

**The Remediation of the Armenian Genocide through fiction film in the period
1919-2021:**

Understanding the memory culture of the Armenian genocide

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ABSTRACT

The memory culture of the Armenian genocide has undergone a process of construction and change. This construction and change are formed through the remediation of media. This thesis has analysed four fictional films, using an in-depth film analysis, to understand how the memory culture of the Armenian genocide has changed over 104 years starting in 1919. This has been done because the memory culture of the Armenian genocide is still denied by the Turkish government. Central in analysis were three concepts, sexual violence, cultural trauma and postmemory, that are important aspects of the Armenian genocide. First, sexual violence has been mediated in *Auction of Souls (1919)* as a Christian suffering in the East, thereby drawing upon Christian iconography to make an appeal the American audience. *Aurora's Sunrise (2022)* deconstructed this mediation and remediated sexual violence as a forgotten aspect of the genocide were the Armenian women suffered. Secondly cultural trauma has been mediated by *Nahapet (1977)* as a national trauma of Armenia. It did so by connecting the personal trauma of Nahapet with that of the nation through the symbol of the apple tree. *Ararat (2002)* remediated cultural trauma of the Armenian genocide as a diasporic trauma. *Ararat* used two film-within-a-film techniques to relate the personal traumas of the Canadian Armenian characters to that of the diasporic one, thereby altering the memory culture of the Armenian genocide. Lastly, *Aurora's Sunrise* remediated cultural trauma as a trauma for the Armenian people. The film retells the story of survivor Aurora and connects her trauma to that of the Armenians. The film shies away from nationalistic or diasporic tendencies and establishes the memory culture of the Armenian genocide as a trauma for the Armenians. Thirdly, postmemory has been mediated in *Ararat* to understand how trauma is carried across generations. Through its use of different Canadian characters, it established that one who does have a connection with the Armenian genocide is still tormented by that past. Therefore, *Ararat* adds an important part in the memory culture of the Armenian genocide, that of generational trauma.

KEYWORDS: Memory culture, Armenian genocide, remediation, sexual violence, cultural trauma, postmemory, film

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Armenian genocide was a long and complicated event that occurred in three different stages and targeted the destruction of the Armenian people and identity in the Ottoman Empire. At the core of this genocide was the period 1915-1916, in which the number of deaths exceeded 600,000.¹ In the whole period of thirty years, historians estimate that more than a million Armenians were killed.² Furthermore, Armenian women experienced sexual violence such as rape, slavery and forced conversion to Islam.³ The current Turkish government still denies the genocide, as they claim it was part of the war and that both sides suffered losses.⁴

The ambiguity and sensitivity surrounding this historic event make it socially relevant and interesting to explore in terms of memory and trauma. Filmmakers have tried to overcome the silence in the last 105 years and tell the story of the Armenian genocide in different ways. The importance of film is that it provokes an emotional release from its audience.⁵ Furthermore, it provokes thought; the sensory effect produced by film triggers a conscious reflection. The audience revisits the images portrayed by the film during or after the screening. This revisit will result in reflection and insight into the genocide that has been portrayed.⁶

This thesis selected four fictional films from the early aftermath of the genocide until recently to explore how the memory culture of the Armenian genocide has been remediated. The research question that will answer this is, therefore, how is sexual violence, postmemory, and cultural trauma of the Armenian genocide remediated in various fiction films in the period of 1919-2021?

¹ Benny Morris and Dror Ze'evi, *The Thirty-Year Genocide Turkey's Destruction of Its Christian Minorities, 1894-1924* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 486.

² Morris and Ze'evi, *The Thirty-Year Genocide Turkey's Destruction of Its Christian Minorities, 1894-1924*, 487.

³ Frieze, Donna-Lee. "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardiganian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment." In *Women and Genocide: Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators*, edited by Elissa Bemporad and Joyce W. Warren. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018, 62.

⁴ Frieze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardiganian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," 60-61.

⁵ Jonathan C. Friedman and William L. Hewitt, eds., *The History of Genocide in Cinema: Atrocities on Screen* (London New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 1.

⁶ Shohini Chaudhuri, *Cinema of the Dark Side: Atrocity and the Ethics of Film Spectatorship*, 1st edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 16.

Remediation is a concept that describes how a historical event is differently represented over time by different media formats. It is also how the mediation of mediation media is constantly reproducing and replacing each other.⁷ Thereby, constructing, altering and keeping the memory of said event alive.⁸ To study how these media have shaped memory of the Armenian genocide is, therefore, crucial. The paper will further draw upon different concepts, sexual violence, postmemory and cultural trauma to understand how filmmakers mediated different aspects of the genocide. An in-depth film analysis, using a schematic model by Anneke Smelik, is used to understand the style, narrative, symbolism and metaphors of the fictional films. The study will, therefore, contribute to the field of genocide and film studies, as most scholars in this area have focussed on the Holocaust. Not only does the Armenian genocide deserve more attention in this field, as the event is still denied by some, fiction film offers a fruitful medium in which filmmakers find creative ways to convey their stories.

⁷ Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, "Introduction: Cultural Memory and Its Dynamics," in *Introduction: Cultural Memory and Its Dynamics* (De Gruyter, 2009), 3.

⁸ Erll and Rigney, "Introduction," 6.

1.2 Sub-questions and chapter outline

This thesis will draw upon three sub-questions to answer the research question stated in the introduction. These questions will be answered in two chapters. Chapter 2 will analyse and compare the films *Auction of Souls* and *Aurora's Sunrise*. Chapter 3 will analyse and compare the films *Nahapet* and *Ararat*.

Firstly, it will analyse how women as victims of the Armenian genocide have been represented, focusing specifically on sexual violence. Women are often not the main protagonists in films representing genocide.⁹ The films *Auction of Souls* and *Aurora's Sunrise* have the woman as the protagonist. The Armenian genocide is noticeable for the gendered impact it had on its victims. Women were treated differently than men, as they faced rape, mutilation, forced Islamisation and vaginal impalements.¹⁰ Therefore, the first sub-question is: How has sexual violence been remediated in films on the Armenian genocide? To answer this question, this thesis will analyse the films *Auction of Souls* and *Aurora's Sunrise* since both films have a female protagonist and mediate sexual violence.

Moreover, to understand how the genocide shaped the collective memory of the Armenians, the concept of cultural trauma will be applied. Trauma is not necessarily individualistic but may affect different generations of a group of people, in this case, the Armenians. One of the ways in which this can be transmitted is through film. The generational difference between the first and second is that in the latter case, they don't have a direct connection or experience of the genocide. Nevertheless, people can be affected by the Armenian genocide because they share the Armenian identity. Therefore, the second sub-question is: How do films on the Armenian genocide remediate cultural trauma? To answer this, the dissertation will analyse three films, *Nahapet*, *Ararat*, and *Aurora's Sunrise*. The narrative in each of the three films centres around trauma and the Armenian genocide.

Lastly, the paper draws on the concept of postmemory to analyse how the 2nd generation of victims got trauma inflected upon them through the experience of the 1st generation. Familial postmemory will be at the centre of the analysis. Therefore, the last sub-question is as follows:

⁹ Friedman and Hewitt, *The History of Genocide in Cinema: Atrocities on Screen*, 4.

¹⁰ Fricze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigianian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," 60-61.

how do films mediate postmemory of the Armenian genocide? To answer this, the thesis will analyse *Ararat* because the film tells the story of Canadian Armenians who are all affected by the Armenian genocide whilst they are from a generational remove.

These questions will answer how women as victims of the genocide are represented differently in film and how sexual violence is remediated over the selected period. Secondly, it will answer how these films remediated trauma and, thereby, how they shaped and altered the memory culture of the Armenian genocide. Lastly, it will answer how the trauma within the 2nd generation is mediated and shaped the memory culture of the Armenian genocide.

1.3 Main theoretical concepts

Remediation is at the centre of this thesis. Astrid Erll defines this concept as how a historical event is represented repeatedly in different forms, such as film or novels, over a period of time.¹¹

This concept was introduced by Bolter and Crusin in their work called Remediation:

Understanding New Media.¹² In this work, they explain how newer media forms help us to understand older media. It is through remediation that one can understand media. Therefore, each mediation depends on the other: they are continually intertwining.¹³ Therefore, to function, media needs media. Furthermore, Erll and Rigney argue that there is no past without mediation.¹⁴ Every mediation is a remediation. Therefore, cultural memory cannot exist before mediation; it is shaped by it. Memory is kept alive by remediation.¹⁵ This concept will be used to understand how the Armenian Genocide has been mediated and how each mediation of the genocide remediates or is remediated by the other, thereby structuring the memory culture of the Armenian genocide and how it is shaped, altered and kept alive. Film is the chosen medium because, as Erll argues, films have become the leading medium of popular cultural memory.¹⁶

Three theoretical concepts will be used to analyse the films.

Firstly, during the Armenian genocide, women faced an additional aspect of violence than men, namely sexual violence. An essential element of sexual violence is what Frieze calls biological absorption, destroying the marginalised group organically through forced Islamisation, rape and the Turkifying of children born of enslaved women.¹⁷ Sexual violence is used as a weapon and is critical to understanding genocide, especially in the case of the Armenian genocide. In this genocide, there was a clear gendered difference; women had to give up their culture and identity, while men, who were not murdered, were not required to convert to Islam, as Frieze argues.¹⁸ Thus, to understand how women were portrayed in film, sexual violence is a crucial term that

¹¹ Astrid Erll, "Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory," in *A Companion To Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 392.

¹² Jay David Bolter and Richard Crusin, *Remediation: A New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).

¹³ Bolter and Crusin, *Remediation: A New Media*, 55.

¹⁴ Erll and Rigney, "Introduction," 4.

¹⁵ Erll and Rigney, "Introduction," 4-6.

¹⁶ Erll, "Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory," 395

¹⁷ Donna-Lee Frieze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigianian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," in *Women and Genocide: Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators*, ed. Elissa Bemporad and Joyce W. Warren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 62.

¹⁸ Frieze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigianian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," 63.

will help to understand the mediation.

The second theoretical is postmemory. Postmemory is a concept gaining importance in trauma studies. This concept was introduced by Marianne Hirsch in 1992. She uses the prominent graphic novel *Maus* by Art Spiegelman to define postmemory. She defines postmemory as those of the 2nd generation of the holocaust, like Art, whose lives are determined by the memory of the 1st generation. Hirsch primarily sees photographs as the way memory is mediated between generations.¹⁹ She further expands postmemory in her work *Family Frames* as in how memory transpired; the 1st generation mediates this memory through photographs, oral history, and personal artefacts.²⁰ Hirsch argues that postmemory differs from memory because it is a generation apart. Therefore, Hirsch argues that postmemory does not mean we are beyond memory, but the generational difference makes postmemory different from memory. The 2nd generation grew up with narratives that existed before they were born.²¹

Furthermore, in her article of 2008, Hirsch argues that postmemory is a structure of transgenerational transmission of trauma. Importantly, postmemory is a consequence of trauma but a generational remove.²² Hirsch, in this article, also splits up postmemory into familial postmemory and affiliative postmemory. Familial postmemory happens in the family primarily through family photographs from the 1st generation survivor to their children. Affiliative postmemory is broader and encompasses whole 2nd generations of survivors who get trauma transmitted through media and storytelling.²³ Importantly, familial structures of mediation, such as photographs, facilitate affilial postmemory. They are in relation with each other.²⁴ Trauma can also be inflicted on a group of people even when the family structural mediation is absent. This trauma becomes apparent in the third concept, which will be used to understand the collectiveness of trauma and how it is shaped by media.

¹⁹ Marianne Hirsch, "Family Pictures: *Maus*, Mourning, and Post-Memory," *Discourse* 15, no. 2 (1992): 8-9.

²⁰ Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames : Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 13.

²¹ Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 22.

²² Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 106.

²³ Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," 114-115.

²⁴ Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," 115-116.

This is the concept of cultural trauma. To define this concept, this paper will draw upon the work of Jeffrey C. Alexander et al.²⁵ Smelser argues that cultural trauma should consist of an established group; this can be a nation or a subgroup. Smelser claims that collective trauma relates to the identity of the determined group.²⁶ Moreover, Eyerman argues that trauma affects the social group. Notably, as Eyerman argues, cultural trauma does not emphasise the direct connection to the event but how the trauma of a historical event is mediated through, for instance, film on the public. Accordingly, the trauma is carried out by what he calls intellectuals, such as directors, who shape collective trauma and further represent the desires of the affected to the broader public.²⁷ The role of the intellectual is vital because it ties in with remediation; it shapes the mediation of other media. These films are, therefore, vital in understanding the collective memory and trauma of an affected group precisely because they shape the trauma identity of a group in the representations.

Concluding, the three concepts bridge those affected by the Armenian genocide. Firstly, the 1st generation will be analysed through sexual violence because of the gendered difference of victims in the genocide. Then, the 2nd generation, those inflicted by trauma through the narrative of the 1st generation with the concept of postmemory. This is still an individualistic and familial experience of transmission of trauma. Therefore, the third concept, cultural trauma, will be applied to understand how the Armenian people are affected by the trauma of the genocide as mediated through films.

²⁵ Jeffrey C. Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

²⁶ Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 43-44

²⁷ Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 62-63.

