

## **The Image of Neighbor Enemy in Armenian Fiction Geopolitics: An Imagological Study of Poyachyan's Stories**

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**Abstract:** The article examines the image of the Turk as a foreign neighbor enemy in the collection *Tomar Taragri (The Calendar-Chronology of the Exile)* by Lebanese-Armenian writer Eduard Poyatchyan. The article reveals the genealogy of the foreign enemy figure in Armenian literature and, for the first time, examines the dehumanized image of the enemy neighbor in Poyatchyan's text through various imagological dimensions. Poyatchyan reconstructs the image of the foreign Turk through the traumatic memories of Armenian male characters and symbolic representations of the natural world, such as flies, mosquitoes, mud, and hunger. The purposeful presence of specific toposes in the works associated with the image of the foreigner serves as literary testimony to historical reality. The article considers the Armenian's abandoned house, grave, church, and garden as mythologized symbols - material embodiments of identity and historical memory - that signify lost land and homeland. The analysis concludes that the characters are literary witnesses bearing historical trauma, and in their imagination, the image of the Turk foreigner continues to be perceived as an enemy neighbor. Not believing in a peaceful coexistence with the Turk, not returning to their homeland, and choosing freedom in Lebanon or Soviet Armenia, the characters reject the path for a dialogue with the foreign Turk in the future.

**Keywords:** Armenian exile, imagology, stereotype, symbol, the self and the other, topos

### **1. Introduction**

The image of the Turk foreigner first appeared in Armenian historiography (Lastivertci 1971) in the 11th century, when Armenia was subjected to the Turkic-Mongol invasions. Later, because of the Turkish invasions, Armenia lost territories and was subjected to massacres and persecutions for centuries. Historical-political and later socio-political, cultural, and religious perspectives in Armenian literature have gradually shaped the image of a neighbor who appears as an enemy conqueror, destroyer, tyrant. After the Armenian Genocide of 1915, when part of the Armenian people went into exile and Armenian culture was revived in the Armenian Diaspora, Armenian emigrant writers (A. Tsarukyan, V. Shushanyan, M. Ishkhan, E. Poyatchyan, A. Haykaz) in other countries began to openly portray the genocidal Turk in extremely negative tones as an individual character, as a force, as a collective whole, as an abstract type. Perhaps the only exception is the literature of the Soviet period, when writing on national-ideological themes was not allowed

and even persecuted by the Kremlin (Grigoryan 2016: 105). Although in literary works created in Soviet Armenia, the Turk neighbor often appears as an abstracted category, sometimes as a friend. Nevertheless, even at that time, writers (G. Mahari, Kh. Dashtents) continued to create literary works on the theme of the Genocide, in which the Turk was portrayed as an enemy, murderer, and oppressor. In almost all works of Armenian literature in which the image of the Turk is present, they are mostly a plot character, sometimes a prototypical character. But there are writers in whose works the image of the Turk is generalized to an archetypal, abstracted figure that destroys peaceful life and brings disasters. One such writer is Eduard Poyatchyan (1915-1966), a teacher in the Lebanese-Armenian community, editor of *Bagin* magazine (1962-present), whose life and works directly bear the imprint of the Armenian Genocide, the second deportation of the Musa Dagh people, the loss of homeland, and detachment from national roots (Perperyan 2017). After the heroic battle of Musa Dagh, when Poyatchyan was only 3 months old, his family emigrated and lived in Egypt, and later returned to his native village of Khdrbek, in Musa Ler. In 1938, when France ceded to Turkey the Armenian lands where the Armenian people had lived for centuries, considering them their cradle, the residents of Musa Ler emigrated to Lebanon. For almost ten years, these people, including Poyatchyan, endured various hardships, hunger, epidemic, life without water, yet founded the Armenian village of Aynchar (Tchanpazyan 2024). Poyatchyan's collection *Tomar Taragri* is a unique artistic documentation of the odyssey of its creation, which is the subject of this article. The trauma of the exiled writer's memory prompted him to document historical events through artistic means, turning writing into a space to live (Said 2000: 377). The author is a bearer of the traumatic memory of his people (Fokeeva 2019: 120), and his collections are unique artistic documentations of the torturous life of the homeland and its people (Tsirani 2021), revealing the search for national identity of individuals shattered by the tragedy of war and massacre. The collection *Tomar Taragri* includes 5 short stories, two of which - *Sisak and Misak* and *Dar Dar Tariner (Century - Century Years)* - are extended narratives, in turn composed of essay parts. They contain individual narratives about the lives of different characters, including large philosophical monologues and dialogues, letters, and transitional texts.

