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William Saroyan the Memorialist

DICKRAN KOUYMJIAN

There is so much more to write about William Saroyan, born and died in Fresno (1908-1981), one of the most prolific literary word masters of American literature. Those who know anything about him can usually recite the major steps in his rocket-like ascent into the select club of literary figures at the end of the Great Depression at age 25. He was the fourth child of Armenian immigrants fleeing Turkish persecution, the only one born in the United States, then losing his father at three, forcing the boy to spend nearly five years in an orphanage in Oakland with his siblings while their mother eked out a living as a domestic in the Bay Area. Afterward, the return to Fresno, living a street life hawking papers after school, discovering the public library as a compensation for formal schooling, which didn't agree with his restless temperament, finally at thirteen simply walking away, a dropout, but enrolling in vocational school to learn touch-typing, and much to the dismay of his family, spending the important sum of \$15 for an Underwood typewriter with which he would start his formal and very serious journey to become a writer. There followed thirteen years of apprenticeship starting in Fresno and continuing in San Francisco, where the family moved when he was sixteen because there was work.

Saroyan described these earlier years of writing and submitting mostly indirectly in essay-stories, one after the other, most of them published later in ten volumes of collected short stories from 1934 to 1940. After that, he turned to the theater, churning out play after play, regularly several in the same year. At one time he had three productions running simultaneously on Broadway, and to top it all, offered himself his own William Saroyan Theater in New York. In 1943, he married Carol Marcus, a would-be actress and New York socialite, fifteen years his junior. They had two children, divorced six years later, remarried in 1950, and divorced again in the following year, after which Saroyan remained a bachelor. The marriage coincided with his venture into writing novels, only ten were published. After the divorce, he began writing memoirs, ten

or twelve volumes of which were published up to his death in 1981. Though it sounds compartmentalized, Saroyan kept writing in all and any medium, including essays and poetry, constantly. He was unusually disciplined about this, which was something he practiced from the beginning, typing at times as quickly as he could think.

The peculiarities of his workaholic attitude towards typing words on paper have been described by many, including this writer.¹ In normal times when he was not going through one crisis or another, he wrote each day and for a prescribed duration. After his divorce and his move to Paris, definitive in 1960, and then from there back to his childhood hometown, Fresno, three years later, he created a commute between these dramatically different environments, Paris and Fresno. He settled into a routine that remained constant during the last twenty years of his living and writing time. This insatiable need to create, to engage in life passionately and consciously, led him into other domains, which I have sometimes referred to as the unknown Saroyan.² This included his life-long need to draw and paint, achieving at an early age a certain competence in abstraction and in later life as an accomplished watercolorist working with consistency, sometimes obsessively, in a very *avante garde* style. His film career began in 1936 and moved forward rapidly until his great falling out with Louis B. Mayer in 1943, the same year he won an Oscar for “best scenario” for *The Human Comedy*, which he easily turned into his first novel. Another career as composer and songwriter began in the late 1930s from which he garnered at least one hit song, “Come on a My House,”³ and in a more serious vein, a composition he co-wrote with the American composer Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000).⁴

Saroyan’s love of the written word coupled with his obsessive need of productivity resulted in an enormous literary legacy that remains virtually unexploited, even now more than three decades after his death. His archives were in part given to University of California, Berkeley and entirely stored there by the William Saroyan Foundation, until they were definitively transferred to Stanford University in 1996, again by the Foundation, whose first president

