

According to his stepmother, “the reason why he was so strict with his children was because he had suffered as a child, having been abandoned by his own mother” (Shafak, p. 309). Shushan kept that secret for life. The children she bore to an Armenian husband in her new life in the U.S. knew nothing about that page of their mother’s ordeal. They thought her suffering had come to an end once she had reached the freedom of the New World. The secret she had buried deep in her heart was the key to her behavior and explained her concern about Armanoush’s upbringing under the influence of her Turkish stepfather.

Historical novels, fiction, and memoirs detailing the experience of women who fled to freedom or stayed with the children they conceived from their abductors are not abundant. Fethiye Çetin’s *Anneannem*,⁶ the story of her Armenian grandmother, is one of the very few that speaks of such an experience.⁷ Indeed, Seher/Heranoush had the opportunity to join the remnants of her family in the U.S., but she did not. She chose to stay and faithfully “serve” her Turkish husband and children. The unusual turn of events in her case was that, after she was discovered but refused to leave, her brother maintained contact with her and her Turkish family. He even invited her to visit the family in the

⁶ Çetin’s story, *Anneannem* (My maternal grandmother), originally published in Turkish in 2004, was translated into Armenian as *Mets mayrs* by Ruben Melkonian in 2006. All references are to the Armenian translation of this work.

⁷ A lawyer by training, Fethiye Çetin is the former spokeswoman for the Minorities Commission of the Istanbul Bar Association and, incidentally, the lawyer representing Hrant Dink’s family in the trial of Dink’s assassin(s).