The research aims to examine the image of the Turk as a foreign enemy neighbor in the collection of short stories *Tomar Taragri* by Lebanese-Armenian writer Eduard Poyatchyan.

To achieve the goal, the following tasks have been set: to show the origins of the image of the Turk in Armenian literature, to analyze the images of the self and foreign Turk, to portray the psychological profile of the Lebanese-Armenian characters within the framework of the contradiction between the foreign and the native, to present the peculiarities of the image of the foreigner depicted in the Armenian traumatic memory after the Armenian Genocide according to the worldview of the exiled writer and stereotypical perspectives.

In this article, we consider it necessary to answer the following questions:

1. How did the image of the foreign Turk turn into an enemy in Armenian literature?
2. To what extent is the concept of the foreigner fundamental to the exiled writer's traumatic and historical memories?
3. Why, nine centuries after the first mention of the Turk, did Poyatchyan from Musa Ler, like other Armenian exile writers, not introduce a Turk as a plot-driven character into his prose? And, conversely, why did he create a faceless, abstract image of the Turk in contrast to the Armenian characters depicted with everyday details?
4. What is the purpose of Poyatchyan's portrayal of the images of the enemy foreigner and native in a symbolic context?

The research was conducted using imagological, historical-comparative, analytical, and interpretive methods. The principle of historical imagology, along with several political-psychological perspectives, served as the basis for uncovering the origins of the image of the other - the Turk in Armenian literature, its stereotypical model, and typological features. Through imagological approaches to traumatic memory and the migrant writer, Poyatchyan's and his characters' identity system was interpreted within the context of the self and the other. Using ethnocultural and spiritual-religious descriptors, and especially the comparative method, individual signs and toposes of the symbolic system in the author's text were examined and interpreted. Psychoanalytic and socio-psychological methodological approaches allowed for the revelation of the issue of physical and spiritual freedom of Armenian characters in the context of the significance of lost land and homeland.

## **2. Literature review**

The scholarly literature studied within the interdisciplinary intersection of historical and literary studies, socio-historical and socio-political psychology, anthropology and conflict studies, cultural studies and ethnology has served as a basis for interpreting the image of the Turk from an imagological perspective. Therefore, for the present study, fundamental works and articles on imagology (Leerssen 2007; Kozlova 2015; Leerssen 2017; Beller 2022) have been of paramount importance, which reveal the imagotypes of the other and the self, and the concept of presenting the image of the enemy in a global catastrophe is revealed. Emphasized are the theoretical propositions of Senyavskaya (2006) study, which define historical memory, the nature of the archetypal image of the enemy embedded in the image of war, and the forms of depicting the dehumanized "absolute enemy". All of this has acquired fundamental significance for defining the image of the Turk foreigner in Aristakes Lastivertsi's *History* and for analyzing the image of the Turk enemy neighbor in Poyatchyan's literary system. Poyatchyan was a migrant writer; therefore, consideration has been given to those articles and books (Hall 1990; Said 2000; Dimitriev 2024) in which the perspectives stemming from the geopolitical perceptions of the migrant writer are emphasized. Based on those perspectives, Poyatchyan's works are regarded as literary documentation. Within the scope of

these questions, articles on post-war and post-genocide trauma have been studied in order to interpret Poyatchyan's and his Armenian characters' perceptions of the Turk, shaped by the traumas of historical memory (Fokeeva 2019; Saleh 2025). In the course of the study, a significant consideration has been given to the national stereotypes created within Poyatchyan's literary narrative, to comprehensively examine the image of the foreigner. These stereotypes are closely tied to the symbolic toposes, the migrant writer's perceptions of the homeland and of home (Said 2000; Senyavskaya 2006; Vlasta 2016; Beller 2022). During the formation of the diaspora (Safran 1991, Vertovec 1997), these themes are closely related to the loss of the homeland, the mythification of the lost home, and the clarification of its symbols (Zuhair and Abu Amrieh 2020; Bachelard 2004; AlRamahi and Al-Shetawi 2025). To emphasize the foreigner-native contradiction in a displaced territory, articles and studies related to the foreigner, particularly the Turk, in the literature of other peoples have also been used. Of particular importance has been the article by the Arab researcher Almuthaybiri (2024), in which the image of the Turk is analyzed through the imagological method, highlighting its negative manifestations and the perceptions of the Arab people at that time. Emphasized is one of the first Arab sources on the Armenian Genocide (El-Ghusein 1917: 53) in which the eyewitness author testifies to the innocence of the Armenians.

