

that was his alone. Someday, one way
or another, I would add my name to that.¹⁰⁸

And he did make a name for himself in American literature, bringing in an Armenian component while creating universal literature, revealing humanity, as William Saroyan had done before him.¹⁰⁹ Kherdian found meaning and legitimacy in his search for self-identity.

Growing up in a strictly Armenian family environment, Helene Pilibosian lived with two separate identities, a sort of split indoor and outdoor personality. In "Less than a

¹⁰⁸ Kherdian, "From *My Racine*," in *ibid.*, pp. 336–7.

¹⁰⁹ I have deliberately kept references to William Saroyan (1908–1981) and his work at a minimum in the present study since I felt that I did not have anything more to add to the comprehensive studies by scholars such as Leo Hamalian (1987), Nona Balakian (1998), Dickran Kouymjian (2009), and many others. Kouymjian, a friend and confidant of Saroyan's in his later years, introduced courses and lectured on the author's work at California State University, Fresno, diligently archived his manuscripts, and compiled and published some of his unpublished material. Lorne Shirinian considers Saroyan "the prototypical Armenian diaspora writer" because of his "quest for home that is also the central quest and theme of all Armenian-American literature" (*Writing Memory*, p. 76; see his entire chapter on Saroyan, pp. 68–101). "Saroyan documented very well in both his fiction and in his memoirs the difficulties Armenians had in adapting to their new environment in America" (p. 78). As a testament to Saroyan's conviction that Armenians will overcome and survive, Shirinian cites a famous and often quoted line: "I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race..." (p. 86). However, he also shows that Saroyan was preoccupied with Armenians outside of Armenia and with the difficulty of burying the old and allowing the new to grow. Even in his last years, Saroyan wrote plays on these themes, always raising the essential question of "how to maintain the nation with its language and traditions in the diaspora" (p. 88). For a list of Saroyan's publications, see *Forgotten Bread*, ed. Kherdian, pp. 463–5.