“I physically felt what it meant to belong to a minority discriminated against”

« J’ai senti physiquement ce que c’était que d’appartenir à une minorité discriminée »

‘Ik heb fysiek ervaren wat het betekende om deel uit te maken van een gediscrimineerde minderheid’

Janine Altounian

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If we shall commemorate the opening of the Auschwitz camp in January 2015, next April we shall look to the centenary not of a liberation but of the first genocide of the century which struck Turkey's Armenian community in 1915. *Testimony* will dedicate its next dossier not to the facts, but to the construction of its memory and its internationally current nature. This will be included in the issue n°120, released in April 2015. However, we wished to meet with Janine Altounian well beforehand.

→ Interview by **Luba Jurgenson** and **Philippe Mesnard** / Translation: Sarah Voke

Janine Altounian

“ I PHYSICALLY FELT WHAT IT MEANT TO BELONG TO A MINORITY DISCRIMINATED AGAINST ”

Janine Altounian is one of the great figures of the French speaking intellectual milieu who, since several decades already, bears a consciousness of the Armenian genocide. She takes part in all major events, she has published numerous works on the genocide and manifold articles on Freud's language, of whom she is one of the translators, as well as on traumatic transmission. Especially, she has remained accessible, extremely modest in the face of the extent of the task she has set for herself, whereas all too often – sometimes by defense, at times simply giving in to one's sense of own self-glory – we see memorial actors become self-inflated. We went to interview her with Anouche Kunthe who, as an historian, studies exile and, more precisely, the Armenian Diaspora.

Janine Altounian never knew her parents' or her ancestors' land, since her mother and father, before meeting each other in France, had escaped the genocide perpetrated in Turkey upon Armenian populations. Altounian visited this land twice, in 2013 and in 2014. Up until then,

she had only known it through imagination, in other words through the few narratives her maternal grandmother had told her and the terror emanating from past events which did not have any precise legal qualification (it was in 1944 that Raphael Lemkin created the term of genocide). Did this project mature over a long period?

Janine Altounian: The desire to see one's parents' land obviously arises at a certain point in life for Armenians of the Diaspora. For a long time I had intended to go to Turkey, yet I did not want to go as a tourist, I was waiting, in a way, for an institutional circumstance. Furthermore, I first had to deal with the heritage of material goods left by my parents. It is, in fact, when survivors die that the descendants' memory takes a new turn. It is only when they disappear that, at that moment, they are totally taken care of. My last living parent, my mother, died in 2005 and you know how things are in such circumstances: there is the house to empty, the grieving process, etc. All of this took me at least five years. In addition to losing my parents and the world they represented, my translation of the *Œuvres complètes de Freud* (Freud's Complete ...

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... works) came to an end in 2011. My first trip took place in October 2013. For a long time, I had hoped that a book, the famous book surrounding my father's text, would be translated into Turkish, that was the time I thought I should go to Turkey. In 2010-2011, the Presses Universitaires de France, the publishers of this book, addressed two so-called left-wing publishers in Istanbul. Both refused.

After this, I accepted the offer from a psychoanalyst from Montreal who had published a book on my work (Harel, Hogikyan & Peterson 2013), to accompany him to Istanbul. I seized this opportunity because I was afraid of going alone, not of being killed, but of... something, without really knowing of what. During this first trip in November 2013, a Turkish psychoanalyst of Jewish origin and Human Rights activist invited me to come back for a conference which took place during a second trip from 7 to 13 May 2014. However, beforehand, one of the conditions of the first trip had been for me to go all the way to Bursa, the place where my parents came from. This is where I was able to see what abandoned houses were like, and I was shocked to see, in real, things which I nevertheless already knew: that is, the disappearing and the effacement from the dispossessions which follow a genocide. There, I physically felt what it meant to belong to a minority discriminated against. I was able, for example, of identifying with Armenians I met at the Armenian publishing house, Aras, which, by lack of finding a Turkish editor, which I would have preferred, published my book in December 2014.¹

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I was shocked to see, in real, things which I nevertheless knew: that is, the disappearing and the effacement from the dispossessions which follow a genocide.

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What struck me when I was at Aras, or at *Agos*, the journal founded by Hrant Dink,² was the feeling of being amongst people who did not feel at home, who had a *you never know...* in their mind. Sensing this atmosphere, at first, I thought to myself that I had never felt this in France. I later wondered, had I been sensitive, deep down, I must have had this same feeling as a child with my recently immigrated parents, a feeling which I most likely repressed afterwards. It is true that I never experienced any insecurity in France, in Paris, whereas in Turkey, in the 1950s, for example, rose a wave of persecutions. Yet, I felt with these people something of a *you never know* atmosphere.