1.4 Historiography

In the last decades, several scholars have sought to understand and conceptualise the role of fiction film in the remediation and remembrance of atrocities. One of the earlier works is the work of Omer Bartov. His book, *Murder in our midst: the Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation*, was published in 1996.²⁸ Only one chapter of the book is focused on the representation of the Holocaust in cinema. Therefore, Bartov only looks at the Holocaust and how it was represented in Hollywood and European films while drawing comparisons and analysing in short films such as *Schindler's List* and *Europa Europa*. He stresses the importance that most people in the audience do not have a profound understanding of the Holocaust. Therefore, the film *Schindler's List* is the basis of Holocaust knowledge people are exposed to.²⁹ Because the film tells the story of how Oskar Schindler saved hundreds of Jews, it diminishes the harsh reality of the genocide, the death of millions. Bartov stresses that when you tell the story of the survivors of the genocide, you will leave out the bigger story of the victims.³⁰ This could be like *Aurora's Sunrise*, which tells the story of the survivor Aurora. This raises the question of whether this is similar to *Schindler's List*, where the victims have been forgotten.

To conclude, Bartov tries to grasp how films deal with authenticity and genocide in their representations. He raises the question of whether fictional genres can represent genocide or whether documentaries are preferred. He argues that documentaries also have shortcomings in dealing with authenticity because the primary source material carries subjectivity and intent.³¹ He ends his argument by stressing that scholars should not ignore popular representations of genocide but rather that the scholar should be involved.³² However, these popular representations of genocide come in many shapes and forms; there is not one clear genocide representation.

This becomes clear in the collected work *The Holocaust and the Moving Image*, where scholars try to answer how the Holocaust is mediated in feature films.³³ This book focuses not only on feature film but also extending to archival film and documentaries. Haggith and

²⁸ Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation*, 1st edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

²⁹ Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, 161.

³⁰ Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, 168-69

³¹ Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, 171-73.

³² Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, 174.

³³ Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman, eds., *Holocaust and the Moving Image- Representations in Film and Television Since 1933*, (London: Wallflower Press, 2005).

Newman argue that film is a source of memory. However, the way this memory is shaped differs in the media. They argue that archival film can shape an alternative memory of the European Jewish experience in the war. They highlight an example of an amateur film showing the life of pre-war Jewish communities. Furthermore, archival films, such as liberation films, are often remediated in new media, creating evidence of the brutality in the newer representation.³⁴ Additionally, feature films, such as Hollywood, are creating mass awareness of a historical event but also shaping the memory of the event. They argue that it has become so effective that the Holocaust is part of the nation's cultural memory in the US. However, for the survivors it felt the Holocaust is trivialised and Americanised in feature films such as *Schindler's List*.³⁵ Therefore, according to Haggith and Newman, film balances between keeping the memory alive because it keeps remediating itself and the role of the survivors and their right to reply. Unlike Bartov, this argument centralises memory and the role of film instead of authenticity and its role with film. This work thus makes the first step in understanding the relation between memory and film when mediating genocide.

This prominent work is the work of Jonathan Markovitz. He argues in his article that what makes the Armenian genocide an interesting event to mediate is because of the denial of memory by the Turkish regime. Unlike the Holocaust, which is a well-known event, this genocide is actively denied its cultural memory identity. Whereas Haggith and Newman claim that Hollywood feature films create mass awareness, Markovitz argues that the films are made precisely because the Holocaust is so well known.³⁶ Therefore, mediating the Armenian genocide in film for a wide public is groundbreaking in its role of constructing the memory of said genocide. *Ararat* employs the film-within-a-film mechanism to show the generational difference in mediating genocide. The fictional director, Edward Saroyan, wants to represent the genocide and show its brutal imagery, whilst Atom Egoyan, the director of *Ararat*, represents the lasting effects of the genocide and its denial in contemporary identities. Markovitz explains this difference because Saroyan feels the necessity of representing the genocide because he is the son of a genocide survivor, whilst Egoyan is from a generation that came after. He feels the need to

³⁴ Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman, introduction to *Holocaust and the Moving Image- Representations in Film and Television Since 1933*, ed. Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman, (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 7.

³⁵ Haggith and Newman, "Introduction." 8.

³⁶ Jonathan Markovitz, "Ararat and Collective Memories of the Armenian Genocide," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 20, no. 2 (October 1, 2006): 237.

represent the impact of the past upon the present.³⁷ Interestingly enough, Markovitz argues that this film-within-a-film shows the heroic Armenians in the siege of Van, which, according to Markovitz, is good because it provides an alternative to the victimhood identity of Armenians.³⁸ However, since the film emphasises this part so heavily, audiences whose knowledge about the genocide might not understand the severity of the genocide.³⁹ Lastly, Markovitz's argument falls short in its lack of connection to the different mediations. He calls previous mediations 'ruins of the past'. These ruins then construct the identity of contemporary Armenians.⁴⁰ However, past mediations should not be seen as ruins but as mediation in their time that can be remediated in the present, as this thesis will prove. The present mediations can alter or construct the memory of the genocide. However, Markovitz creates an excellent beginning point for studying the relationship between film and the Armenian genocide regarding memory studies, which is expanded on in the work *European Cinema and Intertextuality*.⁴¹

In the first chapter of this work, Ewa Mazierska delves deeper into the subject of the Armenian Genocide and *Ararat*. She does this by using the concept of Marianne Hirsch: 'postmemory'.⁴² She analyses three different films to answer how film mediates postmemory. In the first film, she argues that postmemory is, by its nature, hollow. The trauma never gets fully transmitted, leaving gaps and an unfilled identity. She further argues that in *Ararat*, the characters are haunted by a past that preceded them.⁴³ The film centres on characters with an Armenian Canadian identity. She argues then that diasporic communities tend to focus more on the past than the present. They are in Canada because of the Armenian genocide. Their identity is formed by events that preceded their birth.⁴⁴ What is striking is that Mazierska interprets the film-within-a-film differently than Markovitz. He claimed that the generational difference is at the root of the difference between the film and fictional film. Mazierska, however, argues that Saroyan's film is criticised in *Ararat*. This film-within-a-film is a conventional historical epic

³⁷ Markovitz, "Ararat and Collective Memories of the Armenian Genocide," 238.

³⁸ Markovitz, "Ararat and Collective Memories of the Armenian Genocide," 239.

³⁹ Markovitz, "Ararat and Collective Memories of the Armenian Genocide," 246.

⁴⁰ Markovitz, "Ararat and Collective Memories of the Armenian Genocide," 249-250.

⁴¹ Ewa Mazierska, *European Cinema and Intertextuality: History, Memory and Politics*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁴² Mazierska, *European Cinema and Intertextuality*, 22.

⁴³ Mazierska, *European Cinema and Intertextuality*, 38.

⁴⁴ Mazierska, *European Cinema and Intertextuality*, 40.

done in an abandoned style of Hollywood, according to Mazierska.⁴⁵ Thus, what she argues is that Saroyan films are shaped by the mediation of Hollywood. Egoyan does this to show that he would not make a film like this. He is a postmodern filmmaker and wants to restrain himself from the Hollywood mediation, thereby altering the memory culture of the genocide.⁴⁶

Mazierska's argument is crucial for this thesis because it uses the theoretical concept of postmemory and applies this to *Ararat*. It is another essential work relating memory studies with film representations of the genocide.

Astrid Erll also wrote an important argument regarding memory studies with film, albeit not about genocidal films but war films in general. She claims that because of remediation, stories and memories can become iconic and successful depending on the remediation. Some films can never make it into a collective memory.⁴⁷ She argues that forms of censorship or film exhibitions can make or break the film's role in the collective memory. This argument is crucial precisely because the Armenian genocide has been denied. Films mediating the genocide suffer from censorship and even destruction of existence, in the case of *Auction of Souls*. Furthermore, she argues that narratives that originated in novels and are adapted into film become part of the media memory. There is traffic between embodied memory and media memory. She gives the argument of veteran stories in the war being adapted into a film. This individual memory becomes part of the filmic memory.⁴⁸ This relation between embodied and film memory is important in this study because Aurora is an individual story, and her memory is mediated into two different films, analysed in this thesis. Erll shows that films are powerful medium in creating collective memory.⁴⁹

This also goes for Georgiana Banita, who analyses *Ararat* with a different perspective concerning collective memory. She does so in a chapter in the book *Film and Genocide*, a significant work in genocide studies concerning cinema.⁵⁰ Banita's central argument in this

⁴⁵ Mazierska, *European Cinema and Intertextuality*, 42.

⁴⁶ Mazierska, *European Cinema and Intertextuality*, 42.

⁴⁷ Astrid Erll, "War, Film and Collective Memory: Plurimedial Constellations," *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema* 2, no. 3 (2012), 234.

⁴⁸ Erll, "War, Film and Collective Memory: Plurimedial Constellations." 233.

⁴⁹ Erll, "War, Film and Collective Memory: Plurimedial Constellations." 234.

⁵⁰ Georgiana Banita, "'The Power to Imagine': Genocide, Exile, and Ethical Memory in Atom Egoyan's *Ararat*," in *Film and Genocide*, ed. Kristi M. Wilson and Tomas F. Crowder-Taraborrelli (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

work is that *Ararat* is a film that shows how a medium can take up residence within another medium. From the picture of Gorky to the filmic representation of Raffi, media shifts from authenticity into representation. Banita sees this as a transition from a direct memory to a form of ethical recall. She argues then that the character Raffi has the desire to live through the events; the genocide torments him.⁵¹ Therefore, Banita shows that this film proves that mediation of genocide does not have to entail a faithful representation of the genocide. It is precisely remediation that creates a collective memory through the postmemory torment of the descendants of Armenian culture with the Armenian genocide.

Two years later, the book *Cinema of the Dark Side* was published.⁵² This work takes a different stance regarding memory studies and film. Chaudhuri argues that film creates a memory-world; it does not show us the memory of others; it creates its own.⁵³ This is like the argument of Erll, who also claimed that embodied memory is translated into filmic memory. Where the argument of Chaudhuri differs is in his understanding of the memory of film and the audience. The memory-world of film mediates the memory of the audience. It tries to incorporate the memory of an audience that has no connection to the historic event. Therefore, film can lure the audience into a past they do not connect with. Memory, therefore, can be shared and multiplied. Even for those connected to the historical event, their memories can be intensified, according to Chaudhuri. However, the memory-world of the film can also fail to correspond to their own personal memory.⁵⁴ Whilst previous scholars discussed try to understand how film creates the memory culture of an identity of a specific group in the film. Chaudhuri argues that the film creates memory, which is shared by everyone and challenges your own memory. Chaudhuri states that memory exceeds the past because it constantly alters and forgets aspects of the past.⁵⁵ Therefore, this work sheds new light on memory in relation to film because it reasons the impact of memory on different groups, how memory is not only shaped by film but, furthermore, how it can alter one's own memory.

⁵¹ Banita, "The Power to Imagine': Genocide, Exile, and Ethical Memory in Atom Egoyan's *Ararat*," 102.

⁵² Shohini Chaudhuri, *Cinema of the Dark Side: Atrocity and the Ethics of Film Spectatorship*, 1st edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

⁵³ Chaudhuri, *Cinema of the Dark Side*, 87.

⁵⁴ Chaudhuri, *Cinema of the Dark Side*, 88.

⁵⁵ Chaudhuri, *Cinema of the Dark Side*, 89.

The book *Aesthetics of Displacement*, published in 2016, is not a book, particularly about genocide and film, but has a chapter devoted to film and the Armenian genocide.⁵⁶ What is striking about the analysis of Özlem Köksal is that he analyses *Ararat* not in isolation but in the context of other mediation and the personal history of the director of *Ararat*, Egoyan. He explains that Egoyan has a history of displacement. His grandparents were survivors of the genocide and fled to Egypt, and his parents migrated from Egypt to Canada. He was raised Canadian and reconnected with his Armenian identity during his student time.⁵⁷ Therefore, *Ararat* tells the story of the loss of identity in Canadian Armenians, precisely what Egoyan underwent himself. The characters in the film try to find the answers in the past to understand their present. Furthermore, Köksal argues that Egoyan's earlier films are predecessors to his *Ararat*. All films experiment with topics such as memory, family and loss. Furthermore, one film, *Calendar*, is also about Armenia but not the genocide, and it uses the same filmic styles, such as flashbacks.⁵⁸ Therefore, to understand *Ararat* and its role in representing the genocide, it must be placed in the context of Egoyan. He could not have made the film without his earlier mediations. *Ararat* remediates his earlier works to understand the memory and loss of the descendants of the Armenian culture. The argument of Köksal is crucial for this study precisely because it is centred around earlier mediations. This paper tries to prove and show how a mediation is shaped and alters earlier mediations to construct the memory culture of the Armenian genocide.

Marsoobian further builds onto the notion of remediation in the context of the Armenian genocide. He gives a chronological filmography of the Armenian genocide and places this in relation to denial.⁵⁹ However, Marsoobian fails to mention *Nahapet* in 1977 and sees the period between *Ravished Armenia* and *Ararat* as a period of silence. Where Marsoobian succeeds in his argument is that he connects the denial with the mediation of the genocide. As earlier mentioned in Erll's argument, collective memory is made through remediation. However, censorship can break a film's role in this collective memory. This is precisely what Marsoobian proves. For

⁵⁶ Özlem Köksal, *Aesthetics of Displacement: Turkey and Its Minorities on Screen* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

⁵⁷ Köksal, *Aesthetics of Displacement*, 103-104.

⁵⁸ Köksal, *Aesthetics of Displacement*, 104-106.

