

# Kostan Zarian: Turn and Return between Homeland and Diaspora

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## Résumé

**Kostan Zarian**, l'une des figures majeures de la littérature arménienne du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, a laissé un vaste corpus littéraire de prose et de poésie. Cet essai présente l'un de ses principaux sujets : son projet de construction de la nation par la littérature, particulièrement traité au cours des décennies qu'il a passées dans la **diaspora** arménienne. Il convient de noter que Zarian a explicitement rejeté la dispersion des Arméniens provoquée par le génocide de 1915, un rejet qu'il incarna lorsqu'il (re)vint à sa patrie au crépuscule de sa vie.

**Mots-clés** : Zarian, Arménie, diaspora, patrie, littérature

## Abstract

**Kostan Zarian**, one of the foremost figures of twentieth-century Armenian literature, left a vast literary corpus of prose and poetry. This essay introduces one of his main subjects: his project of nation building through literature, particularly addressed during the decades he spent in the Armenian **Diaspora**. It is noteworthy that Zarian explicitly rejected the Armenian dispersion brought by the catastrophic genocide of 1915, a rejection embodied by his (re)turn to the homeland in the twilight of his life.

**Keywords**: Zarian, Armenia, Diaspora, Homeland, Literature

## Introduction

Kostan (also spelled Gostan, Constant) Zarian (Shamakhi 1885–Yerevan 1969), poet, novelist, and essayist, was among the most important names in twentieth-century modern Armenian literature.

His life was punctuated by turns and returns. Zarian was an exile from his birthplace, his family, and his language. After studying in a Russian gymnasium in Baku, he was sent to a boarding school in a suburb of Paris and then he pursued his university education in Brussels. He published initially in Russian and French, until he learned Armenian in the early 1910s. In a certain sense, he was a forerunner of a language-based model of diasporic identity: his passage through the West led him to return to the Armenian language, which he turned into his main means of expression.

He was a sort of “wandering Armenian,” and as such, an outsider, both in a literal and a metaphorical sense. Most of the time, he lived on the margins of Armenian community life, and his frequent moves through countries and continents were mostly due to personal reasons. He balanced his act between a diaspora intellectually unprepared and a homeland ideologically unable to accept him, reflecting a continuous search for a direction.<sup>1</sup>

Zarian’s prose sought to explore Armenian identity and current issues and was steeped in his extensive and voracious reading of a plethora of world authors and his contacts with a wide array of non-Armenian writers, plastic artists, and musicians. His literature evolved outside the pairs “Western Armenian/Eastern Armenian” or “Diasporan Armenian/Soviet Armenian” traditionally affixed to the name of Armenian writers.

This essay<sup>2</sup> will draw upon some excerpts from his fiction and non-fiction, as well as his correspondence, to introduce one of Zarian’s main subjects: his project of nation building through literature, first sketched in the period 1915–1922 and then more extensively addressed during the decades he spent in the Armenian diaspora. A project somewhat similar, the creation of a literary community in the diaspora, was also raised in the same chronological range by the generation of French-Armenian writers gathered around the short-lived *Menk’* [We] journal (1931–1933) in Paris (Beledian 2016, 109–140). However, unlike them, Zarian explicitly rejected the Armenian dispersion brought by the catastrophic genocide of 1915, a rejection embodied by his (re)turn to the homeland in the twilight of his life.

### 1. National Consciousness and Nation Building

Kostan Zarian was one of the leading names and the editor-in-chief of the short-lived monthly *Mehian* [Pagan Altar], which was published by a group of five writers—initially including Taniël Varuzhan, already a celebrated poet—that intended a movement of literary renewal in Constantinople on the eve of World War I. Zarian and Hagop Ōshagan,<sup>3</sup> two up-and-coming writers, were particularly conscious of a clear-cut displacement in Armenian life and

national fragmentation, and maintained that art was bound to become the gathering factor. Zarian expressed the idea in one of his articles, entitled “The Heart of the Homeland,” in a metaphorical way:

But, in order that the Great Heart might once again sing out with all its thunderous force, it is necessary to gather up its fragments and seek the new form of its existence and manifestation (Zarian 1999, 97; English translation in Nichanian 2014, 277).

