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Armenian Identity: Memory, Ethnoscapes, Narratives of Belonging in the context
of the recent emerging notions of globalization and its effect on time and
space

Introduction

The proposed paper based on fieldwork among Armenians in Lebanon,
Armenia and Montreal examines from a feminist and socialist
perspective how Armenianness with its varieties constructs public and
private gendered, racialized, class divided spaces. In the symbolic
construction of Armenianness attention has been given to memory, the
1915 un-recognized genocide of the Armenian people and to the moral
imperative put in particular on Armenian women as bearers of culture.
The everyday practices of Armenians are examined as they tend to
demarcate, construct spatial and symbolic boundaries.In particular the
paper looks into the concepts of de-territorialization, ethnoscapes,
transnationality, globalization in the Armenian context.

My journey:

Following Adrienne Rich's Notes toward a Politics of Location (1984) -
A speech given at the First Summer School of Critical Semiotics,
Conference in Women, Feminist Identity and Society in the 1980s,
Utrecht, Holland, June 1, 1984, I will begin by an attempt "to
understand how a place on the map is also a place in history".
Adrienne Rich asks to,
"Begin ... not with a continent or a country or a house, but with the
     geography closest in - the body ... as at least /we/ know /we/
     exist that living human individual whom the young Marx called 'the
     first premise of all human history'... and /as women ... the need
     to begin with the female body - our own - was understood not as

applying a Marxist principle to women, but as locating the grounds
from which to speak with authority as women. Not to transcend this
body, but to reclaim it. To reconnect to our thinking and speaking
with the body of this particular living human individual, a
woman... Begin with material. Pick up .. the long struggle against
lofty and privileged abstraction. Perhaps this is the core of
revolutionary process, whether it calls itself Marxist or Third
World or feminist or all three" (Rich 19 1986: 212-213).

The approach followed is to deconstruct abstractions in order to
understand the constructed nature of memory, space, time. As an
Armenian, Canadian-Armenian and a woman I attempt to unravel
Armenianness itself as it pathologizes difference and ignores
differences of gender/class/ diverse backgrounds and historical
experiences and creates gendered spaces.

Armenianness – narratives/memories of belonging:

" I don't belong... I will be a disappointment to you and my
    ancestors. My father, a transcendental Armenian I can never hope
    to equal in imagery, escaped a holocaust of Turks and curved his
    initials into the belly of the Caucasus. I live in a lily garden
    and serve tea to Edgar Allan Poe."(Diana Der Hovanessian, How to
    choose your past, Ararat Press, 1978, p. 49)

Armenian identity and Armenianness are considered to be a contested
ground for Armenians throughout the world. Ethnicity has been of
interest to the social sciences in North America since the early
studies of the Chicago school. In these early studies, ethnicity was
examined through the question of assimilation. We have since moved
away from Gordon's theory of assimilation to models of internal
colonialism, and gradually, ethnicity has been conceptualised as a
dynamic element of identity and culture. Starting with Barth's pioneer
work in anthropology, there has been a realisation of the negotiated
nature of ethnicity. In the Canadian context, ethnicity has continued
to be presented as a way of classifying individuals and groups. It has
often been juxtaposed with discussion of stratification and
inequality. Ethnicity has been "an ubiquitous presence", and ethnic
studies often lack any clear understanding of its nature. In studying
the nature of Armenianness among Armenians of Armenia, Montreal
Armenians and the Lebanese Armenians of the Beka'a valley of Lebanon,
ethnicity becomes a constructed or invented aspect of everyday life
and memory, to be not only negotiated at the individual and group
level, but as an invented, and re-invented condition of the
contemporary.

Arjun Appadurai in an article entitled Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and
queries for a transnational anthropology , presents the notion of
"ethnoscape" as indicative of several issues: (1) dilemmas of
perspective and representation, and (2) "brute facts of the world of
the twentieth century", including "the changing social, territorial,
and cultural reproduction of group identity"(1991: 191). In this
context, "ethnoscape" – the landscape of group identity – becomes "the
landscape of persons who make up the shifting world in which we live:
tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers, and other moving
groups and persons " (Appadurai 1991: 192). This is the world of
diasporas marked by transnationalities/ transnationalism and

de-territorialization and transcendence of "specific territorial
boundaries and identities" (Appadurai 1991: 192).

Armenians have long been associated with notions of
"transnationality", "diasporas", "fragmentation", and "flux". As a
Montreal Armenian and a woman, these notions have been part of my own
everyday experiences, as a fragmented, hyphenated, gendered individual
with a multitude of identities. Among their multiple identities,
Armenians give particular importance to the notion of the "diaspora".
Lebanese Armenians and Montreal Armenians conceive themselves as a
"diaspora" community. In Susan Pattie's terms,
"The question of diaspora, not only in its relationship to the
    homeland, ancient or modern, but the nature of its construction,
    is critical to the understanding of contemporary Armenian
    life..... While the underlying root paradigm of suffering and
    sacrifice links and informs Armenians and their communities around
    the world, the ways in which this is interpreted and acted upon
    are myriad".

Although each Armenian considers their situation to be different from
those of other Armenian communities, they have a consciousness of a
shared experience, as in the case of London Armenians discussed by
Vered Amit Talai,
"Communities such as that found in London /or in this case, in
    Lebanon/ are ... seen as communities in exile from their true
    motherland in eastern Anatolia. But this loss is further viewed as
    part of a long and ancient series of tragedies befalling Armenians
    in which, caught between the machinations of rival powers, they
    suffered repeated conquests, occupations and consequent
    dispersals. Armenians today are seen as still caught in the middle
    between contemporary superpowers, their national aspirations and
    territorial claims being subjugated to international conflicts,
    over which they have little tangible influence. /This has led to a
    charter, which puts/ the moral imperative imparting to successive
    generations a 'duty' to perpetuate their ethnic identity".

This notion is quite common throughout diaspora-Armenians. As Ulf
Bjorklund points out,
"In principle, most diasporans subscribe to a basic myth portraying
    the Armenians as (1) an ancient people, a 'nation' with (2) a
    primordial and unbroken link to a God-given land, Haiastan; in
    spite of (3) heroic defense and martyrs willing to die for their
    faith and nation, they have (4) been almost exterminated and
    expelled from the Fatherland, Hairenik; now they (5) live
    dispersed at the mercy of various host populations in the Spiurk;
    but they have never given up their link to the homeland, and one
    day (6) they will return to the lands, tebi yergir".

Throughout the "diaspora", Armenians have established organisations
ranging from religious institutions to political, cultural
associations and educational institutions. Many of these associations
are branches of larger Armenian organisations with a long history.

Armenians in the diaspora, present themselves as fragmented. At the
same time their main pre- occupation is to preserve their selves as
human beings and as ethnic beings, as they do so, they also express
their gendered selves. In this process diaspora Armenians have been

creating a new sense of being or forming a collectivity with its own
collective memory-history and culture.

