Some 'Apples' for Analysts: Micheline Aharonian Marcom's *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*

Harvir Singh

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to examine the treatment of the Armenian genocide in Micheline Aharonian Marcom's novel *Three Apples Fell from the Heaven* (2001). The Armenian genocide is now viewed as the first genocide of the twentieth century. It took place from 1915 to 1917, during World War I. Ottoman Turkey accused the Christian Armenian population of supporting the enemies who were monolithically identified Turkey as "Christians". As a result, around 1.5 million Armenian people were slaughtered by the Ottoman militia. The paper focuses on the way the novel under study faces up to and lays bare in its peculiar way the reality of genocide. For this purpose, it relies substantially on the insights given by Wallace stevens in his theory of imagination. Steven argues that imagination is not a counterpoint to reality; he rejects the binary polarization of reality and imagination as vulgar, proposing that the two be seen as existing on a continuum. In fact, imagination is indispensable to grasp the multidimensionality of reality. The paper argues that the novel employs literary imagination as a mode of representation to understand and represent genocide in a way that depicts the multidimensional reality of the genocide. With the detached sense of an outsider, Marcom unveils the gruesome reality of the Armenian genocide through a fictional account. The aesthetic and literary treatment adheres to history, but exceeds it with the aid of imagination. The novelist thus offers some 'apples' to the readers who have the courage to immerse themselves in Three Apples Fell from Heaven.

Keywords : Genocide, History, Literary Imagination, Novels.

Micheline Aharonian Marcom, an American citizen, is of Armenian-Lebanese origin. She was born in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in 1968. During her childhood she lived in Los Angeles, and now lives in northern California. She has written seven novels, including *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* (2001), adjudged the best book of the year by the *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times*. The prominent subjects of her novels are history, genocide and war.

Marcom's *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* uses imagination to lay bare the reality of the Armenian genocide. The novel employs literary imagination as a mode of representation to understand and represent genocide in a way that depicts its terrifying experiential reality in many nuances and dimensions. As Imre Kertesz states in support of this novelistic strategy, "We may form a realistic view of the Holocaust, this incomprehensible and confused reality, with the help of our aesthetic imagination" ("Who Owns" 268).

The Armenian genocide is seen as the first genocide of the twentieth century. It took place from 1915 to 1917, during World War I. Ottoman Turkey accused the Armenian population of supporting the Christian enemies (Fisk 393). As a result, around 1.5 million Armenian people were killed by the Ottoman militia. Robert Fisk, in "The First Holocaust," vividly presents the catastrophic picture. He writes:

> There were no men of between sixteen and sixty among them, they had all been massacred on leaving their homes, and these the remainder, old men, women and children were dying like flies from starvation and disease, having been on the road from their villages to this, the bare desert, with no means of subsistence, for anything from three to six months. (Fisk 402)

The Syrian desert, where some Turkish Armenian villages were situated, thus became "the Auschwitz of the Armenian people" (390). A witness to the Armenian genocide, Grigoris Balakian tells us how the event started with killing of reputed leaders and ended with the massacre of ordinary people. He depicts the arrest and deportation of two hundred and fifty Armenian cultural leaders on April 24 with such vivid detail and texture that

> we see how well planned and orchestrated the whole scheme was. We also recognize the importance that the CUP (Committee of Union and Progress Party) placed on killing off the intellectuals, first in Constantinople and then throughout the country (thousands of cultural leaders were killed), so as to mute the potential outcry and to silence the voice of the culture. (*Armenian* xv)

Balakian gives a list of prominent names, including Daniel Varoujan, the poet and Krikor Zohrab, the novelist and Ottoman parliament member, who were killed by the Ottoman militia. The only objective of the Turkish reign of terror was to destroy the Armenian race, while everything was presented as an attempt to "resettle" the Armenian

population. The genocide remained unknown for a long time: it is often referred to as "the forgotten genocide," the "unremembered genocide," "the hidden-holocaust," or "the secret genocide" (Balakian, The Burning xvii). Ellie Wiesel considers denying genocide, in particular the Armenian genocide, a "double killing," because it kills also the memory of the event (xxiii). Deborah Lipstadt argues, "Denial of the genocide strives to reshape history in order to demonize the victims and rehabilitate the perpetrators" (Balakian, Armenian xx).

