ARARAT

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Reine Barteve: L'Arménoche

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Reine Bartéve:

DRAMATIST OF THE DIASPORA

By Angele Kapoian Kouymjian

In 1976, Reine Bartéve, a fine French-Armenian actress of exceptional talent, was revealed to Parisian theatergoers as a playwright of equal ability.[1] *L'Arménoche* was produced at the beginning of that year at the Theatre Daniel-Sorano in Vincennes, and her second play, *Le Pavillon Balthazar (Balthazar's House),* with Claude Dauphin playing for the last time, was presented at the Petit-Odeon in the autumn of 1978. Turning to the medium of radio, she wrote *La Pointe des Trois Amants (The Foreland of the Three Lovers),* broadcast on *France-Culture* in April of 1979. And recently her *Ouverture sur Mer (Overture on the Sea)* was performed at the Theatre de Poche-Montparnasse.

Very few plays have dramatized as well as *L'Arménoche* and *Le Pavillon Balthazar* the condition of the Armenians in Diaspora.[2] The central theme of these works is exile: the memory of a haunting past, the feeling of being uprooted as well as rejected, and the insistence on individual assertion as opposed to a "victim" mentality.

How does the past live in the memory of Balthazar Ameradjian, the old stateless survivor of the massacres of *Le Pavillon Balthazar?* Tinged with happiness or grief, it bursts forth unexpectedly. Thus, while he is stuffing dates with almonds and hazelnuts, his senses rediscover the scent associated with his homeland, "the crisp and sweet skin, the taste of peppery cinnamon." His memories of childhood reappear helter-skelter: his aunt, the rice cake which he ate secretly with delight, his horse Azad, wounded in his wild flight from death:

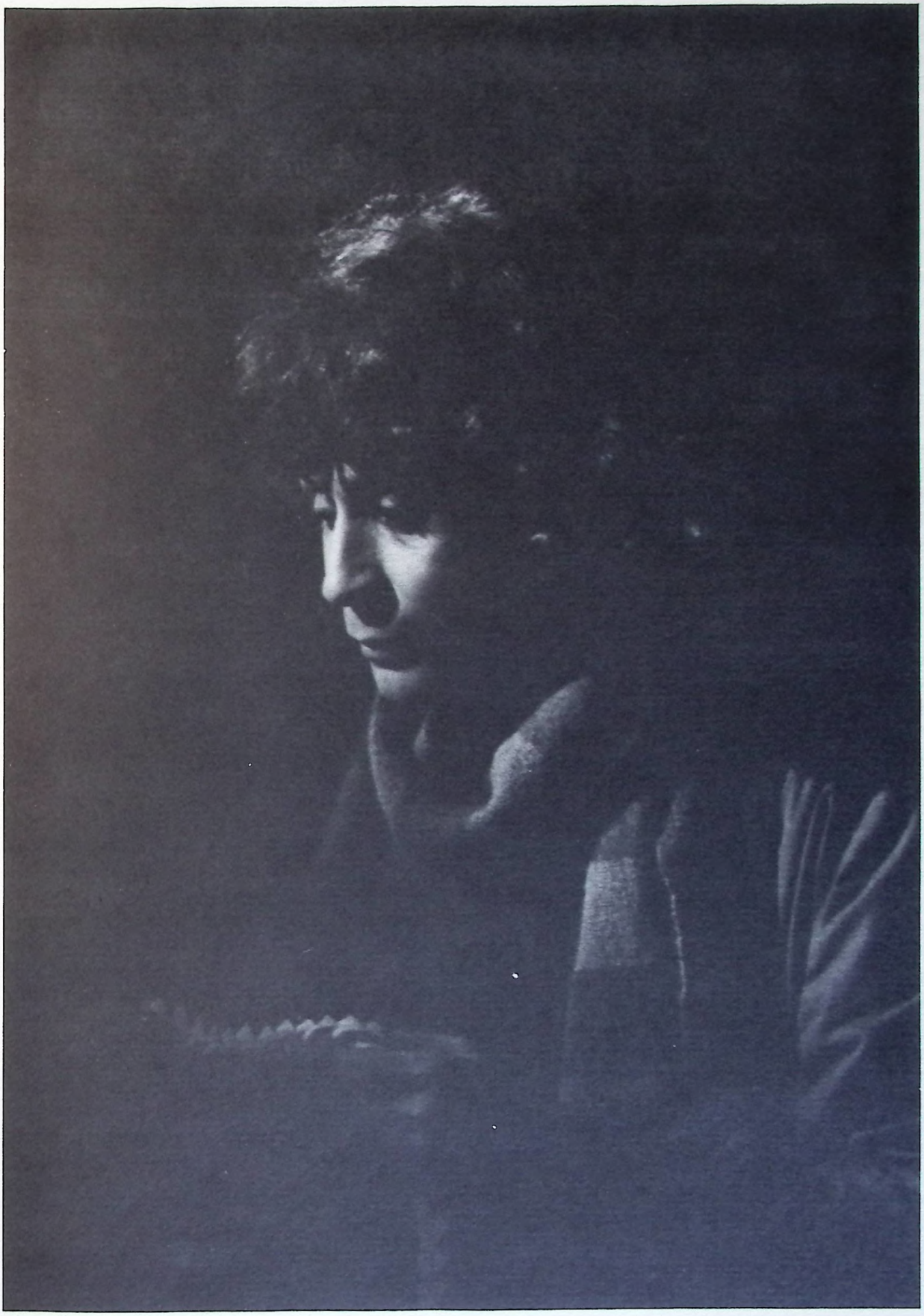
> On the mountain a black horse
> Without a rider
> Runs, runs,
> And slips on a rock.
> His blood runs down his flank,
> The snow weaves a mantle on him . . .
> Come on, get up . . . Stand, stand, Azad . . .
> Wait, wait, I am going to warm you up . . .
> Do not tremble.

The memory of his horse is deeply rooted in him. He sings to it, he calls it: "My beautiful black horse . . . If you were here Azad . . . All this blood on the stones of the road . . . Where shall we go now? . . . Where shall I go with you, Azad . . .?"

Born in France, Marie, the "Arménoche", did not experience this past directly. However, she carries it within herself like an invisible wound which she wishes to expose. Thus, she says to the first man she meets on the platform of a small railroad station, apparently without reason: "Do you know how life returned to a small village? Nothing remained. Everything had been destroyed . . . burned. Only one old woman had escaped the rape and the slaughter. Her naked body was conjoined to the corpse of her son. She held the corpse against herself for days and nights. She licked it, caressed it, clasped it to her, and when nothing remained of his body but a few bones and a bit of decayed flesh, the blood ran out of her sex."

Interrupted by the stranger, who thinks that she is hallucinating in order to excite herself, just as he himself enjoys looking at exciting scenes on television, Marie continues nonetheless: "The old lady was my grandmother. At Trebizond. After the massacre. All the members of one family tied together . . . Mothers and their children . . . All killed by the blows of a rifle butt . . . or buried alive if they persisted in living . . ."

To Reine Bartéve, the return of the past does not signify passivity. Rather, it leads to a desire for rebirth, for new life. Thus, Balthazar wishes to revive Azad, the symbol of Armenia, wounded but determined to rise again. Like an oppressed nation without a leader, Azad has no rider to control his energy. It is a *Kourkik Djalali,* waiting to be mounted and directed by a new David or Mher.[3] One of Balthazar's songs is equally significant. It reminds us that "[his] breath, [his] voice and [his] song give life to the hands of the dead."[4] Also, the blood flowing down the flank of Azad—which



recalls the blood running out of the sex of Marie's grandmother as she holds the body of her dead son. From this blood comes the hope of new life. The image of *flowing* reappears when Marie speaks of the happy moments her father spent in his homeland. "There, the garden and the orchard overlooked the sea, opened up over the sea, and he passed his days among the trees, devouring the fruits. Their warm juice flowed, flowed, and satiated, slightly drunk, he threw himself into the water." Here the juice symbolizes the carefree period of unbruised childhood. However, the juice that flows seemingly without end also evokes the blood which will be spilled during the massacres. The warm juice and blood mingle within our mind; and paradoxically enough, it is from this spilled blood that the rebirth shall come.

By the very choice of scene—the abandoned annex of a hospital in *Le Pavillon Balthazar* and the platform of a deserted railway station in *L'Arménoche*—Reine Barteve underlines Balthazar's and Marie's feelings of being uprooted, since both the hospital and the railway station are places of waiting, passage, separation, and nameless "elsewheres."

Balthazar expresses his sense of deracination by evoking the aura of homesickness: "This is the story of my life," he says to Dr. Zaqua as he gives him the manuscript. "As you know, doctor, I was forced to leave everything I loved. Now I am sorry. Death is bitter when one is far from his homeland. During all these years, I have thought only of my return. Faces and landscapes, washed by the tears of the exile, surge obsessively through my memory, locked in place by the dust of the past."

Uprooted, Balthazar feels the need to flee occasionally into fantasy: "I was dreaming, my eyes fixed on the light bulb. It expands . . . bursts . . . flies into the room as light as a child's balloon . . . cracks into a thousand snowflakes. I am lying on the frozen earth . . . My mother's white shawl envelopes my shoulders, my belly, my feet . . . The white shawl of holidays . . . All of the peasants from the mountains run towards me, embrace me while laughing . . . This Baghtassar has returned to his country . . . He has still the beautiful expression of his poor mother, and look at the thick, soft hair . . . We are going to comb and perfume it."

He also escapes from the confines of exile by singing: "My beautiful black horse, I press against you, you protect me . . . from the wind . . . from the cold . . . We cross rivers and the blue mountains. You gallop with me towards the land of my ancestors."

It is because he is without his own home or country and because he has lost everything that he invents the story of a house at "Aulnoy," of which he is the proprietor: "I have walked so much . . . knocked on so many doors . . . This garden was finally my country, with its roots and its birds . . . the flowers mixed with the trees . . . the windows remain wide open but I have put locks on all the doors . . . They will not be able to get me during the night and lead me naked into the cold."

In *L'Arménoche,* Marie speaks of the difficulties that her father experienced when he arrived in France: "Often I was not understood, Marie," he said. "It is so difficult to speak only with the lips and not from the heart . . ."

As for Marie, who was born in France, how does she feel in this land?

On a deserted station located "nowhere" she waits, a long wait. She is searching for herself. She is a stranger in the country where she was born. She feels

THIS IS FOR YOU

By Shen Mah

This is for you
who showered
once, a sweet
sadness down
over my desolation
like a golden pollen
or misted beams
of light, a light
multiplied like stars.
This is for you
who in silence
and diffidence
appeared
like green grass
growing through
the snow.
This is for you
around whose soul
grief has floated
like a vapor,
like a misty shawl.
Now again I bring
the empty pitcher
of my empty heart
to fill
at the cold springs
of that immortal
guileless soul, saying
this is for you.

(Translated by Diana Der Hovanessian)

not only like an emigrant in France, she feels like an emigrant in life. She has been ostracized to the outer edge of the world, cut off from everything as she is at the station. She does not have any cultural guidelines because she has rejected the model provided by her family: she simply cannot accept the spirit of duty and sacrifice which her mother was constantly preaching to her.

Another theme in these plays is racism. It does not appear in an obvious way in *Le Pavillon Balthazar;* Dr. Zaqua's clinical judgments and his rather negligent casualness are only exasperating. Actually, he regards Balthazar as a sick person suffering from "cerebral trouble," "obsessive neurosis," and "paranoia." "He is a foreigner, an Armenian, I think . . ." he says. "I had never met one before. Ah! Yes, yes . . . a little girl terribly shy! Her mother used to stuff her with candies, and trembling with fear during the physical examination, she spat up her candy on my neck."

In *L'Arménoche,* Reine Bartéve vigorously denounces racism through the character of the Inspector of the Labor Ministry, "the first man" Marie meets. He says: "They did well to liquidate all of them, Arabs, Jews, it's all the same." Then he adds: "If foreigners are not happy here, let them return to their own countries!" And further on, he states: "We put up fences all around, because of this factory. With all these foreigners prowling around . . ." It is the indifference or hostility in so many people that leads Balthazar and Marie to feel a deep tenderness towards all of those who are so rejected: "These are very nice boys . . . Three nice boys deprived of love . . . That's all," says Balthazar, speaking of the young drug addicts to whom he is very attached. It is with warmth and kindness that he comforts Therese, the young woman who has just lost her fiance after he has fallen from a scaffold.

In *L'Arménoche,* facing the racism of the Inspector, Marie sings of her friendship with Ahmed, whom she met one evening in a cafe. Later, she speaks to "the second man" of her affection for an animal regarded as loathsome, the rat. Marie has chosen him as a companion to soften her hard solitude. She confides in him in Armenian. Like her, he is an excluded one, an alien with whom "one does not feel at ease when he is on the prowl." We can only think back to Saroyan, who in a short story, "The Armenian Mouse," writes: "They [the mice] live in another world . . . . Where nobody else wants to go."

The exile has two choices, either to drift and to sink into apathy and resignation, or to challenge the oppressive environment while struggling to save her/his own identity. This is what the protagonists of Reine Bartéve's plays do. If it is true that Balthazar, nostalgic and lonely, takes refuge occasionally in fantasy in order to find his former identity and to flee the sadness of reality, it is equally evident that this old man does not carry within himself a passive despair. His love of life is too great. When he is asked: "Grandfather, are you hiding a treasure?" he answers: "Yes, my life, my life."

A surprising energy leads him to reject submission, to demand his freedom, to buttress himself to live: "You are making me groggy with all your drugs," he exclaims. "Tomorrow you must give me red meat . . . I wish to leave. I shall leave. I have not signed any papers. You cannot keep me here by force. I do not wish to die between four walls, I am leaving tomorrow . . . God! What a blessing! Outside, with people walking by, life." Seized by a fit of anger, he cries: "Why have you kept me here? You don't have the right to do so . . . My hands tremble but they can still set fire to this hovel."

L'Arménoche is the more committed and more violent drama of the two. It presents a young woman who is determined to act forcefully in order to live a life different from that of her father, who could only "vomit" his revolt. Determination, provocation, and violence are the successive stages of this search for affirmation. "I must hold on. Hold on," she says, while recalling the unbounded instinct of survival demonstrated by her grandmother after the massacres at Trebizond.

She then turns to taunting the Inspector, who carries within himself his own death by virtue of the fear, the hostility, and narrowmindedness of his person: "Have you ever seen the old people of the Sainte-Marguerite Home? Well, you resemble them. Yes, yes. They sit on their bench, like this . . . very well behaved, very quiet, expressions frozen, their hands pressed together, dead for how long?"

In order to confront him with his own fear, she says to him coldly, "Aren't you afraid? This station is deserted . . . One reads of so many things in the papers. Take this fellow who was struck down in a public square. It's extraordinary how peaceful he was. He was watching the duck paddle on the pond." Continuing her provocation, she asks the Inspector for fifty francs. In the end, she calmly stabs him.

If Marie is the destiny of this man, it could also be thought that he himself is the destiny of Marie. Actually, at the same moment that Marie gives her own version—falsified—of the act, doesn't she also bring death in her imagination to the unpunished aggressor of the past? "He menaced me more and more brutally," she says. "His enormous eyes were swimming in a reddish liquid . . . he frothed at the mouth." Thus, she portrays the aggressor of the present with the characteristics of

the aggressor of the past (i.e., the torturers of the Young Turk government).

After the killing, Marie has reached the end of her search. She has eliminated the symbol of her oppression. She then decides not to leave: "I am the only traveler, and I am no longer going away," she says to the station master. Now she knows she is strong, very strong. She has finally found herself. The play ends with the word *"Azadoutiun* (Freedom)," which Marie cries out to her friends, the rats of the station.

It is clear in both plays that the past cannot be disassociated from the present, since the diasporic individual must first know her/his past in order to understand and assert herself/himself in the present. It is not any longer the present of despair and perdition as lived by the characters of *Retreat Without Song* by Shahan Shahnour. Reine Bartéve has understood perfectly that to be Armenian is quite different than not to be. This self-evident truth is the startling reality. It means that once and for all the Armenian has taken control of her/his remembrance and once and for all she/he is on the alert.

(Translated by Edward Bearman)

NOTES

[1]In the theater, Reine Bartéve had already distinguished herself in Anouilh's *Antigone,* Camus' *The Misunderstanding,* Ionesco's *The King Dies,* J. J. Varoujean's *1915,* Racine's *Esther,* as well as in her own plays. In the cinema, she has played in *A Bag of Marbles* of J. Doillon and in the last film of M. Drach, *The Red Pullover.* She also played in two little-known works of Tennessee Williams, *Something Unspoken* and *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow.* The latter was discovered by Bartéve herself at the American Library in Paris; it is a playlet from the collection *The Dragon Country* (1947) and had never been performed. Tennessee Williams, who was in France in 1976 to preside at the Festival de Cannes, came to Paris and saw the play. He had written it in memory of a woman he had loved, and had thought that the play could not be done until he saw Barteve's performance.

[2]It was from the Armenian Diaspora in Lebanon that the development of this type of theater was expected because it had all the possibilities for flourishing. On the eve of the Civil War in 1975, there were no less than eight Armenian theatrical troupes in Lebanon, most of them directed by professionals. However, no play of significant repute bearing on the Diaspora had been published. For further information, see Ralph Setian, "The Armenian Theater in Lebanon," *Ararat,* No. 75, pp. 31-35. Two writers, though, are worth mentioning here: Vahe Oshagan and Hagop Papazian. Most of their plays have not been published but they do explore new horizons relating to life in the Diaspora.

Also to be noted: *Armenians* of Saroyan, performed in New York in 1975, and J.J. Varoujean's *Les Eaux Derobees (Stolen Waters),* broadcast on French television in 1965, as well as *Apsoss* of the same author, in the collection *Cultures Armeniennes,* ed. Astrid, Paris, 1980.

[3]Kourkik Djalali is the mythical horse of the Armenian epic *David of Sassoun.*

[4]Sung in Armenian by Claude Dauphin at the Petit-Odeon. Bartéve revived this song during the broadcast of *Le Pavillon Balthazar* on *France-Culture,* April 8, 1979. The song is missing from the published text of *Le Pavillon Balthazar.* Collection *Cultures Armeniennes,* ed. Astrid, Paris, 1978.

□This text is based on a paper given before the second International Seminar organized by ICOM (Institute for the Spreading of Knowledge of Minority Cultures) on the subject "The Denied Structure: Armenian Culture in the Diaspora," at the University of Paris on September 7-11, 1979.

BAZAAR

(Meshed, Iran—1962)

By Dan Stryk

In the shop-
Stalls
Of the rug-dealers,
The snake-eyes
Of barter
Leap
Along the geometric
Nap,
Flower by
The lush *Kirman.*
Sheepskins
Hang obscene
From other stalls—
Acid smell
Of drying flesh.
Here,
The taut jaws
Clap,
But nothing's meant.

Nothing
But the blinding
Of their children
Weaving
Black light
On cracked looms,
The belly-growl
For every *rial*
Less.

L'Arménoche

By Reine Bartev



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Foreword

Is this text a shout of pain, revolt, wisdom? Like the Arménoche—though this isn't by any means an autobiographical work—I am a refugee's daughter, a daughter of stateless people. I've always deeply felt the violence and injustice which have been committed

against them. Refugees are kind, sad, discreet. They're cold. They smile a lot but their terrified eyes always look behind. They blame themselves for still being where they are in spite of everything. Unwanted. When a child, I thought of France as my natural country. It was only later, much later. . . that memories and visions of the past came back in small scraps, the nostalgia for a return to a land and to its warmth, its light, its breathing. The Arménoche's character is strange, sad, naive, and inside her a frightening violence dwells. Her sensuality and deep interest toward other beings protect her from death. Like her grandmother from Trebizond, she licks, strokes, kisses to give life and keep it.

Reine Bartéve

Time: Winter of 1970.

A young woman with her suitcase on an empty train platform. Night is falling. No houses are seen. She looks around, walks a few steps, waits, sees a silhouette hunched on a bench. A man is sitting there, reading his paper. He doesn't look at her.

MARIE *(comes near the bench, humming softly. The man glances at her and goes back to his reading):* Monsieur! . . . I'm really glad you're here, Monsieur . . .! I was told: "You'll see, it's very easy. You get off the train and ask for your way. There'll be someone, there's always someone, don't worry" . . . and there you are . . . Excuse me for troubling you, Monsieur, but could you tell me the way to Dommer, please? I must hurry, night comes so quickly!

MAN *(not raising his eyes from the paper):* You go straight ahead to the next turn. There you'll come across several roads. You'll see it indicated.

MARIE *(wrapping her shawl around her shoulders and taking a thermos out of her bag):* Is it far from here . . . ? I fell asleep on the train. It was so hot . . . my feet are swollen . . . it shouldn't be far . . . *(the man starts coughing, takes a pill box from his overcoat pocket, picks one out and puts the box back in his pocket)* . . . Won't you have a drink?

MAN: No, thank you. I'm not thirsty.

MARIE: Is it interesting, your paper? *(she drinks slowly)* . . . I must get there before nightfall . . . otherwise . . . All during the journey, I tried to picture what Dommer looked like . . . the houses . . . the people . . . what a lovely day. Have you ever been there? *(man keeps on reading, scratching his nose)* . . . Have they started bombing the dikes?

MAN: Dikes? Which dikes?

MARIE: The thing to do is to hold on. Hold on. Do you know how life returned to a little village . . . ? There wasn't a single thing left standing. Everything erased . . . burned down. Only an old woman had escaped rape and death . . . her naked body clinging to her son's naked corpse . . . she kept hugging it for days and nights . . . she would lick it, stroke it, kiss it . . . and when nothing was left of her son but a few bones and rotten flesh, blood came pouring out of her womb. And again . . .

MAN: Really? . . . you mean . . .

MARIE: Yes.

MAN: Do you dream often? Even in front of television? Personally, anything that can turn me on, I rather like . . . but really . . . unless it is censored . . .

MARIE: The old woman was my granny. In Trebizond, after the massacre. All the members of one family bound to each other . . . the mothers and their children . . . all . . . killed with gun butts . . . or buried alive if they still wanted to live. Won't you have a drink to warm you up? It's almost dark now.

MAN: Is that your only luggage? You won't stay there long, will you?

MARIE: Are you waiting for someone? Don't you find it queer, the two of us alone on this platform?

MAN: Not at all. Why? The train won't arrive for another hour, and at this time of the year there aren't many travelers, especially since they've closed down the Kerlahen factory. Always the same old story . . . they had foreigners coming, and then there weren't any jobs left for the local people. Guys who can't even speak French . . . and then . . . yet we had hoped during the war . . . anyway! It's like wild grass, always growing again. You don't want to go off, do you? . . . at this time of the night? Aren't you afraid to be alone?

MARIE: Afraid of what?

MAN *(chuckling)*: Well, I don't know. . . of men for instance . . . Algerian rats and niggers, of course . . . I tell you, especially since they've closed the factory down, they swarm everywhere, looking for jobs. What I can't understand . . . Miss? Mrs?

(Marie doesn't answer)

. . . is that they yell to get a job and then they yell again because they aren't paid enough. They are exploited, they say, but if one wants to kick them out of the place, they yell even louder . . . Trebizond . . . Trebizond . . . where's that?

MARIE: In Turkey.

MAN: Ah . . . that's where you come from. Well, I thought so.

MARIE: No. I was born in France.

MAN: Well, you find pretty women everywhere . . . .

MARIE: Daddy often told me with his big, sad smile that he had been very lucky . . . yes, very lucky . . . France . . . Lamartine . . . Chateaubriand . . . Victor Hugo . . .

"O Peoples of the World!
Tomorrow is no monster lying wait,



Reine Bartév in a scene from *L'Arménoche* (photograph by Jean-Yves Moisdon).

No Parthian shot from Yesterday in flight,
O Peoples of the World!
The Future is already in our midst,
A universal champion of the truth,
Seeking the right for all and bread for all,
Calm, unafraid, unbeaten in the fray,
He wields his sword as one by Love inspired.

That was something, all the same . . . and at a Turkish merchant's shop, he had found a small business handbook written in French, which was quite useful to him after the Armenian massacre, when he had arrived in France. . . "You know, dear little Marie," he told me, "at first, they would make fun of me whenever I talked" . . . I've found a little notebook where he used to put down all the expressions. Wait (*she looks in her bag*). . . Here it is . . . *(she reads)* . . . "Thank you my dearest brother" . . . "I'd feel very much honored, my dear sir" . . . "Such help as yours would be as sweet and precious to me as my own mother's caress" and "we confidently rely on your efficient cooperation" . . . "may God grant you seven lives . . ." and "with my best thoughts, thankfully yours." Very often they couldn't understand me, Marie . . . it's so difficult not to speak with an open heart . . . in spite of hostile smiles, you were lucky, yes very lucky . . . speaking "the language" to get a job . . .

MAN: Why didn't he stay in Trebizond?

MARIE: I told you, didn't I? Well, I must leave now.

MAN: Surely you're not going to leave now for Dommer? It must be more than a ten-mile walk from here . . .

MARIE: Wait, I've got a map. *(takes an old map out of her bag)* There, look . . .

MAN: But you're all wrong. This is where you should have gotten off the train. You should have looked at your map on the train all that time instead of dreaming. Well, if that's how you get your kicks, walking alone in the night . . . Jeannette—now she's preparing breakfast. Jeannette's my wife. Coffee in the thermos bottle, two buttered rolls, that's quicker in the morning when in a

hurry, and cheaper, so easy to spread! Jeannette always keeps some to grease her face with before going . . . butter's good for everything . . . I even read *(dives back into his paper)* . . . all done away with . . . I mean it's terrible, isn't it? Not to have the least respect for anything! Sure they were kikes, but all the same! Wasn't the right time, was it? . . . as I was telling Jeannette . . . what are you drinking?

MARIE: Tea.

MAN: Are you sick? I was telling Jeannette, in a way they were right getting rid of them all. Arabs, Jews, they look all the same to me. When you feel them crowding all around you . . . the same slightly rancid smell . . . one doesn't feel comfortable with them, don't you find?

MARIE: *(very softly)* The only way to get rid of the Armenian problem . . . is to get rid of the Armenians.

MAN: Sorry?

MARIE: That's what they did.

MAN: Who they? It doesn't make sense, your story.

MARIE: The great Western powers: Germany, England . . . France . . . I mean their governments . . . their interests, you understand . . . too long to explain . . . anyway . . . how old are you, Monsieur?

MAN: Why?

MARIE: Certainly not over forty. What a strange color . . . Alberto's shit . . .

MAN: Hey . . .! Wait a minute . . .!

MARIE: And quite crumpled! Ever seen the oldies in St. Marguerite's Home? You look like them . . . yes, you do . . . They sit on their bench, like that . . . very quiet . . . very peaceful, a fixed stare on their face, their hands clasped, dead for how long? . . . *(strokes his brow with her hand)* . . . yet you've got a lovely brow . . . What do you do for a living?

MAN: An inspector of the Ministry of Labor.

MARIE: *(faintly smiling)* And yet. . .

MAN: Yet what? You're getting on my nerves, you know! I'm sitting here, quietly reading my paper, waiting for the next train. I'm not asking you anything, no, nothing, and you, you don't stop talking rubbish! You'll forgive me, but I feel as if I've had enough now! *It's always the same with women!* One should never allow oneself to talk to them . . . yes . . . that's right . . . usually I never talk with strangers . . . especially the younger ones . . . one never knows, but you looked rather nice! . . . always watch your step, with women! That's right! I'm a well-bred man, Mademoiselle! But really . . . so, good night for now!



Reine Bartév in a scene from *L'Arménoche* (photograph by Jean-Yves Moisdon).

MARIE: You've just knocked your hat off. Do you always wear a hat? . . . too bad . . . with such a beautiful brow . . .

MAN: You find me clever?

MARIE: I didn't say that.

MAN: Because you know . . . college . . . I've worked hard, very hard . . . You think everything comes the easy way? I was clever, that's right, very clever even. But that's not enough! That's not enough! That's what I tell those youngsters when they come complaining! "Look at me! . . . my father was a small shopkeeper, there were many of us at home . . . I had to fight . . . struggle, work sixteen hours a day, at the office, and then the evening course to push on, always push on, but now I've got two houses, two cars . . ."

MARIE: But . . .

