

KÁUKASOS

ANA ARZOUMANIAN

Translated by: Leonor Silvestri. Austin Miller

“The art of creating hate manifests itself by invoking the magic power of a supposedly predominant identity that soffocates all other filiations and which, in a conviniently bellicose form, also can dominate all human compassion”

Amartya Sen, Identity and violence

In New York there are no jasmines.
There is a barber, a psychic
a shoe store
on 49th.
There is the naked belly of the sky,
a constellation of beauty spots.¹
There are buildings with ships and sailboats.
From the bathtub I can see the theaters
and the ships and the sailboats
moving,
and the counters
and the skylights
and the revolving doors
floating on water;
they move.

There are crystals irradiating their light
like Gothic churches.
I can see that vibration from my bathtub,
the flapping of the museums, of the coffee shops.
All of New York is moving to soothe me.
It's not caressing me.
Topaz and bronze animals
releasing their muscles in the air.
Their frantic tongues
making disappear
all delay, they advance.

In New York there are no jasmines.
He took the point of the rifle and aimed at me.

1 In its original Spanish “El vientre desnudo del cielo sus lunares abanderados” is a reference to the flag as the naked body of a woman. The concept of “lunares” (beauty spots) relates the moon as a symbol of the Middle East. In this verse one can note the movement of the poem between Middle East and Caucauses.

That's what I thought when I thought of not returning.
I thought I would say that.
I would say he took the point of the rifle and aimed at me.
I would say the rifle was less cold inside,
he pressed the rifle on one of his legs
and pushed,
I would say I cried.
And the buildings with ships and sailboats
moving.
The rifle is soft,
it does not shoot.
He took the point of the rifle and aimed at me
while I was drinking the sails of his ships.
Show me what scares me,
he asks of me.
So as to show him what scares him the most
everything in me that takes too long disappears,
what saturates
a non- returning
as if I were dying in the sights of a rifle.

It is not a city for living
a lady vendor tells me
in the yarmulke shop in the Jewish neighborhood.
It is a city for disappearing.
The reddish stone
pink granite
the narrow lengthy island
surrounded by rivers,
checkered table cloths
red and white,
Buddhist temples
and synagogues
and churches
they move.
Faster and faster
the speed
is now
agitation.

I am the flashing billboards.

The flashing billboards
in the early hours
in the screens
showing me
half-naked.
You, on the other side
asking me to turn around.
Me on billboards
in the alleys,
in the industrial streets
I turn around,
raise my dress.
The great white path of the lights,
jazz sessions
in the barges,
in the artificial beaches,
in the empty pools.
Thick vertical trace
as if the camera zooms away from
the character
taking on its own
actions.

In New York there are no jasmines.
White on white it's impossible to film
a collection
of runners, musicians, skaters
in Central Park
insisting
like a multifaceted eye,
agitating,
dragging millenniums.
A pulse of civilizations
infinitely
dilated.
Me in the moving bed
in the billboards
inside the screen
turning around
showing you.
The image changes the potency.
Theatrical or circus attractions,

the plains of Mongolia,
a tea table in Saint Petersburg,
the Mujik, India.
A look which is not focused
on my legs,
in the water the noise
of the voices the music
of the ships the sails
like a photograph taken
in the core
of the things.
A toothy line
makes the image flash.
Making the movement more intense:
falling.
Now, when I turn around,
I twist my neck,
spy the screen,
I see you touching
an illustrious gland
of milky perfumes.
You look for a drowned woman in black waters,
you see how the tones degrade,
how I drag myself to a
swirling abyss.
The reddish incandescent
reflection.
You are in a movie,
they were telling me,
and I was thinking,
can I still speak of me?
Cinema makes the world
into a play:
me a set
of billboards,
of images
that spread propagate
without waste
nor resistance,
flopping,
undulating
in the water.

In the tobacco shop
clients smoke
bulging cigars.
A water in the sidewalk of passers-by
drinking coffee
in cardboard glasses
which look like the plastic
used to cover corpses.
You are in a movie.
In the movie,
in a Hungarian restaurant,
Palya Bea sings.
The city slithers in me,
it shakes me and I knock it down.
Can I still speak of me?
I undulate,
I go dancing to Hungarian music,
I pull down my straps,
raise my arms
above my shoulders.
Someone throws plates on the floor,
takes off his shoes
and bows at my feet,
and bleeds.
I brush my fingers
across his mouth.
We fall.

In New York there are no jasmines.
Ocher walls
splattered with blue and green,
anonymous blocks like houses
that enter
the sight.
From your eyes
I still have the perfume
that dazzles the carriage horses
in Fifth Ave.
Horses are naked jockeys,
they remember
riding a blinded dream.
I still taste

ink in my mouth.
Virgin Mary remains
substituted by the dynamo,
ritual belief
in the gas pumps,
in the billboards
inside the museums
where paintings hang,
where flocks of cattle
from the deep Mid West
rise.
In the eyes of those who walk
in the streets
the cattle urge on to
the next station.
One can glimpse how the flock
crosses the promontory
without anything that lights its way
they get rid of themselves
in a hurried sway.
Circular madness
the scene where the actor
does not feel, and it is a sheer character.
Shop windows napkins cups coffee pot.
Former occupants
of popular fantasies.
Me also here, a fiction:
a woman who enters the bed
watched from the front,
pubic hair in view
in an inner space
with the curtains waving
in and out.
Sex is seen
but not the head
nor the right arm
nor the feet.
A Virgin Mary
sung in Gospels
on Sunday
a Sunday Market
like the markets
on my block in Buenos Aires.

And the stands,
Hindus Pakistanis Mexicans.
The Virgin Mary
a dynamo an electricity
inside the things.