Robert Setrakian, was an alumnus.⁵ Dr. James D. Hart, Director of the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, had cultivated Saroyan over the years, and the author in his lifetime had turned over substantial documents to it. Saroyan's will, of which I was a signatory, designated two repositories for his archives: University of California, Berkeley, and California State University, Fresno. After his death, I was asked by Robert Setrakian, on behalf of the William Saroyan Foundation, to inventory Saroyan's Paris apartment at 74 rue Taitbout in the 9th arrondissement and ship all papers, documents, artwork, books, and certain personal items like furniture, a player piano, his typewriter, some clothes, etc., to Berkeley and Fresno, which was accomplished in the winter of 1981-82.⁶ The following year I was asked to do the same for Saroyan's two tract houses in Fresno, which again I accomplished moving most everything of importance to the Henry Madden Library at Fresno State as agreed. Of course, beside my personal lists, Bancroft-Berkeley had spent years organizing the archive and preparing an elaborate inventory, and after the move to Stanford, the contents, or at least the part which was not dispersed as recounted in the Boulware article cited above, of the Saroyan house owned by his sister Cozette was also inventoried. These documents have been available online for sometime.⁷

Among the archives are some 1,200 manuscripts and an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 letters, mostly sent (he typed 99 % of them and kept carbon copies of everything) and received by him.⁵ In this musing on Saroyan's writing obsession, my interest is essentially with his journals. He kept a regular record of his life and thoughts from his earliest years; at first handwriting them in line notebooks, but eventually typing them. The Saroyan Archives at Stanford preserves most of them, but forty-three of the earliest from 1934-40 were in possession of Peter Howard (1938-2011), proprietor of the Serendipity Bookstore of San Francisco, until his death.⁹ These no doubt came out of the 15th Avenue house that Saroyan had built for his mother and sister in the late 1930s, sold by his daughter Lucy Saroyan (1946-2003), who occupied the house during her aunt's lifetime and after her death. I, along with many other close friends of her father, cautioned her about doing this when she spoke at our Armenian Studies

Program Annual Banquet at my invitation. However, she needed money desperately, and seemed to be unable to think rationally. The fate of the forty-three notebooks is not clear but a private group, on good terms with the Stanford Saroyan Archive, bought most of the Saroyan items held by Serendipity.

It is hard to imagine or calculate the size of forty-seven years of diaries. Saroyan had prepared parts of journals for publication, and actually published a section covering three months, August of 1967 in Paris, and November and December of 1968 in Fresno.¹⁰ The book has 139 pages and two dedications. The first: “In memory of the house at 2226 San Benito Avenue in Armenian Town; Emerson School; Longfellow Junior High School and Technical High School—all gone from Old Fresno. And forgotten, too.” The second is actually a series of quotes from a renowned Swiss diarist, Henri-Frédéric Amiel (1821-1881):

27th October 1853, Geneva

Only those truths which have become ourselves are really our life. So long as we are able to distinguish any space whatever between the truth and ourselves we remain outside it.

4th October 1873

Tell me what you feel in your solitary room when the full moon is shining in upon you, and I will tell you how old you are.

4th February 1881

It is a strange sensation, that of laying oneself down to rest with the thought that perhaps one will never see the morrow. Yesterday I felt it strongly, yet here I am.¹¹

Saroyan probably owned an edition, one of many reprints that he refers to in a rather disorganized manner as early as 1936.¹² No doubt he bought it from one of the many used bookstores with bargain-book bins that he loved, signing

his name in the front or back along with the date and place, and usually its price, tens cents or a quarter, but always less than a dollar. He would “read around” such books, as he used to say. He had a particular affinity for Amiel, because he too wanted to describe a life in detail. Amiel was an academic type, interested in philosophy, but he tried to record everything in his daily routine and thoughts, which are preserved in some 7,000 pages of journals.