MAN: Yes, today I had to take a train. My wife's got the Citroen deluxe, and my new Peugeot 405—it's a nice car, very beautiful, blue, a slightly grayish blue, but very nice; very, very nice. Maybe you know it? It was on the front page of the last issue of . . . Oh, yes! It's not running . . . a slight accident on the highway, three days ago . . . I smashed a "Deux-Chevaux". The ass is in the hospital. . . guess what vear his rod was? '69! Would you believe it? Well, anyway . . . there we are . . . this is the first time I've taken a train since . . .

Marie: Do you like your job?

MAN: Oh no! you've got to wait. . . what a waste of time.

MARY: Do you like your job?

MAN: In a way if we'd gotten only foreign workers, it would be a good job, yes, a fairly good job. . . an easy one. Foreigners don't dare complain in front of us, and they hardly speak a word or two of French, so you see, their talk of "rights"! Well that's a good joke, for me! If only the others weren't meddling into it. . . those little bastards. . . they could hardly pass their junior-high exams, and already arguing, on and on! You wouldn't believe it. . . no, really! But I mean what do they want exactly? You must understand me, Mademoiselle. Personally I stand for equal rights. . . but I mean, what do they want exactly? Everybody can't be the boss! If everyone were rich, nobody would ever want to do the dirty work! If these foreigners are unhappy here, well, they can go home! and as I was telling Jeannette, if. . .

MARIE: I met Ahmed in a cafe, one evening. it was pouring. He asked the waiter for a glass of wine, but the guy refused. "Don't you see? It's closing time." "Do you want a cup of tea and a bit of cheese? . . . I've ordered for two and I am alone." With a sad look on his face, he ate the cheese without a word and took all the sugar lumps, which he put into his pocket. "Why don't you help yourself to the cup and spoons?" the waiter said. "These foreigners, they think they can rule the country." "No," I said, "but if you had some more sugar. . ." "You bitch, go screw. . ." said the waiter. I saw him to the factory gates. He was working the night shift. He came from the village of Youssouffia. Why did he come? He loved his teacher and thought all French people were like him; and his mother, she was left alone



Reine Bartév in her Paris apartment on Rue des Pyrenees (photograph by Jean-Yves Moisdon).



Reine Bartev in a scene from *L'Armenoche* (photograph by Jean-Yves Moisdon).

with the children. . . eight kids they were. . . He hoped he would be able to send her a little money from France, that she could keep the house. Oh, surely not a very big place. . . but they had a flat roof all right, in the full sunshine, where friends could come and have a drink and dance. . .Do you live in a big house?

MAN: Yes, a two-storey house. Beautiful. Private toilets, bathroom, two bathrooms. Jeannette has a TV in the first-floor toilets. . . best thing against constipation. . . you know. . . with prune carpeting. . . diffused light. . . and on the wall, a view of the Firenze Basilica . . . Ah, Firenze! We have very nice furniture. . . spent a real fortune on it: covered with plastic, it looks so much cleaner! And so convenient, you wouldn't believe it, a real time-saver! There's only Salvador. Plastic drives him mad, specially on the rugs and the carpet in the sitting-room. He tries to bite it and gives little yaps. Then he's got a little dusty red cushion that he drags around the house with him. I had to put up a fight with Jeannette. . . "But, Jeannette, you can't talk sense with a dog! Of course, dust, germs. . . but Salvador's such a young puppy, surely he'll understand one day. You've only got to explain things to him. . ." "You're getting senile, old man," she says, "go and have a shower!" I wished she knew!. . . I stay under the shower for hours, watching the garden through the windows. . . standing on tiptoe. . . what a view! God! What a view! I did it all by myself! every weekend for the last five years. We've put up fences everywhere of course. . . with the factory. All these strangers prowling around. Fruit trees, small apple trees against the fences, and concrete everywhere; yes, we've pulled all the wild grass out, so disgusting, it does grow everywhere. . . that was Jeannette's idea, the concrete with small graveled paths, so much cleaner. . . of course the children hurt themselves a bit when falling, but they can come and go, no mud, no dirt, and between the concrete pavings I've sown tulips, and when they grow. . . very nice tulips, even. . . to think of it, I must build a fence. If they were shrewd enough, they could still. . .

MARIE: You look worried. Are you afraid of me?

MAN: Afraid? Afraid of you? Of course not, silly. That is, why should I be afraid of you? I fought in the war, Mademoiselle. Yes, I did. I can't tell you about it in detail, but I had some good times. . . yes, indeed, some rather good times. . .

MARIE: You did?

MAN: Two pals and I took care of these Algerian rats who wouldn't talk. Understand? We made the best of it. . . but as Jeannette says "There's an end to everything!"

MARIE: Yes.

MAN: You should go, now, really. It's dark.

MARIE: I'm waiting for someone.

MAN: Are you? Well, so I thought. . .

MARIE: He won't be long now.

MAN: On the next train, the one that takes me to Flers?

MARIE *(takes postcards out of her bag):* Will you play cards with me?

MAN: Cards?

MARIE: Yes. While we're waiting. I'll explain it to you, it's very easy. Each of us draws five cards and tells a story. I'll begin, if you want. . .

MAN: But. . .

MARIE: Wait. . . there we are. . . "Moscow under the snow". . . "Stormy sea at the Pointe du Raz. . . "Out of a factory in. . ." I can't read. . . "Small girl eating toast with jam". . . the jam must be nice, she's cross-eyed. . ."Dreaming lion, Africa". . . Africa, Africa. . . it grates in your throat, Africa, alcohol, can you give me a title?

MAN: A title?

MARIE: Yes. For my story. I don't know. There, for instance . . . wait. . . "Watch the clouds. Stop. Very dangerous. Stop. Twenty drops a day, no more. Stop. I begin. . . once upon a time. . .

MAN: Go on alone. It's too damn silly, your thing. I had better read my paper.

MARIE *(looking at her postcards):* I wonder what they're doing. They should've been told, by now. Aren't you afraid. . . On this deserted platform?

MAN: You're getting on my nerves, you know. Why should I be afraid? Why? What should I fear?

MARIE: I don't know. One reads so many things in the paper. There, this guy for instance who got it in a garden. Such a peaceful guy, he was, watching the ducks. . . gloup. . . gloup. . . ducks are nice, aren't they? . . . gloup. . . gloup. . . the first of the gang, he's the most funny of all. . . so thin, so frail. . . gloup. . . he caught a fly. . . gloup. . .

MAN: But why was he killed?

MARIE: Oh, I can't remember. Oh, yes. . . his money. They were lucky for once! He had just gotten his pay.

MAN: These hooligans. . . ah! If I was given a gun. . . when I think of all the pain it gives me every day to make my family a little more comfortable. . . and they. . . but good God! Why don't they want to work? Huh? Why?

MARIE: Because of the collar.

MAN: Collar?

MARIE: "But as they were going along, he noticed a curious bald white patch behind his companion's ears.
"What's that?" he asked with dawning fears.
"Nothing." "How so?" "Well, hardly anything;
The collar of my chain, maybe,
has been the cause of what you see."



Reine Bartév in a scene from *L'Arménoche* (photograph by Jean-Yves Moisdon).

"Your chain!" exclaimed the Wolf," then you're not free to run at will? "Not quite—but it don't matter."
"Don't it indeed? It wouldn't do for me."
But I prefer my liberty
To all the riches of your platter."
He didn't pause to say good-night
But ran till he was out of sight. . ."

If only you had heard Ahmed tell the tale. He had learnt it at school. He told it in a slightly singing voice, and once he had done with it, he used to laugh, laugh. . . "You know, Marie," he would say, "he's still running!" and I laughed too. . .

MAN: Is he the one who must come for you?

MARIE: Oh, no!

MAN: Well, that's better. I can't stand them. . . *(snickering)* . . . may be their smell. . . must never wash. Actually I know one of them, he spends this time lying on a bench. I watch him from a distance. Of course, when I take Salvador for a walk—you know, Salvador, my dog. . . Salvador! It was Jeannette who wanted to give him such a name. . . strange idea, back from Spain. . . the sun. . . well, actually once back from holiday she always feels upset for a few days, Jeannette. . . every time. . . "Don't you find it a bit sad, this plastic, Jeannot?" Marcel's my real name. Well, this guy, he never moves before the sun goes down. Salvador got away once. He ran towards the guy and started licking his face, biting his beard, the chap kept laughing and laughing. Disgusting, it was. . . Salvador could have brought lice back home. . . I told a cop about it, but he just shrugged his shoulders. They are overcome. . . soon we won't even be able to walk freely with the dog. . .

MARIE: Your wife must be waiting for you.

MAN: No. Tonight is the last of a Wednesday night TV series showing every Wednesday—"Death at the end of the track," a thriller. . . and I told her the journey back would be rather difficult with all these changes.

MARIE: The train shouldn't be long now.

MAN: Well, I'm glad. . . I'm hungry.

(Marie looks in her bag and offers him a bit of cheese)

MAN: Oh no, thank you very much! Never between meals, never between meals. . . what is it?

MARIE: Camembert.

MAN: No. . . no. . . *(dives back into his paper. Marie gets up and walks up and down. She begins to sing.)*

When shall we be wise?



Reine Bartev and Claude Dauphin in *Le Pavillon Balthazar* (photograph by Jean-Yves Moisdon).

Never, never!
When shall we be devils?
Always, always!
The earth feeds them all
crazy boys with crazy girls
the earth feeds them all
crazy girls, with crazy boys.

(She comes near the bench.) Give me fifty francs.

MAN: Sorry?

MARIE: He won't come now, and I need some money. I haven't taken any money with me. . . *(takes off a little shell necklace that she wears around her throat)* There, it's a present, I give it to you. . . for Jeannette or Salvador. . .

MAN: But you're mad. . . but this girl is mad! I thought so! The way you talk to people. . . you'd like me to give you fifty francs! Fifty francs! Like that! But why? Just because you've been a pain in the ass for the past hour? Well, I've known quite a few women. . . but nuts and liars like you, never! Now just leave me alone or I'll call the police!

MARIE *(smiling):* The police. . . ? the police. . . ? but there's nobody around.

MAN: You think so? The station master is coming to announce the train. . . and then. . .

MARIE: The station master? But he is friend of mine! Didn't I tell you? Yes, he's. . . a colored man with a big beard and he plays the flute. . . it's always the same tune. . . but very nice. . . haven't you heard him? Won't you give me fifty francs, then. Well, keep it! I'll manage some way or other. But don't pull such a face! Breathe, breathe, you're nearly suffocating. . . could have been a beautiful memory for you. . . a funny story to tell your dog. . . "Salvador, can you believe it? One day I was waiting for a train, when a strange character came and talked to me. . . she didn't look like any one of our friends but I wasn't afraid. . . I liked her very much. I didn't understand her very well. . . but I was feeling fine. . . just as with you. . . but you can't sing can you? And she. . . *(Marie begins to sing)*

The earth feeds them all
crazy boys with crazy girls
the earth feeds them all
crazy girls with crazy boys . . .

She told me I looked great. . . Suddenly I felt the urge to go, to go far away, and meet friends. . . strangers,

fellows we were to meet in Youssoufia. Before she went, she asked me for a little money. Oh not much! I wanted her to take more but she refused. She thanked me by giving me a postcard. . . There, look, Salvador. . . I'll show it to you. . . it's a color print. A naked woman sleeping in the jungle, between two tigers licking her face, and on the overleaf, you read: "If you lift the stone, you'll never be afraid anymore."

MAN: Haven't you finished yet?

MARIE: Yes. There, take it. *(gives him the postcard)*

MAN: What do you want me to do with it? Go and repeat your nonsense somewhere else. *(tears it up)*

MARIE: Too bad. You would've liked Youssoufia. Anyway. *(She gets up quietly, gathers her things, walks behind the man who keeps on reading, and stabs him several times with a knife; he falls off the bench. Marie pushes the corpse away and covers it with her shawl.) A train is heard coming, The station master rushes in.)*

STATION MASTER *(to Marie):* Sorry to be late, but Albert had forgotten his cheese. Got your ticket? The train only stops one minute. . . aren't you cold in the dark?

MARIE: No, no. . . you don't need to hurry for the tickets, I'm the only traveler, and I've decided not to go.

STATION MASTER: Indeed! Fine, then! I'll go to. . . *(Leaves running. The train comes, then leaves. A man approaches Marie).*

MAN: Excuse me, Mademoiselle. Have you seen the station master?

MARIE: No. I mean, yes. He ran that way.

MAN: Are you waiting for someone?

MARIE: Yes.

MAN: Why don't you go into the waiting room? You'd feel warmer. Yes, that's right. . . you're waiting . . . do you know this place?

MARIE: No.

MAN: We have a house nearby. . .well, Elisa. . .it's rather strange but. . . she's coming for me. . . well. . . can you hear? You find a lot of them around here. . . the pile of garbage attracts them. Haven't you seen them? You see it when you arrive here. Behind the hedges, tons and tons of garbage. How can we get rid of it? There was a swamp there before, with a spring. The water was delicious. . . can you hear? . . . *(goes and sits on the bench, still listening). . .* maybe they'll meet each other, our friends. *(smiles to her)* You're not talkative. Actually it's rather late. You must be tired after such a long journey. . .

MARIE: Are they rats?

MAN: Yes, they are. You know them well.

MARIE: *(fumbles in her bag and shows a photograph);* There, that's him!. . . I met him in the courtyard. . . he'd been very frightened, and had found shelter in a large dustbin. I was already alone then. He calmed down when hearing my voice. . . "Come, come. . . you'll be my rat, my royal Ferdinand. . ." Oh, my raft. . . he climbed up the edge. . . I squeezed him quickly in my bag. . . visitors are so scarce. . . you get forgotten. . . you get forgotten so easily, Monsieur. I never knew such a clever being. He understood on the spot. "We have the night, the entire night before us, Ferdinand. . . listen. . . but first of all don't you make a move in the daytime." That was easy. We looked after the housework ourselves. . . you got your toilet box in the closet. . . you won't need anything. What he liked most, cake crumbles, strokes, and conversation. . . oh, as for conversation he really was. . . whenever I talked too fast and he didn't understand he would put his right paw on my mouth. . . as soon as he heard a step in the doorway, he sneaked under the blanket. . . then he would go out and have a piss on the geranium.

MAN: The geranium?

MARIE: Most beautiful, that geranium. . . but there was a strange smell to the room. So one night I opened the door for him. Well, I've known other rats, there are lots of them up there, too, but not as kind and lively. Do you want one?. . . that's quite easy. . . I can speak to them *(she talks Armenian: . . .égour, égour, hima mout é. . . gernas kal. . . mi vakhnar anouchik mart é. . . anoti és. . . inch gouzés oudel. . . hatz. . . banir. . .* I can give him bread if you like?

MAN: No, thank you. I prefer cats.

MARIE: Do you have any?

MAN: Yes. Three. When I play music. . .

MARIE: Do they like it?

MAN: Oh yes, they really do. I mean it depends. . . all light sounds. . . water dropping. . . paper. . . dying embers. They hate cries, tears, drama. . . Elisa. Elisa my wife. . . why isn't she there yet?. . . she's always so punctual. I don't like this place. It's so cold, isn't it?. . . and your friend. . . how you shake. . . you. . . wait. . . *(opens his travel bag and takes a small bottle out of it)*

MAN: There, drink it. It'll do you good.

MARIE: I never drink alcohol.

MAN: Never mind, drink. *(drinks after her)* Have you been waiting for long?

MARIE: Yes, but I have to go now. Only. . . what does your wife look like. . . is she pretty?

MAN: Very pretty.

MARIE: Funny, crying when one's pretty, don't you find? All these treasures you can give the others. . . and yet they are yours. . . nobody's but yours. . . it should make you happy. . . why does she cry, Elisa?

MAN: Oh she cries rarely. . .

MARIE: Ah?

MAN: We often go a long time without talking. . . *(drinks again)* With you. . . it's easier to wait. I often look desperately for the moment. . . when. . . if you

don't know where to go tonight, the village is far away, come with us. You'll like Elisa very much.

MARIE: And what about you?

MAN: Oh, me. . . I think I can hear a car coming. . . *(car's motor is heard, but the car passes without stopping)* for such a long time now. . . I've never really loved her, you know.

MARIE:Haven't you. . . yet you looked different. A whim?

MAN: At first, I could listen for hours to her laughing and singing. . . and then. . . at which moment. . . *(he drinks again)*. . . very slowly. . . yes, very slowly I stopped seeing her. . . hearing her. . . and I began to feel much better. . . I told you I'm like my cats. . . I can't stand being disturbed. My habits. Elisa took too much space. I can't stand being disturbed.

MARIE: Ah?

MAN: No.

MARIE: Death.

MAN: Pardon? Often I dream that I sell her for a little peace, a little calm. . . I feel fine with you. . . you listen. . . if only she could fall in love with another man! But no, she clings to me, she clings to me. . . she should be here. . .. but what's she doing?. . . and that station master who's not coming back. . . I could give a ring. . . maybe it looks awkward to you, my worrying?

MARIE: Oh, no! I know it all! Yes, it was the same thing with my mother. It should have made me laugh. . .



Reine Bartev in *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow by* Tennessee Williams (photograph by Jean-Yves Moisdon).

but it didn't. . . yes, I should have laughed about it. . . but I couldn't. . . "Put your overcoat on, Marie, be careful, Marie. . . don't catch a cold. . . wear something sensible on you. . . take off your overcoat. . . you really don't look well, you know. . . why do you come back so late?. . . you had better have a rest. . . anyway, all you can do, my poor girl, doesn't help anything, you know that. You're really too thin, you don't eat well. You don't eat enough. You sleep too much. You stay up too late at night. . . "

MAN: Are you sure she hated you?

MARIE: Oh, yes! She was always speaking of duty, sacrifice. . . like you with Elisa. . . why must you wait for her?. . . Later on in the cheap books I used to read on and on without her knowing. . . how cold. . . I could do with a little more to drink. . . what are you going to do tonight when you go back to Elisa? No one will come anymore, now. Take me to Dommer tonight.

MAN: Yes, of course. As soon as Elisa gets here. She's lost without me.

MARIE: Is she?. . . can you hear? Someone's playing the flute. . . must be the station master. . . it's very nice . . . he's made some progress! It was different up there . . . we were always shoved about. . . but here with all that silence! My feet are frozen. . . don't you want to dance?

MAN: Here?

MARIE: Yes. Why not?

MAN: If you like.

(Marie takes a pair of shoes out of her bag, very nice shoes but worn out. Very slowly she takes her coat off along with the music, then her scarf, and starts dancing with her old-fashioned bright dress. They dance slowly, Marie takes the man's hand and strokes it slightly. They break at the end of the music. The man stumbles on the corpse.

MAN: What's that?

MARIE: That?

MAN: Yes. . .

MARIE: Nothing. Listen. Do you want to help me? While I was waiting a man came near me. I was standing alone on that empty platform. He threatened me, grew more and more brutal. His enormous eyes were swimming in a reddish liquid. He was dribbling. Fortunately I'm strong. . . you don't believe it. . . very, very strong. I punched him with my fist. . . there. . . he slipped. . . and I finished him off with the knife. You want to see it?. . . It's a splendid one. . . a cousin brought it back for me from Africa. . . they use it there to cut off the thieves' hands. It was done very quickly. How soft he was, this man! No resistance, a big shit heap. . . yes, yes I tell you. . . Poor chap! He's the one who stinks now. .

MAN: You can't leave him there.

MARIE: Help me carry him? It's not far. . . We will



lay him upon the rails. He'll be crushed by the next train. Do you mind?

MAN: No, but. . . and what about calling the station master?

MARIE: What for?

MAN: To explain to him.

MARIE: Oh, yes! Surely he'll understand. He's a friend of mine.

(they shout louder and louder) Hey. . . Monsieur. . . Monsieur. . station master. . . station master!

STATION MASTER *(comes in running):* What's the matter? What's going on?

MARIE: I'll tell you. . . I was humming to myself on the platform and. . . what a lovely beard you've got. . . a nice warm blanket, isn't it. . . like a nest. . . can I touch it?

STATION MASTER: Yes, but mind the birds. *(they laugh)*

MARIE *(stroking the beard):* You found a job easily after. . .?

STATION MASTER: But it's Marie! Marie l'Arménoche!. . . in the dark, how changed you are! Well, no, not that much. . . your eyes shine like. . . troubles?

MARIE: Nothing serious. On the contrary. But there under the bench? Don't you see?. . . a corpse?

STATION MASTER: Ah. . . ah. . . that's strange. . . it'll bring me a lot of trouble. . . maybe if you could help me, best thing would be to lay him on the rails. . . next train will be coming soon.

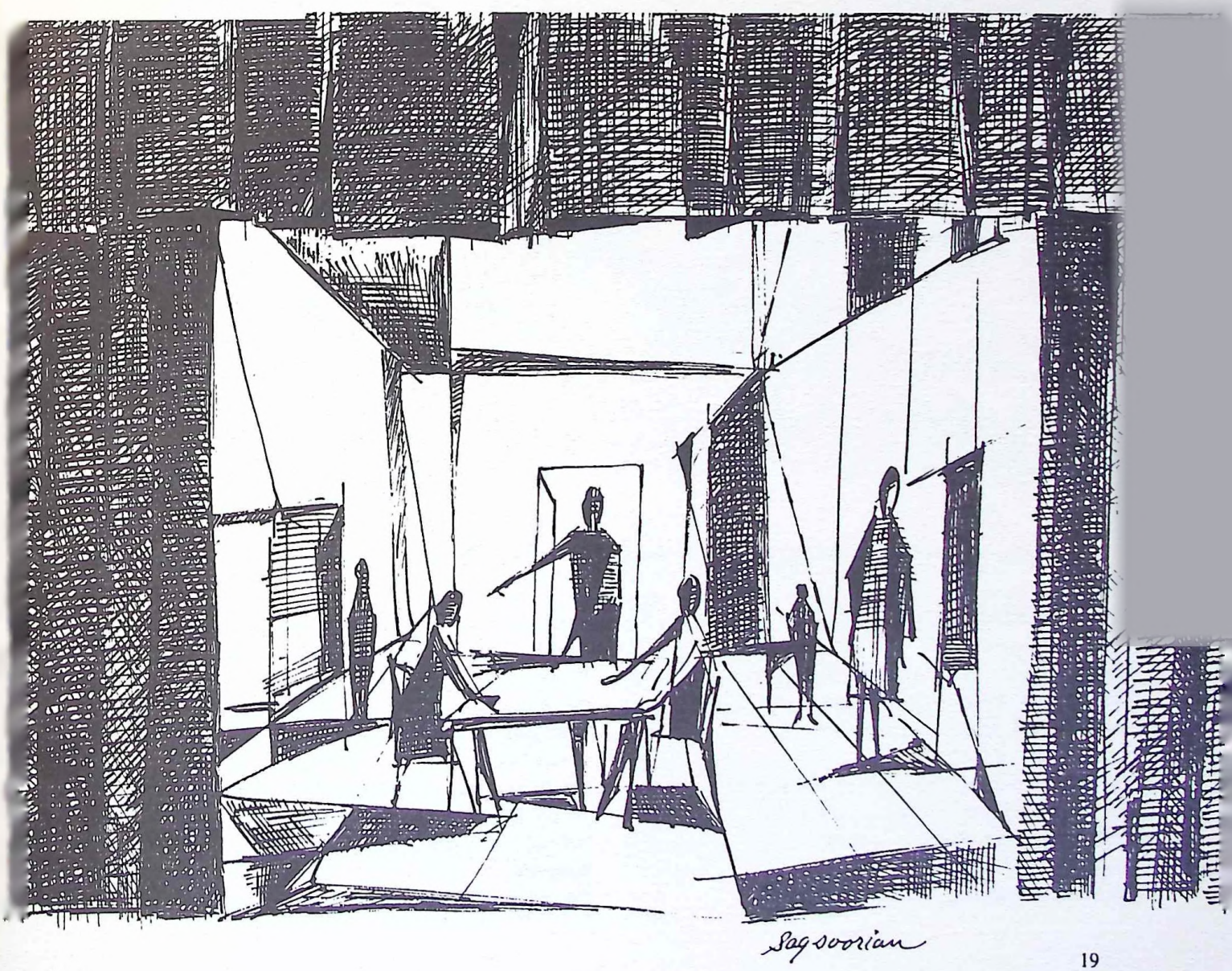
MARIE: *(turning to the man):* You see!. . . best thing! You'll help him, won't you? I'm staying here. . . one never knows. Should I hear someone coming, I'll sing the "Marseillaise". . .

STATION MASTER: Do you think it's a good idea?

MARIE: Wait. . . *(takes the shawl off and looks at the corpse)*. . . You aren't afraid anymore. . . you see! Everything turned out all right. There. You can take him.

STATION MASTER: You can get a little sleep if you aren't too cold. . . Don't worry. Nobody ever comes this way. The next train is a goods train.

(they pull the body while Marie hums)





Reine Bartev in *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow by* Tennessee Williams (photograph by Jean-Yves Moisdon).

STATION MASTER: Quite a heavy chap, wasn't he! . . .See you in a minute!
MAN: Do you really think? Well, let's hurry up then!
MARIE: *(putting her things back in her bag):*
Don't you find plastic a bit sad, Jeannot?
Tons and tons of garbage. . .
Personally, anything that can turn me on I rather like.
I can't stand being disturbed. . . my habits.
Algerians rats and niggers of course
tons and tons of garbage. . .
Trebizond, Trebizond, where is that. . .?
Come with us, you'll like Elisa very much. . .
Arabs, Jews, they look all the same to me. . .
they were right getting rid of them all. . .
one doesn't feel comfortable with them, don't you find?
I feel fine with you, you listen. . .
always watch your step with women, that's right. . .
I'm like my cats, I can't stand being disturbed. . .
we put fencing everywhere of course. . .
with all these strangers around. . .
concrete. . .
I fought in the war, we made the best of it. . .

some good times, indeed yes some rather good times. . . the children, they fall. . .
but it's very nice. . .
It does grow. . . it does!

MARIE: *(screams):* Ferdinand! Ferdinand! Help. . . help!

(the station master comes in running, man following)

STATION MASTER: What's the matter? What's the matter with you, my dear little Marie? You're not doing it again! You looked so well. . . So quiet. Come, come . . . That's nothing. . . We were rather quick, you know . . . but it wasn't easy. . . Found it hard to fix him between the rails. . . what are you going to do now?

MAN: How pale you look. . . You became frightened all alone?. . . I didn't imagine him so. . . correct and haggard. . .

MARIE: So much quieter though.

MAN: That was a nightmare.

MARIE: Yes, a nightmare.

MAN: You know his name?

MARIE: But I told you. . .

MAN: It's only natural. You had to protect yourself. I looked for his papers, but he'd lost his wallet. . . come to our home. . .

MARIE: Home. You know what he looked like?

MAN: No. But why. . .

MARIE: "With all these strangers soon we won't ever be able to walk quietly with our dog." You're free, now, silly ass! *(she bursts out laughing)* This cold is terrible. . .

STATION MASTER: You should go. . . I'd get into trouble. . . do you understand that, Marie? Cops like it, the smell of a corpse. The one that's lying on the rails, it won't be long before it attracts them. Let's go into my office and phone for a taxi. . .

MAN: And I'll go home. Elisa must have gone to the wrong station. What time is it?

STATION MASTER: . . . And before leaving, Marie, I would have played for you "The Little Gypsy." You know, my favorite piece. . . the one I played when I had the blues. . . all those walls we used to have around us. Here it's different. I feel fine. Incredible how trains can make you dream. . . all these departures. . . all these countries. . . those I love most are on the seaside, with palm trees and monkeys. . . one has become my friend. . . it's the one who whistles and waves my flag when I wake up late on winter mornings. . . I called him Francois because of my grandfather. Oh, he's much shrewder and nastier, but his face twitches like his when I get out of tune. . .

MARIE: *(staring at the station master):* Wouldn't you like to take Monsieur into the station for his call? He's getting worried. I'd rather wait here. Ask for a taxi to Dommer.

MAN: But you're cold! Come!. . . Why don't you want to come home with me?

MARIE: Home?

MAN: Yes.

MARIE: What is it like?

MAN: Very large, with French windows and a terrace where cats sleep in the sunshine, and the smell of honeysuckle and lime trees. . .

MARIE: An orchard?

MAN: One cherry tree and three prune trees. . .