Literary imagination has a significant role to play in representing a lived/historical reality so as to deepen and enhance our understanding of it in terms of experience. Alan R. White, in *Language of Imagination* (1990), remarks that imagination is not only an articulation of memory but also a discovery. A writer discovers those possibilities through imagination which might not be available in other narratives. Imagination is an act of concretely bringing out, of bodying forth, often through invention, aspects of reality that have been overlooked or not sufficiently heeded. White says:

> Imagination is linked to discovery, invention and originality because it is a thought of the possible rather than of the actual, of what might or could be so rather than of what is or must be so, even when what is possible happens, unknown to the thinker, to be actual. (186)

Employing his imagination, a writer searches for possibilities that would lead the reader to vividly and tangibly enter other lives and events. In terms of Aristotle's idea of probability and possibility, a writer, dealing with the brutal reality of genocide, may create a cohesive whole that embodies a poetic truth which is of a higher order

than a historical truth. Fiction, thus, is more than fact, not l**ess:** The poet, as Aristotle says, aims "not only to say what has happened, but to say the kind of thing that *would* happen, i.e., what is possible in accordance with probability and necessity" (Aristotle 16). Continuing the argument, White further writes:

> The imaginative writer not only himself thinks of possibilities unthought of by his inferior colleagues, he also by mentioning them, leads us to imagine the scene, characters and the events more vividly; to think like him, of these possibilities. The very imaginative child not only thinks of and treats the chair as a fortress, but fills it, in word and deed, with a wealth of possible details. (186)

Thus, imagination helps the writer to free himself or herself from the dull and unproductive cycle of the actual and leads him on the path of new possibilities. White links imagination to discovery, invention and originality because it gives space to the possible and the unknown.

Imagination often works retrospectively also, in the sense that it imbues memory with some detail that might not have been there, or removes some detail, or changes it. In this way there is vital link between imagination and memory. Imagination, in other words, not only builds; it also transforms. Samuel Taylor Coleridge has explained the nature and power of imagination in *Biographia Literaria*. He argues that imagination is the "synthetic" power that "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create." He does not consider imagination as a mechanical process; rather, distinguishing imagination from fancy, he emphasizes that it is an organic faculty of the mind.

The faculty of imagination synthesizes discordant elements into an organic whole and harmonizes "sameness with difference; the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative" (*Biographia* 67). Coleridge's conception of imagination goes a long way in indicating the usefulness of imagination for representing something as unimaginable as a genocide.

Three Apples Fell from Heaven narrates the fate of several Armenians who suffered persecution and extermination at the hands of the Turkish regime during the World War I. The novel covers a period of two years from 1915 to 1917 during which the Armenian genocide happened. Marcom shows "how past might be reconstituted by the imagination into a form of elegiac empathy" (Terry). The two epigraphs of the novel "Not to have seen it yet inheriting it" (Myung Mi Kim) and "At the edge of love, there we stand" (Clarice Lispector) suggest that though Marcom has not directly experienced the genocide, she re-enacts the event through imagination, yet not slackening her grasp on reality. The novel is drawn from the life of her maternal grandmother, a survivor of the Armenian genocide. This is an instance of bearing witness but indirectly. As Mane Khachibabyan writes, "Armenian-American writers showcase, retell and transfer the history of their nation without seeing it, yet the saved documents and eyewitnesses are a firm foundation for depiction" (17).

The title of the novel calls to mind ending of many Armenian folk tales. These tales end with the sentence: "And three Apples fell from Heaven, one for the storyteller, one for the listener, and one for the eavesdropper" (Morcom 97). In these tales, "the apple is associated with love, fertility, and immortality" (Avakian 95). The storyteller,