In Armenian cultural and literary studies, there is a body of research work on the Turk and related themes, such as the Genocide, migration, post-genocide trauma, and more (Gasparyan 2022; Hovhannisean 2024). An extensive article by S. Grigoryan (2016) is particularly noteworthy, as it examines the image of the Turk in the prose of the famous Armenian author H. Matevosyan. The author presents Matevosyan's comparative analysis of the Armenian and the Turk interpreted from the standpoint of national critique. and emphasizes the writer's idea that episodes of friendship between the Armenians and the Turks were visible during Soviet times.

Nevertheless, Grigoryan, like other Armenian researchers, has examined the image of the Turk presented by the writer from the perspectives of literary analysis and interpretation. In Armenian literary criticism, perhaps for the first time, it was Qalantaryan who spoke about the image of the Turk from an imagological perspective, though through a brief theoretical reference, considering him as the Foreigner in Armenian literature (2021).

There is almost no imagological analysis of Armenian writers, particularly of Poyatchyan's works. In general, studies of Poyatchyan's literary narratives are few and have been only partially analyzed (Teoleolyan 1956; Bekmezyan 1996; Perperyan 2014; Perperyan 2017; Tsirani 2021). He was a banned writer in Soviet Armenia, so his literary heritage was studied only after Armenia's independence (Bekmezyan 1996: 108). Poyatchyan's collection *Hogh (Land)* has been interpreted through imagological and hermeneutic principles. The spatial loci of the stories and the three-dimensional time have been examined, along with Armenian identity

within the system of symbols, and a brief reference has been made to the Armenian-Turkish antagonism (Balayan 2024).

The study of scholarly literature on Poyatchyan's collection *Tomar Taragri* reveals that the questions posed in our work have never before been a subject of research. This article represents the first scholarly attempt to comprehensively present, through various imagological dimensions and by tracing the origin of the Turk's image, the portrayal of the Foreigner - the neighboring enemy - in Poyatchyan's stories.

### **3. The emergence of the image of the Turk foreigner in Armenian historical memory**

The first Armenian chronicler to recount the Seljuk-Turkish invasions was Aristakes Lastivertsi (Manukyan 1977: 48). His *History* (Lastivertsi 1971) is a valuable document of Armenian medieval history, "an important source on Armenia and the Byzantine Empire, as well as on the Seljuk Turks who invaded the Armenian Highlands" (Vardanyan 2022: 9). For the first time, the Armenian scholar M. Abeghyan (1970: 60-61), and later other researchers, also consider Lastivertsi's *History* as a literary work, considering Lastivertsi "the bearer of the classical traditions of the artistic reproduction of history" (Nalbandyan 1986: 78-79). Abeghyan notes that the artistic basis of *History* is the problem of internal moral strength, the spread of which will make it possible to defeat external enemies, that is, the Seljuk Turks (1970: 57). Lastivertsi's *History* has the value of documentary validity, but the author also resorted to artistic forms of expression to narrate the history of the tragic time of Armenia in the 11th century, due to which the historical characters in his story often turned into literary characters. Against the background of Turkish invasions, cruel actions of the Turks, plunder and massacre, and then the loss of parts of the country, Lastivertsi presents the historical-individual and collective characters of the Turks. The historian distinguishes between "us" and the foreigner, using the word "alien" to emphasize the cultural difference of the type that is destroying the country. "The alien nations // Alienated us from our natural world" (Hovhannisyanyan 2012: 526). Taking into account historical, cultural, and social factors, Lastivertsi's definition of the foreign enemy, according to the principle of historical imagology (Kozlova 2015:116), can be considered the first one. Lastivertsi presents two types of foreigners: Christians, towards whom he is favorable, and Turks, to demonstrate a negative attitude (Vardanyan 2022: 133, 136). Such a foreign character is Khtrik, who bathes in the blood of captives to soothe his heart, burning with defeat (Hovhannisyanyan 2012: 549). The character of Sultan Tughril is even more terrifying (a deadly bloodthirsty beast and murderer), the invasion is destructive and devastating (Hovhannisyanyan 2012). Describing the inhumane ways of the Turks in robbing and killing, the narrator depicts the collective image of the foreign enemy, with a characteristic feature of their type: "The swords of the enemies became dull, their hands became exhausted, the strings of their bows were cut, their quivers were empty of arrows, they themselves became tired, but their hearts did not tremble" (Hovhannisyanyan 2012: 568). It should be emphasized that the first depiction of the Turk foreigner in

