok anlamlı geldi bu bana. Söylenecek daha çok sey var ama pek çođunu zaten kitapta da söylemişsiniz.

TT: Evet.. (silence)

MS: Peki siz hic Çorlu'ya gittiniz mi?

TT: Tabii tabii, şöyle söyleyeyim. Yine bundan 40 sene öncesini söylüyorum, 30 sene öncesini söylüyorum, hani ipimizi koparınca Çorlu'ya, Çatalca'ya, Silivri'ye giderdik. Bizim yani şöyle diyeyim, mesire yeri diye gittiğimiz, gitmek istediğimiz yerler yoktu. Yani hep arzumuz mevsim baharda, yani öyle çok konuşulurdu ki şöyle güzeldir böyle güzeldir, e tabii bunu evlatlara da göstermek için dayılarım, yengelerim, işte ne bileyim, o zamanki böyle farklı bir piknik kültürü vardı,

şimdiki gibi mangallar yakılıp ateş yakılıp duman dumana etler pişirilmezdi. Herşey evden hazırlanır, zeytinyağlı, yani kolay yenecek susuz yemekler, dolma, kuru köfte deriz mesela, evden kızartırız akşamdan, sucuk içi gibi baharatlı köfte, muska böreği yine kızartılmış, patlıcan tavası kızartılmış patlıcan, ondan sonra haşlanmış tavuk, didiklenmiş yemesi kolay olsun diye soğuk, yanına da domates salatalık, bir de karpuz oldu mu işte size şahane bir piknik sepetiydi. Öyle arabalarımız falan da yoktu, Topkapı'dan otobüs kalkardı, bir otogar gibi bir yer vardı orada, şimdiyle hiç kıyaslanamaz. Oradan randevulaşırđık işte bir pazar sabahı, giderdik Çatalca'ya, Ferhatpaşa Çesmesi'nin etrafında yayılırdık kırlara, ya Çorlu'ya, öyle mesire yerlerimiz vardı. Silivri'ye özellikle yoğurt yemeğe giderdik, böyle özel kendimize hediyelerimiz vardı. Ailece kendimize böyle bir pazar günü hediye ederdik, oralara giderdik ve yine birşeyler vardı görmek istediğimiz ama artık bu şehirleşme, yapılaşma, değışen yollar, bunların hepsi yavaş yavaş bizleri soğuttu. Artık gitsek o mesire yerleri, o kırlar bayırlar, çeşmeler yok veya herhangi birimizin içimizden büyüklerimizden birinin doğduğı ev yok. İşte dükkanı yok demirci dayımın, dükkanı yok şu yok bu yok derken artık gitmez olduk. Yani Çorlu çok çok değışti, Silivri artık bambaşka bir yer. Yani şöyle söyleyeyim, istediğiniz yerde oturup, çıkınınızı açıp, örtünüzü serip yemeğınızı yiyebileceğiniz dünya kadar yeşillik yer vardı, şimdi hiçbiri yok. Yani Büyük Çekmece'den sonra gözünüzün alabildiğine bağlar bahçeler, ay çiçek tarlaları, ne bileyim soğan tarlaları vardı, şimdi yok.

MS:

Ben de küçükken giderdik Silivri'ye yazın, o

ayçiçek tarlalarının içine girer kopartırdık.

TT: (laughs) evet biz de, kaybolurduk içinde. Zaten kısa boylu bir çocuktum, çok minyondum, kaybolurduk yani tarlalarda.

MS: Çorlu'da büyükannelerinizin yaşadığı evler hala var mıydı gittiğiniz zamanlarda?

TT: Evet, duruyordu. En son Çatalca'daki annemin büyüdüğü ev, çok şık bir evdi böyle iki katlı, çatısı sivrice, dağın hemen eteğinde, Çatalca çünkü öyle dağlık bir yerdir. Onun da yıkıldığını gördük. Bir de şöyle birşey oluyordu, her bir evden, o eski evlerden, o eski mahallede, birileri kafasını çıkarıp “aa Mari gelmiş” diye, bir de böyle güzel şeyler oluyordu. Son gittigimizde son bir arkadaşı kalmıştı annemin, yani üç sene önceydi bu söylediğim, annem sordu iste orada Makbule ne oldu falan, oradan bir çocuk “aaa teyze öldü Makbule” dedi, oyle ki yani artık annem çok fena oldu, zaten hep bir tek ben kaldım deyip deyip duruyor. 90 yaşına girdi bu sene.

MS: Daha da uzun olsun ömrü! Bir de yemeklerin nasıl değişime uğradığı hakkında sorular sormuşsunuz, mesela, topik eskiden perhiz yemeğiyken şimdi rakılara meze oldu. Bu konuda ne düşünüyorsunuz? Nasıl değişti yemekler?