Among the Armenians, there have been a multiplicity of strategies of
representing Armenianness, Armenia, and the Armenian nation, and
historicity. Each political organization has/had its own notion, so
do/did the religious organisations. These representations have
undergone changes and are changing with changes in Armenia and the
collapse of the Soviet Union. Often, the definition of being an
Armenian includes language. However, it is to noted that Armenians are
divided along different dialects and there are two major written
standardized versions of "Armenian": Western Armenian, which is based
on a version of 19th Century Armenian spoken in Istambul and Eastern
Armenian which was based on the Armenian spoken in Erevan. This latter
was subjected to orthographic reforms during the sovietisation era of
Armenia. There is also "Grabar" Armenian, which is the language of the
Armenian national church. The Armenian national or apostolic church
itself has also been divided into two Sees: the Cilician (now residing
in Antelias, Lebanon) and the Echmiadzin (in Armenia). Lebanese
Armenians speak Western Armenian so do the majority of the Montreal
Armenians, and the inhabitants of 'Anjar speak their own dialect along
side the standardised Western Armenian language.

Although nationality and ethnicity are considered to be natural means
for classifying people, both are theoretical and/ or ideological
constructs. The historicity of such notions have long been recognised
by Anderson (1983: 13), Gelner (1983: 6) and Nash (1989). However, for
the participants themselves entities such as a "nation" are not
"imagined communities". In the case of the Armenian populations, their
ethnic identities and "nationhood" are a result of historical
experiences, struggles, a common language (with diversities/
dialects), and other primordial ties. For Armenians, their diversities
and the diversity of their historical experiences are woven into the
formation of their ethnic and national identities. Further, they have
an awareness that their ethnic identities are not givens. Armenianness
is something which has to be generated and re-constructed at every
level. The idea of a collectivity and the collective history of
Armenians has been "invented" and is being "invented". There is a
knowledge and understanding of the fragmentary nature of being
Armenian. In this fragmentation, elements of unity have/ and are being
constructed. Some of these elements have been the 1915 Genocide which
had befallen on Western Armenians, and the heroic resistance of some
Armenians. After February 1988, the rise of the nationalist movement
in Armenia, the Karabakh movement and the Sumgait massacres have been
elements of re-definition of "Armenianness" and unity. Ethnicity, thus
becomes a process re-invented through the inter-reference between
diverse experiences.

Expressions of identity among the Lebanese Armenian community of
'Anjar - Haouch Moussa

Based on re-examinations of my fieldwork research carried out in
1980-1981 and 1986-1987 among the inhabitants of Haouch Moussa
('Anjar) - a Lebanese Armenian community in the Beka'a valley of
Lebanon, gender and ethnic identity becomes unraveled as an
articulation of several factors including global and local orders.
Among their multiple identities, Armenians give particular importance

to the notion of the "diaspora". Through a reconstruction of the
practices and experiences (and their genesis) of the people in
question, as Lebanese and Armenians {and therefore, of my own history
as a Lebanese and an Armenian (and a woman)}, the many faces of
identity become evident. The settlement itself was established in 1939
by Armenian refugees deported from their original habitat in Mount
Moussa, the Sanjak of Iskandaroun (Turkey). When relocated in the
Central Beka'a, the inhabitants initiated a collectivisation
experiment. However, it was brought to an end shortly after Lebanese
Independence. During the following decades, while the socialist
ideology has persisted the individual households have at first become
petty commodity producers for a regional, national and international
market, petty commodity production, capitalism, and the effects of the
civil war in Lebanon further transformations have occurred. Through
their various practices to re-invent a collective memory, a sense of
community and an ethnic identity for themselves, Lebanese Armenians of
'Anjar, as hyphenated Armenians also set their gender identities and
relations. Their identities as gendered selves are woven through their
constructed ethnic identities in their everyday realities: in their
cuisine with its definitions of male and female tasks; in their dances
and its male and female steps; in their male dominant organisations;
in their values which put emphasis on family and friendship.

The inhabitants of 'Anjar, define themselves in opposition to other
Armenians. Unlike other diaspora Armenians, such as Montreal
Armenians, Armenians of 'Anjar see themselves as having a geographic
locale - a territory - through which they can maintain their existence
as a collective. The experiences of the inhabitants of 'Anjar are
quite unusual in Armenian diaspora history, in many ways. Aside from
showing resistance to the Ottoman Turkish deportation orders of 1915,
when relocated in the Beka'a valley of Lebanon from their original
villages in Mount Moussa, in 1939, the inhabitants in question,
initiated an experiment in collectivisation of agriculture. The
assumptions behind the planned socialisation of agriculture were
manifold. It was argued that not only such a move would bring forth
rapid and tangible results in agricultural productivity, but it would
also generate attitudinal changes and the adoption of egalitarian
principles and practices by the participants. However,
collectivisation was brought to an end shortly after the declaration
of Lebanese Independence. During the following decades, while the
socialist ideology has persisted, individual households have become
petty commodity producers for a regional, national and international
market. The outcome of the structural dynamics and contradictions of
this incorporation has been the formation of classes, whose existence
is denied by the prevalent ideology. It is beyond the scope of this
study to reconstruct the conditions as well as external and internal
factors involved in this transformation. Our focus here is on the
nature of ethnicity and how the Armenians of 'Anjar define their
identity and understand Armenianness.

The inhabitants of 'Anjar are constantly reminded in their day-to-day
activities that they are at the same time the only non-Arabic speaking
group in the region, and are part of several larger totalities: As
Lebanese citizens they are part of the Lebanese state structures and
socio-economic formation, and co-exist as a collectivity with several
other groups and communities with whom they have various
relationships. Furthermore, along with these other communities they

are part of the international division of labour. On the other hand, as Armenians they are also part of both the Armenian community in Lebanon and the diaspora, as well as in Armenia. As such then, the identity of the Armenians of 'Anjar is also the product of quite diverse historical experiences. My interest in the expression of identity among the inhabitants of 'Anjar is closely related to my own quest to have an understanding of my own identity as a Lebanese/ Armenian/ and a Canadian-Armenian: a fragmented-self. After having lived in the multi-ethnic situation of Montreal with its "dual majority" culture (in P. Anctil's terms), I came to realise the historicity and context dependent nature of identity formation. Identities are also contested and have to be re-invented or re-constructed at every level and with each generation.

During my discussions with the inhabitants of 'Anjar a multitude of collective identities were recognised (by those present): a. as inhabitants of 'Anjar; b. as descendants of inhabitants of Mount Moussa; c. as inhabitants of the Central Beka'a valley; d. as Lebanese citizens (or inhabitants of Lebanon); e. as Armenians. Depending on the context, one or the other (or several of these identities) were brought in and stressed. In addition, the inhabitants viewed themselves as "refugees" and victims of "international politics". The multiplicity of the collective identities of (and related concerns or issues) is expressed in the following extract from an informal discussion with one inhabitant of 'Anjar:

We often ask ourselves 'what are we doing here ?' This is not our land. We cultivate it, but when the political currents turn against us, we will be deported once more. After all, not long ago, we were forcefully uprooted from our historical homeland and that was our land (and to think that we would be left in peace in 'Anjar which is not our historical homeland!?). We may be deported any time despite our Lebanese citizenship. After all, we do not know what is going to happen to Lebanon. As you know, the future is rather uncertain. The Lebanese crisis may go on forever, or one day we may find out that Lebanon has been removed or wiped off the surface of the map. In any case, even when the A.R.F. goals of a United Free and Socialist Armenia are achieved, we won't get our lands. We have lived so far away from historic Armenia, some theorists suggest that we were living in our mountains (in Mount Moussa) since the second millennium B.C., and yet our sons and daughters (since the first World War and on) have fought and are fighting for the liberation of all Armenians and their historic lands. This process sometimes has included an armed resistance and struggle and at others the preservation of Armenian culture. This is a serious problem for all Armenians. We are perhaps in a unique situation in the diaspora. In the sense that we and our children live in semi- isolation. We have our own Armenian schools and unlike the situation in Beirut, where in spite the fact that there are Armenian schools, the neighbourhoods and the streets in which the children play are not Armenian. Whereas here in 'Anjar our children grow up with other children of 'Anjar who speak the local dialect and Armenian, the Armenian children of Beirut, play with Arabic speaking children.