Armenian artistic historiography appears as a result of war and Turkish conquests. In 1072, Lastivertsi testifies that after living next to the Armenians for many years, the Turk foreigner continues to remain the same: “their intentions were always evil about us, and their words were full of deceit” (1971: 108). The situation of danger and threats emanating from the “foreigner” begins to shape “the social and socio-cultural context within which the 'image of the enemy' is formed” (Senyavskaya 2006: 9), as a result of which the Turk foreigner is fixed in the Armenian consciousness as a neighbor enemy.

In the geopolitics of conquering Armenia and the Armenians, the negative image of the Turk foreigner does not arise from the rejectionist attitude of the Armenians at all; the same is visible in the lives of other nations who suffered from them (Almuthaybiri 2024: 489). On the contrary, the image of the Turk neighbor as an enemy was further strengthened by historical reality over time (Akçam 1999). Nine centuries after the time of Lastivertsi, even after the Armenian Genocide, the Islamized Armenians were undergoing a second stage of assimilation, losing their identity with final Turkification (Marutyan 2018: 33). The Turkification and assimilation of Armenians was on the agenda of the Kemalist state, and one of the important targets of its “social engineering”. By converting Armenians to Islam through deceit and violence and forcing them into marriage, the Turk, under the pretext of liberating the land from its former owners, subtly and peacefully achieved their elimination. (Peacock, Andrew, De Nicola and Yıldız 2016; Ohanjanyan 2021: 81). Therefore, after the Genocide, Armenians who did not want to convert to Islam took the path of forced migration, dispersing to other countries: from a certain original “center” to two or more “peripheral” or “foreign regions” (Safran 1991: 83), while retaining a sense of belonging to their historical homeland, as well as a “homesickness” and a myth of return (Vertovec 1997).

The literature of the Armenian diaspora is conditioned by the characteristics of the community, which “are based on a common religion and language, a collective memory of national independence in a circumscribed territory, and a remembrance of betrayal, persecution, and Genocide” (Safran 1991: 84).

If the literature of other diaspora nations is distinguished by the fact that the contact and assimilation with the literary circle of a foreign country is closer, especially if the migration was to Europe or America (Eagleton, Terry, Jameson and Said 1990), then the literature of diaspora Armenians differs from the literature of other peoples (Dimitriev 2024: 325). In this sense, we can argue that, unlike the literature of other Armenian diasporas, the Lebanese Armenian literature of the 1930s-1950s was without obvious manifestations of foreign influence. Writers of the Armenian diaspora in Lebanon continued to depict the reality of the Genocide and Turkish oppression, introducing into the sphere of artistic narrative the image of a foreign neighbor who is always an enemy\*.

Literature is a new territory for the exiled writer to live in (C), different from the displaced territory (A) that he has lost, and the new territory (B) in which he is still a foreigner (Beller 2022: 159). The literary characters of the Lebanese-Armenian writer Poyatchyan operate in the context of this spatial displacement, and their perceptions of the Turk foreign neighbor are expressed through artistic

interpretations of the historical reality of the time. In one of his books, Poyatchyan writes: “Never have neighbors and distant tribes brought so much sorrow, so much mourning, so much injury and cruelty to one people” (1972: 65).

In general, in the collective consciousness of the Armenian people, through the transmission of historical memory over several generations, the image of the Turk enemy has changed, acquired certain features of mythification (Senyavskaya 2006: 19, 25, 250), and has become a unique archetype of the enemy. This is also evidenced by the verbal meaning of the word “Turk” in the Armenian sphere. In the vocabulary of the character in the literary text, the word “Turk” is equivalent to an insult, a meaning that is quite widespread both in the Armenian language and in the linguistic thinking of humanity in general (Grigoryan 2016: 98).

