

# HYEBRED

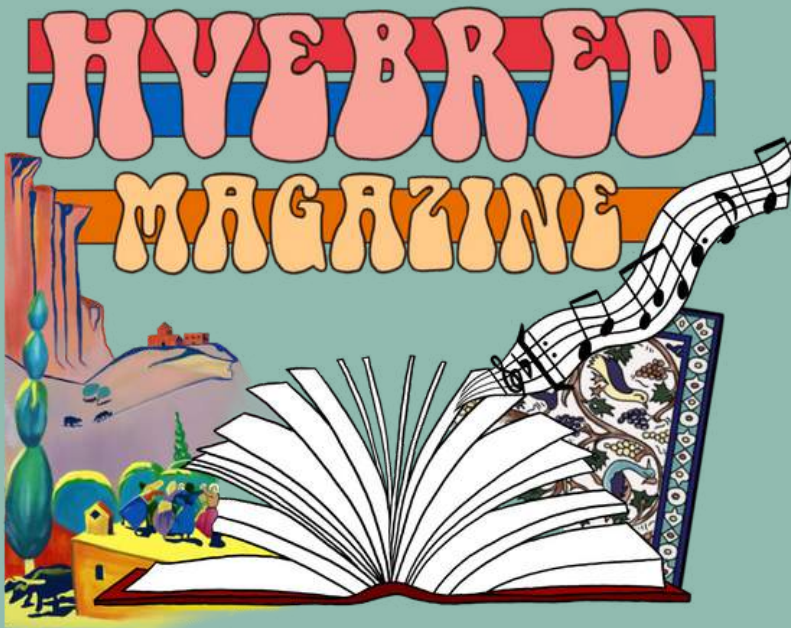
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MAGAZINE

## nostalgia



Cover art: Milan



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## Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We are so excited to present HyeBred Magazine's twelfth issue! We want to humbly thank all of our readers and contributors — those who have been with us since the beginning and those who have recently learned about us. Thank you for imbuing these virtual pages with life, passion, and community.

Our team decided to evolve HyeBred from a bi-annual to an annual journal. This change grants our contributors more time to put the finishing touches on their pieces while also allowing our HyeBred team to dedicate even more care and intentionality to the quality of our issues. With time, everything evolves. In an ever-changing and polarizing world, we look to the past to reminisce and learn. Thus, we asked for submissions inspired by the theme of "Nostalgia."

We hope that in the dark moments of 2023, you had moments of peace and joy. This year has been a distressing one for the Armenian people and many others around the world. Let us take this time to reflect on the past critically, and move through the present with intention and grace, so we can solidify a world wherein equity and peace are the norm.

We hope this publication will bring you a bit of hope and joy as this year comes to a close. These virtual pages exhibit the complex tapestry that is nostalgia through the poetry, prose, art, and music of our talented contributors. We hope that these pieces inspire you to reflect but also create and delve into the crafts you feel most passionate about.

Thank you for reading!  
Հնորհակալություն,  
Rafaella, John, & Gayane

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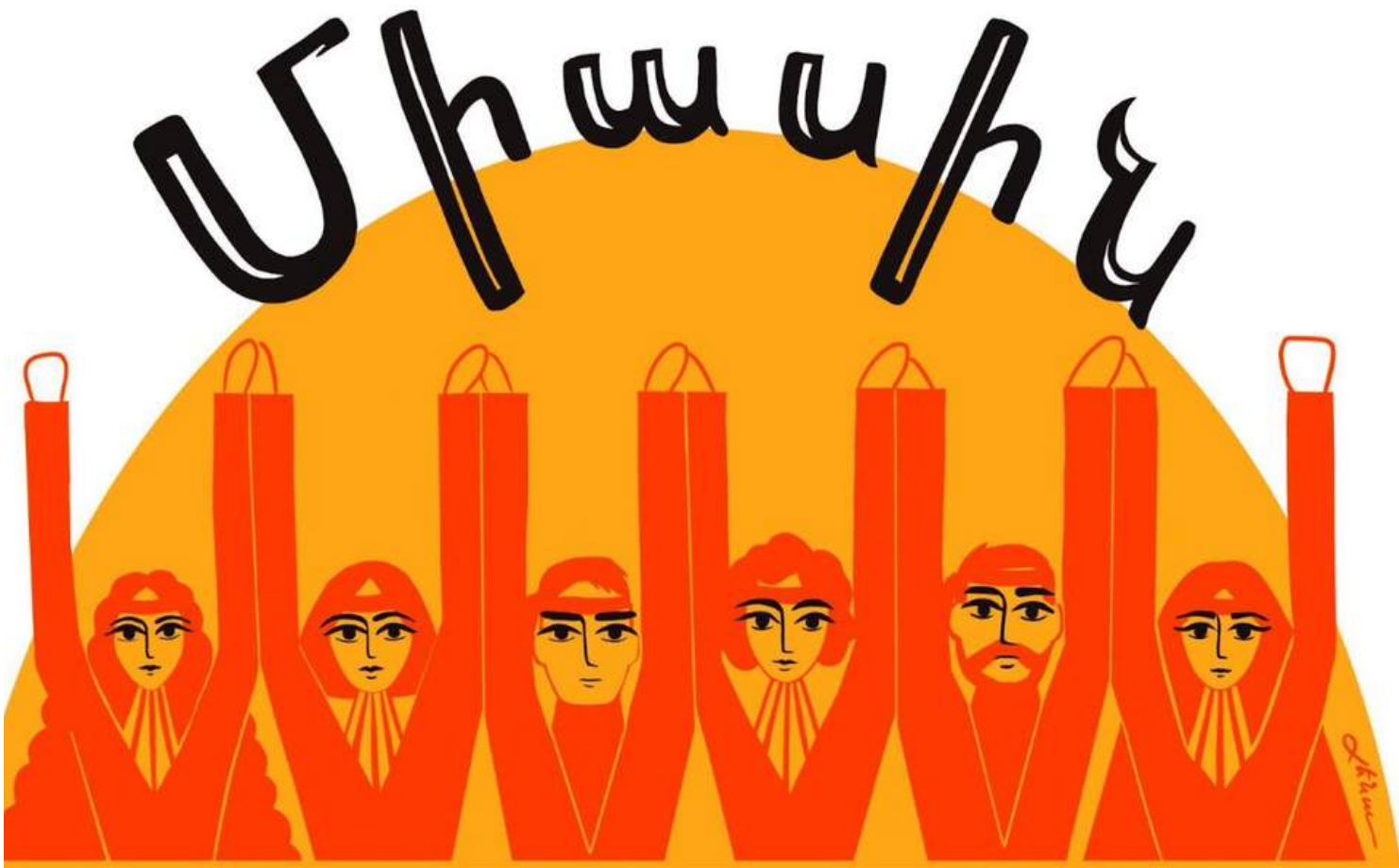
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## Cherry Picking

We drove about two hours on a Sunday to pick cherries. The little ones ran through the orchard lanes, searching for the plump red jewels that lay hidden beneath the leaves. I chose an empty row and followed it all the way down, feeling the baby shift inside. The sound of my feet pressing into the crumbling dirt paths broke the stillness that often accompanies golden hour in the countryside. I lifted the end of my dress to rub the dust off a handful of cherries I'd plucked. One by one I popped them into my mouth, savoring the way my teeth punctured the fruit to release its tart sweetness. I thought of the late summers spent running through the aging fig trees at sunset, clouds of dirt forming in and around my pink jellies. The figs were warm, with sticky sweet syrup oozing from the slight tears in their purple skin. I longed to remain in slowed-down thoughts of distant hills and orchards but the darkening sky meant it was time to load the mismatched bags of fruit into the van and head back to the city. The baby moved again. I heard the others shouting. "Mama! Mama!" they said, calling me home.





“Miaseen” - Together

This piece was originally created in collaboration with Miaseen Inc. for one of their fundraising initiatives. My chief vision of “togetherness” seems to often be in the context of dance and its tie to nostalgia for me is twofold. I’ve taken a step back from teaching and performing with the Armenian dance company I called home for over 20 years. Dancing is nostalgic for me as the experience of it is so wrapped up in memory– of the sights and sounds of a special era in one’s life and reckoning with the fact that it was a fleeting moment in time. Our repertoire, too, was nostalgic in that dance choreography was consistently leveraged to tell the story of the Armenian people. The experience of it opened my eyes to the power of storytelling through movement and performance art.

## The Meals that Make Us

Hello friends, I come to you on the eve of Thanksgiving—a night of brining, chopping, pie-prepping, etc. And I've been thinking a lot about the Thanksgiving meal...about when and how the traditions of our own unique family menus are born. I've been giving more thought to the openers, the dishes that prepare our palettes and appetites for the main event. For as long as I can recall, a sourdough bread bowl—filled to its brim with unapologetic, straight-from-the-packet spinach dip—has sat right beside a crystal platter of my mom's tangy, extra-lemony yalanchi

(vegetarian stuffed grape leaves for those who don't know, and come to think of it, if you don't know, you very well should). A tray of her golden, crispy cheese borek soon follows and before you know it we're all trying (and failing) to rid our sweaters of the residual filo dough flakes. And for quite a few years now, we've settled into our ceremonial night-before-Thanksgiving meal, where my family gathers a day in advance to enjoy Manti, delicious little dumplings made two ways by my mom: soft and doughy the way Siranoush Medzmama (Grandma) would make it, and crunchy but soaked in a tomato broth the way Yevnigeh Medzmama would (both of course topped with a dollop of garlic yogurt, sumac and Aleppo pepper). The point, dear friends, is that while the bird surely brings us together each year, I ask to consider how its accompanying dishes made their way to your family's table. So whatever you're serving up this season, I hope you and your loved ones have a blessed Thanksgiving.



# Tatik

you never told me you loved me, but

you whispered love  
in \$100 bills you secretly palmed me every birthday  
Մամաիդ չ'ասես // "*Mama-it ch'ases*"

you murmured love  
in voicemails full of worry  
Ու՞ր ես, չես զանգում // "*Ur es, ches zangum*"  
and invitations to share a meal  
Արի քոչիկ կեր // "*Ari qrchik ker*"

you encrypted love  
between silence and criticism  
Խեխն ու կրակ աղջիկ ես: // "*Khexj oo krak aghchik es.*"

- -

On a warm, languid afternoon  
I pull up to your apartment

You are perched on your post  
watching over your garden,  
yelling to your neighbors  
over the sound of dice striking a Nardi board.

I walk up the steps to pickled cabbage and mint  
wafting from your kitchen,  
stovetop steam dissipates with every step of your uneven gait.  
You greet me with disapproval of my sneakers  
(too scuffed, too casual),  
we laugh.

I recognize the dry rectangular pechenyiner  
on your coffee table from last week, now stale  
but I eat them anyway.

It's 6pm.

Time for your favorite soap opera,  
last time from Brazil, this time India.  
In silence, we watch melodrama unfold  
at a volume that makes the walls vibrate.

This was our weekly dialogue...

Tatik,

you might not be here, but

in my jawline and the curvature of my nose  
I carry you

in pages of books aged with your touch  
I become you

in the silence between Armenian syllables  
I find you

in these imperfect stanzas

և իմ ամբողջ հոգով

I love you



## the unwanted bird

they wanted to pluck my feathers  
burn and blow them far away  
make me fully deviant  
and simply act like them.

they wanted to break my wings  
to take my sky away  
make me walk the earth  
and meet despair again.

they couldn't watch me soaring  
through thorns up to the stars  
how i abandon them  
how i save myself.



