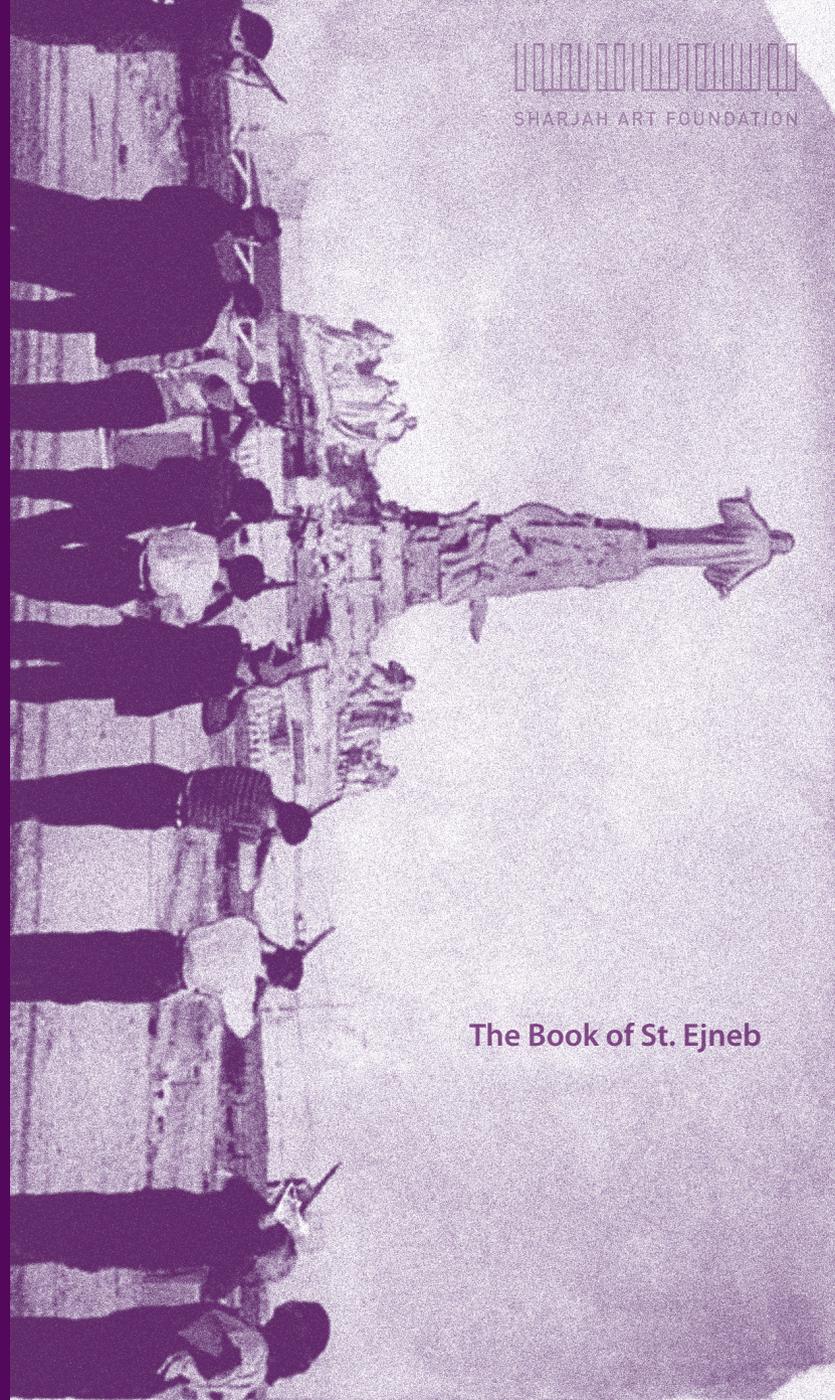




SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION



The Book of St. Ejneb

THE BOOK OF ST. EJNEB

كتاب القديس اجنب

HZ. ECNEB'IN KITABI

كتاب القديس اجنب



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HZ. ECNEB'IN KITABI

Универсальный

SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION



February, 2011

Cairo, New York, Istanbul, Yerevan

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*all the signs have appeared, time has come...*

This book is dedicated to the Egyptian Revolution

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## Prologue: Saints, Scholars and Lumpens

### Aras Ozgun

The sky above Babiali was the colour of a television screen, tuned to a dead channel. We walked up the hill along the tired and retired 19th-century warehouses and commercial buildings, which had been erected in the spirit of the “Meşrutiyet.” The short-lived parliamentary period of the late Ottoman gave birth to the first free press as well as to the İttihat ve Terakki Party. Free press, democracy, public opinion, İttihat ve Terakki; revanchist modernization-the vicious offspring of Osmanli (Ottoman) who actually signed the death warrant of his father, the sick old man of Europe. But unlike Oedipus Rex, unable to claim the authority of the old fart, unable to win the heart of his beloved, unable to claim his own identity and unable to confront his own guilt, he ended up turning into a paranoid serial killer in his hopeless attempt to get rid of all the witnesses. First the Armenians, then the Greeks, then the Kurds, then the remaining non-Muslims, then the communists, and then the Muslims... Tired of their history, some of the old print-house buildings found a new glory during the last decade; denying their past, they finally entered modern times as “historic buildings” of a “global city,” sealing the fate of a hundred-year-old bloody nationalist dream, rendering it to a bloody joke.

