

# HYEBRED

HEALING

FALL 2019 ISSUE 06



# MAGAZINE

# MASTHEAD

## Rafaella Safarian

Founder, Editor-in-Chief,  
Designer

Rafaella has been writing for as long as she can remember. A graduate of Arizona State University, she created HyeBred Magazine in 2017 as part of her Creative Writing capstone project. She is continuously overwhelmed by your enthusiasm, love, and support for HyeBred!

Haley grew up in Oakland, California before moving to New York, where she graduated from Columbia University. She is currently based in Armenia. Haley is committed to amplifying the voices of the Armenian diaspora community and hopes you enjoy HyeBred!

## Haley Zovickian

Reader, Editor

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# NOTE OF GRATITUDE

Dear Readers and Contributors,

Thank you for tackling the sensitive and intimate topic of 'Healing' with us. For a lot of us, art is healing, as the journey to healing is often through our craft, be it art, photography, writing, music, or filmmaking. David Richo has said, "Our wounds are often the openings into the best and most beautiful parts of us."

So, we'd like to thank you all for your participation in choosing this complex theme and for your continued investment in our Armenian literary community. Thank you to the contributors for submitting excellent work. Thank you, readers, for simply opening up these virtual pages in support. We cannot mention enough that HyeBred Magazine would not be where it is today without you.

May each piece inspire and encourage you on your own path to healing.

Thank you, Շնորհակալություն,

*The HyeBred Team*



Marsha Nouritza Odabashian

*The Villagers*, 2016 ©  
Onionskin Dye and Acrylic Paint on  
Stretched Canvas

## ancestral tones

Celeste Nazeli Snowber

we are not only  
ones who died in the genocide  
victims of the horrific

we are beauty incarnate  
weavers, shoemakers, mothers & daughters  
duduk players, poets, fathers & sons  
priests, goat herders, brothers & sisters  
bakers and artisans  
and most of all ~

we are of the land  
baked from the terroir  
of arid and fertile soil  
figs, pomegranates, nettles and olives

don't forget who we were  
and how we loved  
here is the essence of a civilization  
a poetic memoir of Armenians  
notes on a tetrachord  
calling forth a polyphonic chord  
to inhabit the sinews  
on our shoulders, in our bones  
here are ancestral tones.



*Hymns* 2019 ©

Onionskin Dye and Gouache on Stonehenge  
Paper

## Blood lessons

there are traits  
that get passed down  
from generation to generation  
propensity for humor, diabetes  
high blood pressure, or a knack  
for telling stories or the way  
you curl your foot or ache to paint

or even if you like dogs,  
cats, hippos or you can move your hips

and then there are inheritances -  
how we care and be in life  
how one holds the ache  
for sons and daughters  
sing hymns for unborn  
visions, dreams and plans

we stumble into knowing  
shake into becoming  
blood lessons



*The Sun is a Lemon Pendant, 2017 ©*  
Onionskins, Onionskin Dye and Acrylic on Stretched  
Canvas

# Offering

perhaps imagination  
is the final praise  
to look until we see

what offering beholds us  
in the mystery  
of a life well lived

look beneath the surface -  
how many dimensions can  
one object, one heart  
hold a world within  
in the company of light  
radiance comes to all

sun circumferences, cherish  
the unseen and seen  
this too is a miracle  
right in front of you.

Celeste Nazeli Snowber, PhD is a dancer, writer and award-winning educator who is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University outside Vancouver, B.C., Canada. She has published widely in the area of arts-based research and her books include *Embodied Prayer and Embodied Inquiry: Writing, living and being through the body*, as well as two collections of poetry. Celeste continues to create site-specific performances in the natural world as well as full-length performances. She is presently finishing a collection of poetry connected to her Armenian identity, which will be integrated in her next one-woman show. Celeste's mother was born in Historic Armenia in 1912 and survived the Armenian genocide before immigrating to Boston. Integral to Celeste's own healing process is excavating fragments of ancestral memory, which find their way in poems and dances. They become a path to excavate trauma as well as the beauty imbued in the terroir of Armenian culture.

Boston-based artist and MFA, Marsha Nouritza Odabashian's drawings and paintings uniquely reflect the tension and expansiveness of being raised in dual cultures, Armenian and American. As a young child she watched her mother cultivate the Armenian tradition of dyeing eggs red by boiling them in onionskins. In her work, vignettes of current events, history and social justice emerge from the onionskin dye on paper, stretched canvas or compressed cellulose sponge. Her numerous solo exhibitions in the United States include *Skins* at the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown, *In the Shade of the Peacock*, *EXPUNGE* and *Miasma* at Galatea Fine Art in Boston. Group exhibitions include the Danforth Museum and Gallery Z. She has exhibited in Armenia twice: *New Illuminations* (HAYP Pop Up) and *Road Maps* (Honey Pump Gallery). Reviews of her work appear in ArtScope, Art New England, the Boston Globe, and the Mirror Spectator. Odabashian studies early and medieval Armenian art and architecture at Tufts University with Professor Christina Maranci, with whom she traveled to Aght'amar and Ani in Historic Armenia. Pairing her ancestral past with the present in her art is her means of fulfillment.

# To Float

**Natalie Tamar Hovsepian**

"It's easy to float!" She calls out to me.

"Just lay flat on your back, the water will hold you!"

It's funny the water should care to do that, I think. "Where should I center my weight?" I ask.

"Just don't think about it."

I don't understand how I can not.

"Are you still thinking about it? You're fucking kidding me..."

She said don't think about it. Lay flat on my back. Ok. I can do this.  
Lay back.

"Fuck!" I come splashing to the surface in a panic.

"You had it, what's wrong with you?"

"I heard something in the water. You didn't tell me about my ears, that they'd stay under, they'd hear what was under. I think I want to get out."

"Of course your ears are going to stay under, don't be stupid. You can't leave, I'm still here! Are you going to leave me alone?"

Of course, I can't leave her alone. I feel always the wound I inflicted, my burdensome presence. But today, she wants me to stay.

Lay back.

"I'll hold your hand, don't worry. You waste my time worrying," she says, just before I lose my ears again.

"I'm doing it! Oh my god!" My voice is muffled, far away. If she spoke at all, I can't be sure. Maybe I could get used to floating, I think. I remember how she told me the water was her home, and I said I think I understood the waters. She said I might think I do, but when I come to visit I come to swim. She comes to float. I remember thinking how if she could float, I might try it too. Did I think that? Maybe I remember her inviting me. Maybe I simply accepted.

Her hand is still in mine, holding tight. It feels like the truest thing, the realest thing my senses could make out, apart from the water's percussion and the dark blue of bottomless sky.

Holding her hand, I can ignore the sound. I can forget the land. I can discard the empty knowledge of how to swim, imparted on me by an eager father tossing me, flailing and small, into the pool where my mother waited to comfort me. I put all that away.

Then there is a change in the percussive sound. Could I be sure it was her voice? Stay still, keep floating, grip her hand tighter. You know where you are.

And then again.

"Are you saying something?" I must've screamed it judging from the pain in my throat.

She tugs on my hand, and the sound changes again, this time louder, more urgent. I still can't make it out.

If only I remembered how to swim! How long had it been? Would I hear her then?

"I'll help you, don't worry! Don't let go!" I yell again.

Then there is a sound like I'd never heard. Higher in pitch and decibel than anything I know, the feeling that it is both approaching and receding, the sense that below me, deeper than I could possibly imagine, entire civilizations are crying out together. And above them, the fish and their schools join in. And then I become aware of the movement. The rising to match the crescendo of despairing voice.

A wave is forming beneath me and I can do nothing but float with it to the top of the world. Even with nothing but the sky to look at, I know it is the tallest wave a person could imagine. It feels as though maybe I can reach the bottom of the deep blue that is no longer above but all around.

There, we are suspended. Atop the Glorious Wave in the Sky, the voices balancing together on a single note.

"Have we made it?" I call to her, uncertain if it would reach anything at all. I try to clasp her hand tighter.

Something small and slimy wriggles, leaps out of my palm, and there's a distant splash. Somehow, in the confusion, I've misplaced her!

"Where are you?!" I scream.

Even through the water's voice, I know there is no reply.

"What have I done! I'm here, swim to me! Please! Come find me! I'm at the top! I'll wait for you! Swim to me!"

And it is only then that I remember, she doesn't swim, she floats. In fact, she's never swam. I am alone. I am alone.

And it is then that this occurs to me; she does not care to be found. She has replaced her own hand with a silver fish. She knows the ways of the water, she's had her ears under so long. She knows the sound. She has known the wave would come. She has tethered herself to something deep within. She is down there, somewhere in the voice of the ocean.

"I'LL NEVER FLOAT AGAIN!"

And I call upon every ounce of strength I have left to whither in my core, the memories of lives past and the shock of it all, I force my ears up and out of the water into the piercingly silent blue, and just as my equilibrium tips and I fear I would plunge through the depths to the bottom I've never known and can hardly imagine, I decide there is but one option – to swim.

And together, we come crashing, the wave and I. Me, struggling to stay at the top while the wave struggles to destroy as much of its path as possible. I swim above torn tree limbs and houses broken in two, dolls and trucks and used condoms, familiar people staring blankly while my limbs nearly decide to divorce themselves from my aching, feverish heart.

I remain this way for what I think is eternity, existing in the water of my betrayal, with the force of my awakening feeding the motion of my exhausted body.



