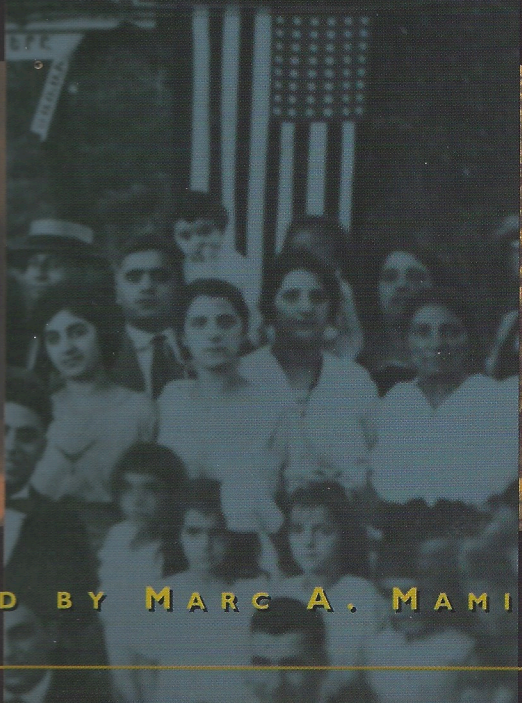


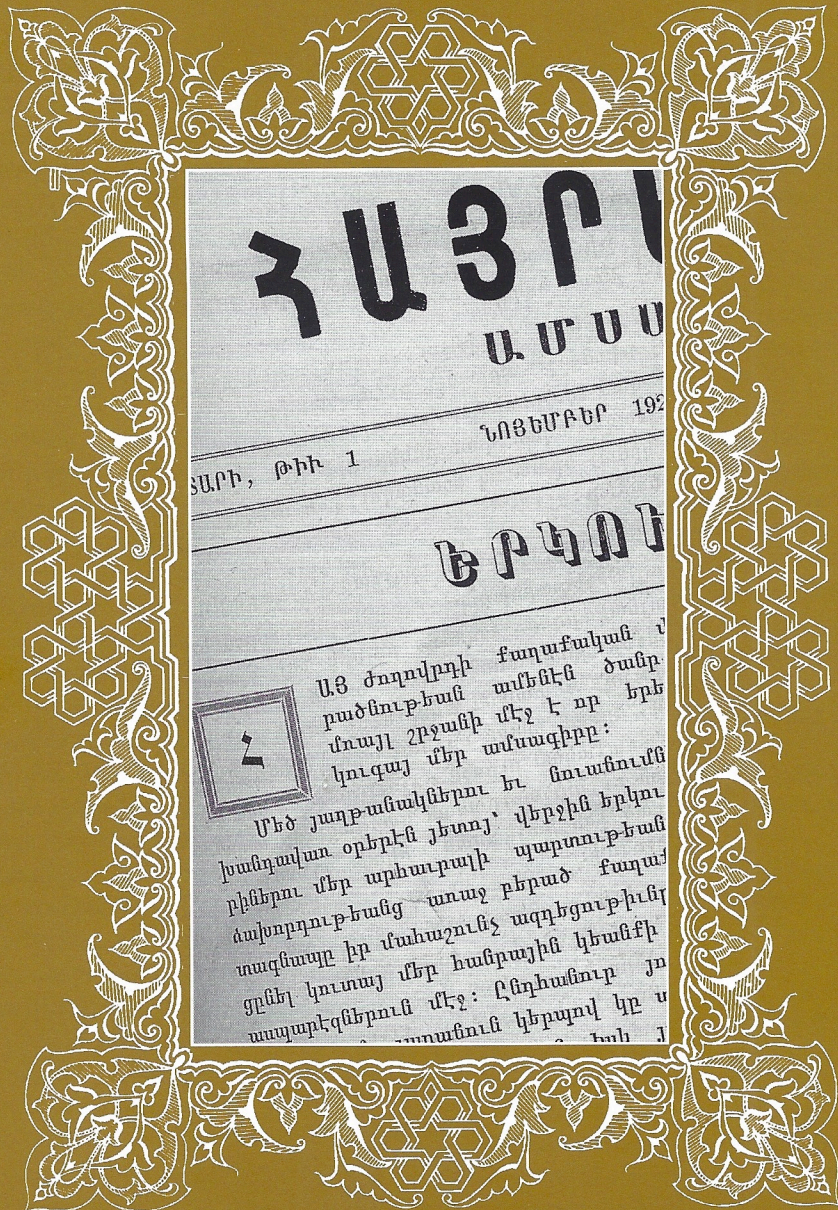


*The*  
*Armenians*  
*of New England*



EDITED BY MARC A. MAMIGONIAN





## Hairenik: A Periodical in the Heart of New England





## by Rubina Perroomian



During its publication spanning over nearly five decades, *Hairenik Monthly* established itself not just as another Armenian-language periodical reaching the homes of some Armenian families but also as an institution with an important mission in Armenian-American society. *Hairenik* monthly began publishing in November 1922 in Boston, Massachusetts. Starting in 1968 it appeared as a quarterly, and it ceased publication with the summer issue of 1970.

This brief study will examine *Hairenik's* role as an institution in Armenian-American life and its contribution to the process of shaping diasporan Armenian identity. The study is limited to the first five years of *Hairenik* monthly (sixty issues, totaling over 8,400 pages), although the later issues were searched to find the answers to questions arising during this research. The reason for this limitation was not only the enormity of the task of studying the rest of the 550 issues, but also the fact that the answers to my inquiry and the theme selected for this study were best reflected in the early years.

As the basis of my analysis I have relied on the theory of reflection and control, which has been expounded and institutionalized by both sociologists and those literary critics who believe in the interrelations of history and literature. Interestingly, however, this method of approach led me to realize in the course of my research that *Hairenik* had worked as an effective force to shape and control social behavior in Armenian-American life more than it reflected that life.

In order to apply this theory to its fullest extent and to broaden the scope of my inquiry, I had to adopt yet another course which led me to deviate from the literariness of the "text" and look at it not as an "autotelic artifact" but in its status in social realism, as mimeticism with a direct relationship with American-Armenian life. In other words, I tried to focus not on the aesthetic quality of the texts but on their social significance.

With the experience of almost a quarter of a century in newspaper publishing, the appearance of a monthly of the same name (*Hairenik*, meaning "fatherland" in Armenian) was designed to complement the scope and bolster the mission of the daily newspaper.<sup>1</sup> The inception of this periodical coincided with the closing of an exceptionally turbulent epoch in Armenian history punctuated with catastrophes, victories, and defeats. In addition, the Genocide and deportations of Western Armenians in 1915, the Turkish Nationalists' takeover of Constantinople in 1922, and the Sovietization of the Transcaucasian Republics robbed Armenians of two important centers of Armenian learning and inspiration. Constantinople and Tiflis became dysfunctional, and the aloofness of Soviet Armenian leadership *vis-a-vis* the spiritual needs and the plight of the diasporan communities aggravated the situation. The result was a precarious situation in the absence of direction and patronage for the Armenian language and culture in the diaspora. *Hairenik* monthly was to fill at least a small corner of that tremendous void. It was to shoulder the task of a serious publication to educate and entertain, at the same time, not





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only the Armenians of New England, the home of the periodical, but also the Armenian Americans in general and the diasporan Armenian community at large.

For almost a quarter of a century *Hairenik* daily had faithfully echoed the struggles, the hopes, the frustrations, the victories, and the defeats of the Armenian people in the homeland. Even though it was published thousands of miles away, *Hairenik* responded to the situation in the homeland more promptly and spontaneously than to the everyday life of the Armenian-American society; Ruben Darbinian, the editor-in-chief, attested to that reality. In an editorial on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Hairenik*, Darbinian admitted that the Armenian-American community was always deemed to be a temporary phenomenon and, therefore, had nothing noteworthy to report or discuss.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the majority of Armenians who came to America, mostly young males, did not intend to stay for good, but planned to work, save money, and return to their families in their homeland in Western Armenia. The catastrophic events that took place between 1915 and 1923 corroborated the reality that could not be overlooked any longer: the Armenian-American community was there to stay, and its special needs had to be addressed. Especially important was the fact that it had become a powerful financial base for the diaspora and held the potential of becoming a weighty moral support for it as well.

It is in the light of this new predicament of the Armenian diaspora that one should explore and analyze *Hairenik's* mission to safeguard Armenian culture, language, and tradition; to ensure the perpetuation of the Armenian spirit in coming generations in America away and cut off from the homeland; and to sustain in them the hope of one day returning to a free and independent Armenia.