the listener and the eavesdropper each deserves an apple because they would share the tales with the world that has still not heard them. In the same vein, the novelist uses the metaphor of an "apple" as the reward received by those who are trying to unravel the story of "the hidden genocide" before those who are still ignorant of it. This is the reason the novelist ends three significant chapters ("Mardiros," "The History of Bozmashen as Iterated by the Local Dogs" and "As to Where are the Bootmakers and the Town of Kharphert") in the same manner: "And three Apples fell from Heaven, one for the storyteller, one for the listener, and one for the eavesdropper" (97, 145,184 respectively). Explaining the novelist's chosen strategy, Elena Lucine LeFevre observes, "Aharonian Marcom manipulates the phrasing and placing of folkloric conventions throughout her narrative. Ultimately, the author employs the terms of traditional Armenian storytelling in order to tell a non-traditional, subversive set of Armenian stories" (39). Marcom's is an attempt to give to the genocide a lasting home in folk memory. This is part of her personal battle against the suppression and erasure of the horrifying events. Janice Dzovinar Okoomian has aptly captured Marcom's motivation: "The Armenian Genocide raises for us not only the matter of the genocide itself, which was as horrific as genocide always is, but the problem of the ongoing active denial by Turkey, and by some of its allies" (n.p).

Marcom departs from the traditional form of narrative when she decides to begin *Three Apples fell from Heaven* with a sentence in which, the writer and the reader are both present: "She writes it late at night, while you are dozing" (1). The omniscient narrator's voice goes on to offer not only the horrific accounts of the Armenian people

but also delineates the situation of the writer who takes the risk of confronting the "unremembered genocide" (Balakian, xvii). Hence, the narrator points out, right at the beginning, that whosoever tried to reveal the event has been considered a liar. Marcom herself has also not been spared. The narrator says:

> Rumor tells stories, this is the story she writes. Don't believe her. She's a liar of the first order. A mendacious tatterdemalion. A middle of the night whisperer. She follows you and circle your head like stinging bees in the late summer. She is disjointed, disorderly, malapropos. She begins in the middle, she stops and starts; she is a wanderer. (1)

The metaliterary element in the novel works to uncover the historical events in a non-linear mode. The chapters are titled, but not numbered, to emphasize each particularity. Divergent accounts of events by characters belonging to different age groups, genders and callings, follow; however, genocide is the common thread connecting them. The novel thus looks like a collection of many thematically connected Armenian folk tales. The phrases "there was and there was not" and "and so, and so on" invoke "the traditional orality and structure of Armenian storytelling practices" (LeFevre 42). The story does not remain bound to a single, particular and restricted narrative frame; it uses multiple and heterogeneous but intersecting frames. These frames become independent entities which break the traditional model of the beginning, the middle and the end of a conventional narrative. Patricia Waugh writes about the function of this device in metafiction:

> Contemporary metafiction draws attention to the fact that life, as well as novels, is constructed through frames, and that it is finally impossible to know where one frame ends and another begins. Erving Goffman in "Frame Analysis" has suggested that there is no simple dichotomy 'reality/fiction. (29)

The different frames used by Marcom facilitate action and also enhance reader's involvement. It not only helps to variedly represent the events of the genocide, but also illuminates how they are reinterpreted from generation to generation.

The plot of the novel neither begins nor ends with any particular event. On the contrary, the novelist shows the events through two types of frame: a) historical b) fictional and imaginative. These two frames cannot, however, be dissociated from each other. The former provides authenticity and legitimacy to the latter; the latter adds concreteness and experiential richness The presence of Leslie Davis (an American diplomat) as a wartime consul to Harput and the Ottoman Empire from 1914-1917, Henry Morgenthau, an American lawyer, (businessman and prominent American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the genocide) occupies a pivotal position in the narrative. The personal letters and official reports they send to America broaden the scope of the narrative. Eight chapters namely, "Mamouret-ul-Aziz (Harput)" "Turkey" "File no. 820" "Page 3" "American Consulate" "Offical Proclamation" "11 February" and "My Final Report", contain factual reporting about the genocide as a historical event. The novelist corroborates the imaginative account with a testimonial exchange between Davis and Henry Morgenthau. She writes in one of her dispatches:

> Mamouret-ul-Aziz (Harput), Turkey
> July 11, 1915
> Honorable Henry H. Morgenthau,
> American Ambassador
> Constantinople.
>
> Sir,
> I have the honor to supplement my report of June 30th (File No. 840.1) in regard to the expulsion of the Armenians from this region, as follows:
> On July 1st a great many people left and on July 3rd several thousand more started from here…. If it were simply a matter of being obliged to leave here to go somewhere else it would not be so bad, but everyone knows it is a case of going to one's death…. Women and children were also killed. Many died, of course, from sickness and exhaustion on the way and there have been here. (82)

