

Who is she? To what place is her sense of belonging? She is profoundly conscious of this element in her identity and the influence of the present environment, no matter how much of the past is present:

I found the bloodied arm on the ground
 before me. "You didn't need it" said the voice.
 I saw a sea of dismembered limbs tossed,
 strewn on the horizon and beyond.
 "You didn't really need these bones."
 They covered land that stretched, pressed past.
 "You didn't need these provinces, did you?"
 What would you do with all these stones?"
 A mountain of broken bodies rose.
 "You didn't need Mt. Ararat, did you?"
 I tried to speak. No tongue. My breath froze.
 "You didn't need that language, did you?"
 I woke, washed, and looked in the glass.
 Only another American there dressed in fine clothes.²⁰

This is Diana Der Hovanessian's poetic rendering of the makeup of a second-generation Armenian's identity in the Diaspora. Whereas the first generation either assimilated and completely embraced the host countries' mainstream identity, or lived in a cocoon of unadulterated Armenian identity, the sense of dual identity began to creep in with the second-generation Diasporan Armenians, becoming the source of an insurmountable psychological conflict. Noubar Akishian developed an array of Diasporan Armenian characters caught in the turmoil of dual identity and intermarriage leading to assimilation. In his first short story, "The Broken Home," the second-generation survivors of the Genocide leave their

²⁰ Der Hovanessian, "In My Dream," *Selected Poems* (1994), p. 43.