MARIE: Daddy used to tell me that where he lived, the garden and the orchard looked, opened onto the sea. He spent his days up in the trees eating the fruit, their warm juices flowing and flowing. Having had his belly-full, lightly drunk, he would throw himself into the sea. . . Marie, he said, the sea was so calm during the crossing on the boat which had been willing to take us aboard and bring us to France, and yet I vomited. . . vomited for hours. . . such a revulsion, Marie, you'll never be able to understand. Ah yes! your home. . .

MAN: Why?

MARIE: No, I tell you. Don't worry, I'm not alone. . .

MAN: As you like. Good-bye.

MARIE: Bye.

(She doesn't watch him going away. She keeps on for some time talking Armenian to the rats): "Hima gernas kal. . . mi vakhnar. . . hima agheg em. . . kezi hed agheg em. . . kidem ki inzi ge hasganas. . . kezi ge haskanam. . . kezi hed grnam khosil. . . inzi ge sires. . . kezi ge sirem. . . mi vakhnar. . . . mi vakhnar. . . egour daksir. . . ches msirgoor. . . egour. . . egour. . . mi vakhnar. . . azadoutiun"

(Light slowly fades away)

(Translated by Bruno Kernz)

NOTE: *L'Armenoche* was presented at the Theatre Daniel Sorano, Paris (Vincennes) on January 5, 1976. It was directed by Jean-Luc Boutté with the following cast:

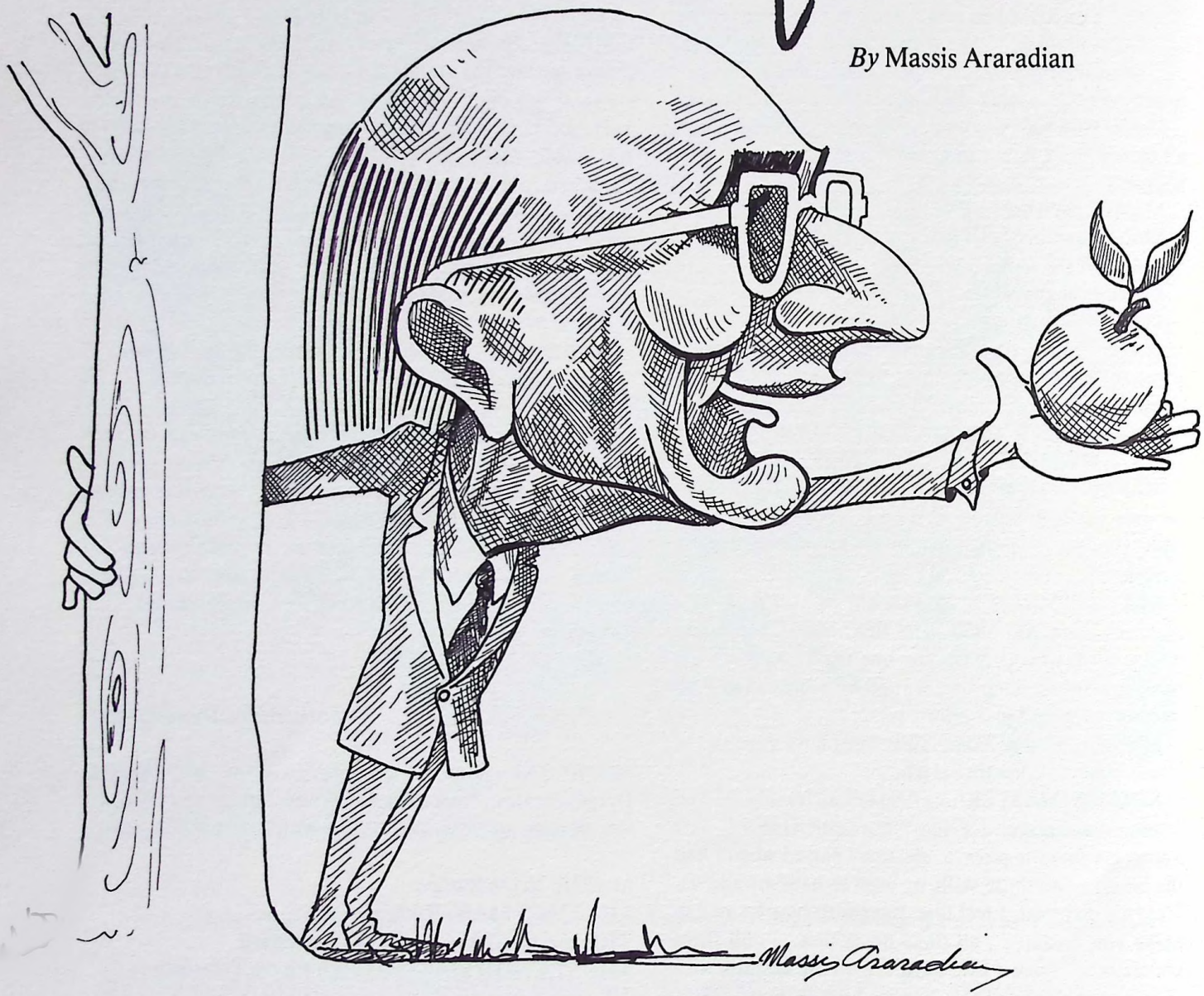
MARIE: Reine Barteve
THE FIRST MAN: Rudy Moraes
THE SECOND MAN: Gerard Berregard
THE STATION MASTER: Jean Pierre Thiercelin.

L'Armenoche was performed again at the Theatre "Le Coupe Chou," Paris on December 27, 1976, in a new setting by Jean-Luc Boutté with the following cast:

MARIE: Reine Barteve
THE FIRST MAN: Rudy Moraes
THE SECOND MAN: Francis Aubert
THE STATION MASTER: Philippe Kerbrat

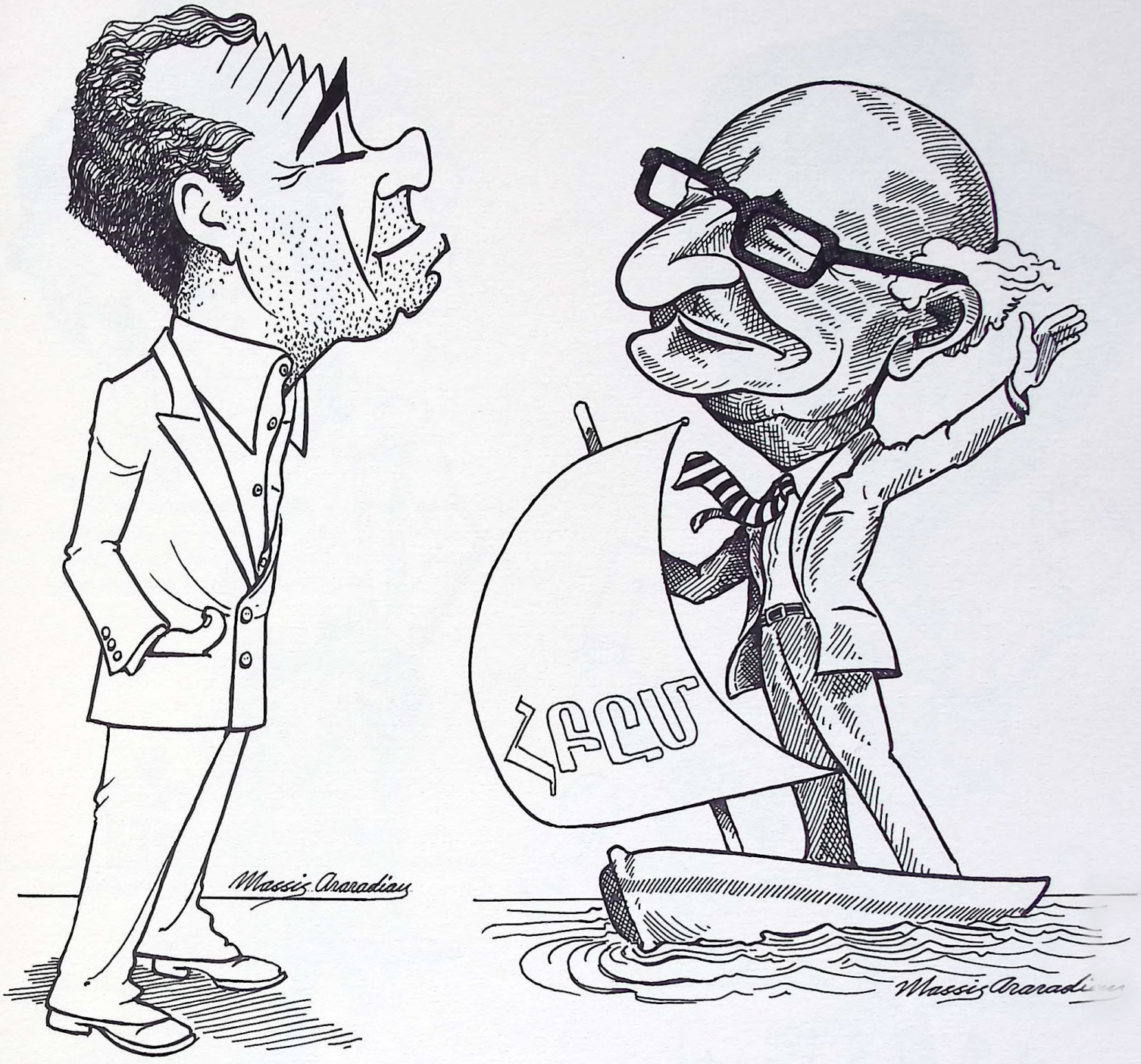
Portraits in Ink

By Massis Araradian



Arshag Dikranian

The champion prince of the fruits of the earth, he leapt, ran, and reached the longing, the prayerful, the pupil and sage. His fruits were carried, one by one, to the earth's four corners. The Armenian Good Samaritan of Los Angeles rose and brought others up with him.



Antranig Dzarougian

He grew up to be a man, but he had no childhood. He opened a new path with old dreams, and promised to ascend to the summit of Ararat. He felt no need to open his eyes wide when he wished to see far; he felt no compulsion to write or to live on the straight and narrow way.

Alex Manoogian

He is the insuperable, modest and gray-haired captain of the ship, the sail of his nation fighting the sea waves and the great and small storms that threaten culture and art. He searches for his successors in the Armenian ocean.



George Deukmejian

He sped swiftly, rose and conquered, attaining the rank of Attorney General of California. But since in the United States anyone who does not run is considered to be lying down, and since he is zealous for the Armenian name, he will run to the Governorship, and then God knows where.



Mike Connors (Mannix Ohanian)

The great star on a small poster who shone in the Hollywood sky and has cast rays over all the world. If he were delegated to find a solution to the Armenian cause, how many hours would it take for him to find and punish the criminal?



Puzant Granian

A gifted writer and dedicated Armenian, he has told the story of our people who have come to this land during the last decade. His work has illuminated the pages of *Ararat* as well as several books.



Barry Zorthian

One of the brightest Titans of the American press, a man of science and law, he knows how to work in darkness and in light; he can write in black and white, and can judge the good and the bad. Surely one day he will write and show in deed what the Armenian is, and what his history is, as well.



Khoren Der Harootian

This modest artist who survived the Armenian Golgotha has sculpted in the mind of America the gratitude and pride of the Armenians. His statue of Mher, which stands in Philadelphia, is a proud and eloquent testimony of the history of the past, present and future.



William Saroyan

The Armenian patriarch abroad, St. Mesrop's very own translator, he clambered up to Ararat's two snow cones, he planted his heart in the mountains, his eyes on the Armenian nation and his mind on mankind.



Charles Aznavour

A true son of the Armenian nation, a singer, composer, and poet, he shouldered his people's fate and after years of suffering and degradation attained the laurel of glory. He sparked the passions of mankind and conquered the world by stubborn, Armenian work and will.

Diana Apcar



A photograph of Diana's portrait.

Little Mother To A Nation

By Araxe Apcar

In October 1921, when I was almost twenty years old, my sister Novart and I traveled with our father to Japan on business. Because I was used to the customs and climate of Canada, the sights, sounds, and smells of the Orient fascinated me.

What an exotic setting in which to meet Diana Apcar! Later that same year she would be awarded the title of honorary Armenian Consul for Armenians in Japan. But I needed no official recognition of her importance to be properly impressed.

This strange and courageous woman had entered my life five years earlier when I read her books. Diana Apcar had described in detail the plight of our people—Armenians who fled their homeland as the Turks pillaged and massacred during the bloody years 1893-1896. About the time of World War I, and afterward, some Armenians escaped to New York or Boston. Others traveled across Siberia, through Harbin, China—to Japan.

Mrs. Apcar's books transported me to a world of unspeakable horror. In bed at night, I read *In His Name* and similar books, and trembled. Agonizingly descriptive passages were illustrated with pictures of torture and atrocities. I couldn't sleep for reliving again and again those awful images. In the same way Joan of Arc wielded her sword, Diana Apcar wielded her pen.

And so, on that October day in 1921, two weeks after we set sail from Victoria, B.C., Canada, *The S. S. Fushimi Maru* drew alongside the Japanese pier. I leaned eagerly over the rail. My eyes, ears, and nose were immediately assaulted by the activity below. Lithe coolies in tight knee breeches chattered as they leaned against their vehicles. Ship's crew shouted musically as they tossed long ropes to waiting dock hands. Friends on shore called to friends on board. Hawkers and vendors whistled urgently to announce their edible wares. Iron pots steamed and gave off mouth-watering aromas. *So this is Yokohama,* I thought.

When we made our way down the gangplank, rickshaw coolies surrounded us. I picked a gaily painted cart, and climbed aboard. My coolie tucked my suitcase under my feet, and we were off. I admired the way he maneuvered in and out of traffic. He moved with the ease of a panther. Soon we arrived at our destination—49 Water Street.

My sister and I gaped at the humanity swirling around us. But Dad had work to do, an appointment with a business associate. The three of us climbed a flight of stairs, then entered an office. It was full of wicker furniture—desks, chairs, and other items.

A short stout woman with upswept gray hair rose from her chair and approached us. She held out her hand to Dad. "Mr. Sanders, I believe? I am Mrs. Diana Apcar."

A bell rang inside my head. Surely this ordinary-looking woman couldn't be the author of the powerful books I'd read! She turned, and the occupant of the second desk stepped up. "This is my son, Michael."

I stared, dumbfounded.

The meeting in that office remains as vivid in my memory as the day it happened. At the outset I was impressed with the Apcars. Even so, I didn't have an ink-

ling as to the significance of the occasion. It never occurred to me that I would marry Mike a year later, or that Mrs. Apcar would live with us as our beloved "Ma."

* * *

Diana Apcar was born in Calcutta, India, of Armenian parents. She married an Armenian from Persia and together they made their way to Japan, where she lived for forty-six years. Mike, her oldest child, was in his teens when his father died. Mrs. Apcar undertook to operate the import-export business, run a hotel, and bring up a family of three children.

As soon as young Mike was old enough to take over the business, she "retired" and transferred her considerable energy to the care of refugees. At her personal expense she maintained a number of homes for Armenians passing through Yokohama. Deservedly, she was dubbed "Little Mother."

On the surface, Ma seemed like any typical housewife. As I lived with her over the years, I pondered her contradictions. Though frugal with personal expenses, she could be a spendthrift in behalf of some destitute stranger. She worked to the point of exhaustion for her refugees, yet seldom took time to enjoy herself. Only once to my knowledge did she ever attend a social function.

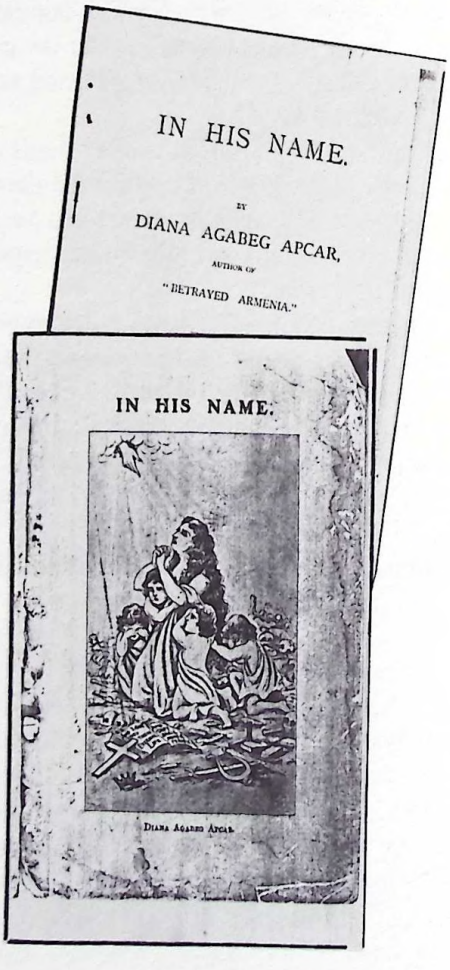
She was superstitious to the point of mania. Sapphires terrified her and so did cats. In times of death or tragedy, she reacted with strength and comfort for others, without shedding a tear for herself. Her cooking compared favorably with any French chef's. Squab and Indian curry were especially delicious the way she fixed them. The kitchen interested her, but not housework. In all the years I knew her, she never held a broom.

In a diminutive body she carried a heart large enough to encompass a whole nation. The time she could spare from pounding the typewriter, she spent tramping from the American consulate to the steamship office demanding passports and tickets for her unfortunates. It was her responsibility to see they were adequately equipped with passage to the United States and to look after other needs.

Nor was her attention limited to a safe, sterile dis-



Diana Apcar and her grandchildren.



tance. She'd concocted a salve and many times I watched as she treated pus-filled wounds with her famous ointment. When blankets were called for, she gave ours. It didn't matter that we shivered ourselves.

She was at her best when surrounded by the ragged, hungry group of runaways. On such occasions, this short, dumpy woman became an angel of mercy. Comfort and compassion flowed from her. I recall a typical scene.

A refugee protested some difficulty or delay in his passage. He lashed out at Ma in a guttural roar. Ruth, Ma's daughter who was visiting, resented his tone of voice. "Leave at once," she ordered the man. "How dare you speak to my mother that way!"

Quietly, Ma turned to Ruth. "I don't blame the poor man," she said. "He has suffered enough."

* * *

It was her custom to rise at six. She wrote articles and books in a small study next to her bedroom. Later in the morning, I'd often hear loud voices coming from the dining room. I'd know then that she and Mike were arguing politics. If I heard loud chanting from the piano room, it would mean prayers were in progress. Ma did everything with gusto, and at top volume.

"Although Diana Apcar and I had our differences on occasion, I consider myself fortunate to have been her daughter-in-law."

She loved her garden. Each morning, after writing and prayers, she'd go out and greet each of her rose bushes. If bugs threatened their foliage, she'd make a spray out of the liquid from Mike's soaked cigarette butts. Finally, she'd summon a rickshaw and go about her errands in behalf of the refugees.

Today she would be called a "character." She had a horror of automobiles. If of necessity she entered a taxi or private car, she gripped the seat with both hands, begged the driver to go slowly, and got out at the earliest possible moment. Whenever feasible, she took a rickshaw.

One day as I arrived home from shopping, I went through the kitchen and saw Ma chatting with a vendor who sat on the step having a snack. I wore matching new jewelry. Ma looked up and exclaimed, "What a lovely pin and ring! Let me see them." When she got closer, her expression changed to shock and outrage. "Not sapphires!" she screamed. "They are bad luck. Give them to me at once. We must get rid of them." She insisted my beautiful jewels were the devil's invention. Ma's will was so strong, I had no choice. I never saw my pin and ring again.

* * *

Everyone enjoyed afternoon tea with Ma. Because she was such a genial hostess, it was the event of the day. She loved to sit behind the samovar, pour tea from the teapot, and dilute it to suit the individual taste. I liked to watch her hold court. She dressed in a gray silk tea gown with lace frills at the neck and wrists. She passed out the tea as though it contained royal nectar. With her thick gray hair piled on her head in a twisted coronet, she really did come close to looking like a queen.

Ma loved to tell stories about her earlier life, and I loved to listen. One of the most harrowing occurred just prior to the birth of her first-born, Michael, who was to become my husband. Mr. Apcar had just declared bankruptcy.

As this tiny woman lay in an upstairs room in labor, she heard the sound of heavy boots treading the living-room floor below. The auctioneer's men, she realized. Creditors. They would strip the house, take everything of value. Her pains intensified. Nearby, a midwife watched carefully and made ready for the baby's arrival.

Just then, the bedroom door opened. It was Ann, Ma's best friend. "How are you, Di? How is it going?"

"Come closer," Diana whispered. She took a package from under her pillow. "Jewels," she said softly. "A sockful. You know what to do?"

Ann took the parcel and went into the bathroom. When she returned, the folds of her skirt were as smooth as usual. She leaned down to kiss her friend. "Goodbye, dear. All is well."

The Apcar jewels that Ann smuggled out that day were later sold to raise money for Armenians—the Near East Fund.

* * *

One of the most terrifying experiences of my life happened on September 1, 1923. I was a bride of a little over a year.

The day dawned windy and hot. All the night before, the wind had moaned like a giant struggling for breath. Gusts rattled a loose window of the veranda. Mike had



A family portrait. The author is sitting next to Diana, her sister-in-law and husband are standing, with the three grandchildren.

been sick for almost two weeks, and between his illness and the nerve-wracking wind, we were both exhausted by morning. I suspected a typhoon was coming.

At noon, we assembled in the dining room. Ma bustled about. The maid carried in grilled chicken. Then I remembered Mike's cigarettes and a book we'd left in the bedroom. "I will be back," I said, running up to get them.

I reached the top of the stairs when suddenly I felt uneasy. There was a lurch under my feet. Or was I dizzy? I thought I heard Ma scream, "Araxe, come down!" We were having an earthquake.

The floor heaved—*terribly.* I grabbed a box of cigarettes and staggered. I dashed for the door, stepped through, and fell all the way to the first floor. The stairway had collapsed under my feet. The cigarettes flew out of my hand. Without pausing, I began crawling.

I clawed my way over crashed stove, crashed doors, and crashed windows. If only I could reach Mike and Ma! I didn't know where they were. I had to try and follow Ma's scream. I turned the last corner of the hall. Like a rushing, moving stream, the dining-room wall pushed me towards Mike and Ma where they huddled in the back pantry doorway.

Just as I got there, the glass windows of the veranda overhead crashed. Clouds of dust drifted down on us. Clay tiles on the roof sent down another gritty shower of dust.

Ma's loud Armenian prayers broke the sudden quiet. Mike spoke in a hoarse voice, "This damned house is broken." I thought I heard someone burrowing. Soon the man from next door inched his way through the tiles. Pushing, shoving, we worked ourselves out. The air was thick with sulphurous smoke from the surrounding fires.

All day the ground never stopped heaving. We spent the night boiling water, filling bottles with the boiled water, digging holes to stand the bottles in so they would not get broken in the continuing tremors. We also had to watch for looters.

When daylight arrived Mike took note of our transportation—a smashed car without gas or oil. He turned to Ma and said, "Can you walk to the pier?"

"I will do it," she said.

I looked at Ma and wondered. Ordinarily she did very little walking. That day I found my respect for her increasing as we made our way in the direction of the pier. Rubble was all around. In some places there were deep splits in the road. Sometimes we had to crawl on our hands and knees. Whatever was necessary, Ma did. She crawled over piles of debris. She walked down hills once dotted with houses, but now strewn with wreckage. We walked three hours, and Ma kept up with us all the way.

It was evening when we reached the liner, *The Empress Of Australia.* Imagine our discouragement when we discovered it too had suffered damage during the earthquake.

The day before, at noon, just prior to departure, the big ship had nestled up to the dock, its deck jammed with passengers. streamers were flying on the pier, friends were waving and shouting farewell greetings.

The earthquake struck at three minutes after twelve. With a loud cracking noise, the pier jerked up and then,

with all the people and cars on it, disappeared into the water. As it went down, dragging hundreds to their deaths, cables linking the *Australia* to the dock tangled the ship's propellers, rendering them useless.

We arrived the next day. Though the vessel was unseaworthy, it could at least serve as temporary refuge for escapees from the holocaust on land. A tugboat carried us to the ship. Because the water was thick with oil from exploded Standard Oil tanks, we were warned not to light cigarettes. In the distance, toward the horizon, the sea burned hideously. (Later we learned that approximately a hundred thousand people died in the quake and fires).

As soon as we boarded, the stewards passed out soup to the general company on deck. We ate as we sat or stood, without benefit of silverware, and gave thanks for our safety.

The following day *The Empress of Canada* steamed into Yokohama harbor. We boarded her and soon were on our way to Kobe, where Mike had a branch office. We lived there two years, then were able to return to Yokohama. Life slowly returned to normal. We found rented quarters. Ma tended her precious refugees. I thought of her work with new insight, for after the earthquake we had had a taste of refugee life ourselves. Eventually we were able to get into our own home again.

In time we noticed Ma was not her old self. Despite diminishing health, however, she continued her missions of mercy. She stayed at home more and, although she tried to conceal it, we knew she was ailing. It took her a long time to write her final book, and it was never published.

One morning when she awoke she did not recognize us and began talking of her early married life. Mike and I called the doctor. On his advice we wired both her daughters in the United States to come for a final visit. A year later she suffered a series of heart attacks. She knew instinctively she wouldn't be around for the following spring. Each day, between attacks of pain, she arose and bathed herself as she had all her life.

On the final morning of her life she requested us to go down to breakfast. She said she wished to sit in her favorite chair and say her prayers. When we returned, she was having another attack. She greeted us with a radiant smile, and then her life returned to the Creator who gave it.

Although Diana Apcar and I had our differences on occasion, I consider myself fortunate to have been her daughter-in-law. I cherish a deep appreciation for her many fine qualities, I grew to love her, and, eventually, I dared hope I may have played a small part in her mission to our people.

A MOTHER'S HANDS

By Parouyr Sevak

Ah these hands, a mother's hands,
Ancient and yet always new hands.

What can you say that these hands haven't done?
During her wedding, how they did dance these hands,
With such gracefulness and dreams.

What can you say that these hands haven't done?
They never let the light die out these hands,
When the first child was born,
He was nurtured on her sunny milk.

What can you say that these hands haven't done?
they've borne deprivations and great worries, these hands,
Always with a sea of silence and patience.

What can you say that these hands haven't done?
They've turned into a column from heaven these hands,
So the pillar of the house doesn't collapse,
And her son returns home from the war.

What can you say that these hands haven't done?
Until they become grandma hands, these hands,
These old hands, their strength diminished,
But with a new grandchild, their strength replenished.

They've pushed over rocks and moved mountains these hands,
How much, how much we need these hands,
Powerful hands, holy hands.

Come today let us sons kiss these hands,
That brought us into the world and fed us,
That defended us and took care of us,
That never get tired of us,
Always cleaning, always creating,
Endlessly judging, endlessly working,
These hands.

Be they cracked and rough,
But for us, hands smooth as silk.

(Translated by James Der Garabedian)

Songs of Armenia

By Leonardo Alishan

I: Armenia Sings to the Black Sea

My teeth, the songbirds, age with snow,
the winds plough wrinkles on my face,
and each of these stones, my bones,
has a sea gull for a heart, caught in its marrow.

I dream of my hair, sails,
my fingers, sailors,
and seasons of God's breath
blowing in my hair.

The apparition of a horse
haunts my mind, the storage
of Ararat's ancient tales.
The sound of swords slamming
against blood-black sacrificial
altars of foreign gods, echoes
in the hollow of my hands.

My hands, in dreams, are seashells,
splashing blue secrets into my ear.
My soul is a soft shore
in my dreams, salt in her words.

Arax, my bloodstream, sings my life
to me. Wolves drink from the banks
of Arax, when you, my lost lover, my sea,
gone with the leaf and the wind,
are aeons of annals away,
the memory of motherhood
in an ancient woman's leather breasts.

Venice . . . sails of silk . . .
wet under the vulture's wing —
sunburst after clouds,
sunstroke after snow —
turquoise of your water
into drops of sweat . . . .
My mad daughter in my room, Arax
walks round and round my heart.

Shattered ships, scattered driftwood,.
the sunken skeletons of my firm-breasted yesterdays,
disturb my dreams, my sea, O husband
of fish soul, and black heart.

II: The Seafarer Sings to Armenia

My fate soaks in the diary of a wave.

Wind pulls at the sea's white hair,
sea screams the piercing cold of her shells
into the pearls of my spine, night's necklace
breaks and splashes into the sea, sparks
and patches of smoke rise to the deck.

With salt in my lungs,
I make my way through water
to water, never reaching you.

