

stay low-key and never display her talents openly. Varsenig's reason for this strange guidance is that during the Genocide, it was the Armenian leadership, the intellectuals, "the brains" who were liquidated first, followed by the eradication of the rest of the Armenian population. Putting this idea into the head of one of her characters, Shafak suggests that Armenians in the Diaspora never feel secure and become fearful and concerned if someone "swerve[s] too far away from the ordinary" (p. 96). There is, of course, some truth in this perception. Yes, the Young Turk government targeted the leaders and intellectuals and dealt with the beheaded nation afterwards.<sup>9</sup> In the novel, Armanoush's great-grandfather was

---

<sup>9</sup> The Young Turk-planned annihilation of the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire was carried out in different stages. The conscription of able-bodied Armenian men, 20–45 years old (later extended to 18–60) into the Ottoman army in August of 1914, putting them in labor battalions and then slaughtering them, was followed by the notorious process of disarming the Armenian population, accompanied by plunder and murder. Then it was the turn of the Armenian leadership to be liquidated. During two nights, April 23 and 24 (10 and 11, old calendar) in 1915, Armenian intellectuals and civic and religious leaders in Constantinople and almost every city, town, and village throughout the Empire were arrested and exiled toward the southeast and murdered on the way. The last stage was the deportation and massacre of the helpless masses, mostly consisting of women, children, and elderly men.

Significantly, in an article on the Serbian massacres in Bosnia titled "Human, All Too Human," Adam Lebor draws a parallel between the Ottoman Turks' strategy of eliminating the Armenian leaders and intellectuals first, before murdering the rest of the population, and the Serbs repeating the same strategy toward the Bosnian Muslims in the 1990s. Parenthetically, Lebor also mentions the "criminals released from prison, during the Armenian genocide in 1915... granted a free hand to murder and rape." He then asserts