# SPRING CLEANING

Natalie Manukian

gingerly,  
I skate my fingers down your back  
only to feel shards of indifference  
pinching your spine.  
I already knew—  
a cheap shield crept  
deeper than you had planned.  
cutting my caresses  
became your reassurance.  
did you not know  
wounds of vulnerability  
are easier to clean  
than carrying this burden of ego?

[pt. I]

no one  
has ever made me feel  
so sick.  
your sweet secrets,  
your subtle nothings,  
dripped like tar  
down my throat  
and sunk into my soul,  
leaving an unquenchable thirst—  
or was it suffocation—  
that i've spent years

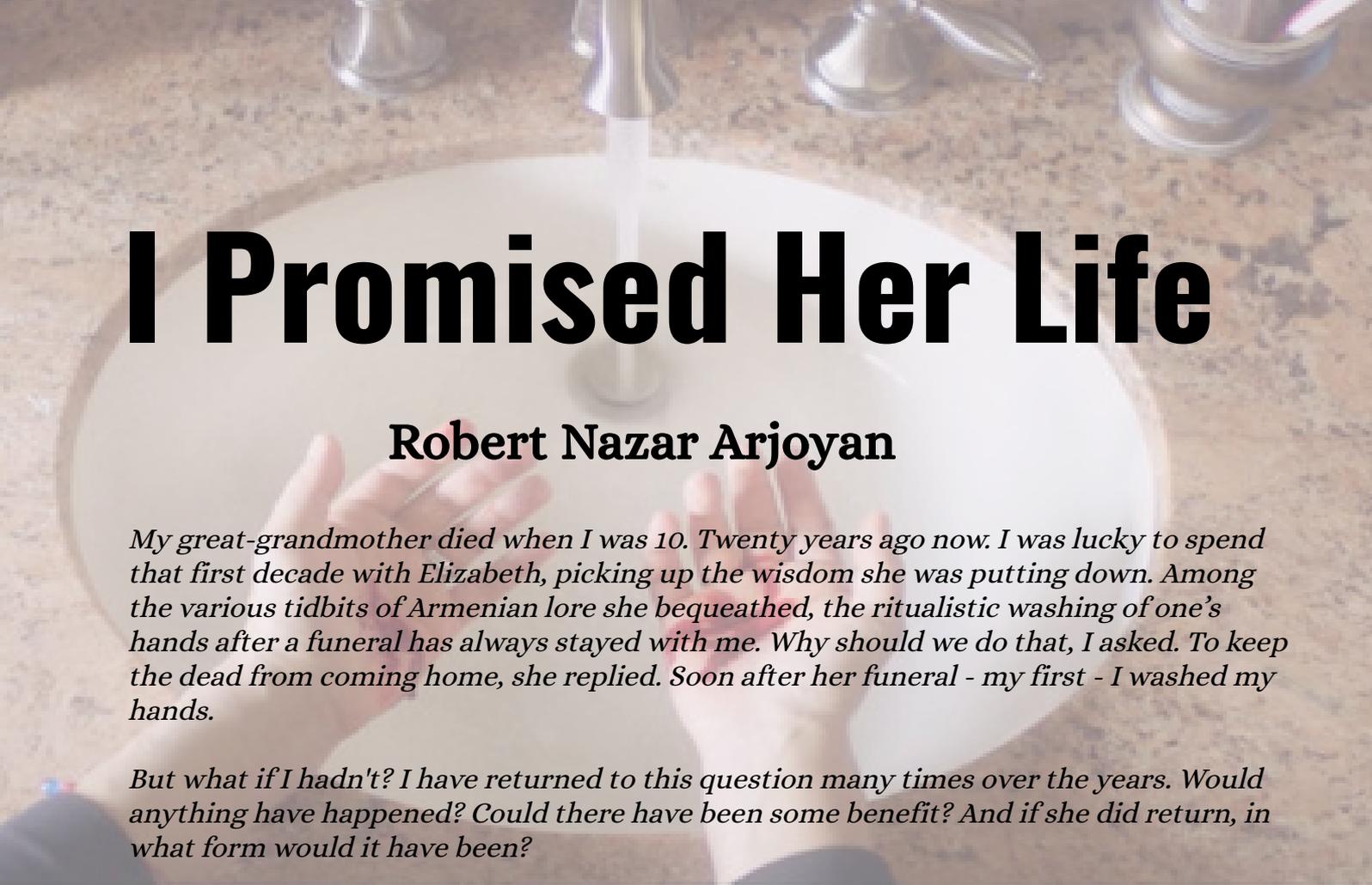
diligently scrubbing away.  
with fingers raw,  
and breath so short,  
my morale buckled.  
please,  
let me go.

[pt. 2]

my skin,  
our intimacy,  
was never meant to be  
the host of understanding  
your self worth.  
it's only in my tending  
to this former battleground,  
that I can strip  
the poison that sunk,  
hungrily devouring  
what was once lush.

[pt. 3]

Natalie Manukian is a product  
of time spent in D.C., Montreal,  
and Yerevan. She uses poetry  
as a mechanism to process  
difficult emotions and to  
release words left unsaid.



# I Promised Her Life

**Robert Nazar Arjoyan**

*My great-grandmother died when I was 10. Twenty years ago now. I was lucky to spend that first decade with Elizabeth, picking up the wisdom she was putting down. Among the various tidbits of Armenian lore she bequeathed, the ritualistic washing of one's hands after a funeral has always stayed with me. Why should we do that, I asked. To keep the dead from coming home, she replied. Soon after her funeral - my first - I washed my hands.*

*But what if I hadn't? I have returned to this question many times over the years. Would anything have happened? Could there have been some benefit? And if she did return, in what form would it have been?*

*I Promised Her Life explores the line between tradition and superstition. How do these tenets benefit us? Why do we hold them, and is it our right to defy them? Armenians are not ones to break from the mold. Having fought to keep our heritage alive, we are by nature traditionalists. Rebellion is often met with concern, criticism, or downright derision.*

*What if your legacy was taken from you? What, if anything, is still worth holding onto? I Promised Her Life tells the story of a grieving mother, the dead daughter she hardly knew, and the lengths to which she'll go to make things right.*

*I treasure my culture and explore the nooks and crannies by making movies about it. In telling this story, I invite people of all cultures to examine their own. Our traditions help define us - but not, ultimately, more so than our actions.*

## Watch Here

As a child, award-winning filmmaker Robert Nazar Arjoyan was consumed by rock & roll and movies, especially those directed by Martin Scorsese and Steven Spielberg. He studied cinema at the USC School of Cinematic Arts and has since worked as a writer, producer, director, and editor of shorts, commercials, and features in Los Angeles.

Arjoyan founded his production company, Garuna Film Group, Inc., in 2017, going on to helm its first project - a short film entitled *I Promised Her Life*. It tells the story of Elena, a grieving Armenian-American mother who, on the day of her daughter's funeral, defies a centuries-old ritual and tests the limits of tradition as she walks the thin line between death and afterlife. The film has screened at 30 film festivals worldwide, garnering seven awards during its run - including two for Best Actress and one for Best Director. It can be seen at Omeleto and Vimeo.

# Reparations of the Heart

**Kristin Anahit Cass**

Gumish becomes Keban  
After the massacre  
More Armenian than before  
Now that our blood has soaked the soil  
Now that you carry our DNA  
Armenian houses  
Run up the hillside  
Where we must have run  
When the tribesmen came for us  
Knives and guns and fire  
Will the ancient church walls be blackened  
Where you burned us alive  
But soon will be reborn a museum  
We are reborn  
On the land of our ancestors  
Not purchased with any blood sacrifice  
But our own  
More than a hundred years have passed,  
Today I stood in a place I never expected to be,  
I had no words at first, only tears,  
Thank you, kind strangers who led me home.





*Village of Keban Madan in Western Armenia  
(Modern-day Turkey).*



Kristin Anahit Cass is an Armenian-American artist and writer based in Chicago. She is a graduate of the University of Chicago. Her work includes photography, video, writing and other media. Cass's work in Armenia on the *Borderlands Under Fire* project was a finalist for the 2018 Dorothea Lange-Paul Taylor Prize. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally. Cass's works are in a number of private collections, as well as the permanent collection of the Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Armenia in Chicago. Her family survived the Hamidian Massacres and the Genocide of 1915. In 2018 Cass journeyed to her ancestral village, finding a measure of healing for the intergenerational traumas that have been a legacy of the state-sponsored violence in Western