## Education and Indoctrination

As a journal sponsored by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF-Dashnaktsutjun), *Hairenik* understandably harbored articles dealing with the party's ideology, tactics, and strategy; the analysis of past and current political events; and deliberations on the Armenian Question and its favorable solution. It naturally mirrored the efforts of the ARF in its new role of preserving the Armenian identity and culture in the diaspora. Beyond their political context, however, its articles served to boost pride in Armenian ethnic identity and to strengthen ethnic nationalism. In *Hay kaghakakan mtki degerunnerē* (The quests of Armenian political thought), for example, Ruben Darbinian examines the concepts of nationhood and nationalism, and promotes the importance of upholding aspirations for a free and independent Armenia. In this context, he criticizes the Soviet regime for its anti-nationalistic slant and its attempts to alienate the pro-ARF communities and to mobilize the non-ARF diasporan organizations into an anti-Dashnaktsutjun faction. Soviet propaganda, Darbinian claims, aimed to abort the efforts of the diasporan Armenians to unite and to rally behind the common goals of the nation.<sup>3</sup>

In this category falls another series of articles by Levon Shant, entitled *Inch e azgutianē?* (What Is Nationhood). Here Shant engages in a philosophical inquiry into the nature of nationalism and analyzes factors lending a unique characteristic to each nation. He theorizes the status of a nation driven out of its homeland and notes that in this situation ethnic characteristics are transported abroad. With the passage of time, however, and because of mixed marriages and the unavoidable influences of the culture of the host country, these characteristics are defused. Shant believes that as long as mixed marriages are occasional, the





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ethnic group is segregated and viewed by the host community as outsiders or visitors at best. In a state like this, if the ethnic institutions have remained immune from changes and influences, the group is ghettoized; and the prospect of the community perpetuating itself in a healthy process is dim. In normal situations, when racial or religious hatred or extreme prejudice is not an issue, mixed marriages become unavoidable; the more often their occurrence, the quicker is the process of assimilation and loss of identity.

This analysis surely reflects the fear and anxiety of the Armenian intelligentsia in view of the sad reality enveloping Armenians in the diaspora. But whence should the solutions come, and what are the means to "correct the nation as a social organism" and find a happy medium? Shant offers no practical solutions. Nonetheless he continues in an optimistic vein, suggesting that multinationalism is the law of nature, and the process of the evolution of humanity does not lead toward a one-nation, one-language, and one-civilization situation. He believes that the trend is toward the multiplication of nations and tolerance toward a throng of nations, languages, and cultures in the world.<sup>4</sup> Significantly, Shant's analysis of almost eighty years ago has kept its validity. The same factors and parameters are still functional in the life of the diaspora today.

### **Hairenik on Literature and Literary Directions**

Although the publication of *Hairenik* monthly coincided with the beginning of a new era in the Armenian diaspora, the shift, especially in the life of the Armenian-American communities, did not translate into a new direction to guide the periodical. New forms in literature, new colors, meanings, and spirits, did not come to replace the old and worn out models in Armenian literature of the pre-

Genocide era. Articles on literary history, theory, and criticism which could help to pave the way were scarce, as Armenian literary critics are rare in the history of modern Armenian literature. Articles of this genre were mostly dedicated to writers who either became victims of the Genocide or were already well established before the Genocide.<sup>5</sup> The only contribution of such articles was to keep alive the legacy of the giants of modern Armenian literature. In regard to exploring new avenues for contemporary literature, Levon Shant is one of the few who ponders theoretical issues in artistic literature and discusses literary genres, lyric themes, structure, form, content, relationship between theme and genre, etc. In his articles in every issue of the year 1927, he provides valuable insight for both the artist and the critic and encourages creativity and production.

Another step *Hairenik* took to encourage artistic creation was a literary contest for the best poetry and the best fiction to appear in that magazine during 1927. This incentive, no doubt, stemmed from the writer's concern with ensuring the continuation of Armenian literature in America. The prizes for this contest were donated by A. Abelian, MD, \$50, and Hamasdegh, \$25. The winners were announced in the first issue of 1928: Kostan Zarian for his series of *Antsordē ev ir chamban* (The Traveler and His Road) and Armen Anush as the most promising young poet.

Despite all efforts, strides toward a collective literary undertaking to refine and train the aesthetic judgment of the Armenian public, to open a window – through translations of literary pieces of international value – toward Western thought, to familiarize readers with timeless values of art and culture, were slow and weak. There were no substantial efforts to define the social context, to discuss contemporary literary texts, to create that dialectic between text and context that would then





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become sources for the student of the social history of that era to extract invaluable information.

In a long article entitled *Tirojē aigiin mej* (In the Proprietor's Garden), Neshan Destegul expresses concern about the lack of critical reviews in *Hairenik*.<sup>6</sup> "Our contemporary literature! What is written about it seriously, impartially, out of aesthetic concerns? Almost nothing." Destegul strives to fill that void. In his argument for a healthy approach to literature, he rejects the fetishization of the old generation and the trend to try to emulate especially writers who fell victim to the Genocide or those who survived and were now dominating the literary milieu in the diaspora. Instead, he suggests questioning their tenets, the value and the role of their work in the history of Armenian literature. The new generation, he states, should feel the tempo of the cataclysmic changes in Armenian life, changes that caused the huge flux and displacement of the survivors and brought about the formation of the new concept of the Armenian diaspora. The new generation ought to reassess the values and principles that prevailed in the old days in the Old Country. Instead of glorifying our merits as a nation and exaggerating the genius of our ancestors, he writes, we should evaluate our strengths and weaknesses realistically and probe our potential.

Destegul acknowledges the value of Armenian provincial literature, which brought a breath of fresh air into the artificial and worn-out forms of Western Armenian literature at the turn of the century. However, he refutes those who believe that this kind of literature is still a novelty and can earn success and fame for the writer. His reference is to writers – some of whom were quite popular at the time – who textualize and dramatize past Armenian life and create a fantastic and picturesque recollection of that enviable time. He prescribes literature

elevated from its folkloric embryo and reaching toward the universal. He challenges Armenian literati to experiment with new directions, to open new horizons and new vistas in Armenian literature, to explore the depth of the human soul as no one has done before, and to bring out a new understanding and perception of life and art. According to Destegul, there are no new writers who have something new to say, who are not repeating what has been said before in the form that has been used over and over before.

Shirvanzade's study of Armenian-American literature, although not as extensive as Destegul's, brings him to a pessimistic conclusion. He argues that America will soon dominate world culture and literature as it does in the domain of technology and economy. Armenian Americans will climb the ladder of excellence in art and literature; however, Shirvanzade maintains, their creations will be devoid of nationalistic spirit and will add nothing to the legacy of Armenian art and literature. In regard to Armenian Americans and their individual dispositions, Shirvanzade suggests that the conditions of life in America have toughened Armenians physically and morally; and when one day they are offered the chance to return to the homeland, they could become a strong and effective element in the progress and development of Armenia.<sup>7</sup>

Most critical reviews of the newly burgeoning Armenian-American literature return to the source – the Armenian tragedy and the dispersion – as an ever-present imposing factor. Destegul believes that human suffering can be the richest, most unique source whence true art is born. Ruben Darbinian, conversely, blames the enormity of that same cataclysmic experience for the absence of true art. Darbinian stresses the importance of the artist's peace of mind for the work of art to be a success, and it is to this favorable condition, more or less exist-





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ing in America, that he attributes Hamasdegh's success. Darbinian praises Hamasdegh, a promising young writer at the time, and his ability to characterize the sufferings of Armenian refugees, many of whom are misfits in American society, and those characters with whom readers are likely to identify themselves. He also underlines Hamasdegh's talent in describing colorfully, yet realistically, the old Armenian village – humble huts, proud mountains, and refreshing springs – dream-like images that mesmerized homesick Armenians. Darbinian believes that it is possible to produce authentic Armenian literature outside Armenia, literature that will not taste like fruit grown in a hothouse. However, his optimism has its limits. He joins Shirvanzade to assert that true national art can prosper only in the homeland and draw inspiration from the life of the people living in their land. Literature and art can blossom but cannot take root and flourish in the diaspora.

Darbinian's judgment implies the doom of Armenian life and culture outside Armenia. In such a predicament, efforts are only temporary measures and artistic creations are devoid of qualities needed to make diasporan art an everlasting value.<sup>8</sup> Significantly, by such a skeptical prediction of the future of diasporan Armenian art and culture, Darbinian is unconsciously predicting also the doom of *Hairenik* itself. *Hairenik*, the echo of the diasporan Armenian or, more specifically, American-Armenian intellectual life, was condemned to decline; time and sociopolitical factors were in collusion to wreck the pillars of its foundation. Armenian intellectual endeavors were fading, the concepts typifying the idea of Armenianness sounded romantic and unrealistic, and the nobility of Armenian culture and art was something distant and unfathomable for the second and third generations born to Armenian immigrants. Realistic and immediate were the exi-

gencies of pure survival, and the overpowering influence of the mainstream culture.