Anouche Kunth: Indeed, in September 1955, a pogrom initially directed at the Greeks was perpetrated upon a Cypriot backdrop, mainly in Istanbul, followed by analogous events at a lesser scale throughout the country. A conspiracy rumour circulated at the beginning. There was word that there had been an attack on the Kemal Atatürk's native home in Salonica. This manipulation caused worked-up crowds to pour into the Christian neighbourhoods in Istanbul, including the Beyoğlu

(1) This collective work on the Deportation Journal by Vahram Altounian contains contributions of his translator, Krikor Beledian, of his daughter Janine Altounian and of two psychoanalysts, René Kaës and Régine Waintrater.

(2) Hrant Dink was a Turkish journalist of Armenian origin, namely the founder of the Armenian review *Agos*, bilingual in both Armenian and Turkish, in 1996. He was assassinated by a Turkish nationalist on 19 January 2007.

hill, as a spontaneous movement. Yet, we notice that, earlier, Christians' homes were marked before being stormed. After the Greeks, the assailants retreated to the Armenian and Jewish neighbourhoods. Churches and synagogues were devastated, people were tortured, some were assassinated. From this moment, panic among the Empire's elderly *dhimmi*³ led to new migration waves, Greeks often went to Greece, Jews often to Israel and Armenians did not go to Soviet Armenia, many joined the Diaspora in France or in Canada. In the years following the new millennium, in Istanbul, there was a photo exhibition which showed smashed windows, the crowd, etc. And this exhibition was ransacked by ultra-nationalist Turks. I hereby make a link to Janine's feeling of insecurity.

Janine Altounian: During my first trip, I only encountered things I already knew. But I really understood what effacement was, for example when I was at the station in Haydarpasa. On 24 April all Armenian elites were deported from this place, a very beautiful station, not in use today. It figures in quite a few narratives, namely in *Sur la route de l'exil* by Aram Andonian (2013), for which I wrote an afterword. Today nothing remains. What is lived at such a moment? One ponders: "Do I exist? Since it no longer exists." In Bursa, when I saw the Armenian neighbourhoods, the collapsed and shattered houses, I realized what people may experience when they are ordered to leave everything, who are thrown onto the roads to be killed. I went to the neighbourhoods where my grandmother's house stood, I knew the name of the street, but to try to find it was meaningless because streets are civilized places, yet where I was felt ghost-like, nightmarish, so I did not spend more than a day there. I thus experienced what the Jews who returned to the "*yiddishland*" had lived, where nothing from their past remained.

Can we therefore talk of a mythical country, in regard to Turkey?

Janine Altounian: My parents spoke Turkish and, even if they spoke Armenian to me, I understand some Turkish. I like this language, but it is also the criminal's language and I find it psychologically difficult to deal with this amalgam when I am over there. We took a boat to Bursa, the quickest way is to cross the Sea of

Marmara. I heard the names my grandmother used to pronounce: Mudanya, Çekirge, Yalova. In the past, I had indeed imagined something mythical for I felt my grandmother's joy in mentioning these places. It was somewhere, one day, over there. Yet, when I arrived, there was no more "over there". I saw the large concrete buildings of a port. I felt a sense of loss in this place, the loss of an imaginary. Exile and destruction superimposes in one's mind as a palimpsest. Indeed, survivors of the Armenian genocide on the one hand, survived a genocide, and on the other hand, were transplanted from the East to the West. They share an experience key to every exile story, for example, I have heard French people from Algeria share identical stories, like when I work with Jews inheritors of the Shoah. What they say fully resonates within me.

Anouche Kunth: The Treaty of Lausanne, dating from 24 July 1923, forbids survivors to return home. This dimension redoubled in violence, for they were in provisional camps in Syria, Lebanon, Greece and Caucasus, everywhere they had been able to flee to. And they learnt, after the peace treaties, that it was not possible. The Allies preferred to play the card of Kemalism, thus believing it possible to hold back the Bolshevik expansion in the East. In short, there was an alliance between destruction and expulsion which finalized the Turkification project.

Janine Altounian: What I feared, deep down, was to realize that it could also have been my country, over there. Whereas my entire journey had been about implanting myself in France. In fact, there was not an "over there".

