Familiar Faces and Nostalgic Places: Family Photographs as Instruments of Memory and Identity in the Montreal Armenian Community

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ABSTRACT

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Vana S. Nazarian

Canada is home to many ethnic communities, some displaced from their homelands by political conflicts, genocide, and war. Within these diasporic communities, there is a need to collect and preserve whatever evidence remains as a way of holding onto the past, its memories and traditions, and to express the greater loss. My thesis investigates a small corpus of family photographs, taken prior to and after the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923), which have been passed on through generations. My interest lies in determining the meaning of these images in relation to a history of trauma in the family.

Considering the history of displacement and the subsequent creation of multiple homes, this thesis explores family photographs that have travelled with families to different places that these Armenian families have temporarily called "home." In that sense, I regard the physical function of the photographs as instruments to transmit memory, as well as their contributions to the assertion of cultural identity. Through their portrayed subjects, these images serve as visual support for three distinct functions: remembering people from the past; recalling places once called ‘home’; and transmitting cultural heritage and traditions.

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To my family, a BIG thank you for your continuous support, your unlimited love, your sleepless nights and difficult sacrifices in life to give me a better future. Thank you for teaching me that hard work pays off. To my new family, thank you for your warmth and constant support. Lastly, to Varante, thank you for being my pillar and for always believing in me.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the ones who survived, took risks, believed, and remembered. To you, my family, whom I have met through photographs, your lives of bravery and hard work have not been forgotten

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1. Introduction

I was born in 1988, an Armenian in Athens, Greece, to parents who had fled the Lebanese civil war that tore up the country from 1975 to 1990. By the end of 1989, all four of my grandparents—who were originally from different parts of the Ottoman Empire (present-day Turkey) and therefore survivors of the Armenian genocide (1915-1923)—had already passed away. While three of them had died of natural causes, my paternal grandfather had been murdered at the age of 36, as a result of his involvement in a political party at a time of inter–community tension in Lebanon. Thus, my understanding of ancestors and my knowledge of their existence was shaped through the series of recollections and stories of my own parents and relatives.

Our permanent move to Montreal, in the summer of 1997, reunited my mother with her brothers and allowed me my first experience of Armenian familial life. It was at that time that I first came across a collection of old family photographs that had been divided between the eldest members of the family to be passed on through several generations. There were early twentieth-century studio portraits, some produced as photographic postcards, and some snapshots—less than 30 in all. The discovery of these ancestral family portraits seemed to ease some of the perplexity, if not entirely fill in the gaps, of my newly acquired identity as an immigrant to Canada.

Upon my arrival in Canada, aside from dealing with cultural differences and language barriers, I was highly preoccupied by questions about my family history which also influenced my early integration into Quebec society. The discovery of these photographs increased my need to understand the seemingly eventful familial past, one that had a history of traumatic loss, continued displacement, and the necessity to preserve

fleeting memories. The photographs did more than put faces to the names I had known through storytelling and brief recollections. They triggered a need to define cultural roots within my newly embraced Canadianness. Later, my personal quest was reinforced when I came to the realization that most Canadian-Armenian families owned similar collections of photographs from the same period.

2. Situating Armenianness

The earliest known employment of the term 'Armenian' can be traced back to a rock-cut fifth-century BCE inscription.[1] The key factor of Armenianness is its language as "Armenian represents its own Indo-European language branch."[2] Historian James Russell asserts that, despite variations in scholarly theories, one fact is certain that: "there were Armenians in Armenia by the late second millennium BCE, speaking their own language."[3] Located between Georgia in the North, Azerbaijan in the East, Iran in the Southeast, Kurds in the South, Syria and Mesopotamia in the Southwest, and Anatolian peoples assimilated amongst Turks in the West—Armenia occupies "the central-most and highest of three landlocked plateaus, together forming the northern Middle East."[4] Its

[1] James Russell writes in his introduction, "The first historical reference to Armenians appears in the rock-cut inscription of 518 BCE of the Achaemenian Persian king Darius I at Behistun, on the main road from Babylon to the Median capital Ecbatana." See James Russell. "The Formation of the Armenian Nation" in *The Armenian People From Ancient to Modern Times, Volume 1: The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century.* ed. Richard G. Hovhannisian (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 19.
[2] See Michael Meier-Brügger, Matthias Fritz, Manfred Mayrhofer. "Introduction" *Indo-European Linguistics.* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2003), 29-30.
[3] See Russell. "The Formation of the Armenian Nation," 26.
[4] See Robert H. Hewsen. "The Geography of Armenia" in *The Armenian People From Ancient to Modern Times: The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century, Volume 1: The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century.* ed. Richard G. Hovhannisian (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 1-5.

strategic emplacement between the East and the West "has been a crossroads for traders and invading armies since ancient times."[5]

2.1. Political Parties and the Construction of Identity

For Armenians of the twentieth century, the formation of a distinct ethnic identity was a process that did not occur overnight. In fact, the desire to strengthen national identity predated the genocide, initiated at a time where different politically inclined, armed revolutionary groups formed in an attempt to oppose repressive authorities on both Turkish or Russian sides of the border. The main political and revolutionary organizations were, in chronological order: the Armenakan party in 1885 in Van: the Social Democrat Hnchakian party in 1887 in Geneva; the Hay Heghapokhagan Dashnaktsutiun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) in 1890 in Tiflis; and Ramkavar party in 1908 in Cairo.[6] The leaders of these parties were predominantly from the Middle East, people who had studied in the West and had gained a large amount of support amongst the rural Armenian communities where corruption and oppressive tactics were inflicted on local minorities of the Ottoman Empire. The same was true on the Russian side of the border.[7] In 1907, prior to their access to power, the revolutionary Young Turks movement was supported by Armenian radicals, such as the Armenian Revolution Federation, who were desperately supporting the departure of Sultan Abdul Hamid and his "increasingly repressive Pan-Islamic policies."[8]

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[5] See Hewsen, "The Geography of Armenia," 2.
[6] See Simon Payaslian. "Armenia and the Evolution of Human Rights" in *The Political Economy of Human Rights in Armenia: Authoritarianism and Democracy in a Former Soviet Republic.* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2011), 78.
[7] See Razmig Panossian, "The Political and Revolutionary Organizations" in *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2006), 200-201.
[8] See Alan Kramer. "German Singularity?" *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War.* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 147.

In 1908, the Young Turk party forced the Red Sultan[9] to agree to a constitutional monarchy. In 1913, the ultra-nationalist party had risen to power following a coup d'état that had deposed the sultan.[10] Inheriting a decadent empire, the new power was caught between West and East: a turbulent Europe on the verge of entering the Great War; and a growing Russian threat. According to Alan Kramer, the Young Turk movement, starting off with different ideals, instead "subscribed to ethnic Turkish nationalism [...] calling for the union of all Turks and Turkic peoples, from Anatolia to Central Asia" also referred to as Pan-Turanism or Pan-Turkism.[11] During the First World War, Russians had sided with Serbia and the Western European allies, while the Turkish side was allied with Austria and Germany. In the midst of a Western state of chaos, the Young Turks, emboldened by their wartime allies, the Germans[12], saw this moment in time as a good opportunity to complete the Sultan's earlier killing spree of the minority populations (1894-1896 massacres), in the aim of purifying their nation.[13] In her book, Isabelle Kaprielian-Churchill explains: "To popularize their political ideologies, the new Ittihadist

[9] "Red Sultan" was a surname given to Sultan Abdul Hamid II for his bloody tyrannies. Among other things, he was responsible for the great massacre of Armenians during the 1894-1896 period, which was at the time, massively reported in Europe. See Philippe Videlier. "French Society and the Armenian Genocide" in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies,* ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 326.

[10] According to Arthur Grenke, "the Young Turk cabinet declared a state of siege and suspended normal constitutional rights." The regime was controlled by "the triumvirate consisting of: Enver, minister of war; Tala'at, minister of the interior; and Jemal, the military governor of Constantinople." See Arthur Grenke. "Genocide in Turkish Armenia" *God, Greed and Genocide: The Holocaust Through the Centuries.* (Washington: New Academia Publishing, 2005), 52-3.

[11] See Kramer. "German Singularity?" 147.

[12] See Vahakn N. Dadrian. *German Responsibility in the Armenian Genocide: A Review of the Historical Evidence of German Complicity.* (Blue Crane Books, 1996).

[13] Pan-Turanism is a term designating "one of the pan-ideologies of the nineteenth century, [expressing] a strong nationalist interest in the welfare of all Turks and members of Turkic groups, recognizable by kindred languages and a common origin, history and tradition. [...] Essentially, the Turkish nationalist movement carried a religious undertone, at least until 1922. The first nationalist intellectuals tended to be secular-minded without being anti-religious. Their rallying slogans were 'Turkism' and 'Pan-Turkism' to which Islam and Pan-Islam were occasionally added." See Hülya Küçük. *The Role of the Bektashis in Turkey's National Struggle: A Historical and Critical Study.* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2002), 63-64. See also Jacob Lantau. *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation.* (London: Hurst & Co Ltd., 1995).

leaders and thinkers manipulated and exploited powerful and complex forces: Turkish nationalism, pan-Turanism, domestic racial and ethnic tensions and jealousies, religious differences, class struggles, and foreign intervention."[14] Thus, these chaotic circumstances certainly contributed to the easier execution of genocide without the burden of foreign interventions or sanctions.

From 1915 to 1923, the Young Turk regime in the Ottoman Empire carried out a premeditated, centrally planned, and systematic genocide against the Armenian people.[15] In the spring of 1915, under the mastermind of the Central Committee of the Young Turk Party, Armenian leaders, thinkers, and professionals in all corners of the Ottoman Empire were arrested, and either deported or killed in synchronized effort.[16] In the large cities of the empire, public hangings of Armenians were used to terrorize the minority population.[17] Then came the massive deportations of women, children, and old men to the Mesopotamian deserts, on the way to which large numbers of deportees were massacred by "specially engaged gangs of convicts and brigands, led by carefully selected regular army officers."[18] The deportations had taken place under the pretense of relocation,

[14] See Isabelle Kaprielian-Churchill. "Genocide and the Response of Canadians." *Like Our Mountains: A History of Armenians in Canada.* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 114.
[15] See Roger W. Smith, Eric Markusen, and Robert Jay Lifton, "Professional Ethics and Denial of the Armenian Genocide" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (9: 1, 1995), 1.
[16] On April 24th, 1915, an estimated 270 Armenian intellectuals were initially arrested in the capital of the empire, Constantinople. This is why Armenians around the world mark the 24th of April as the symbolic date to commemorate the beginning of the genocidal acts against the Armenian people. See Fatma Müge Göçek. "Remembering the Past: How to Commemorate 24 April 1915," *The Transformation of Turkey: Redefining State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era.* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd., 2011), 211.
[17] U.S. ambassador to Turkey, Henry Morgenthau writes in his memoirs: "Public hangings without trial—the only offense being that the victims were Armenians—were taking place constantly." See Henry Morgenthau. *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story: A Personal Account of the Armenian Genocide.* (New York: Cosimo Books, Inc., 1918, 2008), 214.
[18] See Israel W. Charny. "Documentation of Armenian Genocide" *Encyclopedia of Genocide, Vol. 1.* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO,1999), 94.

although not many survived—as for those who did, they were subject to renewed massacre in the summer of 1916, when an estimated 150,000 people were killed.[19]

Deniers of the Armenian genocide claim that the violent events took place during the war and that both sides endured losses. Nevertheless, in 1997, the conference of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, held in Montreal, declared that the mass killings of the Armenian populations conform to the definition of genocide[20] in accordance with Article II of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide.[21]

The end of WWI, however, ironically became a milestone for peoples held between the Turkish and Russian frontlines. In the aftermath of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and the dissolution of the Russian Empire, Russian troops withdrew from the South Caucasus region.[22] Meanwhile, despite several attempts to seize Armenian regions and control Azerbaijan, the Ottomans halted their army because of their defeat in WWI.[23] This led to the creation of three independent republics in the region between 1918 and 1920: Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia.[24] Their independence was short-lived, however, as all three republics had joined the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) by 1920.

2.2 Diaspora and Armenian Heritage

[19] Charny, 95.
[20] See "The Armenian Genocide Resolution Unanimously Passed by the Association of Genocide Scholars of North America" in *zoryaninstitute.org*. (June 13, 1997). http://www.zoryaninstitute.org/Genocide/genocide_docs_assoc_resolution.htm. (Site visited on July 29, 2012).
[21] See U.N. General Assembly "Article 2" *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.* (December 9, 1948). http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html. (Site visited on July 29, 2012).
[22] See Ohannes Geukjian. "The Origins of the Conflict in the Later Russian Empire," *Ethnicity Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabakh and the Legacy of Soviet Nationalities Policy.* (Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, Ltd., 2012), 52.
[23] Ibid.
[24] See. Christine Carpenter. "Armenia," *World and Its Peoples: Middle East, Western Asia, and Northern Africa.* ed. Ali Aldosari (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2006), 768.

From the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the number of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire was recorded at two million.[25] In 1914, the Armenian Patriarchate conducted a new census which established the Ottoman-Armenian population as 1,914,620 people, of which close to 130,000 had emigrated.[26] A recently discovered document, shows a very intricate report commissioned by Minister of Interior and one of three leaders[27] of the Committee of Union and Progress[28], Tala'at Pasha, in 1917, which brings the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire to a total of 284,157 people.[29] Undeniably, the Armenian genocide led to the scattering of Armenian populations across the globe, yet the dispersal of these peoples outside their historic lands, or the creation of a diaspora, is not strictly tied to this early twentieth-century genocide. Over the centuries, with the influence of emerging powers and geopolitical instabilities in the region, Armenian populations have known many displacements across the land and even beyond, with the creation of new diasporic communities across Europe and Asia, as early as the twelfth century CE.[30] These displacements have created

[25] The 1844 Ottoman census reveals that the Armenian population in the Empire amounts to 2 million. The same number appears in a report by the Turkish government for the Exposition Universelle in Paris, in 1867, which accounts an additional 400,000 population dwelling in the European part of the Empire. See Raymond H. Kévorkian and Paul B. Paboudjian. "Démographie et découpage administratifs" *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire ottoman à la veille du génocide* (Paris: Editions d'Art et d'Histoire ARHIS, 1992), 52.

[26] See Kévorkian and Paboudjian. "Démographie et découpage administratifs," 57-60.

[27] The three pashas—Tala'at, Enver, and Jemal—"undertook the disarmement and deportation of the Armenians, which eventually led to the destruction of the Armenian people." See Grenke, 53.

[28] The Committee of Union and Progress was "known as the Young Turks movement in the West and as the Unionists among the Ottoman masses" that "forced Sultan Abdul Hamid II to adopt a constitution" and eventually deposed him, in 1909. See Stephen Schwartz, "Haters of Song: The Early Wahhabi Movements" *The Two Faces of Islam: Saidu Fundamentalism and Its Role in Terrorism.* (New York: Anchor Books-Random House inc., 2003).

[29] See Ara Sarafian. *Talaat Pasha's Report on the Armenian Genocide, 1917.* (London: Taderon Press, 2011), 21.

[30] Susan Pattie asserts that: "From Byzantine times onwards, however, the forced transfer of Armenian populations and voluntary migration have continued to create new diaspora centers, including Iran, Istanbul (Constantinople), parts of Africa, India, Europe, and Russia." See Susan P. Pattie. "Longing and Belonging: Issues of Homeland in the Armenian Diaspora" *Polar: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 22: 2 (June 2008), 81.

networks of acquaintances and relatives across the West and the Middle East. Richard G. Hovhannisian notes that a large proportion of the population in Cilicia was Armenian and they "played a vital role in the crafts and trades of western Anatolia."[31] The Armenians' success in the trading business was embedded in their network and the fact that these merchants "retained family members in faraway commercial centers to facilitate trading."[32]

Their ties to the West also contributed to their involvement as key players in the development of photography in the Middle East. By the second half of the nineteenth century, a network of Armenian photographers had developed in Ottoman Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, and Egypt.[33] Part of their success can be explained by their talent for business and recognition of opportunity, such as gaining exclusive copyright on all photographic portraits of the Ottoman imperial court and family; the importing of photographic materials and maintaining a Middle Eastern agency for Kodak.[34] However, despite their relative success in Ottoman society, Armenians were nonetheless part of the empire's Christian minority and thus, their lives were strongly affected by their ethnic and religious identities.

2.3 Armenian immigrants in Canada

[31] See Richard G. Hovhannisian. "The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1914" *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times: Foreign Dominion to Statehood: The Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth Century, Vol. 2.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 204.
[32] See Susan P. Pattie. "Armenian Diaspora" in *Immigration and Asylum: From 1900 to the Present, Vol. 1.* ed. Matthew J. Gibney and Randall Hansen. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2005), 15.
[33] See D. J. Miller. "The Craftsman's Art: Armenians and the Growth of Photography in the Near East, 1856-1981" (M.A. Thesis, American University of Beirut, 1981).
[34] A 1984 article in the Middle East Magazine confirms that "by the turn of the century, one of the biggest importers of photographic equipment was an Armenian, Onnig Diradour in Constantinople, who obtained the important Kodak agency for the Ottoman Empire." See *The Middle East Magazine: Issues 111-122* (London: IC Publications, 1984), 15.