*Mehian* disappeared after a run of seven issues (January–July 1914), and Zarian managed to escape to Bulgaria in November 1914, months before the genocidal deportations started, and then settled in Italy. In July 1918, barely two months after the declaration of the independence of Armenia, when the country was teetering between life and death, he wrote to Arshag Ch’ōbanian from Florence:<sup>4</sup>

It remains to get ethically [*baroyapes*/բարոյապէս] ready to enjoy freedom. The nation is not a geographical or local or linguistic conglomerate, but a symbol-creating ethical [*baroyakan*/բարոյական] link that should be created with unending work. The Armenian nation must be created by poets and ethicists [*baroyaget*/բարոյագէտ]; otherwise, the age-old sacrifice will be lost in vain (Matioessian 2007, 387).

Zarian established a connection to “ethos” [*bark’*/բարք], namely, the beliefs or aspirations of a community that express its characteristic spirit. He used words derived from *bar(k’)*, whose meanings are not entirely covered by the English equivalents “ethical” and “ethicist.” From his viewpoint, a *baroyaget* was an ethnologist, a collector of anthropological data, and an ethnographer, an analyst of such information who recreated the foundations of the people. A force of renewal (“the age-old sacrifice”), a creative act that was to be led by poets and “ethicists,” shaped the beliefs or aspirations of the community. Art was the way to create the heart (= the nation), Zarian maintained, the ethnologist-ethnographer was the collector of its pieces and the seeker of new ways of creation, and the poet-artist became the creator. The birth of the nation resulted from an ongoing process of sacrifice, self-renewal, and creation, a “symbol-creating ethical link” that reflected the force of art.

The idea of the poet-artist as creator of the nation was the core of Zarian’s literary project, chiefly enunciated in three of his major novelistic works based on recollections from his visit to Armenia as a journalist for Italian newspapers in 1919 and his sojourn as a teacher at Yerevan State University in 1922–1924.

*The Wanderer and His Road* [Անցորդը եւ իր ճամբան] (1926–1928)<sup>5</sup> and the unfinished *The Workers Cooperative and the Bones of the Mammoth* [Բանկօօսարը եւ մամուլի ոսկորները] (1931–1933)<sup>6</sup> were two novels serialised in the Boston-based monthly *Hayrenik’* [Fatherland], published by the anti-Communist Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) [Hay Yeghap’okhakan Dashnaks’ut’iwn]. Full of devastating swipes at the regime, both reflected on the status of the Armenian people and its present and future, dealing also with the theme of nation-building:

The spirit becomes a creative force when it becomes a living organism. Peoples are alive when they search for their inner and deep law. Real life is not an accumulation of ideas, but spiritual quality and standing, a certain way of expressing life, a sense of responsibility and creative ability (Zarian 1975, 168).

Zarian opposed his idea of a spiritual construction to the material construction or rebuilding already in the works in Armenia as part of Communist ideology, as he wrote to Ch'ōbanian in March 1931:

[I] believe like you that we must protect materially what we have, avoid [political] adventures and reinforce “construction.” But we also must save the free spirit of the Armenian individual, otherwise tomorrow, especially if the Bolshevik system succeeds, we will disappear as a sovereign element, as a nation, as we are disappearing in America. Tomorrow Russia will become more subsuming than America and no abstract border will be able to protect us if our free spirit and deep national awareness are dead (Matiossian 2010, 450).

In the preface to his third major work in *Hayrenik'*, the travelogue *Countries and Gods* [Երկիրներ և աստուածներ] (1935-1938), he added:

All these questions are mostly of interest for those who are aware that we are going through the most dangerous and crucial period of our history, and who feel responsible before that history.

In particular, [they feel responsible] before our country, because there cannot be life and cannot be history outside the country. When I say country, I want to say that given and certain piece of land where the Armenian people lives and acts, where, despite external circumstances, the Armenian spirit is being forged anew, the nation is being rebuilt, the new historical myth and the new Armenian individual are being born.

