

# A Day of Woe

by Myron Gananian (September 2012)

*All these things are the beginning of sorrows. Then they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. – Matthew (24:8,9)*

Khachik (Cross) Chookalian could not know that these would be the last flutterings of his eyelids as the just rising sun touched him from atop the hills limning the upper reaches of the Euphrates River, the fourth and last of God's river creations, whose headwaters are the River of Hate, the River Styx. Nor would his family know of the evil that awaited them on this very special day, Easter Sunday, April 14th, 1913, by the calculation of the Julian calendar, nor that exactly two years later today's immolation of a handful of impoverished Armenian peasants would be the harbinger for a deluge of blood-letting in the very shadow of the Biblical flood that would inundate the entire country of Turkey and splatter the fleeing remnants for the next century. Rising late his first thought was to get at the *madjoon* (yogurt) with bits of *lavash hatz* (flat bread) in it before it was all gone and dressing in the same clothes he wore the day before with just repaired bast shoes hurried to be with the rest of the family leaving for Armenian Orthodox services. His attire not qualifying for use as a shabrack but sufficient for his soon to be cerement.

Twelve year old Khachik was the younger son of Varatavar (Transfiguration of Christ), his mother Mariam (Sea of Bitter) and unnamed twin girls having died recently just after birth. No matter for even the "walls cried" (Badera latseen) when a family was confronted with the calamity of the birth of girls.

Infanticide not counting toward genocide. Not long before his seventeen year old brother Vasken had been conscripted into the Turkish Army along with untold tens of thousands of Armenian men and boys and some months previously had been demobilized and placed in a labor battalion. It was the family's lot to witness Vasken and his group marched through town not as soldiers but as prisoners under guard. No one able to put into words what they all knew as a certainty that they would never see him again. The loss of Vasken to the family was especially painful since he, the *Antranig* (first born), a designation of high esteem, was considered a stalwart and future bulwark of the family to such an extent that his grandmother when alive affectionately called him *Dashaghli Manchus*, a combination of Turkish and Armenian, *Achkees Louysa*, and *Aslanus*, (My Boy with Balls, Light of my eyes, and My Lion), as an appellation, dispensing with his name. This pithy grandmother's daily plaint, *Darabankov egank yev darabankov bedee yertank*, (We arrive suffering and will depart suffering) was lamentation to become prophecy. Khachik to the contrary was called *Charadgeedgee* by all, meaning mischievous, since he was never where he was supposed to be. There would be no question about his being with the family this morning, not knowing that by doing so he would be avoiding orphanhood.

Vartavar's brother, Khoren, was married to Khanum, sister of the late Mariam, and the two families lived together with the former's children, Vartanoush a girl of Khachik's age, Garo a seven year old boy, and an infant girl Hamaspur. Their house, a jumble of stone and wood, was better than most since the brothers were itinerant carpenters. A kitchen of sorts and two small bedrooms below ground level and a loft with two barely demarcated bedrooms and an animal stall situated to allow the occupant's heat to rise, although the emaciated therein had little of that to spare in reflection of their owner's hardscrabble existence. Yet another cenacle in which final

acts would occur.

The importance of the holiest of days for this little remnant of a once populous nation, Christian for one thousand six hundred years, predating Rome and Byzantium by some decades in sanctioning Christianity as their state religion, could not be overstated. After sheer physical survival the story of the Crucifixion and Resurrection was not only essential for their emotional and spiritual life but also that which painfully and often fatally distinguished them from their neighbors and ostensible hosts, the Moslem Turks. This caul, intended to be their eternal talisman, this sanctified bane, this cilicium, this mithridate, this imago, sustained for a millennium and a half, slipped to become instead a noose, today to be tightened yet more.

*"...seek a remedy for sorrow and not a source of joy." Anthony Trollope, Palliser Novels*

The hope was that this special day would leaven the miasma of fear which had settled over Anatolia, the eastern part of Turkey. Dreadful, unbelievable stories of friends and neighbors turning on the Armenians-sporadic beatings, rape, murder, displacement, confiscation of property. All frightful rumors since little of this had touched this tiny, isolated hamlet, Malatya. Why would anyone want to leave Malatya, then as now in the center of apricot production for most of the world, *Prunus armeniaca*, in the western shadow of Mt. Ararat, the purported repository of Noah's Ark, and one of the possible locations of the Garden of Eden. In contrast the Ottoman balance of trade was bolstered by its centuries old, renowned exports-destruction and mayhem, metonymically

appropriate. The Turks universally regarded as the prime authors of the enchiridion. Where else could one live, other than Jerusalem, with a constant reminder of the Bible story? No one had yet left though a trickle of emigration had begun from the more populous areas. Could the Roman name Melitene have meant sweet?