**Literature of Nostalgia or  
Recourse To the Past**

Literary pieces, poetry and prose, on different aspects of life in the Old Country are abundant in *Hairenik*. These works clearly mark a recourse to the past and are manifested in two ways. They are recreations of the Old World, fetishizations of village life with nostalgic reminiscences of the bygone days. Or they are sentimental and trenchant lamentations over the loss of that beloved homeland. In all cases these manifestations are apt to make a tremendous impact on the readers, many of whom had likewise experienced the pain and agony of losing their homes and their loved ones. The result was a lasting attachment to the Old World and a continuous consciousness of former loyalties, consequently decreasing the likelihood of assimilation.

The theme of lamentation is entertained mostly in poetry. It engages the loss of parents, siblings, relatives, parental home, native land, and the entire victimized nation. In some cases the loss is personified. The poet depicts the funeral of a loved one, and the sky, the clouds, the mountains, the valleys, and the flowers are participating, sharing the poet's grief. *Sug* (Mourning) by Phenix exemplifies this type of personification.<sup>9</sup>

The theme of recreating the homeland and describing the Armenian world of the pre-Genocide era, on the other hand, is entertained both in prose and poetry. The short stories, for example, reveal the simplicity of human relationship, the customs and mores within the Armenian patriarchal tradition.<sup>10</sup> Kostan Zarian's *Antsordĕ ev ir chamban* (The Traveler and His Road) represents one of the better-wrought pieces within this group.<sup>11</sup> In this long autobiographical essay, impressions of a





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VOL. I, No. 1

## ԵՐԿՈՒ ԽՕՍՔ



Այն ժողովրդի ֆաղափական վերածնության ամենն ծանր և մոռյալ շրջանի մէջ է որ երեւան կուգայ մեր ամագիրը:

Մեծ յաղթանակներու և նուաճումներու խանդավառ օրերէն յետոյ՝ վերջին երկու տարիներու մեր արհաւիրքի պարտութեանց ու անխաղաղութեանց առաջ բերած ֆաղափական տագնապը իր մահաշունչ ազդեցութիւնը գտնուելու կուտայ մեր համրային կեանքի բոլոր ասպարէզներուն մէջ: Ընդհանուր յուսահատութիւն մը յարանուն կերպով կը տիրանայ հայութեան բոլոր խաւերուն: Իսկ յուսահատութեան հետ միասին սպառնականօրէն կը ծաւալուի և կը խորանայ մեր հասարակութեան մէջ նաեւ բարոյաբան անտարբերութիւն մը ոչ միայն հանդէպ ազգային առօրեայ պէտքերուն ու անցողական ցաւերուն, այլ և հանդէպ ֆաղափական այն մեծ խտրանքներուն, որոնց իրականացման համար պայքարող հայութիւնը ստուած է բիրտաւոր գոհեր:

Ազգերու պատմութեան մէջ աննախընթացօրէն դժնդակ պայմաններու տակ, բազմաթիւ անգամներ անբիշ արշաւանքներու, մասսայական ջարդերու և անուր հալածանքներու ենթարկուելով, մեր ժողովուրդը կը բացառուէր սակայն ապրիլ դարերու երկար շարքէն, որոնք բնութագրին կործանուեցան և գրեթէ անհետ կորսուեցան մեզմէ շատ անիւի հը-

գոր ու մեծ ազգեր:

Զմայելի կենսունակութեան, սոկունութեան և յարատեւութեան անսպառ աղբիւր մը կայ հայ ազգի բնութեան մէջ, որ, հակառակ իր շատ մը յառի, յաճախ վանող գիծերուն, պահպանած է իր ուրոյն գոյութիւնը մինչեւ մեր օրերը:

Հայ ազգային նկարագրի բանկագին և ազնուական յատկութիւնը եղած է անոր անյաղթելի, անմեռ սէրը դէպի իր հայրենի երկիրը, որուն ամէն մէկ անկիւնը ողորում է իր արիւնով և որուն ամէն մէկ կտորը հայկական գերեզման մըն է: Զանգուածօրէն, տարբերակօրէն հայը կառնած է իր պատմական հողին եւ՝ բռնի ուժով անկէ հեռացուած՝ օտարութեան մէջ ալ կը շարունակէ երագել անոր մասին, պատրաստ՝ ամէն վայրկեան ձգելու ամէն ինչ ու վերադառնալու իր հայրենիքը, երբ փոքրիկ ապստամբութիւն մը կը ստեղծուի հոն իր և իր գաւակներուն կեանքին համար:

Հայու կենսունակութեան մէկ ուրիշ հիմք է անոր նկարագրի մէկ ուրիշ բնորոշ գիծը, որ միշտ զարմացուցեր է անբաւեցանալ օտարներն անգամ, անոր անդիմադրելի ու ըստեղծագործ մղումն է դէպի լոյս, դէպի ֆաղափալքութիւն, դէպի առաջադիմութիւն: Անբողջ Արեւելի մէջ չի կայ ուրիշ ազգութիւն մը, որ աշխարհ կուտարունակ, աշխարհի դիրքագրւած ու նախանախնդիր բոլոր Ա-

real and an imaginary journey into the past are juxtaposed. Zarian depicts people who no longer exist and places that are no longer inhabited by Armenians. Contrary to ordinary travelogues, here the dimensions of time and space are often disrupted and confused. The scene becomes a crossroad of unrelated events, peoples, and places. This travelogue is actually an abstract but dramatic painting of Western Armenian culture from the pre-Genocide era to the Kemalist takeover of Constantinople and the final stifling of Armenian cultural life in that intellectual center of the days of yore. Zarian's journey then takes him to the newly Sovietized republic of Armenia, and this time bits and pieces of Eastern Armenian past begin to appear in the horizon of that rich panorama.

Poetic recreations of lost homeland vary in mood and climatic finale. In some cases the leitmotiv is the recreation of a small corner of the Old World, its nature, the people, and their habitat. An example is Sos-Vani's *Haireni giugh* (Native Village).<sup>12</sup> In other cases, recurring more frequently, the poem ends with a depiction of the present unhappy life and the poet's bitter yearnings for the homeland.<sup>13</sup> Characteristically,

First page of *Hairenik* monthly, volume I, number 1, November 1922

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titles given to these poems are not very creative and remain mainly in the range of various forms of the words *karot* (yearning) and *Hairenik* (fatherland). Some of these poems have renowned authors, such as Isahakian, Aharonian, and Nayirtsi; others are unknown. Obviously, their poetry did not survive the scrutiny of time. Nonetheless, their poems represent the mood of an era characterized by the struggle to cope with the aftermath of the Genocide. Another importance these names carry is the comparatively more frequent occurrence of the participation of women. Indeed, women contributors to *Hairenik* are rare if not almost non-existent. Was there a social impediment against women's participation in that kind of intellectual endeavor? Or was it lack of ability? Were the smaller frame of poetry and the confined scope of that genre the limits of the Armenian women's intellect? This is something worth investigating.

Most often in this nostalgic poetry, the native land is personified in a suffering mother, as in *Karot* (Yearning), by Armenak Melikian, or *Mors* (To My Mother), by Armenuhi Tigranian.<sup>14</sup> In some rare cases, the poet strikes an optimistic cord and expresses hope for future victories and a new dawn of freedom and independence. H. S. Levonian's *Kê dzune* (It Is Snowing), Er. Movsessian's *Ani* (On the Ancient City of Ani), and Arsen Ajemian's *Haireni erger* (Songs of the Fatherland) are examples.<sup>15</sup> In other instances, the poem encapsulates Armenian history and inspires the reader with nationalistic pride and exaltation. Armen Anush's long poem entitled *Hayastan* (Armenia), for example, embodies that effort to bring out the glories of the Armenian past, the tragic moments of history, and that yet unwavering hope for evil to vanish and justice to prevail.<sup>16</sup>

Romantic portrayals of village life in the Old Country and nostalgic outbursts in prose

and poetry were definitely instrumental in strengthening the bonds with the Old World, lest Armenians drifted away from the norms of Armenianness and forgot their native land and their ancestors. But more importantly, as even Destegul – the staunch critic of the trend – admitted, “recreating Armenia” in contemporary literature was the only way to cure the incapacitating homesickness of Armenian refugees and inspire them with optimism and hope for the life ahead.<sup>17</sup>

Destegul and others, perhaps subconsciously, imply the potential impact of this type of literature on the interrelations among members of the Armenian community. Obviously, the strengthening of bonds within a minority, as Armenians were in America, stressed the marginality of that group and procured an emotional and mystical power to resist the encroachment of the dominant culture. Was it healthy? Was it desirable? These were issues especially important in the process of determining Armenian-American identity. These were questions that particularly disturbed Levon Shant when he tried to analyze the relationship of diasporan Armenians to members of the host society.

