

“Having survived genocide, not only do [Armenians] have to believe in themselves, but they have to convince others of their existence.”

The first-generation diasporan Armenian survivors' literature echoes the survivors' self-perception/identity as victimized exiles. There was basically a literature of nostalgia and haunting memories of Turkish atrocities. Armenian tradition and the hope of returning to the homeland were exalted as an ideology leading to the formation of a new diasporan Armenian identity. That trend may be considered a resort to the past, a step backward that hindered the quest for a new direction in the development of diasporan Armenian literature, but it was the only way they knew to keep the Armenian spirit alive, to ensure the continuum of Armenian literature in the Armenian language, and to fight the gradual decline of Armenian identity—as they would conceptualize it. But the torrent of modernization in world culture was overwhelming. Even though the second generation continued to respond to the Armenian Genocide—of course, with a new set of literary tools, norms, and ideas—the concept of tradition, which was the first generation's bulwark of identity, underwent change. To paraphrase Dexter Fisher in *Minority Language and Literature*,⁹² the process of constructing group identity is dynamic. The confrontation of national identity with the exigencies of the acquired sense of belonging and citizenship constantly imposes and forges ethnic duality. Writers in the minority group assimilate certain values, tenets,

⁹² Dexter Fisher, Introduction, *Minority Language and Literature: Retrospective and Perspective* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1977).