*“And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.” – Genesis (4:16)*

Since there is no single wellspring for hate in the chronicle of mankind, gushing everywhere and eternally as it does from the darkest reaches of humanity's spirit, one should not look for an explanation for the grief of this doleful story, a predictably futile effort. Some prelude, however, to today's vignette of horror, beyond understanding, beyond our grasp, beyond words, truly ineffable, regarded by the rest of the world with indifference and ennui, while not leading to comprehension may at least provide the stage setting for this production of anguish.

## **Birth Is a Crime Punishable by Death**

For Armenia peace has been a rarity. Being at the crossroads of the world in the center of the Caucasus meant being buffeted from every direction of the compass. Is it deniable that “Geography is Destiny”? Its history is a monotony of “Being in the way.” Today would be yet one more confirmation of that legacy. It is not clear that Armenia was ever the invader. History books have precious little of criticism directed against Armenia which may explain the world's

ignorance about this hapless, cursed nation and much about the Ottoman Turks even from parts of the world far removed, their ferocity legion. Despite its claim to primacy in Christianity, Armenia was treated despicably by none other than Tankred and Baldwin, leaders of the First Crusade. Providing aid and succor during their stay and passage through Armenia and protecting the Crusaders rear when on to Jerusalem was not sufficient to prevent maltreatment. Marrying an Armenian nobleman's daughter, Arda, to Baldwin did little. She becoming the first Queen of Jerusalem did not prevent her abandonment by her bigamous husband. Tergiversation and pusillanimity would characterize the attitude of even the few avowed friends of Armenia.

*"Cursed is the man that trusteth in man..." – Jeremiah (17:5).*

Despite Malatya's isolation there had been no shortage of reason for fear. The Turks had many weapons with which to harass. Their military the only effective civil administration since Ottoman Turkey was as far removed from the concepts and tenets of a participatory democracy as any nation in history, entering the 20th century unprepared and virtually unchanged in its essence from the time of its founding in the Thirteenth Century by its ruler and namesake Osman I, who dreamt that a tree growing out of his umbilicus would cover his empire, with its branches encompassing the world. This the Ottoman Constitution. For many, many others, a nightmare without a sunrise. The Armenians with no country of their own were voiceless in the so called courts and unable to respond to the boycott of their shops. Then there were the Zaptieh, military policemen whose very uniform and even posturing inspired fear, leading to the comment amongst the Armenians, *Zaptieh bes mee guyneer*, meaning "Don't stand there like a Zaptieh" when

someone had a threatening stance. Then there were the Kurds – a crude, stateless, ungovernable, also Moslem, rabble, who had been organized by the Turks into cavalry regiments called Hamidye, a name chosen to honor their Sultan, Abdul Hamid II, specifically for the purpose of accelerating the elimination of the Armenians, a warrant they accepted with glee. So added to their meagerly existence was this ceaseless torment.

The Chookalians were soon joined by the Haratoonians (Resurrection), Shelengalians, and Tustanians on the several mile trek to church, the solemnity of their mission not dimming their gaiety, especially of the children, anticipating more to eat than usual on returning home. The moon, one week from full, casting its pallid light over their shoulders, the crunching of the spots of frozen soil, recollections of the previous year which would not be their penultimate Easter, seemed like prologue to the liturgy to come. The men as customary in front speaking of anything but Easter, and the women already chanting the Trisagion, the oldest prayer in the Armenian Orthodox Church though not unique to it. *Sourp Asvadz, Sourp yev h'zor, Sourp yev anmah, vor haryar I merelotz, voghormia mez.* (Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, Who rose from the dead, have mercy on us). Trisagion refers not to the Trinity, a concept at odds with that of the Armenians who believe in the unification of the divine and human in Christ, part of a long list of profound doctrinaire differences which includes the number of fingers to be used and in which direction one is to cross oneself, and which has led to much discord and even bloodshed among Christians, but to Nicodemus, helping to enshroud Jesus, shouting "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal", on seeing the crucified Jesus' open eyes.