It would be interesting to differentiate, perhaps in the period prior to your trip to Turkey, what could have overlapped or been built together, between a memory of exile, which could have been transmitted, and something which, embedded in this memory, would have been another memory or a non-memory of the destruction: a trace.

Janine Altounian: There is question of the destruction, the dead and the torment in the recent book titled *L'Agonie d'un peuple* (2013). I was recently able to read it as it has been translated. In order to be able to reach one's heritage, it is necessary to pass through the language of the other, in this case a western language where things have meaning and visibility. It is neces- ●●●

(3) *Dhimmi*, this term designates non Muslim citizens living in a Muslim country.

... sary to pass through translation. This is what I call the host country's language. It was useless for people to write in Armenian as the inheritors cannot do anything with it. As I am, in inverted commas, French, I can only work on my memory by passing through France. I read very little Armenian. I do not understand an Armenian language of thought because my parents themselves did not acquire it. They had a simple language because, my mother, for example, had not been able to attend school before 1915. But I never felt a form of rejection in regard to my Armenian history. This is why after a certain journey, not knowing it would be through psychoanalysis, I felt the need to write about it all.

I felt an initial shock after reading Jean-Marie Carzou's book, published in 1975 at the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Armenian genocide, and it propelled me to write. I did not have a political consciousness, I had only just begun attending Anahide Ter Minassian's seminar.

Anouche Kunth: The book by Jean-Marie Carzou, who is by the way not an historian, was the first work on the genocide.

Janine Altounian: It is titled *Un Génocide exemplaire* and includes photos. It is a journalistic book and I discovered things which enabled me to understand what I had lived at home. My parents did not continually tell horrible stories, on the other hand, they ceaselessly repeated: "You must work, you must not remain poor." They rarely spoke of what they had lived. My mother only talked about the misery, the poverty, the sordid hotels, their arrival in France, the lack of work, not knowing the language. With my maternal grandmother, it was a kind of litany: "We lost everything, we lost everything, etc." From time to time, the famous names I mentioned would come up. When I read the previously mentioned book by Aram Andonian, *Sur la route de l'exil*, namely the description of the train departures at Haydarpasa, I recalled what my grandmother once told me: "We were put on cattle wagons." I do not recall that she expressed it in a dramatic way, I don't remember anything, this is what psychologists call a screen memory. And it was by reading Andonian's description, in translation, that it suddenly dawned to me: "But let's see, my mother was born in 1911, in 1915 she was four years old, she must have been on these trains, since my grandmother was there." I had never pieced it together. That is how memory works.

The translator Hervé Georgelin, whom I know well, had asked me to write the postscript and I initially refused because all of this was too horrible. But he insisted so much that I finally accepted. At that time I was discovering intelligent, cultivated and humorous Armenians. Myself, I come from a family of nearly illiterate people, let's say, people who had not been to school.

So you had not seen this humour before? What place did the Diaspora hold in your story?

Janine Altounian: I only related life's pleasures to the French side. At home, of course, people gathered together, there were celebrations, but I did not have any friends, girls or boys, there was no relationship with sexuality or libido. My parents frequented Armenian shopkeepers and artisans whose children did not interest me. It was during my analytical work that I understood how much culture these people had, even though they were not educated. I think I wished to translate this cultural context into my texts. I often say: "My texts are like a patchwork, same as what my parents did: weaving."

In 1975, after this first reading, I wrote my first text: "Comment peut-on être Arménien?" (1975). And Madame Ter Minassian, whose seminar I was following, told me: "You should send it to the *Temps Modernes*. You must be somewhat of a feminist, why not send a letter to Simone de Beauvoir." Indeed, in 1975, I was already divorced, something which was not often done within Armenian circles.

A letter written by Janine Altounian and addressed to Simone de Beauvoir:

Madame, you are one of the first to have denounced the scandal of the status of women and to have paved the way which is likely to lead women to themselves. Among the nonexistent creatures which women are part of, we can obviously also include the oppressed and ignored of all kinds. So I am here addressing you as a woman and a woman from a people that was massacred in silence sixty years ago. The recent commemoration of the Armenian genocide, the first genocide of our century, as well as the publication of Jean-Marie Carzou's work *Un Génocide exemplaire*, at Flammarion, coincided within me after the completion of a personal journey during which I was able, with the help of a psychoanalyst, to retrace beyond every women's enslavement all the way to the exile beyond native lands, deportation and family deaths,

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My parents did not continually tell horrible stories, on the other hand, they ceaselessly repeated: “You must work, you must not remain poor.”