From 1890 to the outbreak of WWI, almost two thousand Armenians entered Canada.[35] Later, in 1922, motivated by a humanitarian impulse, a Canadian assembly by the name of Armenian Relief Association of Canada persuaded the Canadian government into admitting some one hundred Armenian orphans between the ages of eight and twelve.[36] Subsequently, some 140 orphans, coming from the Middle Eastern Near East Relief orphanages, immigrated to Canada, between 1923 and 1932.[37] On the other side of the Atlantic, during the post–genocide era, Lebanon and Syria became two vital homes for large populations of Armenian refugees who had survived or escaped the genocide.[38] The following decades, however, brought increasing political instability, war, and displacement to the Middle-East, experienced by three generations of Armenian families, resulting in renewed waves of immigration to Canada. Thus, apart from the early settlers, a great majority of Canadians of Armenian descent today are generally second- and third-generation descendants of genocide survivors, most having settled in other countries of Europe, the former Soviet Union, and the Middle East before uprooting once again to come to Canada.[39]

In a 2007 essay Diane Wolf argues that life for immigrant Jews, after the Holocaust, was equally significant in terms of attempts at survival, although different in many ways. Wolf asserts in this regard that "the postwar period defined how Jews lived

[35] See Isabel Kaprielian-Churchill. "Armenian Pioneers in Canada: The First Wave" *Like Our Mountains: A History of Armenians in Canada*, 56.
[36] See Jack Apramian "The Georgetown Boys" *Armenians in Ontario.* (Toronto: Polyphony 4: The Bulletin of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Fall/Winter 1982), 43.
[37] See Apramian "The Georgetown Boys," 44-45.
[38] See Marie-Blache Fourcade. "Une Diaspora: Des trajectoires de vie" *Habiter l'Arménie au Québec:Ethnographie d'un Patrimoine en Diaspora.* (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2011), 35.
[39] See Fourcade, *Habiter l'Arménie au Québec,* 34-35.

and delineates the complexities and the challenges they confronted."[40] In some respects, the constant displacements rooted in geopolitical turmoil and economic instabilities have generated the continued scattering of these populations over time. In other ways, the effort of starting anew and reintegrating into a new and often, foreign society also disturbs the peaceful course of life. This is precisely why the large part of this research has been based on diasporic discourse, considering works by authors such as Andreas Huyssen, Tzvetan Todorov, Susan Pattie, toward an understanding of diasporic identity.

In the process of unraveling Armenian identity, a number of scholars agree that the yet-to-be recognized and resolved issue of the Armenian Genocide by the current Turkish government has paralysed Armenians across the world. Their inability to mourn the loss of their pasts makes it nearly impossible to move on. Moreover, the political dimension of this Turkish genocide denial listed as the final stage of genocide development by Gregory H. Stanton [41] compels diasporan Armenians toward a political proclivity. Hence, the identity of every Armenian in the diaspora is charged with the baggage of the tragic history of genocide, a legacy that, according to Marie-Aude Baronian, "implies both a complex personal and political responsibility and the endless desire to fulfill that responsibility."[42]

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[40] Wolf's evidence in this study consists of a series of interviews of a Holocaust survivor, Jake Geldwert who explores the difficulties in his life as an immigrant in the Unites States, after surviving the Holocaust. See Diane L. Wolf "Holocaust Testimony: Producing Post–memories, Producing Identities," in *Sociology Confronts the Holocaust: Memories and Identities in Jewish Diasporas.* ed. Judith M. Gerson, Diane L. Wolf (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 172.

[41] Gregory H. Stanton is a former member of the U.S. State Department and President of the International Association of Genocide Scholars. His essay argues that all known cases of genocide conform to eight common stages, the last step of which is the perpetrator's denial of genocide. See Gregory H. Stanton. "The Eight Stages of Genocide," *Yale Genocide Studies Working Paper, GS01.* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, February 1998), 1-8.

[42] See Marie-Aude Baronian. "History and Memory, Repetition and Epistolarity." in *Image+Territory: Essays on Atom Egoyan,* ed. Tschofen, Monique and Jennifer Burwell. (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 58.

3. Methodology

Old family photographs are often considered small remnants of our ancestors, little treasures from the past, that inform us and tell us the stories of our lives. In the context of utter instability, the photographic medium—and the strange relationship that is created between object and man—becomes highly problematic as meaning-making is embedded in several layers of significance.

My research is concerned with family photographs that have travelled with families to different places temporarily called 'home'. Bearing in mind that the present Canadian home is part of a post–war and post–traumatic establishment, I attempt to investigate the multidimensional role of the travelling family photographs within the familial life. In that sense, I would like to consider the physical function of the photographs as instruments to transmit memory, as well as their contribution to asserting cultural identity. Through their portrayed subjects, my argument considers these visual items as initially performing three distinct functions: they prompt the remembrance of people from the past, trigger the recollection of nostalgic places once called 'home', in addition to producing a platform for the intergenerational transmission of memory, cultural heritage, and traditions.

Furthermore, inspired by the theories of Kristen Emiko McAllister and Martha Langford, I am especially interested in the idea of the family photographs complementing survivor and witness testimonies and often acting as referential sources for storytelling, in engagement with new recipients. In fact, I consider the images as agents performing a ritualistic function by making intergenerational connections to pass on heritage, lived traumatic experiences, and sentiments of nostalgia. Although the process of transmitting memory might very well affirm and reinforce cultural, if not national, identity, I would

like to consider certain components of this memorial exchange that might be regarded as unfamiliar and thus problematic for new generations. One issue here is the question of remembrance in the transmission of memory: for instance, how can one remember someone they have never met? I will explore this point toward the end of my thesis, guided by Marianne Hirsch's concept post–memory.

My analysis investigates family photographs of one extended Armenian family of the diaspora and seeks to understand the meanings embodied by these objects. My corpus consists of 15 images drawn from photographic collections and memoirs of my paternal side (Nazarian family) and of my maternal side (Demirdjian–Kouladjian families). I also study images in my future father-in-law's collection (Yapoudjian–Keshkegian families) as they connect with my parents' families. Our ancestors—father and grandfather, respectively—although from different regions of the Ottoman Empire, ended up in the same orphanage in Lebanon. The seven photographs are from my own family's collection, while the remaining eight are from Haigazoun Yapoudjian's (1908–1986) collection, portraying his wife's, Satenik Keshkegian's paternal line (Keshkegian family portraits), and his own paternal line (Malkhassian portrait). Haigazoun Yapoudjian was born in 1908, in Yozgat, Ottoman Turkey. He was the sole survivor of his immediate family who disguised himself as a Kurdish shepherd and fled to the Near East Relief orphanage in Jbeil, Lebanon. After leaving the orphanage, he worked for 60 years at the Mobile Oil company in Lebanon, until he retired.[43] He had two sons and five grandchildren who later immigrated to Canada. By limiting my research to a selection of

[43] Haigazoun Yapoudjian has published a memoir of his life experiences and accomplishments in which he discusses events such as his flight to Lebanon, life in the orphanage, early establishment of the Armenian community in Lebanon and his personal accomplishments throughout the years as a leading figure in the Lebanese-Armenian community. See Haigazoun H. Yapoudjian. *Darabanki yev Houysi Dariner (transl. Experiences of Suffering and Hope)* (Beirut: Hamazkain W. Sethian Press, 1988).

portraits—portraits of siblings, married couples and family—I intend to explore the relationship between portrait photography and the sense of representation and belonging within a diasporic community.

My thesis will be developed over three stages. First, I will examine the different types of portraiture in my family collection, and subject them to historical and socio–political analysis, in an attempt to understand the life stories of the photographic subjects. Second, I will look at the circulation of the images—their travels—and consider the migration routes in connection to the relationship between possessor and photo, emphasizing the role and function of the photographic object. Here, I have been guided by Svetlana Boym's work on nostalgia and the home, as well as Marie–Blanche Fourcade's research on domestic Armenian material culture in Quebec. Third, I will attempt to define the photographic device—as a visual and physical object—in relation to notions of memory and identity.

4. Photographic Familial Ties

Unlike any other representational medium—whether painting or literature—the photograph holds the distinction of appealing to truth. Undoubtedly, today's digital technologies allow distortion or alteration of what is considered truthful but in essence, the photograph represents some aspect of existence. By discussing the denotative and connotative meaning of the photograph in earlier texts,[44] in *Camera Lucida,* Roland

[44] See Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message" (1961), from *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, 1978, in *A Barthes Reader,* ed. Susan Sontag. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 194-210.

Barthes develops the "*ça a été,*" that undeniable link between the photograph and the viewed subject or what he calls as the "photographic referent:"[45]

> The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, thought impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin with anyone who has been photographed.[46]

In other words, the viewer experiences some degree of reality and of what has at some point existed, by looking at the photograph. Indeed, amid this undeniable reality of the photographic image and the viewer's gaze lie a number of constituents—two of them being time and memory. Barthes argues that, apart from capturing a moment in time, the photograph also imprisons memory in a tiny frame: "a superimposition [...] of reality and of the past."[47] The photograph forms a physical platform on which the evidence of a fragment of time and the notion of memory exist in direct connection with each other.

In *Images of Women*, Sarah Graham–Brown, acknowledging Barthes' sociological and semiological readings, states that: "photographic images do not exist in a vacuum. They have various layers of significance contained within the images themselves and in the context in which they appear."[48] So then, I wonder, how much of this reality discussed by Barthes can be malleable and to what extent does it inform the viewer's gaze? To answer these questions, I realize that the inquiry involves an

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[45] In a passage Barthes explains the 'photographic referent' as "not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph. See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida.* (New York: Hill & Wang/ Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981), 76-7.
[46] See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 80-1.
[47] See Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida,* 76.
[48] See Sarah Graham-Brown, *Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East, 1860-1950.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 2.

understanding of two key actors: the viewer and the subject. It can be argued that meaning is rooted in the link between the two. For instance, in a study of photographs and their link to memory, Rob Kroes notes that: "Photographs are often referred to as mnemonic devices, as memory aids, as tools that help us to remember what we wish to remember."[49] Similarly, Marianne Hirsch is also drawn to this bond between photograph and viewer, especially regarding post–generations of Holocaust survivors and their attempts at identifying with images of traumatic histories that they believe to be informative of their own. [50] Precisely then, in reference to family photographs, the issue is a matter of what happens to memory when it is not yours to begin with. In *Family Frames,* Hirsch notes: "photographs, as the only material traces of an irrecoverable past, derive their power and their important cultural role from their embeddedness in the fundamental rites of family life."[51]

It is significant that the photographs in this case study not only belonged to members of these families, but were created by and intended for the family. This intention is transmitted to new generations in physical form and through the mnemonic framework that embodies them. In fact, the notion of family, according to Marianne Hirsch, is a "privileged site for the intergenerational transmission of memory and embodied experience."[52] Consequently, I would like to suggest that the images are not incidentally about family history and memory, but were intentionally reproduced to create and preserve these structures.

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[49] See Rob Kroes. *Photographic Memories: Private Pictures, Public Images, and American History.* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 2007), 2.
[50] See Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory" *Poetics Today 29:1* (Spring 2008), 109-110.
[51] See Marianne Hirsch. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory.* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 5.
[52] See Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," 109-110.

In a case study of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, Raymond Kévorkian and Paul Paboudjian explain that the notion of family in Armenian society is much more than a framework of solidarity, motivated by blood ties.[53] It is, in reality, a community in itself with its strict hierarchy marked by the Indo–European heritage, which in turn, consists of a specific patriarchal order of familial governance where each individual has its own respective rank despite the recurrent destabilization by modernity.[54]

This part of the thesis explores the portrait arrangements discernible in this collection. I have identified a variety of arrangements: portraits of siblings, portraits of married couples and family portraits and subjected them to visual analysis. Based on the strict arrangement of studio portraiture, the images can be assumed to have been set and heavily influenced by the photographer's input. While the majority of the selected images do not include photographic studio stamps or logos, other unselected photographs (earlier cabinet cards or later prints) from the same collections include photographic studio insignias on their backs that attest to the Armenian origin of photographers. A large number of family photographs of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, posted on a social network site online, attest to the active presence of Armenian-owned photographic studios.[55] That said, considering the close-knit structure of Ottoman sectarian society, in addition to the Armenians' active involvement in the development of photography in the Middle East, especially in the Ottoman Empire, I have a tendency to regard the

[53] See Kévorkian and Paboudjian. *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire ottoman à la veille du génocide*, 62-3.
[54] See J.P. Mahé "Structure sociale et vocabulaire de la parenté et de la collectivité en arménien contemporain». Revue des Études arméniennes" Vol. 18 (1984), 339-340.
[55] I have gained access to a large number of family portrait photographs that have been posted online, through a collaborative effort on a page in the social networking website, Facebook.com, that include over twenty different photographic studio names on the back of photographs. See "Birzamanlar Anadolu Ermeniler" (transl.: "Armenian Anatolians of the past") Facebook.com. https://www.facebook.com/pages/birzamanlar-anadoluda-ermeniler/297491638134. (Site visited on July 29, 2012).

photographers in this selection, as being of Armenian origin. Subsequently, it would lead me to suggest that these potentially Armenian photographers would have been complicit in making these arrangements according to Armenian family structure and tradition. Nonetheless, despite the photographer's role, these family portraits reveal a great amount of information about the family members and the bonds between them. Indeed, it is through the written inscriptions, the data gathered from the owners, as well as the key familial storytelling references to the photographs that discussed in this thesis. All of these photographs now have titles, but it is important to emphasize that these are 'constructed titles', based on family tradition.

4.1 Brotherhood

As the men are the most important actors of the patriarchal order, the visual analysis of the photographs will start by viewing portraits of brotherhood. Boys, adolescents and adult men of families—who are not necessarily the heads but nonetheless, enjoy the privileges of being the male descendants—are represented here, at a critical time of change in the Middle-Eastern Armenian society.

My maternal grandfather, Ezekiel Demirdjian was born in 1911, in Anteb, Turkey. He and his brother, Puzant, fled their birthplace some time in 1917, when they were placed in an animal-transporting train to Aleppo, to be sent to the Near East Relief orphanage in Jbeil, Lebanon. The older brother, Avedis Demirdjian, would survive the deportations, along with his mother, Rahel Demirdjian, and two sisters, Annik and Mary Demirdjian. The family reunited in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1923, although by the time of their arrival, all three of the eldest siblings had lost their eyesight due to an outbreak of an

illness in the Deir-El Zor desert. According to Mehrdad Kia, "the majority of young male populations [...] did not receive any formal education and learned how to work the field from their fathers, older brothers, and uncles."[56] Had the the two brothers stayed in their native home, they would most likely have learned the skill of metal working. However, once out of the orphanage, Ezekiel and Puzant entered the shoe-repair business, a skill that they had likely learned in the orphanage.[57] While all three disabled siblings were sent to a home for the blind in Beirut, Avedis was taught the skill of weaving chairs, enabling him to earn money and to be financially independent. This photograph was a last item testifying to the memory of their past life.

According to family history, their father, Soghomon (Solomon) Demirdjian was a metal worker. While the majority of Armenian populations were part of the Armenian Apostolic church, some, like the Demirdjian family, must have joined the Protestant church of the American mission in Anteb,[58] prior to the start of mass deportations, because a portion of survivors remained members of the Armenian protestant church in Lebanon. This can also be certified through the fact that one of Soghomon's daughters, Annik Demirdjian, had attended the missionary Central Turkey College in Anteb [59] until the eleventh grade. Around 1915, when casualties had started in their city, Soghomon Demirdjian, was told by Ottoman authorities to take down a church bell he had been

[56] See Mehrdad Kia. *Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire.* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO LLC., 2011), 103.
[57] See Yapoudjian, 8.
[58] According to the Official Journal of American Association for the History of Nursing, "the United States [had] established trade relations with the Ottoman Empire during the first half of the nineteenth century, and American missionaries soon followed. Hospitals were opened in several provincial capitals by missionaries and nuns." In Anteb (modern Gaziantep), missionary work had established as early as 1847, with the founding of the American Hospital by missionary physician, Azariah Smith. See Zuhal Özaydin. "Upper Social Strata Women in Nursing in Turkey" in *Nursing History Review, Vol. 16,* ed. Patricia D'Antonio. (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2006), 165.
[59] According to a missionary report, issued on May 31st, 1873, the city of Anteb was "to establish a first-class college and medical school." See "Great Britain, America, and the Colonies" *The Day of Rest: Illustrated Journal of Sunday Reading.* (London: Henry S. King Co., 1873), 37.

commissioned to build in earlier years, so that it could be melted and the metal used for weaponry. [60] At a later time, an American missionary, Elvetsa T. Leslie, reports that "most of the Anteb Protestants were sent away from [the city] after the 1st of December in 1915."[61] The family affirms that Soghomon was convened for a second time by authorities, this time as a skilled worker on the Berlin–Baghdad railway. In his study, Jonathan McMurray notes that Ottoman troops "used the Baghdad Railway and Hijaz Railway to deport the refugees" however, "skilled Armenian workers on the [...] railway construction [sites] were not spared."[62] Soghomon left his home in Anteb, never to be seen again.

The *Three brothers, Ezekiel, Avedis, Puzant Demirdjians* (fig. 1) postcard is in delicate condition, heavily deteriorated and with a tear on the middle top edge which appears to have been taped sometime later. The back of the postcard includes Turkish inscriptions in Armenian letters: (transl.) "Look at this captured picture of brotherhood, each time you remember us. We were sincerely delighted to have received the 'card-photograph' you have sent us. Avedis, Puzant, Ezekiel Demirdjian." It is through photograph inscriptions like these that young survivors were often able to certify their identity. Ezekiel's orphanage identification card has registered his name as Ezekiel

[60] In Peter Balakian's *Armenian Golgotha,* Grigoris Balakian notes in his memoirs: "we had to send all the bells [...] from Armenian churches and monasteries—large and small from the hundreds of abandoned and plundered Armenian churches and monasteries—to Germany where they were melted down and made into cannons in the Knupp factory." See Peter Balakian. *Armenian Golgotha.* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 147.
[61] See Elvesta T. Leslie. "Elvesta T. Leslie, Aintab-Ourfa" in *Turkish Atrocities: Statements of American Missionaries on the Destruction of Christian Communities in Ottoman Turkey, 1915-1917,* ed. James L. Barton. (Michigan: Gomidas Institute, 1998), 107.
[62] See Jonathan S. McMurray. *Distant Ties: Germany, the Ottoman Empire and the Construction of the Baghdad Railway.* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 117-8.

