Hagop had taken the road to exile with his mother and younger brother. At some point during the difficult trek, his mother had relinquished him to an elderly Turk who offered his help. Apparently, the psychological pain of that tragic experience lay dormant during his long trek to freedom and his struggle to adjust to and make a living in the West. Nonetheless, it surfaced vividly and dramatically when, in his forties, he married and had a son in America and came face to face with the reality of life, with his difficulty in maintaining a normal relationship with a woman, and with the deep distrust and insecurity he felt toward women in general. His tender loving mother had abandoned him; so might another woman as well. On top of all this was his mistrust of American justice and societal behavior. "There is no justice," he would tell his son Theodore, "Don't look for justice" (79). And then there was his American-born Armenian wife whom he considered the embodiment of everything American and blamed for whatever he disliked about America. Before immigrating to the USA, he had spent over twenty years in France and grown fond of his adopted country. It was awfully hard for him to adapt to American ways, and the gap between the Armenian-French father and his American son continued to widen.

Growing up, Theodore was caught in the unpleasant environment of these complicated relationships. He tried to maintain a distance from his father, "a quiet and aloof man with whom I seemed to have little in common. It was a predicament that only time and mature effort would ease" (94). Later, he would even see his father as "morally numb or, worse, indifferent" (107). He became more and more American, to the point of total assimilation, and even lost the