Armenian Pastoral, 1915

Memory is useless if none of us remembers the same things.

—Bruce Murphy

If Anoush were holding her child
and watching the sheep
carted off like men to the slaughter

and Armenag in his dark vest and trousers
were hobbling barefoot in the village square
toward the pockmarked wall

and Ashod in his prison cell
were counting the sprigs of parsley
that must be rising in his garden now

if Araxi were razor-thin by the roadside
dreaming of a white mountain
turning red in the alpenglow

if Antranig refusing to walk
were shod like a horse
and tethered in his own pasture

and Azniv were a wet nurse now
to a battalion of mouths
her infant slit clean in the straw

how long would it have to go on then
beginning with A and spilling over
into all the alphabets

before mother sister father child
could wear the same faces in any language
be cut from the same tongue.