I am sure that tomorrow, when the period of instinctive materialism is gone in our country, to which I feel myself deeply close, the new generation will be thirsty to look over all the questions that currently interest us (Zarian 1998, 23-24).

How are nation and myths—namely, literature—linked? In 1932 Ōshagan used the concept of “ethicist” mentioned by Zarian in 1918 while making a revealing yet complex remark:

Writing is such a wide and public phenomenon that we can only compare it to the moral ethos created by religions in ancient times. As ethicists [*baroyaget*] have uncovered great, beautiful things in that realm, authentic critics can uncover great, simple, and deep laws from literature (Ōshagan 1983, 27).

Writing, therefore, becomes a creative force as binding as religion. It shapes the ethos of the community and collects its dispersed fragments, offering them a certain “sacred value”. In a letter to Peniamin Nurigian,<sup>7</sup> written in 1938, Zarian stated:

Armenian life has gone from one pole to the other and remained suspended in the air, and with it, Armenian literature itself. To find new paths for the Armenian mind, to give new momentum and new contents to that life and to anticipate the probable future of spiritual development; that would be, I think, the target of Armenian creation (Matiossian 1997, 121).

## 2. Centralisation

In the late 1930s, Zarian wrote his most ambitious novel, *The Ship on the Mountain* [Նավը լեռան վրայ],<sup>8</sup> where he condensed these and other connected subjects. The novel was set in the days of the first Republic of Armenia (1918–1920), but, as the author remarked in the preface, it intended to be “the history of a few Armenian souls who were destined to live through one of the most crucial periods of our national history” and “not a book of history, but a book of the spirit” (Zarian 1943, 9), namely, an instrument to forge the path to a cultural renaissance; Zarian hoped that the novel would contribute “to the rebirth of the Armenian spirit (Zarian 1943, 9). This is reminiscent of recent trends in postcolonial literature, where, as Timothy Brennan has pointed out:

Many of the novels often attempt to assemble the fragments of a national life and give them a final shape. They become documents designed to prove national consciousness, with multiple, myriad components that display an active communal life (Brennan 1993, 61).

Zarian retrieved and reworked the theme of the mountain in the story of Ara Hērian, a seafarer captain struggling during the Republic years to bring a ship from the Black Sea coast to Lake Sevan. The story is based on reality; at the time of the fall of the Republic, the actual ship had stopped halfway at a hill near Yerevan (Matioossian 2019). “The ship on the city...” Zarian had written in *The Wanderer and His Road*. “A sort of living statue, symbolic and attractive. Its shadow, which dominated daily life, inspired strength and faith and awakened golden dreams” (Zarian 1975, 302). He reminded the reader that “peoples have founded their mythology over small, but idiosyncratic pieces of evidence” (Zarian 1975, 301).

The myth of “the ship on the mountain” transposed the myth of Noah’s Ark. After the Deluge (namely, the Catastrophe), the ship has settled on the peak of the mountain, from where a new life will start, the devastated country will flourish, and the ruins will be rebuilt. But the Ark story is just the start. The general subject is part of a myth of eternal return: “The Sacred Mountain—where heaven and earth meet—is situated at the centre of the world” (Eliade 1959, 12).

The centre’s function is to become the beginning of creation. The title of the novel is ambiguous: the mountain is a centre, a point of reference. The ship goes towards sacredness, the state of nature where everything is eternally repeated. The place become sacred when the archetype realises the sacrifice; he creates and establishes the rite.

The path of the ship is difficult and dangerous because it is a rite of passage from the profane to the holy, from utopia to reality, from death to life, from humanity to divinity. The ship has departed from chaos and is progressing towards cosmos (Eliade 1959, 18).

The novel tries to summarise Zarian's ideas about the search for the Armenian "spirit" and the need of centralisation:

The Armenian nation, mister Captain, has lost the path and has only kept the customs... It has lost the Spirit and kept the form... We are defeated... (Zarian 1943, 85).

The ship itself is not the only representation of the spirit. Its meaning is only fulfilled through Hērian's presence. It will not be just a means of transportation—its primary mission in Lake Sevan—but a way to return to the sea, where Hērian, "captain of faraway trips," will rediscover its essence, as well as its source (Zarian 1943, 53).