Stories of you reach the islands of my days
and suckle me to sleep, and to sunrise,
woman of my father's eyes
and mother's hair.

Wind and water recognize
among sea-blue flowers and sun-gold grass,
the two black buds blooming
in my blood-rimmed eyes,
offspring of seeds
slipped through your fingers.

Dusk settles ancient dust
on the roofs of Yerevan,
my hair grows gray.
The mountain my mother milked every morning
for my snow, is left untended,
milk oozing from her swollen breast.
Longing, I weep my daughter's watery arms.

My winged arms, in dreams,
are sheltered in winter with wool
your hands weave in your sleep.
Winds of these steel cities
have plucked feathers
from my wheat-old wings and pressed them
with dying flowers
in the history books of lonely girls.

Your mirage appears through the angle
of a gray angel's wing, spread above a factory.
Images of you meet my mouth with bird-beaks.
From the idle islands no one sings,
no bird leads to harbor,
no harbor leads to you.

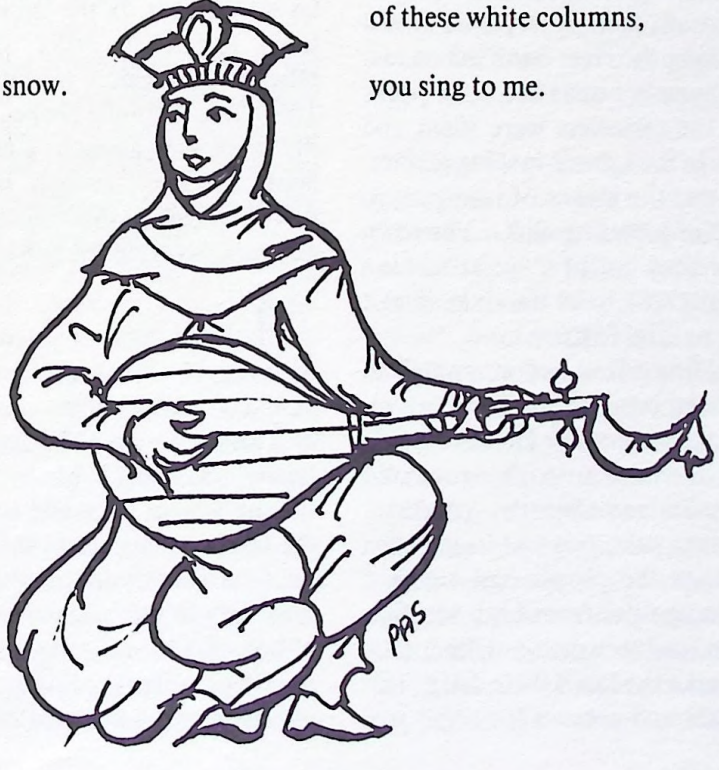
Pillaged caravans, crushed villages,
the rotting corpses of my stallion yesterdays
disturb my dreams, my home, O wife
of snow soul, and bone heart.

III: The Wedding Song

Shattered stained-glass windows
scattered on the dry sand . . .
Though I draw His face on the cave's wall
He does not come to me.
  The souls of wolves caught
  in the starving wind, have set
  the pieces of glass, words
  I have gathered, to music . . . .
Of children's mouths, opening
into petals of holy colors
I sing
to myself, of the autumn wind I sing
rushing through the sleep of yellow leaves.

Quicksilver rises through the pearls of my spine.
My eyes are on the wind
in the eyes of my son,
on this torn paper bag,
on the marbles of dead days
scattered all over the street.
I cannot catch the wind
in this torn bag,
with these eyes of marble
I cannot love.

Heavy with a scream, my tongue
the wave, rises
but drops. Through the songbirds,
my snowy teeth, your name blows
with the blood-warm breeze of aeons
of summers and springs:
Ani . . . Ani . . .
annointed with the milk of snow.



The affluence of answers decorates
the ancient throat of your columns, Ani.
The powder of the black petals in my eyes
and your stones: that alchemy
molds my bones — the nests
of sea gulls, the fields of wheat.
My lips season fish-words with salt,
with salty lips I sail your name, Ani,
on seven seas.
Your scattered bones, my spoils, words
of many colors, pieces of glass cut with diamonds,
meet into a window and shield my son
from the wild, piercing wind.
Ani . . . Ani . . . your name still sings to me.

My silk-wings are your sails,
on your stone-thighs I stand.
In your forests of my hair, songbirds sing,
and fishes lay eggs in the Van and Sevan of my eyes.
I, mountain, hold high the drowning child of the ark.
My arms are your borders,
my fingers, your sentinels.
The wheat-mane of my son will dance, Ani,
as he harvests the winds
in your fields.

Ani,
  water, palm tree, home,
                oh Ani,
through the pieces of night
on these desert-flat pages,
through the black cracks
of these white columns,

you sing to me.

The Miracle



By Marian Hodgkinson

The village of Hasankeyf lies high on a cliff overlooking the Tigris River as it flows to meet the Euphrates hundreds of miles below the city of Bagdad in distant Iraq. To reach the town was an involved journey—by air from Ankara, Turkey's capitol city, to Kaiserie, then to Malatya, and finally to the walled city of Diyarbaker, once known as "Black Amid" because its ancient walls were built of shiny black basalt, then by jeep over an old camel trail to the river. Along the river bank paced two lonely camel trains. The ungainly beasts had huge packs balanced on their backs; the cameliers were silent and remote, swathed to the eyes in dark dusty-looking scarves. At the river a crude ferry was the means of transport to a narrow shelf at the base of towering cliffs. The town above was built along terraces cut in a spiral fashion from sheer rock. A pale mist rose from the river almost to the village, which was a natural fortress.

Over the centuries, invading tribes had attempted to scale the cliffs, but had been repelled by the villagers, who threw rocks down on the unprotected heads of their enemies. At one time this had been an Arab stronghold but now it was Turkish Muslim and Christian Armenian. Folklore said in the far distant past, this had been called the "Devil Village" because the people had suffered wars, mistreatment, and indignities from both Muslims and Christians and had decided to worship neither God nor Allah but instead to make the Devil their deity. This was an unsubstantiated tale and seemed less than true since both Muslim Turks and Catholic Armenians now lived in harmony.

At the top of a steep path a blue-domed mosque dominated the main rock-strewn street. One slender minaret pointed to the sky, cool and remote as the bud of a lily. Children played in the streets in front of windowless, faceless, pale beige-colored clay huts. Across from the mosque was a shabby rectangular building with a slightly arched roof. Inside on one dark wall was a huge Maltese cross, a faded picture of St. George and the Dragon and a small altar with gutted candles in copper holders at its base. A missal, printed in Roman script and wrapped in layer after layer of yellowed linen, lay on the altar. In the center of the room was a row of small handmade desks where children were given religious instruction, taught in the Armenian language. This was a Catholic chapel. Tethered in the far end of the room were animals: a goat, two sheep, a new-born lamb, and oddly enough, one skinny white pig, proof that people other than Muslims worshiped here (pork in any form is forbidden by Muslim faith).

How did the Armenians get here? During the many boundary shifts between Turkey and Armenia, this area of 40,000 square miles and with the largest minority race in Turkey, became the Armenian Republic. But this liberty was short-lived. In 1925 the Turks and Kurds rose up against them and massacred thousands, driving the few survivors across the Syrian border. Here in this peaceful countryside it seemed incredible that at one time the madness of man had made this a bloody scene of horror. However, some Armenians were given refuge by friendly Turks, thus forming the nucleus of the present Armenian population of Hasankeyf.

It was the hour of prayer. A muezzin in the minaret called the faithful to worship. Across the street the clang of a primitive bell indicated the hour of mass. Both sounds mingled in the still air. People flocked to their separate houses of worship chatting in a friendly manner. The common language of the street was an interesting patois. The somewhat gutteral sounds of the Turkish language mixed with the sharper tones of Armenian made a language unintelligible to any outsider.

A boy and a girl came arm in arm. She wore a graceful red-and-white striped long dress sewn with blue beads on the tightly fitted bodice. In her slender hand was a rosary. The boy, young, virile-looking, was in a peasant shirt of white and baggy Turkish trousers. From his hand dangled a string of brown Muslim prayer beads [itsbahs]. He wore no fez nor were the Turkish women passing by veiled in accordance with custom. The young couple parted at the gates, he going his way, she into the church. Mass was in Latin, the service in Armenian. The priest wore a simple white chausable and colored stole. The eucheristic chalice was of native copper, no doubt hand-crafted.

The young man waited impatiently outside the church for his sweetheart, twirling his prayer beads with the skill of a yo-yo champion. When she reappeared, they were off down the street to the nearest tea shop where a gleaming copper mongol (brazier) was heating for tea and would serve later as a barbecue for the supper crowd.

On the street something of interest was about to take place. The local dentist was preparing to remove a tooth from a patient who crouched at his feet. The spectators gathered around, taking occasional peeks into the open cavernous mouth of an old man. They shook their heads at the offending molar. The dentist placed his hand reassuringly on the bald head of his patient, addressed him as Jacob. (In Armenian, it was pronounced "Hakob," while in Turkish it was "Hagop.") To the listener there was little difference in sound. This was a moment of suspense. Some watchers crossed themselves, others murmured softly, "Allah, Allah." The dentist took from the pocket of his flowing white robe a pair of pliers, inserted them into the man's mouth, gave a mighty heave, then held aloft the bloody tooth. The spectators breathed a universal sigh of relief, then went about their business as did the patient.

A tired camel lay nearby. He fluttered his fantastically long eyelashes, his upper lips quivered, he snored, belched, and slept. Behind the village and away from the river lay arid but well-tended fields. Since the only source of water was the river far below, there was a constant parade of men, women, and children with brown clay jugs balanced on their shoulders on their way to irrigate their fields of vegetables and melons.

Two cemeteries lay in this area. Graves with white painted crosses bore Armenian names and inscriptions. They were carefully tended in this hallowed ground which was separated by a low rock wall from the Muslim burial place.

An old white-haired attendant said, "The Catholic Armenians lie here." He pointed, "And the Muslim Turks there. Not together, but near. They lie in peace as they lived."

"Folklore said in the far distant past, this had been called the "Devil Village" because the people had suffered wars, mistreatment, and indignities from both Muslims and Christians and had decided to worship neither God nor Allah but instead to make the Devil their deity."

Back in the village, it was time for the Muslim's fifth and last hour of prayer. The muezzin again called from the minaret. Across the street, the less than melodic but urgent bell rang again and again for evening mass.

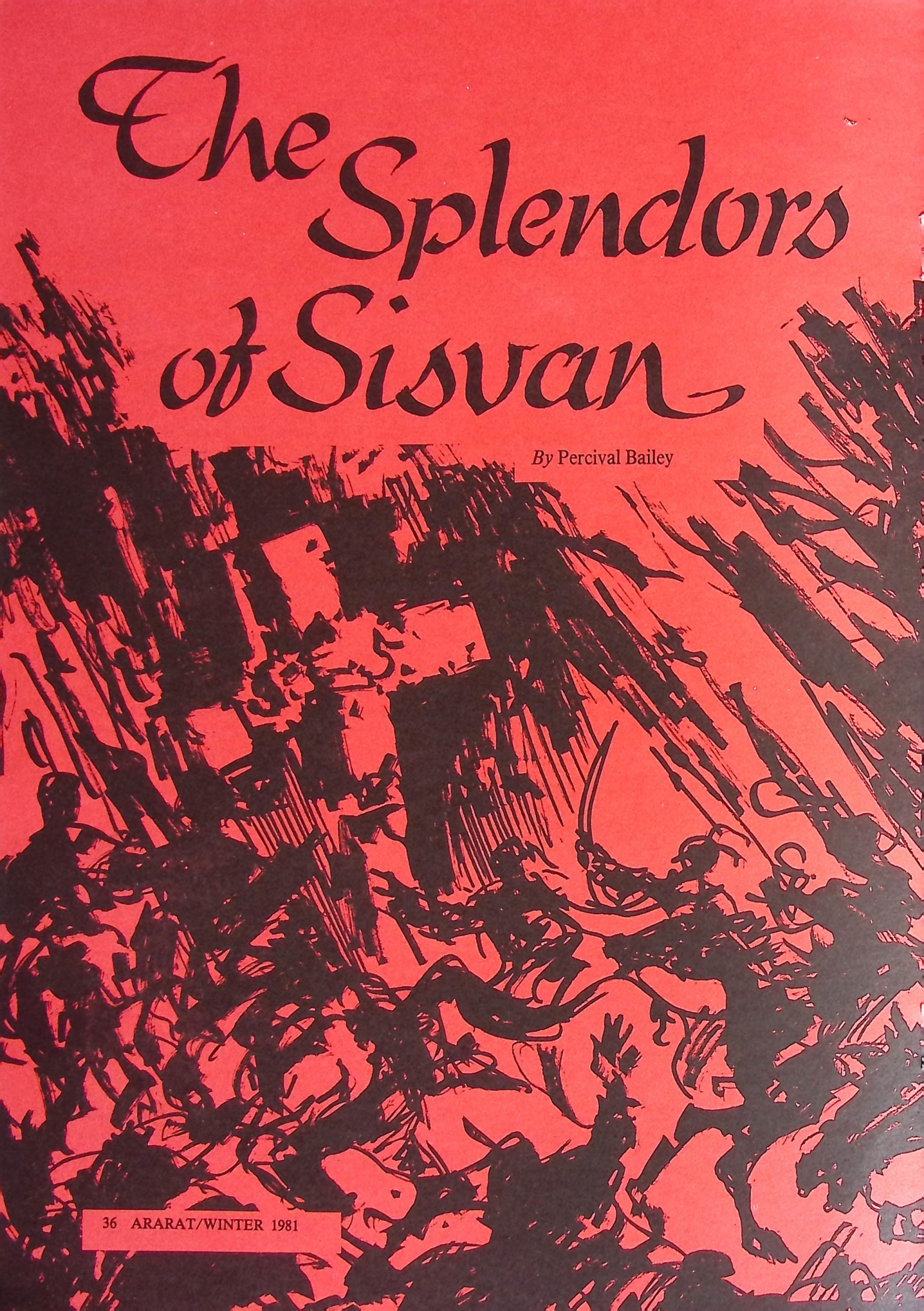
* * *

Time has brought few changes in Hasankeyf. Remote as it is from eastern Turkey's civilization, this different but not divided village lives on in harmony and isolation. Whether Armenian or Turkish, the inhabitants are united in their desire to remain aloof from the world's troubles. They are a quiet, dignified people and their faces reflect the tranquility of a life undisturbed by strife. If changes do come elsewhere, Hasankeyf will always be a reminder that there is one place in the world where people of different faiths can live together in harmony—a reminder also that not long ago Turks gave refuge to the beleaguered Armenians.

The headman of the village said, "We worship our God in our way; they worship theirs in their way." Then, with a shrug that could not be identified as either Turkish or Armenian, "What does it matter? We love our fellow man and we live in peace."

The Splendors of Sisvan

By Percival Bailey




Saysoorian



Ruins of the Fortress of Sis

While William of Normandy was busy conquering England, another Norman, Roussel de Bailleul, set out from Sicily with 3,000 followers, presumably to take service under the Byzantine emperor Romanus Diogenes in his wars against the Turks, but secretly hoping to carve for himself a kingdom out of the shattered remnants of the Eastern Roman Empire. A series of palace intrigues had placed on the throne of Byzantium a frivolous fop, Constantine X Doukas, who had allowed the powerful army built up by Basil II to be dispersed. The Turks, profiting by the disorder, made increasingly destructive raids into the Asiatic provinces. When the energetic Romanus Diogenes came to the throne in 1068, he was obliged to raise a mercenary army of Normans and Pecheneg Turks to defend his country. At the fatal battle of Manazkert on August 19, 1071, the Pechenegs deserted to their cousins the Seljuks and Roussel de Bailleul never appeared on the battlefield. As a result of their treachery, Byzantium lost forever the sturdy Anatolian peasantry which had been the backbone of the Byzantine armies.

The disaster of Manazkert resulted directly from the policy of Byzantium toward the Armenians. Armenia had just thrown off the Arab yoke, and was passing through the most brilliant period of its history. It had an organization much like that of Germany in the Middle Ages. Each mountain was crowned by a feudal castle, but a certain unity was assured by a common language, common religion, and common danger. The Bagratid kings had built a beautiful capitol at Ani. Art and architecture flourished and literature was at its peak.

Byzantium also, under the rule of Basil II, great-grandson of the Armenian emperor Basil I, had compensated for the loss of its European provinces by brilliant conquests in Asia and the Balkans. Under its great commanders, Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimisces, himself an Armenian, the Byzantine army had cleared the Arabs out of Anatolia, made a triumphant march through Syria and Palestine, and finally had recaptured Antioch. In this successful army were 10,000 Armenian troops furnished by their king, Ashod III.

The relations between the sovereigns were most cordial. Armenian civilization, although its genius was indigenous, was nevertheless strongly influenced by Byzantium. In return, the Armenians, who at that time supplied the Byzantine Empire with bellicose mountaineers, formed a most effective barrier against the Arabs and the nomadic hordes coming from Central Asia. The

two countries seemed to have ahead of them a long period of peace and prosperity based on mutual strength.

This expectation was never realized. The elegant and corrupt courtiers of Constantinople, led by Michael Psellus, were jealous of the powerful Anatolian barons, some of whom were Armenian. To attack the Greek barons would be difficult, but against the Armenians the courtiers could enlist the support of the Greek clergy. So the weak emperor Constantine Monomachus was induced to attempt the subjection of the Armenian nobles. Ultimately this move led to the destruction not only of the Armenian kingdom, but also of the Byzantine empire. Because of the centralization of the Byzantine government, with its constant palace intrigues, border fortresses had to be manned by a local barony, able and powerful enough to act independently against invaders until order could be restored at Constantinople and aid be despatched. By weakening the Armenian vassals, Byzantium let in the Turks, as we shall see.

In 1043 the Armenian Bagratid king of Ani, Gagik, was lured to Constantinople for a visit, seized, and imprisoned. The Byzantine troops occupied Ani before the Armenians knew what was happening. Ceding his kingdom to the emperor, Gagik swore fidelity to him as a vassal and received in fief certain lands in Cappadocia. Many of his retainers followed him to this new location. Moreover, because of new internal dissension, the Byzantines had withdrawn most of their troops from Ani so that in 1064 it fell an easy prey to the Seljuk sultan Alp Arslan. Following this disaster, a yet larger stream of Armenians trekked southward toward their king. This development aroused the fears of the Greek emperor, who saw a new Armenian kingdom being organized in Cappadocia and Commagene. He had Gagik assassinated in 1079. The crime so aroused the Armenians that his lieutenants revolted and renounced their allegiance to the Byzantine government, in spite of their disorganized condition and their unhappy situation between the Seljuk marauders, the Greeks on the west, and the Arabs to the south and east.

* * *

After this mess, Armenians scattered throughout the known world. At this time, the Duke of Brabant gave them the right to sell their rugs in the porch before the cathedral of Bruges and established a hostelry for Armenian refugees. Ari Thorgilsson, the first historian of Iceland, mentions three Armenians, Petrus, Abraham, and Stephanus, who landed there in 1067. But these expatriates were largely priests, merchants, artisans, and the like. The hardy peasants and mountaineers followed leaders like Philaretos Vahramian and Thoros Hethoumian southward into the provinces of Cappadocia, Cilicia, and Commogene. Those with Philaretos formed an ephemeral principality on the banks of the Euphrates, including the principal cities of Edessa, Marash, Anitab, and Malatya. Those with Thoros built for themselves behind the Taurus mountains a citadel which endured the onslaughts of Greeks, Arabs, Turks, and Franks alike until 1375. Their country was known in ancient times as Cilicia. The Armenians called it Sisvan, the land of Sis, after its capital city Sis. The Arabs called it also Bilad-i-Sis, the land of Sis. Its history, extending from about 1080 to 1375, covers the entire period of the Crusades, and the relation of the tiny kingdom to the Crusaders is full of interest for us.

Sisvan lay northeast of Cyprus between Syria and Anatolia. Northwest lies an almost impassable mountain barrier, the so-called Bulgar mountains, a part of the Taurus range; southeast another imposing barrier, the Amanus range. Through the Bulgar mountains the famous Cilician gates led toward ancient Iconium and through the Amanus range the Syrian gates gave access to the Orontes and Antioch. Southwest and northeast no such obvious natural frontiers existed. The minimal boundary to the southwest rested upon the fortress of Corycus near the city of Selencia and sometimes reached as far as the village of Alaya, including the valley of the Calycadnus. The northeastern boundary at times reached the Euphrates, including the narrow valleys of the Sarus and Pyramis (Djahan) rivers. There was a row of mountain peaks fanning natural fortresses around which the Armenians clustered. As long as they were entrenched on them, an enemy hesitated to invade the country for fear of being taken in the rear.

The fertile soil of this country was the plain built up by the Sarus and Pyramis rivers. The seacoast stretched from Selencia eastward two hundred miles to Cape Rhosicus west of Antioch and included the beautiful gulf of Alexandretta, called in the Middle Ages "The Gulf of the Armenians." About the middle of the seacoast stood the city of Tarsus, birthplace of St. Paul and meeting place of Anthony and Cleopatra.

A rich country it was and self-contained. The fertile Cilician plain furnished wheat, cotton, rye, and sesame. On the uplands grazed vast herds of goats, sheep, buffalo, and horses. In the mountains were great forests of pine and cedar, and rich mines of iron. The treaty of 1285 between Léon II and the Egyptian sultan Kelavoun obligated the Armenian king, in return for his freedom, to deliver 10,000 horseshoes with their nails, so valued that two would buy a slave. In addition were lead, coal,

and silver mines. In 1333 the right to exploit salt mines was granted to the Venitians by Léon IV. Pliny mentions the famous Cilician whetstones which could be used with either oil or water to moisten them.

An active commerce was carried on, especially with Egypt, which lacked iron and wood. The famous cedars had long since disappeared from the denuded hills of Lebanon and the principal source of the indispensable cedarwood for Egyptian coffins was now the forests of Cilicia.

The country was famous from the most remote times. There were many Greek legends about it, but its real history began when Alexander defeated Darius on the plains of Issus. Cicero was consul of the province of Cilicia in 48 B.C. and Julian the Apostate was buried at Tarsus, which he had planned to make the capitol of his empire. It was in this natural fortress that the first Crusaders found the Armenians entrenched.

In the first Crusade of 1095, the true fighting men went in three groups under the command of Godfrey of Bouillon, Raymond de St. Gilles, and Bohemond, son of the Norman Robert Guiscard. As they arrived at Constantinople, the Greek emperor Alexis Comnenus induced Godfrey and Bohemond to swear fealty to him as his vassals, for whatever lands they might conquer originally belonged to the Byzantine empire. In return he pledged himself to feed and transport their armies and give them military aid. Raymond de St. Gilles and Tancred, nephew of Bohemond, refused to take the oath, thus causing complications which we shall note later.

The Ottoman capitol at the time, Nicea, lay on the line of march. This city was easily taken by assault and turned over to the Greeks. The Crusaders then started for the Holy Land. The Turks tried to stop them at Darylea but were defeated and thoroughly crushed. This great victory put the Turks on the defensive for a long time and deferred the fall of Constantinople for more than four centuries. Leaving the Greeks to clear out the Turkish remnants from the western coast of Anatolia, the Crusaders started across the Phrygian desert in midsummer. They finally arrived at Iconium half dead with hunger and thirst. Here they first came in contact with the Armenians. The Crusaders had intended to revictual and remount their forces at Iconium, but the Turks had adopted a "scorched earth" policy and Iconium was deserted. But the Armenian mountaineers came to their rescue with food and horses and taught them to carry water in bags of skin. So they came safely to Gyana north of the Taurus mountains.

Here the army divided into two columns for reasons not now clear. The most direct route to the Holy Land lay through the Cilician gates, and Baudoin de Boulogne, brother of Godfrey, accompanied by Tancred, nephew of Bohemond, followed this route. But the main army turned toward Caesarea, going around the Taurus to the northeast by a long and laborious detour. Godfrey and Bohemond might have been following the wishes of Alexis, who doubtless wished to regain the allegiance of the large Armenian populations of Cappodocia and the Commagene subject to Turkish rule.

However that may be, Caesarea was taken and left in the command of an Armenian named Simeon. The army now turned southeast, crossed the Antitaurus and arrived before the fortress of Gŏksún whose Armenian population, which had been hard pressed by the Turks just before they had been recalled to the battle of Darylea, opened the gates joyously to welcome the Crusaders. From Gŏksún the army marched on to Marash, where the same welcome was repeated. Here they were rejoined by Boudouin and continued southwestward toward Antioch which they reached on October 20, having built up a powerful and friendly barrier between themselves and the demoralized Turks of Anatolia.

We go back now to Baudouin and Tancred in Cilicia. From their actions it is evident that these two chiefs, among many others, had not embarked on the Crusade from any zeal to rescue the Holy Places. They intended doubtless from the beginning to carve out principalities for themselves in the Near East. True, Baudouin had sworn fidelity to the Greek Emperor but such oaths sat lightly on his conscience. In Nicea he had formed a friendship with an Armenian named Bagrad whose brother held the fortress of Raban in the Antitaurus. Bagrad suggested to him the possibility of using the Armenian Christian population as the basis for a Franco-Armenian Christian state. The reception which the Armenians gave the main Crusader army only encouraged them in their plans.

When Baudouin and Tancred came through the Cilician gates, they found Oshin Hethoumian firmly established in the impregnable fortress of Lampron, and Constantine Rupenian at Pardzerpert and Vahka. The lowland cities were in Turkish hands but contained large Armenian populations. Immediately the justice of Bagrad's advice became apparent. When Tancred appeared before Tarsus, the Armenians opened the gates and the Turkish garrison fled. When Baudouin compelled him to give up Tarsus, Tancred repeated the same performance at Adana and Mamistra. Since Baudouin and Tancred both wanted to create a principality in the region, it is not surprising that they soon came to blows. But Baudouin, learning that his brother Godfrey had been seriously wounded in a chase, was reconciled with Tancred and set off to join his brother

at Marash. With the aid of a Flemish pirate, Guynemer de Boulogne, vassal of Baudoin, Tancred completed the conquest of the coastal region by taking Alexandretta. Leaving behind a small Frankish garrison, he then joined the main Crusader army before Antioch.

It was not in Cilicia therefore that Baudouin de Boulogne was able to realize his project of creating a Franco-Armenian principality. But the idea was too attractive to relinquish. Finding that his brother was in no danger, he again left the Crusaders to seek his fortune to the eastward. On the banks of the Euphrates, in the ancient province of Commagene, an ephemeral Armenian principality had been established by Philaretus Vahramian. Dying without heirs, he left his domain broken up into a number of petty states, each dominated by a fortified city. At Malatya ruled a former officer of Philaretus named Khoril; at Marash, Thathone; at Raban, the brother of Baudouin's friend Bagrad, known as Vasil the Robber; and at Edessa another former lieutenant of Philaretus named Thoros. Interspersed between these larger strongholds were many smaller ones, some in control of Armenian chiefs, others held by Turks or Arabs. Into this anarchy marched Baudouin to seek his fortune, accompanied by his advisor Bagrad.

Undoubtedly Bagrad and his brother Vasil intended to use Baudouin to get rid of their Turkish and Armenian rivals, thinking to deal with the Franks later. But in Baudouin de Boulogne they found a politician capable of beating them at their own game, more astute than a Levantine, more subtle than an Arab, more valorous than a Turk, an adventurer of genius who dominated his epoch.

The Armenian barons defended themselves against this menace as best they could. Khoril, seigneur of Malatya, married his daughter to a lieutenant of Baudouin de Boulogne, known as Baudouin du Bourg. Thathul of Marash hastened to swear allegiance to the Greek emperor Alexis Comnenus. Vasil the Robber retired into his inaccessible fortress at Raban and defied Turk, Greek, and Frank alike. At Edessa, Thoros, in a desperate attempt to bolster his position, became a vassal of the Greek emperor, the Turkish sultan, and the caliph of Bagdad all at once, and joined the Greek church. This last step alienated the Armenian clergy and, together with the heavy taxes which Thoros levied on the people to pay for military defense, led to his downfall later.

The smaller fortresses of Ravendel and Turbessel near Antioch were easily taken by Baudouin. Their gates were opened by the Armenian population and the Turkish garrisons fled. Hearing of the good treatment of the Armenians by Baudouin and under attack by the Turkish *atabeg* of Somosata, Thoros determined to avail himself of Frankish aid. He therefore invited Baudouin to aid him against the Turks in Edessa. Baudouin hastened to accept but had no intention of remaining in the role of a mercenary soldier.