Tenekedjian, meaning Ezekiel son of 'tin worker', [63] in Turkish. [64] As Ezekiel Demirdjian explained to my mother, it was very common for young Armenian orphans to be asked about their father's profession to assign them a surname in their card. The postcard, later sent to them from Anteb, attests to their original names as "Avedis, Puzant, Ezekiel Demirdjian," whose surname in this case means "family of metal worker." Ezekiel and Puzant left the orphanage in 1923: a period that corresponds to the official change of their orphanage surnames into the real family name of Demirdjian. A later postcard (14 x 9 cm), *Two brothers, Ezekiel and Puzant Demirdjians, shortly after release from Near East Relief Orphanage* (fig. 2), taken in c. 1923–4, in Beirut, Lebanon, records the approximate period when the name-change would have occurred.

Three brothers, Ezekiel, Avedis, Puzant Demirdjians (fig. 1) portrays an adult man, Avedis Demirdjian, seated between his two much younger brothers, Puzant, on his left, and Ezekiel, on his right. The senior figure sits in a dominating pose with both legs and arms crossed, at the front. He is wearing a black suit with a white buttoned up collar shirt underneath. His footwear is particularly striking as he wears a dark coloured boot-like soft-leather sock called *Khuf* [65] over which is worn a soft yellow leather slipper. The yellow footwear was "favored at the court of the Ottoman dynasty (1281–1924) [and that] either the neglect or the disinclination to wear such an item could be interpreted as a

[63] The composition of Armenian surnames reveals their Armenian origins with the traditional end of the suffix 'ian' or 'yan' meaning 'of' or 'from,' while the root itself "designates a family of or [the] specific place, profession, or lineage." See Kim S. Theriault. *Rethinking Arshile Gorky.* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 24.

[64] In a study about Armenian-American identity, Anny Bakalian notes that "indeed, during four hundred years of Ottoman rule, many Armenian family names had acquired Turkish roots, though most had the 'ian' ending." See Anny Bakalian. *Armenian Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian.* (New Brunswick/New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 341.

[65] The *Khuf* is a traditional Muslim footwear, especially convenient for Islamic prayer customs and its use goes back to surviving attributes of the Prophet Mohammed's own dress. See Imam Abi Iassa Muhammed At Tirmidhi. *The Characteristics of Prophet Muhammed.* (El Mansoura, Egypt: Dar Al-Manarah, 2003), 62.

calculated insult."[66] Therefore, although the subject in question is of Christian Armenian origin, the influence of the dominant culture's influence is undeniable. On his head, Avedis wears a "brimless cone-shaped flat-crowned hat,"[67] commonly known as the traditional Ottoman *fez*. The use of the fez entered the Ottoman society after Sultan Mahmud II's attempts at modernization through dress with his "decree of 1829 that all male subjects were expected to wear trousers, frock coat, shirt, European-style shoes and fez."[68] Quickly, the hat became a symbol of equality and of the "service of the state rather than religious identity." [69] The fez remained as an emblematic fashion accessory of the Ottoman Empire until its decline. In fact, after the 1908 revolution, men's headgear, according to Philip Mansel, became a vehemently contested issue as "Turkish nationalists disdained the fez, which for them symbolized Hamidian pan–Islamism, and wore a fur cap, qalpaq, inspired by Central Asian and Caucasian headgear."[70] Given that the leadership of the empire ruled from Constantinople (Istanbul), early attempts at Westernization would have taken time to reach Anatolian cities, especially Anteb (Gazianteb), more than a thousand kilometers away to the South-East. In 1925, Mustafa Kemal, later called Ataturk (father of Turks), keen to Europeanize the country, passed a

[66] See Jonathan M. Bloom, Sheila Blair. "Dress" in *Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art and Architecture, Vol. 2.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 22.
[67] See "fez" Merriam-Webster dictionary. www.**merriam-webster**.com/dictionary/**fez.** (Site visited on July 29, 2012).
[68] See Jonathan M. Bloom, Sheila Blair. "Dress" in *Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art and Architecture, Vol. 2.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 32.
[69] See Philip Mansel. *Dressed to Rule: Royal and Court Costume From Louis XIV to Elizabeth II.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 107.
[70] See Touraj Atabaki and Erik Jan Zurcher. *Man of Order: Authoritarian Modernization Under Ataturk and Reza Shah.* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2004), 211.

law forbidding the wearing of fezes, motivated by the thought of Turkey's traditional ways and costumes as being "morally and religiously backward."[71]

It is, however, interesting that from the mid–19th century until Ataturk's rise to power in the 1920s, the Ottoman army's "archetypal headgear" consisted of a "red fez with a dark blue or black tassel."[72] Moreover, David Nicolle asserts that subsequent to their rise to power in 1908, the new Young Turk government "introduced laws that compelled non-Muslim Ottoman citizens to be conscripted into the army."[73] This photograph is dated circa 1916–7 in the midst of WWI and the organized state deportations of Armenian people. According to the family, at the time of this photograph, Avedis would have been a few years younger than the military conscription age of 20.[74] That said, the link between his dress code and the military could not have been directly tied; although, Philip Mansel notes that: "local Christians and Jews, and foreigners working in the region [...] wore the fez when they wanted to show respect for, or deflect the hostility of, the Muslim population."[75] This photograph then, may symbolize minority assimilation and may even represent a prototype of Christian Ottoman citizenship, a few years prior to the birth of the republic and drastic social change.

The two brothers, who being close in age could pass for twins, are wearing short trousers, topped with shirts and belts, as well as knee high socks. Puzant, on the left, is wearing ankle-strap shoes while Ezekiel, on the right, is wearing ankle-high boots. They stand very straight, each one placing one hand on their older brother's shoulder. The fact

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[71] See Osman Okyar "Ataturk's Quest for Modernism" in *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey,* ed. Jacob M. Landau. (Leiden, Netherlands: Westview Press, Inc., 1984), 45.
[72] See David Nicolle. *Ottoman Infantrymen 1914-1918.* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2010), 30.
[73] See Nicolle. *Ottoman Infantrymen,* 11.
[74] Donald Quataert. *Miners and the State in the Ottoman Empire: The Zonguldak Coalfield, 1822-1920.* (Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 132.
[75] See Mansel. *Dressed to Rule*, 107.

that the hand is visible and not hidden behind the older figure's shoulder, would suggest a certain symbol of fraternity and brotherhood rather than pure authority. Two other images in the collection, the *Demirdjian family portrait* (fig. 3) and the *Meguerditch Agha Keshkegian with his wife and two daughters* (fig. 4), both portray children who have an arm reaching toward an elderly male figure's shoulder. In comparison, in these two instances, the male figure is the father and the hands are hidden behind his back—while in the *Three brothers, Ezekiel, Avedis, Puzant Demirdjians* (fig. 1), the hands are not only visible but are instead, placed on the older male figure's shoulder. Although the two younger brothers have most probably been advised to stand in those positions, the general posture suggests a certain air of admiration, like a sign of patriarchal authority in the absence of their father. The three brothers' facial expressions are especially noteworthy. Avedis stares directly at the camera, emanating an air of domination and superiority; Puzant, on his left, who also looks at the camera, seems to emit a certain sense of admiration for his older brother; while Ezekiel simply looks down, almost uninterested or unaware. This simple detail informs the viewer of the hierarchical ranks of the family.

In *Two brothers, Ezekiel and Puzant Demirdjians, shortly after release from Near East Relief Orphanage,* (fig. 2) the two brothers are standing in front of a painted backdrop, in a seemingly outdoor studio. The painted backdrop illustrates an Ottoman Palatine-style building with square-domed twin towers which resembles a building in the Topkapi palace complex.[76] The palace had served as the residence of Ottoman sultans, as

[76] Fatih Sultan Mehmed built a new palace from 1475-8 called the Topkapi Palace which constituted of a complex of separate homes—small scale buildings, opposed to monumental, religious Ottoman architecture—and gardens. See Nevra Erturk. "Earthquake Preparedness at the Istanbul Museums" in *Preparing for the Worst, Planning for the Best: Protecting our Cultural Heritage from Disaster: Proceedings of a Special IFLA Conference Held in Berlin in July 2003,* ed. Johanna G. Wellheiser, Nancy E. Gwinn, et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2005), 57.

well as an administrative centre for the empire between 1478 and 1839.[77] The multi-purpose complex with its luxurious interiors has, according to Nebahat Avcioğlu, "for centuries after its construction in the fifteenth century [...] remained the object of considerable admiration by Europeans."[78] Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth, European travelers had been visiting the Ottoman Empire and later Republic of Turkey in greater numbers. From 1890 to 1914, the Orient Express railway enabled large numbers of European travelers to visit Turkey; a luxury passenger train service that gained new popularity in the 1920s, after WWI.[79] It was also during the latter period, precisely in 1924 that the newly converted Topkapi palace opened its museum doors in the Turkish city of Istanbul, under the orders of Ataturk.[80] It is uncertain whether the painted backdrop represents a symbolic reference to the brothers' place of origin, a reflection of current events of the time, or an influence of European travels on photographic studio decoration—all three possibilities can be entertained. The bottom of the backdrop seems to depict an interior view of a checkered floor. An armchair strategically placed against the checkered floor appears to be in synthetic woven wicker material; its presence completes the domestic theme. Overall, the combination of these three elements (i.e. building, checkered floor, and armchair) seems to create an indoor and outdoor illusion.

Next to the chair, Ezekiel stands with a very serious gaze, hair parted on the left and carefully combed to the side. He wears a buttoned-up white soft collar shirt with a

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[77] Ibid.
[78] See Nebahat Avcioğlu. *Turquerie and the Politics of Representation, 1728-1879.* (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 65.
[79] See Andrew Eames. "In Search of Poirot" in *Time Out Great Train Journeys of the World,* ed. Andrew Eames, Hugh Graham, and Patrick Mulkern. (London: Ebury Publishing, 2009), 27-8.
[80] See Erturk, "Earthquake Preparedness at the Istanbul Museums," 57.

buttoned, fine striped, sack coat and short trousers underneath. Similarly dressed, Puzant wears a striped white soft collar shirt, vertically striped short knee-length trousers, and a belt visible under the identically patterned and unbuttoned striped sack coat. Finally, both brothers have dark-colored, knee high socks.

Ezekiel and Puzant's outfits are not necessarily fashionable according to the European and American 1920s trends. The sack coat had entered men's fashion in the latter part of the nineteenth century[81] and remained as an essential part of the wardrobe in the early twentieth century.[82] In an essay about modern era fashions, Tiffany Webber-Hanchett explains that: "post–Edwardian men's fashions [...] [included] easily laundered and starched detachable high collars and cuffs center-creased trousers were slim and tapered to the ankle, with cuffs."[83] My suggestion here is that the two brothers have been dressed based on popular fashion trends of the early twentieth-century Ottoman Empire, like their older brother. Popular Ottoman trend would have him wearing a mustache but he is perhaps too young to have grown a full one. Instead, he wears his hair neatly combed and pomaded to the back, and has attached what seems to be a flower in the buttonhole. While I have weighed the possibility of this item being a brooch or a knitted decorative badge, an early twentieth century trend in the Ottoman Empire has convinced me otherwise. This trend, formally known as the *alafranga* [à la française] fashions is, according to Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet's study of the Ottoman social history, said to have had an impact on a number of men in the empire, driving them to go to "extreme

[81] See Cynthia Cooper. "Victorian and Edwardian Eras: 1860-1910" in *The Fashion Reader.* ed. Linda Welters and Abby Lillethun. (Oxford/New York: Berg Publishers, 2007), 36.
[82] See Tiffany Webber-Hanchett. "The Modern Era: 1910-1960" in *The Fashion Reader.* ed. Linda Welters and Abby Lillethun. (Oxford/New York: Berg Publishers, 2007), 47.
[83] Ibid.

lengths in the dandification of their appearance."[84] Certainly, this trend would have been noticeable in the earlier photograph where the three brothers were pictured however, at the time when *Three brothers, Ezekiel, Avedis, Puzant Demirdjians* (fig. 1) was taken, in c. 1916–7, there was a great debate dividing the empire's popular culture, caught between Western trends and traditional customs. According to a study of Istanbul households, Alan Duben and Cem Behar explain that: "this dualism was [...] categorized as *alaturka* [à la Turque] versus *alafranga* [à la française], and it was one of the major subjects of the novels of the period, particularly up to the First World War."[85] I have to wonder whether this style of dress represents Lebanese influence on Armenian populations, or whether the two newly independent, adolescent men were expressing themselves in partly nostalgic manner, or was it that they had not been exposed to more current trends. Overall, their outfits seem to be ill-fitted, while their shoes seem dusty and a bit worn out. Of course, one also has to acknowledge the economic factor and the possibility of hand-me down clothes, especially given that the two young men have just been released from the orphanage.

The way these two figures pose is another interesting feature. Unlike the first image, the two brothers have been posed side by side. In fact, nothing in their posture differentiates the brothers by their age gap, apart from Puzant's apparent sophistication in hair treatment and the addition of the little flower decoration. Instead, they have been portrayed as peers, standing right next to each other which reminds us of their shared

[84] Late 19th and early 20th century men who have been ascribed to following this trend are described as wearing "gleaming shoes, starched shirts and tassel length chang[ing] according to the fashion of the day, gloved hands and [...] flowers in their buttonholes," in addition to an extremely close and smooth shave with mustaches that were "powdered and lotioned, their tips waxed, and [...] combed hair." See Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet. *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 303.

[85] See Alan Duben, Cem Behar. *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family and Fertility, 1880-1940.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 204.

experience, first fleeing the Ottoman empire and then as orphanage children. I wonder if their brotherhood would have been captured otherwise, had their lives not been shattered by their tragic past, and had they remained in their old home, faithfully obeying to the customary familial patriarchic order. However, the only hint of hierarchy is evident in their faces. As in the first brotherhood image, Puzant stares straight at the camera with a severe look, almost as though emphasizing on his superiority while Ezekiel, once again, looks sideways with no attempt at affirmation.

In a third image, *Two brothers, Karnig and Vahram Keshkegian,* (1920s) (fig. 5), have been captured in an indoor studio setting that seems to replicate an indoor domestic environment. The two portrayed men are Haigazoun Yapoudjian's two brothers-in-law, originally from Arapgir, Turkey. At the start of the deportations in Arapgir, the family had been displaced to the city of Antep, about 350 km to the South, where the family stayed for almost four years and where the two youngest Keshkegian sisters (Araxie and Satenik) were born. According to the family, the two brothers had been part of the uprising movement of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. On May 30, 1920, a first Franco–Turkish armistice had been signed.[86] The treaty of Sèvres, signed on April 10, 1920, between Turkey and the victorious powers of the First World War,[87] left French troops that had been occupying the Southeastern parts of Anatolia[88] to withdraw and submit to a ceasefire. However, the treaty's signed agreements took longer to apply

[86] See Odile Moreau. "Echoes of National Liberation: Turkey Viewed from the Maghrib in the 1920s" in *Nation, Society and culture in North Africa,* ed. J. Mcdougall. (London, Oregon: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), 62-3.
[87] See Michel Graham-Fry, et al. *Guide to international Relations and Diplomacy.* (London, New York: Continuum, 2002), 146.
[88] According to Schulze, "French units occupied the south-eastern parts of Anatolia in 1919," advancing in central Anatolia, while British marine units were established on the Black Sea coast and Italians occupying the south-western part of Anatolia. See Reinhard Schulze. *A Modern History of the Islamic World.* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 48-9.

as a pan–Turkish and pan–Islamic propaganda encouraged Turkish armed forces—at this point joined by Kurdish bands—to engage in combat with French troops.[89] Clashes between the two opposing sides were renewed on July 29, 1920, compelling Armenians in Antep to organize self-defensive units to fight alongside French troops, until February 8, 1921.[90] The family was again subjected to relocation at the end of the conflicts in 1922, this time to Aleppo, Syria where Armenian refugee camps had already been established. At this point, Meguerditch Agha Keshkegian, a father concerned over the safety of his only two sons, pushed Vahram and Karnig to leave the country for a safer United States. Fortunately, an extended family had already established itself in Philadelphia, U.S.A., for some years by the time the two brothers fled their home to join them there.[91] From 1890 to 1923, close to one hundred thousand Armenian immigrants and refugees entered the United States.[92]

The photograph portrays two clean-shaven brothers, wearing fashionable three-piece suits with neckties, in a Philadelphia studio. The exact date of the image is undetermined but it is likely after 1921. Judging by their clothes, they seem to be well adapted American society of the 1920s. Tiffany Webber-Hanchett states that men's mainstream fashion during the period of 1919–1929 incorporated "single- and double-breasted jackets with a natural shoulder-line, cut narrow through the torso and ending just

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[89] See Jordi Tejel. *Syria's Kurds: History, Politics and Society.* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 12-3.
[90] See Avo Katerdjian. "Ayntab, Baberous Pnorinage" (transl. "Anteb, My Ancestrors' Cradle") *akounq.net*. (April 30, 2012). http://akunq.net/am/?p=20819. (Site visited 29 July 2012).
[91] According to the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation's (SOLEIF) passenger directory, two people have been registered with the 'keshkegian' family name (although with a different spelling) and having 'Arapgir, Turkey' as their hometown. One of them is Armenak Kechkegian, 21, who has arrived to Ellis Island in 1909 while the other is Mardiros Kesgekian, 40, who has arrived later, in 1911. See Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation Inc. "Passenger Search" *ellisisland.org.* (Site visited on July 29, 2012).
[92] From 1890 to 1914, about 64,000 Turkish Armenians came to the United States before WWI, while a second wave of immigrants and refugees brought 30, 771 Armenians to the country from 1920 to 1924. See The advocates for Human Rights. "Armenian Immigration to the United States: Immigration Library" *energyofanation.org.* http://www.energyofanation.org/ccc66309-019b-49ea-b404-8c653781b674.html?nodeid=. (Site visited 24 August 2012).

below the hip, [while] shirts were still white, colored or patterned with a narrow attached collar pinned together under the neck-tie."[93] Indeed, more than any other subjects depicted in the collection, these figures seem to be fully up to date with the day's fashions.

