

Mehmed Uzun first heard the term “reject of the sword” used in reference to the Armenian neighbor of his uncle in the Infidels’ Quarter in Diyarbakir where he stayed as a young student. Curiously, Mehmed’s uncle had chosen to take up residence in the Infidels’ Quarter, away from the hubbub of the city. In his essay, “The Pomegranate Flowers,” Uzun describes the neighbor as a calm, peaceful, hardworking cobbler who would turn inside out, sing sad songs, and pour out his grief, crying, sobbing, and gazing at the waters of the Tigris River. This happened every time the cobbler’s family picnicked under the pomegranate trees on the banks of the river, and they always took along Mehmed, a good friend of their son, Mgo (Migirdic). Vardan, the famous cobbler of Diyarbakir, lost his self-imposed reserve when the bottle of *raki*³⁰ had been drained and the alcohol had loosened his nerves; when control of a forcefully assumed prescribed behavior was no longer possible. It was this influence that allowed him to return to his past and relive the trauma over and over again. He sang songs and uttered words that had no meaning for the new generation, especially the non-Armenians of Turkey.

Years went by and Mehmed forgot about Vardan and Mgo, the unintelligible sad songs, and the pomegranate trees with “blood red flowers,” until his arrest in Istanbul as a socialist and his coincidental imprisonment in Diyarbakir. This was right after the 1971 military coup in Turkey. After his release from prison, he stayed on a few days in Diyarbakir to live the nostalgia of his childhood. Neither Mgo nor his family

³⁰ An aniseed-flavored liquor very popular in Turkey.