# I AM

## Mari Mansourian

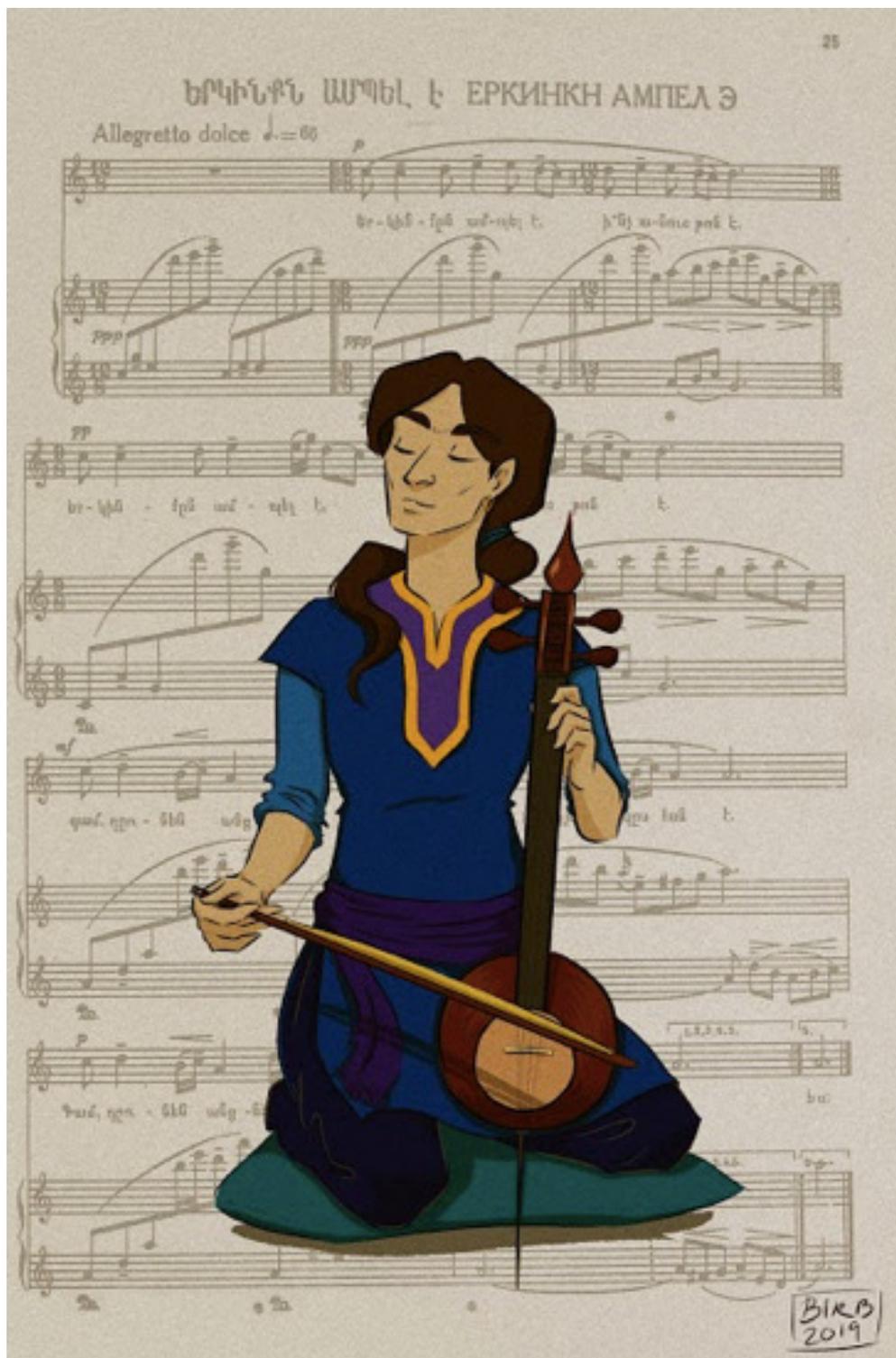
I am strong and  
I am weak.  
I am tough and  
I am soft.  
I am water and  
I am stone.  
I am light and  
I am darkness.  
I am an optimist and  
I am a cynic.  
I am love and  
I am hate.  
I am sweetness and  
I am harsh.  
I am beauty and  
I am hideous.  
I am brilliant and  
I am ignorant.  
I am a witness and  
I am blind.  
I am hope and  
I am despair.  
I am healed and  
I am broken.  
I am birth and  
I am death.  
I am human.  
I am me and  
I am you.

Mari Mansourian has been capturing moments through her lens since her young teens when her father passed down her first camera, a 70's Zenit, and the rest is history. She sees the world from her own unique viewpoint and perspective. Mari captures the essence of the moment, through the colors and energy of the world around her. She has been an active member of the She Loves Artist Collective since 2016.

Recent shows include the She Loves art exhibition with over 40 fellow female artists in February of 2016 at HNYPT, Los Angeles; MI\_YA SEEN photography exhibition at Armenian Arts Gallery in October 2017, The Many Faces of Armenians at Roslin Gallery in June 2018, Pure Not Proper at Coagula Curatorial in June 2018 and Sense of Armenia photo exhibition at Armenian Arts Gallery in February 2019. "My eye is where I see my world through; express my passion through, and where I speak my mind and heart through. Live life with passion, conviction, and through love," says Mari.

# An Imaginary Self-Portrait As Femmeboi Kamancheh Player

Anni Movsisyan



*I am a musician and I was raised in the UK, so I mostly learnt music that belongs to the western classical, jazz and pop traditions. As I got older I learnt to play styles of music that reflected my expanding tastes, but it is only in the last few years that I began to more deeply appreciate the musical traditions of my Armenian-Iranian heritage, as well as those of the wider region of West Asia. As my main instrument is the violin, I particularly admire the kamancheh, a bowed string instrument which originated in Iran but is also commonly used in Armenian and other West Asian music traditions.*

*While I was growing up, I saw that non-Armenians didn't know anything about Armenian culture, let alone where or what "Armenia" was (likely*

Sheet music from the song "Yerginkn Ambel E" (The Sky Has Clouded), recorded by ethnomusicologist Komitas

*thanks to the legacy of cultural erasure caused by the Armenian Genocide). I found this somewhat bizarre at first, until I noticed that it wasn't just a few people, but the majority of people I came across who were ignorant, by no fault of their own. We were only kids, after all.*

*Even though I went to an Armenian school on Sundays – which you'd think would help a child to see the positive aspects of their cultural heritage – I found the institution to be a place where I didn't really fit in. For example, singing the Lord's Prayer and the national anthem every week at the start of the school day made no sense to me, because we never did this in English school, and because I came from a secular family that held onto the parts of Armenian culture we valued while being reasonably critical of the parts we weren't interested in (such as the national anthem: my Dad would highlight Armenia's post-independence problems when others would uncritically ramble about the greatness of Armenia as an independent nation. We were more loyal to culture than to nation states.).*

*In retrospect, my sister and I realised that this Sunday school taught us things about Armenian history in a way that blurred the lines between established historical fact and mythology in ways it wasn't supposed to, that is, to the point of confusion. Meanwhile, our education about the Genocide barely scraped the surface. It was also a deeply heteronormative place; while I didn't identify as non-binary or know of such terms as a child, I didn't get the girly girls and I didn't get why the horrible boys never got tired of being annoying, and the Armenian dance classes they put on for girls after school looked slow and uninteresting (but I may have been more intrigued if they were mixed and/or taught some of the faster-paced men's dances as well).*

*All this is to say that I essentially grew up as someone who was intrigued by their own culture at first, but gradually wanted to be less and less associated with it (just like many other young diasporans who try to fit in at the expense of hiding from the cultures of their heritage), and the community I found myself in didn't help very much with changing that. However, through my love of music, and through gradually learning about decolonial thinking, I am reconnecting with my heritage and cherishing the music enjoyed by my parents, cousins, ancestors and the like.*

*The character I have illustrated playing the kamancheh is a semi-*

*autobiographical figure, who I will include in a comic that will explore some of the themes mentioned, which I hope to create one day. The background of the illustration is taken from the sheet music for the folk song "Yerginkn Ambel E" (The Sky Has Clouded), which was put into writing by the pioneering Armenian ethnomusicologist Komitas. I recently came across this song while continuing my research into Armenian folk music, and I found that the chords accompanying the melody as written by Komitas give the song a joyful colour. Meanwhile, Stepan Epremyan's version changes the chords, which fill the air with a beautiful and pensive sadness instead. Although the melody was the same, it surprised me to hear how much of a melancholic quality it now had, and I have been converted to prefer Epremyan's version!*

*Instagram @\_peacock\_paradise\_*



# The Vessels

Denna Berg

I collected these stories like a torn-up book -  
scrap by scrap.

A conversation that I wasn't supposed to be part of...

A name mentioned that I had never heard...

A photograph of someone I had never seen before...

Slipping out, unfastened, from an old leather album.

It's impossible to find all the scraps as the dead sometimes take them with them  
As some scraps leave too many paper-cuts to be passed along.

The scraps from my book haven't had an easy binding  
The glue was forced to weaken in the desert sun.

But I wear my cuts as a badge of honour  
as I tape together the pieces mapping my blood.

For the vessels before me were elegant and strong.  
Richly painted and kept on high shelves.

Though as the scraps show,  
sometimes the vessels would fall and shatter.

They would be pushed off by vases  
who wanted to be displayed in such beautiful places.

For even though the vases had shelves of their own, they wanted more.  
They wanted ours.

They criticized our vessels for not being elegant enough –

even though they were as delicate as hand-loomed silk.

They criticized our vessels for not being strong enough –

even though their bases were as fortified as our mountain.

They criticized our vessels for not being rich enough –

even though their colors were as saturated as our tapestries.

So we had to hide our vessels.

We could no longer display them with pride.

For the vases wanted that pride as their own.

-

So here I sit.

Taping together scraps.