Similar concerns were also expressed by others present during the discussion. The 55 year old wife of a restaurant-owner and mother of

three married daughters, for instance, pointed out that the opinion
presented by the first respondent "used to be shared by all the
inhabitants during the early years in 'Anjar, but not any more":
"I remember from my childhood (and from people of my parents'
    generation)that during the early years of settlement in 'Anjar,
    people were not sure that 'Anjar would be a permanent settlement.
    Some had assumed that this would be a temporary uprootedness
    similar to the 1915-1919 Port Sa'yid experience. However, it was
    evident from the planned collectivisation and housing that we were
    going to be here for good and there was no hope for a return. The
    political climate was such that our lands in Mount Moussa would
    never be ours again. In any case, our stay in Lebanon was
    guaranteed. We were given Lebanese identity cards (and
    citizenship). The other Lebanese peoples consider us Lebanese,
    after all we were here prior to Lebanese Independence".

In addition, as a young working mother has expressed in the following
quote (and the earlier quote also reveals), the inhabitants have
considered themselves to be in a rather different situation from other
Armenians elsewhere, but with whom they share the same concerns and
obligations of preserving their cultural identities or "Armenianness":
"Unlike Armenians, in let us say, cities, or in Europe or for that
    matter in North America, we have a better chance of preserving our
    Armenian culture. We also are a community in exile, but we, unlike
    other Armenian communities of the diaspora a. live in
    semi-isolation, and that constitutes our blessing, b. have a
    common collective history (unlike the other communities we have a
    memory of a homeland and a history of a collective resistance or
    uprising, which has made us world-known, especially through Franz
    Werfel's novel). I remember when in 1974 an Armenian poet from
    Soviet Armenia had come and visited 'Anjar, he was impressed
    greatly, and said that we are living in a little Armenia. We have
    created our little sanctuary in which we are not only preserving
    our culture, but are turning it into a living culture.
    Unfortunately, however, the crisis in Lebanon has had its negative
    impact on our community. Many have left the area. We are afraid
    that, if this continues, 'Anjar will be completely depopulated and
    that would be a major blow to the Armenian culture as a whole. The
    threat of assimilation will befall all".- " 'Anjar is the space of
    memories of a homeland in exile".

Other inhabitants of 'Anjar likewise expressed that their cultural
survival depends on the one hand on their anti-emigration stance,
which has also been the Armenian Revolutionary Federation's policy for
the past decades; and on the other hand on the creation of a new
collective history and common identity, based on the history of the
Armenians as a whole. This history has been marked with repeated
conquests, forced deportations, massacres, and some heroic resistances
and a liberation struggle. We can see this new collective history
already reconstructed (and continuously re-defined) in Armenian
communities such as the London Armenians, studied by Vered Amit Talai
(1988: 50- 51; see also Talai 1989) and in Montreal.

Although the inhabitants of 'Anjar consider themselves to be in a
relatively more favourable situation than other Armenians in the
diaspora, there is, as in the case of the London Armenians, an absence
of a uniform prescription on how to perpetuate and maintain their

identity and culture (see Talai 1988: 51). The members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation's youth organisation, for instance, expressed concern that whatever means they have to preserve their identity are insufficient to end the threat of assimilation, as one member summarised:

"Assimilation is a serious threat to the perpetuation of our culture. We have seen evidence of this in the Middle Eastern Armenian communities, which we had thought were rather 'safe', in comparison to our communities in Europe and the Americas. We believe the only way to prevent this is by rallying the people towards the determination to demand justice for the Armenian genocide and the return of our lands. As long as we live in the diaspora, the threat of assimilation is going to be part of our reality. Hence, we have to find a way to achieve our objective of a 'Free and United Socialist Armenia'. Only then can we express our identities and preserve our culture and language".

The teachers of Armenian language, literature and history also expressed concern that the courses that they teach are not sufficient to perpetuate Armenian culture. Such courses are also subject to government policies and regulations. As one school principal pointed out:

"The educational curriculum has to be approved by the Lebanese government. The students have to be prepared for the Lebanese governmental exams and as a result, we have to give priority to subjects in these exams. Armenian language, literature and history are not part of the programme. They are given over and above the required courses. Hence, some students do not take these courses seriously. Nonetheless, I must say that the majority of our students are interested in learning Armenian. Many of our graduates have become teachers of Armenian language, literature, and history in other schools of the Armenian diaspora. Still others have become Armenian poets and writers".

Membership in the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, which is the sole political organisation in 'Anjar, and in its affiliated organisations as well as the Armenian schools were seen as means through which "Armenianness" can be maintained, but they were considered to be "no more than pain relievers". Furthermore, in spite of this shared concern for the preservation of their cultural identities, the inhabitants of 'Anjar did not provide for a "shared" means to achieve this end. Nor was there agreement on what constitutes Armenianness as a collective identity.

The Armenian communities have been considered to be constituting ethnic rather than sectarian groups, in the Lebanese "multi-sectarian" context in general, and in the Beka'a valley in particular. Such classifications have been based on linguistic factors of group differentiation. For the inhabitants of 'Anjar, on the other hand, group identity is based on "place names": The term by which the inhabitants designate themselves is 'Anjartza (lit. inhabitants of 'Anjar). In addition, they consider themselves to be Jebel Moussetza. The latter includes people who are not 'Anjartza, i.e. people who are from the original villages of Mount Moussa, but never had a home in 'Anjar. Likewise, the differentiation or identification of "the other" has also been in terms of place names. Thus for instance, when speaking about the neighbouring villagers and city dwellers, the

identification is not in terms of religion nor of language but the name of the city or village: Majdaltza - a person from the neighbouring Sunni Muslim village of Majdal 'Anjar; Zahletza - an inhabitant of Zahle; Baroutza refers to anyone who resides in Beirut. Interestingly enough any Armenian whose "history" in a geographical locality is unknown to the inhabitants of 'Anjar is classified as yabandja - lit. an inhabitant of Japan, which has acquired the meaning of distant, unknown land.

Be this as it may, language also plays an important role in identity formation for the inhabitants of 'Anjar. Their sense of an us as opposed to the rest of the Armenian populations is also based on differences in dialect. When speaking of the local dialect they identify it as mir lizon - lit. our language, as opposed to the written and spoken standardised Armenian languages.