The combination of their postures and their modern dress seems to be giving them an authority, almost as a sign of accomplishment. The older brother, Vahram Keshkegian, is seated comfortably, his left arm resting on the arm of the chair while his right one is placed on his brother's leg, positioned on the arm of the chair. The younger brother's position is especially notable, as he seems to be supported on the back of his brother, while his left hand is in his trouser pocket—a studio arrangement that according to Christraud M. Greary makes the 'Victorian gentlemen pose.'[94] Although the Victorian era (1837–1901) has long passed, it seems that some portrait customs persist. The pose seems to have been a common studio arrangement of the early twentieth century, as it can be found in another photograph in the same collection. *The married daughter and her husband, Haikanoush Keshkegian–Stamboulian and husband, Hagop Stamboulian* (fig. 6), portrays Vahram and Karnig's younger sister, Haikanoush, sitting comfortably on an armchair, staring straight at the camera and wearing her hair in a bun. Her husband, Hagop, is seated on the arm of her chair with an arm extended across his wife's shoulders and slightly leaning towards her. In a later image, *Casual portrait of Misak and Nazelie Nazarian in the countryside* (fig. 7), the gesture of the arm across the woman's shoulder is repeated although the image lacks the arranged quality of the studio photograph. In the cases where married couples have been portrayed, the male figures emanate a certain air

[93] See Webber-Hanchett. "The Modern Era: 1910-1960," 47.
[94] See Christraud M. Greary. *In and Out of Focus: Images from Central Africa, 1885-1960* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2002), 104.

of affection and a protective manner, though without relinquishing any of their masculine authority. In the two brothers' portrait, this authoritative nature is still present although in different form. Unlike Haikanoush, Vahram is sitting straight up, slightly leaning forward which makes his torso parallel to the frame. Despite the tilting of his head to the left, toward his younger brother, Vahram is portrayed as the main character of the arrangement—hinting at his higher rank in the family. Karnig, instead, is physically leaning toward his seated brother. The extension of his right arm may serve as an affectionate gesture, while his leaning body seems to symbolize an admiration and the sense of looking up to his older brother. Nevertheless, the hand in his pocket accentuates his independent nature as a male adult—suggesting that while he looks up to his older brother, Karnig is his own man, not dependent on Vahram. Unlike the previous images, there is no trace in the faces of sitters of a strict hierarchical order at play; instead the two men seem a lot more at ease with a slight hint of a smiles on their faces. Whether these looks were affirming happiness in their new American home or whether it was the effects of modernity on the subjects, still remains to be known.

4.2 Sisterly Bonding

A postcard from the 1940s*, Haikanoush and Vartanoush Keshkegian* (fig. 8), shows two sisters seated in front of a picturesque backdrop, in an indoor photographic studio. Judging from their proximity, they seem to be seated on stools, one set higher—approximately 20 cm—than the other. Vartanoush, on the left was the eldest sister of four Keshkegian sisters. She was apparently married young to Garabed Apanian, in Arapgir, Turkey. The couple fled to Aleppo, Syria, at the start of the war. They later moved to

Beirut, Lebanon where she had four children—three sons and one daughter. As for Haikanoush, she had married Hagop Stamboulian in Lebanon and then moved to the United States. In the portrait, Vartanoush is positioned on the lower left, wearing a round-neck, long-sleeved print rayon dress—typical of popular and affordable late 1930s–1940s women's fashion.[95] Haikanoush, who was also married and had two children, had by this time moved to the United States. She is dressed in similar style as Vartanoush—a circle-neck vamp-cuffed long-sleeve print rayon dress. Both sisters have one hand placed on the back of their sibling, in something like an embrace, while their visible hands are joined, accentuating the sisterly bond.

At the time of this photograph, Haikanoush, from the United States, must have been visiting her sister Vartanoush in Beirut, whence the two sisters had taken a trip to Aleppo. A message at the back of the postcard reads in Armenian: "(transl.) Reverend Mr. Garabed Apanian, Aleppo," seemingly addressed to Vartanoush's spouse who was likely in Beirut. My assumption is that the sisters went to the photographic studio on the occasion of this visit.to Araxie in Aleppo. In a section of her book, pertaining on the development of photography in the Ottoman Empire, Wendy Shaw asserts that: "photography began as a tool of Orientalist fascination and touristic voyeurism [but] it soon developed into a mode of self-representation."[96] Nancy Micklewright further notes that while this new technology of studio portraiture spread as a form of touristic consumption, growing "in popularity long after tourists were able to produce their own

[95] According to Robert Sickels, "rayon [...] was the most common material used in the 1940s," in the Western world. See Robert Sickels. "Fashion" *American Popular Culture Through History: The 1940's.* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 81.
[96] Wendy M. K. Shaw. *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire.* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 139.

photographs."[97] Here we see signs of Middle-Eastern photographic customs, a lingering of the old technology, some practices and customs would remaining present in Ottoman society or even travelling to new places with the former citizens. Here, I refer to customs, such as sending postcards to family and acquaintances of "personalized studio photographs [...] to prove the presence of the travelers."[98] This image then is not so much a symbol of their visit to their sister—as that would entail the presence of Araxie in the portrait—but the travellers' evidence of their journey to Aleppo.

The two women's serious facial expressions are especially noteworthy as they experience an occasion of reunion in a culture of migration. The serious tone of this image may be explained by the dynamics of separation—separation that has been created by the distance and formality of married life and the very real possibility of never seeing each other again. In the image, the sisters sit up straight and stare straight at the camera. Yet, unlike the other sisters depicted in the collection, these two are married. In fact, being the two eldest daughters of the Keshkegian family, they have indeed, at this point, been married most of their lives—since the mid-to-late 1910s and early 1920s, respectively. That said, I would like to consider the role of marriage in this portrayal. In a 1962 publication, Mary Matossian asserts that: "the ideal Armenian woman was chaste, restrained and passive. She cared for her household and obeyed her husband and elders without protest."[99] Certainly, a comparison between this portrait and a married couple's might attest to the impact of married life on the representation of these women. In *The married daughter and her husband, Haikanoush Keshkegian–Stamboulian and husband,*

[97] See Nancy C. Micklewright. "Personal, Public and Political (Re) Constructions" *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922.* (New York: State University Press of New York, 2000), 287.
[98] See Shaw. *Possessors and Possessed,* 140.
[99] See Mary Kilbourne Matossian. *The Impact of Soviet Policies in Armenia.* (Leiden: E.J. Bill,1962), 370.

Hagop Stamboulian (fig. 6), Haikanoush appears comfortably seated on an armchair and quite relaxed before the camera. Yet, bearing the overall arrangement in mind, it becomes clear that her husband, Hagop Stamboulian, is the leading figure, making her the faithfully submissive woman in the portrait. In the sisterhood portrait, however, their upright position and the serious stares contribute to a more conservative representation, despite the women's modern dresses and rather cozy pose. It is noteworthy that the portrait of *Haikanoush and Vartanoush Keshkegian* (fig. 8) lacks the presence of male figures—a studio arrangement that seems to create gendered imbalance. In contrast, it is equally true that these women are clearly not represented as free in the absence of their husbands. According to Nora Dudwick's essay on poverty and the Armenian society, the author comments on the role of women, affirming that: "women are expected to behave modestly and play a subordinate role in the family honor."[100] Consequently, in representing married female subjects, the male figure's presence generates a gendered distinction between male and female subjects; whereas, the sisterhood portrait of two married sibblings, highlights their sisterly bonds but represents them nonetheless, as advocates of their patriarchal society.

The following two sisterhood portraits represent the two youngest sisters of the Keshkegian family. Araxie and Satenik Kehskegian, the two youngest sisters, had their primary education until the sixth grade at their local neighborhood school in Aleppo. The eldest among them, Araxie Keshkegian, worked in embroidery and had met her husband through a family friend, getting married around 1934–5, in Aleppo, where she would have been between 25 and 28 years old. As Vartanoush and her husband had moved to

[100] See Nora Dudwick "When the Light Went Out: Poverty in Armenia" in *When Things Fall Apart: Qualitative Studies of Poverty in the Former Soviet Union.* ed. Nora Dudwick, et al. (Washington: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ The World Bank, 2003), 122.

Beirut, and in the late 1920s, Satenik and her mother later joined them there as well. The youngest of six siblings, Satenik Keshkegian, was a grade school teacher who worked in an Armenian school in Ashrafieh, Lebanon, while her later husband, Haigazoun Yapoudjian, was the school's trustee. After strong encouragement by the neighborhood priest, the couple got married in 1944, in Beirut, when Satenik, according to the family, must have been 30 years old. Traditionally, girls were to be married young, between the ages of 14 and 16.[101] It is noteworthy that the two younger sisters married at a much later age, as opposed to the older two. This factor is probably a result of the disruptions of migration and economic difficulties experienced by the family as the two girls were growing up, in addition to the effects of modernity on an otherwise strict community.

The first image, *Araxie and Satenik Keshkegian, 1930s* (fig. 13), is a postcard photograph, taken in a photographic studio called Diana, in Aleppo. This is evident through a stamped logo of the photography studio, "Photo Diana–Alep," on the bottom left corner, a studio practice that had lingered from the time of cabinet cards.[102] The two young women appear positioned in a strategic arrangement in front of a studio background. Araxie, on the left, sits diagonally on an arm bench, facing the camera, her gaze directed outside the frame, almost as though something in the studio has caught her attention. Behind her and slightly to the left, stands Satenik, her arm visibly resting on the back of a decorative chair, on the right. Both seem to be wearing rather fashionable

[101] See Stephanie Platz. "Armenians" in *Encyclopaedic Ethnography of Middle East and Central Asia, Vol. 1*. ed. R. Khanam. (New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2005), 56.
[102] Smith explains that as "paper albumen prints had a tendency to curl, they were pasted to stiff cardboard back, typically bearing the photographer's insignia and studio address." See Shawn Michelle Smith. *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 66.

clothes for that time. [103] Araxie wears a long-sleeve, dark coloured dress with a floral pattern of lighter colored leaves. The dress seems to be accentuating a straight silhouette with particularly long and fitted sleeves that have extra fabric and left loose at the wrists. She wears a showy pearl necklace that highlights her style and draws the viewer's eye to her face. Satenik is dressed in similar style as her older sister, in a dark coloured dress that indeed includes a waistline modeled right where her natural waistline should be. The outfit is designed to include a circular neckline of small ruffles on one side, and a sewn white shawl collar, on the other end. The sleeves are generally fitted and cuffed with the neckline ruffle and white shawl fabric, on her wrist. She also wears jewelry: notably, a necklace, a bracelet, and a ring. Finally, both sisters have short hairstyles.

Some viewers who have looked at this image have wondered whether the girls are wearing makeup or whether they have plucked eyebrows. It is true that Middle Eastern women had long been consuming Kohl eyeliners to brighten their eyes—a beauty practice that only gained popularity in the 1920s and 1930s, in the West.[104] Compared to the other women in the Keshkegian family, Araxie and Satenik's eyebrows seem less full, though whether that forms their natural brow line or a shaped one is impossible to ascertain. However, threading was indeed a common practice in the Middle-East while plucking eyebrows into thin lines only came in style in the 1920s, in the West.

[103] According to Webber-Hanchett, between 1930 and 1938, the Western women's silhouette, "emphasized the bust, natural waistline, hips and legs with an elongated and curvilinear aesthetic." See Webber-Hanchett, "The Modern Era: 1910-1960," 52.

[104] Sherrow writes that kohl "remained popular in Africa, the Middle East and some other regions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and still is used today." However in the West, "during the 1920s, women who wanted to emulate the dramatically lined eyes they saw on film stars began using kohl as an eyeliner;" while the use of mascara was only applied by the average woman in the 1930s. See Victoria Sherrow. *For Appearance's Sake: The Historical Encyclopedia of Good Looks, Beauty, and Grooming.* (Westport: The Oryx Press, 2001), 107.

[105]Nonetheless, it is certain that the girls have not applied any visible cosmetics and in the case where makeup or plucking exists, it is done in a subtle way. Thus, their facial treatment and the act of sitting in the assigned positions, suggests a more conservative approach although, judging by their clothes and style, they seem to be quite modern for their time.

A second photograph of the sisters, taken in the 1920s (fig. 14) shows the two young women seated next to each other. They both sport the short bob hairstyle, fashionable at that time.[106] Araxie, on the left, wears a long plissé skirt with a light colored satin shirt on top. The shirt has an embroidered pattern all around the bottom, as well as a sewn shawl collar with traces of the pattern behind the neck. Given that Araxie worked in embroidery, it is possible that she has sewn the needlework on her clothes, and it is also possible that they had sewn their own clothes as sewing machines were already available in the Middle East, in the 1930s.[107] In addition, Middle Eastern "girls were taught sewing, embroidery, home ecomonics, and child care" early on, in their schools.[108] The shirt has a 'v' neck with a large button sewn on the tip of the opening, long sleeves that are fitted at the top while being loose and cuffed with a bow at the bottom. A much younger Satenik who seems prematurely aged in her early teenage years, wears a velvet dress with frills at the bottom of her skirt. A black leather belt holds her waist, while a cotton blouse covers her top.

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[105] See Victoria Sherrow. *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 118.
[106] Ibid.
[107] John A. DeNovo *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939.* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, Ltd., 1968), 316.
[108] Zehra F. Arat. "Turkish Women and the Republic Reconstruction of Tradition" in *Reconstruction Gender in the Middle East: Tradition, Identity, and Power,* ed. Shiva Balaghi and Fatma Müge Göçek. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 70.

As their clothing suggests, this photograph has been captured on the same day as *Meguerditch Agha Keshkegian with his wife and two daughters* (fig. 4). What is interesting in comparing these two images is that the girls' dresses have been subjected to a significant restyling. They have not changed their clothes but their outfits appeared much more revealing in the sisterhood portrayal than in the family portrait. Where Araxie appears to have her chest hidden with a tied-up shawl around her neck, in the arrangement with her sister, one finds her bare neckline. Furthermore, in a similar manner, Satenik's conservative look in the family portrait is altered to a more liberal one, where she appears to have unbuttoned her blouse. An unusual detail also catches the viewer's eye, as the photographer has captured part of Araxie's legs, visible at the end of her plissé skirt. Indeed, this is very strange as early twentieth century portraiture was generally restricted and conservative, apart for the Orientalist representations of Middle Eastern and African women. As I compare modes of representations between the East and the West, I am unquestionably confronted here with the issue of sexuality. A point of interest, for instance, is the fact that two sisters appear open, less strict, in some ways playful and generally modern-looking. It is at this rare instance, in the overall corpus of photographs that one can detect a hint of sexuality.

Undoubtedly, eroticism and sexuality were prevalent themes of the portrayal of the Middle-East. *Orientalism,* a groundbreaking and controversial publication by Palestinian–American scholar, Edward Said, discusses the pervading and often derogatory Western view of the Orient, present in eighteenth– and nineteenth–century academic and artistic representations of the East. In his book, Said notes on this eroticization theme: "the relationship between the East and the West is really defined as

sexual: [...] the association between the Orient and sex is remarkably persistent."[109] Naturally, women were key figures in this type of representation but in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the representation of women is noteworthy as the very context of this portrayal influences the image. In portraiture, Sarah Graham–Brown distinguishes between commercial and family portraiture explaining that generally, "Men took photographs of women and men frequently dictated if, or on what terms, women appeared in photographs. Where women appear in family photographs, this was sanctioned because these pictures were intended to be seen only within the family circle."[110]Therefore, in studying the nature of this liberal sisterhood portrayal, one has to bear in mind that the photograph has been captured as part of a family portrait session. As such, while the above mentioned discourse about Orientalist representation and sexuality might be influential, this idea loses relevance given the familial context. The critical question then is: why this change in representation?

The photographer's input and the girls' eagerness to comply is a possibility one is unable to ignore. Considering photographic practices of that period, the photographer's presence in the image is far more significant than the sitter's will to pose. An interesting detail in this image is the little bouquet in Satenik's right hand. Of course, in different circumstances, a bouquet would signify marriage but Satenik is very young at the time when the photograph has been captured, in addition to the fact that she only got married some twenty years later. Instead, the tiny bouquet seems to be used much like the Armenian–American artist's, Arshile Gorky's, hand-held flowers, in the sentimental and

[109] See Edward Said. *Orientalism.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 309.
[110] See Sarah Graham-Brown. *Images of Women*, 62.

referential photograph behind the many versions of *The Artist and His Mother.* [111] In a biographical treatment of the artist, Hayden Herrera mentions that Gorky's flowers were without a doubt "plunked in his hand by the photographer,"[112] which according to Kim S. Theriault was a "characteristic indicator of a poetic disposition."[113] Yet, on a semiotic point of view, John Gedo and Donald Kusprit highlight the fact that "the flowers in the work are the signs epitomizing their [Gorky and his mother] fusion" apparent through the mother's floral pattern on the apron and the young boy's bouquet. Taking a closer look, the image of the two sisters develops this analogy through the embroidered floral pattern at the bottom of Araxie's shirt and the bouquet on Satenik's right hand, resting on her lap. Certainly, the bouquet could be an indication of a special occasion, particularly relating to the life of Satenik but the family argues otherwise, contending with the idea that the flowers were simply planted in the girl's hand for decorative purposes.