**Toward Strengthening the Sense  
of Armenianness**

Recourse to the past was no doubt instrumental in perpetuating the sense of belonging to a spiritual Armenia and strengthening the emotional aspect of being an Armenian. *Hairenik* worked toward that goal. It brought out the good and the noble in being Armenian, in order to make it something to be proud of. In short, it instilled patriotism to work as a bulwark against assimilation. Articles geared toward this objective consisted of accounts of heroic struggles against Turkish persecutions and massacres. *Vani inknapashtpanutiunē* (The Self-Defense of Van), by Onnik





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Mkhitarian, is one of the best examples.<sup>18</sup> Typically, the author expresses the hope in the prologue that in the current dire situation in diasporan communities, reading about such heroic deeds not only will revive the memory of our loved ones but will also encourage those who have lost hope in the future and those who have lost faith in the miraculous stamina of our people. Examples of this type of article are abundant. Some of them were later published as separate volumes; others remained buried in the pages of old *Haireniks*.<sup>19</sup>

To this group of articles belong the biographical essays on important figures of the recent past, men such as Onnik Vramian, Aram, Kristapor Mikaelian, Simon Zavarian, Serob Aghbiur. Each one of these essays can serve as a source of information and inspiration for the student of the history of the Armenian national struggle for emancipation, but more important is the immediate impact. These stories of dedication and heroism were intended to inspire national pride and elevate the Armenian spirit among the new generation.<sup>20</sup>

To this category of writings belong also the memoirs of the devotees of the Armenian national struggle, men like Ruben in *Hay beghapokhakani me hishataknerē* (The Memoirs of an Armenian Revolutionary), which was published in *Hairenik* long before it appeared in a multi-volume book, or Ruben Khan-Azat, one of the founders of the Hnchak party, in *Hay beghapokhakani busherits* (From the Memories of a Revolutionary).<sup>21</sup>

Toward the goal of strengthening the feeling of Armenianness, curing the sense of inferiority Armenians had in America, and promoting self-esteem and self-recognition, there were also articles discussing the origin of the Armenian people – aimed toward proving that Armenians belong to the White Caucasian race and are therefore no different from other Americans, articles describing the magnificent

civilization of ancient Armenia, and those about the origin of the Armenian language – to prove that the Armenian language is related to English and belongs to the family of Indo-European languages.<sup>22</sup>

### The History of the Recent Armenian Past

The first volumes of *Hairenik* are rich repositories of research articles and attempts at historiography of the recent past. Most of the works of serious research on this subject were first published in serialized form in part or in whole in *Hairenik* before appearing in separate volumes. For example, two monumental works on the Republic of Armenia, *Hayastani hanrapetutiun* (The Republic of Armenia) by Simon Vratsian and *Hayastani hanrapetutiun tsagumn u zargatsumē* (The Birth and the Development of the Republic of Armenia) by Alexander Khatisian, as well as Garegin Nzhdeh's accounts of the struggle of Karabagh and Zangezur, appeared first in *Hairenik*. There are also works of smaller size and scope that were published only in this periodical and never as books. The totality of all these works presents an invaluable resource for the student of the history of Armenian national struggle and the Republic of Armenia, especially due to the unavailability of official documentation. (Indeed, besides some well-kept files in a few archives, many of the documents pertaining to this important period of Armenian history have been lost or deliberately destroyed; some have survived in smudged and unintelligible handwriting on torn pieces of paper.)<sup>23</sup>

### Witness to Genocide?

Eyewitness accounts of the Genocide are not abundant in *Hairenik*, at least in the first five years. References to this catastrophe echo more in nostalgic poetry or appear as a subtext interwoven with other themes. The traumatic





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experience was too immediate, the memory too painful, and the everyday struggle for survival too consuming for the survivors to be able to put their memories in writing. In one of these rare pieces of memory, Mary Galaijian, the author-narrator and the only survivor of her family, finds a newborn baby hidden behind bushes on the roadside and takes her in. Despite her own abject poverty, she takes care of the baby, through whom she finds the alleviation of her own pain and loneliness. One day the baby's mother appears at the door. Driven insane by the horrifying scenes of murder and slaughter, she had wandered in rags, hungry and dirty, looking for the baby she had once hidden from the murderers. The narrator takes the mother in, feeds her, and looks after her until she finds her old self again. And one day she takes her baby and goes away, leaving the poor woman once again in the agony of her loneliness and grief.<sup>24</sup>

In another example, a poem from the same author entitled *Gharibis* (To My Man in Exile), the narrator is writing an open letter to her husband, who left her and her unborn child to go to work abroad and never returned. The woman describes the hardship she went through to raise their child and to care for her husband's old and sick mother. During the massacres, she consented to marry a Kurd to save the family. But soon the mother-in-law died, and the Kurd killed the little boy to have the woman to himself. In this new situation she could not help but kill the Kurd and avenge the murder of her son. Now she is a runaway, wandering in the countryside of "that hell, that land of evil and blood."<sup>25</sup>

Aram Haygaz dedicates his work, *Mankutian hishatakner* (Childhood Memories), to his mother and to all mothers, "whose boundless religious devotion did not save them from the raging waves of the Euphrates."<sup>26</sup> His *Mghdzavanjē* (The

Nightmare), written in the form of a diary, records the calamitous events of December 1915; *Serē ev mahē* (Love and Death) describes life during the massacres in 1915-1917; and *Huisi chambun vra* (On the Road of Hope) speaks of the stamina and the optimism of the young generation before the Genocide. In the latter, Haygaz bewails the fact that this generation, who "after years of search, seemed to have found the Hope for the spirit of the nation's revival, instead of becoming the light-bearer of this road, was turned into skeletons thrown alongside that road."<sup>27</sup>

Hamasdegh's *Ernek ays overun* (Envy to These Days) is a recreation of Armenian village life but it ends with scenes of forced deportations and the destruction of Armenian villages and Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire. *Zruits shan mē het* (Conversation with a Dog), by the same writer, is a lonely man's reminiscence of his martyred family and fellow villagers.<sup>28</sup> Ren's *Anapatnerum* (In the Deserts) depicts the author's impressions and his recollection of the victims of Genocide when in 1922 he visited the deserts of Der El Zor.<sup>29</sup> *Isk aproghmerē* (And Those Who Live), a play by H. Ch. Siruni, is a moving account of the difficult struggle of the survivors of the Genocide in the diaspora.<sup>30</sup>

In *Tsaygerg* (An Evening Song), Vazgen Shushanian, the author-narrator, speaks to his little sister, whose torturous death he witnessed one night on the roads of deportation. He shares with her memories of happier days. He recalls the day their innocent childhood was interrupted by the Turkish horrors, and the family took to the road on the death march. His family members fell one by one on the roadside, unable to bear the unbearable hardship of "the journey." The author-narrator is a young man now with a tormented soul, bent under the burden of horrifying memories. He is not able to cope with the present. He is not





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able to rid his soul of the torturing images of the past and the memory of his murdered little sister. While making love to a French girl, Lucette, or another, he cannot help reminiscing, confusing the past with the present, and thinking of his dead sister. He sees his sister in that girl. It is his sister whom he takes so warmly in his arms and kisses on the lips. Bewildered and heavy-hearted, he asks, "Isn't this betraying you my little Lucette?"<sup>31</sup> The Turkish atrocity did not end with destruction and murder alone; it completely subverted the survivors' world of moral order and robbed them of their ability to conduct normal human relationships. Shushanian's literature is a true portrayal of that deranged and damaged inner world.

V. Zorian's *Siro mē vepē* (The Story of a Love) portrays Armenian suffering with a delicate interplay of binary oppositions, such as life and death, love and hatred, massacres and scenes of armed self-defense. *Nahanjē* (The Retreat), by the same author, paints a unique landscape of the life of the deportees from Van and their perilous journey to Ejmiatsin in 1918.<sup>32</sup> *Vranneru tak* (Under Tents), by Trchnik, is another portrayal of hardship, suffering, and death experienced by the deportees of Van during that same journey.<sup>33</sup> *Achkerē* (The Eyes), by Seza, is a heartrending description of the ordeal of a young girl who is the only survivor of her family.<sup>34</sup> In other short stories in later issues, Seza expounds on the impact of war, massacres and deportations even in those few places that were not affected by the government's policy of extermination of the Armenian people.