I have been told of several childhood incidents concerning this issue. Early childhood socialisation takes place in the local dialect and not in Western Armenian which is the language of instruction in the local schools. I was informed that many children, who after the first few days, weeks or months of school, have gone home and complained to their parents that they have not brought them up as Armenians. Several parents of school age children narrated to me that their children returning from school had asked "mama, tchva mi hay arouts tchess ?" (lit. Mother, why have you not brought us up as hay = Armenian).

Although nationality and ethnicity are considered to be natural means for classifying people, both are theoretical and/ or ideological constructs. The historicity of such notions have long been recognised by Anderson (1983: 13), Gelner (1983: 6) and Nash (1989). However, for the participants themselves entities such as a "nation" are not "imagined communities". In the case of the Armenian populations, their ethnic identities and "nationhood" are a result of historical experiences, struggles, a common language (with diversities/ dialects), and other primordial ties. For Armenians, their diversities and the diversity of their historical experiences are woven into the formation of their ethnic and national identities. Further, they have an awareness that their ethnic identities are not givens. Armenianness is something which has to be generated and re-constructed at every level. The idea of a collectivity and the collective history of Armenians has been "invented" and is being "invented". There is a knowledge and understanding of the fragmentary nature of being Armenian. In this fragmentation, elements of unity have/ and are being constructed. Some of these elements have been the 1915 Genocide which had befallen on Western Armenians, the heroic resistance of some Armenians such as the ancestors of the inhabitants of 'Anjar - Haouch Moussa. After February 1988, the rise of the nationalist movement in Armenia, the Karabakh movement and the Sumgait massacres have been elements of re-definition of "Armenianness" and unity.

The expressions of identity among Montreal Armenians

There are only about twenty thousand inhabitants in Montreal who identify themselves as being of Armenian ethnic origin, immigrants and their descendants. Historically their origin can be traced to various European and Middle Eastern countries.

Several waves can be noted in the history of Armenian immigration in Canada. The earliest immigrants were mainly male sojourners and had lived in the area of south western Ontario: "The foundations of Armenian community life in Canada were established well before the World War I, principally in Brantford, St. Catherines, and Hamilton, Ontario. Yet little was known about the communities or about the settlers themselves. Armenians came to Canada and quietly lived out a part of their lives and left scant record of how they managed or what they thought. These 'phantom people' would have been lost to time if elderly informants had not referred to their existence and to their importance in creating the parameters of Armenian community life in Canada". These early immigrants "molded a new kind of settlement" reflecting "the lives of men from a rural, pre-industrial, and Armenian society" :

> "In their own fashion, within the strange and new environment of an English-speaking /in the case of Ontario/,'civilized, Christian culture', they created a world of their own, welding elements of the world they had left behind and the new society in which they were living".

Often early migrants were faced with racist Canadian immigration laws. Armenians were classified as Asiatic and therefore, were not "looked upon favorably by the Department of Immigration". None- the-less, during the late 19th and early 20th century, due to humanitarian grounds about 3100 Armenians had already been admitted to Canada. The majority of these early immigrants had settled in Southern Ontario, and gradually in Montreal. Many of these were orphans and refugees - victims of the Ottoman Turkish atrocities. During the period between 1930 and the Second World War, due to strict immigration regulations, new Armenian immigration decreased to 74 individuals. It is only during the post-World War II period that the immigration policy was revised and until 1962, "the Canadian Immigration Act was clearly administered to discriminate against non-Europeans and especially non-white immigration".

Montreal: The city with scripts for multiculturalism, francophone nationalism, bilingualism, racism and tolerance.

> "Perhaps one day people will no longer be classified according to the land they come from. Nor will they be identified by predetermined genetic qualities. And they will not be identified by the language they speak. Then, I believe, identity will be set by consciousness alone. More than all the flags of the world, more than all the religions and languages of the world, it will be the kind of society you choose to participate in that will determine who you are. Let no one tell you otherwise." Antonio D'Alfonso

The history of Montreal did not begin 350 years ago with white settlement, as the official discourse has proclaimed in the various celebrations in 1992. During Jaques Cartier's 1535 visit to the St.Laurent river valley and his arrival in Hochelaga region (what became named by him as Montreal), members of the Five Nations' Confederation occupied that area, and a people speaking an Algonquin language used to live in the Quebec city region. By the time Champlain explored the region, the members of the Five Nations Confederation were already displaced by Algonquin speaking populations (1609). Nevertheless, through information from the archives in Ottawa and records of the missionaries of St. Sulpice and of Recollet who had

established missions in the Montreal region, we know that there already was a mission at Fort de La Montagne by 1667-68 where natives of various backgrounds, including Mohawks lived. In 1704 a mission was established in Sault du Recollet. In 1717 with a special grant a mission was set in the Two Mountains region - Oka. In 1721 the mission at Sault au Recollet was transferred to the Two Mountains region. Today at the McCord museum one can still find and see the original Wampum belt proving the land claims of Oka Mohawks (Kanasatake). Unfortunately, when the British took over the territories held by New France (in Quebec), in spite its promise to recognise native land claims, it did not transform Oka lands into reserve status. These lands remain as Crown property. Only Kahnawake has "reserve" status.

By 1760, when the British conquered Montreal, the city had become a fur-trading settlement for about 8800 French colonials. Beginning in the 1780s until the 1820s, the fur trade fell under British control. By 1831 Montreal begun to have a British majority: Montreal was no longer the city of anglophone rich merchants and administrators, in Paul-Andre Linteau's terms, but the city with a "substantial and diverse /anglophone/ population, differentiated along ethnic and class lines" (Levine 1990: 8). This composition changed by the 1860s in favour of the francophone population making Montreal the "centre of French-speaking Quebec". By 1961, Montreal became a multi-ethnic city, "as post-World War II immigration surged from southern and eastern Europe, the non-French, non- British component of Montreal's population reached 350 000 or almost 20% of the Island's population".

Since the 1860s the city begun be divided into two linguistic geographical zones. The western and central sections of the city begun to have a concentration of English speaking populations and the eastern districts begun to be populated by french-speaking residents. This spatial distribution continued into the 1960s. Regardless of a francophone majority, until the end of the 1950s the "English character of Montreal remained intact". The 1960s, however, witnessed a politicization of the linguistic issue in Montreal:
"Before 1960 there was no serious, sustained political debate in
    Montreal over French or English rights in the city; by the end of
    the decade, the Montreal language question had become the
    provincial political issue" .

With the Quiet Revolution thus the "re-conquest" of Montreal was to begin and its francisation culminating in the 1980s by the advances in the political developments in its "political economy of language". However, in spite of francophone gains in the domains of the language of work, the control of capital, income distribution, and the external face of business,
"English persists as a dominant language in the Montreal economy......
    /However/, In the city's economic affairs, the days of the
    'English city' are clearly over" .

A range of ideological positions, from assimilation to bilingualism to francophone nationalism have been recognised in Montreal and Quebec linguistic policies.. These positions and accompanying practices are tied to individuals' access to material and symbolic resources as constrained by language boundaries and social stratification. They contribute to competition between the Canadian federal ideology of individual and institutional bilingualism, legitimating the authority

of a central government, and the Quebec ideology of francophone territory-based nationalism.