Lumpen Salih’s office was not in one of these newly renovated headquarters of the new media industry. It was located in an indistinct concrete apartment building patched in between these glamorous headquarters: an eyesore of a building whose only excuse for existence was as part of the urban decay of Babiali before its second coming. We walked up the staircase, passing the cheap plastic signs of small companies on the doors left and right on every floor. “Tomorrow Publishing and Tourism” was on the third floor. We ringed the buzzer and waited. Then ringed again, and waited some more. A big woman, even taller than me and slightly thicker too, finally opened the door while quickly petting her blonde hair with her other hand. “Who are you looking for?”, she asked in Turkish with an accent I couldn’t recognise. “Lumpen Salih!” almost escaped from my mouth, but instead I said, “Is this Salih Bey’s office?” She replied, “Yes?” and stood there. “We have an appointment with him-sorry we are late a bit, you know, it’s Istanbul, the traffic...” She stepped aside, let us in, yelled towards a closed door at the other end of the hallway. “Salih Bey, you have guests!”, and walked us to the office.

Behind the sofa, visibly different shelving units were randomly

brought together to give the impression of a big library covering the wall. Shelves were stuffed with samples from all kinds of books—from cheap fiction to self-help and tourist books, several rows of standard left-wing political titles in Turkish, old magazines and journals, stacks of newspapers falling apart. It was almost like the one-dollar new arrivals section of secondhand bookstores in New York, all kinds of worthless titles randomly dumped together. Unorganized stacks of papers covered the metal office desk, some with round coffee and tea stains on them, others already turning yellowish around the edges. An old CRT monitor was attached to a desktop that had a floppy drive with a disc sticking out of it. Its beige plastic case was darkened by cigarette smoke. Several framed pictures hung on the wall, some of them black-and-white photos showing young men enjoying their rakis at meyhane tables; not only were their moustaches, sideburns and shirt collars so 1970s, but also their shy smiles. Next to them, a reproduction of the famous photograph showing the limousine of Komer, the U.S. ambassador to Turkey in 1969, overturned and burning in flames in the parking lot of the administrative building of the Middle East Technical University. A bigger print showed a young man, standing, in a green army surplus jacket, with a thick wool turtleneck on top tucked into jeans on the bottom, and a row of typical Ankara apartments in the out-of-focus background.

A door opened, the final part of an Ahmet Kaya song escaping and quickly dying with the closing of the door. The sound of a man's heels in the hallway, then the man grunting, "Elena, is there tea?" The big woman answered from the next room, "It's brewing now, I'll bring it soon." The man in the photo entered the room, with a slightly different appearance. Strategically unshaven facial hair replaced the moustache, and with the help of excessive hair gel his longer hair looked like a dark hat with silver lines attached to his head. He had exchanged his turtleneck for a shiny white long-sleeved shirt, and his jeans with loose grey pants. He was still thin, but now had a potbelly, which made his tight shirt almost unfit. Probably he picked his outfit from an ad in a magazine for young professionals, but the shirt and the pants refused to be his, for he was neither young, nor professional. He greeted us and shook our hands; mine first, hers second. He apologized to her—"Sorry, my English is a bit rusty"—in a notably quick and fluent way.

He sat in the chair behind the desk, put a cigarette to his dark lips, and started digging through the stacks of paper to find matches or a lighter. Since he had announced that his English was rusty, I decided to make the introduction in Turkish. "I talked to you a few days ago on the phone, you know, my friend and I are looking for a publisher for our book. A friend recommended talking to you; he

said you could perhaps be interested in the publication or give us advice. I faxed you the book treatment yesterday, it will be a book about arts and politics consisting of essays on the transformation of artistic practices since the late '80s in the Middle East, and relating this transformation to the political..." He finally found a fluorescent green plastic disposable lighter and cut my words while lighting his Tekel 2000: "Who sent you guys to me?"

Actually, an older friend of mine working as an editor for a big publishing company had told me about him: Apparently, in Ankara he played side roles in Dev-Yol—the massive revolutionary youth movement of the 1970s, as well as in agit-prop street acts at Middle East Technical University's theatre club. He didn't get caught by the bullets flying in the streets in those days, he lay low and remained under the radar after the military coup, and didn't get caught by the torturers' electrocution pincers either. He opened a bar in Beyoglu—one of those smoky dark places where protest-arabesk played from cheap speakers and middle-aged leftists preyed upon young university chicks in the early '90s. He did many things, including a short-lived venture in publishing professional journals such as Electrical Engineers' Quarterly, Urban Planners Monthly, etc. He had shady connections, found his way around, never got any longer or shorter than he ever was, remained insignificant as always. The only reason his name showed up in the endless database of names in my friend's brain was the fact that he was going to start publishing again, and this time invest in art-related publications. Refused and rejected by big publishers, I thought, "Lumpen Salih, then."

