

Writing Disaster, Testifying
Violence and Abusing Trauma:
The Double Tragedy of Aurora
Mardiganian (Arşaluys Mardigyan)





Ravished Armenia



The
TREMENDOUS
MOTION PICTURE
SPECTACLE
of the
Great Massacres

THROUGH WHICH RUNS
THE TENDER, HEART
GRIPPING STORY OF

Aurora
Mardiganian

THE CHRISTIAN GIRL WHO
SURVIVED

A vivid, authentic portrayal
of the greatest tragedy the
world has ever witnessed—
the deliberate, ruthless de-
struction of a whole nation
of 4,000,000 Christian souls:
a revelation in the actual
scenes themselves of what
has almost transcended the
power of the human mind to
believe.

Production Made from Scenario by NORA WALN

FOR THE

American Committee for Armenian
and Syrian Relief

(American Committee for Relief in the Near East)

Tanıtım afişı:

Ravished Armenia - Büyük Katliamların Muazzam Sinema Gösterisi



Translation-transformation of her testimony

- To English
- Her name
- Violence into a romance story
- Parameters of humanitarian discourse established by Christian organizations





Translation-Listener-Witness

- Listener as a second degree witness
- Transformation of incomprehensibility into a narrative of comprehensibility
- Witness to an experience
- Witness to the testimony of others

Elimination of Witnessing

- Possibility of addressing another is eliminated
- Regaining the loss of the capacity to be a witness—a retrospective act
- Gates's listening: enabling violence

Fiction or Testimony

- Non-literary account of what happened
- Autobiography
- Memoir

- Boundaries
 - Real/fictional/truth/literature/eye-witness account/art

An Event-Without-a-Witness

- Personal occurrence
- Truth of an event—beyond subjective experience
- Impersonal dimension in testimony—objective reconstitution of what history was like

Archive, Truth and Fact

- Evidence: exists only in testimony of the survivors
- No archive
- The surviving memory transformed into archive
- Will to destroy the archive and witness

Loss of Thought, Loss of Understanding

- Loss of reason
- Loss of comprehension and intelligibility
- Disappearance of affirmation and negation, silence and speech, questions and problems

Battle over Truth

- Testimony: a literary practice, a narrative that unsettles the distinctions between evidence and fiction.
- Truth vs. falsity: an invalid opposition

Value of Testimony

- Testify to an experience of the survivor
- Authority of the witness: the capacity to speak in the name of an incapacity to speak
- To render the event visible
- Render the in-demonstrable into a representation

Derrida

Bearing Witness and Secrecy

- Problematic distinction between truth and perjury
- Testimony: compatible with a value of certainty?
- Aporia of testimony: attribution of truth and the loss of the value of testimony as testimony
- To bear witness \neq provide proof
- No possibility of lying, as this pertains to the domain of law

Arşaluys: Determination to Survive

- Determination to survive in order to tell
- Gates's invitation: enabling moment for Arşaluys
- Overcoming the burden of silence, of witnessing a secret trauma
- Bringing out new frames of reference

Testimony as a Language in Process

- Not a completed statement or complete truth of an event
- But a language in process
- Does not possess a conclusion
- To use one's speech as an evidence for truth
- Speech act that is beyond the legal model
- Conveys the event's incomprehensibility

Losses

- Witness
- Comprehensibility
 - Beyond understanding
 - Its force lies in its affront to understanding
- No detached witnessing
- To witness from inside or outside, one has to have the imagination of another, but the event eliminates the appeal to another
- It is incommunicable even to oneself
- Hence one becomes a bearer of a secret

Nevertheless Witnessing Occurs

- Not at the actual occurrence of the event, but belatedly and retrospectively
- In the encounter of the survivor and the listener

Aporia (paradox) of Testimony

- Disturbing loss or disappearance: loss of the event's incomprehensibility
- Offers an understanding to what cannot be understood
- Obscenity in the project of understanding: offers an understanding to what is incomprehensible
- The ethical question: How to Speak Without Losing the Event's Incomprehensibility

Mourning

- Mourning is impossible when the event is incomprehensible = interdiction on mourning
- To mourn the secret has to burst to pen
- Liberation from the bondage of secrecy
- Limit of imagination, limit of mourning
- No limit and no measure to violence, no mourning is possible
- For mourning to be possible: there must be a measure, and hence comprehensibility