By the 1980s Montreal was no longer the city with a double majority. It has growingly become the city with a francophone face where the "British ethnic component",
"had fallen under 10 percent, and over 30 percent of Montreal Island's population was now composed of 'cultural communities'. Italians (160 000) and Jews (73 000) represent Montreal's largest non-British, non-French ethnic minorities, while a sizable number of Greeks and Portuguese also emigrated to the city primarily between 1945 and 1970. Since the late 1970s, a new wave of immigration further transformed Montreal's ethnic make-up, as refugees fleeing war, political repression, and poverty in the Third World emigrated to the city. Fifty percent of Montreal's immigrants since 1978 have come from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, adding racial diversity to the Island's growing multicultural character. Montreal's black population, around 4000 in 1961, totaled an estimated 120000 in 1987 with Haitians (45 000) the largest single group; the Island's population is now estimated at 7 percent black".

In time for the 350th anniversary of Montreal or colonial settlement in Hochelaga several French language books were published about the historical development of Montreal and its neighbourhoods.. However, the focus is almost with few exceptions on "White" settlement.

Symbolic forms and identity negotiation
"We come here to speak like them ... but it will be a long time before they let us practice".

Saliha Samson
"Here I was, a Carrier who spoke no French, and she was an O'leary who read Archie comic books but knew no English, and we were together in a darkening classroom in Montreal under a cross, flanked by the photos of the cardinal of Montreal and the Holy Father". Montreal, in spite of Quebec's perception of itself as homogeneous, white, and francophone, throughout history has never been unicultural. "Quebec has throughout its history been a story also of Irish and English and blacks and native Indians".

Manifestations of racism:

The Greater Montreal area had been since March 11 to September 26, 1990 the stage for various manifestations of racism and at the same time solidarity demonstrations with natives when the Mohawk of the Kanasatake settlement had run out of legal options. On July 3, 1991 Marcelius Francois a 24 year old father of two was shot after a bungled surveillance operation: a case of mistaken identities. The victim: a black Montrealer. Around the same period, the east-end neighbourhood of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve was marked by a night where a hundred youths chanting "white power!" at occupants of an apartment building who were black. The following morning, the blacks moved out under police protection and images of the riot were broadcast nationwide.

In a documentary entitled Disparaitre, the Jesuit father Julien Harvey

states "les immigrants sont poussese prendre une place qui est encore
la notre et decider notre place ce que sera le Quebec de demain".

Manifestations of tolerance:

The Conseil des communautes culturelles et de l'immigration, founded
in 1985 aims to construct a plural society (multi-cultural) with a
french character.

In the preface to the 4th edition of the directory to the
organisations of Quebec's ethnic groups or cultural communities to use
the official designation for immigrants, immigration is recognised as
being the main resource for the demographic, economic and cultural
development of Quebec. The directory boasts a list of 1800
ethnic-cultural organisations operating in Quebec and the majority of
which operate in Montreal.

Manifestations of the multicultural character of Montreal are
manifold. They range from restaurants, to festivals, to parades, to
dancing and music during the Summer months in Park Jeanne Mance.
Through cuisine, dance, music and other leisure activities Montrealers
express their ethnic identities or partake in the cultures/
performances of other Montrealers.

Multi-culturalism as an ideology has been argued to be rooted in
colonialism and relations of domination and subordination. It has also
been pointed out that multi-culturalism leads to the isolation of the
ethnic "other". In the context of Montreal the Canadian ideology of
multiculturalism, federal bilingualism, co-exist with Quebec
nationalism, Quebec linguistic ideologies of unilingual francophonie,
and cultural pluralism. Members of visible minorities and immigrants
and their descendants of neither French nor English backgrounds
(non-francophones and non-anglophones), invent or create their own
identities as the ethnic "other" and perpetuate Montreal: The city
with scripts for multiculturalism, francophone nationalism,
bilingualism, racism and tolerance.

Expressions of Armenianness among Montreal Armenians:

Montreal Armenians like their counterparts elsewhere, as already
mentioned, identify themselves as a diaspora community. As described
above for the case of the Lebanese Armenian community in 'Anjar,
although there is a moral imperative or a duty to perpetuate
Armenianness, there is an absence of a unified prescriptions on how to
maintain one's identity and culture. Living mainly in the northern
sections of Montreal (in the Outremont, Park Extension, l'Acadie,
Nouveau Bordeaux, Saint- Laurent, Cartieville areas forming a corridor
and extending towards Chomedy Laval), the Armenians of Montreal region
have expressed their sense of a community by establishing a variety of
organisations and institutions. The earliest of such attempts dates
back to the 1920s when,
> "in 1929 an overall ethnic organisation named 'Armenian Union of
> Montreal' was founded. Its aim was to provide an Armenian milieu
> for the members of the community. it had about thirty registered
> members and one of its first major activities was to organize the
> remembrance of April 24, 1915, the date when the global Armenian
> community pays its tribute to the victims of the Armenian

genocide." The second such association was "The Armenian Women's Benevolent Association", founded in 1931 (today it has become the ladies auxiliary of the Armenian Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator). After the 1950s with the growing number of Armenian immigration in Montreal other institutions and organisations were established ranging from religious institutions to political, cultural associations and educational institutions. Many of these associations are branches of larger Armenian organisations with a long history.

Montreal Armenians have numerous voluntary associations and institutions such as, the Armenian Community Centre , the Armenian Apostolic church, St. Gregory the Illuminator and the Diocese of Montreal affiliated with the Sea of Etchmiatzin, Alex Monoogian centre , the Centre for Armenian Catholics, , the community centre of the Armenians of Istambul, the community centre of the Armenians from Iran. There are also other churches such as the Armenian Biblical Brotherhood Church , the Armenian evangelical Church of Montreal the First Armenian Evangelical Church of Montreal.

Montreal Armenians have also organisations that cut across religious-denominational and political affiliation. These are the Armenian Medical Association of Quebec, established in 1976; the Canadian Armenian Council of Commerce, established in 1985; The Armenian Studies Association of Quebec, established in 1982; the Armenian Student Association with branches in various Montreal colleges and universities. The Concordia University Armenian Students Association is one of the earliest of such non-factional associations. Founded 33 years ago at Sir George Williams, it became a forum and a space where Armenians of diverse backgrounds could meet and have a dialogue. There are also individual initiatives to promote Armenian culture and provide a prescription for Armenian ethnic identity.

Armenianness and its expressions: language, family ties, dance and cuisine

Montreal Armenians, like the Armenians of 'Anjar or for that matter of any place in the world present themselves as fragmented, lacking a sense of autonomy. At the same time their main pre- occupation is to preserve their selves as human beings and as ethnic beings, as they do so, they also express their gendered selves. In Montreal, as elsewhere they are in the continuous process of creating, re-creating and re-defining a unified collectivity from fragmented selves. Preserving Armenian language to some extent, membership in the voluntary associations, enrolment in institutions, stressing the importance of friendship, the family and home along with maintaining Armenian cuisine and dancing Armenian dances constitute prescriptions available to Armenians in order to perpetuate and maintain their ethnic identity and through it their gender identities and their gendered spaces. Although Montreal Armenians are of different backgrounds and have different historical experiences and in spite of an absence of a uniform prescription on how to maintain their ethnic identities, they have found several media or invented new ways through which they could do so. A stress on family ties and friendship; cuisine - with its spices/"Allspice, coriander (powdered and whole), cayenne pepper, cumin in a square jar, fennel seeds, cardamon, cinnamon (powdered and in sticks), sumac, black nigella seeds, zatar, saffron, paprika,

oregano, basil. And mahleb"(Balakian 1997: 7)/; and dance have become
paths through which Armenians express their culture and perpetuate and
maintain their identities not only as Armenians but also as gendered
selves. However, the dances and cuisine of Montreal Armenians are as
fragmented and divers as the Armenians themselves. Armenians in their
preoccupation with preserving and perpetuating their culture have been
engaged in an objectification process of their culture: recording and
abstracting on- going practices as well as re-defining what is
Armenian about their cultural practices. In this process they have
been creating a new sense of being a collectivity with its own
collective memory-history and culture.