He picked up the treatment I'd faxed him, inhaled a deep smoke and skimmed through the pages. "Well..." he said, looking back at me. "Frankly, I don't understand much from what you've written here..."

I tried to keep my posture. "We think of this as a scholarly edition, it will include some theoretical debates, and probably appeal to a more or less academic audience."

"Yet, I don't understand much of it," he interjected. "And if I don't understand, then people like me won't understand either..." He continued. "But, that's not a deal breaker. The reason I want to get back into publishing through art books is the fact that now there's a growing market in Istanbul. You know, these new galleries, museums, biennials and the like; people indulging in these things have money to spend. And they probably don't understand much about the stuff they are paying for either; if everyone is able to understand it, then it wouldn't be art—isn't that right?"

Theory of the Sublime, according to Lumpen Salih, I thought, and resumed verbal defence of our plans. "Indeed, but this sort of book can also help a general audience by providing them with a

critical view of artistic practices..." I said, before he cut me off again: "That's the problem; from what I understand, you're sort of dissing the art scene here in this proposal."

"We do aim to establish a critical perspective," I said.

"No, no, that's the problem here," he replied. "People are interested in knowing more, seeing more, enjoying more. But you're not 'explaining' what they are enjoying, you're dissing their interest. You're basically telling them that the stuff they are interested in is not worthy of enjoyment because of this or that 'political' reason."

"It's not really a dismissal, but we do aim to establish a critical position towards what's going on in Istanbul and similar places; we have a political perspective underlying this work," I asserted.

He looked aggravated; "I don't think you guys know what politics is! 'Critical perspectives,' 'positions'? How typically academic! You don't even live here, and you think you can analyse, make 'statements' and establish 'positions' from a distance...? Here in real life, my friend, politics work in a different way. It's not about 'perspectives' and 'positions'-it's about what you do, what you facilitate, what you put into motion."

"I agree, you do have a point, but isn't such a book a means to facilitate something, some ideas perhaps...?" I persisted.

"Sitting in your glass palace and dissing everything and everybody, and calling it 'ideas,' hah!" He adopted a victorious smile. He leaned down, quickly opened a few drawers, and decided to make a short excavation in the bottom one. "'Ideas'..." he said, moving back into his chair with a handful of discs. "You guys think you are the only ones with a 'critical perspective' and a 'good statement'? People like you send me shit all the time, stuff they think that will change the world once it gets published!" He shook the bunch of discs in his hand. "I don't even know who sends this stuff... Somewhere deep inside they must know their ideas are not worth a shit-they don't even bother leaving a return address." He threw the discs onto the pile of papers at the far corner of the desk on my friend's side, and yelled towards the other room; "Elena! Can you clean my office and get rid of all this junk before I meet with the lady from the cultural foundation tomorrow?!" Elena mumbled something in response. "Well," he said to me, "at least you showed up personally. But, frankly, I'm not interested in your project at all, and wouldn't waste my time and money on it."

Elena walked in holding a tray with three glasses of tea on it—slightly bigger than the traditional small thin-bellied coffeehouse-style Turkish tea glasses, these were named after a pop star from the '70s, Ajda Pekkan, presumably in reference to her larger relative

proportions. Elena served our teas, and reminded Salih Bey that he had to look into and confirm the proposal for the cultural foundation before he left for the day. I wondered why all the Eastern European accents in Turkish sounded somehow similar.

I briefly explained the dialogue to my partner, who had been listening quietly all along, and already had a general idea of what was going on from the tone of the conversation and from our gestures. Lumpen Salih started slurping his tea and listening to our talk after Elena walked out. "Yeah, think about whether instead of your art and politics 'ideas' you would like to work with me on stuff related to exhibitions, and let me know. Now, I really have to attend to this work, if you'll excuse me for a few minutes. Please enjoy your tea." He smiled, picked up his glass with two fingers, acknowledged my friend with a nod of his head as he rose to his feet, and stepped out. We sat quietly and sipped our teas, while a fast-paced conversation spiced with coquettish laughter on both sides broke from the other room. My friend asked me, "What are those discs?"

"He says those are other 'useless' projects that were sent to him. He doesn't even know who sent them."