In addition to *Days of Life and Death*, he prepared at least one other fragment from his journals in September 1974 in Paris, according to his typed indication on the first page of a manuscript that had passed through his preparer of typescripts for submission: Studio Duplicating Service, Inc. (445 West 44th Street, NYC). He received his copies in Fresno, according to his handwritten note on the first page of a copy in a private collection, “William Saroyan Fresno Tuesday October 29 1974 10:20 AM,” which would have been about the time the postman delivered mail to his house at 2729 West Griffith Way. The journal of 130 single-spaced typed pages entitled, “After Forty Years. The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze,” was written starting in Fresno on “Monday February 25 1974 1:55 P.M. 56th Day 309 Days to Follow” and continues to “Taitbout Paris Tuesday April 30 1974 12:25 P.M.” This elaborate method of recording everything precisely was a habit he developed early, which got more and more precise as the years went by. Day by day, Saroyan recorded his every movement, always indicating the exact moment he started to type, rounded to the nearest five-minute interval, and always at the end of the writing session, sometimes at the bottom of every typed page, the exact time he stopped writing. I have discussed this phenomenon before, even calculating the rapidity of his typing, usually without errors and seldom with strikeouts.¹³ In June and July of 1979 in Paris, during the writing of his play *Haratch*,¹⁴ he typed on thirty pages of a special long paper stock he had ordered a few years before, one page a day of 800 to 900 words, single-spaced with virtually no margins, the start and finish time indicated at the top and bottom of each sheet, totaled to an average of 20 minutes per sheet or per day. He was typing flawlessly at about 40 to 45 words per minute. This is all the more remarkable since Saroyan never

wrote drafts nor did he work from notes or outlines. He simply had a title, but that might also change as the writing went along.

We know from the headings of each day's typing of "After Forty Years" his precise movements from Fresno to Paris. On Monday, March 11, 1974, he left for San Francisco and his house on 15th Avenue with Lemyel Amirian, an old buddy who came by with his Simca. On the way up, they stopped at Lemyel's house in Palo Alto for tea. Four days later he took a train to New York, the entry for the day reading: "Amtrak Car 0635 Roomette 4 moving to Elko 6:50 P.M." With his faithful portable typewriter, usually in the morning, he never failed to chronicle his trip¹⁵: Cheyenne and then Denver on the 16th, Chicago the 17th, then Philadelphia and finally New York, "St. Regis Hotel Room 1726 Tuesday March 19 1974 6:05 P.M." Part of his entry for March 20 offers a glimpse of his approach to writing in those years:

I had had a good if rather busy Tuesday in New York, my second day, after an absence of two full years, and in the evening I had gone to work on the basic idea or scheme for a book I want to write and pass on to the literary agent whose name is Scott Meredith—because I had asked him in a scribbled note left with a receptionist if he knew of some means by which I might earn enough money to build my own library, planned these past 20 years. He sent by messenger a reply saying yes he did: all I needed to do was write the central idea of a novel, and then the treatment, and on the basis of those two items, he could auction the deal internationally, and fetch me a lot of money.

So I thought, Yes, by god, I will do it. Why not? Everybody does it, and there no reason for me not to, too. ...

Write a novel to make money. Can do.

Write a book to make big money. Will do.

Because that's the kind of guy I am.¹⁶

On March 23 he flew to Paris, and after staying three days with his lawyer friend, Aram Kevorkian (1928-2003), he moved into his flat at 74 rue Taitbout, which was a mess when he arrived. So he was forced to take refuge elsewhere. He stayed put until the end of April, typing daily his journal for 20-30 minutes each morning, between 11 A.M. and noon, sometimes a few minutes after. No doubt this was just before lunch and after a morning of writing other things, often several different works, usually a page a day on each, which would be 15-25 minutes. He would take short breaks and then start or continue on a different work.¹⁷ After lunch, he would roam the streets of Paris, visiting mostly Armenian friends in his neighborhood and sometimes dropping into the office of the Armenian daily newspaper of Paris and France, *Haratch*, to talk with the owner-editor Arpik Missakian.

The title of this journal, prepared for an eventual publication, celebrated his first great success, a short story that made him instantly famous forty years earlier, “The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze.”¹⁸ That is only part of the meaning, because ten years earlier, Saroyan had published *After Thirty Years; The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*, an exercise to see if he could do it again, and write a story a day for thirty days, just as he had done in 1934. He in fact wrote thirty-six stories in as many days. They are not included in the volume, but the title of each and the number of minutes it took to write them are found at the end of a number of reflections about writing and life, which make up the first half of the book. The second half of the volume is a re-edition of the original 1934 success.¹⁹

The unpublished “After Forty Years. A Journal” finishes with a summation of this exercise of reflection:

Taitbout Paris Tuesday April 30 1974 12:15 P.M.