In New York there are no jasmines.
A woman seen from the front
in Hopper's picture
in a house that enters
my sight
like a ship that moves
and travels without anything
that lights,
without a lighthouse.
A ship with transparent walls,
a lighthouse on an island.
The ship
a lighthouse in territory
made by the Dutch,
with soft wavy profiles
rocky panorama
with artificial lakes
and transplanted trees.
The new Amsterdam,
a ship
that moves
in an invented terrain,
a strip of shiny sand.
A theater the act of faith
where I have a child again.
I bare my breast,
I feed him.
Your mouth
in a turquoise rain
sprinkling your face.
I like being fed
in the mouth.
In your eyes
there is a smell of gardens
sowed with basil.
I kneel, and touch

the image of Christ.
I like feeding myself
the Virgin says
while she looks into his eyes
colored like the basil garden.
You are seeking the length of my hair,
you feed me
in the mouth.
The image of Christ
on the move
begins to burn,
it expands into an orange
bubbling flash.
Those who take the communion
turn into liquid figures
slide one into the other.
A dawn of ourselves gleams precipitates.
The traits escape
from the shape of the face of Christ
makes holes in the water.

I need you like New York
without jasmines.
A succession
of close-ups
revolving as planets
in constant turmoil,
revolving and never ceasing
to detour.
A love
defined
by its potency
to start again
and re-start,
I like
to feed you
in your mouth;
Christ the Virgin
those who take the communion
and me kneeling
in a New York without jasmines
it suspends the gesture.

The eclipse of the bodies
that revolve as planets
they take over the white
in their light adventure.
There is no truce
in this exhaustion.
Ripped
hunger and satiation,
a violence
propagating.
The eyes half way closed,
the head turned backwards,
a mouth, satiated, is half-way open.
An angelic hand
exposes my breast.
You must see her,
I am this New York without jasmines.
Somebody put a woman
with a torch here.
The woman with a torch
is in hollow water.
The hole
and the water
move,
like the woman that moves
in the whole city
that moves.
The water of the city
has a ruby red nipple,
she gives the hour
to imaginary sailors
in the Atlantic.
The city
is a archipelago
dry of apples.
A postcard
of towers cast into the air
of a violet gleam
grinds the grass,
swims in the water
brutally towards the sky,
again and again.
Water evaporates

in gold smithing,
in shops of spices, of rugs.
We are not in Persia,
we are not Phoenicians,
we came to see.
All construction
is a permanent
monument, solid serene
in the fury of my eyes.
The nipples at the height of your legs,
rubbing them.
I situate in the hole of the water
of a New York without jasmines
your testicles between my breasts;
I lift
until evaporating the water.
In the water there are swollen pink veins,
a humid ring.

You the monument the torch
you open your legs in the water,
while I kiss a postcard
of towers made of wheat
cinnamon and almonds.
You open your legs.
I sink my hands in the pillow
as not to flood with screams
the mob of blind kisses
in the tenderness
of the pelvis.
Until the water
covers all vestiges.
Then the angels
stay in the street,
then the men
raise their hands,
then my tongue
causes a fire and sulfur
rain.
Now
I leave all the thens, now
except your semen.
Except your semen.

A gang of stalagmites.
Carving the volume.
Letting the light pass
when the mist
begins to clear.
Mountain peaks,
nearly nocturnal images.
A wolf mouth, the promiscuity
of an endless womb.
A Venice, New York,
a Venice with its pedestrians
walking from island to island.
A city of lagoons
with canals for streets,
not canals of water
but rather of a torrent that increases
the congestion,
until generating
flexible wooden fists
made of trees from the Philippines, India, Honduras.
Australian silky oak.
The maple and the ebony.
A silver metal leaf,
an alloy that never dims.

In Manhattan's Venetian solitude
there are no jasmines.
There is a forest of needles
reduced to the touch
of the caverns.
The walker touches, then smells
a line of milk
on the edge.
I will not write the word foreskin.
The penis on the poem
circumcised.
Carving the volume,
your member letting the light pass
when the mist
begins to clear.
Like savory bread

with raisins
at a Brazilian restaurant in Little Italy.
I have done things you haven't yet heard of.
A rope with a slipknot,
your Rebecca makes the camels kneel
away from the city
next to a pond
in the afternoon,
the time where the maidens
leave the water.
I wash your feet.
You drink all the stalagmites
on my heart,
Gaudí's erect meteor shower
Manhattan's frenzy
in the afternoon
around the water.
You give me your feet,
while I wash them
you squeeze my breast with your hands,
you lick a nipple,
and the other one,
while I wash you
you approach a girl
who does not know and wants
a Jewish face
on an Arabian pillow.
A mooring mast
for a dirigible.
It cuts jasmines
in my armpits.
I water them
with the water of the feet
where the camels kneel.
Five times a day,
giving faith
rubbing with clean sand
on a piece of fabric,
on the sheet
a series of inclinations,
a prostrating place.
Three hundred and sixty five days in a year
in a space

with a cloth a rug
destined for praying.
You pray on your side
suctioning the spine
down the back
slowly
and quickly.
We weave our fingers
in a night of three hundred days.
I did not sleep
behind my eyelids.
Kneel, you told me.
I understood: on the floor.
The prayer you recite
five times a day
on the cloth
the sheet
tells me
not on the floor,
in the bed.
A night without sleep.
Seven times a week
kissing each other in the streets.
Three hundred and sixty five days
having breakfast
apricots with cinnamon and cloves.
I lay on my side,
like hectares
the black bricks
absorbing the windows.

A city of steep needles
New York a church
of hotels,
pools,
chocolate shops.
An island that casts
its tentacles,
a dark womb
like the mouth of a wolf
the buildings until the clearing
of the roofs
melt with the sky.

A fire burning
inside an iceberg.

Jasmines do not grow, here.
On the crater of a dormant volcano
the mountain becomes
architecture.
Universes of mountains
in a permanent frenzy
eat the walls
on the magic carpet
of the eye.
A reticule
inside a reticule,
a tissue
of a carpet
the sheet
where we pray
five times a day
to believe in the world
to feel the lost climate
of the geographers.