"So, just some other worthless garbage like ours?" she asked with irony. I pouted in frustration. She finished her tea and asked, "Should we...?" I nodded and took my bag. She leaned towards her purse too, returned her gaze to the discs sitting atop the pile, and looked back at me, with a wicked question mark between her eyes. I shook my head in uncertainty. She quickly reached for the discs, grabbed them and threw them in her purse. "Now we can go!" she said. From the corridor we yelled goodbye towards the other room. Lumpen Salih peeked his head from the doorway and said "Goodbye! Nice meeting you! Let me know!"

It was already starting to drizzle when we got outside. We decided to take a cab from across the street. People think Istanbul is melancholic when it rains. I mostly hate it. You can never find a cab, can't go anywhere, and when it comes down heavier, nothing works in the city. I think, having nothing to do until the rain stops, people are left alone with their resentful lives when it rains. That's what they call "melancholia," since it sounds much better than plain resentment. I looked up at the sky, and thought I caught a glimpse of Lumpen Salih's face and white collar through the third-floor window before the curtains were quickly pulled shut. I wondered if he noticed the missing discs, but it was very unlikely that he would run after us, or that we would even see him ever again. I didn't care, but I suggested we walk to the square down the hill, since the cabs had already cleared the side streets.

When we got closer to the square, my friend pointed to the

corner. An old woman in rags was standing in the middle of the crossing, seemingly paralyzed in a weird posture, holding her arms aloft. Her hands, crawling in the air, were shaking. Her face was darkened with layers of dirt, under the weight of the blocks of felt that used to be her hair, her head turned towards the sky over the glass high-rise before her. Her body was shivering, as if trying to regain her balance, not to fall, or perhaps to break away from catatonia. She was mumbling, trying force out the words stuck in her throat. "What is she saying?" my friend asked. Obscured by the cursing horns of the passing cars, I could barely pick out the phrase she was repeating, "*Çok alametler belirdi, vakit tamamdır... Helal haram oldu, haram helaldir...*" I roughly translated: "All the signs have appeared, the time has come; good turned evil, evil is holy..." My friend reached for her cell phone to take a picture, raised it to her face, then, undecidedly, put the phone back in her purse. A taxi was approaching, furiously honking and cursing the mad woman, the false prophet, the Anatolian butoh dancer.

Necmi was still sleeping when we got back to his rooftop apartment. We passed quietly into the living room with its incredible view over the Bosphorus-the most luxurious household item one can own in Istanbul. Under normal circumstances, there's no way that Necmi could afford such a rooftop apartment. He found it so cheap that he rented it without thinking, without looking into why it was so cheap. After moving in, he realized that the apartment was surrounded from all directions by five different mosques, and the ring of multiple loudspeakers on the closest minaret was just ten meters away, precisely at the same level as the roof. Since we began staying there, we were roused by the discordant chorus of incredibly loud calls to prayer five times a day; the neighbourhood used to be a non-Muslim part of the city, so mosques were keen to assert their presence even more forcefully. Two of those five prayers happened during the night; that's why Necmi was taking his usual nap between the noon and the late afternoon calls to prayer.

We were curious about the unplanned booty we had grabbed from Salih's office. There were three discs. The first one was a CD that was marked "D.B. tape" in Turkish. We put it in my friend's computer. Apparently, it was a VCD – a video-disc format that reigned in the Third World before DVDs were forced upon the market for the poor. The VCD was the crappiest video technology ever invented, but very practical and cheap to replicate, and bore no copy-protection device. The video showed a well-dressed older guy sitting on a couch, talking to someone next to the camera. The sound was inaudible, so it was impossible to understand the conversation. Then, a woman came into the room, greeted the guy, and walked with him out of the frame. In the next scene the camera had been

placed close to the floor, inside a wardrobe. In the narrow frame allowed by the open wardrobe door, the same guy in his underpants was trying to put on his trousers, and the woman, in her pyjamas, was tidying up the bed behind him. The video was just five or six minutes long. My friend shook her head in disappointment: "What the fuck is this? A sex tape without sex?" One of the more distant minarets started the late afternoon call to prayer, the others joining one by one, within seconds of delay from each other. As soon as the nearest one caught up with the others, Necmi's voice from the bedroom responded to them screaming a heavy curse. He came out of the room swaying, with red eyes. "How did it go?" We briefly related to him the story. "Dude, he must have earned his nickname for a reason, I told you. What are you guys watching?" We told him the rest of the story. He laughed, and looked at the screen. Then, he jerked towards the screen with a sudden curiosity, and told my friend to replay the video. He looked closely at the guy while he was sitting on the couch in the first scene, then burst into laughter and started jumping up and down with excitement. "Haha...! Dude! You didn't recognize him? Of course, you don't recognize him in his underwear...! It's Deniz Baykal, idiot!" The guy in the video was the leader of the main opposition party, and the woman in the video was certainly not his wife. Necmi was delighted. "Give it to me, man, please! I'm gonna put it on the fucking YouTube!" YouTube was at the time still banned in Turkey, but, as a solution instructed by the prime minister himself, everyone was watching it through proxy servers, bypassing the ban on the domain by Turkish service providers. Still laughing and jumping, Necmi quickly ran to his computer with the VCD in hand.

