

she fell into despair, which happened every so often (31). She became angry for reasons her daughter could not understand, as for example when Helene refused to eat a certain Armenian dish her mother had prepared, or when Helene made pudding, an American dessert (36). It saddened Helene whenever her mother suffered “a sudden attack of claustrophobia” in a crowded place and insisted on returning home immediately (47). She was a strict mother and never showed affection. “Unfortunately, in our family there was little communication of tender emotions, the hug and the kiss seeming nonexistent and sometimes the positive feelings also” (54). Yeghsa was disliked by her relatives because of her “basic pessimism, her temper and her awkwardness” (256).

Altogether, Yeghsa comes across as a negative person, unable to see the good in others, not even in her own children. She constantly criticized Helene and put her down. She considered her incapable of taking care of herself or doing housework (79). She did not value her daughter’s creativity or her success in writing poetry. On the occasion of the publication of Helene’s first book of poetry, *Carvings from an Heirloom: Oral History Poems* (1983), she commented, “No one knows these stories but us.... Who would be interested?” (258). When Helene, 30 years old and already married, was recovering from major surgery, her mother came to see her only once, and she “hurt me as badly as she had ever done by laughing at the sight of me in this unfortunate condition” (167).

Helene knew nothing about her mother’s ordeal during the Genocide and admits that she never really showed any interest in hearing her mother’s story until much later when