#### **4. The Turk neighbor in the context of the genocide, everyday images, and in comparison, with the self**

The interpretation of the image of the Turk in Poyatchyan’s stories is based on historical, cultural, and spiritual concepts that both the author and the Armenian people have (Kozlova 2015:117). The exiled author, in a sense, identifies himself with his exiled characters, becoming the person who “never felt at home, and was always at odds with the environment, inconsolable about the past, bitter about the present and the future” (Said 2000: 370). Poyatchyan is the creator of a fictionalized portrait of his displaced people, real people, and a documentarian in history (Vlasta 2016: 44).

The trauma of the exiled writer’s historical memory prompts him to introduce naturalistic images into a literary text. “Death to the Armenian people was also caused by hunger, cold, mud – after the human Turk came the Turks of nature.” (Poyatchyan 1972: 271). The details of viewing unpleasant and repulsive images of everyday life in comparison with the other depict the newly formed Aynchar of the 1930s-1940s. It seems like a literary testimony (narrative as testimony), in which, during the creation of Aynchar, the “historical and psychological layers of society are revealed through the model of literary characters” of this period (Gasparyan, Luiza and Poluboyarinova 2025: 1257).

During this period of exile, the writer creates mainly male characters in his stories, introducing motifs of everyday life into the realm of fiction: “for instance, the motif of the tongue, cooking, eating, arrival, and the climate” (Beller 2022: 158). For this reason, the stories are essay-like, sometimes lacking a classical plot, and the characters are more contemplative, moving between the realistic everyday life of the past and the present, rather than being active. They are Armenian exiles living in difficult conditions in the desert area of Lebanon, who do not forget their enemy neighbor in their struggle for survival in search of identity (Hall 1990).

Vanas, who was saved from the Turk’s yataghan but was deprived of his land, has boundless and insurmountable hatred for the Turks (*Dar Dar Tariner*). He revises the inherited historical memory, thinks that “God is Armenian, Fortune is Tatchik” (There is a synonym for the word “Turk” in Armenian - the word “Tatchik”, which is used in Western Armenian and has no semantic difference), and formulates the attitude of the enemy neighbor: “You know, Tatchik’s eye is

always on what belongs to someone else". Vanas, who preaches brotherhood and longs for peace, with astonishing contradiction, wishes that everyone "were brothers and wiped the Tatchik off the face of the earth" (Poyatchyan 1972: 235).

Poyatchyan's literary narratives are significantly distinguished from the works of other writers by the very aspects of the image of the Turk, the Turk neighbor, as a faceless "absolute enemy." In the consciousness of the people, the enemy is depicted as a foreigner, an aggressor, a barbarian, an insatiable conqueror. However, Senyavskaya considers the most important thing in the "image of the enemy" to be their complete "dehumanization, the absence of human features, a human face" (2006: 16-17). The ways of depicting the enemy neighbor in Poyatchyan's creative system confirm the viability of the Turk imago type present in the historical memory of Armenians; in the memory of the characters, the Turk is once again a destroyer, a corrupter of life.

There are almost no descriptions of the Genocide and cruel scenes in Poyatchyan's stories<sup>1</sup>. The echoes of the Genocide are resonate through metaphorical use of the word "Turk". "The sky becomes the Turk", "The consequences of the Turk are at least as bad as a midge, a mosquito, a mouse and a lethal thing" (Poyatchyan 1972: 293, 217). For the artistic depiction of the foreign, Poyatchyan uses the image of the most common insects of everyday reality: midges, mosquitoes, and flies, whose invisible danger is greater in reality. Depicting the reflection of the difficult life of the creation of Aynchar, the author turns the fly into a unique symbol. If in Sartre's work (1989) they symbolize the pricking of human conscience, then in Poyatchyan's stories, the fly is a symbol of the Turk in terms of dirt, hopelessness, corrupting everything, and rapid reproduction (1972: 216, 217, 223). The author creates a symbolic image with dark humor in the story *Dar Dar Tariner*: every day, a hundred flies were illegally "consummating" on the mustache of an unmarried 70-year-old Armenian man. The mustache, like the cap, is a symbol of the honor of an Armenian man, and it is no coincidence that in Poyatchyan's story, the fly, symbolizing the Turk, is fertilized on the mustache of the Armenian character, emphasizing the spatial ambitions of the Turk neighbor over the national dignity of the Armenian. Essentially, the writer also depicts the demographic reality in the literary text: the Armenian who does not produce offspring is opposed to the Turk who continues to multiply.