⁵⁹ Armen T. Marsoobian, "The Armenian Genocide in Film: Overcoming Denial and Loss," in *The History of Genocide in Cinema: Atrocities on Screen*, ed. Jonathan Friedman and William Hewitt (London New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017).

instance, he mentions the project of adapting the historical fiction novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. This adaptation, which began developing in 1934, never came to fruition because the MGM studio, which acquired the rights, was pressured by the US State Department to kill the project. This pressure on the US State Department resulted from the Turkish government campaign led by Mehmet Münir.⁶⁰ Thus, the remediation of this novel was interfered with by the Turkish. This absence of mediation in this period leads to a forgotten memory. *Auction of Souls* was the first mediation, and it took until 1977 for a new mediation, which Marsoobian fails to mention. However, *Nahapet* is an important mediation because it was made by an Armenian film studio. Furthermore, it was projected at the Cannes Film Festival in 1978. However, Marsoobian still proves that the Armenian genocide and its mediations have had a long and controversial history due to its censorship and denial. Therefore, it is crucial to study those sources that were made and had a role in forming the cultural memory of the Armenian genocide.

Lastly, for this thesis, memory is not the only meaningful concept in relation to film and genocide. Violence, and more importantly, sexual violence, is a crucial aspect of the Armenian genocide. Therefore, this thesis will look at the work of Donna-Lee Frieze. She wrote a chapter in the book *Women and Genocide Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators*, analysing sexual violence in the film *Ravished Armenia*.⁶¹ Her central argument is that Aurora is portrayed as an innocent young woman. By doing this, the American audience could place themselves better in her position.⁶² Rape and sexual violence are prominent in this film. This shocked the audience of that time. But Frieze argues that Aurora is used in this film as a Christian martyr; the atrocities are a crime against the Christians worldwide. They changed her eyewitness account. In this account, Aurora tells the story of how women suffered vaginal impalements, but in the film, this is portrayed that women were crucified as Christian victims.⁶³ Frieze argues that in this way, the Armenians are forgotten and whitewashed. Through this film, the identity of the Armenians is again distorted.⁶⁴ Furthermore, Frieze argues that Hollywood further exploited Aurora. They

⁶⁰ Marsoobian, "The History of Genocide in Cinema," 77-78.

⁶¹ Frieze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigianian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment."

⁶² Frieze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigianian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," 65-66.

⁶³ Frieze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigianian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," 67.

⁶⁴ Frieze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigianian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," 67.

treated her as an object and fell victim to stardom and harassment that usually happens to women, as Fricze argues. Moreover, after the film, she went on a 21-city US state tour where she had to tell her story to raise funds for the Armenian genocide. When she crumbled under pressure and had an emotional breakdown, she was replaced by look-alikes. This, as Fricze argues, proves she was an object for the gains of many men.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Fricze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigianian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," 68-69.

1.5 Innovative aspects

Research on genocide in film has tremendously progressed in recent years. The Holocaust in Hollywood productions is not the only area worth studying anymore. Films from all over the world are being analysed by different scholars. Yet, the Armenian genocide is still underrepresented in these scholarly debates. Those studying this topic have tended to focus on *Ararat*, ignoring other relevant productions. This includes *Nahapet*, which has not been a commercial success, yet it is one of the few films made by Armenian producers and directors, therefore representing an Armenian perspective on the historic event. In addition, the recent film *Aurora's Sunshine* demonstrates how the topic is still of interest in film production and simultaneously offers a new remediation or format as an animated production.

This research thus not only analyses films that have not been studied prior in extent, in addition it provides a cohesive overview of these various productions over a period of 104 years, therefore aiming to shed light on the development of memory culture on the Armenian genocide. This study will, therefore, add to the field of genocide studies and visual culture, as well as expand on Mazierska's work by approaching this from the concept of postmemory.

Lastly, by taking the Armenian genocide as its focus, this thesis speaks to debates concerning the representation of the unrepresentable. This includes, among others, sexual violence in the form of rape, slavery, suicide under captivity and sexual impalement. Therefore, it provides a gendered lens to the study of genocide and victimhood, something which tends to be overlooked in general knowledge about this historic event.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Fricze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigianian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," 67.

1.6 Sources

As discussed, the sources selected for this thesis consist of four films produced over a period of 103 years. The first source is *Ravished Armenia*, also known as *Auction of Souls*, released in 1919.⁶⁷ This is a Hollywood production directed by Oscar Apfel. This fictional film tells the story of Aurora, who lived through the Armenian genocide. It is a remediation of the memoir with the same title, written by Aurora and Henry Gates in 1918. This film is shot in black and white and is a silent film. However, this source is limited because it only contains a 20-minute film segment. This happened because the production company destroyed all the existing copies after the Turkish government pressured them into destroying all existing copies.⁶⁸ Therefore, this film cannot be thoroughly analysed. However, the 20-minute segment still gives a glimpse of the original depiction, making it worthwhile to research. As the first film representing the Armenian genocide, this production cannot be overlooked.

The second fictional film is *Nahapet*.⁶⁹ This film was released in 1977 and is a Soviet-Armenian production directed by Henrik Malyan. The film is based on the short story *Nahapet* collected in the work of Hrachya Kochar called “The White Book.” This film is in colour and contains sound and music, in contrast to the first. The main character is a man who lost his family in the genocide, and he must now overcome his loss and build a new life in a new country. This film is selected because it is an Armenian production in a time when there was an absence of representations of the genocide.

A relatively well-known fictional film representing the Armenian genocide is *Ararat*.⁷⁰ This French-Canadian production was released in 2002 and written and directed by Atom Egoyan. The film is once more fictional and shot in colour. This film is a different approach to representing the genocide because it delves more into the aspect of how different generations deal with the Armenian genocide. However, this film-within-a-film is a unique approach because it brings forth a difference in the mediation of the genocide in representing the Armenian genocide. This film is selected because it is the most well-known representation of the genocide,

⁶⁷ Oscar Apfel, *Ravished Armenia* (First National Pictures, 1919).

⁶⁸ Armen T. Marsoobian, “The Armenian Genocide in Film: Overcoming Denial and Loss,” in *The History of Genocide in Cinema: Atrocities on Screen*, ed. Jonathan Friedman and William Hewitt (London New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 73-74.

⁶⁹ Henrik Malyan, *Nahapet* (Armenfilm, 1977).

⁷⁰ Atom Egoyan, *Ararat* (Alliance Atlantis, 2002).

resulting a worldwide box office of \$2,743,336 and winner of the Genie Award for Best Picture in Canada.

Lastly, the most recent film analysed is *Aurora's Sunrise*.⁷¹ This internationally co-produced film was released in 2022 and directed by Inna Sahakyan. This film retells the story of Aurora Mardiganian, the genocide survivor and refugee who starred in *Ravished Armenia*. Unlike the previous three films, this film is an animation. Most shots in the film consist of a paper cutout computer animation, occasionally alternated by the segments of *Auction of Souls*, interview clips with Aurora Mardiganian and photographs. This makes this film an interesting remediation of earlier representations. Moreover, animation provides a creative freedom that cannot be gained in a live-action film, which may offer new approaches to the depiction of genocide.⁷² Lastly, this film has been selected because it is the most recent work that mediates the Armenian genocide.

⁷¹ Inna Sahakyan, *Aurora's Sunrise* (Bars Media, Broom Films, Gebrueder Beetz Filmproduktion, 2023).

⁷² David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 17th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2019), 400.

1.7 Methodology

The method used in this thesis will be a qualitative in-depth film analysis. The analysis will combine form and style, as form shapes the narrative and provides meaning; it is a way to grasp the film. Style is how this story is told; which technique is used to portray the story.⁷³ The paper will use a scheme for this analysis, which is attached in Appendix I. This schematic is based on the analysis model of Anneke Smelik and is further expanded to fit this research.⁷⁴ The analysis will be conducted in a systematic, step-by-step approach. First, the most relevant scenes will be chosen, and then analysed shot for shot. The selection of the scenes will be two-fold. Firstly, selecting scenes that are critical points in the overall story, which could mean turning points, endings, and opening scenes. Secondly, scenes that could correspond to the theoretical concepts will be chosen.

After the chosen scenes, the first step will be a simplistic phrasing of what goes down in the shot. Doing so creates a clear overview of what happens and will help further analyse the shot. The second step is determining the style of the shot. Essential aspects are mise-en-scene, composition, and perspective. Mise-en-scene is everything placed in front of the camera: setting, costume and make-up, and staging.⁷⁵ Perspective consists of how the shot is made, for example, a long shot, medium shot, or close-up.⁷⁶

The next step of the analysis is the narrative form and its proposed meaning, thereby focusing on narrative and symbolism. This entails how the story is told, albeit chronologically or not and what symbols the films use to give it meaning. The analysis will focus on scenes, pinpointing the meaning or interpretation of said scene. From that, the scenes will be analysed from the theoretical concepts introduced above. So, to provide an example, does scene A include sexual violence, and if so, how? Drawing back on the earlier steps of form and content. Lastly, this paper will provide a comparative analysis between the films to answer how film representations of the Armenian genocide are remediated over the selected period.

⁷³ Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 52-53.

⁷⁴ Anneke Smelik, *Effectief Beeldvormen: Theorie, analyse en praktijk van beeldvormingsprocessen* (Assen: Koninklijke Van Gorcum, 1999), 99.

⁷⁵ Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 115.

⁷⁶ Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 168-169.

One limitation of this schema is that it focuses mostly on technical aspects of the image rather than, for example, narrative or dialogue. Chapter 3 of this thesis will address this.

Chapter 2: Remediating the story of Aurora (Arshaluys) Mardiganian from *Auction of Souls* to *Aurora's Sunrise*

2.1 Auction of Souls (Ravished Armenia)

This film, released in 1919, tells the story of Aurora Mardiganian during her time in the genocide. It is based on the memoir of Aurora, co-written by Henry Gates. The film is limited because today, only a 25-minute film reel exists. Still, the 25 minutes gives a clear idea of what the story is about and is worthy of analysis. It starts in 1914 with war sequences, then moves on to 1915, in which the title card describes it as "The Greatest tragedy of the Armenian People. First, the film tells what happened to the Armenian men. They are separated from their families and driven out of town. There, they are killed by swords and gunfire. Next, the film shows the plunder and looting by the Turks and Kurds in the towns whilst religious Armenian leaders try to argue for peace; they are shortly killed afterwards. What follows is the story of Aurora and her family; only the children and women part of the family. They are deported by small boats and put in tent camps, getting hardly any rest. In this segment, sexual violence occurs and the killing of children. Furthermore, it shows how a barn is burned while people remain in it. It shows how Aurora and different women are raped and sold into slavery. The segment ends with a game called Game of Swords, where women get impaled by swords. Lastly, the crucifixion is shown of a dozen women as well.

The techniques used in this film need to be understood in that period. The constant fast-motion effect visible in the film was not done on purpose by the filmmaker. At this time, films were often shot at 16 or 18 frames per second; however, film screenings took place at 24 frames per second. This resulted in the effect of *fast motion*, now often used as a creative decision, but at that time, it was purely accidental.⁷⁷ Furthermore, this film is from the period of silent films; therefore, actors could only act with facial expressions, and title cards were used to explain the narrative. Lastly, this film was shot in a period where colour was not yet used, so it is in black and white. Therefore, filmmakers are limited in their creative decisions and can only use the

⁷⁷ David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 17th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2019), 164.

contrast of black and white for symbolism. These technical aspects nevertheless impact the perception of the film and the narrative it conveys, as will be shown in the next section.

2.1.1 A Gendered Genocide

This film centres around sexual violence because it is based on the book of Aurora. This film uses a woman's eyewitness account as the premise of the film. Therefore, violence in this film is centred on the sexual aspect. A part of violence often forgotten in mediations. It does not draw heavily on symbolism, and sound was not possible during the time of production. The violence shown encompasses; rape, slavery, suicide under captivity and sexual impalement. Lastly, it portrays the crucifixion of women. However, this scene is contested since it does not bear any historical authenticity, which *Aurora's Sunrise* (2021) challenges in its narrative. This sub-chapter will explain how sexual violence is shown and the symbolism used.

The first scene that depicts sexual violence during the genocide is when the women and children are deported out of town and are now in camps. The scene starts with a medium shot of five Turkish soldiers talking with each other. One can be seen holding a bottle and drinking from it. It can be assumed that the soldiers are drunk and feel invincible and powerful in the setting. The scene then changes to a new shot in which three women can be seen cleaning clothes on the ground. The women have worried looks on their faces whilst they are looking at the soldiers. The shot creates an ominous feeling for the viewer. What follows is a new shot, again showing the soldiers. This time, their conversation ends as one of them waves his arms and implies that the other soldiers, even the ones in the background, move. As they are seen running away, the shot changes back to the Armenian women, who now see the man running towards them. Quickly, each of the women starts hiding in tents whilst the older woman protects the tent's entrance from the soldiers.

What follows are shots of the Turkish soldiers picking up women or throwing them on the ground with force. In one shot, the older woman is pushed away, and Aurora's sister is taken from her tent. The woman is thrown into a tent with a Turkish soldier only. The following shot shows a medium shot of a silhouette, where she is trying to fight off the soldier. Whilst they struggle and resist, she is berated from her clothes and freedom. The scene ends with the Turkish soldiers leaving, and the young women are consoled by their mothers. It ends with the sister

struggling to get out of the tent, she hardly can stand up as she tries to hold up a sheet to cover herself. She limps with pain towards her mother and falls in her lap. The filmmaker makes it apparent that she was raped, however the rape is not shown. A close-up shot follows of the mother talking to her daughter but to no avail. The woman dies in her hands, and the mother waves her arm into the sky, calling upon God. This last part symbolises the heavy toll women had to endure during this genocide. The often occurrence of rape and abuse by the Turkish soldiers. The film shows that often, young women were the targets, whilst older women were only beaten and cast aside. The film shows the direct sexual violence of women, their abduction and struggle and their sorrowful ending.