TT: Bu değişimin engellenemez olduğunu gösteriyor. Ne kadar da siz geleneklerinizi korumak isterseniz de mutlaka birşeyler değişiyor. Yani siz az önce dediniz ya siz bunları yazdınız, bunlar tamam, kulaktan kulağa değil, yazılıdır, tarifleri tamamdır. Bir anlamda doğru, bir anlamda da değişmemesini mümkün kılan hiç birşey yok. Çünkü tarım şekli değişiyor, yani benim çocukluğumda nerdeee bizim vaktimizin patlıcanları derdi büyüklerimiz, e şimdi yani ben de diyorum. Bunu herhalde evlatlarım, torunlarım da söyleyecekler. Yani pompalı ocağında, bakır tencerede

pişen yemeğin lezzeti başka, yani ocağı istediğiniz kadar kısabilirsiniz, görebilirsiniz. Bugun böyle kahverengi pırıl pırıl bir cam ısıtıcının üstünde neyi ne kadar kısacağımı ben bilemiyorum, onun için mutfağımı değiştirmiyorum. 50 yıllık bir mutfağım var, apartmanımız 50 yaşında, ben fayanslarını kırmak istemiyorum, ocağımı değiştirmek istemiyorum, çünkü ben ocağımı istediğim kadar kısıyorum. Fabrikanın yaptığı açık orta kapalıya sadık kalmak istemiyorum. Anlatabiliyor muyum? Yani bir bahçe budarsınız, incecik dallar çalı çırpılar toplarsınız, onu tutuşturursunuz, bir yalaz çıkar, o yalazda pişirdiğiniz patlıcanın tadı başka olur, ocakta pişirdiğiniz, havagazı ocağında belki veya tupağazın üzerine koyup pişirdiğinizde o patlıcan farklı bir tad alır, işte o elektrikli fırınlara koyup pişirdiğinizde de hiç olmaz. (laughs) Anlatabiliyor muyum? Bir biber közlemek, bir patlıcan tahta yalazda, çalı çırpı yalazında olur. Benim için! Ben böylesini yedim çünkü. O yanık kabuğunun isisi sinmiş olur, hani iside yapılmış etler vardır fümeler şunlar bunlar, işte onların bir özelliği vardır... Yani değişim şart, engellenemiyor, bu değişim de yemekleri nerede yenirken nereye getiriyor. Veya hangi lezzetteyken bugün hangi lezzete dönüştürüyor bunlar önemli. Mesela bugün gençler yoğurt ekşisi diye birşeyi bilmiyorlar.

CS : Süzme yoğurt değil, değil mi?

TT : Hayır hayır değil. Yani şimdi aldığımız yoğurt günlük olurdu, sokaktan geçerdi yoğurtçu ve biz yoğurt corbasi yapmak istersek iki gün öncesinden alırdık. O yoğurt biraz ekşir, o ekşimiş yoğurtla çorbasını yapardık. Onun böyle kendine has, hani ekşi diyorsam öyle kötü birşey değil yani, kendine has bir ekşiliği olurdu. Bugün yapmak istediğimiz yoğurt çorbasına limon sıkıyoruz ki o ekşiliği yakalayalım. Yakalayamıyoruz! Çünkü onun içine o kadar çok katkı maddesi kondu ki

artık hiç bir pasta ekşiyip atılmıyor. Eskiden pasta alındığından hemen paylaşılıp bitirilirdi, çok gelmişse misafirlere paket paket verilirdi ki paylaşılırdı ki bu yarın çöpe gidecek yoksa ekşirdi kreması süsü büsü, şimdi ekşimiyor.

MS : Evet dolapta bir haftaya bekliyor.

TT : Evet ben özellikle bekletip tadıyorum, hiçbir şey olmuyor. Yoğurt öyle. Siz bilmiyorsunuz bozanın hangi lezzette olduğunu..

MS : Vefa bozası içiyoruz

TT : Ama sizin içtiğiniz Vefa bozası, bizim çocukluğumuzda içtiğimiz Vefa bozasıyla aynı değil. Vefa bozası da ekşimiyor. Herşeyin ekşimesini engellediler. Marketlere yetişsin, fabrikadan çıksın, eskiden öyle değildi.

Hemen oturduğumuz semtin dışında ahır vardı, inek vardı, süt vardı, yoğurt vardı, sokaktan geçer günlük satılırdı. Bozacı öyle sokaktan geçer bozayı satardı, şimdi öyle değil, en az bir hafta önce yapılıyor, işte şişeleniyor, bütün Anadolu'ya dağıtılıyor, marketlerde bekliyor, onun için uzun süre dayanması gerekiyor. İçine de gerekenleri (laughs) kimyagerlerimiz sağolsunlar koyuyorlar, bu da lezzeti değiştiriyor.

MS : Bir belgesel seyretmiştim, McDonalds'ın kızarmış patatesini bir sene kavanozda bekletiyorlar ve bir sene sonra kızarmış patates aynı görüntüde, hiçbir şey değişmemiş.

TT : Bozulmamış.. Ya ne yiyoruz biz düşünmek lazım, sormak lazım.

CS : Bir de eskiden bahsettiğiniz yemek masalarının uzun saatler boyunca işgal edilmesi hakkında birşey soracaktım. Bunlar en az iki saat kadar devam eden sofralar değil mi?