Ara Hērian's name brings two interconnected mythical figures together. His first name comes from the mythical figure of Ara the Beautiful, one of the "patriarchs" of Armenia according to fifth century historian Movsēs Khorenats'i, regarded in the scholarship both as a solar divinity and a god of death and resurrection. The novel depicts him in the following way:

[...] The integral and powerful solar king, the will forged with inextinguishable rays, the symbol-maker bold visionary, the high priest who turns blood and suffering into happiness and manifests the meaning of universe through light... (Zarian 1943, 167).

The last name *Herian* echoes the account of the Pamphylian Er, son of Armenios, which concluded Plato's *Republic*.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Herian is not just the captain of the ship: "Whoever says ship, says Hērian" (Zarian 1943, 167). The transportation of the ship through the daunting geography of Armenia becomes material for the creation of a new "teaching" called "Herianism" and the narration and singing of various myths and songs among the people (Zarian 1943, 284-287).

The trinity Hērian-ship-sea embodies the spirit that has found its centre and become whole. The individual creates a movement of return to the sources. An impossible movement, because the mechanical repetition of the former state is unthinkable: only moving forward may ensure a return, and time can only be recreated by sacrifice (Eliade 1959, 73-93).

That is why the ship goes to the mountain. Zarian wrote in *The Wanderer*: "And the Ararat looks like a big mirror that regulates illumination. [...] The plain of Ararat is a cradle. The Ararat is a centre and a primeval place" (Zarian 1975, 122-123). More than three decades later, he declared:

The Armenian *voki*, he said, was enlivened by the majestic mountains of our land which constantly reminds us to ascend higher. [...] Armenian mountains and Armenian people have interpenetrated each other. They are organically related, fused. We have given them our sweat and blood and they have given us iron and stones (Kelikian 1973, 8).

In his description of the components of the "myth of eternal return," Eliade has defined the "centre" as "pre-eminently the zone of the sacred, the zone of absolute reality," where are found the other symbols of absolute reality, such as the trees of life and immortality, the source

of youth, *etcetera*: “The road leading to the centre is a ‘difficult way’ [*dūrohana*], and this is verified at every level of reality” (Eliade 1959, 17–18). The “ship on the mountain” means, therefore, the spirit in the centre. “Spirit” is not just a metaphysical concept, but a synonym for “culture” in its widest sense. When culture reaches its centre, the risk of disintegration has been avoided. However, the ship remains halfway to Lake Sevan when Sovietisation comes. The spirit has not reached its centre. It is beyond the scope of the novel to investigate whether it will reach it or not.

The narrator will lead the ship through thorny and winding roads, through moments of desperation and hope to turn into reality what remains in a world of thoughts and dreams:

In my book, I tried to express the indomitable Armenian *voki* [“spirit”]. To talk about Armenian *voki* is like trying to climb a steep mountain, pushing away the thorny brambles and barbs clogging the path, and bleeding as you climb. [...] It’s the most difficult and dangerous climb, but once you get there you can expand your lungs and breathe in deeply the clean, crystal-clear air and let your eyes absorb the ravishing scenery. It makes you feel alive and whole (Kelikian 1973, 8).

Zarian highlights the need of centralisation through Hērian, who sets out to return to the homeland after traveling throughout the world for years. In this way, Zarian thinks, the “nation-like thing” starts the long road to become a “nation.” Hērian does not appear to lose his sense of the duality between the Self and the Other. There is a sense of distance in his personality which makes him feel incomplete, showing the paradox of Hērian/Zarian: the otherness in the identity.

### 3. Denial of the Diaspora

*The Ship on the Mountain* was published in 1943, “in the days of a new, terrible Second World War, when Armenia, again weapons in hand, is getting ready to keep its existence and forge its future” (Zarian 1943, 9). This was a metaphoric image, since the maintenance of Soviet Armenia’s existence and the possibility of forging its future were contingent to the success of the Soviet military effort against the Nazis. In his preface, Zarian asserted that “our heart and mind have not been detached even for an instant from our land and our people,” and made a remark about the reception of his writings, which had been officially ignored and/or subjected to merciless criticism, which had extended to personal attacks:

We also know that there, in the homeland forcibly closed to us, many have intently listened to our words and, for that reason, we have not felt ourselves distant from them and have been able to endure the grave and bitter experiences imposed by stagnant environments (Zarian 1943, 9).