A second possibility is the significance of parental authority or rather in this case, the absence of it. The image, in the absence of these authoritarian figures, suggests a certain level of liberty and perhaps even, an extent of modernization. In fact, with the establishment of new communities in the diaspora, the patriarchal order of the family became exposed to significant change. Susan Pattie notes that dispersion, uprooting, and adaptation to modern life diminished and radically shifted the strict gendered roles of the Armenian home and family, which were "agreed to be the focus of life. [...] The role of women within the home became secondary, as did the need for certain local knowledge

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[111] Traumatized by his experience of genocide, Nouritza Matossian writes: "Gorky drew from the photograph like a man possessed, using different media to analyze different parts of the image." See Nouritza Matossian. *Black Angel: A Life of Arshile Gorky.* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1998), 212-13.
[112] See Hayden Herrera. *Arshile Gorky: His Life and Work.* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 54.
[113] See Kim Servart Theriault, *Arshile Gorky: A Restrospective.* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2009), 18.

and maintenance of family networks."[114] Hence, I would suggest that this photograph is the very evidence of the effect of the shift in gendered power dynamics on the new generations. On one hand, the image does indeed portray a certain level of rebellion in the girls, a quality that cannot be traced in any of the other photographs. On the other hand, the girls' young adolescent age can also have had a notable effect on the means of representation.

Finally, a third possibility consists of the matter of marriage. Writing about Armenian family and marriage customs, Platz asserts that: "in traditional Armenian society marriages were arranged by the families of the bride and groom or by a matchmaker hired by the groom's family."[115] The fact that both girls' marriages were arranged through third parties compels me to assume that marriage customs were still intact, despite the fact that both girls married many years after this photograph was taken. Furthermore, where portraits are concerned, very often, marriages were arranged through photographs. In regards to early Armenian immigrants in Canada, Isabel Kaprielian–Churchill explains: "Through matchmakers, letters, photos, and the Armenian network, marriages were arranged between men in Canada and often-much-younger women—"picture brides"—from orphanages and refugee centers abroad."[116] Could the change in representation then, between the family and sisterhood portraits, have been done with a prospective groom in mind? Of course, in theory, this would have been a plausible option but considering the strict nature of the culture's patriarchal order, the prospective bridegroom would likely have preferred a conforming and submissive wife—opposed to

[114] See Susan Pattie. "Armenians in Diaspora" in *The Armenians: A Handbook,* ed. Edmund Herzig, Marina Kurkchiyan. (London, Cambridge: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 140.
[115] See Platz. "Armenians," 56.
[116] See Isabel Kaprielian-Churchill. "Armenians" in *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples.* ed. Paul R. Magocsi. (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press Inc., 1999), 220.

a liberal one—as represented in the earlier *Haikanoush and Vartanoush Keshkegian* (fig. 8) photograph.

Certainly, without direct access to the photographic subjects, there is no way of knowing what the true intentions and motives of the photograph might have been. In any case, one thing is fairly certain. This sisterhood portrait accentuates the sisterly bond between Araxie and Satenik, similarly to Vartanoush and Haikanoush's portrait. The arrangement highlights sisterhood with the hand-holding gesture; the warm, cohesive positions; and the adjoined heads. Overall, these sisterhood portraits underline the women's ties, while reflecting the dominant mentalities and social attitudes, in addition to customs and values, present within a family.

4.3 Marriage and Couples

The bust portrait of *Meguerditch Agha Keshkegian and wife, Limonia Khanem* (fig. 9), taken in the early 1920s, shows the parents of all six Keshkegian siblings—Vahram, Karnig, Vartanoush, Haikanoush, Araxie, Satenik—sitting close together and staring stiffly at the camera. The "agha" title between his name and surname attests to his high status,[117] while his imposing mustache is a symbol of his wealth and good status. In fact, the style of one's mustache and beard was very important and revealing in the Ottoman society, enough to have been included in the Ottoman census system from 1831 to 1914.[118] The couple appears conservative, buttoned up with a formal attire, that is not necessarily as fashionable as their daughters' dresses. The identical clothes and studio set

[117] The word "ağa" is translated in Turkish-English dictionaries as "lord, master, local big land owner." See Resuhi Akdikmen. "ağa" in *Langenscheidt Pocket Turkish Dictionary: Turkish-English/English-Turkish.* (Berlin, Munich: Langenscheidt KG, 2006), 28.
[118] Stanford J. Shaw "The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914" *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies.* (9: 3, Oct., 1978), 331.

confirm the fact that this image has been part of the same photographic studio session of them with their two girls. In comparison with *Meguerditch Agha Keshkegian with his wife and two daughters* (fig. 4), the couple's picture here lacks the special treatment of family portrait arrangements.

In contrast, the photographer's touch seems a lot more dominant in *The married daughter and her husband, Haikanoush Keshkegian–Stamboulian and husband, Hagop Stamboulian* (fig. 6), an indoor studio photograph taken in Beirut, Lebanon. The couple appears well dressed, in European fashion, possibly touched by the influence of Lebanon's French mandate (1923–1943). The husband, Hagop Stamboulian, wears a three-piece suit with a tie around his neck and a handkerchief in the side pocket of his suit. Similar to his father-in-law, he also has a mustache although his is trimmed and much more modern-looking.

The postcard has a note at the back, directed to Haikanoush's father and signed by his son-in-law, Hagop Stamboulian. Written in Armenian, it reads: "To my beloved father, Meguerditch Agha Keshkegian, we present you with our photograph in memory of [as a token of] the unforgettable love. June 29, 1923. Beirut." According to the family, the postcard had to have been taken prior to the Stamboulians' move to the United States, on their stop in Beirut. Unlike the note written in the sisterhood portrait of *Haikanoush and Vartanoush Keshkegian* (fig. 8), this inscription seems a lot more intimate, almost as a last reminder of their familial bond before the potentially long separation.

In *Misak and Nazelie Nazarian at their engagement (*fig. 10), taken in 1954, the engaged couple seems to be posing for the camera. The snapshot photograph attempts to capture a non-staged image of a supposedly happy and significant moment in the

couple's union. The couple stares straight at the camera, standing solemnly next to each other, almost stone-like. Two figures visible at the edges of the frame—Nazelie's mother, Victoria, on the left and Misak's sister, Sirarpi, on the right—stare blindly into the air, expressionless and unsmiling. In fact, nothing in this image—notably the absence of ceremonial details, gestures and the mere hint of a smile—suggests the significance of the event, apart from the formality of the couple and their rather emphasized position in the forground of the picture.

The Nazarian family originated in Sason, Turkey where their paternal ancestors had long owned and cultivated lands in the Kharne village. According to family history, they fled the massacres some time after 1919 with the assistance of soldiers from the French invasion. By the early 1930s, my great-grandfather, Hagop Nazarian had lost his wife and most of his children, had remarried a widow, Trfanda, who had also lost her husband and most of her children during the massacres. Each had one surviving son from their previous marriage—Hagop's son, Nshan Nazarian and Trfanda's son, Haroutioun. They established themselves in one of the refugee camps in Beirut, starting a new family of five children (Misak, Azniv, Sirarpi, Nazareth and Bedros). The vast majority of Armenian refugees who had fled the Ottoman Empire would dwell in refugee camps, which according to a 1971 United Nations slums report, consisted of vertically posted together huts, "made up of tin, rotten wood planks or, in rare instances, cement blocks."[119] While many organizations started to mobilize the community and attempted to relocate these destitute populations to new settlements, until the 1960s, "a significant

[119] Universidad de Antioquia. *Improvement of Slums and Uncontrolled Settlements: Report* (Columbia: United Nations, 1971), 80-1.

number of Armenian families was still living in refugee shacks."[120] Those who had some craftsmanship skills would pursue a small activity within the camp, often in their own hut, to support their subsistence.[121] Having left everything behind, the family's refugee experience is said to have been extremely difficult. A close look at this engagement photograph's background would attest to the modest living conditions of that life. The home is said to have been a tin house; this interior view shows patches of cement and pieces of wood. Misak Nazarian had learned shoe-making craft and at the time of his engagement, he operated two shops in the Marash area. Yet, he still lived in a tin house at the refugee camp which makes me wonder about the poor quality of this photograph. It is true that photographic studio family portraiture was less prevalent at this time and that amateur photography was quite common.[122] However, it is uncertain whether the end product is the result of an economic indicator, given the family's unfortunate state, or rather, a case of modernity and an embrace of technology.

In Armenian tradition, the process of an engagement began with negotiations between the heads of the respective families[123], usually the father or his alternate in the patriarchal rank. Misak's father, Hagop Nazarian, eventually died from an illness and Nshan, his eldest son took over as the family's new decision-maker. Following the death of his father, he had been the key negotiator with Nazelie's family, having married his

[120] These largely Armenian inhabited refugee camps were centered around the areas of Karantina, or in the so-called Sanjak and Charchabouk camps. See Nicola Migliorino. *(Re)Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria: Ethno-Cultural Diversity and the State in the Aftermath of a Refugee Crisis.* (Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 127.

[121] According to Nicola Migliorino, this refugee population in Lebanon and Syria was composed of three social strata: a large majority of destitute Armenian populations, a middle class who had higher education and was able to start a business in the city, and finally, settled Armenians who had lived in the region prior to the mass refugee waves. See Migliorino, *(Re)Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria*, 75-6.

[122] The use of the hand-held Kodak cameras had already gained popularity in the West, by the 1890s. As an important Middle-Eastern city, Beirut had since the beginning, been up to date with Western photographic practices and thus, certainly included the use of amateur photography in its society by the time this photograph had been taken. See Graham-Brown, *Images of Women*, 92-3.

[123] Stephanie Platz. "Armenians," 56.

own daughter, Anais, to Nazelie's brother, Haroutioun. According to custom, once an agreement was reached between the two family heads, a formal visit of the girl's family to the home of the young man established the actual engagement and in-law relationship.[124] Hence, this photograph might possibly document the very occasion on which the two families have come together to mark a new union.

In contrast to this engagement portrait (fig. 10), a later image of the couple shows a warmer atmosphere. In *Casual portrait of Misak and Nazelie Nazarian in the countryside* (fig. 7), one finds the couple on a weekend getaway to the Lebanese countryside. They are smiling and appear more affectionate toward one another, compared to the other images. They stand close to each other, Nazelie's posture and the camera angle lending movement to the portrait while suggesting unity and the impression of a happy marriage. Misak has a cigarette in his right hand, while his left one is placed around his wife's arm, resting on her waist. This image departs from the previous formality and serious atmosphere, enabling the viewer to get a glimpse of the portrayed subjects' personalities, instead of an aura of a ceremonial moment. On one hand, as subjects break away from the photographic studio and its subsequent formality, one can get a more intimate view of the sitter's lives. On the other hand, the photograph attests to an idea about the couple itself—to the fact that not only such an intimate view is permitted but it is also actively staged and validated because it is saved by the family.

4.4 Family Portraits: A Patriarchal Matter

The oldest portrait in the selection, *Demirdjian family portrait,* (fig. 3) is an albumen print (14 x 9.5 cm) mounted on a thick piece of card (20.5 x 15 cm). The mount

[124] Ibid.

features a pressed border relief which constructs a decorative frame. The portrait represents my great-grandfather's brother's family—name unknown—along with his wife and four children. The memory of their existence has been transmitted to me through my mother and uncles, who have themselves been informed by their father, my grandfather, Ezekiel Demirdjian. The existence of this photograph is intriguing in many ways, as the whereabouts of the sitters are unknown. According to family history, this photograph is the last piece of evidence of their existence, as it was taken immediately before they left the Ottoman Empire to establish themselves in Boston, Massachusetts. Tracing the whereabouts of the family in United States public records has proved to be a difficult task, partly because the 'Demirdjian' family name is very common in Armenian culture, reflective of the community's active involvement in the Ottoman empire's metallurgical crafts, especially in Anteb.[125] The estimated date for the portrait is in the early 1900, as it was apparently taken a few years prior to Ezekiel's birth, in 1911. Certainly, in the absence of documentation about the photograph itself or of the portrayed subjects, the subjects' Western-style dresses may roughly date the picture while hinting at the family's financial level,[126] as they conform to Edwardian era (1901–1910) fashions.

Set up in an indoor studio, the *Demirdjian family portrait* (fig. 3), shows a young couple seated on a love-seat, at the center of the arrangement, and surrounded by their four children. The man, dressed in a three-piece suit, with a high-collared shirt and a

[125] In a study of minority group memorial objects of the Ottoman empire, Zeynep Turan explains that "copper items are among the most frequently kept objects because Armenians were well-known for their artisanship in jewelry making and metalwork throughout the Ottoman Empire, especially in the area around Aintab." See Zeynep Turan "Material Memories of the Ottoman Empire: Armenian and Greek Objects of Legacy" in *Global Memoryscapes: Contesting Remembrance in a Transnational Age.* ed. Kendall R. Phillips, G. Mitchell Reyes. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 188.

[126] According to Donald Quataert, in his study of the Ottoman Empire, the adoption of western attire was rather related to the "mark[ing] [of] [a] social differentiation and modernity—[indicating] that they [...] were superior to those in their own society who did not wear such attire." See Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700 - 1922. (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 152.

neck-tie, is perfectly centered in the frame, his serious stare gazing at the camera. His short and layered hair, in addition to his walrus mustache, are typical of the times in Western fashion.[127] His wife, immediately to the man's right, wears a high collared bodice dress with a trumpet-shaped skirt and a leather belt at her waist. The leg-of-mutton sleeves, popular in the 1890s and in the early Edwardian period, are the key elements of her outfit, as are details on the yokes and lapels that accentuate the wide sleeves.[128] Wearing a sailor suit, the eldest son is standing on the left, an arm placed on his father's shoulder, situating him above the others and suggesting his future role as head of the family, in succession to his father. A male toddler sits on the father's lap, while a young boy, about five years old, and a younger sister, about three years old, sit on little chairs, in the foreground. Regarding the latter two figures, it is difficult to tell their gender—apart from their hairstyles—as they wear quasi-identical striped dresses.

The Western influence of the late Ottoman society, especially pertaining to the middle class, is an indisputable matter. In an essay about Ottoman portraiture, Nancy C. Mickleright notes that early on, "artists of the Ottoman court were [...] exposed to and interacting with European painting in an active fashion." [129] Moreover, the news about photography arrived in Istanbul only two months after Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre's invention was announced in Paris, in August 1839.[130] On that note, Micklewright argues that the relatively prompt report "indicates the degree to which developments in Europe

[127] See Cynthia Cooper. "Men's Dress: Victorian and Edwardian Eras: 1860-1910," 36.
[128] Idem., 43.
[129] Micklewright makes this observation based on information gathered from a 1987 essay by Gunsel Renda on the Western influence of 18th and 19th century Ottoman painting styles, as well as later portrait photographs See Nancy C. Micklewright. "Personal, Public and Political (Re) Constructions" in *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922,* ed. Donald Quataert. (New York: State University Press of New York, 2000), 287.
[130] See Gabor Agoston and Bruce Masters. "photography" in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire.* (New York: Facts on File, Inc./ Infobase Publishing, 2009), 459.

were followed in the Ottoman capital."[131] That said, given that portrait photography in the Middle East was developed in accordance with the West, this family photograph would suggest that Western influence was well established—from making a family statement through a photographic portrait,[132] to dressing fashionably, and all the way to the positioning of photographed sitters. In this regard, Julia Hirsch's argument—the aesthetic tradition of Renaissance portraiture embedded in Western photographic portraits—can also be noted here, through the family's appearance as "strong, gracious and cohesive."[133]

It is to be noted that Western fashions were especially followed in the capital and then, in the larger cities of the empire. Such observations only generate new questions about this particular image. Were these Western fashions followed closely in Anteb where the family is said to have originated and if so, why is it that the other Demirdjian members (fig. 1) do not dress in the same style? Or was it that this family was situated in another city at the time of the photograph? While these questions remain unresolved, the overall closely positioned yet formal arrangement can leave no doubt as to the portrait's expression of family status and cohesion.

The image of *Meguerditch Agha Keshkegian with his wife and two daughters* (fig. 4) appears to be one of the best examples of patriarchal hierarchy. Husband and wife sit on armchairs, slightly separated from each other but nevertheless assuming their high status. Pertaining to traditional Armenian family customs, Simon Payasalian explains

[131] See Micklewright. "Personal, Public and Political (Re) Constructions," 283.
[132] In her book, Sarah Graham-Brown explains that by the end of the century, a new photographic movement had emerged in which well-to-do Christian families, notably Armenians, were having their portraits taken in studios to express social status or family cohesion. See Graham-Brown, *Images of Women*, 58.
[133] Julia Hirsch, *Family Photographs: Content, Meaning and Effect.* (New York/London: Oxford University Press, 1981), 82-83.

that: "the patriarchal system was led by the eldest male, who directed family affairs and finances, while his wife managed work inside the house."[134] Clearly, the father's superiority in the rank is emphasized through the angle of his body, next to his wife and two daughters. Moreover, his firm, clenched fist on his lap and his arm as it rests on the arm of the chair, visually amplified by its placement in the forefront of the image—all contribute to accentuating his status. The eldest daughter, Araxie, sits on a higher stool between her father and mother, with an arm reaching toward her father's shoulder, suggesting her higher rank between siblings. As for the younger sister, Satenik, she is tossed to the far right corner of the arrangement, leaning towards her mother with one hand placed on her mother's armchair, presumably to keep her balance. The arrangement of these female subjects points to the familial ranks, while underlining the strict and conservative nature of the parent-child relations. The general atmosphere is very formal and serious—all members and especially the daughters pose in a very reserved manner.