Well, that’s it for this time.

After Fifty Years, I’ll do it again, most likely.

These things fall into patterns, and the pattern is now fairly well established. And I’m not sure that all of this isn’t the fulfillment of a

decision made long before I was twenty, possibly even before I was ten — to watch it, to keep the eye on the whole thing, and then to watch it again, later, and again, still later, and to think about it, and to keep watching and thinking and noticing whatever it might come to. And so having done it, what have I seen, and what am I seeing, and what did it come to, what has it come to, what is it coming to? Well, of course ignorance is our best bet, and even when we say what we know, we aren't sure we have said anything, or at any rate anything that might be said to have some sort of meaning, or usefulness, and we are back where we started, not exactly nowhere, but so fully everywhere that it almost amounts to being nowhere... . (pp. 128-129).

A page later, he ends his two-month journal:

And so somewhere along the line you arrive at the decision: how to go to your life, and your decision is the honest one, By God, I don't know how, I am trying to find out, but I need all the help I can get from the various activities.

And you find that without making a decision, your help is coming from writing, and you write, and you read, and you write and you read, and ten years go by, and twenty, and thirty, and forty and you write and you read, and you think, I'm finding out something, I think (p. 130).²⁰

The best analysis of this Saroyan method is found in David Calonne's study of thirty years ago, *William Saroyan. My Real Work Is Being*.²¹ Toward the end of the preface, I wrote: "Calonne's ... is the first study to present the entirety of known Saroyan as an integrated whole (p. x)." Despite his vast erudition and research, he simply had no access to Saroyan's unpublished work, his correspondence, or his journals. Nevertheless, I pointed out its many merits:

“No theories to test. No dubious psychological or pseudo-psychoanalytic suppositions to improvise with. Grasping the universal character of Saroyan’s thought... Calonne searches for the inner coherence of every work, whether story, play, novel, or memoir. By revealing gradually the integrity and meaning of each, he fashions a general method for perceiving those ideas which inspired Saroyan (p. xi).”

Most important to our interest in Saroyan as a reflective Memorialist is his final chapter, “The Way of Memory.” Looking at the book again, I had forgotten totally that he too had remarked on Saroyan’s fondness for Henri-Frédéric Amiel, quoting the first line of the penultimate paragraph and the whole of the last of Saroyan’s early essay:

Amiel, I think, once wrote a novel. It took him the major portion of his lifetime to do it, and he wrote only of himself ... I would rather call what Amiel wrote a novel than anything else I have seen what is supposed to be a novel. Christ, I think, lived a novel; which is even nobler than to write one. Living a novel is like carving your language into stone, or it is like placing your language in the wind and in rain and in the sea and in storms and in the heart of man, and in the depths of the earth, and in the emptiness of the cosmos, and it is like having your language everywhere in the form of the only language, silence. It is certainly easier to write a novel than it is to live one. Almost anyone can write a bad novel, but hardly anyone can live even a bad novel²²

Calonne’s final chapter tries to invoke Saroyan’s never ending examination of self and of life and how to live it, in great part by remembering it, but also by recording it, and that Saroyan did with everything he touched. Not just hoarding each object that came his way, but tagging it and making sure it was clearly identified by time and place. It may be too convenient to attribute this, as I often have, to an innate apprehension of a persecuted small nation to claim ownership to what little it had by appropriating through inscription. Perhaps

it is only a coincidence that in the rich Armenian manuscript tradition, which though essentially medieval, continued into early modern times, among all languages in which manuscripts were copied the Armenians employed most consistently the colophon, or scribal memorial, usually at the end of a codex, recording the name of the scribe, the date and place of execution, the name of the patron or commissioner, and often the civil and religious authorities of the time.²³ This spilled over into epigraphy and inscriptions, carpets, and on all sorts of objects, but particularly liturgical ones. Of course, Saroyan, with his vast knowledge on everything, including all things Armenian, was aware of this. One still wonders if we need this reasoning to explain his obsession for self, which is something that Calonne considered was central to his study, *My Real Work Is Being*. Writing becomes the vehicle for achieving his real purpose in life.