The second disc was a DVD-R. It was labelled "E. Files" in English. It contained hundreds of thousands of text documents in English-or some sort of English. We couldn't make any sense of it. The files were named with acronyms (which looked like city names/codes) and date-like numbers. The texts were again full of weird codes and acronyms, and in between there were snippets of information that sounded like reports coded with acronyms. Disappointed again, we decided to send the DVD to an Australian friend of ours who lived in Sweden. He used to be a computer hacker, and he had been involved in setting up a network for decrypting and publicizing classified information. Perhaps he could make sense of all these acronyms.

The third disc was a floppy. Faded pencil writing on it read "The Book of Saint Ejneb" in Turkish. Neither of our computers had a floppy drive. We asked Necmi, who had already ripped the VCD, and was starting to upload it and e-mailing everyone he knew. He said his old computer had a floppy drive, but he wasn't sure if

it still worked. He turned it on for us, and we had to wait for a few minutes until it booted up. We inserted the floppy; the drive worked. It crackled and started grinding and buzzing. After a few continuous repeated buzzing sounds, it displayed a disc error message: "Error reading drive D. Aborting." Whatever it was, the data contained in the invisible sectors on the magnetic oxide coating of the polyester sheet had already evaporated into thin air. My friend sighed with disappointment. Turning to me, she asked in Turkish, "The Book of Saint Ejneb...?"; with an accent that didn't allow you to guess precisely where she was from.

## Introduction

### Angela Harutyunyan

In Arabic, the word "jneb" is said to connote ritual impurity after sexual intercourse. Derived from this root, and with an "i/ee" suffix, the word "ajnabee" comes to mean foreigner or stranger. Moreover, in Turkish religious terminology, "cenabet" pronounced "janaabet", also refers to the condition of being unclean or impure after a sexual act. With these multiple layers, the word has been used in Ottoman Turkish, Kurdish and other Muslim languages in the region of the Middle East and Anatolia. Up until the recent past, the word was used in the legal language of the Turkish Republic to denote non-Muslim Turkish citizens such as Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks and others, until the President of Turkey, Abdullah Gül, issued a decree banning the usage of the word from the legal lexicon.

We wish to take the multiple meanings of the term ejneb in order to construct new meanings and semantic possibilities that are interventionist in character. In other words, these meanings will intervene in the very the fabric of history, the structures and institutions of knowledge production, and the different modalities at work in the production of subjectivity. We endow ejneb with a sanctity that does not grant special access to religious transcendence, but acts as a device of ambiguity that proposes an ethics without morality. Similar to the found photograph on the cover of this manual from the Spanish Civil War, the ejneb first and foremost questions the reification of the figure of the traitor both as a villain and a Samaritan. Who is the ultimate traitor-the iconoclast who points a gun at a sacrosanct religious statue to attack both the referent and the ideology that co-opted the referent, or the one who evokes the referent in the name of a higher good? Ejneb's sanctity becomes a mechanism of disidentification and misrecognition: the figure of the ejneb always fails to recognize itself as a nameable subject, while at the same time it only exists through its singularity and through its name. St. Ejneb thus comes forth both as a general name and as a set of specific acts, which ultimately confuse the general and the particular.

We refer to ejneb with the pronoun 'it', not in the sense that it is genderless, but in the sense that its gender, as well as other markers of its identity, can never be fixed or recognized. Ultimately, the ejnebi are people who follow the ways of St. Ejneb and commit ethically grounded, heterodox acts across times, places, geographies and various power practices in the contemporary world. It is a paradoxical figure of corruption whose acts and deeds, nevertheless,

are affirmative rather than merely transgressive.

The Book of St. Ejneb is a failed manual of treason in that it offers no prescriptions or guidelines for betrayal. Rather, the contributions come together in a movement between fact and fiction, genre and discipline, utterance and translation. From a theory on the advent of betrayal, betrayal as a bodily-sexual gesture to rage an image-war to texts that linguistically recapture a fragment of an epoch while the texture of the time itself is irretrievably lost, the contributions stand as separate texts on their own right without necessarily communicating with their 'neighbors'. But, at the same time, they come together to form attachments and detachments, connections and disconnections that always already take place post factum, at the point of reception, rather than production.

