

GREGORY DJANIKIAN

*In the New Church*

We were in church  
but it wasn't our service.  
We were confessing  
but not in our language.

The priest had a beard,  
but neither thick nor long enough  
to veil the sorrows of the heart.

There were crosses on the altar  
but none of them Armenian  
flaring at the edges  
like the fires of Van.

There were no censers  
filled with myrrh  
wafting our prayers  
of intercession.

There were Stephen and Mark  
but not Sahag or Mesrob.  
There were Ann and Mary  
but not Sandoukht or Sirvart.

Christ's body was in the bread  
but no other body.  
There was His blood in the wine  
but no other blood.

There was the liturgy  
bringing us to our feet,  
the choristers singing hosannas  
from the book of praise,

but there was another book  
keeping us invisibly on our knees,  
written in the names of our fathers  
and for our other voices.