

The burden of memories took Herand Markarian on a pilgrimage to Western Armenia in 1997, as noted earlier. It had taken him eighty-two years to “fulfill my father’s unspoken wish and return Home to say a prayer for the unburied dead. I return on the path of history as a pilgrim to realize his unfulfilled dream,” he writes in *K’aradzayn patarak’/Liturgy-Sound of Stones* (13). Markarian’s pilgrimage to Shoushants (today’s Kevenli), his father’s village near Van, and to *Yergir*, the historic lands of Western Armenia, was a conscious effort to come into physical contact with what he had always thought of as “HOGHS/MY LAND!” and to deal with that puzzling question mark that always appeared in his mind whenever that thought occurred to him: “*Your land?*” He went to fill the “emptiness” in his mind which he could not define: “Is it Longing? Demands? Anger? Vengeance? Bitterness? Inability? Injustice?” (17). He embarked on this “soul-stirring journey” in search of a Fatherland, there to lay down the burden of inherited memories.

Herand Markarian memorializes every site his group visits in a vignette with a brief history of the place since ancient times, its original Armenian name, its new Turkish name, the Armenian presence/absence, the buildings, institutions, and houses that now either exhibit distinct Muslim markers or else are total ruins. His vignette on Van is followed by a poem titled “At the Shores of Lake Van” which he dedicates to the place with passionate flare. Standing on the lake shore, he visualizes his father spending his happy childhood in his village nearby:

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symbol of the Armenian struggle for independence, Vratsian played a decisive role in Richard’s future academic endeavors.