Like many Armenian writers of his time, Zarian was unable to fully grasp the destruction and the void created by the Catastrophe. He drew upon the bipolar dialectics of Homeland versus Diaspora, positing the classical vision of the homeland as the place of reunion, with

the diaspora meaning dispersion and then disposal and loss. The homeland was assumed to be a single place beyond geographical borders, despite the diverse provenance of Armenians abroad, with the majority being from Western Armenia, Cilicia, or other areas of the former Ottoman Empire. The concept underpinning the novel is the denial of the Diaspora, namely, the assumption that Armenian unity can be restored through the reunion of the scattered pieces. The centripetal force must overcome opposing contrary forces; otherwise, Armenian culture will not regain completeness. The reconstruction of the scattered pieces must go forward, or else they will become waste:

However, when the centripetal force weakens, when that force is not a powerful, always renovating, always creating attraction, the remnants expelled from the land gradually diminish and later become dust... Centrifugal forces metamorphose everything: language, religion, the concept of nationality and homeland. Hollow words veil reality. Conventional images are created, deprived of capacity to grow and of strength to flourish... The following happens: the centripetal force no longer leads the particles, but the particles adapt the basic ideas of that force to their immediate, local conditions by altering it, shifting its normal course, and covering its vital symbol.

[...] The nation ceases to exist, and a certain nation-like thing takes its place.

[...] Instead of a dominant thought—we said that race is thought—different thoughts have been created; the central light, the light with which the nation illuminates its mystery of being, establishes its universal importance, extends the torch of its blood, has been veiled...” (Zarian 1943, 160–161).

The denial of the Diaspora ran parallel to the idea that the homeland was the place of salvation for Armenians living in the dispersion. This was central to the propaganda for the repatriation to Soviet Armenia, which had started in the decades of the 1920s and 1930s in a relatively small scale, encompassing genocide survivors and their families. After being interrupted by the Stalinist purges and World War II, it would be resumed in the post-war, with an estimate of 90-100,000 people embarking to Armenia from Europe, the Middle East, and North America between 1946 and 1948 (Mouradian 1979).

Zarian’s uncoupling from the Diaspora seems to have accelerated after the death of Stalin and the beginning of the “thaw” under Nikita Khrushchev’s leadership, despite the toxic environment of the Cold War. His letters addressed to two French Armenian novelists were quite symptomatic. He wrote to Hrach’ Zartarian<sup>10</sup> in February 1958:

The first condition for the creative Armenian intellectual to last is to keep the spiritual link with Armenia. Not to feel himself as an emigrant, but as an exile. To complement the work of Armenians there and do what they cannot do because of political reasons; to get ready for tomorrow’s encounter; to be ready to return home with full hands, clean face, bright eyes. *Faire en se faisant* [to make when making himself] (Matioossian 1998, 156).

Months later, a letter to Zareh Orpuni [Vorponuni] condensed his denial:<sup>11</sup>

It is also good that Armenia is present in the hearts one way or another. Armenians abroad are about to be pulverized, and if they are not inspired somehow by the faraway presence of Armenia, no national feelings will remain in a few years (Zarian 1958, 4).



In an interview with Garabed Pōladian<sup>12</sup> held in 1955, but first published in 1960, he pointed out that the Diaspora—“I do not like that word,” he clarified—had a potential, yet important function to accomplish by shedding the “prejudice” that its role was to criticise or cast everything related to Soviet Armenia under a negative light. He added that Armenia was conducting a historical role that was “admirable, crucial, and decisive,” which needed to be complemented: “If Armenians abroad do not create and feel themselves part of the Armenian totality, they will be pulverised” (Pōladian 1961, 102).

In the preface to *The Ship of the Mountain*, Zarian had regarded his time abroad as “years of exile and not of emigration” (Zarian 1943, 9), underscoring the difference between both concepts. Zarian underscored once again that difference in an essay published in August 1959:

[The emigrant] is a shadow that seeks a new moral body, a new language, a new way to exist and live.