The Armenian general Constantine of Gargar was thoroughly defeated by the Turks of Somosata shortly after Baudouin's arrival. Seeing that Thoros was absolutely dependent on him for defense, Baudouin demanded more power. But Baudouin had not a sufficient force at the time to hold Edessa against a hostile population. If he had attempted to seize the city the Armenians were perfectly capable of opening the gates to the Turks for revenge. So, Thoros being old and without children, a legal fiction was found and Baudouin was adopted as his son. The account of the ceremony in the chronicle of William of Tyre is curious. He states that Thoros made Baudouin, nude, pass between his flesh and his robe, pressed him to his bosom, and sealed by a kiss the engagement which they undertook, then adds "the wife of Thoros did the same."

The story of what followed varies in the different chronicles. Matthew of Edessa, a contemporary eyewitness, states that forty conspirators, including Baudouin de Boulogne and Constantine of Gargar, promoted a riot among the populace, which was disaffected because of the heavy taxes and the political maneuvering of Thoros. The conspirators swore that if Thoros would retire to Malatya he would not be harmed. But as he passed through the streets, the populace fell upon him and killed him after cruel tortures. The Frankish chronicles try to excuse this treachery but none of them makes any suggestion that Baudouin tried to protect his adopted father. The fact is that he wanted Thoros out of the way, and in the turmoil occupied the citadel with his Franks and seized the treasury.

With the Franks in control of Edessa, the situation of the Turkish commander of Samosata was untenable and he sold the city to Baudouin for ten thousand pieces of gold. His star was now rising and many knights began to flock to his standard—Reinard de Taul, Gaston de Béarn. Foucher de Chartres, and many others of whom we hear much in the chronicles of the Crusades. Baudouin rewarded them from his newly seized treasure and elevated them to high positions in his government.

The Armenian family of the Roupenians had steadily improved its position. Roupen I had established himself at Parzerpert in 1080. His brother Constantine I had taken Vahka from the Greeks and Goksun from the Turks. Constantine had married his daughter to Jocelyn I de Courtenay, seigneur of Turhessel, and his niece, we have seen, was the wife of Baudouin de Boulogne. The



Signature of Leo I

King Leo I

son of Constantine, Thoros I, took Anazarbe and Sis from the Greeks, and the brother of Thoros, Leon I, took Mamistra, Adana, and Tarsus from Tancred in 1132. Then he made the mistake of moving too far east and took the fortress of Servantikar claimed by Baudouin. War broke out between the Armenians and Franks in which Leon was taken prisoner. The Turks profited by the disorder to raid the country and the Greek emperor prepared to retake his last provinces of Cilicia and Antioch. Before this menace, peace was established. Leon was given his freedom in return for ceding the cities of Adana and Mamistra, but immediately alienated the Antiochans by retaking the cities as soon as he was free.

Meanwhile the Greeks continued their claims to Cilicia and Syria. They looked on the Armenians and Franks alike as interlopers and sought to dislodge them whenever they felt strong enough. Now a powerful Byzantine army under Jean Comnenus appeared in the Cilician plain. The Roupenian prince, who had not had time to consolidate his feudal state, was left largely to his own resources and had to retire to the mountain fortresses. The walls of Anazarbe were battered down after a seige of thirty-seven days. Vahka resisted for many months but was finally starved out. Leon was taken prisoner with his wife and two of his sons. Another son, Meh, escaped to be a scourge to his country in later times. Léon died at Constantinople in 1142 without regaining his liberty. One son, Roupen, having displeased the emperor, had his eyes burned out and died of his wounds. The other son, later Thoros II, escaped at the death of John Comnenus, fled to Cilicia and reconstituted the Armenian principality in 1144. With the aid of his father-in-law, the Frankish seigneur of Raban now seated in the ancient stronghold of Vasil the Robber, he drove out both Turks and Greeks. The new Greek emperor, Manuel Comnenus, sent an army under the command of his brother Andrónis which was completely routed. Manuel then appealed to the Turkish sultan of Iconium, begging him to attack the Armenians: "Assuage the hatred in my heart for the Armenians. Destroy their fortresses, burn their churches, and give order that all their country go up in flames." Urged on by these Christian sentiments, the Turks attempted to get through the Taurus. Coming around from the west they attacked Mamistra without success, then were surprised and completely destroyed. Some of the officers finally arrived at Inoniya after having traversed the Taurus on foot and suffering great hardships. The Turkish sultan Mahsud died of rage. This was one of the greatest victories in Armenian history.

The influx of these Frankish knights aroused the anger of the Armenian notables who saw themselves reduced to the status of a subject population under a Frankish aristocracy. Baudouin soon learned of a conspiracy directed against himself. He acted quickly and ruthlessly. The two principal conspirators were blinded in Byzantine fashion; the others were expelled from the city after their feet had been cut off. His friend Bagrad decided that he would be safer with his brother Vasil in Raban. There the two brothers maintained their independence until the death of Vasil in 1112. Besieged by the Franks in his fortress, the son of Vasil made the mistake of calling the Turkish sultan to his aid. Caught between the two armies, he fled to Thoros Roupenian at Vahka. The fate of Bagrad is unknown.

Though the Armenians were terrified into silence by his ruthless tactics, Baudouin was careful to make friends among them. He never interfered with the Armenian clergy although urged to introduce the Latin rite. Soon he took to wife the daughter of the powerful Armenian seigneur of Vahka, Thoros Roupenian. Thoros made Baudouin a wedding present of the son of Vasil the Robber but was very careful never to let himself be persuaded to visit his son-in-law.

Thus did Baudouin de Boulogne, afterwards king of Jerusalem, assure himself of a principality, leaving to his brother Godfrey the pleasure of rescuing the Holy Places from the Infidels. The fate of the broken fragments of the principality created by Philaretos Vahramian had many repercussions on the neighboring Cilician Armenians to whom we must now return.

In Cilicia no such able politician as Baudouin remained. In 1100, Alexis Comnenus, the Byzantine emperor, drove out the Frankish garrisons from Tarsus, Adana, and Manustra. Tancred took them back in 1104, but in 1132 the Franks were chased out by the Roupenians, who remained masters of the country. So the struggle between the Franks and Byzantines finally turned to the profit of the Armenians who succeeded in creating a kingdom of their own, which remained usually on friendly terms with the Franks. The role of the Armenian population was absolutely essential to the success of the first Crusade. The Armenians opened the gates of Syria to the Crusaders and guarded their rear, a fact the importance of which cannot be exaggerated.

Manuel Comnenus then tried to induce the Franks of Antioch to attack Thoros, but the Christians, having learned their lesson for the time being, settled their differences by negotiation, and concluded a treaty of alliance in 1156. During this time Manuel had been hampered by the necessity of watching the second Crusade. Conrad III of Germany had obstinately led his army along the route of the first Crusaders, where it was shot to pieces by the Turkish bowmen in 1147. Louis VII of France, profiting by the German disaster, followed the coast but was so handled by the Turks that he took ship at Adana and was ferried across to Antioch. Thus the second Crusade missed Cilicia.

Rid of the second Crusade, Manuel Comnenus turned his attention again to the Armenians. Pretending to attack the Turkish capital at Iconium (Inoniya), he descended into Cilicia so suddenly that the Armenians were completely unprepared. Thoros, warned by a Frankish pilgrim, had barely time to escape into the mountains to the east of Lamproun, where, says the chronicler, "in the memory of man no one had ever lived." The Cilician plain was reduced without difficulty but the mountain fortresses were a different matter and the Byzantine army settled down to a long series of dreary sieges. But Baudouin III, king of Jerusalem, induced Thoros to submit to the suzerainty of the emperor and prepared the emperor to pardon the repentant rebel. Thoros prostrated himself at the emperor's feet, confessed his faults, swore fidelity and obtained the right to retain his mountain fortresses. At first he was excluded from the emperor's table, but the haughty carriage and handsome physique of the Armenian prince soon pleased the emperor. Having obtained permission to carry the news of his pardon to his family, he returned with so many horses, buffalo, and sheep for the Byzantine army that the emperor relented and gave him a robe of honor. Always faithful to his oath, Thoros aided the emperor so well in his wars with the Turks of Iconium that the Sultan Quilij Arslan was obliged to go personally to Constantinople, prostrate himself before the emperor, and confess himself a vassal. Thoros II died in 1168 leaving his principality in peace and prosperity to his young son Roupen II. But Mleh, brother of Thoros, had long wanted the throne. This brother had escaped when his father and Thoros were taken to Constantinople and had lived a vagabond among the Saracens. Deprived of a Christian education, he had entered the service of the *atabeg* of Aleppo, Nur-ed-Din. He had returned to Cilicia when Thoros escaped but plotted to assassinate his brother and had to flee to his old friend Nur-ed-Din, who was glad to use him against the Armenians.

At the head of a Turkish army, Mleh entered Armenia through the connivance of friends disaffected with the Roupenian family and chased out the young prince, who soon died. The renegade Armenian then imprisoned his adversaries, arrested the priests and pulled out their teeth, violated the women, and sent his countrymen as slaves to Nur-ed-Din. When the king of Jerusalem marched against him, Mleh confessed his errors and swore to better his ways but returned to his former habits as soon as the Franks were obliged to leave, having been attacked in the rear by Mleh's friend, Nur-ed-Din. It was only after the death of the Atabeg of Aleppo that the Armenian nobles dared to assassinate Mleh and place on the throne his nephew, Roupen III. This was the darkest period in the history of the Armenian kingdom until near its close two centuries later.

Roupen III was an energetic but licentious prince. While on a visit incognito to the brothels of Antioch, he was surprised and captured by Bohemond III and it cost his brother Leon II 30,000 gold pieces and the cities of Adana and Mamistra to free him. But Roupen succeeded in seducing Sibyl (the third wife of Bohemond), who

betrayed the prince of Antioch into the hands of Leon. Leon now demanded nothing less than the city of Antioch as a reward for not putting Bohemond to the torture. So Bohemond was obliged to swear fealty to Leon and sent two of his marshals to turn the city over. The Armenian army concealed itself in some gardens in the suburbs, while a small band accompanied the marshals into the city to take control of the citadel. The marshals had transferred their allegiance to Leon without hesitation. The Armenians of Cilicia and the Franks of Antioch were by this time so intermarried anyway that it made little difference to them. Unfortunately the nephew of Leon, Hethoum of Sassoun, shouted as they passed before the church of Saint Hilary, "Whoever heard of that Saint? We will rebaptize that church Saint Sarkis." This spoiled everything, for the marshals now understood that the Latin clergy was to be expelled. The Frankish marshals bolted, raised a hue and cry, and the Armenians were obliged to flee. The gates were never opened and the army returned disconsolately homeward, unprepared to lay siege. Bohemond soon after regained his freedom through the intervention of Henride Champagne and married his oldest son to Alice, niece of Leon II and daughter of the preceding prince Roupen III. In this way another Franco-Armenian war was avoided which could have profited only the Turks. Leon, now at the height of his power, was crowned king of Armenia in 1198 by the archbishop of Mainz, Conrad of Wittelsbach. He was henceforth known as Leon I, the magnificent, first king of Sisvan.

We must remember that Leon was only a feudal king. His only dependable strength was based on his fortified city of Sis and the lands surrounding it. His nobles sat in various almost impregnable castles scattered around the country, watching the rise of the Roupenian family with envy. At any sign of weakness they found excuses to evade their feudal obligations. Each noble had his own coterie of adherents, but could usually depend also only on those bound to him by marriage or hire. All had hired soldiers and were followed into battle by bards to sing of their exploits.

The political organization of the country was in no wise different from that of the Frankish principalities of Syria, having only a loose unity based on a common language and a common church. This basis was constantly weakened by intermarriage of the nobility with the Frankish families, causing divided loyalties—religious, territorial, and familial. The great barons of Lamproun were particularly troublesome, but for the moment helpless. With the aid of the Hospitalers and of Jean de Brienne, king of Jerusalem, who had married the daughter of Leon, the Armenians even enlarged their territories considerably toward the Euphrates and north of the Taurus at the expense of the Sultan of Iconium. They were able to do this because the Turks were busy with a new menace on their eastern frontier, the Mongols under Genghis Khan.

When Leon died in 1219 leaving his throne to a female child (Zabel), the baron of Lamproun, Constantine, seized the regency and married Zabel to Philip, young son of the prince of Antioch. When Philip began cautiously to replace Armenians at his court by Franks from Antioch, Constantine had him assassinated and married Zabel to his son, who became Hethoum I. Zabel wept for a time for her elegant Frankish husband but soon became reconciled to Hethoum, who became the greatest ruler the country was to know.

Bohemond V never forgave the death of his brother Philip, but his son Bohemond VI was reconciled by Louis IX of France and married Sibyl, the daughter of Hethoum. After that, as long as Hethoum lived, there was strict collaboration between Armenians and Antiochians.

Not only was there peace between the Armenians and Franks, but the Turks were kept busy by the Mongols, the caliph of Bagdad also, and Egypt and Byzantium were in the throes of palace revolutions and internal dissention. Only Hethoum seems to have realized what use might be made of the Mongols to destroy Mohammedanism once and for all. The Mongol princes were rapidly being converted to Christianity by the Nestorians. An alliance between the Mongols, Armenians, and Franks was all that would be necessary to give Islam its death blow. To prepare the way, Hethoum sent his brother Sempad, the constable, to the court of the Grand Khan in Quaracorum. Sempad was so impressed with the progress of Nestorian Christianity that he induced his brother, the king, to make the long journey himself. On September 13, 1254, Hethoum was received by the Grand Khan. They agreed so well that Guyuk gave orders that no Mongol army was to molest his friend and vassal Hethoum, an order obeyed for more than seventy years. On his return Hethoum tried to get the Franks to enter the alliance, but the proud Franks refused to make the purely nominal obeisance demanded and suffered sorely for their pride, as we shall see. Only Bohemond VI, prince of Antioch, followed the lead of his father-in-law.

Now began the golden age of Sisvan. Art and literature flourished. Great cathedrals were built. Monasteries were established in which men of saintly life and profound erudition were developed. Most famous of these was Saint

Nerses called the Amiable, of Lamproun. Born of a noble family and consecrated by his parents to the church after surviving a severe illness in childhood, he became early filled with mystic fervor. Learning of the life of Saint Gregory, while still a child he ran away to spend his life in the retreat of that great saint. He was found in the mountains only after a long search, starving, his feet bleeding and his clothes in rags. After this escapade he turned his energy to learning and soon mastered Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Hebrew. At the age of fifteen he was made a priest and at twenty-two was archbishop of the diocese of Tarsus. He was a strange mixture of piety and practicality. At the same time he read constantly in the literature of other countries with a very practical purpose.

For the benefit of the army he translated the military and civil codes of the Greek emperor Constant, for the nobles the Latin order of benediction of kings and emperors, for the monks the Latin lives of the church fathers. Even the physicians were not forgotten; for them he translated from the Greek a treatise on anatomy. In addition, from his own hand we have more than fifty commentaries on sacred books and a very practical and eloquent plea for the union of all the churches in the Orient. His charity and tolerance made of him the mediator between the various oriental churches. Greeks, Latins, and Syrians listened eagerly to his words, and all of them, no less than his own countrymen, showed him the greatest admiration and profound respect, calling him the "new St. Paul."

"One has the impression that in a more favorable location the Armenians might have developed into one of the great peoples of the world."

Nor were such able men confined to the church. Sempad, constable of the kingdom, and brother of King Hethoum, found time from his military duties to translate from the Latin the Code of Laws of the city of Antioch as a model for the Armenians. He wrote also a chronicle which is our main source of information for those times.

A good man, certainly, and a valiant one was Sempad. We have already noted the long journey he took to the Mongol court. No saint withal, for while there he had a son, by a Mongol woman, who was known as Vasil the Tartar and who is not mentioned in the above pious preface, unless Sempad was thinking of some such escapade when he wrote of himself as a miserable impenitent sinner. He died with his boots on in war against the Saracens at the age of 69. After a victorious battle near Marash his horse fell during the pursuit and injured him so severely he died shortly after.

During the time that Hethoum ruled over Sisvan the principal seaport was Ayas, terminus of the caravan trade. The good relations between Hethoum and the Mongols assured the caravans safe passage through Greater Armenia to China. Marco Polo departed from Ayas for his celebrated journey, and it was to Ayas that he returned in 1269, the same year that Sempad the constable completed his chronicle.

From Ayas the merchandise was carried to Europe by the Genoese, Venetians, and Pisans for the most part, although vessels were to be found in the port from Barcelona, Marseilles, London, and Bruges. It was a great metropolitan seaport where Europeans mingled with Egyptians, Turks, and Tartars. Only ships of the Hanseatic League seem to have been missing, merchandise destined for Germany being distributed from Venice overland to Augsburg.

And if the Italians had their special quarters, churches, and social life in Ayas, so did the numerous Armenians in Italy. In more than thirty Italian cities the Armenians were sufficiently important to build and support churches for their national cult. In many large Italian cities there is still a street of the Armenians. Many Armenian families remained in Italy and many more emigrated there after the destruction of the Cilician kingdom. Gradually they were absorbed and lost their identity. A recent name we would recognize is that of Eleanora Duse, whose family name was Dusian. Near Venice the island of San Lazzaro contains most that has been preserved of the ancient records and literature of Sisvan.

With the wealth that flowed into the country from commerce, the country flourished. But the Franks were not as farsighted as Hethoum. Without their aid Islam could not be broken and they permitted, even aided, an Islamic revival which turned the Mongols away from Christianity to Mohammedanism. As the Mongols turned to Islam Sisvan was doomed. Let us see briefly how the stupidity and pride of the Frankish barons brought this about.

In 1259 Hethoum had aided Hulagu to capture the great city of Aleppo which the Franks had never been able to take. In 1260 he was present also at the fall of

Damascus. The Mongol general Kitbuqua was a Nestorian Christian and a firm friend of Hethoum. Unfortunately, at this juncture the Grand Khan died and Hulagu departed with a large part of his troops to take part in the decision concerning the succession, leaving an army of occupation under Kitbuqua. The Frankish princes, jealous of Hethoum's success, refused the alliance offered by Kitbuqua at Hethoum's suggestion, joined the Egyptians instead, and killed Kitbuqua. As they might have foreseen, the Mameluke sultan Baibar then turned on the Frankish princes and reduced them one after another. Hethoum, disgusted, had retired to Cilicia and Hulagu was busy with dynastic quarrels.

The great danger to Sisvan was now the able Mameluke sultan of Egypt, Baibar the Panther, who hated Hethoum. The Armenian king, acting quickly, helped by the Venetian and Genoese fleets, declared an economic blockade of Egypt (Egypt depended on Cilicia for wood and iron). For its success the aid of either the Franks or Mongols was necessary. But Hulagu had just died and his successor became a Muslim. The Franks made no move. Baibar demanded that the blockade cease and that Hethoum become his vassal. Knowing what was ahead, Hethoum departed hastily to seek aid from the Mongol garrison in Anatolia. While he was gone the Mamelukes descended upon Cilicia. The two young sons of Hethoum put their old uncle Sempad unwisely on the shelf and led the army themselves. Their inexperience resulted in the death of Thoros and the capture of Leon. When Hethoum returned, he found the lowlands ravaged and the capital, Sis, burned. The Egyptians were eventually to leave, but the destruction broke the heart of the king. He ransomed his son Leon, abdicated in his favor, and became a monk. Leon III was obliged to surrender all the fortresses in the Amanus range which assured his contact with his brother-in-law the prince of Antioch, as well as the 10,000 horseshoes to which we have formerly alluded.

The stupidity of the Franks had done its work. In 1268 Baibar took Antioch. Leon was unable to go to its relief. Sobered by these disasters, he was gathering his strength for the inevitable struggle to the death when an earthquake completed the devastation of the country. The Armenian chronicler writes, "Our country was shaken throughout, and not for an hour or two. The shocks were renewed during more than a month. The great fortress of Sarvantikar fell and buried most of its garrison under its ruins. The illustrious abbey of Arkagaghine and several monasteries under its jurisdiction were also destroyed." Whereupon Baibar appeared with his mamelukes and drove off thousands of the population into slavery. But he was unable to reduce the great mountain fortresses of which more than two hundred remained in the hands of the Armenians. It should not be forgotten that Egyptian, Arab, Turkish, and Mongol armies of those days were also feudal armies. They were always glad to raid and rob a defenseless people, but before the prospect of a long and arduous siege of a strong fortress the emirs found many good reasons to depart for home. Only a Genghis or a Timur could weld them into a unified and disciplined army. Saladin was no better obeyed than Richard the Lion Heart and Baibar could count only on his mamelukes. So the Egyptians departed, leaving the Armenians hopeless in the midst of their destruction, knowing the Mamelukes would be back at the first opportunity.

Then Baibar died and there was peace until 1281, when the Mongols again invaded Syria. Leon III joined them with 12,000 horsemen and 20,000 foot soldiers, an eloquent testimony to the recuperative powers of the country. In the ensuing battle, the Armenians held the right wing and completely routed the left wing of the Egyptian army. Unfortunately, the degenerate grandson of Ghenghis, Mangu Timur, who held the center, had little of the martial hardihood of his great ancestor. Wounded slightly, he sounded the retreat when destruction of the mamelukes seemed assured. Although the Egyptian army was so disorganized that it gave no pursuit, the Armenians were obliged to retreat through a hostile country where they were decimated by roving bands of Turcomans and Kurds.

Shortly after this the Persian khan Abagha died and his brother Tekuder, a fanatic Moslim, came to the throne. No longer could the Armenians appeal to the Mongol khans to save the Franks from their folly. The Anatolian Mongols also became Muslims, completing the encirclement of the country. Although Baibar was dead the mamelukes took St. Jean d'Acre in 1290. The evacuation of all the other Frankish fortresses followed and in 1291 Sissonan stood alone before the Moslems, for Byzantium was also on the defensive and the Pope refused his aid.

In the next years the Armenians fought desperately. In 1305 they defeated a large Egyptian army. In 1320 they destroyed another Egyptian invasion. But in 1322 a Mongol army descended from the north. Caught between the Mongols and the Egyptians they could only retire to their fortresses. The invaders left the country a desert. Still they did not succeed in capturing the capitol, Sis, which held out for another half century. The flourishing trade of former times was, of course, gone, but Ayas was not taken until 1338. In 1375 the last king, Leon VI, half French of the Lusignan family, excited the anger of the Armenian nobles by making his favor-

ite, a French courtier named Sahier Doulcart, marshal of Armenia and marrying him to Ripsimé, sister of the former King Constantine III. The indignant Armenians opened the gates of the city, and the king, besieged in the citadel, was obliged to surrender. After some time as a captive in Egypt he was allowed to go to France where he died and is buried with the French kings in the cathedral of St. Denis.

So the kingdom of Sisvan came officially to an end. But some of the fortresses remained in Armenian hands for many years longer. Unfortunately, this period is very obscure. Out of the darkness finally emerges the village of Zeithoun where the Armenians retained their independence until the latter half of the nineteenth century. On the Musa Dagh, in the twentieth century, the Armenians flashed for a moment with the fire of their ancestors.

When one reads of the Armenians of Sissonan, whether in the records of their own constable, Sempad, or in the records of their contemporaries Michel the Syrian, the unknown Crusader, or the Arab chroniclers, one forms the impression that they were no worse and no better than their neighbors. Driven out of their homeland by the treachery and cupidity of the Greeks, they were able in the face of great difficulties to create for themselves a new homeland in Cilicia. There they went through much the same vissicitudes as their neighbors. Their feudal organization prevented them often from presenting a united front at critical times, but no one who reads the history of the Crusades could maintain that the contemporary Franks had any more political sense. The people alternated between heroic defense and inexplicable panic as did their neighbors. Their leaders were sometimes cowardly scoundrels and sometimes brave, farsighted men of genius like King Hethoum I, Sempad the Constable, and St. Nerses of Lamproun.

It was their misfortune to lie on the boundary between East and West. Every move from either direction washed flotsam of the nation from Iceland to Calcutta. Wherever they went, they readily adapted themselves to the customs of the people among whom they were thrown and were soon absorbed. In their own land they created as early as the tenth century an architecture surpassed by none. To its influence on the Crusaders, the great Viennese archaelogist Stryzogowski traces the origin of Gothic architecture. They furnished many of the ablest generals and emperors of the Byzantine empire. One has the impression that in a more favorable location the Armenians might have developed into one of the great peoples of the world. As it has turned out, the history of Sissonan is typical of the tragic frustration of all their endeavors.

THE BLACK EEL

By Arpine Konyalian

Silent
blind of skin
bearing heavy what was told
in smoothness that is denial
of form, categories
of scaly, crusty, protruding
categories . . . she moves
black and blind
with stone-colored madness in her eyes
in her enlarged eyes that carry
the bulge of drowned Mesopotamia
on their pupils, that focus back and forth
that flutter . . .
her strong-muscled jaws have disappeared inward
within themselves, and she hurts
from the thinness of purpose that presses
hard on her lips

the black eel knows
an obscure deaf matter that is
sand of Palmyra against her skin
a hovering of wetness that warps her
carries her through foreign land
slithering
through foreign rock, over
huge water reflecting her form
awestruck and twisting . . .
she is blanked with befitting instinct
that drives her in a release, thrusts her
charm, evoking the demons of the sea
the orange of the sun
the yellow-orange that beguiles her
that she evades, knowing
she is star material
on earth, rock material
striped silk material of aeons
soon to be splintered, dispersed
into a groaning cycle
of black eel
eel unto eel

nothing will stop her
not even her awkward skeletal mind
she has been on her way
for a long time now

Conversation with Gabriel Vahanian

By Gregory Baum

Gabriel Vahanian believes the world has entered upon a new age that in irreversible manner is changing man's own self-understanding and his relationship to nature. Vahanian agrees here with the great number of social philosophers, often summed up under the name of Enlightenment, that through technology, the natural and the social sciences and a new political imagination we have discovered that men and women are in fact the makers of the social world to which they belong, that they have control over nature beyond anything imagined by the ancients, and that by creating the social world, for good or evil, they also determine who they shall be in the future, what their consciousness will be, and what it means to be men and women. The world is unfinished, and we are unfinished; and as we continue to build the world with the tools and power at our disposal, we also construct ourselves, for better or for worse, and in this sense become our own creators.

This Enlightenment perception of the new age, including the ambiguity associated with it, was clearly acknowledged by Vatican Council II (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 55) when it recognized that in growing numbers men and women are discovering that they are the artisans and authors of their own social world, that they are much more dependent on one another than they had thought (and hence less "free"), and at the same time collectively responsible for their own future (and hence much "freer" than they had supposed). Vatican II acknowledges the "emergence of a new humanism, one in which man is defined first of all in terms of his responsibility toward the brothers and toward history."

Recognizing man's new perception of his self-creation, Vahanian proposed, eighteen years ago, a theology beyond the death of God. Since God of the Church's proclamation belonged to the cultural universe of the past, he had to disappear in the modern age. The functions ascribed to God in the past had to be dismissed in the present. There is no lord who ruled the world from above, there is no savior who prepares us for another world, there is no power that takes responsibility for us. There is no provident provider who protects our house and home. Man has become of age. We, the human race, have acquired the technical and political means of destroying ourselves and wiping out the conditions of life on this globe, and for this reason the survival of the human race depends on man's own collective decisions. It is there that God is alive.

Ten years ago the theology of the death of God was often associated with the so-called theory of secularization, according to which the specifically religious sphere of life was losing ground and the secular, this-worldly sphere was taking over, destined eventually to replace the religious one. These theologians asked themselves what the Christian Gospel means in a wholly secular world.

In a recent book, *God and Utopia* (Seabury Press, 1977), Vahanian remains faithful to the Enlightenment position in regard to modernity, but he tries to show that the entry into modernity does not mean the end of religious experience. The religious sphere will not disappear. What is happening, according to Vahanian's analysis, is that the nature of religious experience is changing. The locus of the sacred is no longer the temple, in which the God of the other world occasionally shows himself in this world; nor is the locus the ritual of the temple, through which salvation for another world is extended to the faithful. The locus of the sacred is, rather, human possibility, or—more precisely—man's future, man's destiny, man's unrealized potentialities, broken by sin, yet restorable and unpredictably transformable. God is utopia. Religious experience in modern society has to do with the humanization of man and the transformation of society.