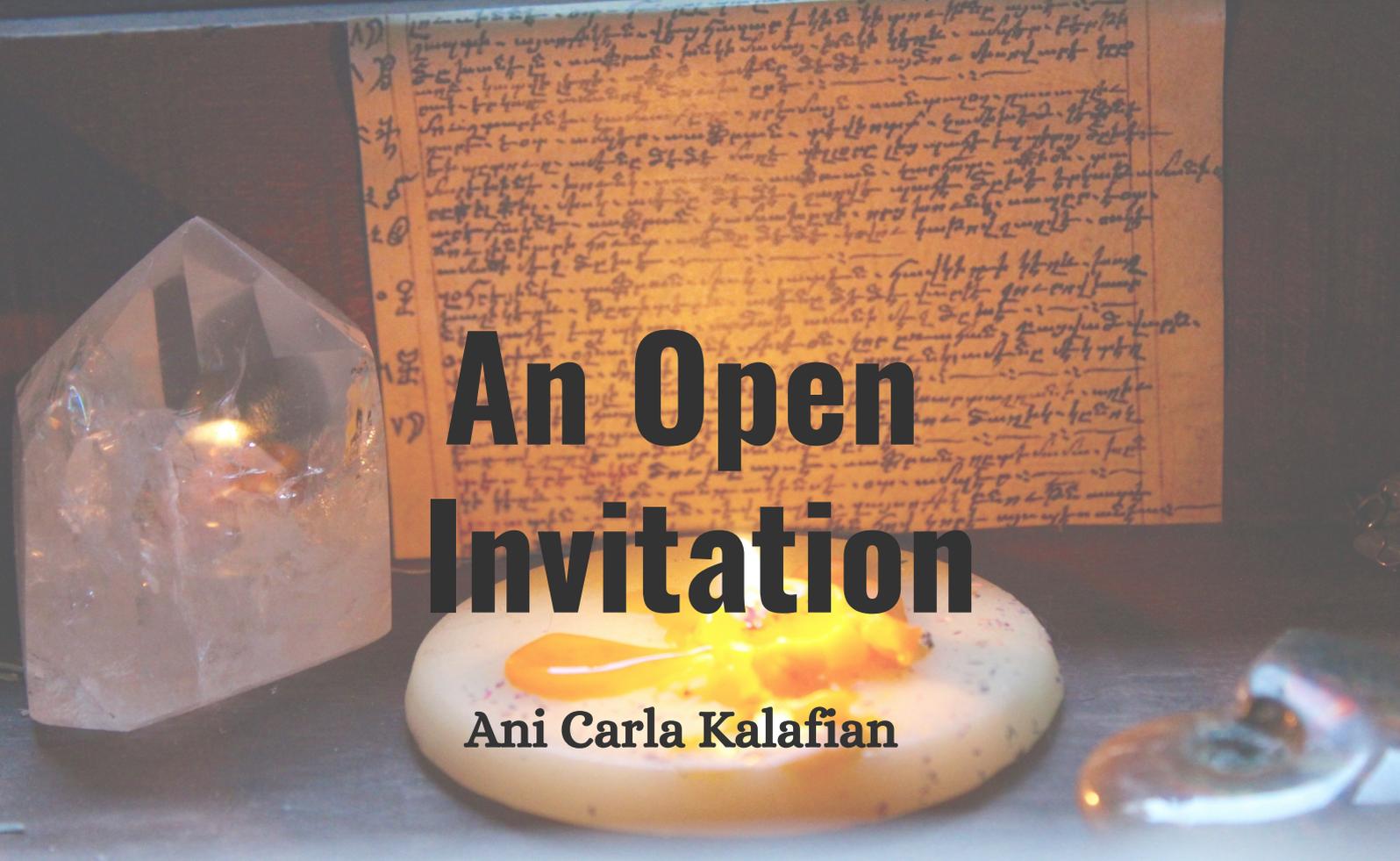
Trying to put back together the photographs of my vessels.

Trying to put back together the stories of my blood.

Feeling my pride over the scraps below.

*This poem came to me during a time where I felt like my connection to my Armenian heritage was being weakened as my grandparents moved into a nursing home. No longer did I have access to stories over dolma and lahmajun, but I did have access to my grandfather's book collection. Delving into the written word, I discovered that other first generation Armenians pieced together the history of how the Genocide impacted our families over years of Sunday dinners and one-off comments. Learning this shared experience through books encouraged me to seek out the Armenian community online. Despite being only half Armenian, the community has welcomed me and I have met amazing and creative young Armenians (many who I talk to on a daily basis). As a result of this restrengthening of community and identity, I have found healing. This poem relates the story of how people part of the Armenian diaspora must use tape to secure their identity, but we are almost always willing to put in the work to do so. I dedicate this poem to my grandparents, Alice and Haig Selian.*

Despite not being Denna Berg-ian, Denna Berg is in fact half Armenian (aka one step closer to being Cher). Denna was born and raised in Toronto, Canada. As a policy advisor focusing on social advocacy during the day, she is new to embracing her creative writing abilities. When she is not coddling her words, you can find her exploring grocery stores, making ceramics or trying to clear her schedule to make time for naps.



# An Open Invitation

**Ani Carla Kalafian**

When it comes to reading coffee, the most commonly asked question I get from clients, followers, and even skeptics is simply: does everyone have psychic abilities to read, or is it a gift you are born with? And the answer is: a little bit of both. Everyone inherits the gift, and for some, the urge or pull is stronger at a younger age and anyone who practices long enough will get there.

My name is Ani Carla and I am inviting you to activate your healing powers within and start practicing an Armenian ancestral healing modality you connect with. This invitation will hopefully light a path to help accomplish the following in your awakening: to heal intergenerational trauma that will inevitably spread like wildfire to your family and join me in an expanding cultural movement to preserve ancient Armenian Healing Arts which is wildly underrepresented.

In Armenia and throughout the world, our culture is encompassing highly spiritual people who pay attention to signs, symbols, and omens as an integral part of survival. For thousands of years, indigenous healing rituals, modalities, and methods of divination have been openly practiced in Pagan Bianilli (Urartu), Historic Armenia, and even in the current Christian religions of our era. So, besides the few centuries-old art of coffee reading, dream interpretations, and common herbal remedies, what else can we practice and pass down to the next generation?

I'm an old soul and I've been at this a long time. From a young age, I was able to communicate with spirits and other angelic beings in person and in vivid dreams. I would constantly see specs of light in the dark and would make my mother cover the sides of

my face with her hands before I went to sleep because I was afraid of the lights crashing onto me. It didn't take me long to realize that I was able to see energies, light bodies, and auras around people. I would stare at our white bricked fireplace for hours and didn't understand why anyone else couldn't see the visions and scenes happening before me. Scenes that played out later on in my life that I remember like watching an old movie happening in real time. The only person I could talk to this kind of stuff with was my dad's cousin's wife Shakeh who recognized my gifts. She lives in London and would sprinkle bits of esoteric wisdom on me during family excursions around the world. When I was old enough and ready, she helped guide my etheric direction to a path of light and healing. I still had to learn most of it on my own being so far away.

I picked up coffee reading from my mom, her friends, relatives, and guests who would gather constantly for coffee and naturally switch around cups to read after. I liked to call these episodes 'Armenian Women's Therapy Sessions' as it was always a hard time for everyone. Each took their turn in a safe space to pour their hearts out and heal over coffee. The readings would bring divine messages and guidance after intense purging. Release, energize, receive, move on, and repeat was and still is the process.

Reading coffee is like second nature for me, and although it requires much of my time, it's easy for me to channel. I had been studying signs, symbols, and omens for ages (literally), and the convergence of deep mystic knowledge and sensitivity to energy makes me who I am. My thirst for learning more continues. I have a calling keep sharing more information so I can keep channeling more and more for not just individuals but for the collective during this great cosmic shift.

In my early 20's Shakeh attuned me for Reiki during the harvest moon on a beach in the South of France and it was even more magical than it sounds. Shortly after, I received my official Reiki training in the Bay Area where I mostly grew up. From then on there was no looking back. I worked on healing myself and plants for two years until I had a complete mental breakdown that forced me to run and cry to my mother. It felt like it was getting to be too much and I didn't know if I was able to handle that type of energy: I didn't think I was worthy. I had the strangest urge to ask her who else in the family was an empath like me, and why was I like this? Who did I get it from? She then revealed to me that her grandmother Tamar was a famous healer in the Armenian community back in Tehran, Iran. People would bring her gifts and knock on her door during all hours of day and night to receive healing. I was in shock as no one had ever mentioned this before. I proceeded to ask her what Tamar did, and my mother replied that her grandmother would place her hands on or over people and healing energy would just run through her body and make its way to people. Literally Reiki, but I'm sure they didn't call it that at the time. I also found out that my grandfather Socrates from my father's side had a strong hand at palm reading too (pun intended).

Now, the realization of my true inheritance and protection from Tamar and all of my other ancestors fueled me to push further. I broke free of self-limitations, fears, and even a curse (another story for another day, sorry), and moved to Armenia for a couple of years to find myself and apparently my husband too. There, I continued my healing work and trained in the modality Pranic Healing. My journey led me back here in Los Angeles, back to my place of birth coming full circle.

Currently, I host coffee reading events, ceremonies, workshops, as well as lead a private Armenian women's healing circle and take clients for energy healing work. This is all on top of my full-time job working as a coordinator for the developing Armenian-American Museum and doing creative freelance work with an Armenian-American filmmaker whose ultimate trajectory happens to be healing through storytelling. I'm finally in a very good place and the truth is I have become a spiritual mother to so many incredible women. It won't end, but when I become a mother to my own children, that energy will be directed to my womb and creations that come out of it. I won't have the capacity to do the healing work at the rate I'm going now. The demand I'm receiving in addition to the in-pour of questions and advice-seeking Armenian women is getting to be so overwhelming, and although I'm grateful for the abundance and challenges it brings, it's heavy work and I can't do it alone. I don't want to do it alone.

