

says you never existed.
What can I say, I who therefore
cannot be here to say it?"²⁷

That was in the early 1980s during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, when Armenian-Americans had high hopes. During his election campaign, Reagan had promised Armenians that once he was elected, he would recognize the Armenian Genocide. Der Hovanessian fights back the best way she can against this hypocrisy, against political exigencies dictating immoral policies and unfulfilled promises. She fights with her cutting words, her artistic skills.

"No One Tattooed My Skin," a powerful poem published in *About Time* (1987), portrays her keen sympathy with female victims of the Genocide. Seventy years removed, she feels their suffering, describes the torture, the rape, and the starvation they endured and the suicide they committed to put an end to their disgraced existence. She was not one of them, she did not endure any of those hardships, but what she cannot tolerate is that the world has remained silent:

But oh, my sisters,
now that 70 years
have passed and
no one has spoken for you,
I spit out words
You swallowed unsaid. (31)

The world turned a deaf ear, and now Armenians are being massacred in Azerbaijan at the hands of the Azeri brothers of the Turkish executioners. The year is 1990 and

²⁷ Der Hovanessian, "At Mt. Auburn Cemetery," in *About Time*, p. 63.