The twins, Mariam and Khoren Kouladjian with their mother and cousin (fig. 11) is a French postcard (9 x 14 cm) mounted on a same size piece of cardboard. Depicted in this image, my maternal grandmother, Mariam Kouladjian, was born on December 2, 1920 in Urfa, Ottoman Turkey. In 1923, her entire family fled the massacres by train and established itself in Zahle, Lebanon, where they continued their family profession of meat vendors. This portrait, taken in 1923, shows my great grandmother with my maternal grandmother Mariam and her twin brother Khoren on her lap, at 2 years old, with one of their cousins on the left. The edges of the photograph show heavy deterioration over time, likely due to damage during transportation. A small detail on the back of the photograph—part of an advertisement in Turkish, written in Arabic script

[134] See Payaslian. "Armenia and the Evolution of Human Rights," 77.

with part of a logo showing the back legs and tail of a jumping horse—certifies the authenticity of the card's Ottoman provenance.

In this portrait, a painted studio backdrop depicting the topography of a plateau with a distant view of a mountain and bushes in the foreground blends into an outdoor studio environment. Unlike more conservative family portraits that attempt to reproduce the home environment, here the opposite is at play, though the backdrop painting includes a pair of doric columns placed before a tree, on the right hand side of the composition. According to Louis-Remy Robert, it was only in late nineteenth century Western studio photography that painted backdrops incorporated "the accoutrements of classical taste such as doric columns and dramatically upswept draperies."[135] The choice of background here might have been influenced by nineteenth-century use of picturesque motifs in drawing and painting which have later been taken-up by photographic studios. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the East—particularly the Middle East, Turkey and Egypt (then part of the Ottoman Empire), as well as India—became a highly visited European travelers' destination.[136] A renewed fascination for the antique generated waves of tourism and contributed to the development of commercial photography. This phenomenon also created the need for itinerant photographers in the region, commissioned by larger photographic firms, to capture sellable views.[137] These practices that started for touristic consumption later served to portray the local populations.[138] That said, the use of a rather picturesque landscape and of doric columns

[135] See Louis-Remy Robert. *Louis Robert: L'Alchimie des Images.* (Paris: Baudoin Lebon and NBC editions, 1999), 132.
[136] See Nancy Micklewright and Annie Brassey. *A Victorian Traveler in the Middle East: The Photography and Travel Writing of Annie Lady Brassey.* (Hants, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 9.
[137] Idem., 10.
[138] See Micklewright. "Personal, Public and Political (Re) Constructions," 273.

in the painted studio backdrop would likely have been the result of Western influence in the Ottoman society. The picturesque aesthetic was meant to generate a reflection in the viewer[139] and it is certainly the effect it seems to have regarding this portrait. Nonetheless, one has to acknowledge that the above information is attributed to Western photographic studio practices, so I wonder, in what ways these aesthetic qualities would have affected Ottoman portraiture? Considering the outdoor studio aesthetic here, this photograph would most probably have been captured by an itinerant photographer in the region. For instance, Megan Heuer explains that the itinerant photographer "wandered in and between cities, asking people to pose for pictures which they would then be able to purchase."[140] However, it is almost impossible to know the author of the large majority of Middle Eastern photographs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—apart from those taken in the capital city by established photographic studios—as there is practically no information, while in some cases the information found cannot be reliable.[141]

The portrait features a mother, sitting on the far right of the image, holding her son, Khoren, on her lap; her daughter, Mariam, seated immediately to her left; and a young cousin, Hagop Deyirmendjian, standing up, on the far left, with an arm reaching little Mariam's leg. The little boy's posture and facial expression reveal his pride in fulfilling the studio photographer's urging to stand straight and look serious. The mother too seems very serious with eyes staring straight at the camera, her two feet seemingly

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[139] Writing about the use of a picturesque aesthetic in photography practices, the authors note that: "the image of a landscape was intended to inspire the viewer to reflect as he would on the nature itself; on the fleeting of time..." See Karen Hellman and Brett Abbott. *Landscape in Photographs* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2012), 10.

[140] See Megan Heuer. "Mapping Sitting: On Portraiture and Photography" *BrooklynRail.org.* (April 2005), accessed July 29, 2012), http://www.brooklynrail.org/2005/04/art/mapping-sitting-on-portraiture-and-photo. (Site visited 29 July 2012).

[141] According to Micklewright, "with the exception of a few major figures, photographers came and went, often buying and selling signed glass negatives among themselves as their business fortunes waxed and waned." See Micklewright. "Personal, Public and Political (Re) Constructions," 268.

stuck together, her right fist clenched on her lap, while holding a restless child with her left arm. Yet, in a photograph depicting mother and children, it is perhaps odd to encounter a young cousin in the same portrait. The reason for this combination is unknown although some possibilities exist. Raymond Kévorkian notes that in average, Armenian couples disposed of up to four to eight children and that "households were correspondingly large," varying from an urban or rural emplacement.[142] Thus, the child's presence would in that context, reflect upon the close-knit nature of the family and its subsequent large household. The similar type of dress on the three children could also attest to that idea. In contrast, this could also be a moment where the woman and three children have been captured in the spur of the moment by a soliciting itinerant photographer on the street[143]– in which case, it would explain the absence of key members, particularly men, of the Kouladjian family.

The appearance of these twins is compelling. The children are wearing matching dresses and are holding their toys in their left hand. On one hand, the little girl, Mariam, sits still on a relatively big chair, wearing her tiny shoes, with a small bunch of her smooth baby hair tied with a ribbon on the left side to reveal her face. Her twin brother, on the other hand, is wearing white socks without shoes, holding a toy in his left hand while seemingly moving his right one, thereby creating a ghostly illusion. Their facial expressions are unquestionably absorbing. Little Mariam's face expresses a certain fascination while staring straight at the camera whereas her brother, Khoren, who is also

[142] Kévorkian explains that "as many as 70 members of the same family lived together in some mountain districts," whereas "in the plains and valleys, an average household generally contained 30 to 40 people." In contrast, in the largest urban centers such as Constantinople, men tended to found their own household, thus parting from tradition. See Raymond Kévorkian. *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History.* (London: I.B. Tauris & CO. Ltd., 2011), 280.
[143] See Heuer, "Mapping Sitting: On Portraiture and Photography."

staring at the lens, seems to be disturbed by the photographer's presence. There is a duality at play here, almost a clash between a contemplative and a tense atmosphere. On one hand, there's the picturesque backdrop and little Mariam's intrigued and fascinated eyes which create a reflective mood. On the other hand, the combination of the ghostly illusion of little Khoren's hand, the intent stares either in the toddler's discontent or the woman's gaze with hard, fixed eyes, as well as her still, clenched fist on her lap seems to provoke and disturb the viewer's reflection. The perplexing nature of this portrait enables the viewer to penetrate an imaginary realm. However, the uniformity of the indoor studio background found in *Meguerditch Agha Keshkegian with his wife and two daughters* (fig. 4), contributes to the controlled environment of formality, while the lack of detail and the strict arrangement helps the viewer to admire the portrayed subjects in harmony. In contrast, the inconsistent nature and the bothersome features of the outdoors in *The twins, Mariam and Khoren Kouladjian with their mother and cousin* (fig. 11) are rather distracting to the viewer.

The *Malkhassian family portrait* (fig. 12), a 9 x 14 cm postcard, taken sometime around 1925, in the village of Roumdigin, Yozgat, Ottoman Turkey, also features an outdoor studio. This is a photograph of Haigazoun Yapoudjian's aunt's family, whom he helped immigrate to Lebanon some time in the 1930s. The older male, Jabra Mahdessian, stands at the top center of the arrangement. Two adolescent children, Jabra's niece and nephew, stand next to him, Siranoush Malkhassian on his left and Parounag Malkhassian on his right. Jabra's wife, Efronia Mahdessian, sits on the bottom far left, on the same level as her own two children, Menzour Mahdessian, immediately to her right, and Apraham Mahdessian at the far right corner. Between the two Mahdessian children, sits

Jabra's own sister, Araksie Malkhassian, the mother of the two portrayed adolescents. Naturally, Jabra's two male children would have been placed next to him but given that Siranoush and Parounag are older in age—thus, higher in hierarchy—they have been placed next to the head of the house. It is also possible that their father, Mr. Malkhassian, missing in this portrait, was older than Jabra, making the two adolescents the dominant heirs. The positioning of the two younger children also suggests that they are too young to be part of the male rule in the family order, placing them under their mother's rule.[144] It is noteworthy that the strategic position of Jabra and his two sons and sister, immediately to his bottom, creates a triangle at the very center of the arrangement, as though delineating and accentuating the direct blood ties between them. Given the patriarchal order, the father is the dominant figure—the common father makes them legitimate siblings, and not the other way around. Furthermore, Raymond Kévorkian asserts that, "All the male descendants of the family are grouped around the *danuder* [trans.: head of home], together with the wives of his younger brothers and his sons. The whole thus formed functions in accordance with well-established rules and a precise hierarchy."[145] Hence, this photographic portrait is possibly the best example of the strict patriarchal order within the notion of an Armenian family. It is also noteworthy that the father stands right in the middle of the tapestry—his body separates the textile into two equal parts in addition to forming the apex of an equilateral triangle whose invisible horizontal side seems to extend from shoulder to shoulder—while the two visible diagonal sides lead up to join an invisible edge centered around his head. Therefore, the father of the family is yet again, centered in the frame and his strategic position in front

[144] See Kévorkian and Paboudjian. *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire ottoman,* 63.
[145] See Kévorkian. *The Armenian Genocide,* 280.

of the tapestry patterns forces an onlooker's gaze onto him. Thus, despite its outdoor space, the background rug's pattern in the Malkhassian portrait (fig. 12) with its larger geometrical forms seems to be enhancing the portrait viewing experience.

In contrast to the outdoor space, the portrait seems to be arranged resembling an indoor one, with an Armenian rug hanging on the back wall as would be customary in a domestic setting. According to Bonnie C. Marshall, "Armenians were master carpet weavers. They cover floors, walls, trunks, and beds with carpets."[146] In fact, the traditional Armenian rug is said to have been "highly visible in the traditional Armenian home of the nineteenth century."[147] Moreover, even after the genocide and subsequent displacements, in the early twentieth century, the popular demand for carpets in Britain and the United States operated through Armenian merchants who exported the carpets from Christian Armenia, until the Sovietization of the country.[148] Aesthetically, Armenian rugs almost always employ an octagonal or hexagonal geometric pattern at the center, and are characterized by their use of floral patterns and animal motifs, "anathema to Muslim practice."[149] In this case, the rug has a highly detailed floral pattern on its contours, a seemingly hexagonal pattern at the center and the famous pomegranate motif. Although pomegranate patterns can be traced through Greek, Pesian and Jewish iconography, Sirarpi Der Necessian asserts that Armenian iconography seems to favor

[146] See Bonnie C. Marshall. *The Flower of Paradise and Other Armenian Tales.* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group. Inc., 2007), xxv.
[147] See Levon Aprahamian and Nancy Sweezy. *Armenian Folk Arts, Culture, and Identity.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 150.
[148] See John L. Esposito. *The Islamic World: Past and Present* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 51.
[149] See Paul Beekman Taylor. *Gurdjieff's America: Mediating the Miraculous* (London: Lighthouse Editions Limited, 2004), 206.

this motif and represents it in several slightly different forms.[150] Thus, its use in this image suggests an intent to reproduce the home environment in the studio space, as a way of generating an authentic image of the family at home. The character of the floor and the visible portion of the back wall betray the outdoor setting of the studio. Indeed, speaking of itinerant photographers' practices, Graham–Brown affirms that: "A substantial proportion of nineteenth century photographs were taken in indoor or outdoor studio sets even though they purported to be 'real-life' scenes."[151]

The sitters' dress styles range from liberal to more conservative. It is noteworthy that the photograph was taken in the 1930s, the early years of the Turkish republic—a time where the population, under the rule of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, had to conform to Western models of fashion. Compared to the earlier Keshkegian portraits, the two pictured mothers dress in the same manner as *Haikanoush and Vartanoush Keshkegian* (fig. 8), which might hint about their conservative role as a submissive married woman. Jabra is also dressed conservatively; he looks old-fashioned compared to the *Two brothers, Karnig and Vahram Keshkegian,* (c. 1920)(fig. 5) who are clean shaved and wearing three-piece suits. His outfit resembles that of Avedis Demirdjian in *Three brothers, Ezekiel, Avedis, Puzant Demirdjians* (fig. 1), though without the Ottoman fez that had already been banned by that time. The boy's outfits—either Parounag Malkhassian, or Menzour and Apraham Mahdessian—are relatively standard without special treatment, consisting of white shirts and pants or shorts. Siranoush seems to be the best dressed, wearing a pearl necklace and a print dress, much like the ones worn by the

[150] See Sirarpi Der Nersessian. *Byzantine and Armenian Studies.* (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1973), 212.
[151] See Graham-Brown, *Images of Women,* 44.

young Keshkegian sisters in the 1930s, in *Araxie and Satenik Keshkegian, 1930s* (fig. 13).

The combination of arrangements, studio spaces, and dress styles in the ensemble of discussed family portraits emits a general sense of formality, no matter the period. However, this idea of formality differs in nature when studying the *Nazarian family portrait at Misak and Nazelie Nazarian's wedding* (1955, Beirut, Lebanon, Snapshot, 8.9 x 13.9 cm, Nazarian family collection) (fig. 15), as it is rather displayed in the very occasion it depicts. The special occasion of a wedding brings formally dressed family members together, while the snapshot image lacks the prearranged qualities of a studio portrait. There is no way of knowing who has captured this image or whether it was an amateur or professional photographer. Whether it be intentional or not, one can discern any logic in the arrangement. Indeed, the married couple, Misak and Nazelie, sit at the very center—the adult Nazarian members occupying the left half of the group, placed behind the groom, while the Melkonian family members, positioned on the right half, behind Nazelie. On the Nazarian side, from left to right, there's Nshan's wife [name unknown] (Misak's sister in law); Misak's mother, Trfanda; his older sister Azniv who has one hand placed on her mother; Misak's brother Nazareth and his younger sister, Sirarpi. In the space between Nazareth and Sirarpi stands the older step brother, Nshan—the head of the Nazarian family, as established earlier—whose strategic higher position places him immediately above Misak. This detail, similar to the Malkhassian portrait, accentuates the patriarchal order of the Nazarian family. Meanwhile, on the Melkonian side, at the far right corner stands the father of the bride, Minas Melkonian, immediately under him is Anais, Nshan's daughter, while on his left stands the bride's mother,

Victoria. On the left of Victoria stands Nazelie's eldest sister Arshalouys, next to which is the other sister Mary and her own daughter, Madeleine. Immediately behind the couple, Nazelie's two younger brothers, Haroutioun and Garo, stand next to Nshan Nazarian.

The Melkonian family came from the northern Sason region, where Minas and his four brothers had left in the earlier stages of the deportations in 1915. His later wife, Victoria Kaprielian, and her entire family left their respective homes [locations unknown] and were forced to take part in the mass deportations. On the way, a young Victoria, who would have been five years old, was hospitalized with typhoid along with several members of her family. When she regained consciousness, she was informed that she was the sole survivor of her family and subsequently, was adopted by a rich Arab man. After spending a few weeks with her new family, she fled her adoptive home along with a 14 year old Armenian bride. They spent several days in the forests until they were picked up by armed Armenian men on horseback—who were in search of Armenian children—and taken to an orphanage where young Victoria was reunited with her brother and sister. Around 1925, at the age of 14, Victoria married Minas Melkonian in Dörtyol whence they went to Iskenderoun to catch a boat to Lebanon.[152] Like the majority of Armenians in Lebanon, Minas and Victoria were first established in refugee camps. Unable to have children for seven years, they adopted a boy and a girl, later having five children of their own—Nazelie being one of them.

Observing the images, one will realize that the act of smiling is not customary to the portrayed. Almost all subjects in the selected portraits pose full-faced to the camera

[152] The two sisters are separated here, when Victoria and Minas ride a boat to Lebanon while the older sister and her husband, instead take a boat to Greece.

with their eyes staring directly out at the viewer. It is interesting that the Nazarian wedding portrait (fig. 15), although made much later than the other family portraits, has only one person out of twenty-four genuinely smiling (two women wear the hint of a smile but are more likely to have been caught in the middle of an exchange). Rony Tobing, asserts that until the 1930s, "it was unseemly in the United States and Europe to face the camera smiling: smiling was considered to make the subject look foolish and childlike."[153] However, this photograph has been taken in Lebanon in 1955. The reason for this serious demeanour cannot be known for certain. Nonetheless, a few factors might have played a role, here, such as the late development of Western photographic customs of posing in the Middle East,[154] especially pertaining to lower social classes—considering in this case, the status of the portrayed as Armenian refugees in Lebanon—or even the family's differing political views at a time of high tension. This is not to say, however, that the photograph does not portray family cohesion. In fact, the attention given positioning three young Nazarian children in the foreground affirms family ties. Three siblings, the children of the Nazarian family head—the smiling boy, Puzant, his younger brother, Hrayr, and sister, Sarah—stand immediately next to the bride, in contradiction of the above mentioned logic. The catch, however, consists of the fact that the children's oldest sister, Anais—in other words, Nshan Nazarian's daughter—has married Nazelie's own brother, Harout. Therefore, the children's position seems to serve as a testament to the union of these families. True to arranged marriages in the Armenian tradition, the potential couple would generally be acquainted as a wedding was considered "a social

[153] See Fatimah Tobing Rony. *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 111.
[154] See Graham-Brown, *Images of Women,* 93.

event involving the whole community."[155] On one hand, in this case, the couple would have known each other through Misak's step-niece's wedding but the involvement of their respective communities would have been very unlikely, given the circumstances. On the other hand, the photograph itself may function as a symbol of community involvement, if not as a bridge between them.

4.5 Impact of the Family Photograph

Overall, the photographs portray family cohesion—a notion which is essentially founded in tradition. For instance, a personal theme seems to be reflected on the back of postcards—some have been inscribed with notes, others have been addressed to the receivers. In the images, individual poses and intimate gestures, such as sisterly hand-holding or a spouse placing an arm on his wife's shoulder, evince the personal.