Short poems and free poetry lend themselves perfectly to abstract portrayal of the Armenian Genocide. Some simply paint a doleful experience, the victim's ordeal. The famous German humanitarian and author, Armin Wegner, for example, praises the unwa-

vering spirit of a mother in *Hay mor mē* (To an Armenian Mother). The same author pens a poignant story of a pregnant woman on the road of deportation, giving birth to a son and then running insane, laughing a loud and maddening laugh in *Sugi ergeren* (Of Songs of Mourning).<sup>35</sup> Others create a synecdoche, where a part plays the role of a whole, like *Epratē* (The Euphrates)<sup>36</sup> by Perchuhi, where the river Euphrates represents the Genocide itself. Or something innocent and quite unrelated symbolizes the horrors of Genocide in the style of metonymy, like *Andzrevi charcharankē* (The Suffering of the Rain) by Vahan Tatul, and *Amper* (Clouds) by Phenix.<sup>37</sup>

Certainly many readers of the time would identify with the victims described in poems and short stories and relive their own experience. That would certainly have a cathartic effect. The new generation, on the other hand, would become acquainted with the agony of their parents and grandparents and the calamity that had befallen their nation. All in all, the unique experience of the massacres would become a secret and sacred link among Armenians. It would raise an invisible barricade around the community and prevent the penetration of foreign elements.

### Prejudice, Discrimination, and Assimilation

Prejudice and discrimination by the host society against a minority group also can work to create a link among the members of that group and segregate them from the rest. Armenians, too, as an immigrant minority, were subjected to prejudice and discrimination; and the reaction to this treatment was twofold. On the one hand, Armenians isolated themselves and formed a close community safe and away from the degrading treatment coming from the outside world. On the other hand, the discrimination provoked the urge to assim-



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late, to become one with the mainstream; in other words, to avoid discrimination by avoiding and effacing the differences in culture, religion, customs, lifestyle, and language. This entire picture is well reflected in articles and stories in *Hairenik*.

The theme of assimilation is treated as important not only in literature but also in research articles or reports on community life. Overall, the conclusion is that Armenian-American communities are not armed with the necessary tools to fight the powerful tides of assimilation. In this context, Onnik Vardanian's article *Gaghutahayutiuné ev ir azgayin pahpanman khndiré* (Diasporan Armenians and the Question of Their Ethnic Preservation) provides an interesting insight in the history of the Armenian communities outside Armenia. In the conclusion of his historical survey, Vardanian asserts that immigrant communities are more likely to think of returning to their homeland if in terms of financial security and human rights they are in a less advantageous status; this has been proven for Armenians before the Genocide and the Sovietization of the Republic of Armenia. That was when no matter how bad the situation, a homeland existed; and the option to return to it was not denied. Then Vardanian takes up the contemporary Armenian communities outside Soviet Armenia and emphasizes their importance in terms of number, quality, and financial power. Faced with the undeniable reality that Armenians cannot return to Soviet Armenia, he advocates the importance of preserving the national and cultural identity in the diaspora. He then proposes organized efforts to achieve that goal and to save the new generation from assimilation. Vardanian goes on defining the force that will be capable of undertaking the task. Being a staunch partisan, he believes Dashnaktsutun to be that force. He draws parallels between Dashnaktsutun and the

Zionists in terms of the influence both have and the role they play in their respective communities.<sup>38</sup>

### The American Scene

Armenian-American life is rarely reflected in *Hairenik*, especially in the first years. Sometimes it is hard to judge by the content just where this magazine is published. The stories are mostly about the Old World, memories of Armenian life in the homeland, memories of the revolutionary period, and the *fedayee* movement of the recent past. Beginning with the first issue of the year 1926, a column entitled *Hay kyanké - amsakan tesutiun* (The Armenian life, a Monthly Review) is introduced. With an emphasis on current life in Soviet Armenia and Armenian communities around the world, the column provides a brief report on Armenian Americans. In March 1927, the establishment of the literary group *Grakan Miutiun* (Literary Association) in New York is reported. The columnist wishes the new group perseverance and success and draws a grim picture of Armenian cultural life in America. He speaks of the fruitless efforts of similar groups to boost ethnic consciousness and appreciation for Armenian history and literature. He admits that only a small percentage of American Armenians care enough to gather around such groups; the rest are on the verge of assimilation.

Significantly, in the May 1927 issue, the author of the column explains the meaning and the importance of holding days of commemoration for the victims of the Genocide every April. He wishes to see these *hanteses* (events) reflect the true atmosphere, the solemnity of the catastrophic Event itself. He deems it important to keep the memory of such a colossal injustice alive in the hearts of Armenians from generation to generation. In the next issue, the author talks about Armenian





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Independence Day and due respect for the symbols of Armenian independence: the tricolor flag and the coat of arms. Thanks to political freedom in America, he notes, Armenians commemorate this day every year around May 28; but some political factions do not share the importance of that historic moment and do not participate in its commemoration, for they wrongly think that the Armenian Independence Day belongs to Dashnaktsutun alone. It is important, he writes, to recognize the importance of this moment in the history of the Armenian people and to perpetuate the idea of independence with the hope to gain it back one day.

As to the American scene in Armenian fiction, there are only a few stories with contemporary settings; but the scenes are not restricted to America, since French-Armenian writers, too, are frequently published in *Hairenik*. Yet even those stories do not necessarily reflect diasporan Armenian life. In most cases the story is about human relationships with universal characters entangled in some kind of tragedy.

With so much emphasis on the memories of the Old World, does current community life have a chance to unfold? It is beyond doubt that literature as a cultural representation is the site where the remaking of the relationship between the self and the social can be recognized, or where all social energies at work in the making of human relationships are reflected and the process of their changes is recorded. In this context, as the strong waves of Americanization forcefully beat upon the boundaries to penetrate Armenian-American life, the impact becomes unavoidable. And so, despite all conscious efforts and subconscious motivations to live isolated and ghettoized, the influence of American culture is unavoidable; and close relationships with members of American society become a part of life for the

Armenian communities. The American scene begins to creep into Armenian-American literature and consequently in the literary periodical *Hairenik*.

Scenes of life in America most often, and especially at the beginning, develop in contrast to the scenes of the Old World. A simple, tranquil village life in the Old Country is ended in a deplorable existence in America. These stories reveal a vast array of threatening contrasts, conflicts, and overall hardship and deprivation most emigrants or refugees face in America. *Ekyornerē* (The Newcomers) is a typical portrayal of the misery of life in America. In this play, Destegul typifies the emigrants of the Old Country each with a tragic destiny awaiting them in America. One is working hard and sending money home to his wife, but people are badmouthing the wife. Rumors have it that she has a lover and a child from him. Another one, a lost and confused recent immigrant, drags through a miserable life trying to save money and send it to his ailing mother back home. The third young man, who after long years of separation has joined his father in America, is the luckiest of all. The father supports him financially, hoping that he will study to become a lawyer and make his father and all the Armenians proud. But like a child to a dazzling toy, the son is drawn to American girls and nightlife. He rushes to get away from everything Armenian – language, family, food – and to plunge into American life as quickly as possible. He goes away. He is happy this way, but he is lost for the community, dead for his father.<sup>39</sup>

Hamasdegh's *Spitak lernerun mej* (In the White Mountains) is one of the few exceptions in which the protagonist is not a victim of his ethnicity. Hrand Maksudian, a well-adjusted, well-to-do Armenian living in Boston, is happily married to Margarit. They are blessed with a son who adds to the joy of the family. But the



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picture changes entirely when Gertrude enters the scene. This beautiful, blue-eyed American girl steals Hrand's heart and ruins his marriage. Hrand acts like a young boy again. He begins to see life and to experience happiness as he never did before. Characteristically, throughout the story, a subtle line of comparison is drawn between Margarit's traditional Armenian timidity and Gertrude's unconstrained spontaneity with life and its pleasures. Hamasdegh shares with his readers the life story of his friend without accusing him of adultery, especially with a foreigner, as if he understands and approves of his friend's yearnings for the unusual, for the unknown horizon's of human imagination, even if it comes in the garb of a *femme fatale*. Or, perhaps, knowing, *a priori*, that his friend will eventually return to his family, he is more permissive and sympathetic to him.<sup>40</sup>

The story continues in the sequel, *Niv Yorki mej* (In New York).<sup>41</sup> Hrand is bewitched by Gertrude's beauty; and although she is married now to a millionaire, he abandons his wife and little son and follows her to New York, only to get a glimpse of her once in a while. The final sequel to this story is titled *Veradardz* (Return).<sup>42</sup> In this tale of blind infatuation, obsession, and now disappointment, Hrand is dragging out his life in New York. He has lost his pride and dignity and is ready to do anything to please Gertrude. What saves Hrand from the final fall and brings him back to his family is not a reawakening to the traditional Armenian family values but the realization of an enormous injustice that Gertrude and her husband are committing through him against a poor farmer, only to satisfy Gertrude's whim. Hrand finally comes to his senses and realizes that he is no more than a tool in the hands of that millionaire couple.<sup>43</sup>

Curiously, the French-Armenian literature published in *Hairenik* in the 1920s provides a

more viable testimony to the everyday life of Armenian communities in France than American-Armenian literature is to life in America. One example is Vazgen Shushanian's *Mahvan aragastē*<sup>44</sup> (The Veil of Death). Written in the style of a diary, the piece elucidates the feelings and emotional upheavals of a pathetic love. The protagonist is a young Armenian artist – a concert pianist and an actress. Her diary reflects the cultural life of the community and shows how well adjusted and balanced most of the French-Armenian youth were. They were able to partake simultaneously of the French high culture and social life as well as the Armenian cultural experience imported from Western Armenia. Of course, the reality is not usually so bright. Shushanian's canvas represents only a small dimension of French-Armenian community life. Shahan Shahnur's stories stand witness to its dark reality.