There are unpublished works that attest to this keeping-a-diary fetish, or recording everything. He had a similar obsession with dates: his birthday, August 31st, was the most important in his personal calendar. Projects were started or finished on chosen days, such as the unpublished, autobiographical “Fifty-Fifty,” which combines both of these addictions. He began writing it in a journal on the first day of his fiftieth year (the day after his forty-ninth birthday in 1957) and finished on his birthday, August 31st, 1958. It was a massive work of 1,401 pages.²⁴ In a letter to the editors of the *Atlantic Monday*, sent from Malibu on January 3, 1959, he writes about the work:

As for “Fifty Fifty”, a few days ago I put the very large manuscript in order, by weeks, 52 in number: and it is an enormous work, much too big: I read at random here and there as I went along, to find out if the stuff was any good at all: it was, it is, but I do want to let it rest for an indefinite period of time. I am a free agent insofar as publishing is concerned—but we went through all this before, I believe. No publishing house, including The Atlantic, wants to publish what I want published, when I want it published, so what’s the point of making a deal with any of them? There really is no urgency at all about the publica-

tion of anything of mine. Eventually every bit of it will be published—not that that is important, or means anything. The economics just now are changed for publishers, that’s all.²⁵

“Fifty-Fifty” was never published, but Lee and Gifford speculated that it might have been used in part, or at least was the inspiration, for Saroyan’s memoir *Here Comes, There Goes, You Know Who*, which is written precisely in fifty-two short sections, highly autobiographical, and uncompromising on his personal hardships and difficult relationships with family.²⁶

During the decade after Saroyan’s death, though nearly a dozen books on Saroyan or by him were published, the material in the archives remained unavailable. The manuscripts, except for a couple of short stories in limited editions issued by the William Saroyan Foundation for promotional purposes, were simply given approval for publication through signed contracts between the press and the William Saroyan Foundation. To the best of my knowledge, there were only three: the two collections of plays and a long and late memoir.²⁷ Since Robert Setrakian, the editor of the memoir, was the President of the William Saroyan Foundation, which controlled the rights to Saroyan’s work, there was no question of archival access. In some sense the same was true for the five plays, which made up the two Saroyan theater volumes, because copies of all the plays had been given to their editor by the author himself so access was a moot point. The first work dependent almost completely on the Saroyan archives was John Leggett’s *A Daring Young Man*. As author of a well-received earlier biography,²⁸ the William Saroyan Foundation contractually engaged him to do an authorized one on Saroyan. He was given a substantial advance and a commitment by Random House to publish. John Leggett had never met William Saroyan. They were from two different worlds: Saroyan, an immigrant kid born in an agrarian California desert, who struggled without an education to make it in a literary world that was dominated at the time by critics such as Philip Rahv (1908-1973) representing the East Coast establishment, and Leggett, someone also pro-establishment, an Ivy League persona, a Yalie born

in New York and schooled at Andover.²⁹ Throughout his early writing career, Saroyan tangled with the establishment critics, so there was a certain irony in the Saroyan Foundation's choice of Leggett.