If you read this far and are in a place in your life where you are not only awakening and deepening your intuition, then growing into a healer for the betterment of all areas of your life is for you. Healing is part of your heritage. By accepting this invitation, you are agreeing to take full accountability for the work I am about to lay forth but do it in your own way:

The time is now for you to rise and vibrate at a more elevated frequency because I know you want to. You know you have the gift and it's crying out to be released. I know what it's like because I've been there. You will eventually get to a place where you will completely trust yourself and not even question those clairvoyant bursts of information that spill over from time to time. It will flow naturally. Supernaturally.

So where should you begin? Right at home. Go back to your families and start asking questions. Who were the spiritual leaders in your family or regions of your origins? What did they do? What did they use? How did they do it, and where did they do it exactly? RECORD IT. Sit with your recording and breathe through it and try to just let your mind be clear and connect with your ancestors. Ask for their guidance, and start channeling information, write it all down when it comes. If the modality is clear—such as divination and protection rituals using candle wax and water, lead pouring, bird flight patterns, a special technique using flour or baked goods, smudging with frankincense, special herbal concoctions, coffee reading, hands-on healing, space clearing using special chants, or whatever it is—start trying it out and experimenting. Do extra research if needed by using clues and hints you get from your family or messages from your ancestors. Get yourself in a natural relaxed state of being. Set the right intentions, and spend time practicing the modality or modalities that come up.

This is an invitation to go deeper and get in touch with your ancestral roots and with your super intuitive nature at your very core. Be comfortable admitting your extra-sensitive, empathic, and psychic abilities. Break free from socially constructed taboos and superstitions and empower your well-being with the guidance of your ancestors. We inherited trauma, yes, but we also inherited strong intuitive survival skills.

Continuing the practice of your ancestors' spiritual work will naturally help filter out toxic habits, thoughts, people, and objects out of your life bringing forth clarity and realization of your higher purpose in this life. It will require you to set healthy boundaries with those close to you in order to create your own sacred space to grow. There's truth to the old Armenian saying, "When you heal yourself, you heal seven generations back and seven generations forward." And when you heal yourself, you are helping heal the collective.

We are now burdened and blessed to clear ancestral trauma and put an end to negative patterns and stop them from continuing into the next life cycle. We have the responsibility to re-activate ancient knowledge that has been inherited and stored in our DNA's memory bank which we can access by asking the right questions, meditating, and praying to heal.

I came to an epiphany after so many of my Armenian clients repeatedly would express that they were surprised I'm so young (32) when they met me for the first time. They were expecting to receive a reading from an elderly woman because that was the norm for them. Coffee reading and intense energy healing work, in general, was something their grandmothers, mothers, and aunts only did. But those elders started this type of work when they were young, so could I be one of the very few who are carrying on this craft? I am blessed to be connected with a handful of Armenian healers around the world who are doing incredible work. We constantly talk about how crucial it is for more of us to emerge.

In fear of losing our special family recipes, Armenian cookbooks have not only been created and distributed worldwide, but the cuisine has had a chance to evolve through fusion and contemporary cooking techniques. In fear of losing the language, in-person classes and curricula were created to teach classical and dialects of Armenian all over the world. In fear of losing folk traditions like music, classes filled with printed songbooks and special music programs are available and even took on a life of its own in the modern Armenian music industry. But what about the healing arts that were part of our cultural wellbeing for thousands of years empowered and dominated by women? It has not only been seldom passed on, embraced, and practiced, but it didn't even get the chance to evolve... Until now. With you.

I hope this invitation provoked something in you to take action and start your sacred journey. I have no doubt you will go through a rollercoaster of hot and cold emotions, explore the world with extra activated senses, and keep ascending into light gracefully. The signs are everywhere, and you will know how to navigate safely through them. And when you reach a plateau, you will share and encourage others to do the same.

Goddess bless.



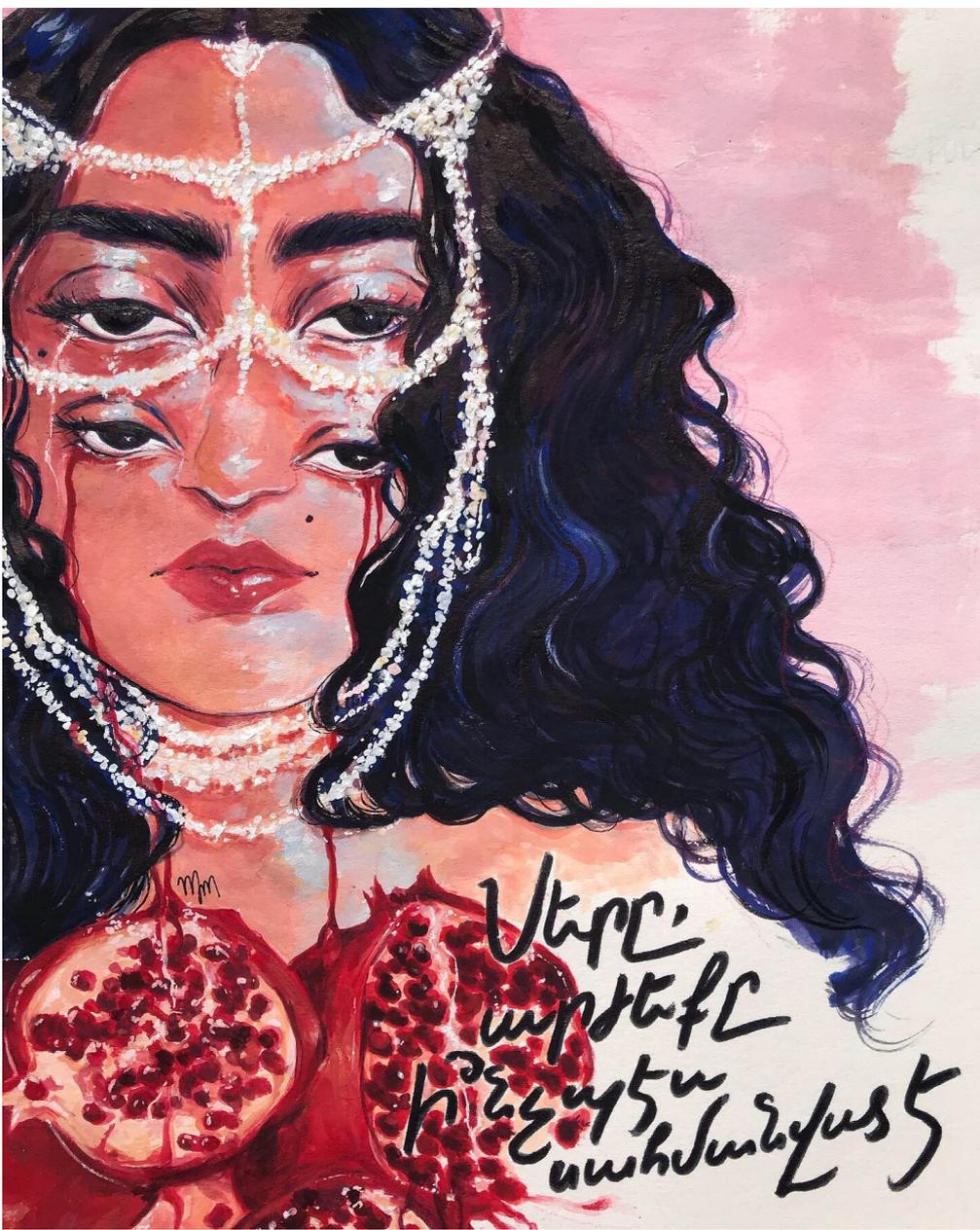


*Watercolor, alcohol marker, pens and gouache paint mixed media paper*

## **Maral Matig**

*I have long questioned what it means to be Armenian, but during these past two years art has helped me find some clarity. I have found that painting and simply engaging myself in the Diasporan community has helped me grow artistically and philosophically in ways I never knew I could.*

*These three paintings, for me, represent healing in the sense that they get me out of my own head. Studying Armenian landscapes and architecture is soothing to me; it reminds me of the love I feel for Hayastan. Our nation's music and poetry has so much to offer to the soul, I find it hard not to share. Shifting my attention from myself and my own thoughts to something larger, like the survival of a language and culture, is a meditation session I cannot explain.*



Maral is an 18 year old Armenian artist living in Canada. She comes from a Bolsahay (Istanbul-Armenian) and Ekiptahay (Egyptian-Armenian) family, and much of her work is influenced by a variety of cultures. Through her paintings she explores dual identity, what it means to be an Armenian living outside the motherland, and simply being a young adult searching for answers. You can see more of her work on her Instagram, @maral.gazellig.



# Diasporan Neuroses

**Zack Kojoyian**

In many ways and for many reasons, we Armenians are a pretty fractured population. This doesn't necessarily mean we don't care for each other or help out when we notice our people in need, but we don't really know each other. Without open communication among the global Armenian community, we're left to imagine our own ideas of how other Armenians must think, feel and live. Growing up in the diaspora, a child of first and second generation parents, I was detached from the reality of life in Armenia. I was not truly knowledgeable on any topic beside the Genocide. Of course, I knew about the Nagorno-Karabagh war and I later learned about the earthquake in '88, but I was blind to the reality faced by the people living in Armenia. I've only recently learned more about the modern history of Armenia. I now know that the establishment of the Republic was never easy and the struggle is ongoing. What this country has overcome makes me proud to be able to call myself Armenian. However, I would think it offensive to claim I know anything about the real experience of living in Armenia. I get the impression though, that some people in Armenia feel like those of us living in the diaspora are basically all the same.