How and Why had it come to this sorry state? Then, in the

maelstrom of history unfolding there would be no answer, nor now, a century later, is there one. The unsatisfying echo from history is always to the question "How," but the survivors of history mournfully ask "Why" and there is no reply, nor has there ever been one. Why would neighbors and friends become hunter and prey? The Turks with a somewhat square head and the Armenians with a rounded one do not look much different. Neither victor nor vanquished is exempted from being a casualty of history. The Turks would be victimized no less than the Armenians by the baleful weight of their own ineptitude and execrable, sanguinary history and as well by influences and decisions made far, far away from the place of our story of grief, with two and a half million of the former destined to perish in the next decade even with the Armenians eliminated, giving the lie to the Turkish assertion that the Armenians were in revolt. A civil war indeed wherein the victors die with the vanquished gone.

The Goddess of Hate and Turmoil, Erida, would trump all of Christ's words of love. Though each speaking the other's language there was in addition a special lexicon reserved for expressing this unceasing, mutual hatred. As a small but telling example, the Armenians' reference to the demise of a Turk was not "merav" (died) but rather "satseksav" (croaked). And if the Turk's departure were especially desirable they would add "Shoony bes" (like a dog). They might escalate their delight with "Mashalla," using Allah's name as blessing and congratulation. As if that were not expressive and satisfying enough they would often add a uvulo-guttural sound – "Okh" (terrific, great, wonderful) arising not from the back of the throat but from the cockles of the heart, located, as they are, in the blackest if not the darkest location in the cosmos, with nothing entering or leaving. God's Black Box which even He is unable to access. Many Armenians in the diaspora would name their dogs after Turkish leaders, with

Talat Pasha, the last Grand Vizier, being a particular favorite. In many ways did these small words reflect the difficulty of their lives, as in "Hayoo pakht," Armenian Luck – always bad. Hatred always engendering hate, bitterness, and cynicism, the handmaidens, nay, the ancestors and progeny, of sorrow. Hamlet, to himself: "As if increase of appetite had grown/ By what it fed upon." One will wait forever for a more perfect, poetic analysis of the consequence of hate. Was Christ wrong, insisting that hate could or would beget love? Whatever was said and done, or not said and not done in Istanbul, Berlin, Moscow, Paris, London, and Washington would be fed into the mindless maw called human events to come out in the cloaca of the Anatolian Plateau. And the names Nicholas II, Poincaré, Asquith, Kaiser Wilhelm II, and Wilson, *inter alios*, had they been known to our family and neighbors would have provided a slim hope of salvation which would never be fulfilled while the names Abdul Hamid II and the Young Turks instilled a fear and dread which would be realized beyond their ability to anticipate and to comprehend when finally faced with them.

*"Where there's laws, there's lies." – Platon Karatev in War and Peace. Leo Tolstoy*

The Turks from even before the beginning of what would be called the Ottoman Empire had a history of incessant conflict not only with non-Turks but as well among themselves – intemperate, disputatious, implacable, vengeful, cruel – qualities that would characterize not only their relations with other countries but were emblematic of every level of their society from Caliph and Sultan down to the personal interactions of its citizens. For innumerable reasons beyond these Turkey was one of many proofs of Oliver Wendell Holmes



Junior's one sentence summary of the entire history of the world – "Certitude leads to violence." Amongst the Armenians it was common to accuse someone who was in the least morose of *Dajeek tartseres*, (You've turned into a Turk). Even Hamlet (III, ii): "...my fortunes turn Turk..." meaning that they turn utterly for the worst.