Wherever Marcom depicts the genocidal events, she prefers giving a deadpan account in the form of reports couched in officialese; yet she ends the narrative with her fictional characters. This produces a productive juxtaposition of historical and imaginative characters. The coming together of the two modes of narration gives a peculiarly revealing to the imaginatively enriched accounts, which enable the novelist to explore what remains unexplored. No doubt, historical facts seem to present the definitive view of an event. But an event as terrible as the genocide has to be also lived through the

imagination. This is where fiction as a mode of truth-telling steps in. Fiction can deeply disclose and dwell on a trauma undergone by a person or group, whereas history may offer general though essential accounts supplemented with fragments of testimonial narrative. As Richard Slotkin notes, "The novel imaginatively recovers the indeterminacy of past time; the form allows the writer and the reader to explore those alternatives, possibilities for belief, action and political change, unrealized by history, which existed in the past" (221).

Furthermore, Henry Morgenthau and Mr. Davis, two characters from history, do not appear out of the blue. They send reports of the atrocities being perpetrated on the Armenian people. The novelist obviously understands that the overwhelming presence of historical documents may distort and even ruin a literary narrative; consequently, she brings in an imaginative character to accompany the historical figures. There is evidently no substantial role for this character named Lucy except than her conversation with Mr. Davis brings in the reality as imagined. Beyond the rigmarole of historical reports, data and figures, the conversation captures a personal response to the genocide. Similarly, the presence of Cavass Garabed forges a link between the historical characters and the plot of the novel. In fact, every history-based chapter concludes with the personal reactions of fictional characters. For instance, after sending his report to Henry Morgenthau, Davis tries to get rid of his melancholic situation by spending some time with his young assistant, Lucy. Marcom writes:

> Davis places his hand on the nape of her neck.
>
> You're a good girl…
>
> Lucine counts the rosettes on the white field of knoted wool.

> I'm melancholic today. A man has his melancholy moments.
>
> Lucine is reminded of Miss Robertson, the first American lady she knew at the missionary-run elementary school where she studied as a girl. She recalls the young Miss saying, Good morning, girls, today is a glorious day for God's work. The class repeating dutifully and in unison: Good morning, Miss Robertson, yes indeed! She never understood this word indeed and she does not know his word: melancholy. She waits, and David laughs. (58)

Whenever Davis feels despondent on confronting the killing of innocent people, he chooses to share his grief with Lucy. English is the language they share; however, they try to understand the situation through silence.

At first sight, such historical references do not subtract from the literary merit and power of the novel. The novelist enhances historical characters and reports with literary imagination. Thus, fictional and non-fictional accounts become complementary to each other. Marcom presents the geography of the Turkish land, the accounts of the genocide, the brutal killing of the people through the letters written by Davis, the American Consul. Davis feels lonely and wants to call his wife Catherine to the town. Davis's letters give an account of how Harput, an ancient Turkish town inhabited by Turks, Kurds and Armenians, during the reign of the Ottoman Empire, fell under Mammuret-ul-Aziz Vilayet, "The landscape of Asiatic Turkey is often desolate, and the road traversing the mountains is steep and narrow and sometimes treacherous" (41).

Marcom unravels the range of suffering of the victims through the use of fictional accounts and characters. She thus emotionally maps the contours of the Armenian genocide onto the reader's consciousne**ss** The reader does not remain a passive witness to the suffering; rather, he/she is able to empathize with the characters. In this context, Terry observes, "Through the poetic re-imagining of the lives of a few individuals, Marcom suggests the inconceivable scale of the estimated two and a half million Armenians killed or deported" (n.p.). It is significant that Orhan Pamuk, in *The Naive and the Sentimental Novelist,* makes out a case for reading novels as "second lives." For him, fiction is a mode of reality:

> Novels are second lives. Like the dreams that the French poet Gerard de Nerval speaks of, novels reveal the colors and complexities of our lives and are full of people, faces, and objects we feel we recognize. Just as in dreams, when we read novels we are sometimes so powerfully struck by the extraordinary nature of the things we encounter that we forget where we are and envision ourselves in the midst of the imaginary events and people we are witnessing. At such times, we feel that the fictional world we encounter and enjoy is more real than the real world itself. That these second lives can appear more real to us than reality often means that we substitute novels for reality, or at least that we confuse them with real life. (3)