Montreal Armenians are considered in the multicultural setting of
Greater Montreal as an invisible minority and practice their ethnicity
only during their leisure time - or time set aside from work. Often,
the definition of being an Armenian includes language. However, as
noted earlier, in the discussion of Armenianness in 'Anjar, Armenians
are divided along different dialects and there are two major written
standardized versions of "Armenian". As language has been particularly
politicised in Quebec, it is to be noted here that the Armenian
educational institutions were founded after the Quiet revolution . In
any case, Armenians were and have been rather impartial to the issue
of bilingualism and a francophone Quebec. For Armenians, the more
languages one learns the better he/she becomes as a human being. Most
of the immigrants were already capable of speaking several languages.
Thus unlike other non-francophone groups in the province of Quebec,
immigrants of Armenian descent had not chosen to educate their
children in English . Nonetheless Armenians do teach their children in
their schools French, English and Armenian.

Montreal Armenians, as their counterparts elsewhere, through the
myriads of their competing organisations have attempted to create a
sense of community and a new collective history and identity. Their
sense of Armenianness is defined in terms of the Other and their
invented collective history. In the Montreal context, the definition
of Armenianness has also included a comparison of their lifestyles
with the assumed lifestyles or cultures of other Montreal's "imagined
communities" or abstracted cultural ethnolinguistic groups and ethnic
groups. Often this has involved a discussion of the notion of family.
As Mrs. Ani, in an informal conversation over notes:
We - that is to say Armenians, unlike the francophones and
    anglophones, but very much like the Italians, Greeks, and other
    Middle Eastern groups, have a strong sense of family, kinship ties
    and friendship. For us, the family is a sacred institution in a
    non-religious sense. We do not allow our children to leave home at
    any age. We keep them until they are married off - even then, we
    keep a strong tie with them.

This same idea was expressed through a different setting by Mrs.
Haygo:
Our superintendent or concierge is a francophone woman from St.
    Eustache and she once noted that she was quite surprised to see
    that my son who graduated from university a couple of years ago is
    still living with us - has not left the nest. I told her that we
    love our children and we would never let them out of our sight. It
    is through our constant care and guidance that our children do not
    end up experimenting with drugs.

Mr. Sarkis also stressed the importance of the home and family in
 defining our identities as Armenians, pointing out that,
 Unlike others we have tried to create a sense of community in this
      very individualistic culture. Our emphasis on the sanctity of the
      home and family has helped us fight this individual centred
      culture and give us a definition (for our ethnic identity). As
      Maro and Koko point out, for Armenians the "home is our sanctuary"
      and "our community centres have attempted to give that feeling to
      us", as Armenians.

Both men and women members of the Montreal Armenians note the
 importance of family, kinship and friendship in defining their
 identities as Armenians. In practice, however, it is the women who
 maintain the home, family and kin ties. Men and women have their own
 separate sets of friends, yet friendship is significant for both
 sexes. The emphasis on family reinforces the Armenian patrilineal and
 patriarchal values and practices. Moreover, these values are also seen
 in the existence of a double set of standards one for men and another
 for women, among most Armenians. There is also differential treatment
 of daughters and sons in families. Ethnicity for the Montreal
 Armenians is not a given. It is something they have to generate and
 re-construct at every level. It is not simply passed on from one
 generation to another. It is something which is beyond the control of
 individuals and yet it is sometimes due to individual decisions.
 Armenianness for Montreal Armenians, as for their counterparts in
 'Anjar, involves participation in their local organisations, communal
 celebrations such as the annual commemoration of the 1915 Armenian
 genocide on the 24th of April, the celebration of the 1918 Armenian
 Independence on the 28th of May (this was once celebrated only by the
 supporters of the A.R.F., after Armenia declared its independence, it
 is being celebrated by all Armenians), participating in demonstrations
 of solidarity with Armenia and protest against the position of
 superpowers with respect to Armenia and the Armenian cause,
 observation of religious feasts such as Easter, or grape blessing
 ritual.

Montreal Armenians like the Armenians of 'Anjar define their ethnic
 identities in terms of their daily patterns of interaction, their
 emphasis on family, friendship, and the practice of ethnic cuisine and
 other objectifications of their specific culture. Furthermore, their
 ethnic identities are as Micheal Fischer argues "a process of
 inter-reference between two or more cultural traditions, and these
 dynamics of intercultural knowledge provide reservoirs for renewing
 humane values" .

Having immigrated from Lebanon into Montreal in 1983, I was greatly
 impressed by not only the diversity of the background of the Montreal
 Armenians, and the myriads of organisations that they had established,
 but more importantly, by their attempt to create a new collective
 history and a sense of community. At the same time, I was also rather
 bewildered by the on-going debates among the Armenians of their
 identity. There were/ and still are, various seminars and public
 events devoted to the questioning of Armenianness, the diaspora, and
 relations with Armenia. There were/ and continue to exist, several
 imagined ideals of Armenianness and Armenia, including a kind of
 "virtual Armenia" with various versions. I also noticed a close link

between ethnic and gender identities. As a feminist, I was strongly disturbed by the fact that unlike the situation in Lebanon - a Middle Eastern country, where contrary to stereotypical or rather media representations of Middle Eastern women, Lebanese Armenian women were quite active in the public sphere, here in this North American environment, there was/is a dominance of men in the public domain or rather the executive positions in almost all of the Montreal Armenian organisations were held by men. Further, there was also a "genderisation" of organisations into "masculine" and "feminine" ones. Years later, while sharing my observations with a fellow Montreal Armenian woman, we noted further that the way gender relations are constituted among Montreal Armenians are quite complex. Living in a society where there is sexual liberation, Montreal Armenians try to live by their re-invented or assumed Armenian ideal where individuals are gendered-selves but sexuality is not expressed. At the same time the Montreal Armenians are aware and conscious that they are divided along class and gender lines, and where gender is not immune to class distinctions. Although this study makes the issue of the researcher's identity more problematic, as in this case, unlike most anthropological studies, the researcher is part of the study, as Sherry Ortner rightly points out, "whether we are studying our own society or another, we and those we study are implicated in one another's lives".