What is striking about this representation of sexual violence is that it refrains from the voyeuristic gaze. As argued in the chapter on representing rape in Holocaust films in the book *Aftermath*, rape and sexual violence on women is often eroticised in Holocaust films. The viewer will derive pleasure from watching rape.⁷⁸ However, in the last section of their chapter, they deconstruct this gaze and highlight some examples where rape is not eroticised in genocidal representations. These examples are two films from 1995 and 2006 that try to deconstruct the voyeuristic gaze. For instance, the focus of the shot during the rape is not on the body but on the woman's shocked expression. Furthermore, she attempts to resist the rape by fighting the man. Because the camera is not focused on the rape, it shows that the reality of the trauma can never be represented in full.⁷⁹ The rape scene of *Ravished Armenia* has similar comparisons to the findings of Brown & Waterhouse-Watson. The sister of Aurora was fighting the soldier, thereby negating the eroticisation. The camera also centres on the face of the victim and her horrified expression. Additionally, the rape is not directly shown, thereby also showing that the trauma cannot be fully represented. This is striking because this mediation of sexual violence was released in 1919. The pattern of voyeurism and eroticism in genocidal films is not coherent within this film and this scene. This scene is comparable to scenes of other films that try to deconstruct this male-gazing pattern.

Not only was rape common during the genocide also auctioning of women into slavery was common during the genocide. This is also highlighted in two scenes in this film. Firstly, the

⁷⁸ Adam Brown and Deb Waterhouse-Watson, "Representing Rape in Holocaust Film," in *Aftermath: Genocide, Memory and History*, ed. Karen Auerbach (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2015), 171-172.

⁷⁹ Brown and Waterhouse-Watson, "Representing Rape in Holocaust Film," 180-182.

medium shot opens with a woman in white standing on an elevated platform whilst Turkish men surround her on the left of the shot, bidding for the woman. The auctioneer walks around and touches the woman whilst upping the price. The woman is then sold, and a new girl is brought up. Also dressed in a white gown, she looks unhopeful as she looks at the ground. The auctioneer touches her like an object, turning her so everyone can see her different sides. She is lost to a man who approaches the auctioneer. What makes this scene so important is that the film tries to balance innocence with brutality. The whiteness of the dresses shows the innocence of the girls, a recurrent symbol in the film. How these women are touched and displayed, the normality of the auction highlights the brutality and normalisation of sexual violence that occurred in the genocide.

The second scene that shows auctioning into slavery is different because it shows that women who got sold also included minors. Aurora herself was a minor when she went through the years of the genocide. The scene opens with a close-up shot of a little girl on the right and a man on the left. Then, a man approaches, who takes the girl and holds her close. He starts bargaining with the man on the left, and soon, a deal is settled; the girl, as if it is a product of a market, is taken by the man and dragged off-screen. This scene shows once more how the filmmakers show how women were often the target of the genocide. They were sold into slavery, even from a young age.

These two scenes depict a crucial aspect of the Armenian genocide; biological absorption. As argued by Freeze, biological absorption is used as a weapon to destroy for instance an ethnic group. It is a gendered weapon because it targets women. These Armenian women were forced into the Islam and their children born in the enslavement would be Turkified.⁸⁰ These scenes, show the start of the process, the women were sold in enslavement where the organic absorption began. Mediating this aspect of sexual violence is important because it is a part of the Armenian genocide. Not in every genocide biological absorption happened. For instance, in the Holocaust the nazis thought it was repulsive because it would taint the Aryan blood. Therefore, the Jews were destroyed through extermination.⁸¹ Accordingly, in

⁸⁰ Frieze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigianian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," 62.

⁸¹ Frieze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigianian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," 62.

the memory culture of the Armenian genocide, biological absorption is crucial to be remembered. Precisely what this film did.

Famine is also a significant aspect of indirect violence that occurred during the genocide. Women and children had to go on long marches, many of which did not survive. This representation uses the women and child as symbol for famine. This is also called the feminisation of famine, a concept used by Margaret Kelleher. The concept is defined as the representation of famine through the image of women.⁸² In one shot of the film, this becomes evident. The medium shot covers a woman and child sitting on the ground. The woman is seen desperately squeezing water out of cloth whilst the child is holding out his two hands in cup form and receives the water as she squeezes. This happens twice, and after a while, she squeezes and sucks the last bit of water out of the cloth. She sacrifices herself for the betterment of the child, giving him more water than herself, whilst she needs more. It creates a sacrificial identity, as Kelleher explains.⁸³

The last scene of the film shows an unauthentic representation of the Armenian Genocide. The scene opens with a long shot of four crosses standing in the background of the set. Four women are hanging on those crosses, all with their heads down and without clothing. In the far background, another cross is being raised between the others. In the following shot, a woman is struggling while she is being tied to the cross. The next few shots show how multiple crosses are raised and how a half dozen women are crucified by the Ottomans or Kurds. The scene ends with a close-up of an Armenian woman as she is also crucified. In this shot, she looks slowly up and talking, perhaps to her God. The film ends with a classic editing trick of fading out the shot with black. In this scene, showing all the women first and ending with her creates for the viewer a sense that women were not alone in their struggle. The filmmakers want to create the idea that innocent Christian women who overcame the rape and torment were, in the end, crucified by the aggressors sealing their fate, as Frieze argued, as Christian martyrs.

This scene is a crucial mediation of the Armenian genocide. The distorted memory formed by showing women being crucified is detrimental to shaping the memory culture of the

⁸² Margaret Kelleher, *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 2.

⁸³ Kelleher, *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?*, 7-8.

genocide. The reason they chose to make this scene was to create an appeal for an American Christian audience. This becomes apparent when looking at the top left part of the poster of this film (figure 1). To authenticate the crucifixion scene, they used the memoir of Aurora written by Henry Gates. This authentication process is an important aspect of remediation. As Erll argued, there is traffic between embodied memory and the media memory. Those personal stories are translated into the film memory but then also become part of the survivor's memory again.⁸⁴

In this memoir, Aurora describes witnessing the crucifixion of the women, even though decades later, she claimed in an interview that she did not witness it at all. The reason why Aurora did claim she saw the crucifixion has to do with the exploitation of the Americans. Anthony Slide, in his book, claimed that Aurora was exploited by American capitalism because they saw potential in the story.⁸⁵ They distorted her memory to create affect with the American Christian audience. This becomes apparent when the name Aurora is changed to Arshaluys, thereby changing her memory and further erasing her Armenian identity. This aspect is further analysed in the section about *Aurora's Sunrise*. This finding also proves the argument of Chaudhuri: film does not show the memory of others; it creates its own memory-world.⁸⁶ This memory-world can place the viewer, who has no connection to the event, in relation to the event, thereby sharing and multiplying the memory. It can also have a failing effect in corresponding with their memory, often with those who have a direct connection to the event.⁸⁷ Therefore, Aurora could not relate to this memory-world whilst the Americans might do.

Therefore, to understand this scene and its depiction of sexual violence at the time, it is crucial to understand its remediation of a memoir that distorted the memory of Aurora. This film and scene abused the memory of Aurora to create a collective memory of Christian suffering in the East rather than the Armenians suffering in the genocide. Over a hundred years later, this memory is deconstructed by the remediation of Aurora's story in *Aurora's Sunrise*, as discussed in the following section.

⁸⁴ Erll, "War, Film and Collective Memory: Plurimedial Constellations," 233.

⁸⁵ Anthony Slide, *Ravished Armenia and the Story of Aurora Mardiganian* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 11.

⁸⁶ Chaudhuri, *Cinema of the Dark Side*, 87.

⁸⁷ Chaudhuri, *Cinema of the Dark Side*, 88-89.



Figure 1: Poster of Ravished Armenia

2.2 Aurora's Sunrise

Aurora's sunrise is a film released in 2022 and directed by Armenian Inna Sahakyan. This film retells the story of Aurora (Arschaluys) Mardigianian. The film has an animated style and incorporates footage from *Auction of Souls* and interview segments of Aurora in her latter stage of her life.

The film aims to tell the life story of Aurora and how it was impacted by the genocide. It begins with a depiction of a simple, happy family: they eat together, and the father creates silk from cocoons. Later in the afternoon, while the father and oldest brother watch, the rest perform a theatre play in the garden.

This seemingly peaceful life is interrupted by the start of WOI and the Ottoman plan to eradicate the Armenian people. Firstly, the oldest brother and father are taken away by Ottoman soldiers from the house, never to be seen again by Aurora. The film then delves deep into the genocide and depicts how the rest of the family had to go on long and strenuous marches, which often resulted in death. After most of her family dies, Aurora becomes involved in a series of capture, escape and slavery. It ends when she flees to the United States to tell her story and the story of Armenia. Once there, she co-writes a book, which was then turned into the motion picture we know today as *Auction of Souls*, where she is cast as the main lead.

The film ends with her rise to fame and fall. She must do many tours for wealthy Americans to raise money for Armenian refugees, but soon she crumbles under pressure. She is outcasted in a monastery whilst impersonators of Aurora continue her story. After finding out that her sister did survive the genocide and is coming to the United States, Aurora leaves the monastery and awaits her arrival in New York. The film wants to keep Aurora's memory alive and tell her story. This subchapter will analyse the mediation of trauma endured in Aurora and how it remediates the film *Auction of Souls* and sexual violence.

2.2.1 The play, the cocoon and the remediation of cultural trauma

The film starts with a scene showing the peaceful family life of the Mardigianian family, where the father of Aurora makes colourful silk from cocoons. The scene opens with a close-up shot of a hand going slowly over the different cocoons. In the next shot, a medium angle is used to show the cocoons' storage, in which Aurora and her father are standing across from each other. The father uses a pipette with yellow ink to colour a cocoon in the foreground, in the background Aurora is amazed at the colouring of the cocoon. The yellow colour of the cocoon resembles the positivity of their lives. Voice-over Aurora describes her life as colourful and happy. A transition shot is used to create a connection between the colourful cocoons and the play that a part of the family is performing in front of the father and oldest son. The camera pans over the cocoon shed towards the backs of the father and oldest son and centres in front of the play as the audience of the film becomes the audience of the play. The connection between the colourful cocoons and the play is at the centre of this film and is a recurring symbol in Aurora's life. The film uses the play as a symbol to highlight the sharp contrast in life before, during and after the genocide.

The first time the film does this is when the father and oldest son are taken away by Ottoman soldiers to be shot. The scene starts after voice-over Aurora tells the audience that her father and son are shot. It opens with a close-up shot of a bush full of cocoons. A yellow and pink cocoon are seen turning into dark red ones. A shot of Aurora and her sister dancing in the play follows. The camera pans behind them, so through them, the audience sees the father and brother enjoying the play. The father has a calm smile on his face while tapping on the ground to the music, and the brother is swaying to the music and smiling. As the backs of Aurora and the sister cover most of the screen, as soon as they leave the screen and the camera pans through them, the father and son are no longer sitting and enjoying the play. Suddenly, the empty background is filled with many dark red cocoons, all tied to each other with silk (see figure 2).



Image 1: The colourful cocoons



Image 2: Two cocoons turning dark red



Image 3: Aurora performing in the play



Image 4: performance whilst father and son watch



Image 4: The disappearance of the father and son



Image 5: The red cocoons fill in the empty space

Figure 2: the transition between the happy life and the death of the family through the symbol of the silk cocoon.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Inna Sahakyan, *Aurora's Sunrise* (Bars Media, Broom Films, Gebrueder Beetz Filmproduktion, 2023).

The film reuses this recurring theme every time a family member dies. As the film progresses, the symbolic play becomes emptier until only Aurora is the last one alive. The last person who dies is the mother of Aurora. After the scene of her mother's death, the shot changes back to the familiar play, where the mother is in a goat costume and shushes the children from behind a door, who were originally in the play but are now non-existent. The camera then pans down, whilst the door simultaneously opens, until it reaches the ground where the goat costume remains, and the mother has disappeared. The costume is covered with dark red cocoons. The film then shows a prop, which the sister was holding, and the costumes of the younger children on the ground, which are covered with red cocoons. It then pans back to the empty audience and the decayed cocoon shed, all covered with red cocoons. Lastly, a close-up of Aurora's face shows the sadness as she is seen looking down; the camera then pans out to show that Aurora is standing on an empty stage. Lastly, the camera pans outwards back into the shed.

This continuous shot and the shot before the genocide of the symbolic play are similar but differ in that they are in reverse of each other. The one shot is panned from colourful cocoons in the shed to the backs of the father and son and then moves on to the play by Aurora and the rest of the family. The other shot pans from a sad Aurora alone on stage in front of an empty audience back into the shed with dark red cocoons. The film does this to show the complete overhaul the genocide caused for Aurora and her family, from peace and happiness to loss and sadness. These scenes serve a two-fold purpose in the narrative of Aurora's Sunrise. Firstly, it shows the loss Aurora endured and the trauma that followed. It establishes the innocence of the play. It then uses the cocoons and their silk connections to symbolise the trauma surrounding Aurora. Secondly, it shows how the story of Aurora serves a bigger story: the story of the Armenian genocide. By establishing this personal trauma, it can create a gateway to the collective trauma, as discussed below.