God is the God of the promises. People from whose lives "the sacred" and "need of salvation" have disappeared have new religious experiences that make them tremble and yearn, that summon them to sacrifice and obedience, that make them negate mainstream culture, strengthen them for present-day conflicts, and enable them to speak of transcendence in a new and believable way.

Lest we misunderstand what Vahanian means by utopia, let me specify that this blessed future is by no means the result of an evolution along lines analyzable and understandable by the natural sciences, nor is utopia the result of a dialectics of history whose law is discoverable by social philosophers and through them becomes a guide for political strategy. Vahanian, a remote heir of the Barthian tradition, emphasizes the total otherness of God. Utopia is beyond nature and history. Utopia is man's impossible future, impossible in terms of nature and history, but possible in Jesus Christ.

Vahanian's book is polemical. A French theologian who has lived and reflected in America, Vahanian argues with theological trends on both sides of the Atlantic. He argues first of all against the pessimistic mood characteristic of French Reformed thought at this time, which laments the arrival of the new age. Jacques Ellul clearly recognizes man's entry into a new age: he characterizes it as the age of power and control and uses the word "technique" to stand for man's domination of the world. Yet Ellul understands this new age almost completely in negative terms. The modern world dehumanizes man. We must expect the end of humanism. Vahanian argues that the Church must affirm the new age and make itself sensitive to the new religious experience found among people. Vahanian argues against the trend in the Church to put up frantic defenses against modernity, promote an old-fashioned piety, encourage other-worldly religion, concentrate on the God of salvation and cling to a literalistic understanding of the creeds. Vahanian argues against what he calls "the miserabilism" pervading sections of the French Church which only see a dark future, the decline of Europe and the end of humanism.

These Christians, Vahanian insists, overlook the possibility of the *novum*. The new does take place, for God is utopia. Beyond the possibilities foreseeable by science or by a definable dialectic of history, the new, the unexpected, the transformative event does take place. Human nature and history remain open. The *novum* is revelation, the *novum* is the momentary anticipation of the promised fulfilment which redirects the movement of history, the *novum* is the sparks in history, derived from Christ's resurrection, that illumine man's self-understanding and constitute turning points on man's journey toward his high destiny. The *novum* is the proleptic presence of utopia.

At the same time Vahanian argued against the easy optimism of Western liberals and Marxist socialists who are confident that the forward movement of history leads to man's humanization and the qualitative transformation of society. These liberals and socialists underestimate sin and evil. They are blind to the dreadful things we keep imposing upon one another. They look away from the oppression and the suffering inflicted on people in the name of Western liberalism and Eastern socialism. It is only through special religious experiences, clarified through the Christian message, that hope becomes available—beyond the definable and predictable powers of nature and history. God, the utopia of humankind, the author of the *novum,* is the only foundation for hope in the future.

This theological critique of liberalism and socialism is not meant to console conservative Christians. Vahanian's theology does not offer support for a new conservative movement nor for the solidarity of believers in God against agnostics and atheists in society. Implicit in the eschatological promises, Vahanian argues, is a radical social ethic that undermines traditional societies and remains normative for Christians in all historical circumstances. What is this social ethic? First, all human hierarchies and classes are to be overcome by true and authentic equality; second, each person is destined to become fully subject, to discover his creativity; and third, the Church's primary concern is not the Church but the world. Vahanian undercuts any effort of conservative churchmen to use his critique of liberalism and socialism for political or ecclesiastical purposes.

"Utopia is beyond nature and history. Utopia is man's impossible future, impossible in terms of nature and history, but possible in Jesus Christ."

Political theology in Western Europe and the Americas is a theology on the left. In Latin America the term "socialism" suggests opposition to the present system of dependency and sums up the efforts of the various marginalized groups to constitute a new society. In North America the word "socialism" also suggests an alternative to the irrational rule of corporate capital and

registers people's rational dream of cooperation and democratic participation in the process of the production and distribution of wealth. For persons living in France, confronted by a powerful Communist party and an equally powerful Socialist party, in addition to various small socialist organizations, the word does not have the same symbolic meaning, especially since the large parties, for strategic reasons or opportunism, often defend issues and join causes that are quite alien to socialism. Radical Christians believe that the Gospel has a political thrust and that they should ally themselves with other groups in society that struggle against structured oppression in society; at the same time, some radicals argue that in their society no clear direction is available. They are "in the wilderness," they live in a temporary desert. While they realize that their head cannot be clear nor their heart rightly attuned to God without a practical commitment to liberation, they find no road open and no allies they can join. If I understand Vahanian correctly, this is how he defines his present relationship to politics.

Problematic for political theology is Vahanian's use of the word "technique" or, in its Greek form, *techne*, to characterize the modern age. Ellul uses the word in this way, and by doing so lays the foundation for the rejection of Enlightenment society. Technology, man's domination of nature and society, the rule of scientific reason and this-worldly, pragmatic intentions make life more and more inhuman on all levels of the social order. What is the origin of this theory? In the socialist tradition of the nineteenth century, the principal cause of human alienation was "the gap" between rich and poor; the gaps in society dehumanized the people at the bottom and, in a different manner, they also dehumanized the people at the top. (Socialists followed here Hegel's famous analysis of the master/servant relationship.) The effort of society must therefore be to overcome the gaps. The classical anti-socialist theory of alienation, most brilliantly formulated by Max Weber, was that technology and bureaucracy—"technocracy" in other words—were extending their power into all areas of human life, personal and social, and that they were the primary cause of modern man's dehumanization. It is not the gaps that cause the great misery but the rule of technological reason; and for this reason the socialist effort to overcome the gaps is based on an illusory hope. Since we are involved in industrial society, nothing can stop the march of technocracy. The future will be bleak.

Ellul adopts the Weberian theory, albeit in a vulgar manner, devoid of the subtleties and refinements of the great social thinker. Vahanian uses the same word *techne* to contradict Ellul. We must affirm the modern age, according to Vahanian. We must say yes to *techne;* we must concentrate on the hidden, humanizing possibilities of modern technology and rational social control. But by adopting the notion of *techne* from Ellul, Vahanian overlooks the gaps in society as the primary cause of alienation, and, secondly, he loses very useful sociological tools for criticizing the damage done by modern technical and scientific control and for elaborating social policies that offer greater hope for humanization. Critical sociologists tend to distinguish between *techne* and *praxis. Techne,* derived from the natural sciences and grounded in instrumental reason, seeks to control the world. In technology the planning subject is superior to the object for which plans are devised. If the logic of technology is the exclusive guide in social policy, the planners will come to dominate and eventually dehumanize the people. A society wholly defined by *techne* would indeed spell the end of all humanism. *Praxis,* on the other hand, is derived from the (non-positivistic) social sciences, i.e., from the social sciences that recognize themselves to be specifically distinct from natural science and aim at the transformation and, in fact, the emancipation of society. These social sciences acknowledge the fundamental difference between interhuman relations and man's relation to nature. These social scientists recognize that people cannot be changed by plans made for them at the top; people can only change if they are themselves doing the planning and act together in the reconstruction of society. Institutions and the people who belong to them can be significantly transformed only through active participation, through *praxis.* And since all people must ultimately cooperate in the effort to humanize society, *praxis* aspires to values of universal validity. *Praxis* is not detached, as is *techne,* from substantive rationality, from the joint search for truth and justice.

By contradicting Ellul and yet using his conceptual tools, Vahanian lets him get away with too much. Since social change, in Ellul's logic, is always produced by domination, he does not recognize the possibility of social change created through mutuality and conflict, through properly interhuman relations, through an activity that not only changes the external framework but also transforms consciousness. Ellul's harsh judgment on modern society, alas, only encourages the spread of positivism in science and social policy, because it makes critical social science invisible. Since Vahanian tends to identify social action with domination—and hence for him the liberation of one group implies the oppression of another—he turns too quickly, in the heritage of Barth, to the wholly surprising *novum,* to the unpredictable and gratuitous event, without recognizing the possibility of a rational transformation of society through joint action, thanks to God's gracious presence to reason and human will.

Two Poems

By Mkertich Hacyan

WHEN DREAMING IS PROHIBITED

One day
When dreaming is prohibited to men
When the fools are cured, too
—Doubtless they'll be cured—
One day
When desire is prohibited to men
When the drunks disappear from the world
—Sure they will—

Who is that singing now?
Can you hear it?

"Luminopulent and dark-dawned
Galactopetrine raging
Charigyromitra of many greens purling,
Shaking pyramidal peak red-hearted,
With rosy, shaggy hair,
Island house of secret burning
Icy, mighty, far and flinging,
Consonant Of The Highest Nothing
smelling of warm flesh, chestnut-eyed
Magpie of courtly glory
Unswerving apple-guide
Emotional ship of salvation,
run!
Dance fast and keen!
Yours are these mountains,
Yours are these cities,
Yours are these human hearts,
Yours are these girlish loves,
Yours are these foolish thoughts,
Yours are this sun and those planets,
For you created the world and its souls. Sing!
Dance! Run fast and keen!"
Because

One day
The fools with their dream-visions will doubtless be cured.
One day
The drunks who burn with passion will disappear from the earth.
And when all the fools
are cured
And when all the drunks
are gone
There won't be any poets, either.

Amen.

FALLING

I am the sole witness of your fall
When my cells accept your being within them—
There.
Lightning and lava!
Chromosomes explode!
Muscles collapse,
And heaven is buried beneath your fall,
Burying me as well.

(Translated by James Russell)





By Gladys Yessayan Cretan

If anyone in Bethany Armenian Church went on a diet, it was because of illness, not because of *Vogue* Magazine. Normally they liked their *beoreg* buttery, their *paklava* flaky, and man, woman, and child they appreciated their *lahmajoon* properly herbed, and in large quantity.

When Aram Balakian came home from a day of work back in the 1930's he looked forward to a hearty *mezzeh.* This was not to be confused with a delicate French *hors-d'oeuvre.* Or with the English custom of "tea." He meant food. For before dinner. Sarma, cheese, black olives.

All as it should be.

But little by little it came to the attention of the closely-knit congregation that Aram's pretty wife, Sophie, was dieting.

"God help us all," Shakeh Boyajian said. "She is serious about it."

"And she is only the littlest bit plump," said Mrs. Poladian.

"It is this vain American nonsense," Old Nick said. "But what can you do? Take the bad with the good."

It was strange enough, my mother reported to my minister father, when Sophie said "No thank you," to Mrs. Minasian's nut-filled *kadayif,* after the Ladies Aid meeting. But then she paused, obviously tempted, and asked, "Is this made with butter?"

Mrs. Minasian was offended. What else would a good cook use?

The polite refusals continued. After a Sunday-school picnic, an engagement party, and a church dinner, with no *peda* bread, no *kourabia,* and no *pilaf* (no *pilaf*!), it became downright disconcerting.

"What does she want?" Grandmother Keshishian said. "She has two nice fat children. She should be happy."

"She is happy enough," said Mrs. Pempayan, "but she wants to be modern."

"Modern?" said Mr. Moomjian, "What is this modern? Her husband should forbid her."

Mrs. Pempayan restrained herself from answering.

Mrs. Marsho giggled. Her husband didn't forbid her anything. But of course, she never asked straight out.

"She is beginning to look peaked," said Mrs. Mosekian.

"She will lose her beautiful color," said Dr. Minasian.

Mrs. Minasian looked at him in some surprise.

"I think she's pretty," Rosie said.

"Prettiest one in the whole church," I agreed.

Then why?

Sophie continued to smile and say no, thank you, but she wasn't saying why. For a good reason. She was afraid it would be considered sinful by at least half the congregation. And the inevitable argument would make the other half, as well as Sophie, uncomfortable.

Sophie tried not to tell. But she finally did confide in her dearest friend, Armine Sempatian, who only told Leah Saladian.

The fact was that Sophie wanted desperately to look like Dolores Del Rio. Somewhere in her secret soul Sophie deeply identified with glamorous, silken, sultry Dolores Del Rio. Of the movies. That demi-monde. That questionable world that brought so much guilty pleasure to those who dared risk the wrath of Mr. Moomjian or possibly of God. Whether or not the movies led to per-

dition was an uneasy question in the congregation, discussed by some, repressed by others.

The theology involved was confusing. I tried hard not to think about it on those breathtaking occasions when I was allowed to pay my dime and enter the usually forbidden portals.

It was an enveloping, sensual experience. The rugs were soft and deep, the ushers were more glorious than grand marshals in their uniforms. They showed us to our seats with flair and precision. And then, oh then, the curtains of heavy velvet would be pulled slowly aside to reveal still others of glimmering gauze, and these would gracefully rise to unveil the screen. The screen that would soon take over all reality.

This was the world I thought of on Sundays when we sang "Yield not to temptation/for yielding is sin . . ." The tugs and pulls were tenacious. And now Sophie found herself in the middle of them.

The word about Dolores Del Rio got around, of course. By telephone, by streetcar, and by whisper after the prayer meeting.

"She is beautiful," said Mrs. Mosekian. "I have seen her picture."

"But her soul," said Old Nick. "Is it beautiful before God?"

A stunning question.

"Why not?" said Dickie Boyajian. "I thought God loved us all?"

("Suffer the little children. . ." my father said privately to my mother.)

"But she must be saved!" said Mrs. Moomjian. "Saved by the blood of the lamb."

"Dolores Del Rio?" asked Rosie.

I suppose we had always thought movie stars were exempt, even if the Moomjians might turn out to be right about the rest of us.

Rosie and I found ourselves fascinated by Sophie's choice. I felt that it would be more fun to look like Myrna Loy. Sassy. Rosie opted for Joan Crawford.

Meantime Sophie was getting more and more uncomfortable at being in the middle of a controversy. She hadn't thought anyone would notice, or care, if she took off a few pounds. She certainly never thought it would evolve into an argument encompassing Lucifer, the archangels, and the Fruitvale Theater.

However, the people most concerned seemed unconcerned. Sophie's children were not deprived by her dieting. The boys thought it was strange for anyone to prefer clear soup to *sarma,* but since she still baked two days a week, with plenty of butter, they took their *beoreg* and ran.

Her husband? As always, he was proud of Sophie. She was beautiful. She was cheerful. She was helpful. Every week she put on her navy-blue dress with the white collar and cuffs and went downtown to his furniture store to do all of the bookkeeping. "My Sophie," he said, in fact prophetically, "is a businesswoman. Someday she will own this whole block."

If she wanted to eat a bit of lettuce instead of *lahmajoon,* Aram didn't feel it was anything to fret about. And no one had asked him if he knew the reason.

As it turned out, he didn't.

"Dolores Del Rio?" he said, when Mrs. Pempayan, in her usual way, took matters into her own hands and brought the subject up after church. "Which one is Dolores Del Rio?"

"Which one is she?" Sophie said. "How can you ask that when we saw her only last night?"

"Last night?" said Aram. "In that cowboy picture?"

"No, no," Sophie said. "In the main picture."

"I thought the cowboy picture was the main picture," Aram said. He thought back. "Oh, sure!" he said. "That pretty dark-haired woman."

"She was beautiful," Sophie sighed. She turned to her friend Armine. "She wore a silver dress that shimmered when she moved."

"That's right," Aram said. "It was too bad she was so thin."

Every head turned toward him.

"Yes," Aram said. "Now if she would put on a few pounds she might be almost as pretty as Sophie."

This was lost on no one.

"But she is so beautiful," Sophie said. "With those eyes, and those wonderful cheekbones."

"The cheekbones will be fine with a little more weight to fill in," Aram said. He was trying to be agreeable but there was no question that Dolores Del Rio was skin and bones to Aram. "Of course," he continued, after pondering a moment, "her eyes are nice and dark." He smiled at Sophie. "Like Armenian eyes," he said. It wouldn't have been in character for him to say "like your eyes," publicly, but no one there doubted that they had heard him say it.

Sophie looked at him in surprise, and then in understanding that grew to delight. She smiled back. Finally they each reached out a hand to one of their boys.

We watched the four walk down the street, and we all knew that we had seen a love story. Not on the silver screen, but right there on 36th and Grove."

"She will cook a fine dinner today," Shakeh Boyajian said.

"With plenty of butter," Mrs. Minasian added.

"As God intended," said Mr. Moomjian. "Praise the Lord."

Harry Naltchayan: Photographer of the Famous

By Maggie Boyajian

"The great law of culture: let each become all that he was created capable of being."

—Thomas Carlyle

What started out as a hobby gyrated into an auspicious profession for Harry Naltchayan, staff photographer of *The Washington Post.* "I've always enjoyed taking pictures . . . . In Beirut, when we were young, movies were the only source of entertainment. I use to see at least three movies a week, if not four," Naltchayan confessed.

In his early teens, Naltchayan would free-lance pictures taken at soccer games to local Beirut newspapers. Sports oriented, he and his brother Jean were cyclist champions in the late forties and were hailed as the Naltchayan Brothers by wheel-watchers.

In 1948, the Naltchayan Brothers, devout Catholics, signed up to participate in a grueling round-trip cycling race between Beirut and Tripoli on a Sunday morning. Just before the start of the race, some participants pleaded with the officials to wait for the Naltchayan Brothers, who were expected to arrive shortly from Mass.

Next day, the headlines read: "Naltchayan Brothers Attend Mass: Big Race Held Up." Hailed by the community, they also received a certificate and a medal from the Pope for being a good *"orinag"* (model).

"At their meeting, Golda Meir told him: 'Everybody thought I came to this country to buy tanks and guns, but you made me look like a typical Jewish grandmother.'"

An international break accelerated the Naltchayan photography business. While cycling one early morning, the two brothers noticed a huge French ship grounded on the shore with panic-stricken passengers jumping off. The brothers photographed the whole affair. It was their first scoop and initiated their international career. *Radar, Paris Match, Life, Time,* and *Newsweek* bought their "initial" on-the-scene pictures. As an example of their ensuing recognition, King Hussein of Jordan personally requested them to cover his wedding and sent a chartered plane for them and their cameras.



In 1958, Harry Naltchayan left Beirut and came to the United States to further his career. Making Washington, D.C. his new home, he had no problem "breaking in" as a photographer, aided by a speaking fluency in five languages: Armenian, English, French, Arabic,



Naltchavan with Sophia Loren



Vivian Hovsepian with a message, part of the story of "The Proud Armenians" in *The National Geographic* a few years ago.

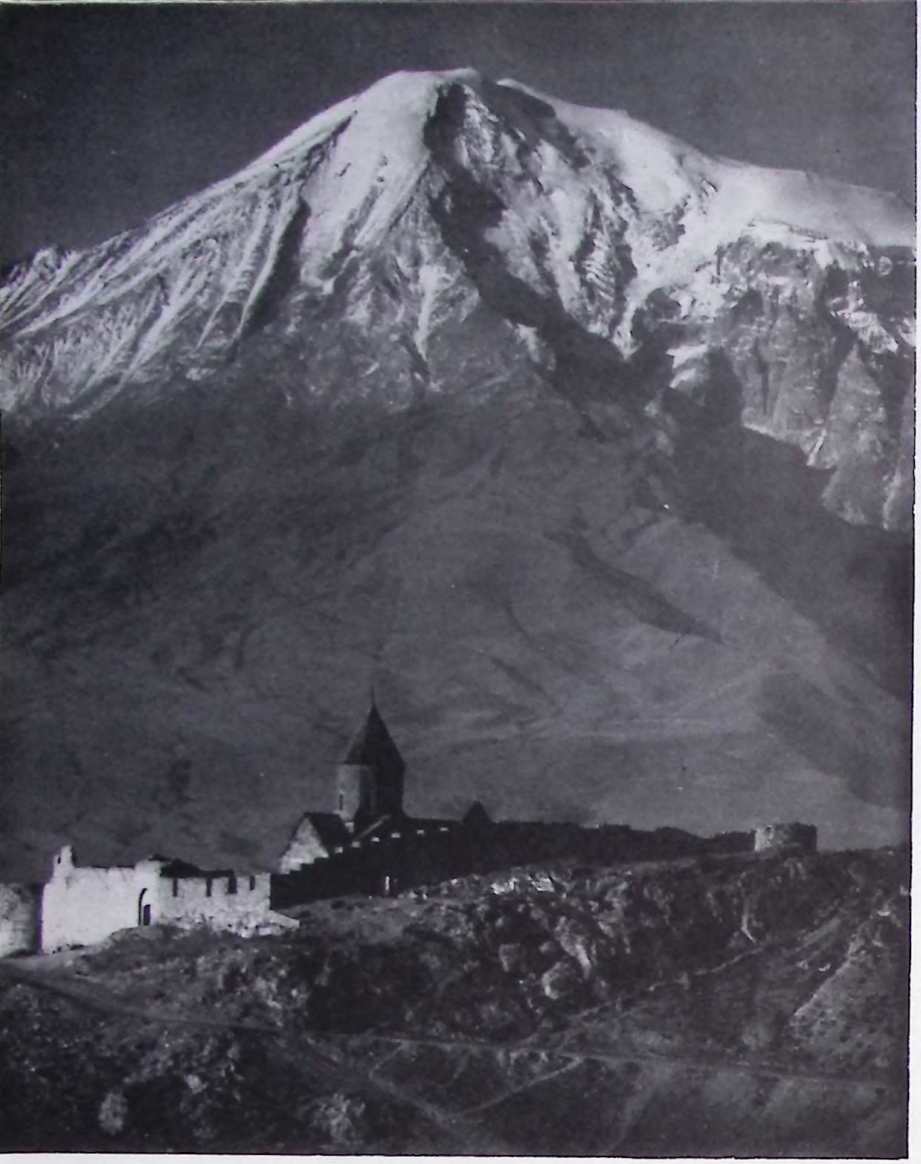


Sadat, Carter, and Begin photographed by Harry.

Turkish. When Naltchayan visited *The Washington Post* with his portfolio, it so impressed its editor, Alfred Friendly, that he was offered a temporary position.

Naltchayan's first assignments at the *Post* were weather pictures, but he soon had an opportunity to demonstrate his photographic expertise in a unique fashion. Asked to cover union workers who had signed a contract to return to work on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, he followed up a standard picture with a silhouette which made the front page. A second coup which also warranted the front page was a general view of the crowd greeting Khruschev on his visit to the United States. Thoroughly convinced of Naltchayan's talents, the editor now offered him a permanent position—which he has held for over twenty years as a staff member—with White House coverage plus a diplomatic "international beat."

Over the years, Naltchayan has been responsible for many front-page shots. They include pictures of Golda Meir when she was in the United States during the Nixon administration and after her death. At their



Mount Ararat and Khor Virab, part of the *Geographic* article.



An unexploded bomb at the Mekhitarist School in Beirut, held by an Armenian student.

meeting Golda Meir told him: "Everybody thought I came to this country to buy tanks and guns, but you made me look like a typical Jewish grandmother." When Bernstein was covering the Watergate scandal, Naltchayan was there to capture the action with his camera. He thrives on the eventfulness and the beat at the United States capital.

In the summer of 1978, shortly after the article on Armenians appeared in *The National Geographic,* Naltchayan covered an interview with Joseph Kennedy, son of the late Robert Kennedy. After they were introduced, Kennedy asked if he were Armenian. "Yes I am," Naltchayan confirmed. "You're from Ararat country," Kennedy exclaimed. "Hey, you'd better read 'The Proud Armenians' in the *Geographic.* I read it recently," he advised with enthusiasm. "I know," replied the proud Armenian. "I took some of the pictures that appeared in that article."

Naltchayan's remarkable success as an international photographer can be attributed to a highly developed

"You're from Ararat country," Kennedy exclaimed."

insight, artistic approach, quickness in taking the initiative, and the knack of catching subjects in their natural environment. His ease in becoming acquainted with people he photographs and a refreshing sense of humor also serve him in good stead.



THE KHATCHKAR

By Vahan Gregory

Sarko's survival was considered a miracle even by those of the countryside accustomed to prodigious feats of self-healing. A scimitar stroke had sheared off the entire lower portion of his face, from the bridge of the nose down to the base of his jaw. In May, 1909, he had been traveling with a caravan of seventy-five pastors, delegates, and alternates from the city of Sis in western Armenia to a convention in Adana. They had stopped in a Turkish village called Sy Gechid, and were welcomed by the Turkish mayor with assurances of their safety The next morning, the entire caravan was butchered by gangs of Turks, Kurds, and Circassians. Only Sarko had survived. Left for dead, he had waited in terror, in and out of consciousness, until darkness, and had then crawled off into the mountains.

He had been assumed dead along with all the other leaders and educators of Sis in the massacre of Sy Gechid.

Several months later, when he appeared for the first time, in Sis, he was wearing a flaxen hood. It covered his head and came down to his shoulders. Only his eyes were visible, eyes of baffling depth, of centuries startled into essence, the radiance of a spirit peering from within the hood that communicated a shock of beneficence. The people regarded him with awe.

Sarko, in the years that followed, was closely accompanied by his friend Pano, a large gray and black dog of bushy tail and erect ears. He was known to appear occasionally in the coffeehouses of the various villages he visited along his journey. Coffee and paklava would be placed before him, although it was accepted that Sarko would never eat or drink in public.

Sarko would enjoy the company and the conversation around him, and Pano would wander from table to table acknowledging the good day. With each piece of chocolate or pastry given him he would do a little half turn of a jump for joy which enchanted everyone. At these moments certain glances would flash to Sarko to watch his eyes smile. Some would lovingly cup Pano's testicles for an estimate of their power and, roaring in appreciation of such candid manhood, pantomime the act of sprinkling the essence of this masculine innocence into their coffees, and marveling at the sweetness it imparted with smacking of lips and incredulous nods of the head.

Whenever Sarko wished to contribute to the sociality —and his friends treasured these occasional occurrences —Sarko's hands would go under his hood, and a strange, poignant, elegiac music would well forth, sounds made with his hands and fingers and mutilated throat, that threaded the complex identities within the room into a gorgeous mosaic that sang of the centuries of the Armenian spirit, songs of hope as poignant as his courage, and each man felt the magic of his heritage of twenty-five centuries and went from there heroic in his stature, awed once again with the beauty beating in his breast.

In late May of 1909 a black and gray puppy of about ten weeks had been wandering about a hillside in a mountain near the city of Sis, fifty miles northeast of Adana. The puppy was alone and had not seen its mother and siblings in nearly three hours. It had just taken a long drink of water from the brook nearby. The puppy was enchanted with the world and its rocks, trees, bushes, and its good smells. The puppy hovered an inch above a small tarantula spider as it strode along oblivious to the puppy's looming curiosity. When the puppy knocked it upside down with a pat of its paw, the tarantula called upon the riches of its inner resources, strenuously attempted to get belly back to ground, and finally succeeded under the fascinated gaze of the pup. Slowly the tarantula rushed from the frightful scene.

A soaring brown and gray hawk spotted the puppy as it emerged from the trees onto the meadow. The puppy paused among a small bunch of poppies and sniffed among the bulbs. The hawk cruised and studied and calculated. Dropping twenty feet, the hawk determined that the pup was not of sufficient maturity to effect a defense or to pose a threat if captured. The hawk climbed and circled about a hundred feet above and well off to the side so its shadow might not interfere with the pup's slow progress toward a clearing.

The puppy paused beneath a tangerine tree and curiously sampled the scents above, spying a nearby tangerine. He reached for it and struck his nose on something sharp. The pup was amused, and personified the tangerine with challenge. The puppy barked at the tangerine and dropped to its elbows, tail high in the air and wagging.

The hawk dropped several feet and extended its radius, which was centered about a hundred and fifty feet to the north, so it might take a closer look at the

new companion the puppy seemed to have found under the tree.

But there was absolutely nothing there!

The hawk regained altitude, and spent watch.

The puppy slowly attacked the tangerine from another direction, and with its nose tilted at a different angle. The tangerine came loose after a tug. The puppy flung it up into the air and pounced upon it. The tangerine scurried away from under the paws of the puppy, and the pup chased it out from under the tree.

"He had been assumed dead along with all the other leaders and educators of Sis in the massacre of Sy Gechid. Several months later, when he appeared for the first time, in Sis, he was wearing a flaxen hood."

The puppy chucked the tangerine high into the air and, unaware of where it had gone, listened for it to reappear.

The hawk was dropping, ready in an instant to release its dive.

The tangerine landed somewhere without a sound. The puppy began looking beneath itself.

The hawk began its terrific descent.

A sudden anxious barking sound commanded the pup's attention and it scattered toward the source.