“The Peaceful Crow”

“Goldfish Wish”



“The Hedgehog”

## De Figuris

It was the cowlick devil-may-care hair for me  
 Only a little James Dean  
 Then a cool electric eel snap  
 As your eyes shot forward  
 With a smooth squid ink cloud finish  
 When they turned away  
 Again  
 You nod your head and tap your foot  
 In time  
 To the ancient rumblings deep in your belly  
 That stretch back a thousand years  
 Coming forward to leave their imprint  
 On your brow  
 A little visible wave  
 Marking you as a  
 Lineage-bearer  
 And consecrating your role  
 As spell-breaker  
 The sound that comes out of your throat  
 Is silky, deep, and rich  
 And familiar  
 As it is the sound that  
 Exits me, too  
 When I exhale  
 In breathless devotion

You want the world  
 And I say you shall have it  
 And I say you have already seen it  
 It was not a fever dream  
 Nor deja vu  
 You were there  
 In every beautiful sensation  
 In every moment of connection with God  
 Beside me  
 Picking poppies on the side of  
 This mountain  
 And I never knew it  
 Until this moment  
 But for the time being  
 Dile a tu boca (Tell your mouth)  
 Que puede reír (That it can laugh)  
 And activate the  
 Formation  
 Of those steep canyons  
 On your cheeks  
 As your eyes disappear into a squint  
 Your nose scrunches  
 Y el hombre se transforma (And the man transforms)  
 En niño (Into a boy)

## SAROYAN'S GRAVE

Ararat Cemetery, Fresno, California

With a bombast  
From living in an orphanage  
For five years after his father died,  
Embarrassed his mother, Takoohi,  
Two sisters, Zabel and Cossette,  
And older brother Henry.  
He turned down the cash prize,  
Five-hundred dollars,  
Thumbed his rather large proboscis  
At the Pulitzer Prize  
(because commerce should not judge the arts);  
—but not The Drama Critic's Circle Award,  
And a cash award of \$1,000  
Some prizes were better than others.  
In life, he had a booming bass-voice  
And a thunderous laugh.  
He was truly a Fresnan first,  
Secondly, a Parisian,  
Then maybe an Armenian.  
When death encroached,  
He changed his order of things,  
Cleaned one of two  
Side-by-side tract houses  
He owned in Fresno, California;  
Washed the dishes in the sink,  
Gave up his fifth-floor walk-up

Apartment, 74 rue Taitbout, in Paris.  
He thought about paying his taxes.  
When death finally arrived  
At the tract-home where he slept,  
On Griffith Way, west of Fruit Avenue  
In Fresno, it was guided instead  
To the Veteran's Hospital,  
Where Saroyan was hiding out,  
Hoping not to be found.  
But death killed him.  
They cremated him  
And his cancer-ridden body.  
Half of his ashes were sent  
To Yerevan, Armenia,  
The Komitas Pantheon of the Greats,  
—he did not exist--  
When the other half went to  
The Chapel Of the Light,  
A mausoleum across the street  
From his ancestor's Ararat Cemetery.  
Until some mourner  
(no doubt, with Bill's money),  
Built him a tomb  
From black marble quarried nearby,  
To hold what remained  
Of his larger-than-the-world self,  
Inside a grail for his ashes  
In a heart-shaped box,  
Next to his daughter Lucy's ashes,  
His name reduced to one word:  
SAROYAN.



## A TINY STUCCO HOUSE

When he turned up  
in Fresno, California, in 1947,  
loneliness and grief pursued him.  
To live in a tiny stucco house  
in a sad neighborhood, an emigre  
in a languid part of town  
where many of his peers  
had settled easily into the diaspora.  
His house was on a street  
without sidewalks, lights,  
hydrants, curbs or gutters,  
and had only a dirt driveway  
into the yard where he had planted  
two trees, an apricot and plum,  
behind the separate garage  
where he parked his '98 Skylark.  
A short hedge encircled  
the house and fenced yard,  
a double-gate opened in  
onto dormant Bermuda grass.  
Largely seen as an enigma  
by his next-door neighbors  
who rarely saw the man  
outside with a broom, or  
at the mailbox, or in his yard.  
He didn't subscribe  
to the daily newspaper  
or come outside to collect it.

His garbage went out at night,  
The only light was a buttery glow  
from a kitchen front window  
with the blinds pulled down.  
His provisions arrived by delivery  
In a pact with a friend, the grocer.  
If one were to venture inside  
this man's tiny stucco house  
they would find the interior  
sparsely appointed with old  
and well-worn furniture  
from another time, another era.  
One bedroom completely empty  
And the hollow door locked  
For whatever his reasons.  
There were the other objects too  
that he used every day;  
a chipped plate, a kettle,  
a cup with no handle,  
a silver-plated spoon  
from the Hotel Fresno.  
The only decoration  
was a framed photograph  
of an uncle in a red fez  
on the living room partition  
above a used/unused couch.  
A perpetual calendar  
hung on the kitchen wall.  
He suffered his memories  
alone, and for that reason  
He rarely ventured beyond  
the confines of his home  
or even outside in his yard,  
guilt he felt for being alive.

He no longer attended church,  
yet he grieved for the slaughter  
of the innocents, those  
who were able to escape  
when many others did not.  
He agonized with the disease  
of false-guilt,  
and deprived himself  
of human relationships,  
ingredients essential  
for one man's happiness;  
a wife and family.  
And that left him morose  
with a sullen expression,  
As his eyes sunk deeper,  
further back into his head.  
He had witnessed the violence,  
tormented by what he saw,  
often dreamt of the events  
relived, sitting by himself,  
isolated, waiting to die.

## OUT BY THE HIGHWAY

Elegy for Gilbert Shamshoian 1930-2015.

“I saw railroad workers lay ties by hand, I saw people picking cotton.”

Wide intersection of a four-lane county highway,  
a two-lane country road next to the Union Pacific tracks,  
vineyard rows stop, traffic passes by—

he presses onward—conveying himself in a hand-cranked,  
chain-driven wheelchair, with a large winch-handle

he turned with his strong right-arm.  
To the cross-roads in the sun by an evergreen tree,  
to wave at oncoming cars.

In the rain, his umbrella trussed,  
waving and smiling at the nameless and neighbors.

First, he went only as far as the mailbox  
to see the world outside,

parked at old Highway 99, waving to trucks and autos.  
Part of the landscape — like the vines,  
railroad tracks and road.

Then they built the new freeway.

Folks sold the vineyard home,

moved to town. He took his chair to the left-turn lane,  
near Adams Avenue and the old-highway,  
where he could judge speed by the sound cars made  
whistling through the air.

Waiting and watching,  
left arm withered, palsied, and worn close to his heart.

A spinal-cord injury, a forcep accident at birth.  
He was never able to pick his father's grapes.

The highway was a powerful magnet, traffic flowed like a river  
he was a fisherman at that roaring river. For forty years

he threw his good arm like a pitch to the prevailing winds,  
to a distant din of moving-forces he could not join,  
but pulled himself to the road every day.

His elderly parents couldn't care for him, he went away  
to a rest-home, while both died.

The Good Samaritans are gone. Baptists tell him,  
“There are no wheelchairs in heaven.” At death, he will walk  
straight and erect, everyone will look up and admire him  
for his good-deeds, tossing him a wave.



## fragments reflecting off the shards of a broken mirror

I don't know what box to check on my employment application. Are the original Caucasians rendered 'White'? Am I Middle Eastern? My grandmother from Beirut tells my grandfather from Syria that my other grandfather from Anatolia does not fit neatly into any of these square boxes on this fillable PDF.

+++

my freshly-washed raven hair dries  
to a rough and rigid curl  
it looks wild, even վայրենի,  
untamable, unknowable

my natural pre-op nose  
was big and strong and  
large and wide, constructed  
to withstand high altitudes  
— unsuitable for the smog  
and smoke of L.A. air  
(or so we told ourselves)

+++

how many types of Armenian can one Armenian be?  
can I eat *khoresht* and sing to Karnig?  
can I recite Paruyr Sevak while playing Babajanyan perfectly?

I listen to my Tigranian vinyl while eyeing the last roll from the  
1973 Ararat cigarette pack I bargained for at Vernissage

+++

my flight to Yerevan from Moscow is three hours on an Aeroflot jet  
the repatriates' ship took three days to get from Beirut to Odessa  
my grandparents sat as toddlers crammed in cattle cars  
from Odessa to Tiflis, Tiflis to Yerevan

+++

the road to Artsakh was bumpy,  
the roadside *arakh* was delicate and strong  
faint hints of nectarine and mulberries in the summertime

I wondered if we would ever go back  
I wonder if we'll ever go back.

+++

my բարեկամ tells me they've returned safe and sound  
from the frontlines back to their family home in Goris

we wipe tears of loss, we wipe tears of joy  
we տաշ տուշ to "Hey Jan Ghapama"  
on a balcony with friends in Brooklyn.



**The government  
thinks I'm *white***

**and they might be  
RIGHT!**

**Good thing there's...**

**hYE  
GLiDE**  
**all-in-one**



**For burns, abrasions, and cultural alienation.**

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## Yerablur

grief presses up against my skin  
moving passed flesh and bone  
threatening to break free

then I watch a mother's heart breaking,  
and I hesitate,  
what right have I  
to mourn those I have not loved?

I hold my breath,  
and tears,  
and voice,  
as the heat of it all rushes to the surface

## Untitled for now

This isn't breakfast conversation  
but I tell him that our people were killed and  
his seven-year-old smile boards up  
like an old window

The corners of his mouth hang with the  
weight of his ancestors

His voice cracks when he asks why  
I tell him they didn't want us to pray to  
our God, didn't want us to speak our tongue

His voice steadies, "but we do both those things"  
"I know," I say, "we're fighters"



## Yerevan; Hayastan

How can I be nostalgic, when I'm still here...

Is it the sound of Armenian being spoken every corner I turn?

Is it the eyes of tatiks I pass, who strike me with a concerned warmth?

Is it the scent of fresh khachapuri, gata and soorj from the small bakery next door?

Is it the energy of people outside, no matter the hour - the true "city that never sleeps?"

Is it the sound of Haykakan music blaring from cars that drive by?

Is it the way Ararat looms over the city on my daily walk?

Is it the fragrance of fresh fruits from vendors that line the shukas?

Is it the desire to break out in dance, anywhere and anytime?

How can I be nostalgic, when I'm still here...

Is it the uncertainty that anything can quickly change?

Is it the struggle for us to merely exist?

Is it the anticipation of our continued challenges to come?

Is it the unreliability of who or what will remain?

Is it the unease of my eventual departure?

Is it the fear that the door I knocked down will close when I go?

Is it the ache I'll feel saying *ցտեսութիւն* to the people, my people?

Is it the lack of knowing when I'll return?

I'm nostalgic, and I'm still here.

## Sharing

Ah,  
 the name. My mother  
 used to call it “Armenian  
 cheese,” though I’ve come to know it  
 by many others. One is here, printed  
 on the corner of its wrapper. It says –  
 I apologize for my pronunciation I was  
 never taught how to read – it says  
 Հիսուիած Պանիր. Like an angel’s  
 braid. Indeed, it’s been twisted beautifully  
 the locks brought together as if they grew  
 and their growing was a dance. Beauty so  
 natural only comes after practice fold over  
 fold, has pulled the love out of the artist’s  
 head; let it fall  
 to settle, at last, in the roots  
 of her knuckles

Now,  
 taste: you will find yet more tender secrets  
 hidden beneath your tongue First, nigella,  
 that makes the milkflesh like speckled  
 marble; then, mahlab, tinging lending its  
 scent. Flavor and aroma, you know, are  
 close cousins. At first, nigella is nutty. But  
 as it cracks between your teeth, it begins to  
 tell  
 a story about opening  
 under Spring rains  
 and flowering

sweet, in Summer  
Mahlab is yet subtler  
We use less. You have to  
look hard for it. But once found  
tucked away in a forgotten corner  
of your mouth, she will remind you  
of things you never even knew  
you forgot. Like the wind  
through a cherry orchard  
or the distant texture  
of soft, pink stones  
Do you like it?  
I wish I could say  
    we ate like this  
    all the time

I would like to share a story

of my own  
There was, and there was not  
a hidden, battered hamlet  
whose mountains locked together like  
scars around a wound. One day there  
came a child to this place, the first that  
any of the farmers could remember She  
spent her days circling their valley  
watching as those dagger mountains  
menaced the sun through the sky Yet,  
while many years were buried thus, in  
that dim and spiraling cage she did not  
bow to the low terror of her landscape –  
for she knew a way out. Distant, yes.  
Hard  
to follow (and it was a long time  
before she dared). But known

even when the sun was ground  
to a stain of fading amber  
across the mountains' peaks –  
known by the furtive signs  
of another's journey

Photos of a baby  
and a pink stone  
church; cherry pits;  
little black seeds  
scattered in the dirt

Ah, you know

Kingdoms have grown  
from less

## ODE

So it's you again,  
 making your presence known by stepping into my mind.  
 Wistfully, I close my eyes.  
 I hear the breeze and smell the ocean.  
 I know it is but a trick of the mind from you, N.  
 Taking me back to 2018, in Carlsbad, on the beach.  
 Your ghost-like fingers are toying with the hemispheres of my brain, and you whisper to me.  
*Remember.*  
*Remember how he looked at you, when he told you how he felt.*  
*Remember how the sun was setting, its pinkish orange light shining upon his face.*  
*The sky looked like a grapefruit.*  
*You were blushing and red hot like a cinnamon candy as you stared into his eyes.*  
*Remember how you thought you would never fall in love, yet there he was, right in front of you.*  
*Remember how awkwardly you told him you felt the same,*  
*with food in your mouth because of your nervous eating habits.*  
*Remember those butterflies, your stomach in knots.*  
*Remember the first time you felt you were in love.*  
 How could I forget?  
 With your voice soft as silk, dripping like honey,  
 sweetly, you embrace me with the warmth of October 14th, 2018.