To stop enlisting as mercenaries
to give the words back
to the refuge of the crotch.
Supporting with the look
what we see,
and not this series of postcards,
the ocean of red velvet seats
in the sum of monuments
the theaters,
the offstage.
In the ocean there is a ship
imprisoned within crystals
with singing passengers,
outcasts returning to the sea
that which belongs to the sea.
Your legs are
the ship from below,
they happen under the water.

You told me kneel;
a melancholic animal
understood: on the floor.
From the black crystal of the ceilings,
where the ship passes,
where it's imprisoned, but moves,
one can guess
a vegetable past,
geometrical gardens
of a radiant city
with its movements of light,
a grassy air.
From the crystal
one sees a ship, escaping,
and no longer knows where it is going.
Now our own faces
on the crystal
move.
Invented prairies
of New Babylon,
a devotion
the waterfall that flows
into the garden of sculptures.
A vaguely entangled hemisphere
like my fingers in yours
when we sleep.
While, behind my eyelids,
I am awake,
I lift the rug the sheet
five times a day
I see you moving
even sleeping,
your penis throbbing
in my tongue that rubs
clean sand, it prays to you
in the bed of a hotel room.
A hotel like a shipyard
beached on the land,
a floating asylum,
a log
searching for the flood.
Metropolitan kisses
with voracious meals

of the living,
that is how memories are invented:
Upon kissing the foot of the saint
the foot disappears.
Ways of wasting the facts
an Atlantic dream
an Egypt turned around
a rounded pyramid
this flood;
a barge of reinforced concrete
the hotel
and the buildings that float
in a Manhattan that has curved,
a curved island
the dorsal fin.
In the line of masts
the flags waves, a
dizzy collection of curved galleries.
The airport La Guardia
and its most spectacular curve
like suspense
that reinforces itself
hiding
the movement of the planes
behind glass dunes.
A veil of tormented mist
your pants.
Pulling down your zipper,
only the zipper.
The fold of the fabric
straightens downwards
with your member erect.
My hand surrounds the object
that touches from all sides
drawing you its shape.
Maybe is it a memory,
a will,
a belief?
I am determined to devour you
in a bloody desire
on steel armor,
empty counter-forms
where a malleable liquid

is poured.
Between the rectangle
and the figure of your pants
that falls folding,
arabesque patterns curving
in a perpetual animation.
Each hand seeks
its own plot,
the thick and polished stone.
I approach,
I walk barefoot through the corridors
that become amphibious
and leave the Earth behind
and they transform
into a path on the river.
I approach.
A tumult
of liquid hair
in a subtle milk,
a white flood
pushes me into the abyss
of the buildings.
We are in the Middle Ages.
We become unrecognizable,
not for the costume,
but for being naked.
All the stories
appear simultaneously.
We cannot resort to
this policing tactic
of impeding the movement
of the suspect.
It's Egypt which is migrating
in this New York without jasmines.

I enter Cafe Reggio.
A man
sitting at a table
next to mine
asks me for a
packet of sugar

and tells me I'm Turkish and you²?
It is not enough
to burn all the archives.
Facts are wasted,
the ghosts invent their memories.
Is the word Turkish written with a capital "T"
or in lower case?
The past is hiding
behind the look
in place of being exposed
forward.
Intermittence of seeing
your hair
inside my eyes.
Wet hair
in the humidity of the green.
Is You³ written with a capital "Y"
or in lower case?
An Italian cafe
in Greenwich Village,
the bohemia
of the Medici's,
Caravaggio's paintings
on the walls.
I had cut my
finger nails
so as not to hurt you
when my caress
rose to your bottom.
Your inebriated body
resisting itself,
before and after,
what your body can
in the fleets,
leaving.
The fissure widens,
we enter
a ceremony,
a carnival
where the visible body
disappears,

² Originally in English.

³ *You* and *Turkish* originally in English.

the piece of history
that drags along.
Filming the word
a black tongue
that makes appear
a new body.
What came afterwards
having talked.
Where the caress finishes
my neck starts,
the pressure of your fingers
chocking me.
It is a question of time,
one more hour.
One more hour
to see the stones
instead of mountains.

Now it's me
who is below.
A low tide
brings along
a cosmology of galaxies,
points, planes, a volume
where the world fatigues
until making me bleed.
I cross myself
as if you were a church
rubbing myself in your look,
upon the colors you see.
Layer upon layer
until reaching some past.
Memory
is not made of memories,
it's a membrane
the pink gland
circumcised,
a membrane
where one chokes death.
I'm Turkish and you⁴

4 Originally in English.

in a New York without jasmines.

At rising speeds
the suburbs are inverted,
ghettos,
concentration camps
prolong themselves,
and precipitate.

There was never a village here.

A cross-eyed animal
loses its eyes
as it approaches
its prey.

The exchange
between the infinity of peoples
and me

who is broken
into suburbs,
into ghettos,
into concentration camps.

I am cross-eyed
losing my eyes
into your pink gland
your pelvis.

I invent a people
here.

Your fingers a fleet
wetting me in the waves
a cold water
in your seaweed fingers
over that which opens
inside of me.

A desperate animal
squeezes the point.

The images
of what has been
superimposed
like a hallucination.

Your thick vein
under my tongue,
the last drop
distilling
when I squeeze.

And your seaweed fingers

refreshing the water
of my seas.
And the question
in the carnival of the bodies,
I'm Turkish and you?⁵
seeking a face
in my lost eyes
where some of the dead
drown.
Let's change the objects
in the military theater
of operations,
where they said
we are wrong
in leaving people alive,
where it's said
they did not blindfold the eyes
of those to be executed;
dumb layers in trance,
a burst
of series of words
forming an atlas
crosses the scene.
The trance doubles twice
of having you
in my body
twice doubly
makes the voices
disappear.
Because there is no
outside of the camp,
because without the remains
completely
everywhere.
This is the infinitude
doubly double
without remains.
I hear again
I'm Turkish and you?⁶
and it is no
offstage voice.

5 Originally in English.

6 Originally in English.

Because
continuously,
because
without stopping,
kneeling only with the feet
I cling to your testicles.
Killing the image.
A catastrophe
it is the disgraceful outcome
of a poem.
Let's write again
let's change the end.