The hawk suddenly spied the faint arm movements of the man sitting on the ground near the puppy, leaning against a rock, and instantly veered off and abandoned its trajectory.

A squirrel chewing on a walnut under a nearby bush froze in terror as a shadow in the form of a cross hurtled by, and it cocked an ear to the mutterings of an angry hawk disappearing over the hilltop. Then it reacted with shock and dismay as the puppy ran injudiciously in the very direction of the thing that had moved and made the strange noise.

The puppy tripped over Sarko's leg and spilled belly-up onto his lap. The puppy gazed into Sarko's eyes. The little tail wagged. In a moment, the puppy was asleep.

This was the first creature to gaze upon him since his nose, mouth, and jaw had been sheared off by a sword in Sy Gechid two weeks before.

He had been sitting in that place beside the brook for six days. He had had no nourishment in that time, and the few drops of water he had taken had been a torture. During the massacre he had covered his wound with a cake of mud mixed with his own blood just before he had lost consciousness. And he had held it on as later, after dark, he escaped the scene of the horror.

And now most of the mud still remained.

Something had aroused his attention, had awakened him. It seemed something had imperatively touched his shoulder. He had seen the pup and the hawk, and had hoped he had enough spirit left to help the puppy. By the time the puppy was asleep in Sarko's lap, he had become aware that the pain and delirium had been gradually subsiding. The probability that he would live was appalling.

But there was a ripe tangerine just beside him on the ground, within reach of his hand.

Sarko was awakened by the puppy's little soprano bark. He realized it was already a new day, and the puppy had remained with him all that time. Sharing that instant was the memory of what had happened to him and the pain and the horror rushed over him again. But added was the knowledge that he was going to survive.

Even though Sultan Hamid had been overthrown, the Young Turks were the same as the old Turks. They had killed his father in 1895, his mother in 1903. Now his friends and teaching colleagues, all of them, were gone. They had taken his life, and left him a horror.

Never again would he ever love a woman. The beautiful human ecstasy gone, now, forever. Never to kiss again, never again to devour, to adore, never again to suck on the soul of a beautiful woman, never again to touch in longing, to be longed for in passion. To be among people and never speak again. His face never to be seen again, gone, his own face, gone!

Then he saw the two Turks staring at him. Sarko's instant terror was dispelled as the older sent the younger to bring milk. The man came closer and asked, "Sy Gechid?"

Sarko could barely nod.

The younger man returned with milk and a small copper bowl. With his hatchet he hammered a narrow pouring spout into the lip of the bowl so he could direct a trickle of milk into the muddy and bloodied aperture of Sarko's throat. The puppy also received his share from the bowl.

Every morning for the next several weeks the men appeared with milk, millet, and some fruits, until Sarko was able to move about in search of food himself, for himself and the puppy, who had become known in Sarko's mind as Pano.

Soon, with his rose-petal puppy tongue and beautiful eyes, Pano licked Sarko's wound clean, and over the weeks of gentle lapping caresses, the wound had brightened to a warm, healthy pink.

Sarko found in Pano an extraordinary spirit, so perfect as he grew that he was also a perfect physical beauty.

Every detail was as beautiful as could be, even to the long, darling hairs at the tip of his little button penis, with a precious drop of water still aglobe there at the tip.

Pano was all joy. He appeared to learn with sheer intuition whatever Sarko wanted him to know. It seemed to require only a forming of the thought in Sarko's mind, and Pano would perceive it. A finger snap acquired a meaning, a hand clap another, as did a wave of the hand, a sound from the ravaged throat. The most joyous sound in the new world was the slapping of Sarko's belly, for it meant time to eat. Then the dance of wildest joy began, with jumps and turns and kisses and wags and smiles and barks. Never had a few grains of millet in milk or a shared peach received such fervent gratitude for their being. Sarko came to suspect that Pano was, in reality, an angel, come down to instruct him on the philosophy of love, for Pano was the perfect loving creature. Finally one day Sarko asked of God: "Is Pano an angel?"

The answer seemed to return, "Pano is a dog."

"Pano is an angel," Sarko said.

"Pano is a dog," came the reply.

In tears, Sarko insisted, "Pano is an angel."

Came the reply, "Pano is an angel."

For all of his old friends from youth who had been on the caravan massacred at Sy Gechid, for Zaven, for Melancthon, for Anoush, for Mariam, for Vahe, for Taleen, it was for *them* that Sarko slowly became aware that he was to become the living prayer of his people. At last he knew he would go back to them. He would go back to all the villages and towns of his people and serve.

He would apprentice himself to love.

He would learn of love as he had never thought to understand it before, as he never would have been capable of understanding it in the past. He would study its warm heart, keep vigil at its magic, adore its wonder. He would turn over possibilities, spy out its nuggets, he would section it like a grapefruit, peel off its tough skin and savor the passionate sweetness of its throbbing moist cells. He would experience love as few men had ever conceived of love. He would receive none, he would want none. He would expect none, because he was a horror. But he would give. He would absorb all the vivacious treasures that his quivering imagination could capture.

He would learn all that it meant to love.

And more.

He would learn all that it *could* mean.

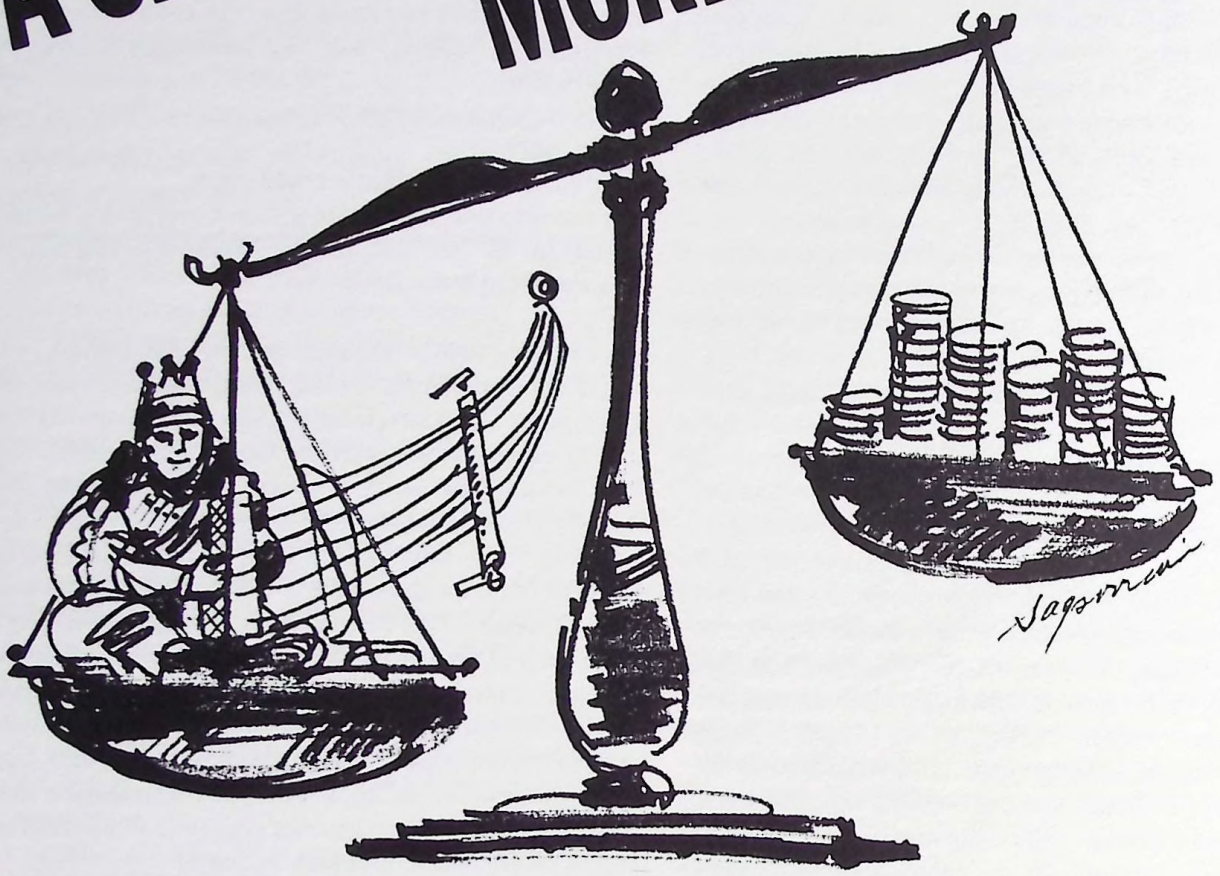
It was his opportunity. He had lost everything he had wanted for his life, but now he sensed that life before the wound had been trivial.

He had grasp of a power that he could share. He would learn to bless with the eternity of his eyes. He would drink like pomegranate honey all the sorrows and joys of Armenia wherever he found them. And with them he and Pano would converse with the human soul in all the villages and towns of his land.

During these last months he had conceived in his mind the hood he must wear to cover his horror if ever reason appeared for him to return. He began spinning a rough yarn of flax by hand as Pano watched with huge, fascinated eyes. Soon Sarko was fashioning his hood in the grandest happiness he had ever known, in the greatest excitement he had ever felt, in richer eagerness than he had ever longed for, in more joyous anticipation than he had ever dreamed, in warmer gratitude than ever had thrilled his enchanted and singing heart.



A CRAFT IS WORTH MORE THAN GOLD



By James Opie

Once upon a time in ancient Armenia lived a young king, who was known widely for his fairness, his hard work, and his kindness. He worked hard at being king, but still wondered what people thought about him, how his subjects liked the way he performed his kingly duties. Now most kings would only want to know the good things that people thought. But this king was different. He wished to know the true thoughts of people, the good and the bad, so that he could see mistakes and try to correct them.

Twice a year he would dress in the clothes of a poor man and go to some distant village for a few days or a week and listen to what people said about him. Since no one guessed that he was king, they felt free to answer all of his questions.

One day when he was in a certain village, dressed in the clothes of a poor man, he happened to see a young woman who struck his heart immediately by her beauty, her soft manners, and her modesty. Dressed as he was he could do and say nothing, but as soon as he returned to the capital city he summoned his vizier (his most important adviser) and told him of what had happened. "Go with some courtiers to her village," the king said. "Find her father and tell him that I ask the hand of his daughter in marriage, for I have seen her and I know that she is a woman of the highest quality."

The vizier did as he was told. He found the village, and the home of the girl, and her father, and gave him the message. The father spoke with the mother and the mother spoke with her daughter, and then they all spoke together. The girl asked the vizier, "What is the king's craft?"

"What do you mean, his craft?" the vizier said.

"What can he make with his hands, well enough so that he can always earn his bread that way?"

The mother interrupted. "But what are you saying, girl? The king's craft is his kingship. He is the king; what need does he have of any other skill?"

"No," the girl said. "The man I marry must have a craft. Now he is the king, but what if, in five years, he is king no longer? Then how do we eat? To me, a craft is worth more than gold."

The parents tried to reason with her about this wonderful opportunity which could not come again. But

"Finally the carpet was finished. It was clipped, dusted, and washed, and everyone who saw it agreed. This, truly, was a masterpiece fit for a king!"

they had argued with her before and they knew it was useless. Finally the father told the vizier, "You see, there is nothing we can do."

So the vizier returned to the capital and told the king of all that was said. This was a blow to the king's feelings, and he nearly said, "Then forget her!" But he thought and pondered and finally decided that if she was this true to herself and knew what she wanted she must be worth his effort. He would learn a craft, not just well enough to make a living, but he would aim to be the very best! And the craft that he chose to learn was carpetmaking.

He went to the best carpetmaker in the district, and hired him to be his teacher. He learned how the wool was spun, how the yarn was dyed, and how the loom was made. He studied the old designs that were passed down for many generations, not just of his own country, but of other countries in the East where carpets are made. And he designed and began to weave a carpet of his own. When it was done, it did not lay quite flat. So he wove another. When it was done, the colors did not seem just right. He wove a third, and when it was done, he and everyone else who saw it thought that it was not only good, but very good.

So he sent it as a gift to the girl, with the message that he had learned a craft and again asked for her hand in marriage. The girl saw the carpet and was very happy.

The wedding took place soon after in the capital city. The celebration lasted for seven days and seven nights, and the king and his queen then entered into a happy and harmonious married life.

Time passed. Again the king wanted to go out into the village to hear what people there were thinking. So he explained to his wife his old habit of dressing in the clothes of a poor man to learn what the people really thought. She did not want to see him go, even for a few days, but if this was his work, then she wanted to help him in every way. So she prepared some food, and soon the king was off, dressed as a beggar.

He went to the most distant part of his kingdom where he had never been before and began talking with people, asking them questions about the king and his representatives, just as he had done before.

But something unfortunate happened. Some slave traders captured the king and held him prisoner, and they looked for someone who would buy him for his labor. The king at first shouted and struggled. "You don't know what you're doing! I'm the king! Release me!"

But the men who had captured him only laughed. "Oh yes, you're the king," they said. "Look at your clothes. King indeed!"

Soon they sold him to a rich man, who held him prisoner in his basement. The rich man asked him what work he could do best, and the king answered, "Carpetmaking."

"Then that is what you shall do for me," his owner said, "and if you want to eat, then do your best and nothing else."

The king began to weave every day. All day he wove, and as he wove he thought about how he might escape. He missed his wife. He missed the capital city and his work as king. But he had one pleasure and that was his carpet-weaving. Every day he did his very best, not just because of what the rich man had said to him, but because his only enjoyment was to do his work well.

The carpets the king made were recognized by everyone who saw them as the best weaving they had ever seen in the district. Soon many people wanted one. It was not long before the wife of the rich man had an idea that she presented to her husband.

"This weaver of ours is the best in the district and perhaps the best in the whole country. Why don't we have him make a carpet as a gift for the king? In this way we can gain great favor."

Her husband liked this idea very much, and he went to the weaver and commanded him, "You shall make a carpet as a gift for the king, and it shall be the best you've ever done. And it shall fit the king's bedroom exactly and be neither too wide nor too long, even by the breadth of a hair. If you fail, off with your head!"

The king worked and worked all day, every day, for months. And into one of the borders of this special car-

pet he wove a coded message that the queen would be sure to notice. It said that the weaver was her husband, the king, who was being held prisoner.

Finally the carpet was finished. It was clipped, dusted, and washed, and everyone who saw it agreed. This, truly, was a masterpiece fit for a king!

The rich man loaded the carpet on a camel and set off for the capital city. When he arrived at the palace, a courtier told him that the king was not there, but the queen could greet him. She came outside and asked him his business.

"I have come with a gift for the king," he said. "It's the finest carpet we have ever seen. But I'm sorry to learn he is not here just now. Perhaps you could take it for him and tell the king my name, and the name of the village where I live. But first, may we take it into the king's room to see if it fits?"

And so they took it into the king's room, and, indeed, it did fit and was neither too wide nor too long even by the breadth of a hair. The queen was very pleased. She looked at the carpet and walked around it, enjoying the colors, the unusual design, and then her eyes caught something unusual in one border. And she read the coded message and immediately was very happy. But, of course, she did not show it.

"And who was the good man who wove this carpet?" she asked. "Or was it woven by a woman?"

"No," the rich man said. "It was woven by a man, an employee of mine, the best carpet weaver in the whole kingdom."

"Yes. He must be the best," the queen said. "And I would like to meet this man, to thank him for his work."

This was not what the rich man expected. But what was he to do? The queen had asked, and now he must obey. So he went back to his home village and told the weaver, "The queen would like to meet you. Perhaps the king will be there too. Mark my words, if you make a mistake with them, say a word about being my prisoner, it will be your life."

So, he took the weaver to the *hammam*, or bath, and got him shaved and cleaned, bought him some new clothes, and they set out together for the capital city with several of the rich man's employees as guards. On the way, the rich man told his weaver how he should behave in front of the king and queen, when to bow, that he should call them "Your highness," and so forth.

At last they approached the palace and were announced. The queen came outside, and at once she and the king embraced and were very happy. But the rich man had a funny feeling in his stomach. He wanted to run but knew he could not.

The king turned to him and said, "So now you understand how I could know the size of my own room. You threatened me with death if I failed, but I will not take your life for doing so. But all of your wealth, your land, jewels, and even the carpets which I have woven shall be distributed among the poor."

And that is exactly what they did. And three apples fell from Heaven. One for the storyteller. One for he or she who listened to it. And one for the best carpet weaver in the world.

—AFTERWORD:

There are many excellent Armenian stories and tales, though published collections of them are few and do not stay in print for long. I found "A Craft Is Worth More Than Gold" in a collection published in England entitled *Three Apples Fell From Heaven,* edited by Mischa Kudian (London: Rupert Hart Davis, 1969). I bought my copy from a remainder table in a Berkeley bookstore for $1.00, evidence that it did not stay in print for very long.

Translations of sixteen stories gathered by I. Khatchatrianz appeared in 1946 under the title *Armenian Folk Tales* (Philadelphia: Colonial House). This volume contains "The Talking Fish," "Nazar the Brave," and "The Fox Without a Tail," all stories that have appeared in other collections, but "A Craft Is Worth More Than Gold" was not included, nor did it appear in *100 Armenian Tales,* edited by Susie Hoogasian-Villa (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966).

Virginia A. Tashjian has edited two collections illustrated by Nonny Hogrogian: *Once There Was and Was Not* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1966), and *Three Apples Fell From Heaven* (Little, Brown and Company, 1971). Both are now out of print, but may be found in some bookstores.

In print are three of Nonny Hogrogian's adaptations of Armenian folk tales: *One Fine Day* New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1971), *Rooster Brother* (Macmillan, 1974), and *The Contest* (New York: Greenwillow Books, 1976). *One Fine Day* won the Caldecott Medal in 1972 and *The Contest* was selected as a Caldecott Honor Book in 1976.

Nonny Hogrogian and her husband, David Kherdian, are presently working on a collection of Armenian stories, thereby giving those of us who enjoy this rich vein of folklore something to which we can look forward.

James Opie



Halldor Petursson's impression of Pilikian. Petursson was Iceland's greatest painter of this century and a great caricaturist. Pilikian was his last subject and this specific portrait is thought to be his last work before his death.

JAPANESE HAIKUS OF ALL SEASONS ON A CHINESE THEME

o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o

By Hovhanness I. Pilikian

SPRING HAIKU

Chailman Hua roves Winstonu Chulchir
Hea thinksu Malgalet Tchatchel isu Mista Tchultchir

Tchailman Huamao's thoughtsu aru bely queel

SUMMER HAIKU

Chailman Hua roves anythingu thatched rike Engrish Cottage
Hea thinksu missu Tchatchel isu a thatchedo thingu.

AUTUMN HAIKU

Chailman Hua rikes Mao's shoeso
Hea wantsu toa step inu themo.
He cun't. The shoeso aru bely ordu.
But chailman Hua stirr tlies haldu.

WINTER HAIKU

Missu Tchuchill hatesu Lussia
Missu Tchachell hatesu Chineso

Chailman Hua hatesu theo Lussians
Ah so missu Chuchel roves chailman Hua

But chailman Hua wantsu waru withu Lussia
And sexu withu Winston Tchulchir
Who's deadu in hisu glave
But rives on inu chilman Hua's mindu.

If music be "the brandy of the damned," as Shaw insists, then there exists a persuasive piper to lead one down the primrose path. But for followers of Shakespeare who contend that "music be the food of love," then there also exists the most provocative of troubadours.

In pianist Avo Uvezian, the piper and troubadour are one.

An Armenian-Lebanese jazz musician?

The mind's eye conjures up images of vivid rugs, leonine faces, lively folk music—and *shish kabob.* Yet the rhythms of Avo *are* those of contemporary jazz at its best.

POET OF THE PIANO

By Rose-Marie Glover



Avo Uvezian at the piano (photo by Rose-Marie Glover).

A handsome, instantly appealing pianist of great versatility, Avo Uvezian has a Middle Eastern background that contributes much to his ability to convert classical Armenian themes into jazz rhythms—without losing any of the melodic lines. The result is refreshing, a resurrecting of folk music too often forgotten.

According to Avo, he began playing the piano before he could walk. His talent has been carefully cultivated but also inherited from musically talented parents. The late Hagop Uvezian was a well-established musician in Turkish music circles. He composed many songs founded on themes from Armenian folk tunes and ancient church music. Mr. Uvezian taught at the American University in Beirut, Lebanon, where Avo was born, and he also served as musical consultant to the Lebanese government. Avo's mother was a gifted singer.

With such a head start, it's no wonder that at the age of sixteen—when many young boys are discovering the opposite sex—Avo formed a quintet of Armenian jazz musicians, which successfully toured the Middle East, even performing in the fabled city of Baghdad.

After graduating from the French and American University in Beirut, Avo went to Teheran and eventually became pianist for the Shah. But his musical education didn't end there.

Following the Second World War, he came to the States and worked toward his objectives while studying at the Julliard School of Music. At Julliard, his immense talent amazed his teachers, including famed jazz pianist Teddy Wilson.

Uvezian's keyboard wizardry continued to mesmerize people during his hitch in the army, where he succeeded Burt Bacharach as pianist for the First Army Band. This led to concerts and television appearances.

His determination to continue his musical career was uppermost in Avo's mind following his discharge and it is at this point that his list of credits begin. Armenian and American audiences have been entertained during his concert tours up and down the East Coast. These were followed by performances with the Westchester (N.Y.) Civic Opera Group and Town Hall in New York City. He has also entertained guests at the Sea Pines Plantation at Hilton Head Island in South Carolina.

For a while Avo wrote and accompanied fellow-Armenian and French singing star Charles Aznavour. His accomplishments include a number of compositions including "Windowpane" and "Theme for Palmas del Mar." Another Uvezian composition was recently used for a television program in Berlin, Germany.

Avo states implicitly that his favorite pastime is improvising—sometimes on old and new melodies—and writing thematic songs. (He's working on the score for an off-Broadway play.) He spends hours at the keyboard creating new levels of musical progressions; Avo's sounds are an innovation in modern music. He combines Mideastern and contemporary melodies with jazz improvisations and the result is the creation of Afro-Arab—or as the artist prefers to call it, "Afroriental," a totally different and unusual sound.

When Avo isn't creating at the keyboard, he's doing it in the kitchen. He states that cooking is a hobby and this, too, seems to run in the family. His sister, Sonia Uvezian, is a noted author of cookbooks on Armenian and Russian cooking.

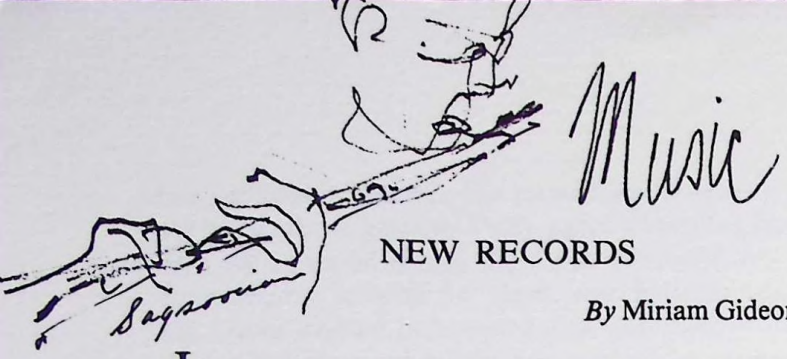
And that's not all. Many people collect "things." Avo collects languages. He speaks eight—fluently. He says that "Armenian, Arabic, and Turkish were spoken at home." Persian and German he acquired during travels throughout the Mideast and Europe. He taught himself English, although his father didn't believe that Avo would ever have any use for it. French came easily while he lived in France, and Spanish when he moved to Puerto Rico.

Avo has a personal philosophy, and that is that every person has been given the ability to do some *one* thing especially well and that it's the responsibility of "every entity to discover his role in the scheme of things and perform it." He goes on, "the alternative of letting a gift lie dormant is to deteriorate progressively as an individual." To Avo, the moment of truth in life comes when a person recognizes his ultimate role, then goes about it without deviation. He relates that people who listen to his music confide that "it makes them feel good." A sensitive man, Avo feels that if this is so, then there is some truth in the theory that music is soothing to the mind and he plans to study the effects of music on the mentally and emotionally disturbed. He recognizes *his* role and has taken it a step farther.

He is an off-beat personality and guests are enchanted nightly at the luxurious Mediterranean-style resort of Palmas del Mar in Puerto Rico. Here, Avo reigns in the elegant Galeria Room, an intimate *boite*. His uncanny—and disconcerting—ability to sense what people want to hear and to play to the mood of the crowd, coupled with his exciting piano style, has made him the resort's most popular attraction.

To listen to Avo convert the folk themes of his Near Eastern homeland into patterns of modern jazz, one realizes that he is motivated by more than the thrills of success.

John Milton said it better than can I: "Sweet compulsion doth in music lie."



NEW RECORDS

By Miriam Gideon

If it were possible for music to sound better than it is, a performer with the virtuosity and insight of Sahan Arzruni could make it happen. With the *Anthology of Armenian Piano Music, Vol. II, Compositions of the Diaspora,* most of the works that appear on the recording deserve the extraordinary performance they receive. Mr. Arzruni's pianism is such that his identification with each piece is complete, and each is convincing in its own right.

There is a wide range of styles, from the stark monophony of Hovhaness, the bare heterophony of Arzruni, the dissonant-tinged folk style of Terzian, the romanticism of Bartevian, the Lisztian overtones of Karamanuk, the impressionistic colors of Yardumian, to the mild Bergian suggestions in the twelve-tone music of Kalajian.

Mr. Arzruni plays all these works with a control and an abandon which are remarkable. While many of the pieces are extremely demanding pianistically, others are fairly simple, though the seeming "simplicities" of Hovhaness must be very difficult to bring off, with their sharp percussive effects and the incredibly rapid repeated notes, which transform the sound of the piano into that of an oud, tumbeg, or kanoon. And Mr. Arzruni is more than equal to the really fearful virtuosity required in the Karamanuk piece, as well as to the nuances of passion, pathos, and playfulness in the others.

The *Armenian Dance No. 2* of Loris Tjeknavorian, which opens the record, has a delicate, modally conceived melody, with an intriguing rhythmic pattern in the ostinato-like accompaniment. The *Prelude* of Koharik Gazarossian entitled "Oh Lass, your Ma is dead" sounds the depths of grief with its low open chords and a modal melody weaving mournfully above and then below its doleful setting. In the *Berceuse* of Ara Bartevian there is another ostinato-like accompaniment supporting a gentle drifting melody, with romantic harmony and modulations. It is enchanting, but does not in any way suggest the composer's Armenian origin.

One of the very appealing works in the varied assortment which the record has to offer is the *Suite for Children* by Grant Beglarian — a series of short, elegantly dissonant, sparse, mostly two-voiced evocations of moods of childhood; cross-accents and occasional passages of perpetual motion provide contrast and excitement. *Two Preludes* by Richard Yardumian are built on chordal formations—"quadrads"—which are impositions of three intervals of a third. These formations intersect and create an airiness which suggests, along with their titles, "Wind" and "Sky," an impressionistic world of light and shadow. Diatonic and whole-tone structures contribute to this atmosphere.

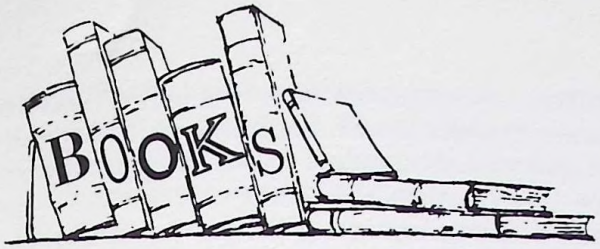
With the four pieces by Alan Hovhaness, the best known and most widely performed of the composers on this disc — *Mystic Flute, Vanadour, Farewell to the Mountain,* and *Achtamar* — we come to a set of outstanding original and striking works, in which Arabic and Indian rhythmic patterns are used, as well as melodic makamas and ragas. The sheer virtuosity necessary to convey the sound of native instruments — a dry, strained timbre, and a lightning-like rapidity of staccato strokes — makes this group the most representative of native origins on the record.

The selections by Sahan Arzruni are *Invocation,* a noble and affecting memorial tribute to pianist Maro Ajemian in the style of a choral prelude, based on the Lord's Prayer in Ekmalian's Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church; *Mentations,* three pieces, terse and beautifully crafted, structured on Armenian melodic formulae, using rhythmic patterns found in Middle Eastern music; and *Heterophonic Suite,* which vies with the Hovhaness pieces for originality.