### Sensuality and Sex

Short stories and poetry are the only genres in *Hairenik* where themes such as love, sensuality, and sex – a little too outlandish for Armenian literature – could have the chance to manifest themselves. In search of such themes and with a keen interest to detect the influence of the new environment on American-Armenian literature, I searched the volumes in vain. I wanted to find out if the traditional “decency” (or bashfulness) and timidity in literature were ignored and taboos broken. Evidently, *Hairenik* belonged to a different world. The unrestrained American or Parisian life and limitless opportunities of literature reflecting that life had had no effect on it.

As far as the realistic description of love scenes is concerned, French-Armenian writers published in *Hairenik* were apparently more at ease. However, the traditional Armenian norms of literary representation still govern.





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*Siro ev meghki partez* (Garden of Love and Sin) by Varos Zakarian is an example. Zakarian describes with a very covert but somewhat suggestive style the relationship between two lovers, seldom giving way to explicit sensuality. The Armenian tradition still dictates the plot and the language when the protagonist confesses in grief that, by having sexual intercourse with the girl he loves, he has killed the girl; he has "crushed a beautiful white calla lily."<sup>44</sup>

The typification of morality and the absence of explicit descriptions of sexual scenes in literature published in *Hairenik* are suggestive of the reality of the behavior that prevailed in the Armenian-American communities. But more importantly, the adopted direction suggests the prescription of an acceptable behavior that *Hairenik* laid out for Armenian youth.

### On Soviet Armenia

Despite the obvious emphasis on pre-Genocide and pre-Soviet Armenian life and despite efforts to strengthen spiritual ties with the lost homeland and the short-lived free Republic, *Hairenik* did not remain indifferent toward Soviet Armenia. It was important for Armenian Americans, yesterday's refugees of Western Armenia, to develop an understanding of that small corner of historic Armenia where Armenian life continued. It was important to create a bond between the diasporan Armenians and that remnant of the Armenian homeland and to put that bond to work in strengthening their sense of Armenianness. But could Soviet Armenia from the other end in the game play its part in the forging of a strong sense of belonging and ethnic identity? It could, but it did not. Soviet Armenia was engulfed in its own internal problems, ranging from adjusting to a new and foreign regime – dictated from a powerful center thousands of miles away from Yerevan – to overcoming the financial difficulties stemming from the princi-

ples of Soviet economic structure.

Despite this aloofness by Soviet Armenia, a considerable body of literature in *Hairenik* is dedicated to discussing various facets of life there. In this regard, Vahan Minakhorian's contribution is most notable. Especially in pieces published in the two years of 1924 and 1925, he discusses the economic structure of Soviet Armenia within the framework of a variety of topics such as methods of construction, husbandry, taxes, agriculture, village life, etc. Similar subjects are also discussed by Sebul Stepanian, Taragir, Artashes Abeghian, and others. Interestingly, Artashes Hatsian, an ARF member from Philadelphia, announces a contest in *Hairenik* with a prize of \$50 to go to the best research article on Soviet Armenia, published in the third year (Volume III) of *Hairenik*.<sup>45</sup> The names of the two recipients, Vahan Minakhorian and Taragir, are then announced in the first issue of Vol. IV (1925). The \$50 prize is split between the two.

News from Soviet Armenia becomes a regular topic in *Hairenik* in the column "*Hay Kyank*" (Armenian Life), which began to appear regularly starting with Vol. IV, No. 12, 1926. In addition to these informative and analytic articles, there appear also stories on life in Soviet Armenia. These stories, however, mostly describe the negative aspects, the persecutions, arrests, imprisonments, and forced indoctrinations. *Gndakaharvatsnerē* (The Executed by Firing Squad) by Ren, and *Drakhtum* (In Paradise) by V. Valadian are examples.<sup>46</sup> The last parts of Kostan Zarian's *Antsordē ev ir chamban* (The Traveler and His Road) also entertain the subject of life in Soviet Armenia.<sup>47</sup>

### Epilogue

Very early in its life, *Hairenik* made its way into American-Armenian society. Statistics and reports provided in the first issue of the second



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year attest to that reality. The number of subscribers had reached 3,000, an impressive figure for the time as well as in comparison with other diasporan publications.

In his travel notes, Shirvanzade attested to *Hairenik*'s popularity. The headquarters of this periodical, he notes, was actually functioning as a community center where every Armenian was welcomed and where a fiery discussion of Armenian issues and world affairs could go on in any given moment among groups gathered there.<sup>48</sup>

With a unique opportunity to work in a relatively unconstrained political atmosphere and free of overt pressures and censorship, *Hairenik* had begun to take firm and steady steps toward establishing itself as an important part of Armenian-American collective experience and community life. America offered an atmosphere that was denied to Armenians in Soviet Armenia. *Hairenik*, as the literary organ and the mouthpiece of the ARF, was aware of that reality and aimed to undertake the role of a diasporan institution to educate, to transmit knowledge on issues of Armenian concern, to teach the new generation about the historical events of the recent past, and to transfuse the righteousness of the Armenian cause and national struggle.

By stirring emotions and arousing yearnings for Armenia, real or spiritual, and by instilling pride in the Armenian heritage; *Hairenik* helped to strengthen the element of Armenianness in the duality of the Armenian-American identity. But at the same time, by doing so, it helped to stress the marginality of the Armenians in America. Was this healthy or desirable? This question is posed once again in this paper, and it is still difficult to find a definite answer. Or, maybe, a definite answer cannot do justice to a question of such complexity. There is no question that by not opening to the outside world and to American culture – and

by consciously denying the effects of that outside world — *Hairenik* served as a buffer between the Armenian communities and the American mainstream; but it also denied the possibility of a livable medium.

In a book entitled *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*, appropriately published in 1922 (the year *Hairenik* began publishing), Robert E. Parks explains the purpose and the *raison d'être* of the immigrant press: "The immigrant press is interesting mainly from the light which its history and its contents throw upon the inner life of immigrant peoples and their efforts to adjust themselves to the new cultural environment." As Bernard Cohen attests, the Yiddish press of the 1920s (and the 1930s) generally did just that for the Jewish immigrant, "accelerating his process of Americanization," constantly disseminating love, appreciation, and esteem for his newly adopted land. This undertaking, of course, did not preclude the emphasis put on Jewish cultural life and preservation of ethnic identity among the Jewish immigrants.<sup>49</sup> *Hairenik* consciously rejected the role of facilitating the process of Americanization for Armenians. It continued to uphold, instead, the vision of a free and independent Armenia and the continuation of a territorialized Armenian collective life in the homeland.

As noted at the beginning of this article, I limited my research to the first five years of *Hairenik* monthly, looking also into later issues to grasp a broader view of the entire picture. Thus, I can safely surmise that the results of my analysis can hold for the entire forty-eight-year period of *Hairenik*'s publication. The themes entertained and the genres frequently occurring in the first sixty issues continue with little change. Obviously, new names appear in the fields of poetry and fiction, as well as in historical, philosophical, ideological articles and literary reviews. In





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later issues, significantly, many pieces, especially poetry, are reprinted from Soviet-Armenian literary journals (*Sovetakan grakanutiun* and *Grakan Adrbejan*). But the general direction remains the same. One can still find the generation of refugees of the Old World letting out its last sighs of despair and pain emanating from an unhealed wound of unfulfilled love and yearning for the fatherland. S. Taparakam's *Erani mi or* (I Wish One Day) and *Tundardzi ughis* (My Road to Return Home) are examples.<sup>50</sup> One continues to find recollections of the bright and enviable days of the pre-Genocide era, like A. Dabaghian's *Polso vanets'i khohararnerē* (The Vanetsi Cooks of Constantinople), or memories of the horrible experiences during the Genocide like *Polisen Der Zor* (From Constantinople to Der El Zor) and Chituni's *Aysor u erek* (Today and Tomorrow).<sup>51</sup> There still appear articles striving to save from oblivion an event or a heroic figure in the history of Armenians of the pre-Genocide, pre-Soviet era. *Patmakan oreri depker ev demker, Erevanē 1917-in* (Events and Faces of Historical Days, the Erevan of 1917), by Eprem Sargsian is an example.