When he finds that new body, he disappears.

The exile is different.

He is a temporary visitor, a wayfarer whose personality is eternally anchored in his essence, in his secular collective body, in his ethnic consciousness (Zarian 2001, 303).

Zarian looked at himself as someone who lived temporarily outside the country and strived to return. In the interview with Pōladian, he dramatically declared that “I am an exile and never an emigrant. My mind, consciousness, and heart are there, and my moments of excitement and disillusionment come from there” (Pōladian 1961, 105–106).

Like many other intellectuals at his time and later, he looked at the Diaspora through an iron dilemma: merger through physical return with the centre, the Homeland, or merger outside the centre through assimilation. The third alternative, suggested by French Armenian writers, of a creative integration with the Other that established the Diaspora as a liminal entity on the margins of the center (Beledian 2016), was out of consideration.

The denial of the dispersion thoroughly reflected in his writings was one of the reasons leading him to reintegrate to the collective body through the return to the homeland. He was allowed that return and then subjected to denial by that same collective body. His membership was rejected, turning him into a “writer punished in his own land,” as his son Armēn stated in an interview, until the end of the Soviet regime (Khachatrian 1991, 2).

In 1961, interviewed by Soviet Armenian literary critic and party bureaucrat Hrach'ia Grigorian in his first visit to Armenia after thirty-seven years of absence, Zarian declared that young and capable people from the Diaspora “should gather around our new Athens, Yerevan, be inspired by it, participate, and restore their willingness and impetus to live as Armenians.” He claimed that “the Armenian youth from abroad is confused, demoralised, and subject to the danger of pulverisation.” His statements became a lightning rod in the Diaspora following his demand that the ARF “stops serving foreigners with its anti-Soviet activities, leading its youth against the homeland, and become a cultural organisation inspired by the

motherland” (Grigorian 1961, 4). His status as an erstwhile prominent contributor to the ARF press attracted acerbic criticism from the anti-Soviet faction and unfettered praise from the pro-Soviet side.

Like many publications in the Diaspora, both belonging to the ARF or somehow associated with it—either by the author’s affiliation or the content of the book—the original edition of *The Ship on the Mountain* had been among those forbidden to be read in Soviet Armenia and condemned to languish at library corners reserved to very few, privileged readers with special authorisation. Twenty years later, despite the Khrushchev “thaw” and the gradual turnaround toward more national subjects and the historical past—although subordinated to a partisan straitjacket—it could not be published in the homeland without a careful editing that amounted to ideological censorship.

*The Ship on the Mountain* became a tool in the hands of the Soviet Armenian regime in its continuing propaganda war against the ARF and anything that could be associated with it, such as the independent republic of 1918–1920. Its second, heavily edited version would add more fuel to the fire as another chapter of the long-standing feud. Hrach’ia Grigorian was appointed as editor/censor and attested in a letter to Mkhit’ar Davt’ian, the director of the State Publishing House (March 10, 1962), that the novel had undergone two rounds of quite substantial editing after working with Zarian during July–August 1961 (Matioossian 2006, 328). The report attached to the letter stated that:

the author already amended many things in the novel, writing a supplementary chapter where he showed the realisation of the centuries-long dream of the Armenian people: the creation of the Armenian statehood by the Communists (Matioossian 2006, 348).

The text was subjected to further changes in 1962–1963, albeit without Zarian’s apparent participation. The writer, who moved to Yerevan shortly before its publication in 1963, recorded in a journal entry (1964) that “the second edition of *The Ship* was published under duress, deception, and threat” (Zarian 1999, 567). In May 1965, he agreed with Silva Kaputikian,<sup>13</sup> who had said “that the edition [published] abroad is a masterpiece and that my changes on the second have ruined the book” (Zarian 1999, 565).

Armenians would feel “alive and whole” when the spirit had reached its fulfillment with the ship climbing to the top of the mountain, where “the Araratian man will be born” (Zarian 1975, 199). Zarian’s failure to reach that wholeness in his turn and return between Homeland and Diaspora was a metaphor of the impossibility to reach the centre.