The principle of the self and the other opposition underlying imago type carries a dual meaning - simultaneous characterization of both sides. Poyatchyan, almost always, in contrast to the concise characterizations of the Turk foreigner, presents the character of the self with the best, sometimes stereotypical, but figurative descriptions. "The Armenian is the son-in-law of courage and Light" (Poyatchyan 1972: 172), confidently asserts the Galust (*Mule person Galust*), who fought against the Turks on the heights of Musa Ler, who was "an Armenian born from the mountains, with the pure soul of starry nights" and had "a conscience as great as the church" (Poyatchyan 1972: 162). At the center of his value system is the brave and unyielding Armenian man, while the rejected man is the man who "has a mustache at home, works with the Turk outside of home, and is a humble servant of the agha (master)" (Poyatchyan 1972: 174). The best qualities of the

Armenian are also evident in the presentation of his land-loving, kind, patient, and strong character, the farmer Trdat. The Armenian created gardens, harvests, and abundance, while the Turk either destroyed it or appropriated all the blessings of the garden, the land with its fertility. Armenians also connect their gardens, trees and ripe fruits with their creative identity, even comparing the priest to an old and peaceful, immaculate olive tree (Poyatchyan 1972: 265). "Such staples are associated with its history, culture, and people's identity" (AlRamahi and Al-Shetawi 2025: 155).

The noblest traits of Poyatchyan's characters are from the source of national moral epistemology. Theorist Leerssen writes: "National characterizations are often specific instances and combinations of generic moral polarities, and that our way of thinking in terms of "national characters" boils down to an ethnic-political distribution of role patterns in an imagined anthropological landscape" (2007: 29). In the context of the over-idealization of the self, the enemy foreign neighbor, having a manifestation of an archetypal pre-myth, turns into a stereotype in the Armenian consciousness. Poyatchyan depicts the meta image of the Turk with a certain national strategy (Leerssen 2017: 21). To give reassurance to the stereotypical ideas rooted in the people (Senyavskaya 2016: 9; Thiele 2022: 281-283), the author resorts to a phrase that sounds from the lips of another nation to describe the image of the foreign enemy: "That nation (the Turks) destroyed the name of good Islam" (Poyatchyan 1972: 209), says the old Arab donkey driver in the story *The First Night and Days* (In the Arab world, the genocide was considered "[...] as a black stain on the history of Islam, which ages will not efface" (El-Ghusein 1917: 55).

In the public consciousness, the Armenian national stereotype remains the same in essence and content, even though "times and circumstances change" (Qalantaryan 2021: 316). Generations have always been told that "through the centuries, the Armenian is brave and the Christian is good" (Poyatchyan 1942: 117). "National stereotypes are first and most effectively formulated, perpetuated and disseminated" (Leerssen 2007: 26). Because of the moral standards arising from the national stereotype, the Armenian self-respect manifests all severity towards its own: "When they saw an Armenian thief in the Armenian's garden, they would beat him to death" (Poyatchyan 1972: 230), says Kashi (Leather) Poghos, considering that it is the Turk who steals from the Armenian (*Dar Dar Tariner*).

The image of the Turk foreigner is perhaps the most enduring historical-social myth among Armenians, which, having originated in the historiography of Lastivertsi and passed through the neighborhood of the self and the other, centuries-old interactions, national oppression and liberation struggle, ideological and cultural exchanges, has been inherited by generations as a historically revalued stereotype - "enriched with new symbolic features" (Khorev 2000: 23-24).

## **5. The house, the church, the garden, and the grave as toposes**

Poyatchyan's relationship with historical reality becomes meaningful through love for the homeland, "the appreciation of the Armenian person, especially the native land" (Bekmezian 1996: 108), the creative essence of the Armenian, and freedom,

which are undermined by the Turk. According to the imagological concept of the opposition of the self and the other, in Poyatchyan's stories, "the values professed by the self are revealed in parallel with the behavior of the other" (Qalantaryan 2021: 316).