Terzian Sargis, another character in the novel, wishes to be a writer but his life takes a turn in an entirely different direction when he notices that Armenian teachers, doctors, businessmen, priests and others

are being arrested by the Turkish gendarmes. His mother locks him up in an attic and makes him dress like a woman to conceal his identity. A brilliant, creative man's life thus takes a tragic turn. Sitting in the attic, he often muses remorsefully, "Dressed like a woman, can you imagine it? And sitting here in the pitch-black darkness like some mewling schoolgirl" (11). He cannot go out; a crack in the room's window allows him to see the outside world. His neighbor, Najarian, is a professor of History and Philology in Euphrates College and is living a peaceful life with his family. All of a sudden, Turkish soldiers come and drag him away for interrogation. Najarian and his friend Mussig Agha are later released. They are out of the group of detained intellectuals and prominent leaders arrested in March. Late nights become unbearable for all the inhabitants of the town the day after the professor is released. Najarian has lost his mind under the pressure of interrogation and wanders naked in the streets. Sargis looks at him through the window, "I saw him; I always heard his screeching cries as he ran through the dark night yelling at the top of his lungs. Mairig said the neighbors listened in the fear but did nothing as the Professor ran naked up and down the street" (15). His daughters and wife run after him carrying a big coverlet. However, the scene keeps repeating for eleven days. The sight frightens Sargis, and he cannot sleep. Finally, Sargis's mother comes with the news that the Professor has died. Everyone is thankful that the suffering man has been released from the excruciating pain and that peace will prevail in the streets. However, this peace now becomes unbearable for Sargis. Trapped in the void of silence, he too goes insane.

When adolescent Turkish boys start spitting on Armenian women, Sargis is forced to think what compels a person to become a fanatic. He wonders how "those nine and ten-year-olds believed wholeheartedly in their ideas?" (46). How does a monomaniac pre-

occupation with an ideology make a man blind so that he starts killing fellow human beings? He recalls the old peaceful days when he was trying to learn a new language, English. However, the memories of the horrific wailing of professor Najarian force him back to the unresolved questions about human nature. He ponders on his likely fate:

> It has been seventeen weeks, three days, five hours, and a certain amount of minutes and seconds and seconds and measures smaller than seconds. I've lived here in this attic where the heat melts the hairs off my arms, and constant perspiration on my skin has brought on mutiny of red-pus sores. I am like a dog, like the bitches who live behind the hamam who burn to nothing and who die but still go again and again to the hamam in search of comfort. My death will be like a dog's, like a hamam-dog's dying day in the heat of the ashes. (137)

Overwhelmed by grief, Sargis begins writing verses in which he tries to see his plight face to face. This is his only hope.

Praise the doo!
You deliver the weak
From their hoary pit.
But as for me, when I was sick
I wore a woman's dress,
I afflicted myself with books.
And looked on the glee,
They gathered against me;
How long will you look on?

Give praise to your excrement,
Madden droppings —
They open wide their mouths to me.
Ala! Ala! They say
We shall rescue you.
Praise the doo! (169)

Gradually, Sargis loses the ability to read and write. Words do not make any sense to him; rather, meaningless signs keep crowding his mind. The attic appears to him as an infinite hole from where he feels he can never go out. Loneliness starts haunting him and he keeps lying on the floor like a corpse. "I'm stuck here, in this lonely place, with these black marks. Is there any man lonelier than me, Sargis, writer of the Caca poems?" (169) He starts losing his mind as the horrific last moments of professor Najarian come back to harrow him. He begins talking to himself, "Professor Najarian, you saw the dark in your last tortured days, you showed me the horrible truth; you uncovered the lunatic place with your nakedness, its Chaos and Hate." (171) He puts his index finger into his nostrils and then sucks the mucus. He dresses like a girl for months and begins forgetting his gender identity. He remembers his childhood Turkish friend, Hakan and addresses him in his absence, "A man-woman in an attic writing a letter to his lover who never was his lover. We stood there together at the edge of love – Turk and Armenian. For centuries. We stood by that terrible, black place. Hakan, my dear, are you killing? Are you being killed?" (211). Marcom does not make it clear whether Sargis dies or lives, though there is a hint. He says, "I sign this letter fitfully in the darkness Goodbye, darling…Insallah" (213), which suggests that Sargis probably drew his last breath in his tiny dark attic. Sargis does not appear again in the novel except once when his voice is heard in a letter written by him. This kind of ending suggests that

the novelist is extending the meaning of death. Sargis's death cannot be limited to his last breath. His letter is captioned: "I HAVE SEEN GOD IN THE FACES OF MEN." He complains that God is violent as obviously seen in the faces of people. Alone in the claustrophobic attic, he screams repeatedly, "Fuck you, cur." Turkish soldiers come to his house, suspecting that there is a male person inside the house. Marcom "reports":