You caress
the line that sinks
in my back,
that groove
in a New York without jasmines.
A ship capsized
the desert island
with its agonized fish
in the water,
lighthouses that pierce
frantically
the darkness with their rays.
Your hand
in the groove
of my back
tastes like sun.
I know from the way
the tip of your penis
rests
on my eyelids.
Let's change the end of the poem,
you give me the keys
to your house.
My wax hands
in magic chance
take the shape
of the keys.
I enter with stockings
on my head,

not to rob you,
but to drink a mountain,
to drink it completely.
While doubly double
not a voice, but
a man who was sitting
in Cafe Reggio
who asked me
I'm Turkish and you?⁷
looks.
Thousands of years
the same.
Everything must remain
the same.
New York without jasmines
freezes at the same time
the multiple river,
it stops it,
it keeps its direction.
So that everything remains the same
this must be the last shot.
When he asks me again
I'm Turkish and you?⁸
so that everything remains the same
New York without jasmines
says that
when they shoot
the adversary will not have
the right to shoot.

Then, instead of answering
I'm Armenian,⁹
I order a plate of honey
in Cafe Reggio,
a thin island
between two rivers,
in that rectangle
of green in the center
dense,

7 Originally in English.

8 Originally in English.

9 Originally in English.

urban.
I spread honey on the back
of an ancient animal,
I give it away to lick.
If I don't talk
his shot will have been the last one.
Everything will continue the same.
Like the jar I keep
with nothing inside,
a souvenir of my trip
of your sperm
in the jar.
I was smelling it
when I missed you.
Like the stone
of the Holy Sepulcher
with nothing inside,
I'm warm.
Near, the fountain of Bethesda,
in New York without jasmines
it has the name
of a pool in Jerusalem
in the path of Beth Zeta valley,
where the sheep are
washed
before sacrificing them
in Salomon's Temple.
A house of mercy
the sacrifice
of this ancient animal,
in me.
Dylan Thomas
and the eighteen whiskeys,
the fifties
the Chelsea bar,
his death, later on,
in a hospital room.

I look around
I see no stray dog
resting its head
on the back of the bitch

before trying to mount her,
I do not see the bone that stiffens
preventing it from coming out
while it howls.
I do not see that the howling
becomes herself;
mother, herself.
And you?¹⁰
And so that he is
the last one to shoot
I do not answer:
*Shun turk.*¹¹

Because in this New York without jasmines
there are no stray dogs.
It would be a consolation,
it would be simple
to say that *Shun* means
dog in Armenian.
Almost.
Because *Shun turk*
is a Turk
and since he is a Turk,
he is a dog.
And as he is a dog
I let him begin
to lick me
while he slobbers.
Irreversible. Even though
it's time to start.
Between the unending current,
sped up and unending
of men who come and go
like a ravine,
passing through the streets
with colorful posters,
I stop
in a little curiosity shop,
I buy a white rug.
Not the kilims¹² from Isfahan

10 Originally in English.

11 In its original language.

with red and purple drawings
to prevent them from seeing
the blood stains
in their expansion towards the Orient.
A white rug
with myrrh perfume
from Mosul's gardens.
There, east of the river Tigris,
the Kurds knit in white
so that nobody sees
any white drop
from your white liquor
dropping
from my mouth.
Only here could this happen.
The mark of the Irish
in Saint Patrick's Cathedral
and the inns;
the garden of sculptures
of the Museum of Modern Art
where one can appreciate
natural exhibitions.
You ask me to look at you.
Look at me. From the ground to your mouth
I look at the camera.
My eyes expose their gesture,
their frantic friction.
Behind the lens
the Turk looks at us.
Only in this city
could this happen.
The siege of Carthage
leaves the easel.
Pollock denies his hand.
Not a brush,
a stick.
There is no beginning,
no end.
A hemorrhaging of ink
flows
in rapid waste

scraping
on the floor.
The whirlpool
of colors and lines,
urban havoc
in close-ups.
You tell me: look at me,
and I look at the camera.
An enraged tempest
of tendons,
of muscles
splatter, dropping.
A conglomeration
of black yellow and green lines
tear the surface.
Pollock makes the easel disappear.
Colors no longer form a silhouette,
they disseminate without return,
they eliminate all recomposition.
Disempowered bodies
anonymous, prismatic forms.
The screen turns into a canvas
Can you see?
The screen the paper the camera
a second skin.
Can you see it all?
Pollock erases all reserves
in a New York without jasmines.
While I,
even with Islamic veils,
even when the Turk
prays for purity, and
begs that I hide,
I expose myself.
My legs your tongue
that place so inside
that it can only account for
its wet ardor.
Your whole member
is now hot,
its burn in my inside.
These words are
images, paintings

on the sand of the Navajos.
The painting on the foam
of the amoebas or crabs,
of a she-wolf's head askew,
they live in the visible, demand
the eye
that does not find a
a moment of calm.
Oscillating lines entangle
in a dun ball of yard.
The pouring,
the trace of the spatula,
exposes us.
This image
circulates and circulates
between the sackers of Carthage.

You take me by the face
with your hands.
I devour
a thickness and engineering
up to the pull-string
of the little dolls,
till there,
although you cannot see it
although the line
in Pollock's painting
is a speed,
something that drips from a place
that does not break;
splattering of semen
on the floor.
We are all foreigners here.
The exiled crosses
the ocean,
arrives at the solid
water of the port.
Fatherland was left behind,
we are passing by.
Stripped,
trained
to the wheel that rises turns lowers
and rises again,

awake practical strong.
In the solid water of the port
converted into
new gears
of the mechanism.

In New York there are no jasmines.
All the shopkeepers of the world
camp here.

In the kaleidoscope
we are shown sliced,
a collage
art decó
with wheels for cars
and radiators
like friezes,
dome with windows
made of chrome.

Old factories
saved from demolition,
art galleries
in the warehouses.