It is difficult to give our story a beginning since the cruelty of mankind is timeless. And our question, the unstated subtitle of our story, implicit in Matthew: Why, why, oh why a hate so strong as to lead to killing for that reason alone? This question goes back in time to before recorded history and remains unanswered. But for the Chookalians and their ilk the problems began about thirty years previously when the Balkans had stirrings of nationalism and rebelled against the heavy Turkish yoke, ironically coincident with the origin of the word diaspora, just in time for use by the Armenians. This rapidly turned into a guerilla war which caused a murderous reaction by the Turks, especially against the Bulgarians. The viciousness and extent of the Turkish response so extreme that even latter 19th Century Europe, inured by endless war, was temporarily, but only briefly, aroused. Oscar Wilde, ever the voice of the trampled and forgotten, was moved to write a sonnet, *On the massacre of The Christians in Bulgaria*, the first and last lines of which are "Christ, dost thou live indeed? or are Thy bones Still straightened in their rock-hewn sepulcher?" and "Come down, O son of Man! And show Thy might, lest Mahomet be crowned instead of Thee!" This slaughter was compounded by a feeble, malevolent Sultan whose mother was Armenian, Abdul Hamid II, the last Sultan, Turkey's Tarquin, Armenia its Lucretia and its unwilling Messalina. No Publius Valerius for the Armenians. And a bankrupt government administered up to the highest levels by Christian Greeks and Armenians, the Turks incapable of doing so because of their illiteracy of ninety

percent and consequent incompetence. This last may very well have been the "illness" which caused Turkey to be called "The Sick Man of Europe." A phantom country. The inability of Turkey to manage its affairs is strongly supported by the experience of its ally in WWI, the Germans, who, in building the Berlin-Bagdad Railway depended almost exclusively on the Armenians to staff their depots and way stations because of their literacy and dependability. As the pool of Armenian employees disappeared with their elimination so did diminish the success of a functioning railway. Like a wounded animal Turkey would insensately lash out at the very ones who might have provided her salvation. Then Russia, under Nicholas II exploiting the ever useful mantle "Defender of the Christian Faith," purportedly coming to the aid of the Slavs and other Christians, succeeding only in goading the Turks into then regarding the Armenians as a "Fifth Column."

All this and much more give us some sense of the murkiness and incomprehensibility of these happenings. Finally the involvement of England and the United States, far from these scenes, did not fail to further aggravate the tumult. Tolstoy, also seeking causes and explanations, pondered just this imponderable in the Second Epilogue to *War and Peace*, concluded that social and political events are the result of so many individuals and forces that analysis and attribution of cause are impossible, casting doubt even on the replies to "How?" Russia, itself just four years from its demise, during this very year was celebrating the tercentenary of the Romanov Dynasty making these events merely an annoying distraction. The participants on this Easter were unknowingly to contribute to the script for the death of untold millions for the rest of the century and to lead to the cruelest of insults by Hitler, "Who now remembers the Armenians?" And the ultimate irony, that one hundred years later the Armenians would futilely beg the international community to be recognized for the

distinction and honor of having been the victims of the first genocide of the Twentieth Century. It is unlikely that they would be dissuaded from this nugatory quest had they known, as few in the world do, that the Germans deflated their claim by virtually extinguishing two tribes in German South-West Africa, now Namibia, the Herero and Namaqua, prior to 1907. The producers and financiers of this performance would not be deterred or daunted by the paucity of audience and several decades later will take the same though much better financed and refined road production to European theaters in the round without number consisting of pillories, gallows and gibbets, pits, walls, and ovens, where there would occur an overwhelming response for auditions. If it is possible for there to be a fate worse than death it would be to be abandoned and forgotten, abandonment being one of the two fears to plague us from the very moment of our birth.

*"If blame were an ermine stole no one would wear it." – Simon Aghabalian, Pensees Profondes, Paris, 1925.*

Our story is not just about the massacre of soon forgottens but also a quest for consolation. The dead do not seek consolation, only the survivors. Since the present history books provide neither consolation nor answers to "Why," let us go back to the original history book and to its very first chapter, to *Genesis*. God's children could not have killed each other but His grandchild did in the second generation of humankind with Cain slaying Abel, *Genesis* (4:8). Is this our blueprint, birthright and imperative, brother killing brother forever? Did then Eve's other issue, from her breast, presage Lupercals unto eternity, so easily from bassinet to ossuary, the universal nursery, whose blueprint is cast in stone? Is this why: murder-fratricide, war-fratricide, genocide-