## EPODE

Why can't you stay?  
 Why can't you hold me in your arms, but for a moment longer, N?  
 Why must you leave, always?  
 I feel cold, like ice.  
 Frigid.  
 My eyes open abruptly and as usual, you are gone.  
 So why do I always ache for you?  
 Why do I need you near me if you treat me this way?  
 Like an abusive lover, tormenting me,  
 you tell me what I want to hear to get me to open up to you,

to show you my wounds, my successes, my failures, my secrets,  
and you pretend to comfort me.  
You show me moments I can no longer touch nor feel.  
My birthday at Disneyland where I spent the night at the Grand Californian Hotel.  
A scorching hot day on the soccer field, running and playing “infection” with my friends.  
That sleepover at Angele’s house in the Hollywood Hills, the moment I realized,  
“I want to live here one day” and I watched my first R-rated movie.  
The sablé cookies I baked with Amaia and her mom before she moved to New York,  
when we ate more dough than the actual cookies themselves.  
Playing “Sims” with Jude until it got dark outside, except we could not feel the day pass.  
You torture me with memories that have slipped through my fingers.  
Like a drug, you give me my fix in the moment.  
And then when I need you more, and when I need you most, you leave me helpless.  
Helpless, but worst of all, in the present.  
And I will never forgive you.

## ANTISTROPHE

But I will always welcome you, N.  
You open my wounds, you salt them.  
Occasionally you give me anesthesia for the pain, but nothing lasts forever.  
Including you.  
The memories you bring to me, as gifts,  
Are opened with delight.  
But they do not remain, and they leave with you,  
until your return.  
I will live alongside you.  
My wound hurts and you only open them, instead of stitching them.  
But I love you.  
I do not want you to stitch the gash.  
I want it open.  
Consider this an invitation, N.  
I am here, and the door will always remain open for you.  
Though, I do know, even if the doors were closed,  
You would find your way back inside.  
Perhaps,  
next time I listen to “Ocean Breathes Salty,”  
I’ll feel your gentle breath reminding me of October 14, 2018.



# Create Story

You're sitting in your garden and it's the end of the world. You're thinking about when you made the first plantings three years ago and how much hardship it took to get here. You're wistful, but satisfied, because you get to enjoy something you made with your own hands. The last day of the world is beautiful and hot and feels insignificant like any other Thursday. You're going to check your phone any minute now.

Hi, so we noticed you like flowers and trees. Here are three photos of flowers in a row on Facebook. Your hobbies and interests have worth. They deserve a special place in your life. Would you like some advertisements of lawnmowers? For the garden you take 15 steps from your kitchen to get to. By the way, this year you're walking less on average than you did in 2022. That's worrisome. Maybe you would enjoy pictures of parks and mountains too? Here's a memory of that hike you took with your boyfriend before the first lockdown. Wasn't life so much simpler then? You can totally go on a hike now, too. Even on your own. Do consider it. Here's an ad for that, if you change your mind.

Your heart rate has picked up. Are you feeling nostalgic yet? It's hard to tell from over here. Are you feeling things right? Do you wanna make a post about it?

Hey did you know your pumpkins are ready to be harvested? No, not the ones in your *garden* garden. The ones in your Animal Crossing garden. Wasn't this game just the most worthwhile purchase during the first year of Covid? Remember how you couldn't leave your apartment for days on end, or meet friends and relatives, or plan trips anywhere with a beach, but we made that all possible for you in this new timely entry. Get it? New Horizons, new entry? Sometimes you would log into the game first thing in the morning because you could not bear one more day of waking up to the news of another big tragedy having happened somewhere in the world. Some nights you would enter the game just to watch the sunset on the beach and let the background tune of the game lull you to restless sleep. You're welcome, by the way. It's a pleasure to keep you updated 24/7. Would you be interested in reading what's next for Animal Crossing after New Horizons?

Always remember: you are special for wanting the most common things, having the most common thoughts and needs. At the same time, you are more than encouraged to indulge in your most eccentric whims and impulses, so long as you don't make yourself too different from everyone else. Go crazy! Within the boundaries of societally approved crazy that is. Enjoy your bodysuit. Human resources are the most valuable resources we have on this planet. The shape you occupy in this world is very important to us. So are your feelings. It's perfectly fine to feel helpless and bleak when everything is so uncertain. We'll never stop reminding you. It's alright. Totally understandable.

Getting off track there. Hi again. How are you? Good. Excellent. We were thinking we could take you back to your graduation day. Back when relationships and human connection came easily to you. Here's a story you made on that day. You're holding your red diploma and you're wearing that nice black dress you've kept to this day, but you no longer fit into. Would you like to buy a new similar one? Or we could offer a Spotify playlist with the exact same songs you would study to, with your university friend group even though the group's long drifted apart. Hey, did you know? You don't have any photos with your best friend even though you talk to her every day on messenger and instagram. Isn't that crazy? I mean, are you even friends if you have not documented even one moment you've spent together?

Doesn't a thing have to be witnessed for it to be true? If a pine falls of the tree and hits a moss-covered rock and topples over the hill and screams and curses -

Did it really happen if no one got it on camera?

Here's a photo of a street cat you took four years ago in Bulgaria. Here's a photo of you hugging a tree. Here's a photo of your friend you're no longer on speaking terms with. It was a painful conflict for you, we remember. We took notes. Sorry, for the reminder. Would you like to be distracted by being made to reflect on things bigger and more important than you?

There's a war raging outside your window and it's looking pretty grim. You need comfort. No, what you don't need more of is facts. The truth is kind of subjective anyway. Who's to say, we won't change our minds by dinner? Don't worry, we'll make your history tweet-sized and palatable. We'll offer first world solutions to your third world problems.

Third world - there's nothing shameful in that, you know. Being a third-worlder. We'll just never stop reminding you how third-world and foreign you are. Your culture and background are important to us! And we'll do our best to represent it. Actually, it's the twenty-first century and it's more progressive if we, the conscious and guilty descendants of your oppressors, hold space for you to represent your own culture and history. No, not like that. Do that again, and we'll ban you off all social media platforms permanently. Yes, you should care about that. It's kind of the equivalent of a modern day public persecution.

Back to comfort.

Your local cinema invites you to the screenings of the gems of Armenian cinematography. The films that reflect your identity and history and traditions best. Your words. You made a lengthy thread on Twitter two years ago about how Armenian cinema's going downhill, and if you could keep the old films and burn everything else that's come out this century, the loss would be insignificant. Hey quick question: would you like to be reminded of your posts on Twitter, the same way you are on Facebook? Just curious. So, the campaign is going to last over two months and there will be merchandise and special catering with popular dishes and dishware from the 90s. Record players and vinyls and vintage posters. Please help yourself. Enjoy yourself. Rest here. Your life, your identity, your mountains, the pieces of your sky, your memories, the tango of your childhood. Let it all rest here.

Hey, do you wanna make a quick story about this event? You can get a promo code, which might win you a free ticket for a friend.



# FEEL LIKE YOU BELONG.



Call the culture your own with  
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\*There is no substitute for enculturation. Disingenuous attempts to claim Armenian identity may result in cognitive dissonance and worsen symptoms of alienation. Deliberately seeking alternatives to whiteness is not a cure for white privilege or the attendant feelings of guilt and placelessness. Consult your doctor about coming correct.

## Summer in A Bottle

If only I could capture the essence of summer in a bottle,  
Embrace the roots in that garden and home,  
Freeze time and go back to savor each feeling once more.  
It holds both the fondest and the bitterest of memories.

Sweet, heavy air and  
Wildflowers kissing gently our fingertips  
While we lay to watch the clouds take shapes.  
Sizzle of sunflower seeds and soorj  
In the night while moths hover over the aunties  
Gossiping about the day.

Climb the mulberry trees,  
Honeyed fruits make up for deep splinters.  
Bunnies and ducklings in the morning,  
Fireflies and frogs in the night.

How I long to go back  
Bittersweet reminiscence.  
Shesh-besh and cigarette clouds,  
New and creative words around the uncles.  
Vai, vai, vai.

But many summers we covered mirrors.  
Arsen taken in the morning,  
Haikush - Azghanush and all her siblings at night.  
A generation in the dirt  
Disconnected from all our ancestors' dirt  
Who lay under occupied, stolen lands now.

That scent of earth and slight petrol  
Off the giant parked machines  
So impossibly colossal to me at the time.  
Together for an Armenian wedding,  
And an Armenian funeral too.  
Gatherings, transitions,  
Comforts, traumas -  
Bottled memories.





“Yaya’s House”

## My Muse

My muse is delicate and rare  
Fell out the tangles of my hair  
Tripped forth from my tired lips  
The monsoon of my fingertips

He is the flavored figs of Greece  
The in between of war and peace  
The adhan of quiet Qatar  
The broken skin around my scar

His eyes are sown within my rug  
Imprisoned in a threaded hug  
Firmly on it I do stand  
As I sink within his sands

His heart cannot be shattered  
Nor his ambition torn and tattered  
Let my thoughts, like birds, take flight  
Finding shelter in Arabian nights

And there he lies, simply still  
With nothing but a silver grill  
With persimmons from Asia  
Coins and eyes from south Caucasia

My muse is delicate and rare  
Fell out the tangles of my hair  
Sprung from the figs of կապույտ Greece  
The in between of war and peace

## BLOODLINE

Peace, when

(?)

My headscarf is frayed at  
the edges of my bloodline.

## CHILD AND OUTCAST

I—

belonging nowhere.  
on every land  
both child and  
outcast.

## SCHRÖDINGER'S ARMENIAN

Homshetsis (Համշէնցիներ; *Hamshentsiner*) were Western Armenians who migrated from Urartu to the Black Sea region of Pontos/Lazica, the soil through which weave the roots of Lazis, from which burgeon the stems of Pontiaká. Forgotten people; unspoken tongues—fellow West Asians have admitted to me they've never heard of Laz, nor do they truly know who Pontians are.

The Tragic Trinity of the Black Sea formed upon the Homshetsis' arrival. *At least we have each other to be forgotten with.*

Most Homshetsis hardly think of themselves as “Armenian” anymore, and opt for “*Hemşinliler*,” not because we lost our heritage, but because for us in Pontos/Lazica it was the Qur'ān or the death marches. And not because we lost our heritage, but because we sprouted new growth in new soil—saltier, cooler. Indigenous Laz trickled into that uprooted Urartian language the way Tigris flows into Euphrates at al-Qurnah and became remade, a bloom given new fragrance. It was the Lazis who helped the Homshetsis keep living. And the most loving community I've ever found were the Armenians.

And Homshetsis don't denounce Armenia. *I don't.* She is to me Մայր Հայաստան (*Mayr Hayastan*) —Mother Armenia. We emerged from that ancient

lineage—Ani, Sasun, Marash—but one does not return to the womb that birthed them.

A child is its own entity. One must become unrecognisable to become Themselves.

“One” is Homshetsi. Մենք բոլորս Համշէնցիներ  
(*Menk bolors Hamshentsiner*): We are all Homshetsis.