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the irreversible loss of roots, etc. I felt the urge to write, initially for myself, the following text I here send to you. Madame Ter Minassian, an historian whom I quote, suggested to me to publish it in a review such as the *Temps Modernes*. I wish to meet with you regarding this subject in order to ask whether my work may be of any interest to the readers of this journal, in which case I would perhaps have to rework it. As far as I am concerned, I am obviously convinced that what I write constitutes a testimony among others on the unrelenting mechanism by which every dominant discourse maintains the oppressed people in an inability of naming the violence they live, to the point that they believe they have nothing to say. The loss of identity condemns them to silence. I also wonder whether such a testimony of the perfect crime or a related research could not also serve elsewhere the cause of the survivors of all massacres. I am forty years old, a German teacher, divorced, mother of three children, through my education and the fact that French was not my mother tongue, I tend to think that all societal change depends namely on oppressed people's ascension to their own language, in other words on their power to unmask the domination which has until then tacitly been suffered and integrated, by naming it. In the hope of possibly meeting with you, Yours faithfully.

I sent her this letter and she accepted my text though I was a complete stranger to her, not an academic and did not have a husband in intellectual circles. Jean Pouillon rang me to let me know that my text had been accepted. This is what I call a welcome from

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the Republic. I then felt the need to write more texts. All of them were accepted. The second one is titled “Une Arménienne à l'école” and dates from 1977. Other books on the history of Armenians incited me to write, for example, *La Politique du Sultan. Les massacres des Arméniens: 1894-1896*.

In 1978, eight years after my father had died, my mother told me about his text – I have talked about this everywhere –, and I asked to see it. I then got it translated. I had to find someone who knew both Turkish, because the text was in the Turkish language, and also Armenian because it was written in the Armenian alphabet.

How do you place within your memorial landscape of Armenian activism, the hostage situation at the Turkish Consulate in September 1981 for example, or the actions of the ASALA, a movement also linked to the Armenian genocide?

Janine Altounian: From the moment I began frequenting Armenian intellectuals, I was also sensitive to what was happening on a political level. I knew the ASALA existed, but it was too violent for me. I cried when they committed their violent act at the Orly airport,⁴ because I thought, it's not possible, this should not be done, this open violence will harm us. Orly was in 1984, the ASALA was a bit later. Yet, in September ●●●

(4) This was one of the ASALA's attacks, committed on 15 July 1983, detonating a bomb at the counter of the Turkish Airlines company at the Orly airport. Eight people died at this occasion.

●●● 1981, apparently no one died, but, for the first time, the genocide was talked about, and this is why, I say this throughout my writing. I sent my father's text to the *Temps Modernes*. It was translated, Beauvoir accepted it, even though, as I later was told, she found it wild.

I had the idea of publishing my father's text after a meeting, and I was then able to identify with him. At the time of the hostage situation at the Turkish Consulate, I told myself that he would have been glad, because, in a vague memory that had stuck in my mind, he spoke of the Ottoman bank having been seized by the Tachnag revolutionaries who, in 1896, had thus wished to warn Western powers – which obviously was useless. My father was quite alert on a political level, but there must have been in him a kind of pessimism for he did not frequent politically conscious Armenians in Paris. After having published my father's text in 1982, as well as other ones which followed, I wrote my first book. *Ouvrez-moi seulement les chemins d'Arménie* (2003), which collected all my pieces published in the *Temps Modernes*.

In one of your texts, you speak of the narcissistic and political effects such memory questions can produce on the concerned people.

Janine Altounian: I mainly talk about it regarding the text I wrote on *Le Livre de ma grand-mère* by Fetiye Cetin (2006). This Turkish lawyer and Human Rights activist, imprisoned during three years, learned from her grandmother, on the eve of her death, that she was Armenian. So she wrote this book, followed by another one, two or three years later with a young anthropologist: *Les petits-enfants* (Altinay & Cetin 2001) They collected testimonies from people who discover they have Armenian grandparents, and this created an entire movement which divided Turkish civil society, a type of political movement. I use a slightly provocative language for this subject: it is the grandparents who libidinize and politicize their grandchildren. This is what happens when third and fourth generations claim their heritage, as the survivors have already died. On this topic, read *Les Restes de l'épée* (Ritter & Sivaslian 2012).

Anouche Kunth: After the war, when the League of Nations buried the Armenian dossier, it also closed the question of the women and children taken by force and integrated into Turkish homes. Several generations later, this was really how, through family units, the

event was revived, by the most secret points of reference, essentially by the body.