The 400-plus-page biography by Leggett was rejected by Random House and the William Saroyan Foundation, because, despite its length and scope, it showed almost limited appreciation of Saroyan as an author and perhaps even as a person. The advance given him was forfeited. Undaunted, John Leggett continued for many years to search for an alternative publishing venue, which he found among the most prestigious in New York. The *Biography* published by Alfred Knopf is a useful work arranged chronologically in nineteen chapters following the major steps in Saroyan's youth and later literary career. In assessing his personal life and relationships with wife and children, he, like Lee and Gifford in *Saroyan*, relied considerably on the words of Carol Marcus Saroyan Matthau, and son Aram, than a somewhat broader spectrum among those who knew Saroyan well. Leggett went through the archives while they were still in Berkeley, and he still acknowledges his gratefulness to both James D. Hart and Bonnie Hardwick in charge of the Saroyan material at the Bancroft Library. The eight double-column pages of notes at the end of the book (pp. 437-444) offer the source material used for his narrative. The first two chapters that dealt with Saroyan's childhood and early, pre-publication writing career, rely almost entirely on the author's many autobiographical memoirs, but after 1934, the correspondence and especially Saroyan's journals become the major source, the references in a clear, but minimalistic style: "journal, 2/27-28/42, 3/7/42," "journal, 4/19, 5/27, 9/11/68," "[page] 432 Death: journal 4/3, 12, 15, 19/81."

This consistent use of the writer's diaries to produce a narrative of his life, if nothing else, demonstrated to all who were interested in William Saroyan that, indeed, there was beside Saroyan's prolific published record and a parallel lifelong manuscript, an endless autobiography, whose structure was recreated daily, like so many other diarists, particularly Amiel. Yet throughout the book, it seems that Leggett was interested primarily in the facts and opinions of others

about Saroyan, selective opinions to be sure. The correspondence of the writer with the literary, theatrical, and commercial world that he was engaged with, as well as his journals, the details of contracts, rejections, quarrels, successes, and cold facts, were sought out and marshaled to fashion a portrait of Saroyan. Leggett seemed to be indifferent to Saroyan's reflections, his philosophical search to understand the constantly changing world around him, and through it to get a glimpse of himself and the existential experience that he was conscious of from his very earliest years. Whereas critics like Calonne, Leo Hamalian, Harry Keshishian, Nona Balakian, and many others³⁰ tried to penetrate the rich reflective musings of a writer who from the beginning was haunted by reflection and inquiry, Leggett simply skipped much of the contents of the journals to chase down names, dates, places, and foibles.

This very first use of the Saroyan memorialist legacy was limited compared to Saroyan's own publishing of fragments of his journals, some of which were cited and quoted above. Now that the archives and all the journals, correspondence, notes, and ephemera are open and free to scholars, we can acknowledge that Leggett's *A Daring Young Man* serves as a pathfinder to the record, though Stanford's own online inventory and finding guide of the collection is more useful for searching out individual unpublished works. It is not realistic to imagine that such sensitive scholars as David Calonne will again seek out the now available ultimate source in order to revise, or better enhance, their general approach to the understanding of William Saroyan as an immense literary figure. Perhaps the greatest part of the "unknown Saroyan" is precisely his archives—over 100 unpublished plays, a dozen novels, hundreds of stories, travel notes and essays—and of course the journals and his correspondence. Henri-Frédéric Amiel is accredited with some 7,000 diary pages over the course of his lifetime. William Saroyan, in nearly a half century of writing, has left more than ten times that.

These thousands and thousands of typed pages cover not just his personal comings and goings, his tribulations with writing or his family, his fantasies (including sexual), but also a vision of the world he lived in and traveled to, its

history, politics, habits, social anguish and political incompetence, its muzzling of free expression, cruelty, and inhumanity. He also writes of its joys, smells, and tastes, its splendor and magnificence, including the natural generosity of most beings as well as his own roots—Californian, American, and Armenian. The diaries and letters are one of the keys, perhaps the magic one, to understanding Saroyan’s writing and the world of his time. It is perhaps too much to expect the systematic editing and publication of the letters³¹ and journals by the William Saroyan Foundation, designed and established by the author in his lifetime to carry out his work, since it appears to be increasingly limited in resources and initiative. Perhaps Stanford will one day make the material available online. What a gift to humanity that would be.