There are many things that divide us as Armenian people. Some are more serious than others. We never seem to fail to find something to keep us at odds. We make jokes about it. Those can help. But what have we really done to solve the problem? How can we bridge the gap? Personally, I feel like a better mutual understanding of both experiences, diasporan Armenian and Hayastanci, could be a possible solution. I don't think it's a bad idea to make jokes, but the healing power of comedy is lost when the joke is at the expense of the other party. Over the summer, I saw a post by a popular Armenian Instagram account that landed with me the wrong way in this regard. It was hastily taken down after only a day or so, but I'll do my best to describe it.

The post seemed to be a clip from an old tourism film or a news reel regarding Lake Sevan. Set to sad choral music, a lone man stares somberly at Lake Sevan as people we must assume are tourists ride boats across the surface. Then he's on a boat for some reason, still with the same expression of tired apathy on his face, as a narrator talks about the lake. Then the clip restarts. The part that upset me was the text above and below, in classic meme format, that read, "Brace yourselves, the Diasporans are coming."

My initial thought, considering I was in Armenia volunteering for the summer was, "Ok then, should I not be here?" I later understood it was primarily a joke about obnoxious, diasporan tourists. This made the post a little funnier as I've definitely experienced the kind of tourists this post was targeting. I still felt hurt by it though. It wasn't clear that obnoxious tourists were the subject of the joke. Nothing about the content of the post mentioned diasporan tourists, just diasporans. I'll accept that the context was where the joke established itself seeing as it was peak tourism season. I'm not from Armenia though and I lacked that perspective. So the joke was lost on me.

I commented on the post saying I didn't know how to feel about it and that it felt bad. Another person agreed with me, albeit a bit too harshly. To balance out the tone coming from my side of the discussion, I politely commented one more time in response to someone explaining the joke. Finally, a third party decided they'd call me and my unwanted cohort out on our "diasporan neuroses," which made me think; if I didn't get the joke because it relies on a shared Hayastanci experience I'm not a part of, it must be possible that this last person is calling me neurotic because they may not understand the experience of a diasporan Armenian. This all led me to ask some questions:

*Do the people of Armenia really think that the Armenians in the Diaspora are all the same? Really?? We exist in dozens of countries across 6 continents. How can we be the same? Do the people of Armenia believe that diasporan tourism is a bad thing? Do the people of Armenia want us here or not? Is it even possible to address this issue without inevitably falling into one side?*

Personally, I'd like to share a little bit of my experience growing up and living as an Armenian in America in the suburbs of Washington DC.

I don't think it can be understated how alienated I felt by my local Armenian community. I was always the weird kid who couldn't speak Armenian very well, but I understood what everyone was saying about me. As a result, I grew up never wanting to participate in anything Armenian. I never wanted to dance. I didn't know the songs.

I didn't speak Armenian at home because my grandfather never taught my dad. He believed it was a useless language and that if you live in America you should speak English. I never went to Sunday school and my family stopped going to church a few years before my parents' divorce. When my mom remarried, her second husband was not Armenian, which meant now nobody was speaking Armenian in the house.

Thankfully, I found my community in the friends I made at school. There were kids with backgrounds from all around the world. I was usually the only Armenian of course. With no Armenians in school who weren't the same people who'd laughed at me at church, I gravitated towards, well, no one. I just made friends with whoever would be my friend. I was a shy, fat kid. By the time I was 13, I had made a small friend group with people whose families came from Iran, India, The Philippines, Mexico, China and Peru as well as a few Americans. I enjoyed being part of an ethnically diverse group of friends. It made me feel more understood. Although, I was always the one with the longest answer to the dreaded question, "Where are you from?"

As I grew up, my friend circle shrank, but the ones who were always there happened to be the ones I felt most culturally akin to. I had to forge my own idea of what it meant to be Armenian because there was and still is no consensus on what that means. I felt like I was on repeat constantly referencing Armenian things or reasserting the fact that I was Armenian, not Romanian. People didn't know we, Armenians, existed and their minds were blown when I told them there's actually a country named Armenia full of Armenians. Oh yeah, and guess what we speak...Armenian. And when we write...we use the Armenian alphabet!

Still, that got old fast and for 27 years of my life, I never had a good Armenian friend. I knew some Armenians. They weren't great friend material. All the other ones I knew were family. Until, finally I met some Armenians who didn't seem to judge me or test me on how Armenian I truly was. They accepted me as I was and didn't demand I meet some standard of 'Armenianness' they had set for me. A couple of them were former Birthright Armenia volunteers. The one other was Jasmine, who is now my partner. I didn't think I'd ever be in a relationship with an Armenian but she proved me wrong.

The truth is that the diasporan experience can be cold, confusing and lonely. I was lucky enough to have a stable financial situation growing up but

else was volatile. This included my ethnic identity. In Armenia, it's easy, you're Armenian. That's it. In America, if you're not Black, white or East Asian, you're always up for questioning. For older generations of my family this was annoying. They had been taught that they were white so when someone would approach them in a language they didn't understand or maybe they'd get asked where they were from, I'd usually hear about it over dinner. But things changed for my generation. Growing up Armenian in the US after 9/11 meant we didn't get to be little, tan white kids who would grow up into ethnically ambiguous adults. The more I aged, the more I was browned by American society. Suddenly, people were calling me a terrorist. From the kids at school to random strangers; even my own family. When my face started growing hair, my dad urged me to shave it for my own safety. As painful as this was at times, I embraced it because it felt more accurate to my experience and culture. I knew I wasn't white. White kids didn't have lahmajoun as an after-school snack!

With my status as a "sometimes" person of color, I learned that the America my family came to was not the one they had told me stories about as a child. Perhaps they had an easier time passing for white than I did? But I doubt it based on what they've told me as an adult. And I know first-hand that Americans of all ethnicities will choose to see me as whatever they see fit, regardless of what I have to say for myself. I've been Mexican, Hawaiian, Native, Arab, Indian and occasionally, depending on who's judging, I've been white. As unfounded as some of those categories may seem, the white one is the one that I find most questionable.

See, there's this idea in America that the term Caucasian refers to people of European descent. Now, we can pretend like the nations of the Caucasus are in Europe, that's fine. They sort of are. Kinda. But in America, Caucasian doesn't mean from the Caucasus at all.

The history of the term is rooted in the scientific racism propagated by European anthropologists like Cristoph Meiners and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach during the 1700s.

The modern American usage is based on racist immigration and citizenship laws from the 19th century which dictated that only white people were allowed the right to citizenship in the US. Armenians were tossed back and forth over the borderline of whiteness until the United States v. Cartozian case of 1925, which claimed that Armenians are "of alpine stock" and "amalgamate readily with the white races..." Without the Cartozian case and

Without the Cartozian case and many others like it, in which people who we would now recognize as SWANA (South West and North African) were vying for their right to citizenship based on this loosely and inaccurately devised pseudo-science of racial categorization, there would be no legal precedent for the term Caucasian as a synonym for 'White European'. Many people from the Caucasus largely would not pass for white by American standards. So why do they keep using that word? I wish I knew. What I do know is that it only made things more fucked up for an American born Armenian trying to figure out what their ethnic identity was all about.

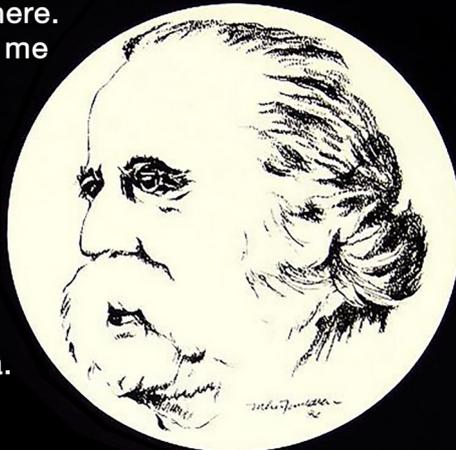
Constantly under question by family, friends and outsiders. Being made to assimilate and eschew your own culture in order to thrive. Always having to explain your existence because of a lack of representation. Being subject to the racism of people who probably don't even know your ethnicity exists. Lacking any connection to a larger community. Feeling like you're the only one. All of this and more are part of my diasporan experience. On the positive side, unexpectedly meeting any Armenian has become the marker of some of the happiest moments in my life. In that moment, your level of language proficiency doesn't matter. Your family's lineage, your hometown doesn't matter. In that moment, all that matters is that you managed to find each other, seemingly by fate, to remind the other person we're still here. We'll always be here, no matter how far displaced or dispersed.

We diasporans are not a monolith. Neither are hayastancis. We are humans and we are complex. We are bound by an ancient kinship and a long history of adversities which we will always have in common. If we are to avoid the kinds of conflicts that have driven us apart, we need to start by understanding each other. We will never be able to know each other if we continue to consider our differences more important than our similarities. We will not progress as a people if we divide ourselves into cliquish sub-categories and refuse to tell our stories. I'm only able to describe my personal experience living in the diaspora. I can't speak for the approximately 7 million other Armenian people who don't live within the borders of Armenia, and I certainly can't speak for those of us who do live within those borders. If you'll let me paraphrase Saroyan: We are Armenians and we inhabit the Earth, not just Armenia.