In November 1967, in the last page of the twelfth issue of that year, a short statement announced that hereafter *Hairenik* would be published quarterly. The reason was stated, without elaboration, to be the new circumstances and new concerns born in the diaspora. The quarterly was short-lived. Its last issue, Vol. III, No.10 appeared in the summer of 1970. After publishing 540 monthlies and ten quarterlies, *Hairenik* was no more.<sup>52</sup>

The end, however, did not come suddenly. During the last years of its publications, *Hairenik* had already lost its tempo both in physical appearance and material content. It had grown smaller in size and in number of

pages. It did not sustain the textual variety and quality of its yesteryears. What was the reason behind this phenomenon? What were the new circumstances and concerns to which the announcement alluded and in the face of which *Hairenik* gave in?

*Hairenik* had lost one very important element: that unique dimension it possessed linking diasporan Armenians to the Armenian culture and homeland. In the aftermath of the Genocide, with the reality of Armenian dispersion, and therefore the interruption of a natural evolution and transition of culture and tradition, *Hairenik* successfully contributed to the minimization of that gap. The situation changed especially after World War II, when the Soviet Union engaged in a cold war against the West. Its propagation of Soviet ideology, its subversive activities, and intelligence work increased substantially. In this reinvigorated campaign, Soviet Armenia was given the role of neutralizing the political aspirations of diasporan Armenians and propagating a special kind of patriotism equated with an unquestioned loyalty to and love of Soviet Armenia. Diasporan Armenians were led to frown upon those who did not share this orientation. The anti-Soviets were alienated and labeled as anti-Armenia. *Hairenik* and the organization behind it fell into that category. In addition to this important factor, there were also the American lifestyle and world views gradually sinking in and contributing to the apoliticization of Armenians in America and weakening their bonds to Armenia and Armenianness. Furthermore, gone was the generation who could read Armenian fluently and for whom the Armenian language was the main outlet to the outside world. The post-World War II American-born generation did not read Armenian, and the new waves of Armenian immigrants were not enough to support the



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existing Armenian institutions. *Hairenik* was gradually losing the pillars of its foundation.

Minas Tololyan's analysis of the post-World War II situation of diasporan Armenian communities, more than a polemic on the decline of *Hairenik* or similar institutions, is an outcry of alarm, a warning against concepts and ideas that are beginning to fail in their traditional role of sustaining Armenian ethnic bonds.<sup>53</sup> Tololyan considers the advancement of technology, the mechanical life, and the inclination toward materialism as factors only partially instrumental in the process, and holds Soviet Armenia, in its subversive role in the diasporan communities, as the major culprit for the deteriorating state of diasporan Armenian culture and literature.

So much emphasis on the Soviet Armenian factor may sound a bit exaggerated. Other equally important factors in the form of social, cultural, and economic impulses were, certainly, at work against the ethnic consciousness of the post-World War II Armenian diaspora. In any event, the picture Tololyan draws is a close representation of the reality, a reality that caused, among other things, the demise of a periodical that for forty-eight years made history and was history.

*Hairenik* had fulfilled its role in the shaping and reshaping of Armenian identity in America. But since ethnic identity is never a fixed and frozen concept and undergoes change both horizontally, in terms of social strata, and vertically, in terms of time, the process continues and will continue as a trait of multicultural American society and as a result of the persisting diasporization of the Armenian people. Only the study of such metamorphoses can shed light on many individual and collective social behaviors, problems, and successes within the diasporan Armenian communities.

References

- <sup>1</sup> *Hairenik* newspaper began publication as a weekly in New York in 1899 and was transferred to Boston the next year. Between 1913 and 1915, *Hairenik* was published three times a week. In 1915 *Hairenik* became a daily newspaper, which continued until 1992. Since then *Hairenik* has been published on a weekly basis. In 1986 the headquarters of *Hairenik* was moved from Boston to Watertown, Mass., where a strong Armenian community exists.
- <sup>2</sup> Ruben Darbinian, *Ksaneyhing amiak mē* (A twenty-five-year anniversary), Vol. I, No.7. (The titles in this paper are provided in free translation to convey the meaning closest to the original.)
- <sup>3</sup> See Vol. I, Nos. 1-12, 1922. For other examples in this genre, see Hovhannes Kajaznuni, *Azg ev Hairenik* (Nation and Fatherland), which aimed to disseminate and propagate nationalism, Vol. I, No.7, 1923 to Vol. II, No. 3, 1924, with intervals.
- <sup>4</sup> Vol. I, No.2, 1922 to Vol. I, No.4, 1923.
- <sup>5</sup> Most prominent authors of these articles were H. Siruni (on Ruben Zardarian, Ervand Otian, etc.), H. Oshagan (on Misak Metsarents, Ruben Zardarian, Eghishe Charents, etc.), Shirvanzade (on Raffi, Gamar Katipa, Gabriel Sundukian, and many other post-Renaissance writers), Art. Abeghian (on G. Khazhak, Khachatur Abovian, and the role of Torbat University on the Armenian Renaissance literature), and Intra with a long series of articles titled *Grakan demker* (Literary figures). Then we come across new names such as Ruben Berberian and Armen Sevan, who appear regularly in the later issues but still with monographs on renowned Armenian writers of the past.
- <sup>6</sup> Destegul, a noted intellectual of the time, was published frequently in *Hairenik* newspaper. He also became the newspaper's editor for a period of time. The above-mentioned article was published in *Hairenik* monthly, Vol. III, Nos. 9,10,12, 1925.
- <sup>7</sup> For Shirvanzade's article-travelogue, entitled *Otar vairerum* (In foreign lands), see Vol. II, No.3, 1924.





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<sup>8</sup> See Ruben Darbinian, *Hamasdegh*, in Vol. II, No.5, 1924.

<sup>9</sup> Vol. III, No.1, Nov. 1924.

<sup>10</sup> Built around this theme are stories by Avetik Isahakian, Avetis Aharonian, H. Oshagan, Hamasdegh, Derenik Demirjian, Vazgen Shushanian, Shirvanzade, Aram Haigaz, M. Valadian, Levon Nayirtsi, H. Siruni, Varduhi Kalantar, M. Khachuni, Eghishe Aivazian, Sos-Vani, Brand K. Armen, Chituni, Artashes Hovhannisian, Arsen Erkat, and many others.

<sup>11</sup> Published in serial form from Vol. IV, No.12, 1926, to Vol. VI, No.4, 1928.

<sup>12</sup> Many are poets and writers whose names sound unfamiliar, and one wonders who are these men and women so dedicated to Armenian literature. What became of the literature they created so diligently? Sos-Vani was one of the unfamiliar names to me. But coincidentally, at the time when I was engaged in this research, I came across an article by Ara Baliozian (*Nor Gyank*, Vol. XVII, No. I, Dec. 15, 1994) in which he was reminiscing about this man. Sos-Vani had been his Armenian teacher in Greece. Baliozian remembered his "piercing gray eyes, that had witnessed scenes of unspeakable horrors, [and that] remained frozen forever." He spoke of him as a noted poet, highly regarded by his contemporaries. "An authentic Armenian, a man of unblemished integrity, proud of his heritage but without a single trace of vanity or chauvinism." Who knows? There may be interesting stories about each one of these men and women, who will, perhaps, never be read or remembered by the coming generations. For the poem mentioned in the text, see Vol. II, No.7, 1924.

<sup>13</sup> Examples are: *Karot* [Yearning] and *Otarutiun* [Experience in an alien land or exile], by Armenuhi Tikranian (Vol. II, No.7, 1924), *Hairenakarotin vishte* [The grief of the one yearning for his fatherland], by Dj. Urvakan (Vol.II, No. 6, 1924), *Haireni arshaluis* [The dawn of my native land], by Aram Diumanian (Vol.II, No.4, 1924), *Karot* [Yearning] and *Nakhaskizb* [Before the beginning], by Vostanik (Vol. I, No.12, 1923), *Knars anlar* [My lyre with no cords], by Perchuhi (Vol. I, No. 12, 1923), *Hairenik* [Fatherland], by Vostanik (Vol. II, No.