NOTES

- ¹ Dickran Kouymjian, “A Note on the Background of *Haratch* and Saroyan’s Writing Technique,” *William Saroyan Festival Program*, Fresno: Armenians Studies Program, 1981, pp. 12-13, available at <http://armenianstudies.csufresno.edu/faculty/kouymjian/articles/index.htm>.
- ² September 15, 2009, 14th Annual Vardanants Day Lecture at the Library of Congress, Dickran Kouymjian: “The Unknown Saroyan,” http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=4753.
- ³ On the occasion of the 100th birthday celebration “William Saroyan (1908-1981)” held at the Musée de la Vie romantique in Paris on December 1, 2008, conductor and pianist Vahan Mardirossian played a medley of his works: Ross Bagdasarian and William Saroyan (1939), *Come on-a My House*, William Saroyan and Paul Bowles (1940), *The Years*, William Saroyan (1940), *Of All the Things I Love*, William Saroyan and Paul Bowles (1941), *A Little Closer, Please*, William Saroyan (1951), *Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas (Eat, Eat, Eat!)*.
- ⁴ The twenty-two page manuscript score is entitled, “*Girakgi Picnic/(Sunday Picnic)* Words by William Saroyan, Music by Alan Hovanes (sic), Armenian Scenes for Solo Voice, Women’s Chorus and Piano, opus 72.”
- ⁵ A detailed account of the strange escapades of the Saroyan archives can be found in Jack Boulware, “Snatching Saroyan. How Stanford University Aced out UC Berkeley and Acquired the Million-dollar Archives of San Francisco’s most Prolific Author, William Saroyan – Without Paying a Dime,” *San Francisco Weekly*, February 11, 1998 (available online). For the record, I was a member of the Foundation appointed to it at the same time as Robert Setrakian in October 1980 by Saroyan himself, and I was the organizer of the 1996 conference, “Saroyan Plus Fifteen,” mentioned in the article, during my tenure as the William Saroyan Professor of Armenian Studies at Berkeley in that same year.
- ⁶ The task was accomplished by a National Endowment for the Humanities grant that Saroyan and I had applied for before his death; the details of the move are narrative in the grant report.
- ⁷ <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/hasrg/ablit/amerlit/saroyan.html>.

- ⁸ This approximate figure was given by William McPherson, William Saroyan Curator for American and British Literature, at Stanford for a 1997 article in *The New York Times* in which he and I were interviewed: Julia Lew, "A Quarter for Late Thoughts of Saroyan," *The New York Times*, May 10, 1997.
- ⁹ Boulware, "Snatching Saroyan," cited above.
- ¹⁰ William Saroyan, *Days of Life and Death and Escape to the Moon*, New York: The Dial Press, 1970.
- ¹¹ *Amiel's Journal: the Journal Intime of Henri-Frederic Amiel*, translated by Mrs. Humphrey Ward, London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1898. The entire text of the expanded second edition is at http://archive.org/stream/amielsjournalint00amieuoft/amielsjournalint00amieuoft_djvu.txt.
- ¹² William Saroyan, "Poem, Story, Novel," *Inhale & Exhale*, New York: Modern Library, 1936, reprinted Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1972, pp. 289-290, the last two paragraphs of work, for which see a quotation below.
- ¹³ Kouymjian, "A Note on ... Saroyan's Writing Technique," p. 12.
- ¹⁴ It was the longest of the three plays written years apart and brought together in Dickran Kouymjian, *William Saroyan: An Armenian Trilogy*, edited with an introduction and glossary, Fresno: The Press at California State University, 1986. Saroyan had given me copies of these plays and others for use in my course on his writing at Fresno State, thereby allowing me to make such explicit calculations of his work, about which I quizzed him more than once.
- ¹⁵ This was not unusual, in fact one of Saroyan's most endearing books is *Short Drive, Sweet Chariot*, New York: Phaedra, 1966, a rambling excerpt from his journal no doubt, sprinkled with dialogues between the writer and his cousin John as they drove a 1941 Lincoln from New York to Fresno in July 1963.
- ¹⁶ Saroyan, "After Forty Year. A Journal," pp. 48-49 of typescript.
- ¹⁷ This later Saroyan writing process was quantified during the preparation in the early 1990s of a two volume collection of seventeen plays he wrote in the spring of 1975, again in Paris: Dickran Kouymjian, ed. *Spring of 1975, Seventeen Plays by William Saroyan*, with an introduction, 2 vols., Fresno: The Press at California State University, about 400 pages with 40 illustrations, project abandoned when the director of the Press left Fresno State.
- ¹⁸ William Saroyan, *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze and other Stories*, New York: Random House, 1934.
- ¹⁹ William Saroyan, *After Thirty Years; The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964.
- ²⁰ Saroyan died on 18 May 1981, three years short of his "Fifty Years After."
- ²¹ David Stephen Calonne, William Saroyan, *My Real Work Is Being*, Foreward by Dickran Kouymjian, Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1983.
- ²² William Saroyan, *Inhale and Exhale*, New York: Random House, 1936, pp. 289-290; cf. Calonne, *William Saroyan*, p. 143.
- ²³ Much has been written on the subject, but a clear and still valid analysis is found in the introduction to Avedis K. Sanjian, *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts, 1301-1480. A Source for Middle Eastern History*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969, pp. 1-41. Even more thorough is the just published study, Anna Sirinian, "On the Historical and Literary Value of the Colophons in Armenian Manuscripts," in *Armenian Philology in the Modern Era. From Manuscript to Digital Text*, Valentina Calzolari, editor with Michael E. Stone, *Handbook of Armenian Studies*, vol. I, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2014, pp. 65-100.