The filmmakers create a connection between the personal trauma and the trauma of the Armenians. They use an interview segment of Aurora, where she explains that she suffers as much for her people as her parents. The film then shows black-and-white pictures of the genocide. The first one starts as a close-up of a young Aurora in a photograph, and as it pans out, the whole family in the photograph is shown. What follows is a series of photos of the genocide,

showing death and different families interchanging with each other. Therefore, centring Aurora's trauma in this film and then drawing it larger to a collective trauma is a way of remediating cultural trauma. They succeed in this because the cocoon symbolism is recurrent throughout the film. Without showing what Aurora went through, this scene would not have been impactful. Precisely because the audience lived through the story of Aurora, the pictures of the other families speak for themselves. The audience knows that behind these pictures are similar stories of loss and trauma.

Astrid Erll argues that remediating eyewitness accounts repeatedly creates authenticity. She analysed a novel by Charles Ball, which used different eyewitness accounts to make his fictional story more authentic. Using repetition certainly has an authenticating function, according to Erll.⁸⁹ This paper argues that the repeated use of photographs of the Armenian genocide serves a similar authenticating function. The mediation of the medium photograph authenticates the fictional account of Aurora. Through this remediation, the symbol of Aurora becomes more real, constructing her story in the cultural trauma of the Armenian people and thus in the memory culture of the Armenian genocide.

Unlike *Auction of Souls*, which was a film for the American audience raising awareness for the genocide by using the innocent Christian white female as an appeal, this film targets a global audience raising awareness for a historical event that is denied and forgotten.

What is important here is the ending scene, where the film challenges the memory denial of the Armenian genocide by the Turkish Government. Firstly, by using white text on a black background, the first shot states that the US became the 33rd country to recognize the genocide in 2021, whilst Turkey still actively denies this historical fact. By using the words historical facts, the film does not leave room for discussion of that what happened was a genocide. It then cuts to an interview segment in which Aurora explains they should've tried the Turkish right after WOI because maybe the Holocaust would not have happened then. She thinks the Turks still need to be tried. It ends with a shot of text again where the filmmaker dedicates the film to the memory of Aurora and all victims and survivors of genocide. The last two words of the film read: never

⁸⁹ Astrid Erll, "Remembering across Time, Space, and Cultures: Premediation, Remediation and the 'Indian Mutiny,'" in *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 117-118.

forget. Thereby, this film actively challenges the denial memory of the Turkish. It broadens the scope of memory, indicating that everyone who watches should not forget this genocide. Thus, this scene exemplifies how a memory-world can alter and challenge your memory. Furthermore, it is an example of the importance of the construction of memory. Especially, as Markovitz argued, because the genocide is denied, the memory culture of the Armenian genocide is also denied. He goes even further by stating that this denial can forge widespread collective amnesia.⁹⁰ Therefore, including a scene in which this denial is challenged, alters and even constructs the memory culture of the Armenian genocide in the international sphere.

Furthermore, it mediates cultural trauma of the Armenians by retelling the story of the Aurora. The Armenians here are not only the ones from the nation, but every Armenian is affected. She and her family stand as a symbol for every Armenian family whose lives were interrupted and destroyed by the Ottomans and the genocide.

2.2.2 The remediation of *Auction of Souls* in *Aurora's Sunrise*

The film intertwines animated storytelling with footage from *Auction of Souls*. Whilst *Auction of Souls* uses Aurora to tell the story of the genocide, *Aurora's Sunrise* uses the genocide to tell the story of Aurora. The copies of *Auction of Souls* are gone and presumably destroyed, erasing Aurora's story and the story of the genocide. Therefore, this film wants to retell the story of Aurora to make sure her story does not disappear from the collective memory. Furthermore, it wants to tell the story of the Armenian genocide because it needs to be remembered. However, this film also tries to 'correct' *Auction of Souls*. Since the time difference of over a hundred years, knowledge about the genocide and Aurora has increased. *Auction of Souls* is a film made at that time to appeal to a white Christian American audience; therefore, creative decisions are based on that audience. *Aurora's Sunrise* wants to challenge those creative decisions and make them understandable for that time.

⁹⁰ Markovitz, "Ararat and Collective Memories of the Armenian Genocide," 237.

As previously mentioned, the memoir of Aurora distorted her memories and identity. This memoir was mediated into *Auction of Souls*, which further remediated a distorted memory culture of Aurora and the genocide. *Aurora's Sunrise* not only tells this part of the story but also remediates the film and memoir to deconstruct and alter the distorted memory culture of Aurora and the genocide.

This happens in the scene where she rekindles with her own identity. The scene starts with a medium shot of a warehouse showing an enormous collection of costumes. The voiceover is, this time, not the fictional Aurora, but they use the voice of Aurora during the interview segment. Here, she explains that she did not want any of those costumes because that was something she did not wear at that time. The film then uses a shot of the interview segment in which Aurora explains what she usually wore in Armenia. Again, the repetition of these interview segments authenticates Aurora's fictional account, similar to the aforementioned photographs as argued above.

It cuts back to the animation with a close-up of a very detailed and rich embroidery on an Armenian costume. The following shot is zoomed out and shows Aurora wearing the clothing; she is standing in front of a mirror in the warehouse. The colour is accentuated on Aurora and the costume, leaving the other costumes in the dark background. The voice-over in these two shots is changed back to the fictional Aurora, explaining that they made the costumes exactly how she had described them. She further says that she became Arshaluys again. The film restores the identity of Arshaluys in this scene. This film portraying Aurora as Arshaluys deconstructs how she is remembered, as established in the memoir and *Auction of Souls*, thereby altering the memory culture of Aurora.

2.2.3 Sexual violence in Aurora's Sunrise

Sexual violence is a prominent aspect of *Aurora's Sunrise*. *Aurora's Sunrise* does not want to shy away from explicit images. As analysed above, the depiction of the vaginal impalements of a dozen of women is explicit, and the film seeks to confront the audience with this image. Unlike *Auction of Souls*, the film does not show sexual violence to emphasise how white Christian

women are assaulted, but it shows how Armenian women were assaulted. When Aurora is first sold into slavery, the film shows how she is objectified by the Turkish.

Firstly, a shot shows how Aurora lies on the ground next to other women as a soldier on horseback passes by. The next shot is a close-up of Aurora's chest; the audience cannot see her face but only the ripped-up fabric and the arm of a soldier. This soldier then proceeds to rip the clothing even further and exposes the left breast of Aurora. He inspects her and her body as an object. The shot then uses another close-up of her right leg as the same hand of the soldier puts up her clothing to expose her groin to inspect this as well. In the next shot, he puts his thumbs on her lips and in her mouth to check her teeth. A medium shot is then used to show the man in neat clothing as he goes with his hand through her hair and face and tells the soldiers that he wants to buy her. This sequence is from the perspective of the male buyer.

In another shot, where Aurora is again sold into slavery, the perspective is changed and is now from Aurora herself. While the men argue in the back about the price of Aurora, the shot is closed up on Aurora while she is looking down. Noteworthy is the focus of the shot; it blurs the background and the men while focusing on Aurora.

In the previous section, this thesis determined that *Auction of Souls* refrains from the voyeuristic gaze and eroticism of the female body during sexual violence. The way sexual violence is remediated in this film is difficult to establish because it uses a double perspective of sexual violence. In the one scene where the perspective is from the male buyer, Aurora is eroticised by the film. The film has a close-up of her body and breasts, corresponding with the argument of Brown and Waterhouse-Watson that showing the naked body of the woman from the men's perspective will create a voyeuristic gaze.⁹¹ However, the film also has a scene where it has the perspective of Aurora. There is a close-up of Aurora's face as she looks down at the ground. This corresponds to the deconstruction of the voyeuristic gaze because the body is not sexualised, and the perspective is not from the male's gaze.⁹² Thus, this film mediates sexual violence in two different ways. In every example of Brown and Waterhouse-Watson, this duality

⁹¹ Brown, Adam, and Deb Waterhouse-Watson. "Representing Rape in Holocaust Film." In *Aftermath: Genocide, Memory and History*, edited by Karen Auerbach. Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2015, 171.

⁹² Brown, Adam, and Deb Waterhouse-Watson. "Representing Rape in Holocaust Film." In *Aftermath: Genocide, Memory and History*, edited by Karen Auerbach. Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2015, 181-182.

of mediating sexual violence is absent and therefore, this film is unique in mediating sexual violence.

Voice-over Aurora explains in one scene how *Auction of Souls* has scenes that did not go down as she witnessed them. This scene occurs in a part of the story where Aurora is working on the set of *Auction of Souls*. The first shot is where they are filming the crucifixion of the Armenian women. Aurora explains that this did not happen. The film then moves to the scenes of *Auction of Souls*, as analysed in the previous chapter. The mixture of animation and live-action footage of *Auction of Souls* shows that the world, as Aurora perceived it, is the animation. What remained for the viewer until *Aurora's Sunrise* is the footage of *Auction of Souls*. The filmmakers then use a real-life interview segment of Aurora, where she explains what happened instead of the crucifixion, thus authenticating the fictional story of Aurora. By remediating the interview segment, it establishes its own 'truth' of what happened in the genocide. This is comparable to the authentication of repetition by the photographs and the example given by Erll.

The film returns to the fictional animation, where the audience sees what happened. The medium shot shows a dozen of women, some fully naked and others dressed in torn-down robes, on the ground, impaled by a spear through their vaginas. The dead women look skinny as the blood ran down their legs. The camera pans out to show all twelve women lying dead on top of a bare, uncultivated desert hill. The film remediates sexual violence to reconstruct the collective memory created by *Auction of Souls*. (see Figure 3).

This scene completely dismantles what Donna-Lee Frieze called the Christian martyr that Aurora is, as created in *Auction of Souls*. It shows the brutal assault and objectification of an Armenian minor. It challenges the whiteness created in *Auction of Souls*, as Frieze argued,⁹³ and replaces it with torn-down robes and desperate girls who try to hang on in the genocide. Therefore, the remediation of Aurora's story and the genocide is not only one of authenticity but also proves how sexual violence is used as a tool to dismantle the Armenian spirit and destroy the Armenians.

⁹³ Frieze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," 67.



Image 7: the filming of the crucifixion



Image 8: five women on the crucifix



Image 9: medium shot of the vaginal impalements



Image 10: close-up Armenian woman on cross



Image 11: shot of the vaginal impalements



Image 12: shot of Armenian woman on cross

Figure 3: Remediating sexual violence; from Christian martyr to the destruction of Armenian identity.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Inna Sahakyan, *Aurora's Sunrise* (Bars Media, Broom Films, Gebrueder Beetz Filmproduktion, 2023); Oscar Apfel, *Ravished Armenia* (First National Pictures, 1919).

2.3 Conclusion

To conclude, both fictional films tell the story of Aurora Mardiganian and the Armenian genocide. *Auction of Souls* is a film created in 1919 to target an American audience to appeal for their help in the Armenian genocide. They used Aurora's story and acting in this film to make it realistic. Most scenes of the film show sexual violence, such as rape, slavery and sexual assault. They draw heavily on whiteness by using white clothing to relate to an American audience. The film plays with authenticity and shows the crucifixion of women to create the idea that the women are Christian martyrs. Furthermore, sexual violence is mediated in a way that refrains from the voyeuristic gaze, which breaks from the traditional way of mediating sexual violence, as argued by Brown and Waterhouse-Watson. This film is a remediation of the Armenian genocide that constructed a memory-world based on the memoir of Aurora, where the Christian suffering in the East is remembered. The film does not exist of many film techniques known today simply because they did not exist in that time. The film relies heavily on close-ups to dramatize scenes.

Aurora's Sunrise completely challenges the narrative created by *Auction of Souls*. It wants to retell the story of Aurora by further telling what happened before the genocide and her life in America. It uses animation to complement and change the scenes created in *Auction of Souls*. It remediates sexual violence to deconstruct the Christian suffering in the East memory. It alters the memory based on a culmination of different mediations to authenticate the story of Aurora. For instance, the crucifixion is deconstructed, and the vaginal impalements are shown to show the harsh reality Armenian women had to go through in the genocide. Lastly, the film wants to mediate the trauma of Aurora and connect it with the trauma of the Armenian people. It uses the cocoon and the play to show how her life changed from being part of a happy family to being alone. When she is living in the United States, the film uses these metaphors to remind the audience that Aurora is still struggling with her past. The film further connects this individual trauma to the trauma of the Armenian people by mediating archival photographs of other families and the atrocities of the genocide. Therefore, cultural trauma is remediated by *Aurora's Sunrise*, shaping the cultural memory of the Armenian genocide as an Armenian trauma where sexual violence as an aspect cannot be overlooked.

Chapter 3: Remediating the role of survivors: the first and second generation in *Nahapet* and *Ararat*

3.1: Nahapet

Nahapet is a film released in 1977 and directed by Henrik Malyan. It tells the story of Nahapet, a quiet, lonely man who lost his family in the Armenian genocide. The film starts with Nahapet, a man who tries to live on after his experience in the genocide. He works in the field, smokes cigarettes and occasionally sings sombre songs. The other men from the village do not understand why Nahapet is a recluse. Nahapet, in this period of the film, thinks back about his family and the genocide. For the viewer, it is not apparent what exactly went down in Nahapet's life. The story progresses slowly in this film. Nahapet reconciles firstly with his brother-in-law and then with his sister. Both meetings are paired with heavy emotion. The couple then tells Nahapet he should move on and marry someone new, Nubar. This scene is a pivotal moment of the film in which Nahapet balances his tragic past with the future. He chooses to marry Nubar, and they both leave for a new place and a new start. On this journey, Nubar thinks back about her tragic past, the death of her man and child, whom she had to bury. When they arrive, a discussion follows with others about Armenia and God. Lastly, the new start of Nahapet's and Nubar's lives starts with the work on the land. They both rejoice when a seed sprouts, paired with Nubar's pregnancy. Nahapet eases more into social life, reconnecting with other villagers. The film ends with the birth of the child and Nahapet's promise to the others to plant an apple tree.