*And what if you are wrong? What if you aren't Homshetsi at all?*

Pontic Greeks aren't *Greek* at all, genetically.

DNA is only a thread in the embroidery—  
culture is language, custom, socialisation.

And Mother Armenia loves her children.

How many of them was she forced to lay to rest? How many of them were cruelly torn from her?

So, say what you will, but whether Yerevani, Artsakhi, Sasuntsi, Myasnikovsky, or Homshetsi, *Mayr Hayastan* loves her children.

## Kheyma

At the age of five or six there are so many things we don't know. But the world is manageable, and you're in no hurry. In 20 years others will call your favorite Armenian dish *Chee Kufteh*. *Kheyma's* not the real name they'll say. *Kheyma* just means ground meat they'll say. *Chee* means raw, raw *kufteh*. But they don't know. The name is what Grandma says. And, as it happens to turn out, no one makes *kheyma* like Grandma Ruth. Well, it also turns out that *everyone's* grandma makes *kheyma/chee kufteh* the way it's supposed to be made. But you'll always feel an affinity for friends who call it by the name you grew up with. And your non-Armenian friends will say, "Raw meat? Ugh!" But at five or six years old you don't know any of that yet.

"It's *kheyma*," Grandma says. "It's good."

She has taken the Greyhound from Fresno to Burbank, taken over the kitchen, stands at the counter with an apron over her housedress, her silver hair you imagine to be a swirling version of the crown that she says God is going to give to the faithful. Her hands, shining, immersed in the biggest bowl in Mom's kitchen, mixing something that makes a pleasant sound; you think of sneakers marching through mud. She stops, samples, adds salt, resumes the work of squishing. You don't know that it's freshly ground, very lean top round, cracked wheat, parsley, onions and pepper paste. Here, she says, you squish now. She immediately swats your hands.

"Go wash!"

You wash at the kitchen sink, Palmolive soap, and return to the task.

The strange-looking contents of the bowl are cold and not as soft as you thought. You realize Grandma's hands are strong.

"Why did you stop?" she says. "It's not finished."

But you're bored and your hands ache.

"Oof!" she says impatiently, and with disappointment. "I'll do it."

She looks down at the bowl. Her hands seem angry but her face is calm. There's a rhythm to her work and you start to feel like there's music in everything.

"Here," she says, "try it." And it's delicious.

She shapes the *kheyma* into discs, concave at the top and bottom, each one an exact replica of the first. She lets you try, but yours looks like something that fell from a



high place; it's flat on one side and uneven, and she takes it from you and shapes it as perfectly as all the others. She stacks them on a large serving plate you had not seen before, spaces them just so in circles and it becomes a castle of *kheyma*.

Dad smiles, says grace a little faster. Your brother is spying the castle. Your sister's eyebrows are arched high, eyes wide. You eat three of them and your stomach closes and you feel sleepy and good. You take another.

"That's enough," Mom says.

"Let him eat," Grandma says in a low, serious tone. And you do.

## Jerry's

Mom said come with me and tipped her head toward the car. I was in my late 30s at the time; we hadn't gone grocery shopping together for quite a while. She pointed the beige '76 Nova west on Burbank Boulevard, which confused me – all her usual stores were in the opposite direction – until we arrived at Jerry's Armenian Deli. Jerry no longer owned the place, but there was still that sweet and spicy cloistered smell, the proud non-franchise store and the dilapidated screen door in the back leading to the alley.

She said get whatever you want – out of character for her – and I picked *choreg*, *halvah*, sesame candy, string cheese and *lahmajoon*. She tossed in Ak-mak and apricot leather. She spent \$65 altogether, paid cash.

At the first stop on Burbank Boulevard she turned to me and said, “Don't eat it all on the way home.”

“Huh,” I said.

“Huh,” she replied.

## Vanilla Ice Cream with Chocolate Swirls

The cup of ice cream with a flat lid and a tiny pull-tab came with a small birch wood paddle spoon. The spoon tasted like what I presumed a tree or a piece of wood might taste and I worried that I might get splinters in my mouth. The flavor of the ice cream was usually vanilla with chocolate swirls, and when they were served before the church luncheon was over the servers burst into the dining area smiling like Christmas morning. You would think all the Armenian mothers said to all their Armenian children, “Hema cheh,” not now, when those children were ready to abandon lunch and go directly to the ice cream. But they didn’t say that. I didn’t understand Armenian. and neither did Robert or his brother Harry or his cousin Jim, or his other cousin Charles, or Laura or her sister, Gloria, or Phil who combed his hair back, like Elvis, and had a peach fuzz mustache at the age of eight. Most of our parents grew up speaking Armenian at home and English everywhere else; then they, or most of them, chose English for their children. The 50s were a very patriotic time.

In any case, when the ice cream came out the mothers at the church luncheon didn’t use any words at all; they looked at the ice cream cup, looked at their children and made the big eyes, which meant don’t even think about it.

A church luncheon meant chicken, pilaf and that chopped salad made of lettuce and miniscule shreds of carrots and purple cabbage, doused in oil and vinegar. Most Armenian-American kids at a very young age made the discovery of pilaf and church luncheon salad complimenting each other in a most magnificent and unforgettable way, having to do with the sweetness of the butter in the pilaf and the tanginess of the salad dressing. They say taste memory stays the longest, and I can testify to that.

A church luncheon also meant speakers with much on their mind. They spoke in Armenian, and even when they spoke in English, it was with words so incomprehensible most seven year olds phased out and tuned in to their own range of thoughts and imaginings, eventually having to do with hoping the ice cream wouldn’t melt.

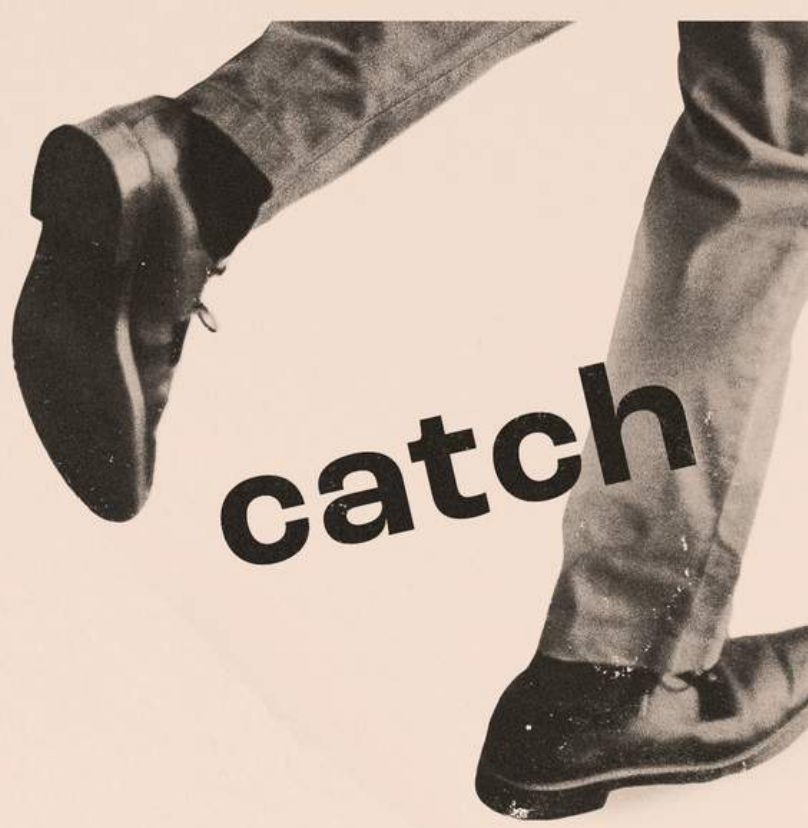
On the top of the lid and on the side of the cup was the word “Balian’s” in blue

cursive, underlined, with the last letter like the Dodgers logo. Balian's came to Los Angeles 30 years before the Dodgers arrived though, and anyway, I didn't know anything yet about the Dodgers or Armenian family-owned businesses and the miracle of escaping from one country and arriving here, hatching an idea, working one's posterior off day and night, getting everybody – brothers and sisters, cousins, sons and daughters, nephews and nieces – on board and becoming quite successful. I didn't recognize the name, and may not have realized it was Armenian. I only knew that there was always a spot somewhere in the cup where the chocolate had congregated mightily, such that all that would fit on that little wooden spoon was pure chocolate syrup and I was very determined to find it, very focused on that task.



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Anna enjoying a cappuccino at a cafe in Istanbul

## EXCERPT FROM “THE CAUCASUS” DIGITAL MAGAZINE

**THIS DIGITAL MAGAZINE CHRONICLES AN EXPLORATION OF ARMENIAN CULTURE, FOOD AND TRADITION THROUGH THE LENS OF HISTORY, IDENTITY AND REGIONALITY.**

**YOU CAN READ THE FULL MAGAZINE [HERE](#).**



## *Armenian Voices: Anna - Eastern Armenian (Hayastanci)*

My mom is my best friend. She sacrificed a lot as a young adult to become the best hands-on and nurturing mother anyone can ask for. I have early memories of learning Armenian through Armenian poetry and music. I never had traditional lessons in the language and everything I learned was from the home and around family. It was a pleasure asking my mom some questions about her youth and what she'd like the world to know today about Armenia.

*From your experience, how would you describe living in Armenia during the Soviet times?*

I lived in Armenia for the first 15 years of my life. I describe it as a very nice experience, full of life and full of friendships, school, and no fear. My favorite thing was to commute from my home to my school, which was about an hour away from where I lived. I used to take public transportation-the metro, bus, trolley bus... and that was the best thing for me—having that freedom and feeling very safe in the city. All the kids used to commute and not worry about anything. That was one of my best memories. No technology, just always playing on the street with friends and a lot of physical activity. I think it was very nice, now that I look back.

*What are some of your favorite childhood dishes?*

My grandma and my mom used to make a lot of food. But my favorites were the barbecues we used to do out of the city. We'd just take the meat and go out in the mountains by the river and then just do grilling, barbecue, and have a party there. And second most favorite was when I used to get home from school and my mom would take out a nice beef and potato dish in a rich tomato sauce out of the oven, nice and warm. I used to love eating that.

*What do you miss the most about living in Armenia during your youth?*

I miss the people, and I miss how carefree everything was. I guess that's how it is when you're a child and you live anywhere, it feels the same. But it was just a very organic, natural and carefree kind of lifestyle. I miss that the most.

*What was it like to revisit Armenia as an older adult?*

It was kind of bittersweet, because it's changed a lot since I left in '87, and to revisit your childhood and to see how everything has changed, it's just kind of bittersweet, but it makes you appreciate a lot of things, like in U.S. for example. But um, life is different.



“Yerevan at Night” by Meline Kalendjian

*Is there anything else you want the audience to know about our country and culture?*

Yes. I want them to enjoy Yerevan with its cafes and beautiful food and restaurant options. But I also think going out of the city during the day and just being in the nature—there is a lot of nature and a lot of out of town places—is wonderful. Think farm-to-table lifestyle and bed and breakfast places. Yes, I think that is what is the most enjoyable as well. And the cities for at night, with their restaurant scene, wineries, cafes, clubs and beautiful jazz music.

# Memories of Gatá: Before We Knew Cheesecake and Tarts

In the fall of 2021, Eva, my childhood friend, moved to France with her husband and kids. Little did I know about what she would be doing there, but someone had told me her plan was to start a bakery in Paris and “surprise everyone” like her Mama had done years ago.

As if it was so easy to surprise the French with a bakery.

That curly-haired girl, Eva, by the way, who you always wanted to tell to go comb her hair, was my childhood friend, and confidant, and the person I could lie to whenever I wanted to talk about having things I wanted in life but couldn't afford. Eva and I were born in the same year and had quite a lot in common. Amid everything else, Eva and I were two big liars who lived in a huge neighborhood famous for two things: poverty and unbearable heat during summer.

“We have a summer house far from here, and there's such a nice swimming pool there. I swim in it when I go there and a servant brings me orange juice,” I used to tell Eva. She didn't interrupt.

“And we actually have another TV set at home, color TV, with a remote control,” Eva would tell me every time I went to their place to watch TV. Ours was always out of order.

“That's a lie!” I exclaimed. “Why do I never see it when I come to your place?”