fratricide, diaspora-fratricide? Or, as Evan Connell wrote it – “Malicide”? Then are not all wars civil wars? Whether these portions of *Genesis* are predictive or determinative is irrelevant, they are reflective. How ironic and fitting for the several dozen of the Armenians in our story that the word “fate” in their language is *djagadakeer*, “writing on the forehead,” referring to the pattern created at the junction of the skull bones called interdigitations that very closely resemble hieroglyphics! Oh, the Fickle Fingering of Fate. Then is this legacy in our bones and marrow with no evidence in the six thousand years since this Biblical story that we have been able to disavow this dreadful destiny? Would that it could be sold as Esau sold his birthright to Jacob, *Genesis* (25:33), requiring only a score of generations from Adam to realize its worthlessness. Question after question and nowhere can we find the answer to “why,” still only to “how.” Let us pursue the “why” of Cain, our first murderer, before returning to the church goers. *Genesis* (4:5) – *But unto Cain and to his offerings He had not respect. And Cain was very wrought.* Those few words were sufficient to send Cain off to murder. Think not that mankind has conjured up more elegant reasons than this for slaying on any scale. Has there been a war with more justification than what is in those two sentences of *Genesis*, the claims of historians about the import of geopolitics notwithstanding? Recall the role of an irate Empress Eugenie insisting that Emperor Napoleon III declare war on Prussia over a few casual, thoughtless words in a telegram from Bismarck and we have the disastrous Franco-Prussian war of 1870. Her fury, not geopolitics, further unified Germany and led to WWI and all the disasters of the 20th Century. Then is this the curse and burden of our birthright? Just as trees drop countless seeds few of which sprout, fish roe beyond counting flushed to the ocean, wildebeests born to feed others, so it seems that this is the human cost of living, the irreducible cost of life on earth. Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan told us in *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* – “Life is profligate, blind,...unconcerned with notions of justice. It can

afford to waste multitudes." Mankind not exempted. And thus we continue to ask, why, why, oh why is there so much death by hate? And the ultimate irony – that Christ's and the Apostles' hortatory words have been least honored in the thousand or so miles around the cities admonished in the New Testament from the moment of their utterance.

Our clutch of soon to be martyrs were within sight of the church, something amiss. Why were there so many Turks and Kurds up and about this early? And few women and children. The presence of rifles and farm implements was obvious. The most certain sign of trouble to come was that the Turks and Kurds were on both sides of the road as an escort and were not responding to the greetings and interactions of the Armenians with their neighbors and friends, their kith. When the congregants responded to this by slowing down and with increased murmurings, the Turks and Kurds, up to now lolling around in their usual crude and slovenly manner, became better organized, clarifying the Armenians' fate.

Confronted with the certainty that they will not survive this holy morning, their never to be Easter, they displayed a near universal response to sure, expected death – a reaction which will forever remain mysterious and unexplained to the surviving and one for which there is no name or word and which can only be described as a suspension of awareness, an isolation, a self-hypnosis. Romeo's soliloquy just before drinking poison touches on this phenomenon, calling it "lightning before death." Even the murmuring and praying of the parishioners diminished, replaced by the twittering of the unknowing children. No screaming, resisting, shouting, crying – yet. Examples of this response are legion. Jesus on the Cross, Joan of Arc on the flames and countless martyrdoms of the Saints, admittedly all depictions, but universal in the

placidity of their visages. Then for reality consider the pictures of firing squads, French Resistance Fighters and Poles on the gallows, beheadings by the Japanese, a Jew, a pistol at his neck sliding into a pit containing his dead and dying family, all showing this gazing into infinity. As if at peace. What better portrayal of this than Vereshchagin's painting "Blowing of The Guns" showing the execution of mutinous Sepoys in India strapped to the muzzles of British howitzers justified as humanitarian. Was this reaction without a name the halcyon that comes from the certainty and comfort of God's embrace? A pre-mortem; the agonal before the agony? Their Private Golgotha.