3.1.1: From the individual to the nation: remediating cultural trauma

When analysing the film, it becomes apparent that *Nahapet* is not about a personal struggle with loss and trauma. It tells a story of a character that can be drawn in a larger context: the loss of the Armenian people and the creation of the victim identity.

This traumatic past of Nahapet is shown in the following scene. In this scene, Nahapet sits in his room smoking while contemplating his life. This time, one of the children makes a remark about Nahapet. As a result, Nahapet looks upon the children in the doorway. What follows is the loud banging noise coming in again, and suddenly, the scene changes into two shots of his presumably children in front of an apple tree. The first shot shows two children in the centre of the shot in front of the tree. The next, a wider shot, shows all the children standing in front of the apple tree. Concluding from this is that Nahapet is reminded of the loss of his

children when he sees the other children standing in the doorway. He envisions them standing in front of an apple tree. Therefore, the film introduces that Nahapet is conflicted by a traumatic past, which the audience is now invited into.

The pivoting scene in the film is the meeting between Nahapet and his sister and brother-in-law. This turning point between the past and the future is established by arranging a new wife for Nahapet. The medium shot focuses on Nahapet as he is seen silently smoking. Next to him, Apur and his wife are sitting on both sides, trying to convince him to continue the Nahapet family tree. As they argue, the camera slowly zooms in on Nahapet, who is seen listening. His listening is disturbed by the familiar loud banging noise, indicating that Nahapet has lost focus on the present and is tormented once more by his past. What follows is a long imaginary sequence. In the first shot, the wife of Nahapet is seen posing in front of an apple tree. The next shot adds Nahapet next to his wife, and in the final shot, all the children of Nahapet and his wife are added, completing the family of Nahapet. Under the guidance of a slow emotional song, the family's disappearance follows, and only the apple tree is left visible. The apple tree is tormented by a heavy wind, shaking all the apples from the tree. The wind symbolises the interruption of the Turks, interrupting the life of Nahapet and his family. The fallen apples symbolise the loss Nahapet endures; his family tree is losing the apples, his family.

The setting of the imaginary scene changes into an extreme long shot, split into the beach and the sea. In this shot, hundreds of apples can be seen rolling on the beach into the sea. In the next shot, all the apples can be seen drifting away in the endlessness of the sea. The imaginary scene ends with a close-up shot of one apple floating in the water. This last part of the scene symbolises the collective loss of the Armenians. As previously established, the apples symbolise family members as part of the family apple tree. Because of the wind, the Turks, the apples have fallen from the tree, no longer part of the family tree. They end up in the sea, floating further and further away from their family. The last apple is the family of Nahapet which he lost. Thereby, this scene morphs the loss of Nahapet together with the loss of all Armenians who have lost family in the genocide. This film is not about individual struggle and loss but connects it to the nation, as explained in the next section.

It becomes clear that Nahapet is not the only one struggling with loss and moving on. The filmmakers make this clear in a few instances, proving that Nahapet is not alone. A point in

which the film demonstrates that Nahapet is not alone is in the scene in which Nahapet and Nabur travel together on a cart driven by two oxen. This way of transport reminds Nabur of her past. A close-up of Nabur shows her contemplating when she looks at the back of Nahapet and how he drives the carriage. The shot of the back of Nahapet transforms into a shot of the back of her previous husband, resembling the similarities of past and present. In the next few shots, the last husband drives the carriage with a profound spirit. The background is transformed from a dark grey sky and landscape to a blue sky with grain ready for harvest. Even the oxen move faster than the ones in the present. The music is more cheerful with the lyrics: "Darling, I love you." In the next shot, the previous husband is cheerful and smiling when he raises their baby into the clear sky. Then, the viewer is transported back to the grey surroundings where, at the centre of the shot, Nabur is crying, wiping away her tears and hiding them from Nahapet. Nahapet suddenly becomes the centre of the shot as he wonders what Nabur is going through, blending in with the viewer, who also wonders what happened.



Image 13: Nabur looking at the back of Nahapet



Image 14: The back of Nahapet



Image 15: The back of former husband Nabur



Image 16: former husband holding up their child



Image 17: Nahapet looking at Nabur



Image 18: Nabur remembers her tragic past

Figure 4: the film shows that Nabur is reminded of her past because the back of Nahapet makes her think of her husband. The editing shows a neat transition between both men, in the shot with the husband the colours are accentuated, and sky is bluer. This shows that the present is dreadful, and she longs for her past.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Henrik Malyan, *Nahapet* (Armenfilm, 1977).

What follows is another flashback, this time starting with sombre music. We see a handful of men resisting an Ottoman attack and shooting their guns. Nabur is hiding behind a wall as she looks back at the men fighting, but the fighting is cut short as the camera zooms in on one man, and the viewer recognises the man as her husband. He gets shot and dies while Nabur watches. What follows is once more a close-up of Nabur crying in the present time, as it becomes clear where the emotion comes from: the loss of her husband in the genocide. But the sad music keeps playing as the scene shows one more flashback, the last part of Nabur's tragic past. In this medium shot, in the foreground, Nabur is seen kneeling on the ground between two graves. The first larger grave indicates the husband, but the other grave is much smaller, indicating she also lost her child. In the background, a group is seen walking away, already moving on, while Nabur is stuck on the ground, not ready to get up and move on. The camera positions lower and focuses on the graves whilst Nabur gets up and slowly walks away, blending in the background and moving away from the life she once knew.

What becomes apparent is that Nahapet and Nabur are both tormented by trauma, and they both only have each other for a chance to let go and move on, rebuilding a new life in a new state. Therefore, this scene establishes the first step in the process of relating the individual trauma to the collective trauma of the nation in the film.

When they return to their village, their marriage is celebrated over a dinner party. On a crowded table, men can be seen eating and drinking. Nahapet is once again silent and smokes a cigarette while Nabur stands behind him, also in silence. Multiple people give a speech, but one of the speeches stands out. In this speech, Nho praises Nahapet's endurance and tells him good luck in fulfilling his dreams. He brings up God in this conversation by claiming that God needs to help fulfil Nahapet's dreams. He further claims that if God does not protect Nahapet, then God is the enemy. This is followed by a lot of commotion precisely because the Armenian identity is rooted in religion. It is because of the religious difference between the Muslim Ottomans and the Christian Armenians that caused the genocide. He then draws it larger than Nahapet by stating that if God blessed the enemy and cursed the Armenians, he would not pray to such a God. This is followed by even more commotion. This speech is powerful because it challenges the Armenian identity. How can one believe in a God if the Armenians had to go through such a difficult period? From Nahapet's struggle, the identity of the Armenians is challenged.

However, the film then tries to reinvigorate the Armenian spirit with a nationalistic dialogue. The dialogue opens with Nho questioning an older villager as to why God hates the Armenian nations so badly whilst they are so devotional Christian. The older man replies that God loves the Armenian nation much stronger than any other nation. To this, Nho replies with another question as to why they are then massacred. The old man answers that God creates hardship for those he loves to test the strength of their beliefs. Nho ends the conversation by stating that Armenians are forced to be killed because God loves them so much and then jokingly remarking that maybe God should love the enemy a bit. The old man reacts with an outrage and all the other villagers laugh. This conversation proves the difficulty of the Armenian identity. On the one hand, they are connected through each other by God but also by the loss of the Armenian Genocide. One person claims this loss out of the strength of their God, whilst the other challenges this God and puts the emphasis on the loss of the genocide. Thus, rebalancing their newfound identity that consists of their religion but also their victim identity.

The dinner party ends with a medium shot of the empty hall; everybody left except for Nahapet and Nabur. From a higher angle, they are seen sitting slightly apart, with both their heads down. The film uses no sound or music, which creates a sense of emptiness. Because of the dinner party, both characters now realise they must move on and create a new life in the new Armenia. This is the last shot before they will have to move on, and thus, it leaves the past behind. The last section of the analysis will analyse the struggle of moving on and the connection between personal traumas and the national trauma of Armenia.

The struggle of moving on in this film is shown using the land. After the empty ending of the previous scene in which Nahapet and Nabur are seen sitting with their heads down, this scene opens on the field. On this field, a medium shot shows Nahapet and Nabur standing up and looking over the empty field. Nahapet tells Nabur that the field will yield more than is needed for them two, implying a future expansion of their family. A new beginning is made when Nahapet tells Nabur to grab a shovel so they can start working on the field. What follows is a long sequence of them working hard on the field. However, it ends with Nahapet discovering that a seed has sprouted. He calls upon Nabur, and they both examine the plant. This is accompanied by hopeful music, indicating the beginning of Nahapet and Nabur's new life. This plant symbolises a new beginning and directly connects to the new family of Nahapet. Later in the

film, Nabur tells him that she is pregnant. Nahapet remains silent, but in the background, the same music is used for the sprouting of the seed. This hopeful music is followed by emotion visible on Nahapets face. The loud banging noise is absent in the shot, and no flashback of his tragic past follows. Nahapet is solely focused on the present and future, his new life. This film shows the power of the Armenian people and their willingness to create a new life and move on.

This is further emphasised in the last part of the film. In a scene, Nahapet talks with Nabur about the Armenian nation. He tells Nabur that the nation is strong and hardworking. It has great endurance and is not to be broken. Even though they faced the wrath of the Turks, they still endured precisely because of their characteristics. It might die, but it will resurrect even stronger. Thus, the film directly tells the viewer about the power of the Armenian nation. Their identity founded on loss creates the power the nation now stands for. It will work hard to overcome every obstacle.

Lastly, the film uses Nahapet to show the strength of the nation. But in the last scene, Nahapet is morphed together with the nation. When Nabur is in labour, Nahapet waits outside in the snow. A villager joins him and tells him Nahapet is like a spring; the source might have closed, but now it has reopened. Nahapet tells the villager he is wrong, for he is not the spring, but the Armenian nation is. The villager replies that Nahapet is the Armenian nation, that he is the Armenian nation, and that everyone is. All have lost something in the genocide, but they are starting again. Their conversation is interrupted by the sound of a baby crying in the distance. Nahapet runs towards the house and kneels in front of the door.

What follows is a culmination of shots previously shown in the film. The first shot is of the former family of Nahapet standing in front of the blossoming apple tree. What follows is the tragic flashback of the genocide. However, the viewer is, for the first time, introduced to the ending of the flashback. First, Nahapet's wife is seen running down the stairs whilst holding a baby. This has been seen before, but now the viewer is introduced to the wife getting caught up by two soldiers while they smash her down to the ground. What follows is the death of his five sons. Previously, the four soldiers have been seen aiming, and the sons are seen kneeling on the ground, awaiting their deaths. This time, the shot is covered in smoke after the shooting took place. As the smoke clears, the five sons are seen lying dead on the ground. The last shot of the flashback, a close-up, shows the defeat on Nahapet's face as he is tied down to a pillar. He wails

it out as he has just lost everything. The shot changes again back to the apple tree, this time without the family standing in front of it. But it is the same shot used earlier in which the wind attacks the tree, and all the apples are seen falling. This part covers the individual loss of Nahapet, followed by the communal loss of the Armenian people. The same extreme longshot shows all the apples drifting in the water. Nahapet's personal loss has morphed into communal loss.



Image 19: Family standing in front of apple tree



Image 20: wife beaten down by soldier



Image 21: the death of Nahapet's sons



Image 22: Nahapet's emotional outcry



Image 23: The wind gushing out the apples



Image 24: Multiple apples rolling in the sea

Figure 5: In this short flashback/fictional sequence the film connects Nahapet with the collective trauma of Armenia. Firstly, it shows his family symbolically placed in front of the apple tree. Then the destruction of his family in front of Nahapet, symbolised in the destruction of the apple tree. Lastly, all the apples from different trees rolling in the sea symbolising Armenian life that is lost.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Henrik Malyan, *Nahapet* (Armenfilm, 1977).

What follows, is Nahapet raising up from his feet and turning to all the villagers. He proclaims that he will plant a new apple tree, symbolising the new start of his family. The loss has turned into a new beginning, a new tree. Lastly, a shot is shown of an apple tree in blossom, as the camera zooms out, a lot of other apple trees are visible. Dozens of apple trees are growing and blossoming in the new nation of Armenia. The sky is blue and there is no wind taking the apples down. The apples drifting in the endless water are changed by a fruitful new beginning of blossoming on the new apple trees. Through this, the film shows that the Armenian nation was founded on genocide and loss but has now resurrected stronger. The sun hit and shown and only life remained.

To mediate cultural trauma, it is all about interpretation and giving meaning to the traumatic event. As Eyerman describes, certain 'carrier groups' give meaning and mediate a traumatic event. He calls them intellectuals who can be for example film directors.⁹⁷ This film, directed by Henrik Malyan, does exactly that. He first creates a collective identity through the character of Nahapet. By telling the story of Nahapet, Malyan does not constrain the story to Nahapet alone. He used symbolism and drew it upon the Armenian culture. The apple tree is at its centre for relating to family and the collective loss of the apples at sea. Malyan uses Nahapet to show how every Armenian can relate to him. By doing so, Malyan establishes an Armenian identity founded on loss. As Smelser argues, collective trauma can have unifying effects or fragmenting effects.⁹⁸ In this film, Malyan tries to ensure that the collective trauma unifies the Armenian nation. He does so in the last part with the spring metaphor. First, he describes that Nahapet is the spring and has now opened again, but then he draws it larger as Nahapet is the Armenian nation, and so is everyone. He directly tells the Armenians that they are part of the Nahapet story and that his story is Armenian.