Through their various practices to re-invent a collective memory, a sense of community and an ethnic identity for themselves, Montreal Armenians as their counterparts in 'Anjar, conceive of themselves as hyphenated Armenians. In the case of Montreal Armenians though the emphasis is on being "a diaspora of a diaspora". In constructing or inventing their ethnic identities Armenians also set their gender identities and relations. Their identities as gendered selves are woven through their constructed ethnic identities in their everyday realities: in their cuisine with its definitions of male and female tasks and space; in their dances and its male and female steps; in their male dominant organisations and public space; in their values which put emphasis on family and friendship. "One has to choose to be Armenian" in the diaspora (Ani, in the film "Back to Ararat").

Armenia: Space of Memory, History

As a diaspora Armenian Armenia has been for me a virtual Armenia in my memory and has been the space of memory, songs and maps of my childhood. It is the dream and site of desire for many Armenians living in exile. After the dismantlement of the Soviet Union, the dream became a reality for many of us. It became accessible and yet it is only a fragment of the historic homeland - the space to where ancestors could rest in peace. The scars of the genocide include the inability to have burials for the victims. "We cannot carry the cemetery of our ancestors on our backs" (Balakian 1997: 247).

The Republic of Armenia constitutes one of the smallest of the ex-Soviet republics. Located around lake Sevan, it has an area of approximately 30 000 sq. kms. The present boundaries of Armenia are the result of historical experiences and treaties (see Mouradian 1990: 13-14). Armenia, in spite of its relatively small territory is one of the most densely populated republics of the ex-Soviet Union (Mouradian 1990: 176). Moreover, half of its 3 million 283 000 inhabitants live

in the Ararat plain which constitutes only 10 % of its territory. It is also one of the most "National" of the ex-Soviet republics. The brand of Armenian nationalism that prevails is one that has identified the Nation as one that has been subject to calamities and has put a moral imperative on Armenians to preserve their Armenianness. We can see this in the 1995 "National Report on the Conditions of Women", of the Republic of Armenia, in cooperation with the UNDP, that states: "For centuries, the people of Armenia, a country rarely sovereign, viewed the family as a key value and the primary factor that kept the nation together."

A strong nationalist movement exists with its focus on the oppressed nature of the Armenian people. The history of the Armenian people for themselves has been marked with tragedies calminating in the 1915 genocide - a genocide which remains unrecognised and unpunished. This emphasis on being an oppressed nation can be considered to be one of the various ways of resistance during Soviet period in Armenia. A brief historical glance indicates that the Sovietisation of Armenia had taken place on the 29th of November 1920, (and the transfer of authority from the Independent republic of Armenia to the Armenian SSR took place on the 2nd of December 1920) was followed immediately, by various kinds of oppressions, imprisonments, exiles. These along with the deteriorating economic conditions led to the first popular resistance and uprising to Soviet rule on the 18th of February 1921. The uprising was crushed by the Soviet army on April 2nd 1921. However, it led to the removal of four disliked members of the Communist Revolutionary Committee, and the arrival of Alexandre Miasnikian, Lenin's friend marked a shift in the Sovietisation policy (Assadourian 1991: 12; Khrlopian 1991: 6).

Armenians believed in Glasnost, and framed their demands in its rhetoric. This led the Armenians to demand the abolition of the 1921 treaty signed in Moscow. In February 1988 there were impressive demonstrations in Erevan (Armenia) and Stepanakert (the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh) requesting the re-unification of Karabakh with Armenia on the basis of self-determination rights. Following the February demonstrations for the re-unification of Karabakh, on the 28th of May 1988, the 70th anniversary of the Independence of Armenia was celebrated for the first time since sovietisation, with demonstrations. During the summer of 1988, mass demonstrations continued followed by general strikes. During this period the Karabakh Committee was formed with a political platform. In November1988, Armenians were subject to further massacres in Azerbaijan, leading to massive refugee problems. Emergency measures were established in both republics and Azerbaijan began a blockade of Armenia: a situation which is still in effect. The disastrous earthquake in Armenia on December 7, 1988, came to add on the existing refugee and economic problems. On December 10, 1988, members of the Karabakh Committee were arrested. On 12 January 1989, a special Commission to administer the Karabakh region, under direct control of Moscow was established. On 28 May 1989, the Soviet Armenian government recognised the 28th of May as the official anniversary of the Republic of Armenia. Some members of the Karabakh Committee formed a new movement, the Armenian National Movement. During the summer of 1989, the political platform and organisation of the Armenian National Movement (Ho. Ho. Sha) acquired legal status, and held its first Congress in November 1989. In January 1990, further Armenian massacres were reported in Bakou and Kirovabad.

During the Spring elections, members of the Karabakh Committee,
"Armenia's most famous dissidents, came to power in parliamentary
elections" (Shogren 1990: F11). On August 23 1990 Armenia proclaimed
itself an Independent Republic. By the fall of 1990, the conditions
were as follows:
"The same Armenian nationalists who spent two years fighting the
    government are now trying to govern themselves and finding out how
    complicated life at the top can be." (Elizabeth Shogren 1990:
    F11).

A historical study of the Armenianness made me face a history that for
the Armenian people has been marked with tragedies culminating in the
1915 genocide - a genocide which remains unrecognised and unpunished.
In this self-conceptualisation issues of gender and class are
undermined, as Di Leonardo (1984: 229) points out,"The vision of
ethnic community / or for that matter, 'Nation'/.. ignores class,
regional, demographic - but especially gender - differences within
ethnic populations /or a Nation/". In addition, the geographic
location of Armenia has made it a place where as Peggy Reeves Sanday
(1981: 231) has pointed out, "The seeds of sexual equality and male
dominance existed from the beginning of written history". As I discuss
elsewhere, gender relations among early Armenians were known to have
been complementary (Aprahamian 1998). Although descent was
patrilineal, the head of the household was the eldest woman. The role
of the male in impregnation was undermined. Water was considered to be
the source of impregnation. This early belief is still present among
Armenians. Every year during the second or third week-end in July,
Armenians celebrate "Vartivar" (the festival of Water/Roses/ and love)
dedicated to the pre-Christian deities Asdghig and Vahakn. During the
celebration young boys throw water on girls and women. During the
pre-Christian period great emphasis was put on the link between water
and fertility (Tsovinar Tsovinyan 1984: 67). The pre-Christian belief
system involved a series of gods and goddesses headed by Aramazd. The
mother of all was Anahit - "e park azgis mero ev ketsutsich", the
pride of the Nation and the source of its continuity, "mayr amenayn
zgastutiants", Mother of all prudence, "shunch ev kendanutiun
ashkharhin hayots", breath and life of the Armenian world), "barerar
amenayn mardkants", benevolent for all humanity (Agatangeghos, cited
in Zeitlian 1992: 7a). Among other goddesses there were Asdghig - the
deity of love, beauty and wife of Vahakn. She was faithful to her
lover; and Nane - the goddess of wisdom/ knowledge and inventiveness
as well as of home economics. The name, today, is applied to the
grandmother or the eldest daughter-in-law (mother-in-law) of a
household. The Armenian woman was "tan chrag", the light of a home:
"Armenians believe that woman is the keeper and maintainer of life and
    therefore she should live longer"... It is cold and gloomy in a
    house without a woman". (Tsovinar Tsovinyan 1984: 68). With the
    introduction of Christianity as a state religion in Armenia, in
    304 A.D., the cults associated with Anahit continued. The early
    churches were named after women martyrs: Gayane, Hripsime, Marine.
    Women continued to be significant. There are numerous accounts of
    the importance of women in politics and public life - in
    particular of aristocratic women. The queen was as important as
    the king in the Monarchy. The emphasis on family values and kin
    ties reinforces Armenian patriarchal values. The Armenian woman
    was the head of the household. She was responsible for the
    planning of the activities related to the maintenance of the