## Borges: A Theory of Treason and Betrayal

### Ulus Baker

Borges' traitors are conspirators. Naturally, they go way beyond the common clichés of popular detective literature. But the conspiracies they set up evoke a kind of well-calculated 'fraudulence', which cannot be immediately defined as 'malice'. They appear before us sometimes as Pampa's machos, sometimes as sinister members of an international and cosmopolitan civilization in the age of world wars. Their fraud is not the small man's everyday cheats; they belong to a civilization that is reigned by chaos, by labyrinths and 'gardens of forking paths': "I already see people surrendering themselves to new treasons everyday, in the way that only the outlaws and the soldiers will remain in the end" (*Garden of Forking Paths*). In Borges' taxonomy, one cannot find small 'mischief', 'forgivable' minor everyday conspiracies, ordinary 'betrayals' of domestic disputes, children who tie things to cats' tails, or the low indignation and resentment that of the 'herd being' Nietzsche talks about. Our very wise author is not even able to distinguish the difference between betrayal and treason. The reason for that is the way he conceives his scoundrels like those of Poe's, as if they are 'heroes', as if they are actors who are most likely to succeed as long as they do whatever it takes, while traversing the unforeseeable labyrinths that have been designed by a superior, anonymous and impersonal intelligence. For Borges, the design of betrayal has to work in a geometric manner—more *geometrico*. Betrayal is acted out like moves on a chessboard, and conforms to only one type in the 'endlessness' of the labyrinth: "He who is to perform a horrendous act should imagine to himself that it is already done, should impose upon himself a future as irrevocable as the past" (*Garden of Forking Paths*). As such, his interpretation of Leibniz's 'endlessness' is indexed to time. Each story's ending can only be possible with the emergence of a pure and absolute betrayal. No questions will remain unanswered, and yet, in front of the skilfully mastered constitutive intelligence of betrayal, a sad admiration will leave its bitter taste on one's palate.

The infamy of Borges is not about execution; it is rather a form of iniquity that refers to innovation on the one hand, and to a universal notion of humanity on the other: "Whatever one man does, it is as though all men did it. That is why it is not unfair that a single act of disobedience in a garden should contaminate all

humanity; that is why it is not unfair that a single Jew's crucifixion should be enough to save it' (*The Shape of the Sword*). In this way, there is no difference left between the 'scam' that is set forth by the abuse of people's positions of power in the social hierarchy, and the petty fraud of a street seller. Of course, Borges does not pick his scoundrels only from the upper classes: men and women in the street can also take their place among the famous personalities in the history of infamy. But only on one condition: Forcing breaches in our common conceptions of crime, treason must always pass through the labyrinths of a conspiracy, twisting and branching out endlessly, and it must be able to create a spectacular show of power, one that conveys the direction of the accusation and hatred towards the disadvantage of its actual victims. Indeed, at a certain moment, in the very labyrinth he constructs with literature, Borges comes face to face with the iniquity he constructs, but only to become its own counterpart. "The idea that history might have copied history is mind-boggling enough; that history should copy literature is inconceivable" (*The Traitor and The Hero*). The end of the story for the traitor is this moment of confrontation and equalization. After all, isn't the story of treason as a narrative a fiction produced by the author? The disappearance of the author behind his own narrative, which has been attributed to modern fiction, will appear at the finitude of the long forking paths, and thus surrender itself to the Aristotelian catharsis of affections relating to crime, antipathy and hatred.

Therefore, *A Universal History of Iniquity*, which is among his early works, is neither 'universal', nor 'historical' enough. First of all, it excludes the demonical and satanic kind of infamy that we find in the literature of the Middle Ages. As Klossowski demonstrates, Satan was never a 'salesman of illusions' or an 'illusionist' himself. Quite the contrary, he was a composer, an artisan who blended 'mixtures' and 'impurities' against the 'pure and clean', against the notion of 'beauty' as 'perfection', as 'good', as 'truth', as 'essence', a solely productive force against the despotism of God and his right of possession over the universe. But this productive activity was achieved through 'spiritual' means; it would not be possible for Satan to produce a darkness of the soul that had not already been there. Whereas for Borges, "No one is someone; a single immortal man is all men. Like Cornelius Agrippa, I am god, hero, philosopher, demon, and world-which is a long-winded way of saying that I am not" (*Immortal*).

Gilles de Rais, or Blue Beard, or increasingly Count Dracula, closed communities and *compagnonnages*, appeared as nothing but

peasant cultures against the artisan cults that were organized within secret brotherhoods. That is the source of their phoniness and epic superficialities. But the type of 'iniquity' Borges presents takes certain elements from this particular kind of 'infamies' that most cultures were boiling with in the Middle Ages, and further modernizes and redeploys them. Borges desires the traitor he presents to appear in a 'devilish' outlook as well. Albeit, in the way that any kind of 'illusion' can be perceived as absolutely 'real', an overarching theme that surrounds his work reaches its moment of fulfilment precisely in the 'description of the infamy.' Borges' labyrinth is never 'endless.'

Yet, there were people who were able to discover an utterly profound kind of treason, one that Borges never wanted to understand and include in his 'universal' history of infamy, not only in 'modern literature' but also in the heart of modern ways of life: these are the kind of traitors that appear in Gogol's, Brecht's, Kafka's and Foucault's writings. Their difference lies in the fact that their authors never mark them as 'traitors'. The sincerity of these grim reapers keeps them apart from all kinds of 'demonic' associations, explosive conspiracies and malevolent designs. They appear as simple civil servants, and find '[their] way ahead' through the cracks in the screen of a collapsing society.

