The more obscure and undecidable
the more palatable. Anneh’s scowl
still bothers me and she’s been dead
for at least a decade. Her husband
comically diffident, downtrodden man
once a Communist?! How much
more fascinating, radical with my
grandparents as émigrés escaping Stalin,
coming to Iran to found a Trotskyite cell,
instead of banal matriarch and dull
ex-patriarch immersed in gossip
and religion. As a child I hated
only a few things more than being
left alone with them. He once believed
in the Dictatorship of the Proletariat? When
he died, I couldn’t summon a single tear
for my Aababa. Had he been so simple
and meaningless? As for Anneh
perhaps not really possible
that she migrated as a teenage girl
from Baku to Iran for a more exceptional
reason than giving birth to a son who’d meet
a woman who’d then give birth to me. Genes
are a poor substitute for fantasy
of a revolutionary saga, a universal family.

Ali Alizadeh