> *When the soldiers pushed the trapdoor to the attic open? I sing Fuck you cur! Was there any poetry then? Were his agonies a word or vibration, a change of garment, were they language at all? they pull his arms behind his back, they beat him around the head and shoulders, blood spills from his ears like water from a cupped rose, what is Reason? He asks them. And what is Love? And what is Life.*
>
> *And to die is different from what anyone supposed.*
>
> (243, Italics in Original)

The words in italics reveal the brutality of life and death with equal force. Sargis's corpse also discloses his suffering during the period he was locked in the attic. Sargis is not just a dead Armenian; his death raises fundamental questions about the human nature and about the conflict between cultures as also about the significance of life against the flight of time.

Anaguil, a fourteen-year old girl, is another important character in the novel. Her father, Hagop Demirdjian, is arrested by the Turkish gendarmes. Out of shock, Yughaper, her mother falls ill and is bedridden. She is desperate to see her husband. In order to meet him, mother and daughter go to the town jail where a crowd of Armenian women is already waiting. Anaguil emerges as a representative

of the terrible situation of Armenian women who suffer doubly. On the one hand, the Turkish gendarmes hurl abuses at them, "Armenian infidel whores, you'll soon feel the glory of our nation between your legs" (110). On the other hand, these women are deprived of food and shelter in the absence of any male breadwinner. Moreover, Marcom does not offer a romantic picture of the pre-genocidal period, but looks at it critically. When Anaguil recalls her childhood, certain bizarre incidents come to her mind. She realizes that life of a woman is in itself a curse. Marcom traces her journey to sexual maturity and the pressure of patriarchal norms restricting her freedom:

> Anaguil remembers how hard it was to lose freedoms; every year as she got older more things were taken away, until finally eleven descended with her menses and she could never again climb the trees and make ugly faces at her brothers. Her brothers played on without her: in the garden, in the attic, and in the cellar. Boys' games for boys only. Anaguil learned to embroider, and to spin wool in the winter, to make baklava and to bring her baba his slippers and empty his ashtrays. (133)

There is another Turkish character, Martisa, but her situation is also not in any way different from the Armenian women's. She is thirteen years old when her parents arrange her wedding with a thirty-five years old man, named Mustafa, who looks the age of her father. She is obliged to do domestic chores and the early years of marriage pass as she gives birth to children. Taking care of them, cooking meals for the family and fulfilling Mustafa's desires is her only destiny. Marcom suggests that common fate awaits most women, irrespective of the

differences of community, race or culture. Whether a woman is Turkish or Kurdish or Armenian, her social status is the same. And then a gruesome event like the genocide takes its toll. The Armenian women have to flee the country, and in their long and arduous journeys many die while others survive. Without food, water and shelter, obliged to spend nights under the open sky. Young girls are often beaten and raped by Turkish soldiers. Anaguil tries to change her identity by changing her name. Marcom considers it as a subtle form of violence when a woman has to live under a new name. The wound remains unhealed all her life, as in Anaguil's case. Though she chooses a new identity, yet whenever she is addressed by her new name she feels her wound is bleeding again. She says, "I look and look for the girl I was and I can no longer find her. I cannot bear her name." (256) She has become a stranger to herself. The memory of who she was torments her the more for this reason.