Of course, the evidence in this case study is family photography. Marianne Hirsch explains that photography, as a medium, "appear[s] to solidify the tenuous bond shaped by need, desire, narrative, and projections."[156] Gazing at the depicted subjects gives proof of the family's existence in time and space, while simultaneously acknowledging their absence—all of this without photographic proof of their fate. Hence, an analysis of the image leads to three distinct kinds of evidence. First, the images are evidence of life and existence in the past; they are evidence of a simultaneous understanding of existence and absence in the present; and finally, they are evidence of the familial network, past and present. Though less faithfully respected today, this

[155] See Platz, "Armenians," 56.
[156] See Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," 9.

domestic hierarchy is certainly an essential part of the transmission of Armenian identity and heritage.

In the absence of primary visual evidence—such as in the case of the Armenian genocide—Paul Williams, in his study on memorial museums, claims that photographs serve as objects with two main attributions. On one hand, he notes the historical aspect where the photograph possesses a certain vitality from the represented time and place; and on the other hand, the imagination component that enables viewers to feel emotions for displayed victims.[157] Thus, displayed images not only refer to the subject, but they also symbolize the sense of family, safety, and continuity that has been hopelessly severed as a result of the traumatic event. In addition, historic photographs from a traumatic past serve to authenticate that past's existence.

5. Specimens from the Past

The use of photography in Western family portraiture began in the 1840s, reaching its peak towards the end of the century.[158] In the Middle East, the popularity of studio portraits came later in time. Graham–Brown notes that the evolution of portrait photography followed a similar pattern—studio portraiture to hand-held Kodak cameras—in the Middle East as in the West, although at a much slower pace.[159] In addition, she asserts that: "until the 1940s and 1950s, the clientele for studio photographs was mostly drawn from the more affluent strata of society and only the wealthy were

[157] See Paul Williams. *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities.* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2007), 71-75.
[158] See Graham-Brown, *Images of Women,* 93.
[159] Ibid.

likely to own cameras."[160] Visually speaking, this development is reflected in the varying styles and techniques of the surviving and circulating photographs, especially notable in the range of formats.

The corpus of photographs represents four different formats. First, it is the specimen seen in the *Demirdjian Family portrait* (fig. 3), an albumen print stuck on a larger piece of cardboard. A second, well represented format is the picture postcard. Mary Warner Marien explains that: "picture postcards evolved after changes in the nineteenth century postal regulations in Europe and the United States authorized a simple, undecorated card with a message to be mailed."[161] The sources of these postcards in the region are places such as France, the United States and Italy; this is apparent from the language of the word "postcard" printed on the back of the cards. Certainly, this aspect can be considered as a reflection of Middle-Eastern trading routes, especially with the West, as well as the availability of photographic materials at that time. In exploring postcards, one necessarily encounters the question of place. Postcards are generally referred to as documenting a specific place, whereas these picture postcards are of a different nature as portraits. The absence of a postmarked stamp is also noteworthy as there is virtually no way of tracing the place of origin. In her study of Japanese Internment camp postcards, Kirsten McAllister argues regarding the relationship between the postcard, its sender and the receiver, McAllister argues that: "the sender is not fixed in place as the newcomer, resident or citizen but in passage, passing."[162] Through a format functioning as a symbol of travel, in addition to a depiction of time and place that

[160] Ibid.
[161] See Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History.* (London: Lawrence King Publishing, 2010), 169.
[162] See Kirsten Emiko McAllister. "Held Captive: The Postcard and the Internment Camp" *West Coast Line* (35:1, Spring 2001), 36.

can never be reached again, the postcard portraits are the very embodiments of displacement. McAllister notes that: "with no possibility of return, the postcard can only be a departure into an imagined future."[163] In this collection, the duality between the portraits and the personal handwritten notes combined with the lack of a traceable origin and of a return address symbolize both a sense of place and displacement, at the same time.

A third type, in the Keshkegian collection, is the regular photographic print: a gelatin silver print (16.8 x 11.8 cm), for *Meguerditch Agha Keshkegian with his wife and two daughters* (fig. 4), taken in c. 1920, in Aleppo, Syria and a printout paper photograph (14.8 x 9.7 cm), for *Two brothers, Karnig and Vahram Keshkegian* (fig. 5), taken in c. 1920, in Philadelphia, U.S.A. Both images seem to previously have been stuck on the same, stiffer material, leaving traces of brown layer stuck on the back. This leads me to believe that the second photograph from the United States had been sent out to the parents in Aleppo who then placed both photographs in an album. My suggestion is that the album was discarded when the family had to move again, from Aleppo, Syria to Beirut, Lebanon. A fourth and final type emerges in a group of snapshots, a black and white series, taken at the mid–twentieth century, displaying significant moments of my paternal family line. The Nazarian collection's snapshot photographs are representative of the post–genocide and early establishment era of Armenian families in Lebanon. The approach in the photographic technique, the lower resolution, less strict emphasis on arrangement, and a lack of studio aesthetic fits with the new technology. The three photographs from this collection discussed here have been printed on thin card material while two related photographs are tiny palm-sized gelatin silver prints seemingly

[163] Ibid.

captured at a different time and displaying gendered gatherings. Those two images have been stamped by a photographic studio where they were likely printed—it seems unlikely that a professional photographer made these snapshots at a casual family gathering.

Overall, the photographic types attest to the availability of formats in the Middle East, and in a small way, reflect the development of photography in many places.

6. Life Journey, Memory of the Past and Material Culture inside the Home

In the context of a history of displacement and trauma, the notion of home becomes a very complex phenomenon embedded in memories of the past and deep emotions of nostalgia. Undeniably, the key element of this domestic environment that contributes to the preservation of the past in the present is its material culture. In her study of material culture in the Quebec–Armenian home, Marie–Blanche Fourcade states that "family goods form the backbone of memory and domestic heritage."[164] Through the study of over 500 objects from the collections of some 19 informants, Fourcade concludes that in the aftermath of genocide, displacement, and renewed immigration, transportable objects constitute the main body of domestic material culture preserved from the family's earlier life in Ottoman Turkey.[165] The entirety of this crucial life collection, held in the newly established Canadian–Armenian home, consists of an assortment of jewels, embroideries, bibles, administrative documents, and family archives that survivors were able to carry with them. Particularly, family archives can be considered as one of the most important aspects of Armenian material cultural heritage as

[164] See Fourcade, *Habiter l'Arménie au Québec,* 117.
[165] Idem., 8.

they are the genealogical and legal evidence of the lost ancestors' existence, taking the form of birth certificates, legal documents of marriage, orphanage cards, personal inscriptions, among other things. It is also at this site where one would find the family's photographic patrimony.

As the reader might expect, photographic patrimony is considered here, as the most important aspect of the familial archive given that this research focuses on the meaning of domestic imagery. Yet, beyond the importance that I impose on them, photographs are indeed embedded with multiple layers of meanings on their two-dimensional framed surfaces. Certainly, a photograph is considered to be a remarkably powerful tool for its ability to, as Marianne Hirsch puts it, "open a window to the past and to materialize the viewer's relationship to it."[166] Hence, I wonder how the anchoring of a social and historical context impose or affect the relationship between photograph, its owner and their pasts? An attempt to answer this question in relation to family photography depends on consideration of the family and its own use of the visual objects.

While photographic albums seem to constitute a facet of the material culture in Canadian homes, the families in this case study have kept the photographs in boxes, over several decades. In the survivor homes, the few saved items had been kept together—photographs often stored in envelopes. With the new generation's displacements, the old photographs were often transported in cardboard boxes, where old and new photos would have been mixed. Their current location in Canadian homes has remained the same, almost as a testament to the family's unstable and migrant journey.

Author of *Suspended Conversations,* Martha Langford argues that a family album is essentially a personal album "concerned with or situated within a particular

[166] See Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," 117.

configuration of family and community."[167] Therefore, the photographic album is a product of its compiler, without which the collection loses its essence, its framework of oral consciousness. Thus, to understand the album, one has to decipher a series of attributes related to the compiler's life in other words, apply what Langford calls an oral-photographic framework to "restore the [compiler's] agency and give back [his or her] voice."[168] The question of interest then, in this case study, is what happens when photographs are not placed in a photographic album and yet, their sole purpose in the home, remains to serve as a mnemonic device? Better yet, how does the correlation of orality and photography differ in the absence of an album where an actual framework preserves that storytelling bond? Answering these questions requires an examination of the alternative space where this dynamic between photograph and orality occurs. That said, there are two possible spaces of consideration: on one hand, it is the home where the photograph functions as an object, part of the domestic material culture; and on the other hand, it is the familial network where storytelling and transmission of memory occur.

As the photographs under consideration here reside in boxes, rather than albums, one might say that they have kept their individuality and are treasured for exactly what they are. Nevertheless, considering that the family does not categorize these photographs according to one individual's personal narrative, the photographs retain their set of meanings. In many ways, they continue to exist in their original form, though it must be conceded that the change of environment and immigrant culture certainly alter the approaches to meaning-making over time. That said, my research proposes that the very

[167] See Martha Langford, "Speaking the Album: An Application of the Oral-Photographic Framework" in *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts.* ed. Annette Kuhn and Kirsten Emiko McAllister. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 242.
[168] Idem., 243.

environment and domestic space of these objects play a critical role in their preservation. The photographs have lived in boxes almost to the entirety of their lifetime. The families in question only take them out during family gatherings where storytelling and memory transmission occur. They are not part of daily life. Consequently, the physical object of a photograph functions in an almost ritualistic manner, brought to light only on special occasions. Nonetheless, the connection with the photograph indeed occurs inside the family home which brings me to explore the meaning of the notion of home.

While some would argue that home consists of a specific location, Svetlana Boym argues that the sense of home can exist independently from a physical location.[169] Moreover, in her study of Armenians in the diaspora, Susan Pattie notes that more than the physical location of a place, the concept of home seems to be largely defined by the experience of place; hence, the family connections and the network of people one has established.[170] In consequence, she argues that the idea of diaspora becomes a conception of place itself in which home designates the nomadic life, centered around family.[171] Similarly, in a study of her own roots, Sima Aprahamian asserts that three of the Armenian diaspora communities she has been part of define their ethnic identities in terms of their daily patterns of interaction, their emphasis on family, friendship, and the practice of ethnic cuisine, dance, storytelling, membership in organizations and institutions.[172] Therefore, the photograph is a mnemonic device whose embodied knowledge and the relationship with the family—in other words, the shared experience of

[169] See Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*. (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 255.
[170] See Pattie. "Longing and Belonging," 82-3.
[171] Ibid.
[172] See Sima Aprahamian. "Armenian Identity: Memory, Ethnoscapes, Narratives of Belonging in the context of the recent emerging notions of globalization and its effect on time and space." *Feminist Studies in Actearca Journal* 60. (July 1999), 16.

the visual object, as well as the memory that is later transmitted to new generations through the photograph—serves as a key reinforcement of cultural and familial basis inside the home. In many instances, the content of the imagery conforms to the appointments of the family home, such as the photographic reference to (fig. 12) and the actual use of decorative Armenian rugs on the walls. On this point, Fourcade argues that "cultural symbols placed here and there in the living room are thus means of reconnecting with the home of the past, the remote community and to register again, almost in a hurry, to a place that will be the center of social life."[173] That said, the photograph enables the creation of cultural patterns founded on visual reference and memory. As a result, memory inhabits the home and is omnipresent in the family's daily life.

It is also noteworthy that the act of reconstituting the biography of these visual objects testifies to the experience that the photograph has lived through with the family. In parallel, this process also outlines a second story; that of the family itself. Fourcade argues on the relationship between family and object affirming that "the owners are the guardians because they recap their memories and histories within this materiality. Objects bear in them the projects and aspirations that nourish the definition of self and that of family."[174] Thus, regarding the treatment of the photographs during the family gatherings, the photographs both in their physical form and visual content embody familial memory.

In addition, the lack of display of these photographs and their storage in boxes reflect on the nomadic lifestyle of the respective immigrant families over the last generations. In a study of immigration in the postcolonial discourse, Mireille Rosello talks about the idea of home in a suitcase: "the contents of the case, represent what is left

[173] See Fourcade, *Habiter l'Arménie au Québec,* 15.
[174] See Fourcade, *Habiter l'Arménie au Québec,* 16.

of 'home' [...]: [as for] what is inside the suitcase simultaneously underlines the absence of home and the idea of what home is (now reduced to a collection of things)."[175] Certainly, the assortment of family photographs depicting a variety of times and places—ranging from photographs of my maternal line (fig. 1, 2, 3, 11), combined with photographs from my paternal line (fig. 10, 15), in addition to images recording my own parents' lives, as well as those of my own—set in a box that has transported them from Turkey to Lebanon, to Greece and to Canada; stand as both a visual and physical testament to the biography of the family they document. Consequently, I would argue that for these Canadian immigrants of Armenian descent, the boxes in their current forms, in their assortment of both old and new photographs, are the very embodiment of home—if not, the family's attachment to the idea of multiple homes.[176] Meanwhile the unaltered boxed format reflects feelings of displacement caused by leaving a previous home.

7. Impact of a Confined Past

As most Armenian families of the diaspora trace their ancestry to the photographically advanced Ottoman Empire, it is quite common for them to possess family portraits from this period. But this phenomenon needs to be examined within the larger scheme of material culture and the value placed on photographs within it. These photographic portraits exist in an object-poor community whose experience of genocide has left little visual representation. In this respect, genocide is different from war; the execution of orchestrated violence and the attempt to systematically eliminate a specific

[175] See Mireille Rosello. *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest.* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), 112.
[176] Manjikian observes that Svetlana Boym's theory on the notion of home excludes the possibility of feeling a connection toward multiple homes. See Lalai Manjikian, *Collective Memories and Home in the Diaspora: The Armenian Community in Montreal*. (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag, 2008), 15.

group of people affects the aftermath, the post–genocide era of these culturally dispossessed peoples. This is a point argued by Williams who claims that: "orchestrated violence aims to destroy, and typically does so efficiently. The injured, dispossessed, and expelled are left object-poor."[177] In terms of documentary films, photojournalism, and amateur photographs, there are few actual photographs documenting the events of 1915–1923. On this note, Williams argues, in a chapter discussing the role of photographs within memorial museums, that the visual objects serve as cues for mental visualization. However, these institutions' museological approaches seem to rely on radical de-contextualization by appropriating private memories into the public domain and relying on displayed evidence that may have actually been little experienced in the victim's life but today become permanently evident history.[178]

In a study about mass media imagery associated to difficult knowledge and especially regarding the Jewish Holocaust, Barbie Zelizer expresses concern regarding the ability of a photograph to prolong an event in such powerful ways as to suspend responses to it.[179] Her conclusion on the media's misuse of imagery contends that it creates a breach between representation and responsibility; therefore, bearing witness becomes crucial for the effective utilization of images representing subjects much bigger than what they depict.[180] Although unquestionably, the mass production of images depicting traumatic events generates a number of issues in regards to the notion of memory.

In his essay "The Uses and Abuses of Memory," Tzvetan Todorov discusses the

[177] See Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 25.
[178] See Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 71.
[179] See Barbie Zelizer. *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye*. (University of Chicago Press, 1998).
[180] Ibid.

functions of memory and seeks to determine the morality in the use of the past in the present. He argues that the act of making use of the past always serves a purpose. [181] He makes a distinction between the recovery and the use of the past; establishing that the first function serves to certify the truth, whereas the other only makes use of part of the truth. [182] Todorov indicates that the political context of recollection is another aspect that should not be taken lightly; for in commemorating the past, one should acknowledge that it is often a one-sided story.[183] Todorov, also examines the dangers of the survival of the past which he argues is at risk between the erasure of parts of the past, its isolation from other events in history, as well as its vulgarization.[184] As a consequence of these risks and issues, Todorov argues that a solution to the good use of memory consists of the recovery and acknowledgment of the past in all of its forms, in hopes that parties in question can seize to identify to one group, opposed to another.[185]

Expressing similar concerns, an essay by Andreas Huyssen entitled "Present Pasts," argues that in an attempt to counter the fear of forgetting within a fast-paced present, memory and the marketing of the past seem to work as an anchor to secure stability.[186] By making use of the terminology of "present pasts," he explains that these

[181] See Tzvetan Todorov, (transl. Lucy Golsan)"The Uses and Abuses of Memory" in *What happens to History: The Renewal of Ethics in Contemporary Thought*, ed. Howard Marchitello. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 13.
[182] Idem., 18.
[183] Ibid.
[184] In what he calls a "literal use", he asserts that the control of the past would lead to a possible erasure of its parts, whereas its sacralization would lead to its isolation from other events in history. In a "pattern use", he argues that it leaves the past toward a kind of vulgarization. Idem., 19-20.
[185] Idem., 21.
[186] See Andreas Huyssen. "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, and Amnesia." *Public Culture*. (12:1, Duke University Press, 2000).

dynamics seem to alter the very nature of the memory, just as much as the relationship between past, present and future becomes distorted.[187]

It is interesting to try to correlate these studies of memory with the Armenian genocide. In contrast with Holocaust memory, Armenian experience remains image-poor, with the exception of family portraits whose importance is increasingly recognized. In other words, the imagery in question in this case does not portray trauma but rather, family members, people from the past. It is also noteworthy that the role of politics in relation to the execution of crimes of genocide is immense on the victimized party. Sociologist and anthropologist Sima Aprahamian argues that Armenian identity is embedded in a discourse of memory that is especially characterized by "narratives of the tragic history marked by an unrecognized genocide and a nationalist discourse."[188] In fact, for nearly one hundred years, Armenians have endured the denialist propaganda of the Turkish government to deliberately silence accusations, if not eliminate any evidence of the events. Moreover, according to Marie–Aude Baronian, for Armenians "the heritage of the catastrophe has become localized in the imaginary."[189] On one hand, this is due to a lack of visual documentation of the event and furthermore it is because "the work of mourning has never really taken place and Armenians feel that they have to provide evidence to legitimate their past."[190] Hence, these conditions heighten the function and value of the photograph within these communities. Accordingly, Marianne Hirsch notes with regard to the role of photographs bearing a difficult past: "More than oral or written narratives, photographic images that survive massive devastation and outlive their

[187] Idem., 37.
[188] See Aprahamian, "Armenian Identity," 25.
[189] See Baronian, "History and Memory, Repetition and Epistolarity," 158.
[190] Ibid.

subjects and owners function as ghostly revenants from an irretrievably lost past world."[191] In consequence, the viewer's imposition of a social and historical context becomes a natural resort under such circumstances to deal with the heavy emotional baggage that also affects his or her identity.