TT : Tabii ki baska bir işimiz yoktu, herkes çalışmış dönmüş gelmiş, televizyon yok, radyo var çok güzel, yani olağanüstü güzel radyo tiyatrosu dinlerdik. Darbaş ve arkadaşları, çigan müziği yani tam yemek saatinde, olağanüstü güzel şeyler vardı. Yani zevkin neyi seviyorsa, yani Türk sanat musikisi vardı, türküler programı vardı, canın ne istiyorsa çevir dinle, seni engellemiyordu radyo, televizyon gibi, gözünü dikmiyorsun.

MS : Uzun sofralar demişken nasıl bir ritüel vardı? İçki gibi?

TT : Babamın içki içme ritüeli yoktu, ama dayımın vardı mesela, o her gece mutlaka sulu bir kadeh rakıyı içerdi. Ağır işçiydi yani, sıcak demirciydi. Ocağın karşısında bütün gün demir döver, ona şekil verir, çeşitli aletler, sabanlar, yani köylünün toprak işçisinin alet ve edavatını yapar ve tamir ederdi, çok yorgun eve gelirdi. Bir kadeh rakı mutlaka içer, öyle çok aşırı birşeyler de aramazdı yani, bir lokma peynir, ne varsa salatalıklı domatesle idare ederdi. O arada yengem masayı düzerdi, ondan sonra hepimiz birden yemeğimizi yerdik. Yani dayımın öyle bir kendi masasının ucunda küçücük bir çilingir sofrası, tabağı bardağı olur, onun da devamını getirirdi hemen yengem, eli çok çabuktu. Onun dışında babam, soylardı “Balığa yazık olmasın, bir şişe de şarap açalım” Anlatabiliyor muyum? Hani yemeği içki kaldıran yemekle, tencere yemeği arasında bir fark var.

MS : Kuru fasulyeyle şarap olmaz mesela.

TT : Eh evet işte, kuru fasulyeye turşu yakışır. Böreğe ayran yakışır ama balığa bir şişe şarap yakışır. Onu da biz çocukken bize de içirirdi yani bizimle de paylastırırdı. Yani soyle biraz sarap ustune su, biz onu icerdik. Yani ben bir

şişe şarabın babam tarafından tek başına içilip bitirildiğini hiç hatırlamıyorum. Kendi de annemle içerler bize de şu kadar (hand gesture) üzerine de su, vişne şurubu gibi birşey olur. Ondan sonra o ki işte böyle bir beraberlik olsun. Sonra şişe kapatılır. Mutlaka haftada bir iki kere balık yerdik. Balığı çok seven bir aileydik. Herşey çocuklarla da paylaşıldı. Çocuklardan birşey de gizlenmezdi bizim ailede. Ermenice’de şöyle bir söz vardır “Duvarın üzerinde sinek var”. Ermenicesi söylenir, yani evde, odada çocuk var, lafına dikkat et, sözüne dikkat et gibi. Bu deyim bizim evde hiç kullanılmazdı. Ya büyüklerimizin kendi kendine otosansürleri vardı, biliyorlardı ne konuştuklarını, ne konuşacaklarını, ama bunun dışında hiçbirsey bizden gizli değildi. Özellikle bazı ailelerde hala da öyledir, para konusu, ben babamın cebinde kaç kuruş parası var bilirdim çocukken, veya bir gömlek kutusu vardı gardrobunun en üst rafında duran, o gömlek kutusunun için de kaç para olduğunu hepimiz bilirdik. Yani idare babamın elindeydi, ama hep bilirdik. Babam mihlayıcı kuyumcuydu, sanatkardı yani. Şimdiki kuyumcuları gözünüzün önüne getirmeyin, çok farklı çalışma sistemi vardı. Bir dükkan sahipleri vardı kapalı çarşıda, bir de onlara çalışan hanlarda üst katlarda işçiler vardı. Yani bugünkü asgari ücret kadar birşey kazanırlardı onlar. Ancak kiralarını verirler, bir tane kalfası varsa onun harçlığını verir, aylığını işte haftalık o zaman verilir. Öyle sigorta bağ-kur falan yok, ödenmiyor öyle birşeyler. Bir vergileri vardı, o verilirdi. Ekstra biz kazanç senede bir kere, yerin tozu toplanırdı.

MS : Altın tozu gibi mi?

TT : Evet, her hafta temizlik yapıldığında, toz bir kovaya doldurulurdu. Senede bir kere o kovada toplanan toz, adı ramattır onun, eve getirilir kaynatılırdı. Birkaç kez kaynatılır süzülür, kaynatılır, en dibinde şu kadar (hand

gesture) bir kitle kalır. O kitlenin içinde başka madenler de var. O kitle götürülür potada eritilir, diğer madenler ayrıştırılır altını çıkar. O altınla bizim kışlık odun kömürümüz alınır. Yani babamın kömür alacak maaşı yoktu o altın olmasa. O ramat evde kaynar, değişik bir koku çıkar süzülür işte, o işlemleri babam kendi yapardı ve senelik odun ve kömürümüz alınır, sonra büyük bir rahatlık yaşanır bu kışı da atlattık diye. Hastalık da ekonomi de herşey konuşulurdu bizim evde. Ama her ev de aynı değil tabii, mesela her Ermeni evi de bizim ev gibi değil yani...

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