

death. “Heranoush spen[t] most of her 95-year-long life in the town of Maden, where this incident took place in 1915, watching that river flow day and night.”³⁵ It was not possible to forget those scenes; it was not possible to forget who she was, where she had come from, the traditions, the religion, the language: the identity. And Seher did not forget. She kept the memory deep in her heart, as she kept her identity secret for decades.

Both grandfathers of Heranoush Gadarian, and her uncles, along with all the men in the village, were taken away, never to return (her father and two of her uncles were in the United States at the time). The next day her young aunt was kidnapped because she refused to cut her hair and cover her face with soot as her sisters did. Heranoush’s mother, Iskouhi, took her three children, Heranoush and her two younger brothers, to the neighboring village to hide them, but soon the gendarmes attacked that village too. They rounded up the entire population and drove them out to Balu (Palu). It was in Balu that nine-year-old Heranoush first came face to face with

³⁵ Altınay, “In Search of Silenced Grandparents” (2006), p. 119. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference on “The Ottoman Armenians during the Era of Ottoman Decline” (Bilgi University, Istanbul, May 25–27, 2005).

According to Fethiye Çetin (*Mets mayrs*, 2006), Heranoush was born in a village called Habab (Havav in Armenian) in the region of Maden (the present Balu [Palu] district) in the eastern province of Elazığ. During Heranoush’s childhood, Havav housed 207 families, two churches, and a monastery. At the beginning of her narrative, Çetin provides a detailed account of the Gadarian and Arzoumanian families, the family trees of Heranoush’s parents on both sides, their background and ancestry (pp. 9–14).