The question of language is an important aspect of the novel. Taylor Davis-Van Atta considers Marcom's novels to be an experiment. About her books, Marcom says in one of the interviews, "They are seeking often to make space for the unsaid and the silences of language and history" (Marcom, "A Conversation"). This becomes possible through the use of imagination and the extensive use of the historical reports and witness statements in the novel. It is to be noted that while the novel gives voice to the silences of history, it also acknowledges the limitations of the language. There are many instances where language fails the victims. Anaguil expresses the pain of this silence in these words: "There are days I cannot speak. Each word is a weight, and there are pounds of flesh, the heft of diction. I say good morning and I am wearied. Good morning pulled from the body, from my mouth, like opaque stones" (237). Similarly, Sargis,

who wishes to express himself through writing, finds himself unable to make sense of language, "I have lost the ability to read. It's as if the words no longer make sense in my mind, no longer take me with them to the places that they travel. They're signs without meaning, black slashes and crosses and curled up slants" (169). Marcom thus tries to include both the objective and the subjective view of the genocide by examining the possibilities and limitations of language in the face of extreme dehumanization.

With the detached sense of an outsider, Micheline Aharonian Marcom unveils the gruesome reality of the Armenian genocide through a fictional account. The aesthetic and literary treatment adheres to history, but exceeds it with the aid of imagination. The novelist thus offers some 'apples' to the readers who have the courage to immerse themselves in *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*.

Works Cited

Akcam, Taner. *Akcam: Talat Pasha Has Been Avenged.* The Armenian Weekly. 8 February 2012.

Aristotle. *Poetics.* Edited by, Amlan Das Gupta. Pearson Longman, 2007.

Avakian Anne M. "Three Apples Fell from Heaven." *Folklore, 1987, Vol. 98, No. 1 (1987), pp. 95-98.* JSTOR, www.jstor.com/stable/1259405.

Balakian, Peter. *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response.* Harper

Perennial, 2003.

Balakian, Grigoris. *Armenian Golgotha: A Memoir of the Armenian*

Genocide 1915-1918.

Translated by Peter Balakian and Aris Sevag.Vintage Books, 2009.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria.* Okitoks Press, 2017.

Fisk, Robert. *The Great War for Civilization: The Conquest of the Middle East.* Harper Perennial, 2006.

Kertész, Imre. "Who Owns Auschwitz?" *The Yale Journal of Criticism.* Vol.14, no. 1, Spring 2001, Pp. 267-272. www.muse.jhu.edu/article/36875/pdf

Khachibabyan, Mane. "Non-Verbal Communication and Cues in Armenian-American Literary Discourse." American University of Armenia, 2016. https://baec.aua.am/files/2017/09/Mane_Khachibabyan_Nonverbal-Communication-and-Cues-in-Armenian-American-Literary-Discourse_Presentation.pdf

LeFevre, Elena Lucine. *Speaking the Unspeakable: Armenian Women's Fiction After Genocide.* 2018. Senior Projects Spring https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2018/332.

Marcom Ahronian Micheline. *Three Apples Fell from Heaven.* Riverhead Books, 2001.

---. "A Conversation with Marcom Ahronian Micheline." Interview by Taylor Davis-Van Atta. *Music & Literature,* 21 Aug. 2012, https://www.musicandliterature.org/excerpts/2013/10/19/a-conversation-with-micheline-aharonian-marcom

---. *The Day Dreaming Boy*. Riverhead Books, April 2014.

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.* First Vintage Books Edition, 1992.

Okoomian, Janice Dzovinar. "*Three Apples Fell From Heaven:* A Meditation on the Centenary of the Armenian Genocide." *Patheos*, 27 Apr. 2015, https://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2015/04/three-apples-fell-from-heaven-a-meditation-on-the-centenary-of-the-armenian-genocide.html

Pamuk, Orhan. *The Naïve and The Sentimental Novelist.* Translated by Dibkas Nazim, Penguin Books, 2009.

Sandra Dijkstra *"A middle-aged survivor of Turkey's Armenian."* https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-57322-264-8. 04/19/2004.

Slotkin, Richard. "Fiction for the Purpose of History". *Rethinking* History, Vol. 9, No. 2/3. June/September 2005, Pp. 221-236.

Terry. "Eavesdropping on history: Micheline Aharonian Marcom." Vertigo,September 13,2013.

Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: the Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. Routledge New York and London, 1984.

White, Alan R. *The Language of Imagination.* Basil Blackwell, Oxford and Cambridge, 1990.

About the Author

Harvir Singh, is doing his PhD at the Department of English, Punjabi University, Patiala. His research topic is titled as "Armenian and German Genocides in the Literary Imagination:A Critical Study of Selected Fiction."