The statue of a woman
with a torch
was going to be
at the entrance of the
Suez Canal.

But she as well
with her homeland behind
enter the solid water,
exiled from the vertiginous
spinning everything.

Provisionally

I am
at a hotel,
a ship,
a train station,
an office.

Here
my ration.

Here
we are taught
to forget

the horror of the soldiers,
the exhaustion of the wounded.
And we are awake
here, here
the prisoners
do not sleep, they must
survive.
I'm Turkish and you?¹³
I do not tell him
I am from a small country,
it became small,
with neighbors affected
by interrogation, by control.
How can we not be vulnerable?
I do not tell him
how not to be vulnerable
in the border with Iran,
with Georgia.
I do not tell him
I am seeking in trash
cloths with the blood of women,
I seek to know
if a woman lives with you.
I'm Turkish and you?¹⁴
The hurried push me.
One must march.
It's impossible to stop.
Reluctance to witness
pain
narrows at this point.
On the right
and on the left
of an unending avenue
the crowd applauds.
It is October 12th
everything is big.
This magnitude is America,
I tell him.
I sniff him like a bitch
that snoops, seeks
the male wolf, the male bear;

13 Originally in English.

14 Idem.

that hard bone
in perfumed water
with sandalwood paste.
The seed that gives life
to a goat,
focuses its head on the stake
and while it whispers,
devours swallows cuts.
In the country of freedom
I seek a slave,
an animated property
like the community of slaves
in the Field of Mars.
A slave
who wraps me up warmly from inside,
and tells me: do not forget to breathe.
A slave
whose cruelty
although is willing to destroy me,
wants, in reality,
its own destruction.
A slave a liquor saliva
in this island where the water
marks its borders;
the East River on the East
and the Hudson on the West
bars in the basements
in the terraces.
The most beautiful,
the biggest,
the most numerous
take pictures on the zigzagging
fire-escape
in the back street
on the narrow map
traced by the Dutch settlers.
I feed
my slave
caviar beluga, oyster, sevruga,
caramelized dried fruits
on worn-out stools of blue leather,
on nicotine-stained walls.
I seek

blood
instead of bone,
a torrent like this
that maintains the erection
with its testicles smacking
the face,
he tells me:
do not forget to breathe.

He, his highness slave,
my majesty,
teaches me visual alphabets.
Then I learn how to see the abyss
in the Hudson
with steel gray waters
when the ships' sirens vibrate
at a rhythm fighting up the river
that swims against the current,
the beat of bellicose actions.
What's important
is the liturgy,
the state of
the Sibilla
upon uttering their fortune,
a hymn
that raises you
in pure activity
disincarnating you
in this abstraction
of pure labor;
my slave god
slapping me in the face.
You dissolve
surrendered
to the need
of this moment,
in this compassion
of knowing ourselves
only one thing.
In this movement
the city and its little markets
displace the imagination

from the altars
to the ancient porcelain jars,
to the shelves
with molds in the ceiling,
the apothecary
on Sixth Ave.
whose client
seeks medicine
so as to write
a book of travels
that coincides
with the passing of the comet Halley.
Mark Twain
between the jars
shouting
punch, brothers, punch.
The question
in a New York without jasmines
returns like flint to the fire,
like water to the sea
of the sea
that does not fill,
like a lynching
of the hooded.
I'm Turkish¹⁵.
And me:
black black black.
Pushkin was black,
so says Marina.
In the Nieuw Haarlem¹⁶
where before
there were only Indians;
blacks.
Me a black woman who is
here
now,
because I was not
in Anatolia
at that moment.
Here like a ship
that seeks you on the shore

15 Originally in English.

16 Originally in Dutch.

of the ports
of the sea
that does not fill,
so that you see me
while I sink.
The rope
with which
the girls
hanged themselves
in the plantations.
Me, a black woman
emaciated
by the lashes of the whip.
All the mornings
in the world
I
a defeated people
attend
the birth
of a nation.
Woodrow Wilson and his dyslexia
writing
the history of the American people.
Wilson's dyslexia
invading Mexico,
with his inability
to read
or write
granting autonomy
to the peoples of the Ottoman empire.
Deformations.
I am here
because I was not
there
in that moment.
A black woman
who never sleeps
entirely.
Steps of laminated glass,
Bavarian wood
and pink marble,
triangular windows
displayed like scales

and the black woman
drifting
astray
that knocks her down.
The black woman sees Joseph Brodsky
at the Russian Samovar
drinking homemade vodka.
She sees
the movement of that which is not alive.
At the edge of the set
somebody asks for a grouper
with the pistachio and anise bark.
The images shake
like the black people shake,
they don't know how
to leave the movie.
Some people shoot
the screen
where they present
the birth of a nation.
I spent the whole night
watching silhouettes,
the profiles of the black women,
an anonymous African adventure,
the flagellation
of the black revolt in Suriname.
And I squeeze,
because the black women know
how it squeezes
the sea.
And I squeeze
as if collecting olives
wrapping the legs around the bouquet,
sliding
I make it run throughout
so that they free themselves.
An oil,
a circle.
In the pelvis
there are fingers,
I pull
and I slide you
until the tip.

Stay here,
like keeping
something in the memory.
I retain that
which is
something like your name
rocking
in the warmth
of that inside
of the flesh.
The whistle of *kebab*
in the street grills,
and the Arab music
or Turkish
or Hindu
that mixes with the spicy scent
in front of or behind the stand,
where women
in short black dresses
move
towards the park of sculptures
in the open air,
there
all of them fall
into the water,
because all the women
in short black dresses
in this New York without jasmines
are undines,
water nymphs,
desiring a man of the earth;
they conceive water carrier children
that follow the fish.
With a cup
of very hot frothy chocolate
they leave the park,
they stop
in a shop of invisible paintings,
of rock climbing hooks
for superheroes.
On the other block
a saxophone is playing
in a bar

with low ceilings
with a brown floor
and Moroccan mosaics,
warped stucco carved by hand,
furniture of Honduran mahogany.
The women in short black dresses
go to the beat of the streets,
swim to the rhythm of the water.