## Notes

- 1 For a bibliographical outline in English, see Matiossian 1994.
- 2 An initial draft of this article was presented as a paper to the conference “Armenia and Its Diaspora: Institutional Linkages and Cross-Border Movements” held at the University of Michigan-Dearborn on 15-16 October 2010. See also Matiossian 2002. Thanks are due to Valentina Calzolari, Claire Mouradian and two anonymous reviewers for their useful suggestions.
- 3 Hagop Ōshagan (1883–1948), Western Armenian influential literary critic and novelist, was the author of important novels and a ten-volume *Panorama of Western Armenian literature*. Along with Zarian, he edited the journals *Mehian* (1914) and *Bardzravank’* [High Monastery] (1922). See Nichanian 2008.
- 4 Arshag Ch’ōbanian (1872–1954), French Armenian writer, literary critic, and political activist. He was a leading force in the pro-Armenian movement in France. He edited the literary journal *Anahit* (1898–1911, 1929–1949). See Khayadjian 2001.
- 5 For an abridged English translation, see Zarian 1981. While this work has been usually considered a memoir, in his revision of the 1950s, Zarian explicitly regarded it as a novel [*vēp*], as he replaced the original subtitle “From the Poet’s Diary” with the neologism *hamaynavēp* [համայնաՎէպ] (Zarian 2010). The word *hamayn* (“all, whole”) is also the root of *hamaynk’* (“community”). In 1914 and 1922 Zarian expressed views close to French novelist Jules Romains’ literary movement of Unanimism with the use of the word *hamatrop’* (Fr. *unanime*) (Nichanian 2012, 383), and *hamaynavēp* may have been an attempt to express the concept of “pan-novel” or “unanimous novel.”
- 6 For an abridged English translation, see Zarian 1982.
- 7 Peniamin Nurigian (1894–1988), an Armenian American writer, was the editor of the journal *Nor Gir* [New Letter] (1938–1954).
- 8 For the French translation, see Zarian 1986.
- 9 Zarian connected *Hēr* [Er] and *Ara* in the epilogue to *Cities* [Բաղադրվելը] (1930), a travelogue published in *Hayrenik’*.  
“A thought: the idea of hell was born in Armenia.  
Michel Angelo had knelt and worshipped before every line of Dante, who had borrowed the structure and the nature of his ‘Hell’ from Plato and Plutarch, and the latter, from Armenia.  
*Hēr* the Armenian.  
[...] *Hēr*, the one who had seen, the one who had returned.  
And *Hēr*, they say, is *Ara*.  
The Armenian king, the king of the Armenian heart, the luminous and beautiful spirit of the Armenian legend. The one who here, near the three pools, near the Urmia, Van, and Sevan lakes, continued watching the inferno of terrible deaths, the abysmal undergrounds excavated in the rocks, the horrible tragedies hidden in the bosom of the mountains, the one who will return!  
Outside Rome, above Rome.  
The Armenian spirit, *Ara*, will return.  
I listened. The cherubs were trumpeting golden calls behind the chaos and *Ara*, the proto-Plato and the proto-Christ, the king of hopes, the great visionary, was advancing amid the lights, sublime and beautiful (Zarian 1975, 642–643).
- 10 Hrach’ Zartarian (1894–1986), son of Rupēn Zartarian, a writer victim of the Armenian genocide. He settled in France at the end of First World War. He belonged to the “Paris school” of French Armenian writers along with Zareh Orpuni. On French Armenian literature, see Beledian 2016.
- 11 Zareh Orpuni [Vorpouni] (1902–1980), novelist. He survived the Armenian genocide and settled in France in 1922. He wrote an important series of novels under the general title of “The Persecuted” [Հալածուածները] among other works. One of them, *The Candidate* [Թեկնածու], has been translated into English (Vorpouni 2016) and French (Vorpouni 2021).
- 12 Garabed Pōladian (1910–1986), French Armenian novelist and essayist, author of five volumes of conversations with noted Armenian and non-Armenian writers.
- 13 Silva Kaputikian (1919–2006), Soviet Armenian poet.

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