

As Sarkis Usta became an old man, his unquenched nostalgic reminiscences drove him to return to his hometown. There he found nothing but ruins. There was no trace of the church, but his home now stood as the town jailhouse. He asked the stunned prison guard to give him a stone from the building, explaining that a long time ago the building had been his family home. With loving care, he held on to the stone, the only physical reminder of his past, his hometown, his home.

Sarkis has been able to overcome much hardship but he cannot forget, and the images intensify instead of fading through time: "The older I get, the more I search for traces of my childhood" (Yalçın, pp. 312-13). He carries the memory of cataclysmic experiences of his own and those of his parents transmitted to him in their stories and songs. Sarkis believes in the effective powers of songs as genuine sentiments that are generated from the heart of the sufferer in moments of pain and despair. He sings these songs for Yalçın to complete the musical film strip he unwinds for him.⁵²

Yalçın speaks of the experiences of many such families, those who remained faithful to Christianity and kept their racial and religious identity, and for which they suffered.

⁵² These types of songs were collected by Verjiné Svazlian, an Armenian scholar living in Armenia, and published in a booklet titled *The Armenian Genocide in the Memoirs and Turkish-Language Songs of the Eye-Witness Survivors* (1999). Svazlian sought out the survivors of the Armenian Genocide in towns and villages of Soviet Armenia. She also traveled to Istanbul to find the men and women who could tell her about their experience, and recorded their songs and stories.