# Ex Memoriam

*Memories, like physical media, deteriorate over time. Like a video tape, every pass through, every new screening of a memory causes it to fall apart incrementally. Strong emotion can help retain certain parts in vivid detail, but ultimately decay takes hold no matter how joyous or painful that memory may be. This piece illustrates that deterioration by using photos posted to Facebook, a step which lends its own type of deterioration to the image via compression, then processing them through many layers of digital manipulation. With each passthrough, the faces and scenes are further distorted until finally we struggle to find any recognizable imagery. The photos used are from a time in the artist's life that left them full of regret and burdened with new trauma. This piece is the closest thing to closure that can be salvaged from that experience.*

Well,  
I am sorry.  
I am deeply sorry that  
Armenia is nowhere.  
It is mournful to me  
that there is  
no Armenia.  
There is a small  
area of land in  
Asia Minor  
that is called  
Armenia,  
but it is not so.  
It is not Armenia.  
It is a place.



There are plains and  
mountains and rivers and lakes and cities in  
this place, and it is all fine, it is all no less fine  
than all the other places in the world, but it is  
not Armenia. There are only Armenians, and  
these inhabit the earth, not Armenia, since there  
is no Armenia, there is no America and there is  
no England, and no France, and no Italy, there is  
only the earth.

William Saroyan

The Armenian & the Armenian  
*Inhale & Exhale*, New York: Random House  
1936, pp. 437-38

## Watch Here

Zack Kojoyian is a second generation, Armenian American digital media artist living in Richmond, VA. They work primarily in video and audio, but will occasionally write a thing or two. Much of their work deals with notions of identity, memory and loss by exploiting flaws in the media itself to distort, displace and destroy recognizable imagery, leaving artifacts of the original source material in place of what was familiar. Unsurprisingly, these themes also relate to Kojoyian's family history as all lines of their ancestry trace back (as far as possible at least) to Central Anatolia.

# Women of Armenian Families

Maria Dermosessian



\* The images in posters are from online archives. Artist claims no copyright ownership over them.



*The relationships and titles in these photos are fictional and assigned solely for the purpose of reimagining and recoloring the stories of pre-genocide Armenian families.*

**հարս**

**/hars/**

**sister in law, bride**

*A century later, we find ourselves in geographically disconnected parts of the world and express our Armenianness in our own unique ways.*



**հորաքոյր**

**/ho-ra-kouyr/**

**aunt (father's sister)**

*I wish to bring our stories back to life, by retelling and celebrating the things we didn't lose in the genocide - sense of family, traditions, food, literature, etc.*

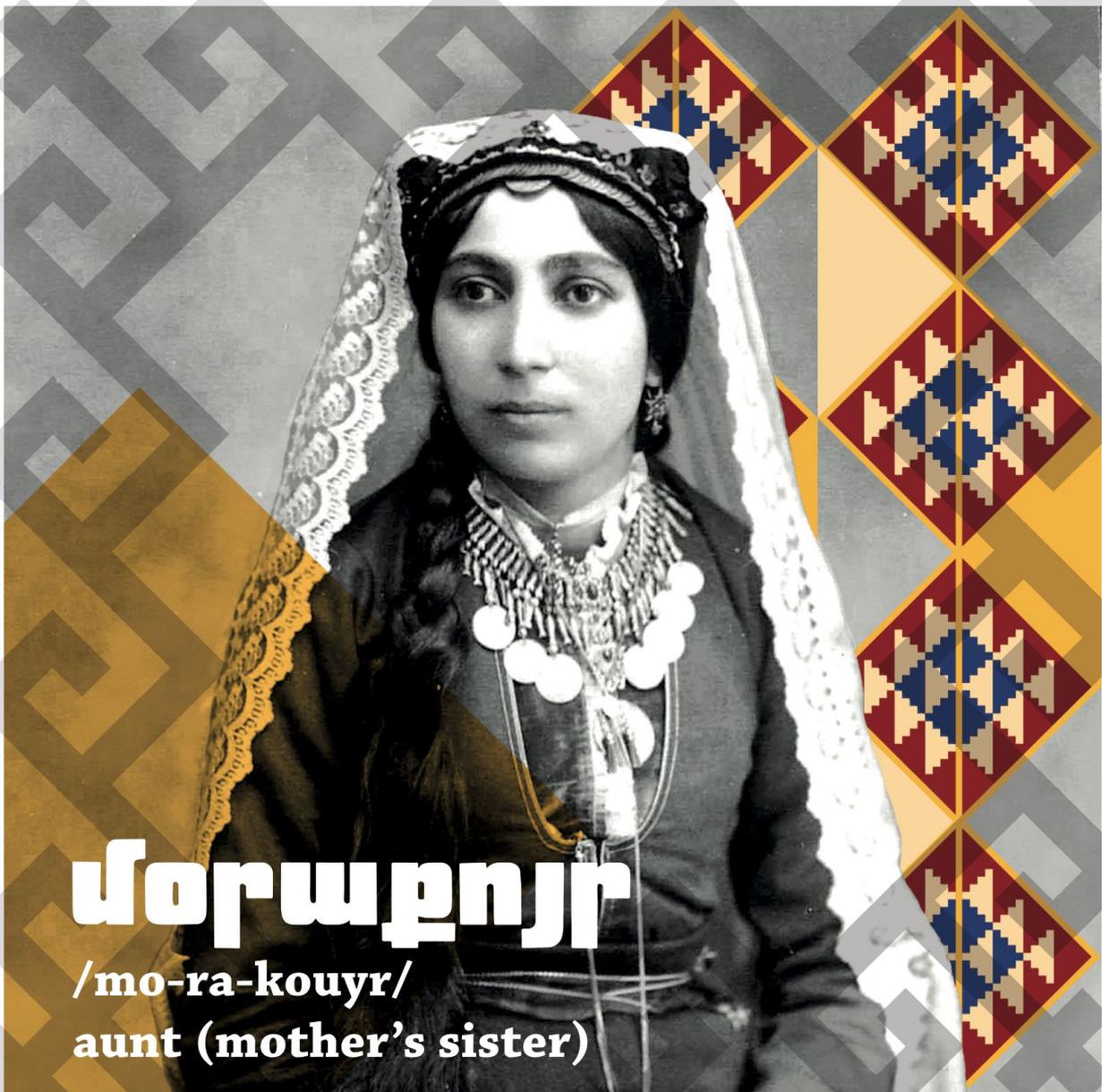


**մայր**  
/mayr/  
mother



**մեծ մայր**  
/medz-mayr/  
grandmother

*This is an ongoing project and wouldn't be complete without the men of the family. I would love to explore more archives to expand this family.*



**մորաքոյր**

**/mo-ra-kouyr/  
aunt (mother's sister)**

maria dermosessian

Maria Dermosessian is a designer currently based in Yerevan, Armenia. She is curious about the intersection of cultures and visual languages, and she tries to implement that in her work and practice.

# Spoiler!

Nour-Ani Sisserian



*Spoiler! is a short film about a blind date between two actors. It's about a nervous encounter, a new beginning that terrifies both characters because they need to let go of their past. I have always wanted to write about the movies that made me fall in love with cinema and acting. I have many inspirations every time I write and I wanted to revisit my personal references for my first short film: French new wave, Japanese cinema, American independent films. Spoiler! is obviously inspired by personal experiences. I wanted to transpose on the screen the pain of break ups as well as the lightness of meeting someone new, with my passion for films in the background.*

## Watch Here

Nour-Ani Sisserian is an actor, theatre director and writer based in East London. She started her own theatre company in 2007 in Paris where she is originally from. Credits include Miss Julie, The Maids, Medea... Nour-Ani recently assisted on the production of Faith Hop end Charity at the National Theatre in London. She also presented her last play Hadithi Yangu / My Story about a woman with cerebral palsy who wants to climb Kilimanjaro.

[www.nour-ani-sisserian.com](http://www.nour-ani-sisserian.com)

Instagram : nourp\_

# I Brought Ice Cream

Silva Emerian

The doorbell rang.

I don't remember who answered the door, if it was me or my sister. We were still in a daze. When you have just buried your mother, the days kind of blur into each other.

It was my cousin Shahe. "I brought ice cream." He was 19 years old then, but when I looked at him I still saw the mischievous boy he used to be growing up. As a toddler he once ran away from his mother at the grocery store and ended up at our grandparents' house about a mile away. But now he was a grown man, putting on a brave face despite sadness, and carrying a bag of frozen dessert.

We sat on our back porch and ate ice cream together. We talked with bleary eyes, shared memories of my mother, and even laughed a little. He was still our baby cousin, but he was trying his best to cheer us up and make us feel better.

And I realized that while I had lost my mother, the loss was not just mine. Shahe had lost his aunt.

The ice cream helped.

\*\*\*\*\*

When my mother, Eugeny, started to get sick, we all thought it might be pneumonia. But it didn't get better. A skin biopsy soon revealed Scleroderma – something no one had heard of. It had hit her lungs. It was too late to do anything substantive. Eight months after her diagnosis, at 49 years old, she was gone.

I was 22 years old then. I knew she was too young to die. I didn't realize how young she actually was. I'm 45 years old now.

\*\*\*\*\*

I didn't want to go to her funeral. It was too painful. I had watched her suffer for months, and I had watched her take her last breath. I did not want to be subjected to the tears and looks of pity from others.

I wore a black shirt with a white satin collar out of rebellion. My mother had experienced a lot of pain in her life but she refused to wear black. She believed in respecting and honoring people when they are alive. What good is it to pay respects once they're gone?

My little church in Watertown, MA was full to overflowing. The sanctuary was full. The narthex was full. The steps and the sidewalk outside the church were full. My cousin Vasken was angry because he was a little late and couldn't get inside.

When we got to Mt. Auburn Cemetery, I saw some friends out of the corner of my eye. They were MY friends – they didn't even know my mother. But they came.