What makes this film important is that cultural trauma is remediated as a nationalistic trauma. As Smelser argued, cultural trauma is embedded in a group. This can be a nation or a subgroup. The intellectual, in this case, the director, determines through remediation how cultural trauma is embedded. This Armenian production, directed by an Armenian, clearly

⁹⁷ Jeffrey C. Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 62-63.

⁹⁸ Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 43.

remediates cultural trauma as the trauma of the Armenian nation. It constructs the memory culture of the Armenian genocide as a nationalistic memory. This differs from *Auction of Souls*, which remediated sexual violence and the trauma as a general Christian suffering in the East.

The film was released in 1977, around 60 years after the genocide occurred. There is a clear distance between the event and the mediation. Mediating such an event, according to Eyerman, always goes along with choosing what to represent and how to create the meaning of an event.⁹⁹ Malyan does so by choosing not to show direct violence per se, confronting the viewer with the genocide and the violence. He does so by showing the willingness of the Armenian people to move and employing the character of Nahapet to realise this fact. In this way, Malyan does not create a unity of traumatic experience but also a unity of the strength of the Armenian people. To conclude, cultural trauma in this film is mediated uniquely, showing the loss and the power to move on and rebuild a new life.

⁹⁹ Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 62.

3.2 Ararat

Ararat tells the story of not one single character. It is a mosaic of different stories of Canadian Armenians who all have a connection to the Armenian genocide. This film released in 2002 was written and directed by Atom Egoyan. The film tells these stories in a non-chronological way, playing with chronology and flashbacks.

The most prominent character in the film is Raffi. Raffi is a young Armenian man who is the 3rd generation after the genocide and thus has not lived through it. He lost his father, who attempted an assassination on a Turkish diplomat as a retaliation for the genocide. This traumatic burden makes Raffi, in this film, a lost person who tries to find himself through his history and the history of Armenia to understand his life better. He works on a film production of the fictional director Edward Saroyan. He is a 2nd generation Armenian who tries to make a film about the Armenian genocide to show the world what happened. He employs the help of art historian Ani, who is also the mother of Raffi, to give insight about the painter Gorky. Ani has dedicated her life to understanding Gorky and his paintings. In this film, a fictional account of Gorky is also being told, albeit in short flashbacks. Gorky is a genocide survivor who is tormented by trauma which is visible in his artworks.

Lastly, Ali is one of the only characters in the film who is not Armenian but half-Turkish. Ali is a character who plays a Turkish governor in the film by Saroyan. This governor played a significant role as the aggressor and killer of Armenians in the region. Outside of his role, Ali conflicts with Saroyan and Raffi on the topic of the genocide. This chapter devotes itself to understand how cultural trauma of genocide is remediated not only in the first generation but also in further generations that followed. Furthermore, the chapter will analyse how postmemory is mediated on the next generations.

3.2.1 Remediating Cultural trauma through the stories of the Canadian Armenians

Ararat opens with a scene of Gorky's atelier. The first shot contains a close-up of a picture of a woman and a boy; the woman is seen sitting while the boy stands beside her. The audience does not know what this picture resembles, however, as the film progresses this picture is at the centre of the story. What follows are shots of Gorky's atelier under slow music. Multiple sketches and paintings can be seen of that picture whilst the opening credits roll. The scene ends with Gorky staring out the window. What this scene indicates, albeit unbeknownst to the audience, is that Gorky is obsessed with the picture. The multiple sketches and paintings suggest that Gorky has not let go of that picture.

The meaning of this picture becomes apparent a little later in the film. Here, the film balances past and present as it shows three different periods, all showing the importance of the picture. As the viewer, first Gorky's studio is shown again, followed by a flashback of Gorky's youth which is then interrupted by the present, in which Ani gives a lecture about the picture. The importance of this segment is to show the torment of Gorky, who is conflicted by his past. The scene opens with the atelier of Gorky, here Gorky is seen painting the eyes of the women, as the camera pans out the full atelier is visible. A text is edited on the screen to indicate the time and place: 1934 New York. Gorky then plays a vinyl and sits down. He reflects on his painting while the picture is visible in the background. The camera slowly pans in on the picture, around this picture different sketches are visible. The film cuts to a flashback in which the woman and child in the picture are walking in a field of sheep, heading back to the village. As they walk through the village, the film shows Armenian life. The flashback ends with a medium shot of the couple posing in front of the camera. In the meantime, the voice of Ani is heard talking about Gorky. She says that his most famous painting is based on the picture taken in 1912. The picture is of himself and his mother. It now becomes apparent that Gorky is painting himself and his mother. His mother died in the genocide, as Ani tells it. The painting then serves a twofold, firstly Gorky cannot let go of his past, sticking to the picture as a last fragment of a peaceful life. Secondly, as Ani argues, the painting is used to remember his mother:

"With this painting, Gorky had saved his mother from oblivion, snatching her out of a pile of corpses. To place her on a pedestal of life" Ani (20:27 – 20:38)¹⁰⁰

The film then goes back to the atelier of Gorky. Here he balances between painting and picture as he thinks back about his past. The film changes between the 1912 and 1934 to show how Gorky is conflicted by his past and cannot let go. (see figure 5)

¹⁰⁰ Atom Egoyan, *Ararat* (Alliance Atlantis, 2002).



Image 25: Gorky looking at painting



Image 26: Young Gorky posing with his mother



Image 27: Ani lecturing about the picture



Image 28: Gorky connects with the picture



Image 29: Gorky looks emotionally at the painting



Image 30: The hands of the mother of Gorky

Figure 6: Three time periods to show the struggle of Gorky with his past and the genocide. The picture serves as a bridge between the three time periods. Reminding the audience that the past is continued until the present.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Atom Egoyan, *Ararat* (Alliance Atlantis, 2002).

How this conflict within Gorky ends is explained in a scene in the latter part of the film. The scene opens with a shot of Raffi's girlfriend. She is looking at the painting when a museum curator enters the shot and tells her to distance herself from the painting. She asks him if he knows anything about the painting. In which he explains that he knows that Gorky suffered and that his mother died of starvation in his arms. The woman then tells him that this suffering was too much for Gorky as he took his own life. The painting, according to her, resembles the pain of Gorky, the pain of losing his home and family. This proves that the past of Gorky was too heavy for him to let go of. It gripped him and cost him his life. Gorky was a victim of the genocide, albeit decades later.

The trauma of Gorky is similar to that of Nahapet. Nahapet is also constantly confronted by his past. Both films use flashbacks to highlight this. A different aspect is that *Nahapet* is a film about nationalistic hope; it shows how Nahapet is strong enough to try and move on. Nahapet remarries, starts a new family, and reconnects with his community. He is a symbol of a nation that has not given up. *Ararat* tries to show how Armenians are conflicted by the genocide. Furthermore, the film is also bounded to life story of Gorky and his unwillingness to live. There is a clear difference between the two films, one of hope and moving on and the other of despair and death. This might be explained by the different periods in which both films were made. *Nahapet* is a Soviet-Armenian production at a time when the country is young. The film shows the spirit of this new nation through the character Nahapet. *Ararat* is a Canadian film made in 2002 to keep the memory of the genocide alive by portraying the importance of, for instance, Gorky's painting. It shows how Armenians, like Gorky, are formed and conflicted by the genocide.

Unlike *Nahapet*, this film goes beyond the direct connection someone has with the genocide. It tells the story of Canadian Armenians who did not live through the genocide but have a connection with it because of their generational past. The film employs a recurrent narrative of Raffi in this film to gradually explain his connection to the genocide. This recurrent narrative is in the form of a dialogue between a customs officer and Raffi. This dialogue takes chronologically place at the end of the story but is cut up into different segments and placed between the scenes of the rest of the film. The officer interrogates Raffi about the content of the film rolls he tries to carry in Canada. Raffi then explains, as he worked on the film, that he had to

do some reshoots in Turkey. The film uses the customs officer as a resemblance of the audience who do not know anything about the genocide, whilst Raffi is used as a character who does have a very personal connection with the genocide.

The second scene, in which the dialogue between Raffi and the customs officer continues, explains how the officer does not know anything about the genocide. Raffi tells him he filmed in Turkey for new footage of the character Gorky. The officer asks him if it is a Turkish painter, to which Raffi answers that Gorky is Armenian. The officer's face shows confusion and persists with more questions. Raffi explains that Armenia was once part of Eastern Turkey or Anatolia and that he went there without a crew because it would be hard to shoot a film about the genocide in Turkey. The officer is even more confused, and Raffi explains that the Turkish authorities do not acknowledge the genocide. The officer asks why, and Raffi says he should ask the Turkish. The officer becomes invested in what happened and asks Raffi to tell him. This scene and the officer are used by the filmmakers to highlight the ignorance of the average person about the genocide and that they are willing to learn more about it.

The last part of the analysis of the dialogue between Raffi and the officer is when Raffi must show his camcorder footage. This footage is his personal footage, which he captured when he was in Turkey. The scene opens with this footage, where Raffi captures old Armenian buildings on the backdrop of an empty landscape and a blue sky. In these shots, he talks about his father. His father got shot after he attempted an attack on a Turkish diplomat. In the mind of Raffi, his father is a freedom fighter, and Raffi wants to understand and feel his anger. After this, Raffi stops his own recording because he panics about the severity of his voice. The officer calls him the son of a terrorist, and Raffi reacts with clear confusion. He needs to play on the recording, in which his voice asks himself why he cannot find comfort in the death of his father; he then draws it larger to Armenia and the places that have been lost and the way to remember it. This scene creates a duality of history. On the hand, Raffi has a personal connection with the Armenian genocide and his father. He sees his father as a fighter for freedom, a man angry at Turkey and a fighter for truth and justice. On the other hand, the officer does not have any connection with the genocide or the father of Raffi. How he experiences this past is based on different factors. He sees the father of Raffi then as a terrorist. The difference between terrorist

and freedom fighter seems marginal but are essential in understanding how trauma can shape the narrative of one's perception towards history.

What is more striking about this scene is the amateur film within the film. Egoyan equips this meta style to connect personal trauma to the collective trauma. This amateur film, shot by Raffi, tries to connect his trauma with the trauma of the Armenian people. He films the forgotten buildings and land where once Armenians lived. He asks himself how much life and land were lost because of the genocide. He is actively shaping the memory culture of the genocide by filming in the emptiness of the land. Furthermore, he asks questions about his father's motivations in his film as he does not understand them. This is a perfect example of how postmemory does not fully transmit trauma, as Mazierska argued, which in turn results in an unfilled identity.¹⁰²

In a following scene, a dialogue between Ali and Raffi shows how trauma is not only personal. It starts with Raffi running up the stairs to Ali's apartment because he forgot to deliver a bottle of champagne. The director gave Ali this bottle because of his splendid acting. Raffi asks him about an earlier incident in which Ali downplays the Armenian genocide. Ali, who is half Turkish, plays a Turkish character who had a prominent role in eliminating the Armenian people in the region Van. Ali explains to Raffi that he never learned anything about it when growing up, and in his research, he realised that it was an event in World War I in which both parties suffered. Raffi counters this argument and explains that Turkey was not at war with the Armenians. Armenians were citizens of Turkey, the same as the Jews were not at war with the Nazis. What follows is the most important part of this scene. Ali argues that he does not deny 'something' happens, he raises the point that both were born in a different country, there is no danger, and he tells Raffi to drop the history and get on with it. Raffi replies by bringing up the example of Hitler convincing his commanders that the extermination of the Jews would work because who remembers the Armenian genocide. Ali is unconvinced and tells Raffi that, indeed, nobody did, and nobody does, and he walks away.

Once more, it becomes apparent that Raffi has a different connection to the historical event than someone else. For Raffi, the genocide should be talked about and not forgotten. It

¹⁰² Mazierska, *European Cinema and Intertextuality*, 30.

shouldn't be denied because there is enough evidence. For Ali, it is the complete opposite; he does not see any connection between the past and present and, therefore, has no reason to remember or care. He forgets that Raffi is still emotionally scarred by the genocide, even if he did not live through it. Ali fails to understand how a group of people can still be affected by an event in the far past. The difference between the customs officer and Ali is that Ali does have a connection with the genocide. He is half-Turkish, and the officer is not. The officer does not know anything about the genocide because it does not get talked about. The character Ali, however, does not want to know about the genocide. He downplays it and argues that it should remain in the past. The customs officer was interested in the event and wanted to learn more, while Ali wanted to not talk about it at all.

Therefore, to understand the character of Raffi, you must compare him to Ali and the customs officer. What sets him apart from the other is postmemory. As Mazierska explained in her book, the postmemory of the 2nd generation explains how their present reflects the past. Ali tells Raffi that they are in a new country but fails to understand that the reason why Raffi is in this new country is because of the genocide. Their Canadian-Armenian identity is, according to Mazierska, formed by the past and the genocide. She goes even as far as to claim that these diasporic communities are more past-oriented than those who did not migrate or flee. Their identities are shaped by the events of the genocide.¹⁰³ The pain endured is transmitted across generations. It, therefore, makes sense that the customs officer and Ali do not understand Raffi. The representation of Raffi can only be understood in a broader frame, one understandable through the concept of postmemory.