- ²⁴ John Leggett, *A Daring Young Man. A Biography of William Saroyan*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002, p. 311.
- ²⁵ The letter was sold at auction in November 2005 by History in Ink. Historical Autographs: http://www.historyinink.com/1112005_Wiilam_Saroyan_TLS_1-3-1959.htm.
- ²⁶ William Saroyan, *Here Comes, There Goes, You Know Who*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962; Lawrence Lee and Barry Gifford, *Saroyan. A Biography*, New York: Harper & Row, 1984, p. 269.
- ²⁷ Kouymjian, *William Saroyan: An Armenian Trilogy*, 1986; Dickran Kouymjian, *Warsaw Visitor & Tales from the Vienna Streets, The Last Two Plays of William Saroyan*, edited with an introduction, 1991; Robert Setrakian, ed., *William Saroyan, Where the Bones Go*, 2002; all three titles were published by The Press at California State University, Fresno.
- ²⁸ John Leggett, *Ross and Tom: Two American Tragedies*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974, reprint 2000.
- ²⁹ Calonne, *William Saroyan, My Real Work Is Being*, pp. 147-148, discusses this antagonism as well as the embrace of Saroyan and his method by outsiders such as Jack Kerouac, J. D. Salinger, Richard Brautigan, and others.
- ³⁰ Leo Hamalian, ed., *William Saroyan, The Man and the Writer Remembered*, Rutherford-Madison-Taneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1987; Harry Keyishian, ed., *Critical Essays on William Saroyan*, New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1995; Nona Balakian, *The World of William Saroyan*, Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1998. None of these are cited by John Leggett, but the very excellent compendium of Saroyan's theater is: John Whitmore, *William Saroyan, A Research and Production Sourcebook*, Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1994.
- ³¹ Shortly after his death, James Tashjian published all the letters between William Saroyan and the Hairenik Association in Boston, "Saroyan Memorial Issue, Unpublished Letters of William Saroyan - Ethnic Motivations of an American Writer," *The Armenian Review*, vol. xxxiv, no. 3-135 (September, 1981); Leo Hamalian somewhat later published a large number of letters *Ararat Quarterly* (Spring 1984). Hamalian and I proposed a multi-volume collected letters of William Saroyan to the Foundation, but nothing came of it.