Let us come back to the father figure whom you started to identify with. The survivors who lost everything are complete and absolute victims, having risen from an irreversible disaster. How can one construct a transmission from such a devastated figure? Unless you made him into a complete hero.

Janine Altounian: I perhaps unconsciously perceived a feeling of superiority in my father. He seldom spoke to me, he did not take care of the children, all the while being very present at home. He undoubtedly represented security to me, and also the fact that a man is very important, but he was not someone who played with me. Later, I struggled to adapt to the real men in my life. My father apparently was a very good worker, he was a bespoke tailor for a house which made him create costumes, and at one point, foreigners' identity cards were confiscated. He was not able to work anymore. One day, these people had a prestigious client and they called on my father who answered: "I have not changed nationality in the meantime." He was a proud man. Similarly, when there was the exodus in 1940, he said: "I was once in exodus, I shall not go a second time, I will die here." So we stayed in Paris. We lived near the Halles, rue Léopold-Bellan. When I discovered his journal, I told myself: "Oh yes, this really is my father." He was a fourteen year old boy, quite resourceful and efficient, he did not waste his time busying himself with catastrophic things, he sought how to survive. In my screen memories, he narrates to his friends what he lived in Turkish. The young girl that I was, felt awfully glad to have a father who told a kind of western: everything was alright since he was there with us. He seemed to me like someone who arrives victoriously from battle. In his text, he wrote for example: "there were so many corpses, the smell was pungent", or: "we walked, we fell to the ground, we saw that we were going to die of hunger", yet he did not complain. It is an incredibly factual narrative, aimed toward what had to be done in order to escape. I had the image of an efficient, intelligent and strategist father. I do not have a negative view of my father. Obviously, on an analytical level, all my work originates from my identification to my parents, work, work, and also, one had to know how to behave, it was the family moral. I often say it, I am an incredibly privileged person for I benefited from a solid framework. I inherited a sense

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of belonging which, although not educated, was based on cultural values. In my father's narrative, there is a very important part where the paternal grandmother, whom I did not know, is adamant about burying the assassinated father and she says: “I shall not leave this place until he is buried.” She could have had her throat cut, or been raped. And then the priest arrived and he said a prayer.

Several times you have said: “I often talk of this, I have written about this everywhere.” We could raise the question of what it means to repeat your narratives and story when you have not seen the land where the massacre took place. Did something change regarding this after your last trip?

Janine Altounian: What has changed, is that I tell myself: “Hopefully no one will invite me to a conference, because I don't have anything more to say, I have had enough.” There is an increased lassitude because the world is in a bad shape. We are in a society which is losing all its symbolic points of reference and whose institutions are being destroyed. In this context there is

not much sense in talking of one's memory and ancestors who suffered the genocide. My work had a certain meaning as long as there was a functioning Republic, a Republican welcome. But from the point when there is no more integration, when unemployment is increasing, all that happened in my family has now become impossible, in other words the accession to wealth and culture through work and through children's studies. This deeply questions my own integration in France. If France is no longer a place of welcome for others, then how is it that it was for me?

Anouche Kunth: In today's current context, with all the misery in the world today and the continual and increasing exiles, I dare say that the Armenian experience still has something to teach us.

Janine Altounian: I would like to read an excerpt on xenophobia. Because I did not personally experience any xenophobia, but it did exist in France in regard to Armenians. The welcome received in the country of Human Rights was often devoid of charity, exemplified ●●●

... with Siméon Flaissières, senator mayor of Marseille, publishing his call in the *Petit Provençal* on 21 October 1923:

For some time now, a formidable flow of immigration from Eastern countries has rushed toward France via Marseille, namely Armenians. These poor people insist they have too much to fear from the Turks to stay in their own country. In the face of this affirmation, men, women and children, altogether more than three thousand people so far, have descended upon the quays of our great port. After the *Albano* and the *Caucase*, more ships shall follow and it is estimated that another forty thousand hosts are heading to France, which comes to say that smallpox, typhus and the pest are also en route toward us. That is, if they are not already here, germs swarming since the arrival of the first immigrants who are deprived of everything, refractory to our Western customs, rebellious of all hygiene measures, immobilized in their resigned, passive and ancestral indolence. The situation is extremely serious on a public health level for Marseille and for the rest of France. The extreme activity and the enlightened vigilance of the port's health service as well as the municipal office of hygiene are, as of now, incapable of facing the danger. Exceptional measures are necessary and they do not depend on local authorities: Marseille's population demands of the government to rigorously deny these immigrants entry into French ports and also to immediately repatriate these pathetic human herds, a great public danger to the entire country. Furthermore, both Greece and Italy seem to have already taken such preventive and legitimate measures. (Kunth & Mouradian 2010, 11)

But this is also a Republican France! The same country which held a similar stance at the end of the Spanish Civil War and who placed the anti-Franco Spaniards in camps.