Then almost within the shadow of the church their torment unfolded when few saw but many heard the butt of a rifle hit *Megerdeech Hayr* (Father Baptist) in the jaw, pushing it so far over as to make it appear unattached to his face, blood from his mouth, lying on the ground, barely able to moan, arms raised not to Heaven but in a plea to be with his congregation, knowing what was to come. Several Kurds were restraining his wife, the *Eereetsgeen*, (*The Priest's Wife*) who did have her arms raised to Heaven, screaming, *Aman Asvadz, Asvadz, eench beedee uhlah? Beedee khentanam! Beedee merneenk! Asvadz mezee bahe* (Oh God, God, what is happening? I'm going crazy! We're going to die! God keep us). With most focused on her screams there was scarce attention paid to the body of Sarkis Dada (Grandfather Serge) the community elder, knocked off his burro with only a push and striking his head on a rock, his fixed pupils seeking the same salvation as the *Eereetsgeen*.

*"Why, he that cuts off twenty years of life Cuts off so many years of fearing death." – Cassius to Brutus, Julius Caesar (III, i)*

With this the Armenians came awake from their trance and increased their resistance to passing through the small, single door but the mob would have none of it and kept filling the church to far beyond its small capacity, those outside fleeing to avoid the obvious calamity, only to be shot. Then, with the door barricaded, the tocsin of doom which interrupted their muteness – *Karyouygh, karyouygheen hoda areek?* (Kerosene, kerosene, did you catch the smell of kerosene?) This then started the frenzy. With no room to move, packed in solid, families separated, though our Chookalians managed to remain together in the far right corner by one of only two boarded up windows. Abject frenzy – *Buzdeegnera ooren, tserkus perne*. (Where are the little ones, hold my hand.) Then such crescendo that rattled the feeble walls of the church, rising to a level of near insanity, a phrenitis. Wailing, screaming, cursing. *Asvadz, pazavankner*, (Armenian and Turkish), *Asvad, horospi vortiner*, (Turkish and Armenian), *Asvadz, mor kunoghner, Asvadz, moret peranum kunem, Asvadz, peraneet mecha kaknem, Asvad, Asvadz, Asvadz oorEs?* (God, you pimps, God, offsprings of whores, God, mother fuckers, God, I fuck your mother in the mouth, God, I shit in your mouths, God, God, God where are You?), quickly replaced by the screams of their death throes. With the crackling of the ignited straw packed around the perimeter of the building the sanctuary appeared to explode from within. The desiccated walls seemed to say “Let’s be done with this.” The Angel of Death, ordained and dispatched by their great, great, great grandfather of two hundred generations ago, Cain, turned the dry, old building into a pyre, a conversion which denied those inside the choice of becoming Moslems, unable to enjoy this Ottoman largess and denied the beneficence and immediacy of the kindest cut of all, the favorite Ottoman method of dispatch – decapitation. This stage of their metempsychosis was to be as ashes, whose susurrations were even less substantial than their smoke. The failed promise of *Genesis* (3:17-19), made in 301 a.d., that

they would return to dust and not ashes added to the heap of Armenian disappointments.

Just then the infant Hamaspur was squeezed between the slats, singed, falling to the ground behind Suleiman (Peaceable), Khachig's Kurdish playmate, exhorting the crowd, waving his yata Khan overhead. Bringing the curved sword down on the baby's neck unawares and it was all over. Stunned, he recovered and danced a jig around the twitching corpse to the delight of the crowd, clapping in unison with his steps and with the monotone lalling universal in Middle Eastern celebrations, especially by the few women present. Immediately Vartanoush (Sweet Rose) and Garo were similarly ejected from the window, but aflame. Their demise was instantaneous since several assassins (a word of Moslem/Arab origin) had been attracted to the window, waiting with a variety of implements, their final cries dimmed by the happy shouts of the killers, "Kafir" and "Akhbar Allah" (Infidel and Allah is Great), and the barking of dogs. Joy fueled by hate.

Some few others tumbled out through the flaming timbers and were exposed to the instruments of the world renowned Turkish culinary repertoire – more yata Khans, knives, axes, hoes, shovels, sickles, scimitars, machetes, stilettos, pitchforks, scythes, mattocks, hammers, awls, rakes, daggers, swords, sabers, rifle butts, bayonets, resulting in dicing, slicing, chopping, pounding, cleaving, splitting, skewering, with some finished off by roasting, being thrown back into the flames. A Turkish collop.