“Because we hide it,” Eva would reply solemnly, her eyes never leaving mine. I let her think I actually believed her.

Ours was a poor neighborhood in the hottest suburb of Yerevan, with people who lacked a lot of things: money, education, table manners, information about the world. We lived in Soviet buildings of the worst category in front of which crooked iron booths emerged like mushrooms every now and then. Those iron booths were shops in which our neighbors did family businesses, mostly selling groceries. One of those iron booths could've become Eva's Mama's cake shop someday.

Because Eva's Mama, Aunty Mariette, could bake the most delicious, fragrant, golden-brown-surfaced, soft gatá I'd ever tasted and because, unlike many other aunties, she could bake gatá and she did bake it.

Auntie Mariette's gatá was different from all the other gatá I had ever seen. Not that I had seen many. But of all the gatá I had ever seen, and touched, and tasted, Auntie Mariette's gatá was the most pompous-looking one. It was as if she aimed at distracting everyone once her creations showed up at dinner tables. Those pieces were big! They looked amazingly different golden brown. And though a regular gatá is supposed to be dry, hers just melted in my mouth, and I thought they were specially made for my palate, my tongue, my teeth and my throat.

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I was there on the day this story started. I went to Eva's every day, since we didn't leave the neighborhood to go elsewhere. Eva's place was where I escaped from home.

Eva's grandmother sat at the table, examining the baking tools. Her face had a sour expression which she didn't want to hide from me. Gosh, those tools hadn't been in use for ages! They had been taken out of the closet that morning. Sieves, big and small. Some of them so useless, they could be thrown away immediately. A rolling pin. Big bowls and a zigzag knife for giving style to gatá before baking. Brushes and measuring cups. The old woman looked as if her daughter-in-law was blocking her air just being there, in front of her, and she couldn't find the right words to reprimand her.

"My son is not very well," she said, breathing heavily. Everyone knew that. Auntie Mariette knew that best of all since that son was her husband and they had three kids together. She didn't answer the old woman.

"I wonder if you know someone, anyone who has ever done this before. Let me ask you, will you ever buy *tolma* from someone if you can cook your own at home?" Eva's Mama fidgeted in her discomfort but just stared ahead. Mother-in-law wasn't giving in.

"I've given the children their dinner since their mama is too busy to do it herself," she snapped with some more venom. She then fell into a sullen silence but occasionally muttered something to show her disapproval of the whole thing. Eva's Mama slowly closed her eyes and stood with her back to the old woman. That way she wouldn't have to see the accusing look the latter was sure to have on her face.

Eva's grandmother, her Mama's mother-in-law, was a woman of contrasts. One look at her was enough to understand she had been beautiful in her day. She still was, if she was in a good mood. Because one day she would be sweet as honey cake, and another day you couldn't coax a "hello" out of her. She would wake up and pour her venom out onto the world and get to her daughter-in-law at every opportunity. Her name was Eva, too, a woman whose face had long ago lost its natural color, so badly it had been scorched in the sun on all those days she sold vegetables on the sidewalks. She wiped her hands off her floral dresses even though they were clean. That was her habit before she went on criticizing.

"Who put these ideas into your head? Who told you it would work? Do you know how much electricity will go? My son is not in good health! And this oven? It's so old! It's going to blow up and kill us all!"

When nothing blew up and the first zigzag-edged pieces of gatá emerged out of the oven safe and sound, for everyone to try, the woman snapped, “Who will even buy these from you? Someone out of their mind?”

She was right about one thing: Eva’s father was in poor health.

Eva’s father was a friendly person, whenever he felt well, that is. Handsome, I heard many of our neighbors describe him. However, I never heard anyone talk about his illness. Unlike his mother, he was amazed at his wife’s skills. He cracked jokes about anything or anyone around whenever he sat with Auntie Mariette because he wanted her to raise her head from her meticulous work and get distracted with a smile. There was affection in the man’s eyes for his wife. All of these, whenever he felt well. Because mostly he didn’t.

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“Is this gatá?” I probably asked the most stupid question ever. I was at Eva’s and there was Eva, her Mama and a tray of shiny, big, fresh, fragrant and mouth-watering gatás right in front of us. Eva came and went, fussed about clearing the table, arranging the gatás into boxes, to be delivered later, and in between everything, she looked at the pastry with eyes like there was a newborn baby in front of her, in need of protection, love and care. Recently, she had started talking about big plans. “My mom is opening her cake shop, we will be famous and rich soon!” she had exclaimed. “When?” I’d asked, taken aback by the idea of them being rich and not having me in the big plan. I felt betrayed but didn’t exactly know by whom. “Soon,” Eva had replied nonchalantly. She always had that air about herself whenever she felt dominant over a situation. “It will be right next to our building, in the corner under the wild mulberry tree.” The best corner.

“Yes, it’s gatá with *khORIZ*.”

*KhORIZ*. The word sounded like it was from out of this neighborhood, out of our lame homes where shortage of everything had long ago made our humble mothers forget what it was to indulge in a good cooking process, where they no longer cooked or baked anything sophisticated, something that would melt in your mouth and make your heart melt. The word sounded like from out of our reality, blown into our conversation suddenly from a hundred summers ago, coming from a lost Armenian town, now home to the Turks; a town where Armenian women woke up earliest and slept the latest because their life was about working incessantly, making delicacies to make their beloved ones happy. The word smelled like finely toasted nuts, tasted like a drop of honey as the final touch to the pastry, brought images of my grandmother’s embroidery with Marash accent to the eyes. “What is *khORIZ*?”

*KhORIZ* is the soul of gatá, I found out; the filling. You can’t change this name and call it any other way because anything else will distort the uniqueness of gatá’s beautiful soul. Auntie Mariette’s first gatá had nothing but a beautiful soul, fluffy, tender. *KhORIZ* was actually a simple mixture of unsalted butter, granulated sugar, and flour on which Eva’s Mama meditated.



I only saw her make *khORIZ* once. With her hands, she merged all of those ingredients, and I admired the way the mixture slid through her fingers like sand. Like snowflakes, into the enamel bowl. She did it all over again. Took the white grainy fluff into her palms and crumbled it down. I was eager to ask if I could help but I dared not. Not that Auntie Mariette would say yes.

Unlike that making of the soul, I had numerous opportunities to see Eva's Mama make the body of her *gatá*. She took 400 grams of *matsoun*, our version of Greek yogurt, 300 grams of butter, a teaspoon of baking soda, another teaspoon of vanilla, and flour enough to knead a dough that didn't stick to the hands. I thought those moments of kneading were moments of thinking, analyzing and making a silent conversation with the *gatá*-to-be. Along the way, also recalling her sorrows, and getting angry with someone in silence. Occasionally, I saw how Auntie Mariette's face changed, became distant and dark, as she kneaded. I wanted her to smile, to change that face of hers, give love to the *gatá* because I thought people would feel her mood when they took a bite of it. But no. Immersed in her internal conflicts, Eva's Mama would eventually get the most soulful, the most delicate, and the most eye-flattering dough, of the best color, best texture and perfect thickness. Quality dough. Flawless body for her *gatá*. And then I would enjoy seeing the *khORIZ* being spread onto the dough, giving it life; soul for the body. Like the fall of the snow in the silence of a winter day. Auntie Mariette would then wrap the dough into a roll and there it was; the long roll of the unbaked *gatá* before she brought her zigzag knife and cut the roll into pieces. And her sorrows would be forgotten for a while, her face radiant with affection because she had the most beautiful pieces of Armenian *gatá* on the table. She would need to glaze the pieces with egg yolk before putting them into the oven for 30 minutes, but this she kept postponing. Life, her life, was not just about baking *gatá*, after all. She knew she might put those beauties into the oven and then someone might distract her with their endless needs and errands, and she would forget about the oven and burn the *gatá*. Oh no. Eva's Mama never did that. She would always bake her *gatá* in the right moment, and see, smiling, how the body and the soul became one; a *gatá*. It would take around 15 minutes for the *gatá* itself to cool and realize it was *gatá*, with a taste, an aroma and a color for the world.

I didn't happen to see Eva's Mama take the hot *gatá* out of the oven but when the night came, when silence descended over everything, leaving us with the fireflies and the sounds of the water splashing from the fountain from which we, kids, drank all evening, I could inhale their warmth sitting in the veranda of our apartment on the third floor, cuddled with Armenian historical novels. The aroma visited me then. It was the aroma of freshly baked or still-in-the-oven *gatá*. It snuck out of the open window near where Eva's Mama sat alone and struggled to keep herself awake till she had all the orders ready for morning, and it rose, touching all the laundry our mothers had hung to dry on the pulley clotheslines, touching the leaves of the mulberry trees, reaching the waterspouts and lingering between the floors. It came to our curtains, and the night breeze helped bring it closer to my nostrils, and I knew, inhaling that aroma, that the fourth floor was jealous of the third one because I, on the third floor, knew the second floor was getting more of it, and I so wanted to be on the second floor. It was the smell of home. It was the smell of the power of one woman feeding a whole family with her craft. It was the smell of something no one could take away from us. The smell of delicious, proud Armenian *gatá*. It was proud of being so Armenian.

I loved looking at the *gatá* dough, its texture so perfect, its color milky white. But one day Eva's Mama disappointed me, saying the best *gatá* contained lard.



Lard? She told me her grandma used to bake gatá using lard in it, and that it was the best gatá ever. I got shocked; so those beauties contained pork fat and I had eaten them and loved them? I felt betrayed until Eva's Mama told me she had never used and would probably never use lard in her recipe because lard wasn't easy to find every day. What a relief! Let someone else find lard and use it in their gatá recipe somewhere else. We were happy with regular butter. It was years later only that I learned that it's these forgotten minor details like lard in the gatá that made it authentic. That authenticity itself was like a capricious dessert, and if you didn't know how to bake it well, you'd better leave it alone. Years later, our city was full of people who didn't know what authenticity meant but loved using the word unnecessarily.

---

Long long time ago, before our grandmothers were born, and even before our great-great grandmothers were born, Armenian people of Van, when Van was of the Armenian people, lived in their houses with *hazarashen* roofs, and in those houses warmed by the healing rays of the sun falling on them from the *yerdiks* above them, they baked gatá. Gatá that looked like the sun. They had songs they would sing while kneading the dough, and they had *gatanakhsh*, the wooden seal to design the gatá before sending it to the *tonir*, the ground-built Armenian oven from clay and stone. They baked gatá before the weddings of their sons and daughters. A huge bowl would be placed in the center, and the dough would be kneaded in it, and women would sing, wishing the bride well. And they would light candles and put them all around the bowl and pray for the bride to be like those burning candles; to be the light for as long as she could; to be there for the whole family.

To be there until she burned out. Like a candle.

On bad days, Auntie Mariette would be like a candle. About to burn out but taken for granted. One had to take a closer look though; to see what reality did to her. To see her on the verge of a nervous breakdown from being overloaded with orders and having no helping hand even with the most basic things; to be defeated and crushed like unnecessary cake crust because she'd completely forgotten about the dessert one family had ordered none other than at Christmas. Now that was serious. A whole family left without dessert on Christmas was a big deal.

To see her sew. Make clothes and linen while the gatá was on its way from the oven to the world, and sell it, when the family didn't have enough money for everyone's needs. To see her lonely, corroded with fatigue. With a sleepy face, ashen from malnutrition and lips bitten from anxiety of not making it on time.

---

"Can I take one? I couldn't resist asking Eva. We were at their veranda where he Mama usually worked.

"No, they're all for sale." Eva was curt, but then she added, "Mom will kill me if I take one too," as if to say we were in the same shoes.

As the fame of her Mama's gatá reached the furthest corners of our neighborhood, Eva went on feeding me daily stories about how her Mama was going to have a cake shop soon. Time went on, and it wasn't solely gatá Auntie Mariette baked now. The napoleons she baked and displayed; it was the first time I had even seen a napoleon in my life. White, tender, coated with crumbs all over, and creamy. So creamy that I actually disliked it then. And bird's milk. I asked my own Mama why they called the cake like that. She didn't know.