This multi-layered film creates a different perception towards mediating cultural trauma. The film, like *Nahapet*, tries to give meaning to the traumatic event. However, the film also tells the story of Sagoyan, who is making a film about genocide to make sense of his past. This film-within-a-film has already been extensively analysed by scholars. This paper agrees with the argument of Mazierska, which claims that this film-within-a-film is used as a conventional historical epic that is based on the mediation of old Hollywood-style films.¹⁰⁴ However, it is also about his connection with the genocide that he feels the necessity to make this film, as is argued

¹⁰³ Mazierska, *European Cinema and Intertextuality*, 40.

¹⁰⁴ Mazierska, *European Cinema and Intertextuality*, 42.

by Markovitz.¹⁰⁵ This section further reasons how this film-within-a-film is used to remediate cultural trauma. It does so by analysing what the film calls ‘poetic justice’.

This poetic justice is discussed in different dialogues between Sagoyan and Ani, the art historian. Firstly, it starts with Sagoyan walking on set through a model of a house onto a balcony. Then, the camera pans sideways towards Ani. Sagoyan tells her that the set is based on how his mother described it to him. This shows that his mother lived through the genocide and fled to Canada to start a new life. However, Ani does not seem to be amazed and sighs. Sagoyan enters the shot, and they stand opposite of each other. Ani explains that Mt. Ararat cannot be seen from Van, the town on which the set is based. Sagoyan argues that while it is true, Mt. Ararat is important and true in spirit. The writer of the film enters the scene and explains that Mt. Ararat is a familiar symbol of the Armenians. Ani is confused and asks how it is justifiable, to which the writer answers that it is ‘poetic justice’. Egoyan shows in this scene how a film uses symbolism to mediate cultural trauma. It creates a set that has symbolism in which Armenians, as the audience, can relate and therefore relate with the trauma of the genocide.

Therefore, this scene is an example of how the intellectual, as Eyerman calls them, controls how you mediate the traumatic event. The intellectual has the creative power to choose how an event is remembered. Furthermore, as the intellectual, you shape the collective trauma, but also this trauma is shaped by your own personal trauma. This personal trauma becomes evident in the context of the director. For example, Sagoyan builds the film set in the way his mother described it to him. Not only Sagoyan but also Egoyan, as Koksals argued, are influenced by his own experience in making the film. He is the grandson of survivors who fled the genocide and the son of a couple that migrated to Canada. Because of this personal experience, he could create these Armenian-Canadian characters that mediate cultural trauma.

In the end, the most critical finding of how *Ararat* remediated cultural trauma is how different Canadian-Armenian characters are used to explain how cultural trauma did not only affect the Armenian people in Armenia. It sheds light on a group that is still inflicted with this trauma that has even carried through the generations. Through the concept of postmemory, it becomes apparent that the trauma of the genocide forms the identity, albeit incomplete. This film

¹⁰⁵ Markovitz, “Ararat and Collective Memories of the Armenian Genocide,” 238.

proves how cultural trauma has been carried across borders by the mediation of two different films. On the hand, Raffi travels back to Armenia and asks how his live could've been, since it was taken away from him by the Ottomans, when the destroyed the Armenians. On the other hand, Sagoyan brings the lost land back into Canada by utilising it in his filmset. He does so because he wants to mediate the trauma through this identifiable symbol. It shapes the collective memory of the Armenian Canadians. To understand why they live in Canada, one must know the history of the genocide.

This finding differs from *Nahapet*, which remediated cultural trauma as a nationalistic one, thereby shaping a nationalistic memory culture of the Armenian genocide. To understand this difference, the context of the directors and production could make this apparent. Egoyan is Armenian-Canadian, an identity formed by grandparents and parents who fled and migrated. *Nahapet* is directed by an Armenian who lived most of his life in Armenia. It is based on a story written by an Armenian writer, Kochar, who lost his parents in the genocide. He fled from the Ottoman Empire to Eastern Armenia and lived the rest of his life in Armenia. Therefore, as Koksall argued, the personal history of the director shapes how they mediate their stories.

3.3: Conclusion

These films tell the story of trauma that is endured because of the genocide. Both films use different perspectives and techniques used in the film. *Nahapet* relies heavily on symbolism and film technique, whilst *Ararat* relies heavily on dialogue and storytelling. Both films mediate the trauma of the 1st generation whilst *Ararat* further mediates the trauma of the 2nd generation, which is analysed through the concept of postmemory.

An essential difference between the films and their remediation of cultural trauma of the Armenian genocide is the nationalistic and diasporic characteristic of the trauma. *Nahapet* establishes through the symbolism of the apple tree and the character Nahapet a connection between his loss and the loss of the collective. This collective group has been established as the Armenian nation, most prominently when Nahapet embodies the nation in the last scene through his conversation with a villager. Therefore, *Nahapet* remediates cultural trauma as a nationalistic one, where it becomes part of the cultural memory of the Armenian nation.

Ararat remediates cultural trauma of the Armenian genocide into a diasporic trauma. The film uses different Canadian Armenian characters to explain how trauma is carried across borders and is embedded in these characters. Two film-within-a-film techniques are used to connect the personal history of the characters to the collective trauma. This collective trauma is not one of Armenia but of those who had to flee and migrate and those who came after. Thereby, it remediates the cultural trauma as a diasporic one, where it becomes part of the cultural memory of the diasporic community, a community whose history should not be forgotten, according to the film.

Ararat further mediates the trauma of the 2nd generation, in which the concept of postmemory is most evident. Postmemory is when people experience the trauma of an event they did not live through. This trauma is often carried from the 1st generation upon the 2nd generation, this can be familial or affiliative. Raffi, in this film, holds the trauma because of his parents and tries to understand what happened. Raffi's trauma becomes apparent in the conversation with Ali, who is half-Turkish. Ali does not understand why Raffi cares so much about a historical event. Ali does not carry the trauma Raffi does and, therefore, cannot understand the importance of talking about the Armenian genocide. Hence, the film mediates cultural trauma through different characters

who each have a distinct connection with the genocide. Still, all share the Armenian identity that was partially formed by the Armenian genocide.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This thesis has analysed four films to answer the research question: How is sexual violence, postmemory, and cultural trauma of the Armenian Genocide in 1915-1917 remediated in various fiction films in the period 1919-2021?

The analysis has revealed how each of those four films takes a different approach in mediating the Armenian genocide. Remediation is partially explained by its period and the countries involved in the production. Through the three concepts: sexual violence, cultural trauma, and postmemory the research question will be answered.

Firstly, two films have mediated sexual violence extensively in this study, *Auction of Souls* and *Aurora's Sunrise*. Both films differ in the mediation of sexual violence. The earliest representation of the genocide is *Auction of Souls*. The analysis demonstrated how the film utilised Christian metaphors to establish the connection between Americans and Armenians. Playing with authenticity resulted in scenes such as a crucifixion of women, suggesting thereby that Aurora was made into a Christian martyr.¹⁰⁶ What made this film unique was its unconventional deconstruction of the voyeuristic gaze. With the focus on resistance and horrified facial expressions, the film negates any potential eroticisation. This representation used sexual violence as a tool to show the atrocities committed by the Turks in the genocide. The genocide was more than the killing of the Armenians, it was the complete eradication of the Armenian culture; forcing women into slavery and conversion. This aspect is essential because, as Frieze argued, the collective memory of the genocide is usually centred around the deportations. Therefore, sexual violence cannot be overlooked.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, this film shaped the memory culture of the Armenian genocide by remembering the overlooked aspect of sexual violence whilst refraining from the voyeuristic gaze, albeit in a Christian motif intended for an American audience.

Aurora's Sunrise remediates sexual violence using media such as interview segments, the film *Auction of Souls* and the memoir of Aurora. Through this, it reconstructs the crucifixion scene and shows vaginal impalements as Aurora witnessed them. It further created a duality of

¹⁰⁶ Frieze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigianian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," 67-68.

¹⁰⁷ Frieze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardigianian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," 66.

mediating sexual violence concerning the voyeuristic gaze. One instance mediates sexual violence with a focus on the female's body and from the perspective of the male, thereby eroticising sexual violence. In another example, it mediates sexual violence through the perspective of the female without the focus on her body, thereby negating the eroticism of sexual violence. Lastly, this film alters the memory culture of the Armenian genocide as shaped by *Auction of Souls* because it mediates sexual violence differently. Negating the Christian motif in this mediation brings back the focus on Armenian women who suffered in the genocide.

Secondly, to answer how cultural trauma of the Armenian genocide has been remediated in the period this thesis analysed three films: *Nahapet*, *Ararat* and *Aurora's Sunrise*.

Firstly, *Nahapet*, released in 1977, mediates cultural trauma through the story of the character Nahapet. It shows his family loss and his struggle with moving on. Nahapet employs flashbacks and imaginary sequences to show how the character struggles with his trauma. The film relies on symbolism to mediate trauma in these flashbacks and imaginary sequences. For instance, the apple tree and the fallen apples symbolise the family and loss. This symbol makes it apparent how Nahapet rebuilds his life when he remarries and starts a new life with Nabur; he also plants a new apple tree. Furthermore, this apple tree is joined with multiple apple trees at the end of the film to connect the personal trauma with that of the collective. This collective is nationalistic because, in various scenes, it becomes apparent that Nahapet embodies the nation. Therefore, *Nahapet* mediates cultural trauma as a national trauma. *Nahapet* as a film might be focused on mediating the trauma as a national one because it was an Armenian production released in 1977 when the country was still young. It adapted the novel *Nahapet*, which an Armenian also wrote. It thus shaped the memory culture of the Armenian genocide as a national trauma of Armenia.

This is where *Ararat* differs as a remediation of cultural trauma of the Armenian genocide. This film is directed by Canadian Armenian Egoyan, which could explain the difference in mediation. He mediates trauma through a mosaic of characters all from this diasporic community. It mediates different media in this film to connect those personal traumas to the collective. For example, Mt. Ararat is used in the film-within-a-film by the fictional director Sagoyan as an identifiable symbol for the Armenians. This collective here is the Canadian Armenian one. As Mazierska argued, their identity is founded on the events of the

genocide. Therefore, this film remediates cultural trauma as a diasporic one. Thereby, the film reshapes the memory culture of the Armenian genocide not as a national trauma of Armenia but as a trauma that got carried across borders, remembering a community often forgotten.

Lastly, *Aurora's Sunrise* remediates cultural trauma using animation and mediates different media. It mediates cultural trauma as an Armenian one, not constricted by borders but confined in identity. It does so by retelling the story of Aurora, mediating how she is traumatised through the symbol of the play and cocoon. This personal trauma is used to connect it with the collective trauma of the Armenians. It does so through the remediation of archival photographs of other families and atrocities of the genocide in repetition. This repetition creates an authenticating effect in a fictional work, Erll argued. Furthermore, in the ending scene, the film challenges the denial of memory by the Turkish. This denial can cause a collective amnesia, as Markovitz argued. Therefore, the film keeps the memory alive by using words as 'never forget'. Concluding, *Aurora's Sunrise* remediated cultural trauma as a trauma for the Armenian people. Thereby, expanding the memory culture from a diasporic or national trauma to a trauma for all Armenians and that none shall forget this genocide.

The last part of this research was the analysis of how postmemory of the Armenian Genocide has been mediated in film. This thesis analysed *Ararat* to answer this question. As Marzierska argued, trauma never gets fully transmitted to further generations. This unfulfilled trauma becomes apparent in *Ararat* in the scene where Raffi shows his amateur film to the security officer. Because of his past, he is left with more questions than answers. He wonders about his father's motivations because he does not understand them. Furthermore, the difference between the characters Raffi and Ali explains how trauma is carried on to the next generation. Because of the absence of transmitting trauma of the genocide, Ali does not understand why Raffi cannot just move on. Through postmemory, it becomes apparent that Raffi tries to make sense of a past that is not his. He is shaped and tormented by it. Raffi is similar to the character Sagoyan, who also makes a film to understand his past. He bases his filmset on what his mother told to him. Sagoyan is stuck by a past that is not his. Therefore, *Ararat* mediates postmemory as a complicated form of trauma. Because of its lasting impact, it shows how the characters are shaped and formed by it. Thereby, the film makes an essential step in the memory culture of the

Armenian genocide: remembering that the pain of genocide is still apparent in the community and that it carries across generations.

However, this study is somewhat limited in its analysis of postmemory. It could have taken a broader scope by choosing another film where postmemory is mediated. It could have then brought forth an exciting comparison and shown how these films, through mediating postmemory, changed or shaped the memory culture of the Armenian genocide. Furthermore, this study centralised how the films mediated certain aspects of the Armenian genocide. However, it could have been expanded on why the films mediated certain aspects by researching the context and timeframe of when the films were produced.

However, this study has contributed to the field of genocide and memory studies. It has established how the memory culture of the Armenian genocide has been shaped and altered through the remediation of four fictional films. This was relevant because the memory culture of the Armenian genocide is still actively denied by Turkish government. Further research should expand on how the memory culture of the Armenian genocide is shaped by, for instance, analysing different media in this period. It could, therefore, establish a complete overview of how the memory culture of the Armenian genocide has been shaped and altered through remediation over the chosen period.

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Appendix I

Style	Mise-en-scene	Graphic aspects	Composition	Perspective
Shot/Scene 1				
Shot/Scene 2				
Shot/Scene 3				

Form	Narrative	Metaphors / Symbolism	Cultural Context	Style
Shot/Scene 1				

Shot/Scene 2				
Shot/Scene 3				

Representation	Sexual Violence	Postmemory	Cultural Trauma	What is not depicted
Shot/Scene 1				
Shot/Scene 2				
Shot/Scene 3				

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