The following morning the Kurds, given leave to sift through the ashes for jewelry, found first the charred skeletons of an adult and child locked in an embrace, likely Khachig and his



father in the "Chookalian Nave," in the manner of the final scenes of *Notre Dame de Paris* by Victor Hugo, in which Esmeralda and Quasimodo are similarly together, yet another portrayal of man's galling appetite, not hunger but appetite, for his species own flesh, lacking even the palatability provided by Gallic xenophobia. The gall of mankind in demeaning cannibals.

*"Humanity must perforce prey on itself like monsters of the deep." King Lear (IV, ii)*

## EPILOGUE

There is no epilogue for the longest running play the world has known, "Death by Hate," nor is there the anticipation that mankind will ever view the final scene from it. None of humanity's finest, highest feelings, neither kings, dictators, democracies, nor the presence or absence of the strongest faith, have ever deflected this proclivity. The genius of civilization has failed to produce either the antidote or the anodyne to it. Its resounding success has been to lengthen and refine the libretto, the music homophonic and increasingly sirenical. The momentum of those two fateful sentences of *Genesis* has generated an irresistible force alluring and overwhelming – being wrought is sufficient for murder. The answer to Why is Hate. The answer to How is History. There is however an epilogue for our victims. And in the epilogue, finally, we are consoled by the good fortune of their misfortune. Had they not perished rapidly their fate would have been to join the million even less fortunate Armenians who would soon be herded south into the Syrian desert, Der Zor, where their new, eager hosts would be the Infidel

Hagarenes, the tribe of illegitimates fathered by Abraham and his concubine Hagar, *Genesis* (16, 1-3), the first of whom was Ishmael, eventually to be known as Arabs, who would then go on to practice their mischief for the next hundred years and spread it far beyond the scenes of this carnage to our present dismay. A proud accomplishment that would place their discovery of algebra into obscurity. Another patrimony of the Pentateuch. The freezing, starvation, beatings, torture, rape, murder by every imaginable, imaginative technique would cause the Armenian corpses to be indistinguishable from the offal and jetsam of their new tormentors. The Armenian agony so profound that the few survivors would be unable to speak of it. The increasingly vehement Turkish denial would forever deny them an audience, with the Turks calling these events a myth while for the Armenians they would reach mythic proportions. The mode of their demise was to be either a Turkish fagot or an Arab plaything, to be toyed with until they became part of their sandbox. The final spoor of the Ottoman Empire.

Our eternal, monotonous story, this Ottoman lagniappe, is a very small scene in a play that continues to this day, with those who would act in it eager to kill for the opportunity and just as many choosing to die for it. Authorship remains in dispute, with God attributing it to his imperfect creation and mankind to the cruel fate predicted by their god. Shakespeare knew that the fault was not in our stars. The playbill continues to hold us spellbound and paralyzed. Our response, no different than for the preceding thousands of years, ranges from boredom and indifference to curiosity, to disbelief, to horror, to bewilderment, to captivation, to puzzlement, causing many of us to jump onto the stage and help with the performance, but almost never attempting, and never, never succeeding in separating the actors in this befuddling puppet show. With averted eyes we gaze irresistibly, entranced,

repelled, attracted. Where do we, the audience of this horrible performance, find ourselves now? Exactly where we started, in the middle act of this presentation. Its antecedent act lost to memory, the final act never to be seen, the Armenians not alone awaiting its desinence. Any anticipation of a final curtain or just a revised script is based on nothing but the futility of hope, in total disregard of the admonition that "Hope is the Mother of Fools." It is a certainty beyond question that this performance will continue until the end of days for only mankind, God's Noblest and for Alexander Dumas, "Nature's Perfection," has perfected self-fornication, and this along with our abiding, impotent fascination with this performance will remain the ultimate obscenity and the true malediction of the Garden of Eden. The Snake was not the Accursed.

*"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee...for we be brethren." Genesis (13:8)*

*"Only what is fine...can feed love. But anything will feed Hate." – Oscar Wilde, De Profundis*

*"...when you have plenty of good strong hating you don't need hope because the hating will be enough to nourish you)..." – William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom!*

*"In politics, as in religion, it is equally absurd to aim at making proselytes by fire and sword. Heresies in either can rarely be cured by persecution." – Thomas Jefferson*

---

**Myron Gananian** is a retired physician living in California.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](https://twitter.com/NERIconoclast)