

social death as the product of genocide—especially when the victims are subjected to torture, long exposure, deprivation, humiliation and degradation, tantamount to stripping them of their social vitality before death. According to Card, genocidal killings also kill the social vitality of the group, that is, its contemporary and transgenerational relationships which are important elements in forging the identity that gives meaning to life. The effects are thus transgenerational and the principal loss of social vitality is a loss of identity and thus a loss of the meaning of life. “When a group with its own cultural identity is destroyed, its survivors lose their cultural heritage and may even lose their intergenerational connections.” The survivors are socially dead, unable to create and build upon their traditions and continue their pre-genocide cultural development. This theory of social death certainly applies to the victims of the Armenian Genocide who lost not only their lives, but also their social vitality. According to this theory, the survivors are socially dead and their descendents “nationally alienated.” Here Card uses Orlando Patterson’s terminology to define the inability of the survivors’ offspring to pass along and build upon the traditions, the language and the community activities that bolstered the group identity before the genocide. This disruption has certainly affected, in different ways, both the Armenian survivors who took refuge outside Turkey and spread to the four corners of the world and those who remained in Turkey. It was an enormous task for the first-generation survivors in the Diasporan environment to overcome the social, cultural, and linguistic barriers, to persevere in the daily struggle for survival and not to give birth to a nationally alienated generation. Here the victim