I wear
my hair down.
When the Turk asks me
I'm Turkish and you?¹⁷
a curly smell
of tobacco
in the hair
answers him:
only the past can be modified.
Europe lifts a trophy in Asia,
I answer him,
a trophy for Helen
in honor of the triumph
of the Greeks.
A catalog of ships
whose sinking
happens
in the Straits of Dardanelles.
So in Turkey,
so Turkish,
that sinking.
The place
of the burnt city
will be taken by
another city;
before or after
heroes return home,
the especially visible
picked up camp,
they knew that it was possible
to kill without risks.

17 Originally in English.

That's how Europe was born,
I would say,
if I had not sunk
when fetching water
in the Niddek river.
The night is as warm as the water.
I'm Turkish and you?¹⁸
The bounty of Troy's ruins
they have carried far
across an ocean that breathes.
It keeps breathing.
Western arrogance,
the strategy
of measuring
the exact limit
of what a body
can suffer.
A non-American child
of a starving mother
isolates the objects
executes perplexing forms,
the nostalgia
of destruction
of the past, its inert confines
of a two-lovers' journey,
of a woman
compatriot of the enemies
who does not turn into a cloud,
who is not a ghost
and provokes war.
The blood
of the flanks of the horses
is white,
does not leave traces.
Still wandering,
attired with Oriental splendor
I love you
like someone disappeared.
*Ana hanim.*¹⁹
Debilitating the resistance,
the Himalayas were found

18 Originally in English.

19 In its original language.

in the bottom of the sea;
removing the memory.
As the ice recedes
the tribes of head hunters
migrate north,
they look after their women,
they know they would be serviced
like cobras in heat;
Ana hanim.
I dream I tell the Turk:
I'm Armenian;
he answers,
from now on
I will teach you Turkish
and you, Armenian.
I dream
of a dream
physically persistent.
I write
to develop
the precision of the touch,
to see
how ink
is applied
by hits,
how it cascades
drawing bony shapes
visceral sexual organs
flames, human bodies.
Filling
the stillness
of the page
with a constant movement,
to penetrate the rigidity
destroying
inert walls,
to reach fluidity,
the color
the pulse.
The ink
or the saliva of a starving woman,

I, ana *hanim*²⁰
in floating ovals, nocturnal
with the hand
of the arm almost immobile;
Gorky's hand
that cannot paint
without that unbearable pain.
The hand that used
a knife
to paint in pastels
that swim over,
they do not end up in the deep.
Gorky's hand
a day after
when it clings,
a day after
writing its letter:
goodbye, my loves,
on a wooden box.
Ana hanim,
I'm Turkish and you?²¹
and me without being able to reply,
me with your fingers around my mouth
as if I had
a second member
rubbing the palate.
Your cock my tongue
like tango dancers
coiling their legs
in my mouth.
A mural decorating the wall,
windows from the floor to the ceiling
with views of Revington street,
us on the floor
under a Venini chandelier
in a New York without jasmines,
in bars
with beer on tap,
sitting on stools
made from old tractor seats.
I rub against buildings,

20 In its original language.

21 Idem.

I mark,
I leave tracks
of my destruction.
Who humiliates whom?
The Turk's mother
carries a handkerchief
wrapped around the neck
up to the head
with lace
around the face.
The Turk's mother in the voice
who asks me
I'm Turkish and you?²²
she is carrying sheep in her arms
and a long skirt.
From there she waits for him
fifteen months,
while her son
gets used to the militia
at the feet of the Ararat.
Seeing it makes me dizzy
with that green uniform
and the balaclava
also green,
and the rifle on his shoulder.
In the accent of his voice
he has a bullet-proof vest
and boots.
We are from Mesopotamia;
on fleshy dates
pink or violet olives,
in the sweet smell of saffron
we will build the right
of the brothers.
I'm Turkish and you?²³
And in his eyes
no illustrious silhouettes
of war veterans,
of the legs of a woman
in black pantyhose
in a New York without jasmines.

22 In its original language.

23 Idem.

His eyes call me, saying:
gazelle from Mesopotamia.

And I move forward
after the retreat
of the last glacier
next to the town
with large houses,
south of Ontario.
Around the Great Lakes
the Iroquois
gather rocks
from the bank of the river
they cut one by one
the jasmines of the village,
and throw them into the Niagara Falls.
New York, the gazelle and me
we hardly ever sleep
and although lying down,
we are always alert
out of fear that we would be surprised
by predators.
New York, the gazelle and me
we are antelopes with long legs,
we have an encompassing vision
which helps us
escape.
War only acts
on those sitting,
it anesthetizes the effect
of certain sounds,
certain images.
I move vigilantly
from your mouth to your legs,
I give you my butt cheeks,
and again
I look for you with my mouth
without intermittence
feeling your smell of berries,
of a seed
of growing cotton.
Who humiliates whom?

The last whirlpool of desire
if it doesn't kill you,
it starts to crouch,
your ways of scaring away
the gazelle
filling me with fear
to control me;
and me,
as I am a gazelle,
the more frightened I am,
the more I realize myself,
the more I run.
During the day, I run,
and at night.
And while I run, I devour
all the jasmines in the field,
so I can see better, I pursue
the smell of the almonds
in the curdling of your penis.
Copying a body.
The one who captures
creates a place
so that the other
does not have one.
You are scenefied,
represented,
under the domain. I
a portion of the world
without identity.
I copy your body,
I attend the birth of a man.
My arms around yours,
taking you by the armpits.
You, reclined,
held up by your legs,
descending.
You are free
of the trembling of the pelvis
it pushes,
it falls apart.
The gazelle of Mesopotamia
attends the birth of its offspring
undone in my mouth.