Honey cake. In the beginning, I looked for the honey to drop right out of the cake layers. The cream-filled pastry cones the taste of which I have long ago forgotten because each time I had a chance to have one of those, I decided not to, scared that the cream would make me sick.

Mikado – the chocolate-caramel cake she baked rarely, for the most moneyed clients; the one I never got to taste.

“Since my mom now bakes everything, we have to have the cake shop,” Eva talked as if she knew every minute detail about how her Mama was going to get one. “You can get your piece of gatá right there and eat it while you sit with me or play around.”

“When?”

“Sooner than you know.”

And one day there was a fight. Auntie Mariette's voice coming from a place of insecurity, and Eva's grandmother's screams that smothered all the voices. It was unusual for me to hear notes of irritation, despair, rattling of dishes, banging of doors and words of accusation coming from a home that usually radiated with its pastry-scented peace and where silence didn't mean someone was ill at ease, but that someone was in a perfect harmony with the vibe they created. The accusing voice won.

I called out Eva's name to give her a chance to escape that voice at home. She looked out of the window. Her eyes met mine and she quickly retired inside. I left her be.

That evening Eva emerged while I was sitting by myself on the old, rusty rug rack behind our building, alone, waiting. She had a gatá in her hand. A big one, perfectly baked, like the ones for sale. I didn't ask her anything but my mouth watered in anticipation.

We didn't talk. Eva climbed on the rack and we sat there, eating the gatá. Inhaling the gatá, dotting on it, indulging in it. I silently dropped the idea of asking Eva what was going to happen to the cake shop. I didn't want to salt her wound. I knew she shop would never happen. And Eva knew that I knew. She was silently grateful for my silence. A sadness lingered in the air but the gatá in my hand patched it up. Life was still sweet, I thought. Life was a *khorizov gatá*. A soulful dessert.

We grew up and ventured out of our neighborhood. We learned new things and travelled the world, and we found out there were divine desserts in the world. We tried many other types of gatá; with dried fruits, with honey and walnuts, and even with thyme. We saw the longest gatá ever baked, awarded with a Guinness World Record, and we saw mouth-watering round gatá in the hands of thousands of fascinated tourists in Armenia. We stopped eating gatá because we wanted to see what cheesecake and French tarts taste like. We went to trendy cafes and took photos of San Sebastian and meringue pies and posted them on Instagram.

I will call Eva, though we almost never talk anymore, and tell her to bake gatá in her bakery and offer them to the French. So that they know we, Armenians, know how to give life an unbelievable taste. So that they know Armenian cuisine is unique. So that they can be transported. To the times when an ordinary Armenian woman sat in her kitchen and baked gatá. Unforgettable gatá. Gatá, of which one can write a story.

# Առատություն Abundance

A stillness  
that brings an immediate sense of peace,  
you can find it in the everyday graces  
that we unexpectedly meet.

In the embrace of the wind  
as you step outside in Vanadzor  
and walk along Vardanants Street.

In the way a beloved memory  
rises from deep within,  
like a blanket of warmth  
that soothes the weathered soul.

In the graciousness of a papik  
that gifts you extra garlic at Lachin Market.

In the glow of the sun upon your eyes  
as it sets across the Pambak Mountains  
during the golden autumn.

Through the magical  
yet earthly stories that unfold  
as your loving host mother Lena  
reads your coffee cup.

The taste and longing of home  
found in a cafe  
in Stepanavan.

In a wistful window frame  
at your friend's home in Darpas,  
from a time long before yours  
and not encased by glass,  
forever open  
and letting the light in.  
The unbridled joy  
of seeing loved ones  
reunite  
in Zvartnots.

The solace you feel  
in the presence of your yar,  
as you wake  
with the morning light  
reflecting  
on your hands,  
reaching  
for one another.

These tiny wonders  
and simple graces  
gather our scattered minds  
and comfort our heavy hearts.

**Reminding us of  
the abundance of beauty  
that endures  
and holds us  
through  
every season of life.**



## Music by Sona Koloyan

After two DIY releases and years of playing in various bands and ensembles around south London, Sona Koloyan is finally carving out a space for her own name with support from the Arts Council and Help Musicians UK.

Recorded at Zig Zag Studios with Harri Chambers, her upcoming release, *Speaking Stones*, is a 5-track EP exploring the isolation and yearning of belonging as a Diasporan. These themes permeate through all areas of life, including relationships, body image, and self-empowerment. The EP ebbs and flows amidst delicate orchestral arrangements of the first single, “In The Air,” and the louder sonic confessions of “Under My Own Gaze,” culminating in a re-harmonised explosion of a cover of “Girls Just Wanna Have Fun,” turning the lyrics on its head and shining a new light on the original lyrics. A contrast to her earlier DIY and minimal works, *Speaking Stones* is her first professionally recorded body of work, with the large instrumental ensemble reflecting her classical background. The EP embodies her hands-on experience with Western classical music, love for discovering folk ensemble music of all cultures, and the classic rock bands her parents encouraged her to listen to from a young age.



Photo by Abi Sinclair

Set for release in the near future, *Speaking Stones* is named after the prehistoric stone circle from her home country, Armenia, where legend has it that if the wind blows in a specific direction through the meticulously carved holes, the stones themselves “sing”. The name is an homage and token of gratitude to her greatest inspiration - her home and the preservation of a culture in peril.

Her first body of work was a series of 3 short sketches - originally written as exercises during her degree, the sketches were entirely home recorded using a 2 input interface, with whatever instruments and borrowed synths she could find. With inspiration from Armenian folk, the home recordings of the likes of Grouper, and compositional experiments of Laurie Spiegel, 3 sketches was her first attempt at self-recording.





Photo by Abi Sinclair

In 2019, Sona released *Pity Party*, a 7-track short form album, comprising entirely of songs under two minutes. Somewhat an extension of 3 sketches, *Pity Party* was also originally submitted work at university, where Sona was researching the effects of modern home recording technology on songwriting. *Pity Party* opened up a new world of experimentation, where Sona became taken with the idea of exposing, manipulating, and picking apart traditional rules of song “form” and instead leaving each song a nuance, or an idea that was both whole and incomplete. Inspired by the everyday nuances of being an immigrant and the fleeting moments that have their roots in otherness, tracks from *Pity Party* were included on the BBC Introducing Mixtape, and also used in an interactive audio theatre piece named *Coney Island Avenue*.

Aside from her own music, Sona has played extensively with bands and ensembles in south east London - from indie bands and artists like Sister Lucy, Lou Terry, Delphi, and Hussy, to improvisatory work with Lumen Lake’s Grey Sea Over a Cold Sky Ensemble. She has worked extensively with playwright and director Francesca Pazniokas - she wrote and performed prepared piano music for “The Wild Boar of Chernobyl” at the Matchstick Piehouse theatre in October 2019, and lent her skills to two of Pazniokas’ short films, *Ghost And Me* and *Motherhose*.

Listen here:

“In The Air”

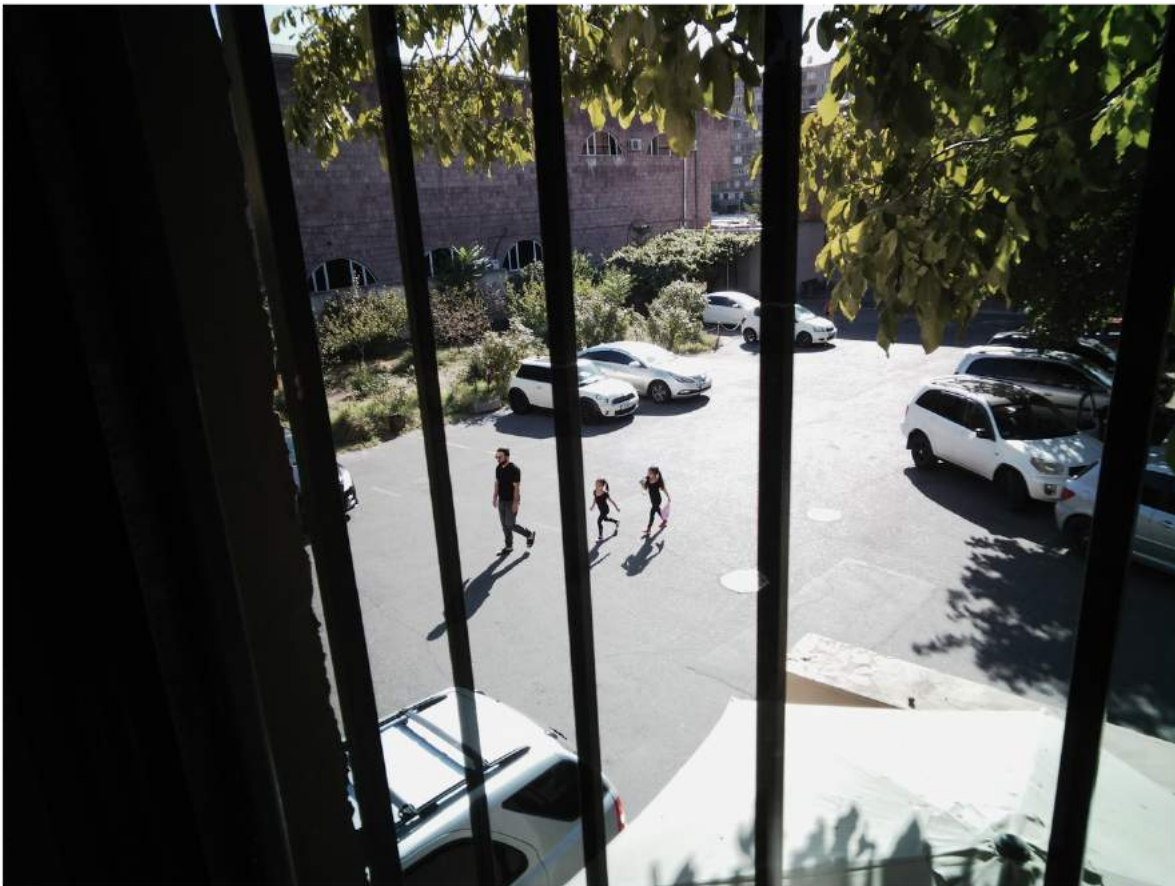
“Under My Own Gaze”

“Girls Just Wanna Have Fun”









## Գովեստը Կարնեցու (Արեւմտահայերէնի Կարնոյ բարբառով)

Ա՛խ, իմ շքեղ Կարին,  
Դու ո՞ւր մնացեր ես:  
Ադ քու սիրուն էրեսը  
Թիրքիոյ դրօշով ինչո՞ւ ծածկեր ես:  
Օսկի ես դու, իմ օճախ,  
Քաղքներէն ամենաթանկագինն ես:  
Ինչքան ալ օր փաստ թաքցնեն,  
Յիշի՛ր, իմ քաղաք, հայկական ես:

Նախահայրերուս տունը  
Էրնէք կրնայի այցելել,  
Անոնց գերեզմաններուն  
Ալաճա-պուլաճա ծաղիկներ դնել,  
Աստուածածնի եկեղեցու եւ  
Անահիտի տաճառի մէջ սուգ էնել,  
Ամա պողպատէ պարիսպը  
Ինչքան փորձեմ, չեմ կըրնայ կոտրել:

Նոյնիսկ հողիդ վրայ էղած շըլլիլով  
Դեռ մնացի քեզնէն կարօտ:  
Ընմը չեմ կըրնայ առնել ան քանզի  
Ընծէն խլեց քեզ ասքեարը կեղտոտ:  
Պիտի ազատեմ եսիր Կարին հողս  
Եատայ իյնամ պայքարի դաշտին արիւնոտ:  
Մանչերս հոն պիտի ծնւին եւ էխթարանան,  
Ոչ թէ ռազի էղնին օտար էրկիրներէն փշոտ:

Իմ պապենական քաղաք, շատ աննուներ  
Պատմութեանդ մէջ կրած ես դու:  
Այո, նաեւ Էրզրում կոչիս կը,  
Բայց ընծի, Կարինն է անունը քու:  
Իշալլա ձունաթաթախ սարերուդ վրայ,  
Մէ օրըմ շաւալի պիտ' պարենք ճկուն:  
Օսկէ հողդ պագեմ, ա՛յ Կարին,  
Իմ Հայրենիք, իմ էրագ, իմ տուն:

# Գովեստը Կարնեցու (Ժամանակակից Արեւելահայերենով)

Ա՛խ, իմ շքեղ Կարին,  
Դու ո՞ր ես մնացել:  
Այդ քո սիրուն երեսը  
Թուրքիայի դրոշով ինչո՞ւ ես ծածկել:  
Ոսկի ես դու, իմ օջախ,  
Քաղաքներից ամենաթանկագինն ես:  
Ինչքան էլ որ փաստ թաքցնեն,  
Հիշի՛ր, իմ քաղաք, հայկական ես:

Նախահայրերիս տունը  
Երանի կարողանայի այցելել,  
Նրանց գերեզմաններին  
Գույնզգույն ծաղիկներ դնել,  
Աստվածածնի եկեղեցու եւ  
Անահիտի տաճառում սուգ անել,  
Բայց պողպատե պարիսպը  
Ինչքան փորձեմ, չեմ կարող կոտրել:

Նույնիսկ հողիդ վրա եղած շիինելով  
Դեռ մնացի քեզնից կարոտ:  
Բայց չեմ կարող առնել այն քանզի  
Ինձնից խլեց քեզ զինվորը կեղտոտ:  
Կազատեմ գերի Կարին հողս  
Կամ ընկնեմ պայքարի դաշտին արյունոտ:  
Երեխաներս այնտեղ կծնվեն եւ ծերանան,  
Ոչ թէ գոհ լինեն օտար երկրներից փշոտ:

Իմ պապենական քաղաք, շատ աննուններ  
Պատմությանդ մեջ կրել ես դու:  
Այո, նաեւ Էրզրում ես կոչվում,  
Բայց ինձ, Կարինն է անունը քու:  
Աստված տա ձյունաթաթախ սարերիդ վրա,  
Մի օր շավալի կպարենք ճկուն:  
Ոսկե հողդ պաշեմ, ա՛յ Կարին,  
Իմ Հայրենիք, իմ երագ, իմ տուն:

## Քարթառային բառարան – Dialectal Dictionary

Օսկի – ոսկի (gold)  
Քաղքըներ – քաղաքներ (cities)  
Էրնէք – երանի (if only)  
Ալաճա-պուլաճա – գույնզգույն (colorful)  
Ամա/հըմը – բայց (but)  
Ըլլիլ/էղնիլ – լինել (to be)  
Ասքեար – [Թուրք] զինվոր (soldier – especially Turkish soldier)  
Եսիր – գերի (captive)  
Եատայ – կամ (or)  
Էխթիարանալ – ծերանալ (to grow old)  
Ռազի էղնիլ – գոհ լինել (to be satisfied)  
Իշալլա – հույսով, Աստված տա (hopefully, God-willing)



# The praise of the Armenian from Garin

Oh, my magnificent Garin,  
Where have you gone?  
Why have you covered your beautiful  
Visage in the Turkish flag?  
You are gold, my hearth,  
You are the most precious of cities.  
However many facts they hide,  
Remember, my city, you are Armenian.

If only I could visit  
My ancestors' home,  
Place colorful flowers  
At their graves,  
Mourn at the Mother of God Church  
And the Temple of Anahid,  
But I cannot break the steel fence,  
No matter how hard I try.

Even never having been on your soil,  
I still remain longing for you.  
But I cannot fulfill my longing because  
The filthy soldier has stolen you from me.  
I will free my captive Garin land  
Or fall bloody on the field of struggle.  
My children will be born and grow old there,  
Rather than be satisfied with thorny foreign lands.

Oh city of my ancestors, you have taken  
Many names in your history.  
Yes, you are also called Erzurum,  
But to me, Garin is your name.  
God-willing, on your snow-covered mountains,  
We will one day dance shavali.  
I kiss your golden dirt, oh Garin,  
My Homeland, my dream, my home.

## Strong Nose

crooked as self cut bangs  
as clear as cognac  
thrown back into protruding  
beautiful and brooding faces  
you don't know  
if you'll see again

you're late for class  
thinking about the 2000 miles  
between Chicago and California  
it hits you for the first time  
a boy like Hagop  
cologne mixed with smoke  
it doesn't matter how far away  
you are from home  
your body makes  
a mosaic smile  
in resistance  
you follow your nose  
and directions

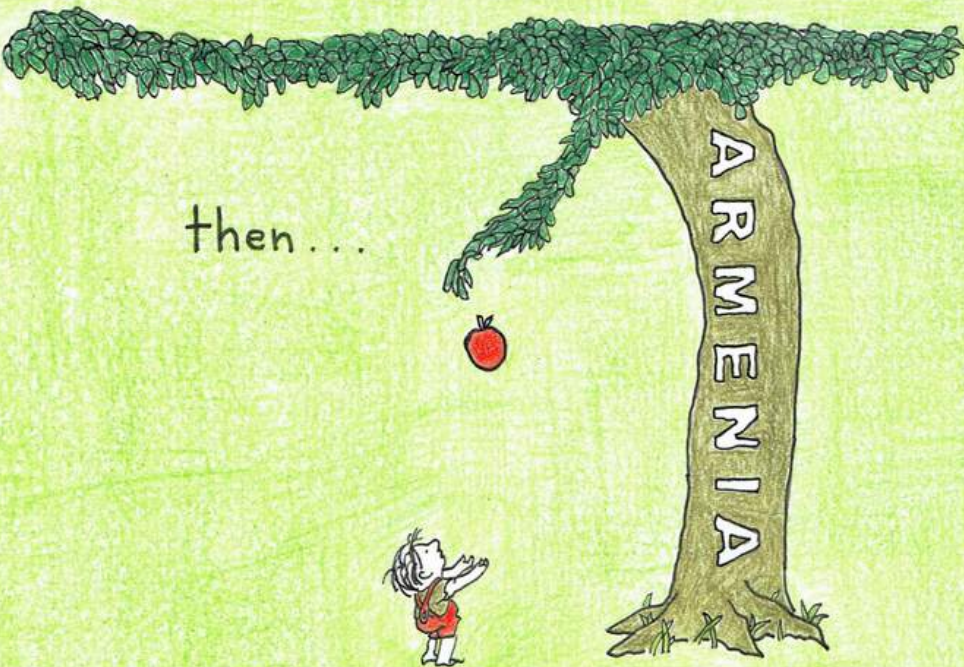
## Hot Water Princess

*Hayq!* Here I am! in the pool  
 under the son - one of the *stooped* girls...  
 I watched you get beat up for saying that  
 how else could I have learned,  
 stupid is a bad word?  
 my cousins and I keep playing  
 always almost dead and happy  
 It's hot out, I-can-drown-  
 and-be-found-three-time-champion  
 Near Death Sweetheart drowning out  
 a fire unseen and engraved behind me  
 leaves turn into tea, bees turn into honey  
 milk turns into *panir*, braided for beauty  
 this life and language imitating  
 the rhythm of poetry  
 I'm packing punches for Peter Pans  
 like my father's labyrinthine gaze  
 a game, Agape, a Grishikian  
 in his wake  
 I never played hide and seek right  
 HERE I AM! Watch me fly!  
 The truth and life  
 on the ever-illusive way!  
 Racing down the stairs  
 the same way I'm coming down the slide  
 the same way I'm coming out her thighs

part lion, part lamb  
a spectacle spinning one man's trash to fools gold  
watch me turn the hot tub throne into a healthy habit  
cocaine a kin to salt on food you haven't tried yet ~addict~  
red bull or sprite, unburdened by time, we sweat  
through summers flow and winter's thaw  
a jacuzzi offering after dinner  
as if inside it we may find  
God this shit is genetic  
I like my water  
*taq*



# The Giving Tree



then...



now...

I have nothing left to give ...

With acknowledgment to Shel Silverstein, creator of the best-selling children's book, *The Giving Tree* (Harper & Row, 1964)

Lucine Kasbarian 9/23 / 2022

By Phyllis Schwaiger  
Adapted by Phyllis Schwaiger



# BIG BROTHER

Having broken his foot,  
the lion was upset with all the animals:

You are under my command,  
for I am king of the beasts!  
Why don't you offer prayers  
so I can be healed?



## The Moral:

Wicked leaders will torment  
those obedient to them  
and offer no protection  
from danger.  
When, as it is fitting,  
the wicked fall into misfortune,  
let us thank God  
we were not the cause.

Because, thanks to you,  
we have found protection  
neither from the bear, the wolf,  
nor from any other beast.  
Nor do you look after us in any way.  
We ought to offer a prayer to God  
that misfortune befall you!

With grateful thanks to *The Armenian Fables of Mkhitar Gosh*,  
translator Robert Bedrosian, and publishers Ashod Press.

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/22  
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# CONTRIBUTORS

Lena Halteh is an Armenian-American writer, illustrator, multimedia journalist and artist but she's best summed up as a storyteller. Lena studied English Literature and Art History at UC Berkeley and years later returned to earn a Master's Degree from UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism. In 2017 she launched Pom + Peacock, a folk-inspired art brand inspired by her Armenian heritage. Her storytelling is heavily rooted in Armenian culture, nostalgia and nearly two decades of performing and teaching with ARAX Dance. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband and three little ones.

Sevana Manukian was born in Los Angeles to first-generation immigrant parents from Yerevan, Armenia. Over the years, her Armenian heritage has become an increasingly important part of her identity and has encouraged her to stay active in the Armenian community in LA. Since childhood, poetry has served as a much-needed creative outlet. After her last living grandparent, Amalia Tatik, passed in 2020, she felt a significant loss of connection to her heritage, homeland, and mother tongue. This poem is an attempt to immortalize the nostalgia of the moments she spent with her Tatik, moments that made her feel close to her heritage and homeland.

Tatevik Galoyan was born and is currently living in Yerevan. After graduating from Armenian State University of Economics, she began working at a bank as an analyst. She had passion for writing as well. Journaling/poetry opened a new channel to consciousness of accepting the world as it is. Besides that, she is interested in many other things such as reading (especially books about spirituality), yoga, and art. "The unwanted bird" illustrates a soul that is homesick for one's true self in the environment of accusers and abusers. Instagram: [@tatevik.galoyan](https://www.instagram.com/tatevik.galoyan)

Gurgen Yeghyan was born and lives in Armenia. He is a film director by profession and graduated from Yerevan State Institute of Theatre and Cinematography. He was the film director of the winning short film devoted to the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 2015 Cannes Film Festival. Over time, he became interested in sculpting and has created more than 70 sculptures/wall sculptures since 2017. The sculptures are put under the name of "tetev sculpture." "Tetev" is linked to the ideology of easy living and remitting the weights of the past lifestyles. You can find and purchase his art in the following ways:  
Instagram: [@tetev\\_sculpture](https://www.instagram.com/tetev_sculpture) | Website: [tetevart.com](http://tetevart.com)

Nura Kinge (she/her, IG: [@nuraladura](https://www.instagram.com/nuraladura)) is a Black, Latine, and SWANA writer, poet, storyteller, and artist. Her work tends to flow from the intersection of pain and hope, with Love as its backdrop, and connection as its aim. She frequently traverses and draws language and imagery from the ancient mixing with the modern, religious/spiritual/pagan elements, and the natural world. Nura gives gratitude to her Armenian Genocide survivor ancestors Elmon Teghnazian of Sivas and Hovsep Ansourian of Malatya. For enduring, and gifting her this precious life so she may realize part of her soul's calling to create resonance and connection through stories of love, longing, loss, memory, and ancestry, and inspiration.

Stephen Barile, a Fresno, California native, attended Fresno City College, Fresno Pacific University, and California State University, Fresno, and taught writing at Madera Center College, and CSU Fresno. His poems have been anthologized and published widely in on-line and print journals, including: The Broad River Review, Featured Poets, Haight-Ashbury Literary Journal, The Heartland Review, Ignatian, London Grip, MacQueen's Quinterly, Mason Street Review, New World Writing Quarterly, North Dakota Quarterly, The Opiate, OVUNQUE SIAMO, Pharos, Rio Grande Review, Sandy River Review, The San Joaquin Review, Santa Clara Review, The Selkie, The Tiny Seed Literary Journal, Tower Poetry, Willawaw Journal.