The problem then with denial is not simply at a political level—rather a denialist propaganda seems to devaluate the survivor's very existence. In the present, the unrecognized genocide—its denial—also affects the formation of collective memory and the sense of a nation. In that context, there is a developing need to attest or the "need to responsibility," in Baronian's terms,[192] that affects the understanding of memory and narrative, heritage, familial history, and identity. Photographic objects are seen to support the survivor testimonies, the revelation of historical events and the personal experiences of injustice. Their service to personal memory and family history becomes their most valuable aspect. They protect against amnesia, assimilation, and the loss of identity, which constitute the biggest fears for this community. Therefore, arguably the images have a symbolic function as they represent a kind of proof of the origin of this trauma, instability, and displacement—even though, they do not actually illustrate this history in literally.

Thus, genocide is indeed different from war, as it is concerned with the elimination of a specific group of people. The political mechanism of genocide denial has a more obvious effect on the past that goes beyond the weight inflicted on the survivors' identity and their inability to mourn their loss. This refers to the part of history that is erased or left out over the years, which in this case includes the pre–genocide era of

[191] See Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," 115.
[192] See Baronian, "History and Memory, Repetition and Epistolarity," 158.

Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, especially their contributions to and heritage within Ottoman society. That said, accepting the fact that there are relatively few visual documents attesting to the events of 1915–1923, the very existence of family portraits sheds light on the lives of Ottoman Armenians before the genocide. Graham–Brown asserts that until World War I (1914–1918), Middle-Eastern family portraiture only represented a narrow segment of society, compared to Europe.[193] So finding such portraits among Armenian families of the diaspora suggests the fortunate position and financially more comfortable background of Armenians in that time. Furthermore, the author claims that "The Armenians, who had played such an important role in the development of photography in the region, were particularly strongly represented. Since Armenian photographers were working in Turkish provincial towns from the 1880s onwards, the photographic record of this community encompassed a more socially and geographically diverse sample."[194] This finding is confirmed by family photographs in Armenian homes around the world which remains an area yet to be studied.

8. Locating Identity

It is safe to say that notions of family, memory and place are distinct and yet inextricably connected if not in constant interaction with each other. Yet in attempting to define identity, one ought to pay close consideration to notions of family and place. Considering the history of these families, one quickly realizes that both key elements are problematic due to the forced displacements of the families and their traumatic pasts.

[193] See Graham-Brown, *Images of Women,* 94.
[194] Idem., 95.

The notion of survivorship applied to cancer patients, is defined as the trajectory of surviving cancer from the moment of diagnosis—a definition broad enough to include the impact of this experience on the patient's family, friends and caregivers.[195] When comparing cancer patients to genocide survivors, while both victims are affected by a traumatic experience, the experience of genocide affects the survivor through their own experience of the event but it also, literally, damages and severs the family network. My motive here is not to compare these very different traumatic experiences but rather, to compare the 'aftermath' component of survivorship in consideration of the notion of family. Given the key role of memory in this discourse, Marianne Hirsch constructs the notion of postmemory and defines it as the result of traumatic recall at a generational remove and a structure of inter– and trans– generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience.[196] That said, the photograph as a flat, two-dimensional and delimited frame becomes a screen enabling a space of projection, approximation and of protection. As a matter of fact, the author argues throughout the article that the technology of photography with its simultaneous qualities of focus, loss of sharpness, and sequencing traits, its attributed beliefs in reference, as well as the *meaning* of generation it engenders are all unique characteristics that connect the Holocaust generation to the generation after.[197]

In this case study, traumatic experience takes a multitude of forms—that of an experience of genocide, of war and of displacement lived by up to three consecutive

[195] The National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship and the National Cancer Institute's Office of Cancer Survivorship have both adopted the following definition: "An individual is considered a cancer survivor from the time of diagnosis, through the balance of his or her life. Family members, friends and caregivers are also impacted by the survivorship experience and are therefore included in this definition." See Mary S. McCabe and Nancy G. Houlihan. "Palliative Care of Cancer Survivors" *Oxford Textbook of Palliative Nursing,* ed. Betty R. Ferrell, Nessa Coyle. (Oxford, New York, et al.: Oxford University Press, 2010), 830.
[196] See Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," 106.
[197] Idem., 107-8.

generations. In all cases, notions of home and family are unquestionably affected. Considering that the intergenerational memory transmission occurs here, within the domestic space and through the photographic device, I would like to argue that each survivor ascribes a set of meanings to saved family photographs. One of these meanings is the set of imagined and rehearsed storytelling scenarios ascribed to a photograph and passed on through generations. A second meaning is the symbolic attribution of a traumatic memory to a photographic referent. In her study, McAllister emphasizes on a certain "ghostly quality:" the disturbing nature of the photographs, not for their depiction of lived injustices but rather, for their nostalgic rendition of the camps.[198] She writes that the postcard seems to generate an inward spiral with a "capacity to rearrange, collapse and implode spatial arrangements" of the memory.[199] In other words, in the relationship between photograph and survivor, memory of the past is revealed in the form of nostalgic renditions. In that sense, Svetlana Boym distinguishes between two types of nostalgia. "Restorative nostalgia" consists of an emphasis on restoring the lost home and patching of memory gaps while "reflective nostalgia" dwells in longing and loss; concerned with individual and cultural memory and expressing the drive to narrate the relationship between past, present and future.[200] The meaning-making process of the photographs within the familial network seems to be located between Boym's two kinds of nostalgia, the application of which becomes adjusted with the change of socio-political changes brought on the new generations. Thus, the photographs embody an entire behavioral system between the photographic object and the owner, enabling the transmission of memory to the next generation. As a result, the combination of imaginative and rehearsed

[198] See McAllister, "Held Captive," 22.
[199] Ibid.
[200] See Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 49.

storytelling scenarios, as well as the symbolic attributions of traumatic memory in relation to different levels of nostalgia creates the space for this interchange.

Memory is essentially lived experience, therefore the transmission of memory entails the transmission of experience. In the impossibility of replicating a lived experience, the photograph acts as a vessel of communication. Indeed, the photograph is transportable, with an image that remains unchanged, aiding the survivor to deal with the trauma, to interact with what renews the link to the past and even, to replace what has been lost. Therefore, what remains of the memory is not so much a permanent scar of a traumatic past as much as a new relationship with an object of the past. More so, in this device is entangled the old and the new, the link between memory and existence; thus making it a vehicle of identity. The inter–generational transmission of memory then, can be defined as the act of transmitting one's bond to the photograph, the very aspect of experiencing the image which in turn, is formed of a threefold association: through visuality, materiality, and embodiedness.

Here we can return to one photograph, *Three brothers, Ezekiel, Avedis, Puzant Demirdjians* (fig. 1), considering not just its content, but its condition. The the deteriorated and torn up condition of the image creates a first-hand experience of rupture and loss. Physical contact with this visual object, damaged through exposure to damp and much handling, creates an understanding of trauma. The very fragile state of the image reflects the fragility of the people's lives.

Where family has been severed, the role of the photograph consists in replacing and thus, completing a severed family network—which is essential to the process of self-identification. Meanwhile the photograph's material nature gives physicality to this

exchange between owner and object. Thus, the person simultaneously known as the "owner-survivor-family member" is set in a relationship with the photograph. The sense of place is also crucial as it defines a sense of belonging, not to mention the journey of the people's lives, their experience and therefore, their memory. The photograph enables them to grasp at something that seems less fleeting than they themselves, thus becoming a symbol of utter stability in an eventful life. This does not mean that the photograph itself is not altered in the process, for every time that the object is displaced with its owner, it gains a new life in each new environment. This results in the creation of imaginary homes and homelands, enabled through nostalgia and the revival of memory.

As mentioned earlier, the photograph of *Three brothers, Ezekiel, Avedis, Puzant Demirdjians* (fig. 1) had been sent to my grandfather, at the orphanage, by his surviving family members back home. The image simultaneously depicts family and a lost home that at the time of receipt, no longer existed. Furthermore, even when the family was later reunited, the photograph always remained as a token of a lost past, triggering feelings of nostalgia and disturbing recollections from a traumatic experience. Meanwhile, at a later period, my mother and her brothers were born in a completely different reality, in Lebanon, but nonetheless, were exposed to these a set of meanings and behavioural attributions to the image ascribed by their own father—an exposure that resulted for them, in the development of Hirsch's postmemory understood as another's experience taken as one's own.[201] It canbe said then that the photograph is the ideal vehicle for that transmission of memory. For even when the post–generation has not experienced the

[201] According to Marianne Hirsch "postmemory describes the relationshio of the second generation to powerdul, oftern traumatic experiences that preceded their briths but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right." See Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," 103.

trauma, the photograph embodies the trauma of survivorship. The attribution of what the image represents to the survivor—from whom he or she is the descendant of—as well as the knowledge of the set of traumatic events that follow the segment of time that the photograph depicts: all enable the following generations to connect to the picture as if it were their own. With the outbreak of war in Lebanon and the family's subsequent displacement, initial effects of survivorship affected new generations. Deep feelings of nostalgia and a prevalent sense of loss were thus renewed and gained a new set of meanings that reaffirm the collective sense of survivorship. As a result, the photograph becomes an image attesting to multiple homes: the time and place it depicts symbolizes the initial family home in Turkey; Ezekiel's image triggers the memory of his life in Lebanon, as the descendant-onlooker came to know it. Finally, this complex bond between photograph and family member—which is primarily a matter of memory and experience—passes down to the new generations through which a new member is able to form his or her identity.

9. Conclusion

While a number of scholars have written about the complicated nature of Armenian identity, there is general agreement on the intersecting links between notions of family, memory, place, and the state of the imaginary. Aprahamian argues that "the diversity of [Canadian–Armenians'] historical experiences is woven into the formation of their ethnic and national identities."[202] Furthermore, she asserts that in defining the Canadian–Armenian identity, there is a prevalent sense of being a hyphenated

[202] See Aprahamian, "Armenian Identity," 4.

Armenian,[203] or perhaps even a multiply-hyphenated Armenian in my case (ex. Ottoman-Armenian, Lebanese-Armenian, Greek-Armenian, Canadian-Armenian). In other words, the various experiences of migration routes and the recognition of a sense of place are equally relevant to the construction of identity as what is generally understood by notions of family and memory.

Each cultural community contributes to Canadian society. While multiculturalism is about coexistence, it is also about understanding the role of each community and the different ways that these entities cope with their complex identities. In that sense, I find it crucial to explore subjects such as the sense of representation and belonging in the very construction of diasporic identities. Inquiring about cultural and collective memories, as well as traumatic memories of immigrants—which entail the unfortunate reality of wars, genocide, racism, displacement—is one way to create a healthy multicultural society.

In this context, the quest of one's own identity can become complex, especially where difficult pasts are involved. In an image-dominated world, one encounters a myriad of meanings encompassed in a photograph. Indeed, the family photograph triggers recall, emotions, nostalgia, but most importantly, it enlivens memory, which is part of a collective identity. Moreover, the behavioural patterns one creates with these visual objects function as a means of situating oneself in a globalized world; a world that is not necessary delimited to a specific geographic location and where home can be found in a box of old photographic portraits. The meanings engendered by the image and the ones we create in relation to our very own experiences all contribute to the formation of identity.

[203] Aprahamian uses the term "hyphenated Armenian" to define the identity of diaspora Armenians regarding themselves as being "a diaspora of a diaspora." See Aprahamian, "Armenian Identity," 17.

7. Figures

Figure 1:
Three brothers, Ezekiel, Avedis, Puzant Demirdjians,
1916–7
French Postcard (12 x 8 cm)
Demirdjian family Collection

Figure 2:
Two brothers, Ezekiel and Puzant Demirdjians, shortly after release from Near East Relief Orphanage.
1923–4
French Gevaert postcard (14 x 9 cm)
Demirdjian family Collection

Figure 3:
Demirdjian family portrait.
1910
Albumen print (14 x 9.5 cm) on Cardboard (20.5 x 15 cm)
Demirdjian family Collection

Figure 4:
Meguerditch Agha Keshkegian with his wife and two daughters.
1920s
Gelatin silver print (11.8 x 16.8 cm)
Yapoudjian family Collection

Figure 5:
Two brothers, Karnig and Vahram Keshkegian.
1920s
Printout paper photograph (14.8 x 9.7 cm)
Yapoudjian family Collection

Figure 6:
The married daughter and her husband, Haikanoush Keshkegian–Stamboulian and husband, Hagop Stamboulian.
1923
Bayern French postcard (13.5 x 8.5)
Yapoudjian family Collection

Figure 7:
Casual portrait of Misak and Nazelie Nazarian at the countryside.
1956
Photographic print (13.8 x 8.8 cm)
Nazarian family Collection

Figure 8:
Haikanoush and Vartanoush Keshkegian.
1940s
American postcard (13.5 x 8.5 cm)
Yapoudjian family Collection

Figure 9:
Meguerditch Agha Keshkegian and wife, Limonia Khanem.
1920s
Italian postcard (9 x 14 cm)
Yapoudjian family Collection

Figure 10:
Misak and Nazelie Nazarian on their engagement.
1954
Photographic print (8.9 x 13.9 cm) 1954
Nazarian family Collection

Figure 11:
The twins, Mariam and Khoren Kouladjian with their mother and cousin.
1923
French postcard (14 x 9 cm) stuck on same size cardboard
Demirdjian family collection

Figure 12:
Malkhasian family portrait.
1920s
American postcard (14 x 9 cm)
Yapoudjian family Collection

Figure 13:
Araxie and Satenik Keshkegian, 1930s.
1930s
Italian postcard, (14 x 9 cm)
Yapoudjian family Collection

Figure 14:
Araxie and Satenik Keshkegian, 1920s
1920s
Italian postcard, (14 x 9 cm)
Yapoudjian family Collection

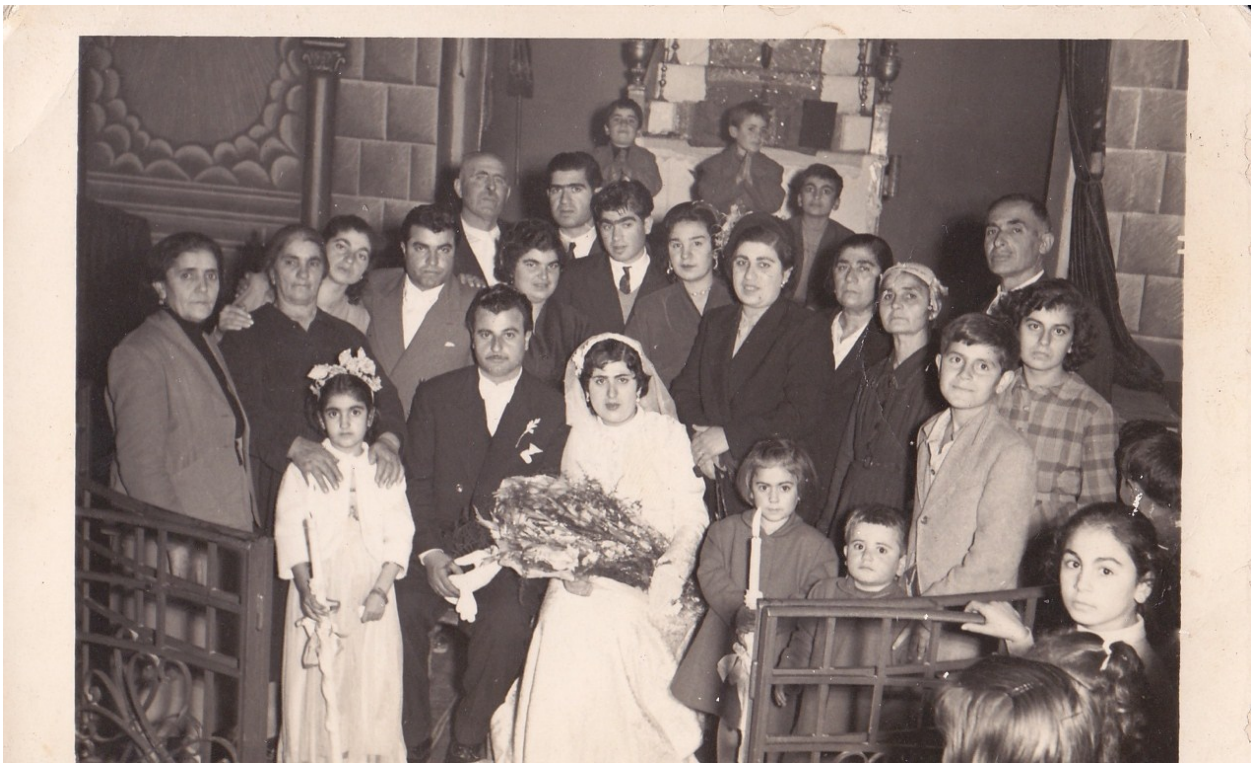

Figure 15:
Nazarian family portrait at Misak and Nazelie Nazarian's wedding.
1955
Photographic print (13.9 x 8.9 cm)
Nazarian family Collection

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