In the traumatic memory of the displaced characters, their native places appear with pain and longing. Among immigrant writers, words like "home" and "language" occur frequently, but words like "nation" or "people" appear seldom (Beller 2022: 158). In his text, Poyatchyan tells about their everyday life, conditions, social problems, and sentiments. There seem to be no national, historical, or political allusions in the stories, yet it is on this invisible basis that the imago-figures of the foreigner and the native are often accompanied by symbols of home, garden, church, and cemetery.

The image of the house occupies a central place both throughout history and in artistic narratives of human history (Bachelard 2004: 26). Poyatchyan considers the house to be "the imprint of the spirit and tribal life" (1942: 33) and finds that Armenians have the strongest understanding of the house, and therefore their houses are living characters that love, hate, grow, shrink, sing, and play music (Balayan 2024: 195). The house is in an inseparable spiritual relationship with its owner, the Armenian. Nikoghos, who does not see an inch of space in Aynchar, climbs the cliff with his wife every evening, longingly searching for his native home on the shore of Musa Ler and "seeing his hut buried in the darkness of distant kilometers in the clearest detail" (Poyatchyan 1972: 227). The memory of the lost house includes the lost homeland. The house is the most powerful force that unites human thoughts, memories, and dreams, and that is why the characters' "houses of the past are immortal" (Bachelard 2004: 28).

The enemy foreigner is the occupier of the native house and has no material or spiritual connection to that house; this idea is central to both of his collections. In the story *Hrashali Pandukhtner (Wonderful Wanderers)*, the symbolism of the house lies precisely in this contradiction. Poyatchyan's fellow villager Zyrb, whose memory was centered on his dilapidated house on the edge of the abyss, was more concerned that any Turk occupying his village and living there would think that the Armenian was lazy for living on the edge of the abyss and not building the house, and "that is what bothers him most of all" (1942: 144). Apart from historicity, the character as the native demonstrates primary interest not so much in the foreigner themselves as in the perception of his own image within the foreigner's social consciousness (Orekhov 2020: 155).

Touching upon the "poetic basis of the space of the house" (Bachelard 2004: 27) in his memory, the exiled character Galust, according to his standards of justice, demands that only those who fought against the Turks on the heights of Musa Ler be housed in the upper houses, and those "who did not fight at the mountain, who sometimes said "yes" to the Turk, bowed their heads" in the lower houses (Poyatchyan 1972: 174). Subconsciously, the character chooses the vertical type of house, which rises upwards, towards the pure dreams of the soul (Bachelard 2004: 37).

In traumatic memory, other abandoned toposes are equated with the function of the house. These are churches and cemeteries, which, being the material embodiments of an identity and historical memory that is religiously distinguished from the outside, symbolize at the same time the lost land and homeland. In Poyatchyan's memory, the childhood house, which was close to the church, bordering the cemetery and neighboring the sky, therefore God, is also always painfully depicted (Teoleolyan 1977: 266). The cemetery and the church, presented through the memory of the past, are not merely the chronicler's narrative, but a literary, just, and truthful depiction of historical trauma (Fokeeva 2019: 120-121). The house, the cemetery, "become emotional, social, and cultural indicators and markers" (AlRamahi and Al-Shetawi 2025: 154). Poyatchyan simultaneously unites the symbols of the cemetery, church, and house, revealing the layers of traumatic memory in a literary structure: "The dead go to the church to guard the houses of the village" (1972: 226-227).

The entire symbolism of the abandoned villages reveals a poorly concealed accusation against the foreign enemy neighbor:

After the Turks arrived, we could not stay there for a year. It seemed like your house was not really yours; your tree was not really yours. [...]. It seemed that only the graves remained precious - the dead were the only ones that truly belonged to us (Poyatchyan 1972: 319-320).

In essence, we are dealing with the fetishization of the house and the surrounding topographies, which implies that "the loss of the house means the irreversible loss of the 'self'" (Vahanyan 2023: 110).