Sinisterness also died with God, and its absence breeds a 'traitor' who appears to be someone else. That is why it is not Dostoyevsky, whose protagonists operate under the shadow of the 'Big Boss', but Gogol who really paved the way to Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*. Gogol's traitor is almost the antidote to the quirkiness of the Hegelian history of the 'big boss' (in Russia even Hegel could be unbelievably vulgarized): 'A history of the little man and his innocent betrayals...' The main formula of the Gogolian traitor becomes most definitely visible in *The Inspector*. The fake inspector puts on his 'civil servant' disguise to gain a few provisional benefits (such as flirting with women, and yelling at and humiliating his subordinates) that he would never otherwise enjoy. The surrender of the entire elite of the village to this illusion demonstrates how a very special kind of 'mutualism' is the necessary condition for betrayal. The inspector is similar to what Foucault introduces as the nameless heroes of a modern security apparatus, such as the police stooge on the corner, or the superintendent of the building: He is neither the possessor of power, nor its victim; always in between, he becomes its main pillar. Far from being intoxicating, this particular form of power cannot even be 'possessed'. This type of power appears in the domesticity of the household, among the neighbours, in the community, in every

corner of everyday life. Those ordinary people in every corner, no matter how much they desire to be insignificant and live without any 'political identities,' cannot help but become the main 'pillars' of authority. That is what Kafka's formula precisely tells us: "Each order a father gives to his son carries a thousand death sentences."

### Three Hypotheses For Almast's Betrayal

Or

### The Advent Of Betrayal

#### Vardan Jaloyan

The advent of betrayal is among the greatest of inventions, if, of course, it is an invention in the first place. For a betrayal can allow us to be magnanimous; to forgive generously the traitor by, somehow, attributing to their acts a meaning of pathological aspiration for autonomy. In so doing, we are also forgiving ourselves by viewing our own acts of betrayal as inevitable outcomes of similar aspirations for autonomy.

'Et tu, Brute?' posits Caesar famously, and this question could perhaps just as meaningfully be put by Jesus to Judas. Betrayal is inexplicable, because it comes unexpectedly. Because conspiracy is its prelude, betrayal is, therefore, also a secret. And it can well be that if we disclosed that inexplicable secret, betrayal would cease being what it is; and so also conspiracy would, just like the ghost, dissolve into thin air. In *The Betrayal* by Harold Pinter, for example, the secret of betrayal is the decisive bond that unites the characters in the play; but which, when disclosed, also leaves them –once friends and lovers –with nothing in common. 'The funny thing,' Jerry says to Emma in the First Scene, 'was that the only thing I really felt was irritation, I mean irritation that nobody gossiped about us like that in the old days. I nearly said, now look, she may be having the occasional drink with Casey, who cares, but she and I had an affair for seven years and none of you bastards had the faintest idea it was happening.' To that Emma objects that someone might have been in the know of the affair. It turns out yes, and that someone was he who was not supposed to know anything in the first place – Emma's husband. The character thinks that a betrayal stops being one, unless it has been ferreted out.

Ours is a different strategy. We are going to discuss a case of betrayal, which we think hides a secret that could be disclosed. To do so, we need to start our discussion in the Middle Ages. In the Middle Ages, betrayal and renegeing were most ordinary practices. For that matter, for example, it was also a common practice to hold captives as a guarantee that opponents would not renege on their word. This is not to say, of course, that loyalty was not appreciated, but so also betrayal could always find a legitimizing ground. The strong could act presumptuously, and the weak were bound to comply. If a vassal chose to leave a suzerain for a stronger overlord, his act – because it was serving his own best interests – was also

seen as proper and justified. Many Armenian princes, for example, practiced this habitually throughout the period of Arab invasions when they repeatedly switched allegiance either to the Arabs, or the Byzantines. Religion, in fact, was the only sphere where betrayal was condemned most harshly and unconditionally. Inasmuch as those practicing other religions were infidels, infidelity itself was a betrayal. Only later, with the emergence of the modern nation state, and the idea thereby of a modern nation based on popular sovereignty, did betrayal emerge in the modern sense of the word. Since there were state secrets, there was also state treason. For instance, during the struggles of national liberation movements, betrayal of fellow revolutionaries was taboo even in the face of death.