\*\*\*\*\*

I walked past the liquor cabinet in our family room. There was dust on the bottles. No one in my family drank much. I didn't drink at all. In fact, I looked down on people who got drunk. They're weak, I used to think. But now... now I understood.

I understood why, in hard times, someone would want to find a way out of the pain. I understood why someone would want to escape their reality – to numb every feeling, every thought. I was so overcome by grief, and it hurt so much, physically as well as emotionally, that it finally made sense. A hint of compassion made its way into my heart and mind.

But I didn't turn to the bottle. I didn't turn to drugs. I didn't turn to anything self-destructive.

My mother would not have wanted that.

\*\*\*\*\*

I cried every single day for the first year after she died. I worked three jobs and came home and cried. Sometimes I cried in the bathroom at work. I never used to cry, but now I couldn't stop.

I remember one boss told me it was time to “get over it.” How the hell was I supposed to get over it? It’s not something you get over.

Ever.

\*\*\*\*\*

When the pain is devastating and the grief is overwhelming, there are a lot of choices you can make. Sometimes the choices are perilous; anything to make the hurting stop.

I made one choice – the most important choice. I chose to run into the arms of my Savior.

I doubled down on my already strong faith. I chose to cling to God’s Word, His promise of wiping away every tear and replacing my grief with joy. I looked forward to the day I would be reunited with my mother in heaven.

I kept going to church every Sunday, even though I now sat alone with an empty space next to me where my mom used to sit. I attended Bible studies. And I prayed. Even though I didn’t get my way, even though the Lord chose not to heal my mother, I never doubted Him. Because that would have left me without hope.

Because I already had a foundation of faith, I was able to finally apply it when things were the hardest they had ever been in my life. It’s easy to believe when things are going well. It’s easy to feel loved and blessed when everything is as it should be. But to feel the comfort of the Holy Spirit when I was empty and alone grounded my beliefs. My Jesus, my friend, never left me. He didn’t abandon me.

He dried my tears, He healed my heart, He replaced the pain with assurance. In Him I felt whole again.

It took a lot of time. Tears. Grieving. Talking. Remembering. And the pain will never completely be gone, because she’s still gone.

But I can smile again.

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“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). In these words, my life was restored. Even a life without my mother.

\*\*\*\*\*

Friends who showed up for me when I didn't expect it but needed it most, they helped healed me. Allowing my tears to flow, for as long as they came, helped healed me. Relying on the One who gives and takes life, and understanding His saving grace, helped heal me.

And ice cream. Especially the ice cream.

Silva Emerian is from Boston but has been a California girl since 2001. With a long and varied background in fashion, she is a freelance writer and editor, wife and mother to two active boys. She lives in Central California, where shoes and chocolate make her world go 'round. Connect with her at [silva@onmyshoebox.com](mailto:silva@onmyshoebox.com), on her blog [OnMyShoebox.com](http://OnMyShoebox.com), on Facebook and Instagram @onmyshoebox.

# How to Survive a Six-Year-Old Relationship

Georgik Barsemian

As diasporan Armenians, our ultimate goal in life has always been to protect our identity and its values within our host countries. From fear of assimilation, we have this ultimate goal of finding that one Armenian soul that completes us. The example of finding a needle in the haystack is nothing compared to catching that one Armenian fish from the sea with an abundance of fish.

But luckily, I was able to find that one Armenian soul that felt dear to me. And we went on to be together for almost six years, that relationship reached levels where I would get invited to different family gatherings such as Christmas and family dinners. It was like being in a relationship with your closest friend that you could talk to about almost anything and that you had their constant support and affection. It felt like the ideal dynamic duo of us being against the world. We were 21, we had it all and then college came into our lives.

College brought new changes and challenges that were part of the new modern culture. Our "Armenianness" stood almost no chance against this huge wave of modern philosophies and ideologies. We quickly realized how easy it was to be integrated in other groups that felt dear to us than staying with our traditional values. New friends came into our lives that showed us that the 20s were supposed to be our prime years of living on the edge with no hold backs. That this era is the peak of our physical body's attractiveness and energy. And our six-year journey came to an end.

How does one survive a break up that took six years to build? A fall from a ladder that took six years to climb? A relationship that was so precious and rare. That is simply reduced to dust now.

I thought I had accomplished my ultimate diasporan goal. But what had happened to my own personal goals? Was I simply focused this whole time on satisfying my community's and family's expectations?

The answer was yes. Who was I and what did I care about as an individual?

I was mad, mad because I had never taken the time to focus on myself. I had let myself be defined by my own relationship and fears. Was I simply this guy who would take care of his girlfriend and hold the door open to be a gentleman?

The healing process was the worst part, because as I was getting back up from this rock bottom state, I also had to focus on creating a newer version of myself that would be stronger than ever. The hardest part was to actually believe that everything was going to get better and that I would find happiness again.

Things that really helped me go through this grieving process was to have a complete wardrobe change. This new person that I was creating for myself had to present itself to society differently than it used to. During this period of time, I knew that the most important aspect to focus on was to try to live new experiences, such as joining local volunteer groups, going on adventures that may have felt intimidating (for example, a trip to Europe or a hike at neighboring forests).

New types of experiences can open up the window to different perspectives about life. Picking up new hobbies could definitely keep the mind distracted while at the same time giving a sense of accomplishment and purpose to the soul. For example, some of the things that I always try to recommend to friends is to learn new skills like knitting, making art pieces with collages, or picking up an instrument that they've always wanted.

The ultimate end goal of going through these changes is to become independent and self sufficient enough to enjoy the time you spend with yourself while at the same time feeling comfortable. At the end of the day, a relationship shouldn't be what defines you, it should only be a cherry on top of your cake. And that cake should be you yourself and everything that you have accomplished.

Since that day, I have accomplished many things: I started my own band with a friend of mine under the name: Yöcto & Yötta. I became the president of my university's Armenian Student Association and more active in the Armenian community of Montreal. Academically I was able to push myself enough to receive an honorary prize for being in the top 15% of my whole university's engineering program.

I went from having:

- 1) that one person giving my life a sense of meaning and completeness to having multiple bigger-scaled projects that are gratifying and satisfying.
- 2) marriage as my next possible goal in life to having this huge horizon of things that I can now accomplish to enrich myself further and to make an impact in my community.
- 3) one very close friend to having a diversity of friends that I can always count on and have interesting mind opening conversations with.

At the end of the day, I am thankful for what I have gone through. It has really helped me bloom and become the person I am today. And every morning I remind myself that good things will happen. I still have many projects that I want to accomplish in the near future, like taking part of the Birthright Armenia program and bringing new changes to my country.

Born in Aleppo, Syria in 1996, Georgik Barsemian moved to Montréal, Canada in 2003. He attended a private local Armenian school, Sourp Hagop, from elementary to high school, then continued on to pursue higher education at Concordia University in Software Engineering. He expects to graduate in 2021. He is a dedicated member of AGBU's Young Professionals chapter of Montreal and A.Y.F.'s Pegor Ashot and Levon Shant chapter. Georgik is also an executive member of Montreal's Armenian Student Association of Montreal. Most recently, he started a musical side project called Yōcto & Yötta as singer and songwriter.



# Our Last Summer

## (I want to build a house by the sea)

Florence Low

*Our Last Summer (I want to build a house by the sea) is a meditation on homecoming, healing and swimming filmed on Cape Cod. Set at the end of summer, it contemplates how we can mourn the world that we are losing. It asks how we can heal heartbreak if we have lost the rituals that our ancestors practised. How do we learn to grieve the things we have lost and the things we will never have in a time of climate change?*

Watch Here

Florence Low (@boy.florence) is a Pisces and a British-Armenian visual artist, graphic designer and drag king based in London. They had always felt like a fish out of water until they had the chance to live in Armenia, where they embarked on a path of art and activism that they have never been able to turn back from.

## Garri Dadyan

*The crucifixion of Jesus represents emotional healing for many Christians. Armenians are the first Christian nation and many wear a cross pendant or have cross-related decor at home. Christians believe that the cross is a symbol of spiritual life, a symbol of redemption, a symbol of rejuvenation. This makes the cross an ideal symbol for the medical profession, in its vocation to keep us physically alive and promote our physical and mental health and well-being. Many of today's hospitals and medical services began as Christian institutions.*



*Traditional Armenian Cross design - material is sterling silver adorned with genuine gemstones. It is double sided with a large 10 mm topaz in the center of one side, and 7 mm garnets on sides. Opposite side has Armenian writing "Jesus Christ" and is adorned with genuine 6 mm amethysts. It was hand-carved on wax by Garri Dadyan, then hand-cast in sterling silver.*

*The cross pendant is a very rare form of the ancient Armenian Cross hand-carved on wax by Garri Dadyan, then hand-cast in sterling silver.*



Garri Dadyan, an ethnic Armenian, was born of a formerly aristocratic family. His paternal grandfather, Aristarches Melic Dadayan, had changed his name to the more proletarian sounding "Artur Dadyan" at the time of the Russian Revolution. Melic means "Prince," and the surname "Melic Dadayan" was a well-known Armenian aristocratic surname. Garri has named his House of Design "Melic Dadayan" to resurrect his family history. Mr. Dadyan became a National Master Artist of the Soviet Union in 1985. In 1993 he became a member of the UNESCO International Federation of Professional Artists, awarded for the superior quality of his work. Garri has been a resident of the Seattle area since 1997 where he continues his art of repousse, as well as custom jewelry, art knife and dagger making, and more.

<http://melicdadayan.com>

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