2, 1923), *Hairenikis* [To my fatherland], by Perchuhi (Vol. II, No.3, 1924), *Hairenik* [Fatherland], by Avetik Isahakian (Vol.II, No.7, 1924), *Im lav ashkharhē* [My beloved world], by Levon Nayirtsi (Vol. III, No.3, 1925), *Hairenakan tun* [The home of my forefathers], by Armenuhi Tigranian-Aharonian (Vol. V, No. 10, 1927), *Im giughakis* [To my little village], by Arsen Achemian (Vol. V, No. II, 1927).

<sup>14</sup> See Vol. II, No.6, 1924, and Vol. II, No.2, 1923, respectively.

<sup>15</sup> See Vol. II, No.3, 1924, Vol. IV, No. 10, 1926, and Vol. V, No.8, 1927, respectively.

<sup>16</sup> Vol. V, No. 12, 1927.

<sup>17</sup> Destegul expresses this notion in *Tirojē aigiin mej*, an article discussed earlier (see note 6). Here, he mentions a statement he made in another article he published in *Navasard* (New York, Spring, 1922).

<sup>18</sup> The story of the defense of Van was published in serial form from Vol. II, 1924, to Vol. III, No.7, 1925. This piece has had an interesting story. Onnik Mkhitarian attests that he published parts of it in various periodicals in Armenia as early as 1916, the last in Baku in 1917. After the Baku massacres and the Armenian mass exodus, the manuscript was lost until much later Zapel Esayan found it and brought it out. It was years later that Mkhitarian finally got hold of the manuscript and published it in whole in *Hairenik*.

<sup>19</sup> For the sake of brevity, I cite only three examples: *Azatomarti servundē* [The Generation of Struggle for Freedom], by Siruni (Vol.II, Nos. 3-12, 1924, with intervals), *Ejer Hayastani ankakhutian patmutiunits* [Pages from the History of Armenian Independence], and *Mi tari gerutian mej* [One Year in Captivity], by Artashes Babalian in Vol. I, Nos. 8, 9, 1923 and Vol. II, Nos. 7, 8, 1924 respectively.

<sup>20</sup> To cite two examples: Loris Melikian, by A. F. Koni (Vol. III, Nos. 4, 6-8, 1926), and *Vani Ishkhanē* [Ishkhan of Van], by Onnik Mkhitarian (Vol. V, No.3, 1927).

<sup>21</sup> For the former see Vol. I, No.2, 1922 to Vol. IX, No.11, 1931 (with long interruptions) and for the latter see Vol. V, No.8, 1927 to Vol. VII, No.7, 1929 (also with intervals).



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<sup>22</sup> Examples are *Hayots tseghayin tsagumē* [The Armenian Racial Origin], an interesting account of the testimonies of expert witnesses (non-Armenian professors) to the Court of the State of Oregon, on the occasion of a trial of an Armenian named Tatos Cartozian. See Vol. II, No. 9-11, 1924, *Hayastani ev hin ashkharhi kaghakakertut'iunē* [The Civilization of Armenia and the Ancient World], by M. Minasian (Vol. III, No. 6 and 7, 1925), *Hin hayots Ashkharhayatské* [The Worldview of Ancient Armenians], Vol. IV, No. 12, 1926, to Vol. V, No. 3, 1927, *Kaghakakan hosankner hin Hayastanum* [Political Currents in Ancient Armenia], by N. Adontz, Vol. V, No. 4, 1927, *Hiuisakank ev hayatipk hay azgin mej* [The Northerners and the Armenoids Among the Armenian Nation], by M. Minasian, Vol. IV, No. 11, 1926, *Hayerē ev Kristoneutiunē* [Armenians and Christianity] and *Hayerē arvestneru taratsich* [Armenians, the Propagators of Arts], by Gevorg Mesrop, Vol. II, No. 1, 1923, and Vol. III, No. 4-7, 1925, respectively, and finally, *Hay lezvi tsagumē* [The Origin of the Armenian Language], by M. Minasian, Vol. III, No. 1, 1924.

<sup>23</sup> In recent years, the Armenian State archives and the archives of Soviet Foreign ministry have been opened and are available to researchers.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Galaijian, *Vordekoruis mairē* [The Mother Who Lost Her Child], Vol. II, No. 7, 1924.

<sup>25</sup> Vol. II, No. 11, 1924.

<sup>26</sup> Vol. III, No. 2, 1924.

<sup>27</sup> See Vol. II, No. 3, 1924, Vol. II, No. 12, 1924, and Vol. V, No. 5, 1926, respectively.

<sup>28</sup> For these examples from Hamasdegh, see Vol. I, No. 7, 1923 and Vol. V, No. 6, 1927, respectively.

<sup>29</sup> Vol. III, No. 1, 1924.

<sup>30</sup> Vol. II, Nos. 7-9, 1924.

<sup>31</sup> See Vol. III, No. 12, 1925. See also the untitled poem in Vol. IV, No. 4, 1926, by Shushanian, for another example capturing this theme.

<sup>32</sup> See Vol. IV, No. 10, 1926, and Vol. V, No. 1, 1926, respectively.

<sup>33</sup> Vol. IV, Nos. 10-11, 1926.

<sup>34</sup> Vol. V, No. 8, 1927.

<sup>35</sup> See Vol. II, No. 2, 1923, and Vol. III, No. 8, 1925, respectively.

<sup>36</sup> Vol. II, No. 5, 1924.

<sup>37</sup> See Vol. II, No. 9, 1924, and Vol. III, No. 4, 1925, respectively.

<sup>38</sup> Vol. IV, No. 7, 1926.

<sup>39</sup> See Vol. III, No. 3, 4, 1924. Another example is the protagonist in Hamasdegh's *Vardan*, a misfit not only in American society but also in the Armenian community. Vardan lives a monotonous life and dreams of getting married one day and returning to his native village to repair his father's windmill, which the Turks destroyed. Of course, none of the goals of this simplistic and gullible man is realized. Deceived and neglected, he continues to live a lonely and unhappy life (see Vol. I, No. 2, 1922 to Vol. I, No. 3, 1923).

In Tserun Torgomian's *Astvats erazs katarets* [God Made My Dreams Come True], Arshak, an only son of a poor widow, dreams of coming to America to work in that land of golden opportunities. He promises his mother to save money and return to help her. The mother is terrified by the idea and tries to talk him out of it. But Arshak is determined. He eventually reaches America and spends the first ten years in that strange and unfamiliar world in a state of shock, disillusionment, and confusion. Then, finally, he finds his way and starts making money. What he does not think about at all is returning home to his mother. He asks her to send a girl for him to marry. The mother fulfills her son's wish knowing that she is losing the last flicker of hope for his return. From then on the story becomes a series of mishaps leading to tragedies in both the mother's and the son's lives. The tragic end to the lives of two innocent human beings tends to show that the far away alien land, called America, is nothing but an evil (see Vol. I, No. 5, 1923).

<sup>40</sup> See Vol. IV, No. 2, 1925.

<sup>41</sup> Vol. IV, No. 8, 1926.

<sup>42</sup> Vol. V, No. 1, 1926.

<sup>43</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the literary themes of American scenes in Armenian literature, see Rubina Perroomian, "The Transformation of Armenianness in the Formation of Armenian-American Identity," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, 6 (1992, 1993), pp. 119-145.

<sup>44</sup> Vol. IV, No. 4, 1926.





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- <sup>45</sup> The announcement is published in Vol. III, No.7, 1925.
- <sup>46</sup> See Vol. IV, No.12, 1926, Vol. V, Nos. 1 and 2, 1926, and Vol. V, Nos. 3 to 6, 1927, for Ren's and Vol. V, No.3, 1926, for Valadian's stories.
- <sup>47</sup> The Armenian-American writers' perception of Soviet Armenia depended a great deal on their political stance. For a point of view opposing that in *Hairenik*, see, for example, Noubar Akishian and Vahe Haig discussed in "The Transformation of Armenianness in the Formation of Armenian-American Identity," mentioned above in note 43.
- <sup>48</sup> See note 7 for Shirvanzade's article.
- <sup>49</sup> Bernard Cohen, *Sociological Changes in American Jewish Life as Reflected in Selected Jewish Literature* (Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1972), pp. 69-70.
- <sup>50</sup> See Vol. 45, No.9, 1967, and Vol. 45, No. 10, 1967, respectively.
- <sup>51</sup> See *Hairenik Quarterly*, Vol.III, No.9, 1970.
- <sup>52</sup> Long before the demise of the Armenian-language *Hairenik*, the ARF launched the publication of two English periodicals housed in *Hairenik's* headquarters. *Hairenik Weekly* (1934), which was renamed *Armenian Weekly* in 1969, and *Armenian Review* (1949). The initiative was, obviously, because of the growing demand for English-language publications.
- <sup>53</sup> Vol. III, No.9, 1970.