And with your children
in my mouth
I cannot reply
to the Turk
when he asks:
I'm Turkish and you?²⁴

Herds of gazelles
looking at him
with a look
that gives movement to the world.
Animals do not talk,
if they talked, I would tell them
that the gazelle from Mesopotamia
is the name
that the Kurdish guerrilla
gives itself
in the mountains
in the North of Iraq;
there where I die
every day
where I open the eyes
of the men.
In the lap
of Mount Qandil
the barracks
show a photograph
of when I got burnt.
Now with your children
undone in my mouth
I cannot talk, tell
the Turk
that the Occident
lied to us.
That New York without jasmines
and its perfume shops
have done
their business.
Four centuries
of Ottoman rule

24 Originally in English.

in Palestine,
is paid
at the price
of a partition.
The Turk and I
paying for
the distribution
of the Orient.
The English and the French
stay in Palestine
in exchange for
the silence
of my death.
That's the price
of an Armenian woman
for
a Palestinian man.
Meanwhile,
the Turk lights
a hookah.
The smoke surrounds
its member,
perfuming it.
The river Mohawk
where skins
were traded.
The migrant constitution
of a republic,
of a city in the hills,
a promised land
for a new man.
A pot the river
where they mixed
all those who have forgotten
and melted
erasing the traces.
Being here denies
the ancient residencies.
Here, a new oven,
an oven to melt.
A new metallurgy
reduces the substances
freeing the metal

in the air.
Reducing
the mineral
to an adequate temperature.
Coal sparks
burning
the elusive
in the new oven,
he, who comes from far away,
you me the Turk
Americanized
liberated and fused
in a mixed race,
adapted.
A malleable liquid
makes the white
be born,
you me the Turk
erasing among us
all traces,
blending ourselves.
I rest my scar
on your leg,
I press
and it disappears.
Your skin giving me skin
unpaints the wound.
Then, like this,
with my swallowed blood,
from your flesh
we stroll through the streets,
we enter a bookstore.
You open a book
show me
photographs.
Behind, the camera
without a gag, free.
A torture chamber,
makes the image circulate,
allows everything
to continue happening.
The photo argues
a loss

of images that pursue us,
insisting.
Figures
of those bodies
incessantly conserved
and destroyed
growing in the look.

Mannahatta
was the native name
before the streets,
before the bookstores,
before the aristocratic Vanderbilt.
Mannahatta
an indigenous language:
a place of general intoxication,
a place of walnut trees and white pines
to build
the mast of the ship.
To remember
I must have
a body.
That's why I suck
as if I ate
fleshy dates
of a flesh
that is sweeter inside, sweeter
my desire to see
that which is no longer,
that place of the male
in which it is female,
that place of yours
pregnant from an animal
that turns into a man,
that place sweeter behind
where it warms
the warm milky water
of a fleshy bone
of the dates
of the desert.
A desert
that has a sea,

or the memory of the sea.
I'm going to see
that which no longer is,
the warm milky water
distilling female.
A primitive woman
looking for fire
a log
and a hole made
with a stone.
I turn
a hard wooden stick
stuck in the hole,
quickly, with my hands.
The logs
become
burning coals;
I blow.
To produce sparks
I scrape a hard rock,
varieties of quartz,
semiprecious stones
like jasper
against one another rich in iron.
The spark
by percussion
contacts
combustible elements,
the fire
upon eating my hair
communicates better.
Clubs from cattle bones
and me
who keep a dead animal
I excavate
so that the crows don't get there first.
The memory of the fire
in the caverns
of my hands,
of the female who looks for
that which no longer is.
The flint stone
that distills warm water

recalls its collision
with black jasper,
like the oak does,
that contains all its past
from the downpour
to the hurricane
that knocked it down
once
written in its guts;
its purple secretion.
The instant
in which it is dissolved,
this nuptial flight
from which I extract
millions
of that which swims
in the liquid
where everything
you have lived today,
where all of
your past
melts,
a pilgrimage
of the male
who is uninhibited
from the origins,
excessive,
inebriated,
almost a female.

There are no jasmines in New York.
I cross by foot
the Brooklyn Bridge
where before
the poor were buried.
Now there are mimes and jugglers,
I turn to the left
of the house where
Henry James
lived,
at 119
MacDougal street;

in the Cafe Reggio,
where John Huston
filmed “The Kremlin letter,”
a Turk asks me
I’m Turkish and you?²⁵
and I answered him:
it is never night in prison
I answer him
there is a ghost city
in Agdam village,
after the war
in High Karabakh,
to prevent the city from
being occupied
the army decided
to destroy it,
a cadaver village
next to the minarets
of the mosques.
The refugees
now live
in improvised encampments,
and I do not say
I am a Japanese girl
who prepares infusions
of hot and cold tea,
to drink one first
while I kiss you
with my hot tongue,
and then the other,
extremely cold,
to make you tremble
fresh from the upright center
of the body;
I do not say
I am a Japanese girl
from the illustrations
who positions herself
to be beheaded
between her legs;
I am the other Japanese girl

25 Originally in English.

in the illustrations
who watches how her mate
puts her removed head
between her legs,
and laughs.

The line
between the shoulders and hips,
an angular speed
around an axis,
a sidereal day.
The taut bow
spins around
the center of our galaxy.
I travel at seven hundred thousand kilometers
per hour
leaning to a side,
I turn,
with more intensity
of light and heat
in the Equator.
I turn
and the turn I make takes a day,
it produces a succession
of days and nights
and I turn more
and the turn takes a year
as if I were
Planet Earth
where I live,
giving the impression
that the sky is turning
around me.
I raise and keep
my legs in front;
and while you watch me
I do not tell the Turk
that it is never night in prison
because nobody moves.
A simple specter of light
the planetary systems
disappearing
hundreds of millions of years ago,

a rain of minor bodies
disintegrating,
remains
like metals
heavier than helium,
little parts
coming off of me while turning,
your Equator making me
lick
my remains.
The eye
a patch
where passers-by resound.
The visual cadastre
of a New York without jasmines
of passer-by dowsers
detecting water, guessing
the volume, the depth.
A rod, a pendulum,
a spasmodic movement;
a pond.
The dowser takes the rod
by one end,
names
the star of Venus,
finds
stones oil lost objects.
A small movement
in the wrists of the dowser
it multiplies, shakes,
orients the rocks
in the ocean's dorsal.
Orometers forkings
Saint Crispin's wand.
The thirst of the miracle
in the beat of your eyes.
I'm Turkish and you?²⁶
and me with a pendulum
in my hand
grabbing a knife by the neck,
grabbing the one that coughs, suffocates