Janine Altounian: Yes, absolutely, however I start with Castoriadis: he explains that the West has committed the worst things in the entire world, but that in the West there is a capacity for democratization, thus making it possible to dialectilize it. I do not idealize France. But as it happens, my parents did not stay in Marseille: I was lucky not to live in a place where there were many Armenians. At Alfortville and Issy-les-Moulineaux, many Armenians were consequently directly exposed to xenophobia. There were no Armenians in my school. My father did not like to group together, my parents were not people to go live with other Armenians. In the same way, my father's mother

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Of course, my parents did not say: “It is useless to learn Armenian”, but I must have unconsciously retained that you have to fight your battles in the place where you live.

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gave him to Arabs so that he may live, I think for me the implicit rule was: I had to attend French school. Of course, my parents did not say: “It is useless to learn Armenian”, and I did take some Armenians lessons, but I must have unconsciously retained that you have to fight your battles in the place where you live.

How did you come to psychoanalysis?

Janine Altounian: I would say that I used analytical work to make my memory visible, it was an instrument. In 1968, when I had my third child, my marriage collapsed and I felt the need to undertake an analytical work. The end of this first analysis corresponded to the time, discovering Jean-Marie Carzou's book in 1975, when I begun writing. Reading my father's text in 1980, I experienced a collapse, a decompensation, and I began a second psychoanalysis. Meanwhile, I became a translator of Freud, I was constantly in touch with his text, three times per week. I love Freud's German. I also published a book on Freud's language. It was by pure coincidence, during a pedagogical meeting for German studies specialists in which a colleague who translated Freud also participated, that I was offered the opportunity to join their team of translators. Then, when Laplanche wished to create the *Œuvres complètes* in 1983, they found that Altounian was not only a translator, she had memory and they gave me a task they called “harmonizer”. This was how psychoanalysis and translation become entwined. Moreover, in Turkey, through the stuffiness one feels over there, I understood that an analytical work can only be undertaken when people

have the possibility of expressing themselves, in a relatively democratic context or atmosphere, if you will.

In conclusion, what is your relation to Armenia, to the Republic of Armenia?

Janine Altounian: I never felt the desire to go to Armenia. French and Armenians alike pestered me with this story: “You have never been to Armenia...” So in 2008 I accepted to participate in a conference in Armenia, organized by a psychoanalyst, Diran Donabedian. I enjoyed the religious edifices, of such beauty I could have cried, and obviously Caucasus. But I was in an ex-Soviet country, I had nothing to do with it. The only point when I felt very moved was at the airport: there were Armenians from every Diaspora, France, the United States, England and standing there, I told myself: “Basically, this gathering can only exist because of Armenia.” I am glad that Armenia exists, but it is not a promised land for me. Turkey probably somewhat played such a role for me. I discovered the ownership certificate of my grandmother’s house. I dreamed about how I wished to find it, how I would spend my holidays with my grandchildren, and when I saw the Armenian neighbourhood at Bursa, ah horrendous! If we can one day file legal action, it would be different. It is not sufficient for the genocide to be recognized, there must also be restitution. For in Turkey, I felt what dispossession was. All the Armenian or Greek churches have been transformed into mosques! I recently read *La Turquie et le fantôme arménien* by two French journalists (Marchand & Perier 2013) which helped me understand the extent of the dispossessions. When you read this book, there is all you need to know regarding Turkey today. For me, its publication was a political event.

Also, Armenians need to be represented in the Turkish Parliament. If not, the recognition of the genocide is useless. Of course, Armenians are still present in Turkey, they were not all exterminated, as Erdogan proves: “There was no genocide, since there are still Armenians alive.” But since Hrant Dink’s murder, their space of expression has been limited, we could say that it is even more restricted than it previously was. Yet, a small number of Turks are practically living the same thing as Armenians. Their country lost its culture, they lost their past. The denial of the Armenian genocide echoes the denial of the Turkish past, of the Ottoman Empire’s multicultural past with Armenians, Greeks, Jews. All the people with whom I have had the pleasure of conversing with, also feel this loss. ■

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