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Pauline Pechakjian is an Armenian-American writer and media professional based in Los Angeles, CA. Consumed by a deep appreciation, respect, and reverence for the stories and relics of yesteryear, Pauline has explored the importance of preserving and documenting history in both her academic and professional lives. Currently, she serves as the Publicist for one of the world's leading collector car auction houses, Gooding & Company, where she works firsthand with some of the most historic and significant automotive treasures ever created. Previously, Pauline completed a Master's Thesis in History specifically focused on the repatriation of diaspora Armenians to Soviet Armenia in the late 1940s, a major migration event that intimately impacted not only tens of thousands of Armenians and Genocide survivors, but Pauline's own family members, as well.

Lorin Shahinian holds a BA in Literary Studies and an MA in English with an Emphasis in Literature and Writing, her focus being sisterhood in 19th century literature. She continues to teach Composition courses at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, Washington, while also having a role at the university's writing center.

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Max Marcil is a visual designer and artist based in Oakland, CA. He combines bold color and cartoonish whimsy with gothic and cosmic horror, and he works in a range of media from block printing to motion graphics and packaging design. His work can be found on posters for local bars and restaurants, in his online shop, and occasionally in person. He is of Armenian, Scottish, and French Canadian descent. His Armenian ancestors were from Kharpert.

Ashley M. David is a first generation Armenian American who volunteered with Birthright Armenia for over four months between 2022-2023. Ashley is an arts manager, dancer, dance teacher, and choreographer, with a passion for yoga. Originally from the Maryland/Washington, D.C. area, where she grew up with her Parskahay family, Ashley has found permanent residence with her husband in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. This piece was inspired by her journey in Hayastan and the duelling feelings of enjoying the present moment, but also knowing that time is finite - hence, "How can I be nostalgic, when I'm still here?" Ashley would also like to thank Garren Jansezian for his contribution to the editing process.

Harootune Otis (they/them) is a librarian living in Atlanta, Georgia. Their poetry draws from sense memories, everyday obsessions, and deep feelings of in-betweenness. As Vartouhi Harootunian, their work has appeared in The Screen Door Review, beestung, and other publications. They use their free time to ramble in every sense of the word.

Chloe Mirijanian is a trilingual Armenian Angeleno who has always felt that writing was not just a creative outlet, but purification of the mind and soul. She pursued her love for English literature at UCI, and is now attending Loyola Law School.

Nareh Ayvazyan is a writer and Japanese-English translator based in Yerevan. She has a B.A. in Linguistics and is interested in the Gothic genre. She hails from Constantinople, Karin and Yerevan.

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Angie Tovmasyan is an artist, writer, and maker across multiple mediums. They love to share ancestral stories and bring forward representation of their intersecting backgrounds as a queer Armenian-Iranian-Jew, a first generation guest on occupied lands known as North America, and coming from a family of refugees who have been fighting against occupation and land grabs for generations.

Milan is a multiethnic artist and graphic designer based in Toronto. Her Armenian ancestors come from Van and Dikranagerd. Many generations of her Armenian family have lived in Cyprus, and she is inspired by the intercommunal history recounted to her by her elders. Her work focuses on these intercommunal relations and other aspects of her heritage. Her work can be seen on her Instagram ([@karpassia](#)) and with the organization Fashion Heritage Network Cyprus ([@fashionheritage.cy](#)).

Jane Partizpanyan is a recent graduate of California State University, Northridge, garnering a B.A. in Journalism and Public Relations. She has worked extensively with the Armenian community, volunteering with AGBU Hye Geen, a non-profit advocacy organization that works with disadvantaged pregnant women in Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh. She has also volunteered with Armenian Assembly of America, a non-profit advocacy organization that works with high-level government officials to enact systemic change for the Armenian community, amongst many other things. Jane seeks to weave her passion for Near Eastern Studies with her journalistic and media related work.

Sfarda L. Gül: A previously-published poet in Musing Publications, Lidia Gulian (*writing under Sfarda L. Gül*) is a 21-year-old polyglot artist, poet, and writer of Pontic-Laz-Russian-Hemshin background. In her spare time, besides maintaining a 1000-follower art account, writing surrealist poetry, and creating fictional worlds with complex worldbuilding, she is enthralled in the study of ethnography, West Asian linguistics, Gnostic theology, Slavic history, and social activism aiding to uplift queer and ethnic minorities of her native WANA and Eastern Europe.

Jack Chavoor, a retired English teacher, has been writing stories since the fourth grade. He is a 2020 MFA Creative Nonfiction Fresno State graduate.

Sofia Sayabalian is a recent graduate from Seattle University with a B.A. in Communication and Media along with a Minor in Psychology. In Autumn 2023, she will begin a graduate program at the University of Washington for a Master's in Communication in Digital Media (MCDM). She is a young creative who has a passion for the cross-discipline of human-centered design, technology, and communications (visual and strategic). Sofia is originally from Los Angeles but has come to appreciate Washington's beautiful landscape. In her free time, she likes to explore new cafés, play frisbee, and cook.

Anna Matevosyan is an Armenian linguist, researcher and aspiring writer based in Yerevan, Armenia. She has an MA in Teaching English and is currently working on her short story collection based on narratives of Armenian women. The stories reveal the lifestyle of the women of Armenia, the challenges and social issues they face every day. Anna is an avid reader and a baking enthusiast. Her short story “Memories of Gatá: Before We Knew Cheesecake and Tarts” was inspired by the examples of many Armenian women who struggled through the difficult years of the 1990s to make ends meet.

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Ani Alexandrian is a writer and dreamer. Born to a Lebanese-Armenian father with roots from Adana and an American mother of Creole and Japanese descent. Ani grew up in California and lived for four years in Vanadzor, Armenia. This poem recalls moments of beauty during her time in Armenia that provide a feeling of abundance and carry her through each day. Surrounded by the resilient Pambak Mountains of Lori and the genuine friendships she made there, Vanadzor has truly become her second home. Ani cares deeply about reproductive justice, disability rights, and health equity. It was through writing that she first found her voice and learned to fully express herself. Currently, she lives in Oakland, CA and works in public health. She also serves as a writer for Pambak Games, which is an indie game studio based in Vanadzor that creates card and board games rooted in Armenian culture. Later this year, they plan to release an Armenian Tarot Deck inspired by Armenian mythology and folklore. Check out Pambak Games on Instagram [@pambakgames](https://www.instagram.com/pambakgames)

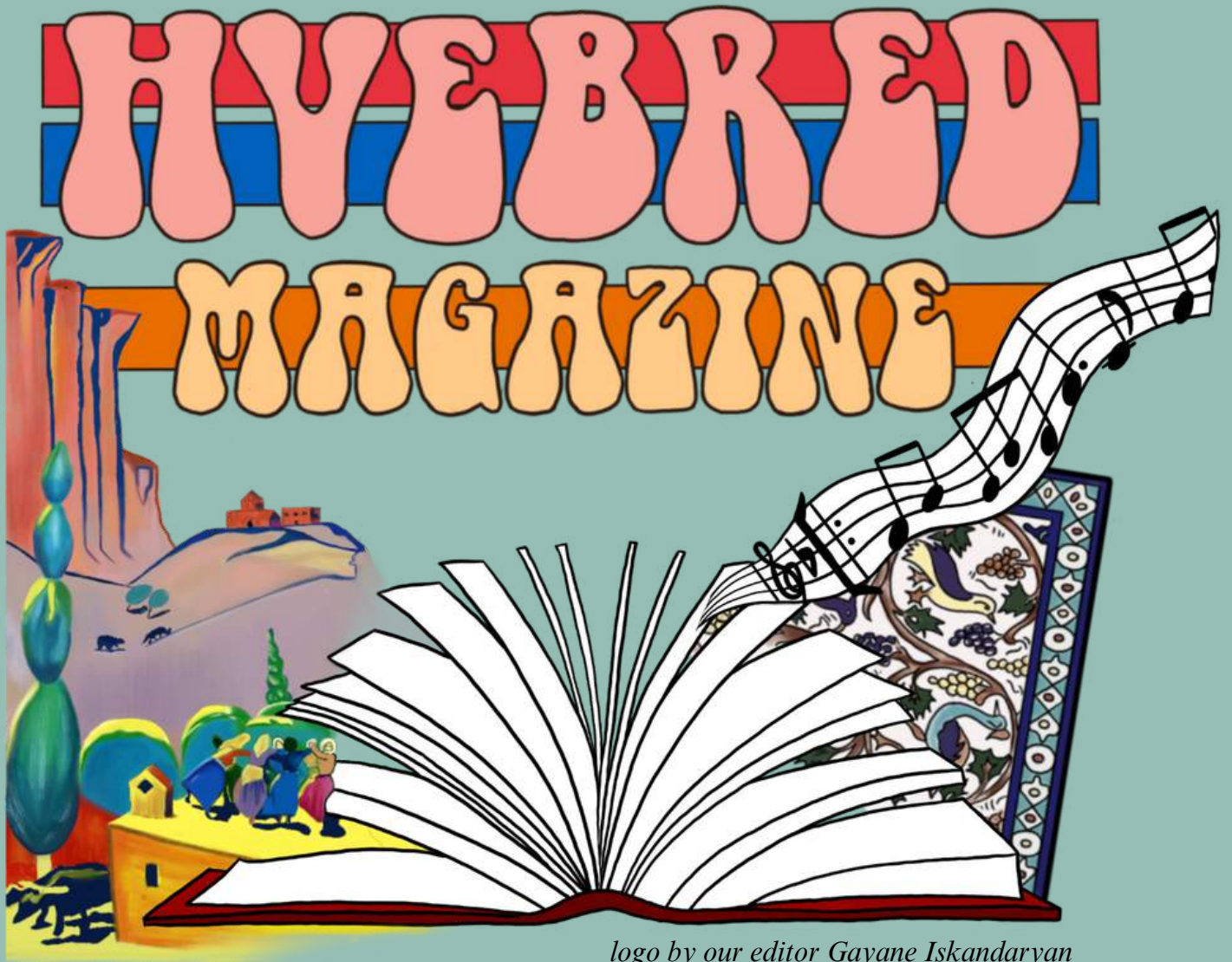
Meg Aghamyan, a Los Angeles-based photographer, has been exploring various styles of photography since the age of 16. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Art and has been a full time photographer for the last 8 years. Originally, a fashion and portrait photographer, Meg drifted into landscape and street photography during the pandemic. She also found interest in film photography and started printing her work. This drift in subject matter and style showcases her desire to embrace the raw, unedited textures that come with film, unlike the her portraiture work which strived for ephemeral beauty without imperfections using industry standard editing techniques. The submitted images are taken in Armenia, with a pocket camera made out of sustainable paper-based materials and have not undergone any editing.

Aram Brunson is an Armenian and Afrikan student of the American University of Armenia (AUA), and a proud descendant of Garnetsi (Erzroumtsi) survivors of the Armenian Genocide. An ardent socialist, Aram has a deep passion for politics, social justice and activism. These beliefs and principles are reflected in regularly published articles concerning Armenian national and diasporan affairs, socialism, social issues, and class struggle in the Armenian Weekly and on Medium: <https://armenianweekly.com/author/aram-brunson/>  
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Alethia Grishikian is a poet, singer-songwriter, and dancer based in Chicago, Illinois. She grew up on a mountain in Glendale, California where she still sources so much of her creative inspiration. You can find her [@alethia\\_grishikian](https://www.instagram.com/alethia_grishikian) on Instagram.

Lucine Kasbarian, a journalist, publicist and cartoonist, has been involved in all aspects of publishing for more than 30 years. She began creating political cartoons following the murder of journalist Hrant Dink. Lucine is the author of *Armenia: A Rugged Land, an Enduring People* (Simon & Schuster) – named one of the 1998 Best Books of the Year by the Bank Street College of Education, and *The Greedy Sparrow: An Armenian Tale* (Marshall Cavendish) – a 2013 Nautilus Book Award winner. According to Emmy Award-winning documentary filmmaker Peter Musurlian, her book of political cartoons, *Perspectives from Exile*, “should be in every Armenian-American school library and taught in social studies classes in each one of those schools.” Visit: <https://www.atour.com/~aahgn/news/20120814a.html>





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