26 Originally in English.

in his own blood,
grabbing that which is still
alive.
Grabbing for the minutes
in which it is still
alive,
two minutes after
the decapitation.
Two minutes
thanks to the oxygen
that stays in the blood
absorbed in my look,
resounding
like thunder like artillery.
Resounding in the eyes
the tattoo of the flesh.
I do not tell the Turk
that I am completely waxed
like the Arab custom,
that the rite of the hair,
the bath and the perfumed oils,
the heavy earrings of silver and amber,
the laces in the sandals
tied to the ankles.
I do not tell the Turk
that I adopted you
through the Berber rite
of breastfeeding.
Your tongue a
tender child on the nipples.

Manhattan Brooklyn,
The Bronx Queens,
Staten Island;
in New York there are no jasmines.
Ozgur, my name is Ozgur,
the Turk tells me.
When he asks
my name
I answer: Now,

I tell him, Now²⁷.
My name is now.
Ozgur insists:
Turkish and you?²⁸
I tell him Now.
My name is Now.
I was born a thousand years ago
under the Bagratuni dynasty,
I live in a country
full of borders.
My country
is a border.
How have we lost our freedom,
Ozgur?
I ask him: Ozgur,
how have we lost
our freedom?
The English
created Afghanistan
to prevent the Russian Empire
from reaching
the English colony
of India.

We are here,
you and I,
and Ozgur does not understand me.
He does not understand
that now,
that Now is my name
that I am the borders
of Armenia,
near the ancient capital
of Ani.
I put in a
little brazier
a certain resin
that produces an aroma
when it burns.
With each rocking,

27 The original line: "...Now,/le digo, Ahora".

28 Originally in English.

each flattering,
the incense
burns more,
with each movement
the bracelets I wear
clash,
at the rhythm of the chains
of the brazier.
Now.
The Turk does not understand.
The peasant
that lives in the house
in the village
on the border
does not understand me.
He does not understand
when I scream at him
please.
Now,
I,
please,
I want to stay.
Can I stay,
please?
The peasant
shows me some pictures
of the ruins
in Ani.
He says,
under the ruins,
ana *djan*²⁹,
there are corpses.
Under the ruins.
He says: I;
the peasant says,
I excavated.
On the table
in the house
in the village
there are grapes and apples
cold yoghurt to drink,

29 In its original language.

coffee and chocolates.
Around the table
three men
look and do not talk.
Only one of them
talks, the others
look
with their bony faces,
Caucasian.
There is pain in their green eyes,
there is hate pain hate,
and me whose name is Now,
I see those bony men,
such soldiers such hunger,
I leave the scene running,
I cry.
I cry without stopping
nearby the monastery, the chapel
in Ani.
On this side
the children
poorer
than the bony men
take me to the school.
Here, they say,
here we are taught to dance,
and they dance.
They dance near
the excavations
of the dead,
of the corpses.
I keep speaking and Ozgur
does not understand me.
He does not understand
they dance,
after the dance lesson
they walk me to another room
where there are rifles on the desk,
photos of the guerrilla and weapons,
they are here only so we know how to defend ourselves,
they say,
only because we live in a country
full of borders.

Ozgur tries
to draw me on a napkin
in a New York without jasmines,
and I do not know if it's your tongue
which I feel
hard
as if it were
the world
that enters through my entrails.
I look at Ozgur in the eyes.
At last
I can talk to him,
I tell him: October 27th, 1999,
five fifteen in the afternoon,
an armed group
enters the Parliament
and kills
the Prime Minister,
kills the hero
of Karabakh,
kills
the commander of the Armenians,
kills
the *Sparapet*³⁰.
I see the image
on the TV.
All the news programs
show the disaster the madness;
under the images
a little banner:
Armenia.
And me
whose name was not yet Now, think:
Armenia is real.
And now
that my name is Now
I consume your future children,
and you with your hard tongue,
your member, and you;
while Ozgur
does not understand

30 In its original language..

does not understand me
that when
you make
my body explode
the scene in
Sparapet Hayots
falling
in the middle of Parliament
falling
and the Ruins in Ani
and the peasants excavating
and the children in the dance lesson
and the classroom with rifles,
Ozgur,
that I,
Ozgur, I

am Armenian.

NOTES:

Shun: in Armenian, “dog.”

Shun turk: form used by the Armenians to refer to the Turkish perpetrators of the Armenian genocide; “Turkish dog.”

Kebab: in Turkish, “roasted meat.”

Hanim: in Turkish, “my lady; madam” (courtesy title).

Djan: in Armenian, “my soul; my love” (affectionate term).

Sparapet: in Armenian, “commander.”

Sparapet Hayots: in Armenian, “commander of the Armenians”.

Blurb:

Ana Arzoumanian was born in Buenos Aires, in 1962.

She is a lawyer. She published the following poetry books: *Labios* (GEL, 1993), *Debajo de la piedra* (GEL, 1998), *El ahogadero* (Tsé- Tsé, 2002), *Cuando todo acabe todo acabará* (Paradiso, 2008); the novel *La mujer de ellos* (GEL, 2001); the stories *La granada* (Tsé-Tsé, 2003), *Mía* (Alción Editora, 2004), *Juana I* (Alción Editora, 2006) and the essay *El depósito humano. Una geografía de la desaparición* (Xavier Bóveda, 2010).

She translated from French *Sade et l'écriture de l'orgie* by Lucienne Frappier-Mazur (Ediciones Artes del Sur, 2006) and from English *The Long and the Short of Holocaust Verse* by Susan Gubar (Alción Editora, 2007).

She is a member of the *International Association of Genocide Scholars*.