Berge Kalajian is represented by *Song,* a twelve-tone piece, whose row is clearly stated at the outset. After that, both melody and harmonic treatment become very expressive in a somewhat Bergian manner, and offer decided contrast to the other works on the record. *Admiration,* by Sirvart Karamanuk, is a brilliant pianistic work, replete with rapid octaves and a broad Lisztian romanticism. In the *Andantino* of Boghos Gelalian we find a romantic waltzlike work, with many chromatic turns and manipulations of the interval of a second, creating a restlessness which interestingly opposes the underlying steady triple beat.

The last composer on the disc, Alicia Terzian, is represented by three most engaging pieces: *Juegos para Diana,* in which a disarmingly naive Latin-American folklike melody undergoes transformations of tempo, texture, harmony, and atmosphere; *Danza Criolla,* with a seductive melody, irregular grouping of accents, and a lush harmonization; and finally *Toccata,* where the relentless succession of rapid notes in varying patterns creates avalanches of sound and arouses further admiration for the spectacular playing of the recording artist.

Production of the record has been made possible by a grant from the AGBU Alex Manoogian Cultural Fund. Its format is enhanced by the cover design by Adrina Zanazanian — a stylized peacock from a ninth-century manuscript.



TRANSFORMATIONS OF LANDSCAPE

By Erika Mumford

FATHER FISHEYE by Peter Balakian. New York: The Sheep Meadow Press (145 Central Park West), 1979. 89 pages. $9.95 (cloth); $4.95 (paper).

With these poems we are plunged into a world of metamorphosis, where the poet's energy becomes transformed into the energies of river, wind, and fish. His perceiving eye becomes the eye of the thing perceived:

> The retina
> finds the sharp rock,
> the sea sends the sun
> back through a choroid
> and loses all current.
>
> ("Approaching the Summer Solstice")

Peter Balakian penetrates his landscape with every part of his body, which "finds holes in the ground/ and fills with water" while "Twigs float/in the mouth." Waves diminish with the size of his pupil, and he wants "the tail of the fish to turn inside my muscle/ and travel my spine." His penis is "Like a fish just hatched," and when the ground thaws in spring, "the inside of the arch/ loses its taut suspension."

Such intimate identification with the nonhuman expands the senses when it works effectively, as it does almost always in these poems. Only occasionally does the poet's attention falter or his diction become rhetorical—pitfalls in any poetry that strives to push the senses to the limits of what they can perceive. There is something hypnotic and eerie about an experience that goes so deeply into the realm of the sensuous as to come out on the other side:

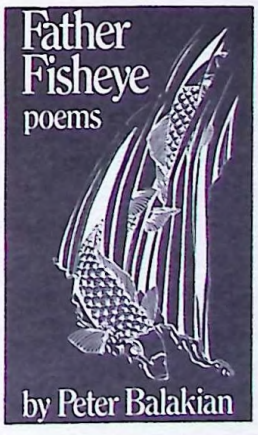
> You'll wait for birds
> or even light
> to wrestle my arms loose
> and tell me
> you've dreamt me
> back to water,
> a scaleless creation,
> slimy, eel-like
> without vertebrae,
> with eyes only large enough
> to see shifts in light.
>
> ("Approaching the Summer Solstice")

One feels a chill of repulsion, shared by the poet who in another poem, "Fishing Off the Dark Rocks," sees the ocean as a "reeling toothless crone/ whose body is all hole beneath each flittering wave." This is a memorable evocation of the uncanniness we feel in the presence of the ocean at night.

Exploration of the fluid, shape-shifting unconscious leads naturally to fish and water poems. The long poem "My Mother Is a Fish," with its dreamlike mixture of childhood memory and fantasy, draws the reader into an almost preconscious state of mind, where sounds and images fuse, and green and silver are the only colors:

> In March before the crocus
> and the lily
> there are eggs in the shoal
> in the green jelly.
> The crab glides backward
> and doesn't see them,
> the kingfisher falls in the wind
> and lands on his head in the sand.
>
> I used to bring him
> a bucket of shells
> and old codheads
> for his neck.
>
> At night my mother is a long
> eel with a light
> winding around the rocks
> off shore.
> Even without a moon
> the land is not black then
> and the rocks glow.

As in many of the other poems that sink further and further into trance, the world gradually narrows to a



few fragments of perception, isolated and mesmerically repeated: mud, a child's bucket, the worms, Father, the fish.

In other poems nature remains more objectified. When the poet writes of fields and mountains he keeps a greater distance; we see through his fully conscious awareness with a clarity that is like second sight:

> In this field I throw a match
> and watch the first smoke smolder beneath
> the stalks and straw, hear the slow cringe of blue flame
> spread along the stubble like a wave,
> and with a wind, even a breath,
> there's a white flame
> that shows the trees big as they are
> naked and shaking on the mountain.
> ("The Busk")

Writing of an Amish farmer, he compresses half the *Golden Bough* into five lines of grace and economy:

> the hex sign on his barn
> rotates his wife's face
> in a pattern that keeps
> each season's sorcerer
> beneath the corn.
> ("The Return")

Peter Balakian's landscape characteristically is lonely, windy, and cold, with only a few poems such as "Loving in the Corn" that bring the solace of heat and tenderness. The second stanza of this poem is a beautiful, intimate whisper:

> If cows collapse from heat we'll not hear
> an echo or a wail, just this dim hissing
> of roots that brings your back to curve,
> returns this furrow to one dark space
> between ourselves. A month's heat rises
> through your legs up my blue-root veins
> and disappears in a wind that drops
> from whisper to breath.

Many of Balakian's poems are written for or about particular people: other poets, friends, family members. They reveal themselves with quiet yet telling symbolism. In "The History of Armenia" his passionate evocation of his grandmother's experience crystallizes for us the enduring spirit of the Armenian people. Again, in "Facing the Water," he speaks to a friend of the great distance that separates their lives: "This was further north than I/ was used to. For a moment/ the sun lay even with the lake." In contrast, other poems address an unreferential "you"—a kind of ghost-self invoked, one senses, to counteract the solitude and self-absorption of the voyage inward. But this mirror image too often becomes a self-conscious device that draws attention away from the poem, and I found these poems stronger and more candid when I read "I" for the indeterminate "you."

Peter Balakian has a vision of a shared ground in nature and ourselves, and he returns again and again to an uncanny state of being in which the self seems to dissolve into its matrix in a kind of reverse birth, "where cold/ is bottom. Where form shares/ common ground with form." There are few colors in this world, and only rarely are objects perceived as having distinct boundaries. The book's title, with its suggestion of a fisheye camera lens as well as the literal eye of a fish, is apt: it is a universe seen through nonhuman, though ancestral eyes, and also one defined by the intense, distorted lens that sees more than the bodily eye can. This is a strong and unusual first book.

GUARDIAN OF A PEOPLE

By Arra S. Avakian

Robert Mirak, "On New Soil: The Armenian Orthodox and Armenian Protestant Churches," IMMIGRANTS AND RELIGION IN URBAN AMERICA edited by Miller and Marzik. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977.

How well did the church serve its people, the Armenians in America during their formative years as a community? How much of that did the people want? And how did the Orthodox and Protestant churches differ both in the problems they experienced and in the level of success they found?

Robert Mirak's chapter, "On New Soil: The Armenian Orthodox and Armenian Protestant Churches in the New World to 1915," takes a look at the way these two religious groups played their roles in America.

Mirak makes his 23-page study understandable to uninitiated readers by giving the history of the fifth century establishment of the Armenian Church; that is, the national, or mother, or orthodox church. He describes the environment in Turkey that bred Armenian Protestantism in the middle of the nineteenth century. Also, he correctly emphasizes its "pervasive influence . . . in stimulating immigration to the United States."

It appears that the Orthodox churches experienced

more administrative and devotional crises in the early years than did the Protestant. The most significant contribution Mirak makes in his essay is his analysis of these crises.

The problem besetting the Orthodox church in its early years in America can be summarized as follows. 1. The Church sought to maintain its Old-World character in an emotionally and environmentally hostile New World. 2. The Church, at first under the Patriarchate of Constantinople, was too far removed, and therefore uncommunicative with its hierarchical administration. 3. Clergy prepared in and sent from the Old World to serve in the New were woefully unprepared for the demanding assignment. 4. Armenian partisan politics entered the church and many leaders allowed conflict of interest to sway them. 5. The people themselves were part of the problem in that they, at once, wanted their mother church resurrected in the New World, but allowed the new environment to cool their ardor for their ancestral church.

Referring to the disruptive force of partisan politics in church harmony, Mirak writes "The [two specific] episodes were the most disgraceful and notorious in the colony's early history; however they were not isolated. Repeatedly, personal and political feuds caused animosity and friction between the boards of trustees, priests, and church assemblies. Turnover among priests was ridiculously high; parish battles were all too common. Certainly the mission of the 'once heralded first Christian nation in the world, the martyr church,' was diverted from its immigrant parishioners' most important social and personal concerns."

Did the Armenian Protestant community escape comparable ills in its early years? We read in the essay that they did, essentially. But they did have their own problems too. Establishing their church in America was considerably less chaotic. A religious kinship already existed between them, these newcomer Armenian Protestants and American mainstream Protestants. Earliest Armenian Protestants joined the churches already there. But when their numbers increased their larger number sowed seeds of discontent. Mirak says of Fresno, "in 1887 . . . Armenian families journeyed on horseback, by wagon, or on foot to the First Congregationalist Church for separate Armenian-language services or joined the English-speaking natives in the Sunday morning services . . . . The harmonious union, however, soon succumbed to prejudice and bigotry . . . a 'system of discrimination and persecution against the Armenians' was initiated. The newcomers were ordered to sit by themselves in the church; all hymnbooks and Bibles were removed from their pews; no new Armenians were permitted membership in the church; and finally, their names were stricken from the church membership rolls. All this, in the church which they were invited to help build and support." The crisis gained much public attention, most of it sympathetic. But it led to their building their own church [their second, since they had combined with the others to build the church from which they were driven] in 1900. This was the Armenian *Presbyterian* Church.

Referring again to the Orthodox church, Mirak pays tribute to the vital role played in the life of the church by women. They contributed much to retaining a meaningful measure of traditional Old-World values of the Church.

A paragraph pretty well sums up the difference between the two experiences: "The old religious culture of the Orthodox slowly lapsed in America for a variety of complex reasons. Its basic mission—the preservation of the old culture in the New World—was undermined. By contrast, the Armenian Protestant Church acted as a willing acculturating mechanism in the New World. The Protestants did not lay stress on the old language and culture. Rather, they preached the new religion of Congregationalism, which promoted the adoption of New World and American ways. The Armenian Protestant Church was a willing halfway house between the old religious culture and modern, twentieth-century American Congregationalism."

The several essays in this book report on the extent to which ethnic groups yielded to the melting-pot crucible that New-World America was taken to be. The reports emphasize the role of the church in preserving the Old-World traditions, or in stemming assimilation.

DEFT BUT GLIB

By Zaven Peter Tokatlian

AFRICAN CALLIOPE: A JOURNEY TO THE SUDAN by Edward Hoagland. New York: Random House, 1980. 239 pages. $10.00.

Edward Hoagland spent three hectic months in the Sudan in 1977, and the result is *African Calliope,* an account of this sojourn in the vast swatch of Africa which extends over one million square miles and embraces a crazy quiltwork of tribes, ranging from the tall black Dinkas to the short, brown-skinned Haddendowas, better known as Kipling's "Fuzzy-Wuzzies." The writer spent most of his time in the Southern and the Western Sudan with brief interludes in the capital, Khartoum, at the confluence of the White and Blue Niles.

The Southern Sudan is an area of some thousands of square miles of woodlands and swamps, until recently

devastated by civil war and still ravaged by disease and poverty. The White Nile, flowing from lake Victoria, meanders through the Southern Sudan joined by several smaller tributaries, creating a vast swampland of floating vegetation called the *Sudd*. The trip up North by paddle-wheeler takes a long time because passage along the hyacinth-choked channels is quite arduous. For the becalmed traveler there is little to do in this land of Nilotes. The Southern Sudan, despite feverish attempts at modernization, is still wild and primitive: all kinds of exotic birds and lush vegetation abound. The precarious economic and political situation in the South, as well as in the rest of the country, is worsened by the frequent coups that plague the Sudan. Today the Sudan, under strongman Muhammad Ja'afar al-Numeiri, is a one-party socialist state.

In Khartoum and in the outlying provinces, Hoagland met remnants of the once-prosperous foreign communities: Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and Italians. His description of the now sadly diminished Jewish community in Khartoum is touching in its pathos. Although Hoagland attempts to describe the plight of these communities, he makes a few glaring lapses in limning Sudanese-Armenians. Here, Hoagland employs clichés and ethnic stereotypes. "In Khartoum," he writes glibly, "Greeks tend to be retailers, and Armenians high-rollers, hustlers and wholesalers who have the air-conditioning business sewn up, for example." It is not surprising then that Boghosian, with his unlikely Christian name of Cornelius, emerges from Hoagland's pages as the paradigm of this kind of seedy enterpreneur. The author waxes almost lyrical about this charming and wily vulgarian: Boghosian "was another instance of the Hemingway of *The Green Hills of Africa* crossbred with an Oxbridge model for show, although in reality he was a proud Armenian and one of the peerless wholesalers of this world." Boghosian seems more like a character out of the movie *Casablanca:* a generous but rootless adventurer for whom life is a con game, the higher the stakes the better. One evening in Juba, Boghosian invites Hoagland and a few companions for a ride in the moonlit Southern Sudanese countryside. For the writer, there is a Homeric quality about this reprobate: "His Armenian exuberance implied, if I read it right, the plausibility of holocaust and genocide as well as nights under the full moon."

Hoagland is deft at conveying the scenery and the dreary atmosphere of the sun-parched, mud-brick villages that he visited in the Western Sudan. Often, he succeeds in capturing the local color and the achingly desolate charm of the Sudan. While Hoagland neither plumbs any depths nor achieves any insights about the Sudan and the Sudanese, he does, however, leave a haunting impression of the country. It has been said that "when Allah created the Sudan, He laughed." One suspects that He's still chuckling.

REQUIEM FOR A VISION

By Laura Kalpakian

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS AND THE AMERICAN SCENE, 1920-1940 by Dickran Tashjian. Whitney Museum of American Art in association with the University of California Press, 1978.

Glossy, elegant, tantalizing all describe this volume written in conjunction with an exhibit at the Whitney Museum of American Art presented two years ago. If you missed the exhibit, the book will make you weep; on the other hand, the book itself has certain satisfactions. Even in the best of exhibits, the material begins to swim before the eyes after a while and one leaves light-headed, grateful to be outside again after the confines of the museum and the ogling guards. Books, by their very nature, allow one to absorb, dabble, and return at one's own pace. While the chapters here are not exhaustive by any means, they provide graceful introductions to artists and artistic movements which have received too little critical attention.

The expatriate avant-garde in the era between the wars is well known for their antics, their excesses, their coteries, but what of the avant-garde that stayed at home? The title here is expressly chosen. It is indeed the *American* scene, those writers, painters, poets who (by and large) remained here during those years and produced exciting work.

On the face of it, Mr. Tashjian seems to have chosen an unlikely focal point, the poet William Carlos Williams, for a book about painters. Williams, however, was our most painterly poet, a man whose dedication, indeed, whose addiction to the arts embraced the visual as well as the literary. The visual, the concrete, the object itself had particular appeal for Williams: he relished them, reveled in them as an earlier generation of poets might have prided itself on hyperbolic conceits.

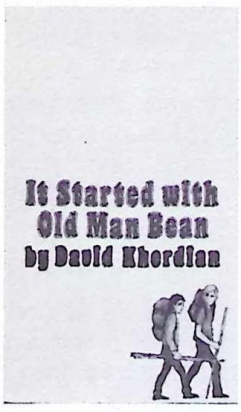
Williams could render the banal—a dish of plums in the icebox for example—into the succulently sublime with a few deft strokes of his pencil. Or he could forever freeze for us a fire truck screaming through the rain, a truck which described in any other words but his seems tinny and insufficient.

Among the rain
and lights
I saw the figure 5
in gold
on a red
firetruck
moving
with weight and urgency
tense
unheeded
to gong clangs
siren howls
and wheels rumbling
through the dark city

Apprehended, set to words (that have their own music) and gone forever, that fire truck provided one of the more interesting fusions in modern art when Williams' friend, Charles Demuth, painted the stunning *I Saw the Figure 5 In Gold* from the poem. The painting makes reference to the poet and screams at us brilliantly though no truck is anywhere visible. The Demuth *Figure 5 In Gold* is a fitting cover portrait for *William Carlos Williams and the American Scene.*

While not all the connections Mr. Tashjian suggests are as overt as the above example, his book explores the influence of Williams' ideas on the world of painting, particularly Williams' insistence on objectifying, on rootedness and validity. In his evocative (and still stirring) book *In the American Grain* Williams produced a highly stylized amalgam of history and imagination which both gave a credo to the American artistic movement and was rooted in it at the same moment.

As exciting as the material in *William Carlos Williams and the American Scene* is, one has the sense of requiem nonetheless, not just of painters and poets long dead, little magazines long lapsed, styles and schools long since fallen into disfavor, but for a vision of America, a sense of shared conviction that, like that vanished fire truck, has gone forever.



GROWING UP IN MIDDLE AMERICA

By Laura Kalpakian

IT STARTED WITH OLD MAN BEAN by David Kherdian. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1980. $7.95.

The title of David Kherdian's latest offering for children is misleading. It didn't start with L. L. Bean of Maine: it started with Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer escaping their families and the adult world in general, off on an adventure down the river. Any river.

Kherdian's tale is narrated by ten-year-old Ted Stavros who lives in a midwest town of the 1940's. Even the town has some of the charms of Hannibal, Missouri, as the boys steal vegetables from an ogreish neighbor's garden, shine shoes to collect money for their expedition and subvert parental guidance to explore an area forbidden to them. They encounter the same eeriness of Indian Joe's cave (minus Indian Joe, only a bone-chilling, not-quite-human echo) and in the end absorb some wisdom.

Perhaps the most endearing quality of *It Started With Old Man Bean* (at least for the adult reader) is the lavish, loving detail with which Kherdian renders Ted's childhood, especially in matters of fishing. Ted is no amateur; he knows every sort of bait and trick, and hook, line and sinker, the physics of the fishing pole (though Ted would not be so pedantic as to call it physics) and the charms of the elusive Big One. He fishes with the grown men from the docks in town, and once in the wild, experiences something quite close to poetry. The skilled fisherman gives himself up to emotions Henry David Thoreau would have applauded:

> *. . . I was in bliss in the elm tree trunk, in the middle of the wilderness with grasshoppers and frogs my chorus and in the presence of the noble, uncatchable, but somehow, someday catchable black bass . . . I was the hermit of that stretch of spooky, wonderous and thrilling river. I would like to be water myself someday, I thought, or wind blowing over it or fish deep within it, as I got up from that spot and wound my way back to camp, on the lookout for those wild raspberries that I hoped old Joe would not be too angry to eat.*

Joe and Ted are at the edge of adolescence (Joe is a little older) and Kherdian catches the nuances of a childhood friendship that will not survive to adulthood. They

are very different sorts, these two boys: Joe the more pragmatic soul, Ted with all the instincts of a writer, with imagination that even Joe recognizes, but does not envy.

The boys order their camping equipment from the L. L. Bean catalog and wait. They lie (or at least fib, or knowingly delude) their parents about their destination and light out for the unknown wilderness. They discover that nature, for all her beneficence, may not be relied upon or supplicated. They get hungry. They get scared. They get homesick. They know they must get out of the wilderness before the river rises and cuts them off altogether. They demonstrate considerable ingenuity, even in the face of the fears, and do not panic. They emerge from their adventure, shaken, not much older, but considerably wiser.

This novel diverges from *Tom Sawyer* only at the end. One cannot imagine Tom Sawyer grown up. Tom's experiences do not evoke any reflections upon the adult world or what his place in it might be. Ted Stavros, by contrast, perceives his future, dimly perhaps, regards his parents with new emotions he can't quite articulate, but for an adult reading (or writing) this book, they are unmistakable.

It Started With Old Man Bean has charm, not only for its vivid retelling of an American classic myth, but in the person of the narrator, Ted. There are some lapses in diction, enough to mar the otherwise effortless flow of the narrative. It is unlikely for instance, that two boys who still seal pacts with drops of their own blood would use the word "deceptive" or one say of another's injured arm, "It appears to be broken." The book might have been more aptly or appealingly titled, but these are small quibbles. David Kherdian's *It Started With Old Man Bean* will find a responsive audience with children and with any adult who knows that we only grow up and grow old when we cease to learn.

THE FLOWERS GENTLY BEND*

By Eghishé Charents

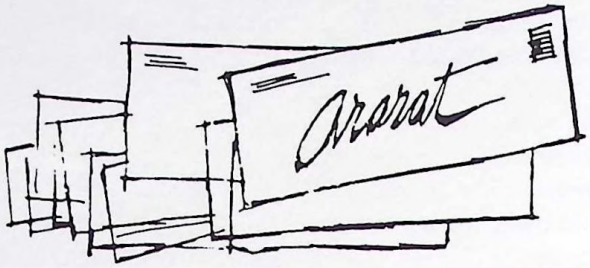
The flowers gently bow, when the winds gently sway
listening to lullabies that come from far away.

The shivering wind touches each turned-up petal mouth
to whisper of love in the distant west, and south.

All of this happens at twilight's dusky hour
when the winds gently blow and bend the sweet flowers.

(Translated by Diana Der Hovanessian)

*This is the first poem of Charents to appear in print (1911).



The following letters were received in response to the special fiction issue of Spring 1980 edited by Nona Balakian.

To the Editor:

Immense thanks for sending, so generously, so copiously, copies of *Ararat*. It too is a discovery for me: *a rich periodical.* I'm sorry it took so long for me to find out that it existed. Your fiction issue is *an exceptional fusion of variety and focus.* If I have to choose my favorite story in that issue, it's the one about the illusioned doctor in Beirut: touching and troubling. And running that one a close second is Krekorian's "Collabyrinths," for its cadences and inventiveness.

Two matters of substance from our conversation keep haunting. The first is the snicker at the phrase "starving Armenians." How dreadful and dolorous and shaming that the suffering of a massacred people should elicit snickers. And the second is the boggling fact that the Armenian slaughter should have been "unwritten," i.e., revised out of existence, as if it were a chimera. Denied! In a way it's not surprising. Human nature likes to hide its guilt away.

I wonder if you would agree with my immense dislike of the word "ethnic." It began as a useful bit of anthropological jargon, and has descended now to describe bunches of people in a way that almost turns them into specimens, laboratory animals. What is wonderful about *Ararat* (aside from its literary virtues) is that it suppresses all the emanations that derive from the attitude represented by "ethnic," and gives over a living people and a living culture. What vigor in this modest magazine! I am so grateful to you for letting me see it.

Warm good wishes,

Cynthia Ozick
New Rochelle, New York

Note: Cynthia Ozick has had critical acclaim for her two books of short stories, Bloodshed & Three Novellas *and* The Pagan Rabbi and Other Stories.

To the Editor:

I congratulate you on the Spring issue of *Ararat*. I have always known that you were a fine editor—but, my God, you're a lucky one, too! I don't know of anyone else who could have found such an excellent collection of short stories in an era when the short story form is said to be all but dead.

I have taught short-story writing at Iowa and Harvard and City College, and have judged many short story contests, one with thirty thousand submissions from all over the world. In all those years, I don't think I've seen twelve stories as well-told and significant as the twelve you put into *Ararat*. I would have bet that nobody was writing stories that good any more. Really—*Playboy* once asked me to scout the country for short fiction of importance, and I told them that they might as well sponsor me on a unicorn hunt.

There is this sad fact: if I had had sense enough to seek stories from Armenians, and had come back with a collection like yours, *Playboy* would have admired them, but would have regretfully declined to print them. Their readers would not be sufficiently appreciative.

So what must writers do? They must do what storytellers were delighted to do at the dawn of history, which is to make their skills ever more exquisite, not for money or fame, but for the pleasure of loved ones and a few strangers passing by.

This is a letter of thanks from a passing stranger.

Cheers—

Kurt Vonnegut
New York

To the Editor:

Thanks very much for the fiction issue of *Ararat* that you sent me recently. I read it with interest and pleasure, and I thought your introduction was excellent—a clear statement of the paradoxical necessity to find reality and transform it in writing fiction. I liked "Death of an Art Dealer," by Peter Sourian, and "Pact," by Harriet Zinnes, the most, but it's hard to judge anyone's work on the basis of one piece. In any case, if you know of any writer in this issue (or anywhere else, for that matter) who you think might have something suitable for us, please don't hesitate to mention my name. And thanks again for this unusual and serious collection of stories.

Sincerely,

Daniel Menaker
The New Yorker
New York

To the Editor:

The Spring fiction issue of *Ararat* is a sustainedly interesting collection. What struck me most was that there was such a range and variety in the telling, even though most of the stories centered on the culture and experience of a specific group.

From Robert Hewson's reworking of an ancient folktale and Vehanousch Tekian-Panossian's finely wrought portrait of the mad woman physician to the grimly realistic chapters by John Barsamian, Laura Kalpakian and Leon Surmelian on what it meant to be an Armenian immigrant in America, the stories manage to be of their time and place and yet something more, something that transcends both categories. This is true too of Deiter Keyishian's psychologically disturbing "Gluttony." And I need not add that I was thoroughly entranced by Michael Krekorian's "Collabyrinths," which caught the fey quality and style of the Borges-induced fabula flawlessly.

All best,

Thomas Lask
New York

Thomas Lask was formerly the daily book reviewer for The New York Times.

To the Editor:

Thank you so much for sending me the special fiction issue of *Ararat*. I think you have made some beautiful selections (including Laura Kalpakian's and Harriet Zinnes' stories) and I congratulate you on a very fine issue. I agree with what you say in your inviting introduction about a "high intensity quotient" and "the element of astonishment" in good fiction.

Best regards,

Sally Arteseros
Doubleday and Company
New York

P.S. Leon Surmelian's *I Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen,* remains one of my favorite books, ever.

Le Monde
7 janvier 1976 -
ELLE
Théâtre
« L'Arménoche » à Vincennes
nº 1568 - 26 janv. 1976
l'Humanité
LUNDI 19 JANV. 1976

ELLE A CHOISI.

Sensibilité froissée

« L'ARMÉNOCHE » de Reine Bartève par la Compagnie du Théâtre de la Place

UNE petite gare à la tombée de la nuit, lugubre. Froid et crasse. Les murs lézardés, griffés de graffiti obscènes, signés d'emblèmes politiques, portent les traces des voyageurs du jour. Ils ont meublé l'attente. Une grande affiche — scène de fin de journée aussi, mais dans le soleil couchant, au bord de la mer, un couple à contre-jour — invite à « mieux apprécier le temps qui passe » : buvez du champagne.

Une femme attend. Le train ? Un homme ? Et spontanément elle va vers l'inconnu qui, dans son coin, lit un journal. Comme s'il était naturel de s'adresser à l'Autre, de lui raconter la grande mère de Trébizonde et le massacre des Arméniens, de lui proposer de manger, ou de jouer à un jeu de cartes (possible) de son invention ; naturel de s'intéresser à sa vie, à sa maison, à ses sentiments... Comment voulez-vous qu'il ne s'inquiète pas, l'Autre, de ces élans incongrus, lui qui craint tant les négres et les bicots la nuit venue, lui qui a recouvert de plastique — parce que c'est propre que c'est plus propre — te et ses meu- drame se cœur

A celui-là, qui s'ain elle demandera une tango. Pas de dev dans le froid. M main touche l'aut cel homme se sur son pauvre foule les mots d montaient aux plus que raide gare, un vieil dans ses bras Ce n'est costumé sur l'immigré « net, il y a ça), ni un de l'incon un regard quotidien deux ye de voul celui q — sur nation Rei sensi son gnie rar Th té. s'est fait thos. Il fait de ton à côté et re- si, un pathétique de bo.

Jacques POULET.

(1) Théâtre Daniel-Sorano, 78, avenue de la République, Vincennes (Mo Bé-

L'Armenoche
de Reine Bartève
Un quai de gare, une femme, entre deux trains, entre trois hommes, elle attend. Qui ? Quoi ? N'importe qui, une main tendue, une bonne parole. Car la femme n'est pas d' arménie