The portrayal of the loss of home, and therefore of the self, in Poyatchyan's literary text is also closely related to the problem of the characters' physical and spiritual freedom. In the relationship between the native and the foreigner, freedom and neighborliness become concepts that either complement or reject one another. For Poyatchyan's Misak, living is moving freely, breathing, thinking, writing and reading, working, and if these are not available in the native land, then "the old place is not a homeland, but only a barn" (1972: 319). Poyatchyan's characters emigrated and did not remain next to their violent Turk neighbor, who is always portrayed as an enemy in the Armenian national consciousness. "The enemy was in their own homeland, while they were in someone else's. They had left their birthplace, abandoned their home, land, and wealth, to choose *the freedom*" (another spelling: E.P.) (1972: 221). In a country where an individual's freedom to act and create is restricted and their life is endangered, the profound sense of injustice kills the love of life (Fromm 1992: 40). If in the previous collection *Land*, Poyatchyan's characters hoped to return to their homeland, then in the collection *Tomar Taragri*, uncle Eprem, the character who fought for freedom in his land, understands that there will be no return to his homeland. He commits suicide with his rifle, which he used in the liberation struggle in the heroic battle of Musa Ler. That symbol of freedom in another country becomes an instrument of death, because the elderly soldier did not rediscover the love of life in another land through illusory freedom. In the story *Sisak and Misak*, the young characters, having

participated in the war, return to the newly founded Aynchar, but they have the same problem in their hearts. Should they live freely in safe Lebanon or emigrate by invitation to the new homeland of Armenians, Soviet Armenia, where freedom would be constrained in terms of nationalism?

Poyatchyan basically outlines three paths. The great impact of historical trauma on the older generation is enormous: they either do not live or lose their "self" under the burden of the tragic past. The young generation of Lebanese-Armenians, who are the direct heirs of historical memory and trauma, do not return to their homeland to live next door to the foreign Turks, once again rejecting the future of dialogue with the foreign Turk neighbor.

## 6. Conclusion

The first mention of the Turk foreigner as an imagotype appeared in the literary historiography of the 11th-century historian Aristakes Lastivertsi. As a result of the geopolitics of conquering Armenia and the Armenians, the image of the foreign Turk, in the context of social and socio-cultural realities, has gradually transformed into an image of an enemy. The historical memory of the Armenians has been continuously reshaped as a result of ongoing trauma. The new perceptions of generations have rendered the image of the Turk as archetypal and later firmly stereotypical. After the Armenian Genocide, especially, the concept of the Turk foreigner as an enemy took a foundational place in the works of Armenian writers. The Lebanese-Armenian writer Poyatchyan, unlike many Armenian writers, avoided choosing a Turk as an active character. In his collection *Tomar Taragri*, he depicts the faceless, abstract image of the Turk who exists within the historical and traumatic memory of the author and of the characters, the exiled men who founded the village of Anchar in Lebanon.

In his works, Poyatchyan reconstructed the common stereotypical image of the Turk through several dimensions. He constructed the mythologized and faceless image of the Turk foreigner through the means of Genocide's scarce but symbolic visions, the naturalistic and demographic details of everyday life, and at times, over-idealizing the self. Analysis in such a context allows us to assert that Poyatchyan chose a new national strategy to condemn the neighboring enemy. For the characters of the collection *Tomar Taragri*, the neighboring Turk foreigner continues to be perceived as an enemy.

Through the analysis of the symbolic system of toposes in Poyatchyan's stories, it is revealed that in the consciousness of the Armenian people, they serve as emotional, social, cultural, and religious indicators. The images of the house, the church, the grave, and the land are closely connected with the characteristics of the self and the other. Consequently, these toposes, while embodying identity and historical memory that are religiously distinguished from the foreigner, at the same time symbolize the lost land and homeland.

In Poyatchyan's literary text, the depiction of the loss of the house, and thus of the homeland, is connected to the issue of physical and spiritual freedom of the Armenian characters. Poyatchyan's characters do not believe in a peaceful yet unfree neighborliness with the Turks; they do not return to their homeland and

instead choose freedom in Lebanon or in Soviet Armenia. In essence, they close off the path to a future dialogue with the foreign Turk.

### **Endnote**

\*There are similar images in numerous works of Armenian literature, often based entirely on historical sources, taken from eyewitness accounts, and fully reflecting the horrors of the Genocide. One can mention the well-known novel *The Book of Whispers* (2009) by Varujan Vosganian, written in Romanian, which in 2009 was considered the best work of the year in Romania, and in the same year the novel was awarded the main literary prize of the Romanian Academy.

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