

of the diasporan Armenian echo throughout almost the whole of Hakob Karapents' literary output, which is mostly short stories, his preferred genre. He is an undeniably skillful observer who penetrates the souls of those around him and creates characters with complex inner worlds. He regards himself as a diasporan Armenian writer in the deepest sense of the term, one who tries to create art and harmony out of "the commotion of big cities, broken-up Armenians in the diaspora, the Armenian and the American, the human being and the ever-present nightmare of a nuclear disaster." Karapents is a prolific writer in Armenian, even though "skeptics have long sounded the alarm of the extinction of my kind."¹¹²

"We are still inflicted by the forays of history. If we get well someday, and that will perhaps take centuries, then the thousand and one distant calls will subside, and we will be able to enjoy life like a human being."¹¹³ These words are spoken by Vahé Vahanian to Ingrid, his Swedish-German-American girlfriend. Vahé, the protagonist of Hakob Karapents' longish short story, "*Mi mard ev erku shirim*" (A man and two tombs), is an Armenian student at Columbia University in the 1960s. He rejects Ingrid's love and devotion because he lives a dual existence, symbolically unable to reconcile his idealization of President Kennedy and his

¹¹² Hakob Karapents, "*Grogħē ink'n ir het*" [The writer with himself], in *Erku Ashkharh, grakan p'ordzagrut'iunner* [Two worlds: Literary essays] (Watertown, MA: Blue Crane Books, 1992), pp. 57-9. Written in Connecticut in 1987.

¹¹³ Hakob Karapents, "*Mi mard ev erku shirim*" [A man and two tombs], in *Antsanot' hoginer* [Unfamiliar souls], a collection of stories (Beirut: Atlas Press, 1970), pp. 333-80. Quotation from pp. 376-7. Written in Washington, DC, in 1966.