household. As such she was responsible for the division of labour. However, she reached this position only at a relatively older age and through it, she became a source of transmitting patriarchal values. For Armenian men and women after 1045 AD, with the end of Armenian kingdom, we see the beginning of subjugation of Armenian women. During the 9th cent - 1373 AD short lived Cilician monarchy, we have a trend towards Europeanisation, marked with emphasis on morality and religious piety. However, for Armenian men and women, the "real" transformation in gender relations and identities took place during the Ottoman domination that lasted over six hundred years. During this period, Armenian values became more and more repressive towards young women. The second half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, is marked by attempts of Armenian women to organise for change (Aprahamian 1998). Throughout the late 19th century and early 20th century - until the genocide of 1915, Armenian women attempted to liberate themselves and engaged in the liberation struggle of their oppressed nation and were conscious that "the liberation of women necessitates the liberation of all human beings" (Sheila Rowbotham 1972: 11). It is to be pointed out though, in spite of the efforts of many Armenian women to liberate themselves, yet in many Armenian communities, in particular in the diaspora, as recent studies have shown, Armenian nationalist practices and community as well as family life have silenced the Armenian woman. There is a history of women's oppression in which "Armenian mothers-in-law held power over their daughters-in-law at the behest of a patriarchy that excluded women from positions of authority in community institutions" (Avakian 1998: 66), as well as contemporary version of sexual politics that tends to silence women in marriage, relationships and in community organizations (Avakian 1998: 66). The story of the Armenian women's liberation movement is seen by many as the "re-capturing" of the "supposedly" free spirit pre-Christian and pre-foreign occupation gender relations and identities among Armenians - a state where women were not confined to the domestic sphere.

I encountered in my own journeys among contemporary Armenian women, a continious re-examining of their history and the history of the European and North American women's liberation movement. In what follows, I will summarize this history - a history narrated to me by men and women I encountered at the Institute of Ethnography in Erevan. It is amazing that in spite of the different historical experiences the bear stories have continued to be narrated. Armenian women have been known to have played a significant part throughout history, especially as warriors, in the struggles for survival that have marked Armenian history (Darbinian 1993: 6). However, during the post-stateless period from the 11th century until the present, Armenian women were not allowed to carry arms. Often, women had to disguise themselves as young men to be warriors. When discovered, they were subject to ridicule. The presence of women among the fidayi liberation movement was considered a bad omen (Darbinian 1993:6). During Sovietisation "women /were supposed to be freed/ from all forms of slavery and humiliation"(Bilshai 1957: 22). However, none of that hope materialized and Armenian women were faced with a situation of double standards much like their counterparts in the Soviet Union. As noted by Ester Reiter and Meg Luxton (1991: 56), Soviet views assumed women and men have quite different natures. This implied a

"celebration of femininity" and a glorification motherhood. During the Sovietisation period in Armenia, women entered the labour force as doctors, nurses, engineers, skilled labourers, agriculturalists etc. and yet continued to be responsible for domestic labour. They became party members, workers and slaves in their own homes. Men were not expected to provide house-work. Child-care remained the responsibility of women. In addition, women were/and are expected to please men and obey them. They were/ and are to obey their fathers, brothers, and husbands. Women themselves maintain and perpetuate these values.

Post-perestoika and glasnost period:
"In 1986, Gorbachev announced the creation of a unified system of
    women's councils or Zhensovety. These are voluntary organisations,
    set up at work places and in residential communities, at the level
    of town, district, region and republic. ... /these/ now present at
    least the potential for a women's movement". (Ester Reiter and Meg
    Luxton 1991: 53). However, as a review of the literature
    indicates, many assumptions about gender differences are
    biologically determinist in their approach and "preclude an
    analysis of gender hierarchy and male privilege" (Reiter and
    Luxton 1991: 55).

"The object of perestroika was to make the entire economic system more
    efficient. The lack of adequate consumer goods and services
    created an impossible situation; it is widely accepted that
    improving the consumer sector would especially benefit women, as
    they are primarily responsible for maintaining life. Despite a
    situation where women make up 51 percent of the work force, they
    continue to be defined in terms of their responsibilities outside
    of paid work. Thus proposals for restructuring don't seem to take
    into consideration the impact on women's employment." (Reiter and
    Luxton 1991: 68).

Women are being conceived in two extreme dichotomies: either as mothers or as prostitutes. In Armenia itself as an article by Varsik Mekerditchian published in Narek medical journal suggests women are being reduced to sex-objects. The following are some of the advice given to women:

"Do not argue with your lover. In his presence do not engage in any
    conversation with others;.. Admire him; Be caring; Repeat to him
    that you love him; Never attempt to discipline him; Sometimes cry
    in his presence, tears would soften his heart; Whenever he wishes
    to kiss you, be ready even if you are not feeling well; Be polite
    and flexible..."

No wonder then, that stories of women and bears are still being narrated, shared, re-narrated among Armenian women.

During my recent visit in Armenia, I received contradictory messages from women. Women with post-secondary education still aim to please men. When a man enters a home, he is surrounded with caring women who give him all their attention. Young women do not wish to bear female infants, and pray to be "blessed" with male children. At the same time there is a realisation for a need to have women's grass roots organisations. There is also an emphasis that the situation for Armenians is a difficult one: we have a moral imperative to alleviate

the pain that has befallen on us as a nation: a collectivity. Women have always put priority for the liberation struggle of the Armenian people. Although invisible in the public arena, women have always been at the forefront during times of crisis: such as the 1988 earthquake, as well as in uprisings and in the early stages of the Nagorno-Karabakh movement (Aprahamian 1998). Whereas Armenian women were at the forefront of this movement, today they have once again been reduced to the background as elsewhere,

"Women are finding more and more that there is no way out but a complete change. But one thing is clear. Things can't go on the way they are. Every woman knows that." (James 1972: 79). During my visit to Armenia in the summer of 1992 and 1993 the Armenian women I encountered felt the need to make themselves "visible" and were looking for ways to organize and break away from feelings of guilt towards the "moral imperative" put upon them by virtue of the tragedies that had befallen on their "nation" throughout history. Their voices can be considered an echo of the concerns expressed by Bell Hooks (1990: 15),

"How do we create an oppositional worldview, a consciousness, an identity, a standpoint that exists not only as that struggle which also opposes dehumanisation but as that movement which enables creative, expansive self-actualisation ? Opposition is not enough. In that vacant space after one has resisted there is still the necessity to become - to make oneself anew. Resistance is that struggle we can most easily grasp."

To conclude, Armenian identity in Montreal, 'Anjar or in Armenia becomes embedded in memory - memories and narratives of a tragic history marked by an unrecognized genocide and a nationalist discourse that pathologizes difference and does not recognize differences of sex, gender or class, Ethnoscapes, and narratives of belonging to a fragmented imagined homeland in the context of the recent emerging notions of globalization.

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