It is hard, indeed, to imagine how a woman in the Middle Ages could commit adultery. Of course, crusaders away for invasions might have had concerns about the fidelity of their wives, and did, for that matter, force them to wear 'chastity belts'. But in agrarian societies, when men worked in the same place as they lived, and women were under the constant watch of men, infidelity was highly unlikely, or required a whole range of Decameronian tricks to be played by adulterous wives on their husbands. What, in fact, allowed for a breakthrough from the taboos of infidelity in those societies was passionate love; that inconceivably tempting feeling that spurred the flight of fancy of so many poets. But passionate love was less about banal infidel affairs, and involved instead Grand Betrayals. As early as a hundred years ago, Russian thinker Vasili Rozanov writes that '[g]reat renaissances emerge from within great betrayals. Those who betray are also the ones who really create new gardens – for in doing so, they are betraying their old, ossified, and withering gardens... Confused, the people of older spirit, then, damn and blast them for immorality.'<sup>1</sup>

The two most famous stories of Armenian Great Betrayal are the treason of Vassak Siuni, written in the fifth century, and the betrayal of the mistress of Fort Temuk, the fictional hero in *The Capture of Fort Temuk* by the modern Armenian writer Hovhannes Toumanian. The case of the latter fictional betrayal, in my opinion, is the more remarkable one. Throughout the poem, there is no indication of the heroine's name. But later, as composer Alexander Spendiarian adapted the poem into an opera, he first suggested that the character be named Gohar, but eventually agreed on the name Almast with Sophia Parnok, the author of the opera's libretto. The choice of the name was made because of its melodic feel, and nothing else. Such was the secret of the name, which we have now disclosed. This gives us hope for further discoveries.

The poem's plot unfolds with the prince of Fort Temuk Tatul

repelling effectively the attacks of Shah Nadir of Persia. The Shah dispatches his minstrels to the Mistress of Temuk to sing her his love and his desire to make her his queen. Greedy for power and fame, the Mistress of Temuk plies Tatul and his army with alcohol and throws treacherously the gates of the Fort open for the Shah. As the slaughter of Tatul's fatigued army takes the trail, the Shah himself becomes pensive.

*The Shah sat still and before him saw  
Festive tables, abandoned and lone,  
And thoughts of Man's frailty came to him  
At the sight of the orphaned throne.  
There is nothing secure in the universe,  
Never believe in aught,  
Neither luck, nor glory, nor victory,  
Nor the glass by a loving wife brought....<sup>2</sup>*

And then a dialog unfolds between the two:

*And the awe-stricken Shah he questioned the pale  
Mistress as there she stood:  
'O dark-eyed traitress, come, answer me,  
Was Tatul not brave and good?'  
'He was far more brave and handsome than you,  
He was fearless, noble and tall.  
He never took castles by foul deceit,  
Never so low would he fall.'<sup>3</sup>*

As Almast utters those words, she puts the Shah into a wrath, who then gives a quick order to throw her off the nearby cliff:

*She was taken away to the giant rock  
That still stands in its place today  
And they threw her down in a bottomless gorge*

<sup>2</sup>) The current translation is taken from Armenipedia. The translator is not identified. [Editor's note]

<sup>3</sup>) Ibid.

<sup>1</sup>) V.V. Rozanov. *Mysli o literature*. (Moskva, 1989, p. 348)

And motionless there she lay.  
 And wolves and foxes came in from the plains  
 And devoured her base heart with wild cries;  
 Kites and ravens flew down from the clouds  
 And tore out her treacherous eyes.  
 So the lovely Mistress of Fort Temuk  
 Passed from the world away  
 Like the choicest flower of last year's spring  
 That will never blossom again.<sup>4</sup>

Now, what made Almast give up so suddenly when she was so close to the desired throne? Why was that final move – flattering the Shah – one that she saw as a betrayal far bitterer than her treason of her country and her betrayal of her husband? To put it otherwise; what is it that a traitor preserves unswervingly, and never betrays when committing an act of betrayal?

One way of understanding Almast's behavior would be to see it as a desire to hate, and consequently also a desire to be hated. Though, of course, deep in her heart what she definitely wanted was to love and to be loved. Just like any other traitor, she is scared of strong and enduring commitments, and is thereby also inclined to ruin any bond so firmly established. Faced with the impossibility of love –for she realizes soon that she cannot love Nadir either– all she can seek, then is the pleasure of inflicted hatred and the satisfaction of it she may derive once and for all.

There is a known affinity between the traitor and the revolutionary: it is the tendency to destroy for the sake of love. And yet, a revolutionary would deem it wholly inadmissible to destroy something out of hatred, and instead, does it so in the name of love. For given that love and hatred are always already mutually inscribed in one another, the revolutionary prefers to ruin in the name of love, which is a creative destruction.

Hovhannes Toumanian is a romantic poet, and I doubt whether he would share the minstrel's condemnations of the Mistress of Temuk and his tone of disapproval. In one of the drafts of the poem, for example, he writes, 'Here let me tell you whyfor/ The bard stays always away from those beaut highlands;/ And whyfor to Achara, and to the land of it,/ Sends he curses instead of verses.'<sup>5</sup> Toumanian's initial idea, in other words, was to blame it on the minstrel who had

lured the Mistress of Temuk with his verse. But apparently, unable to master his initial message, the author eventually resorted back to a patriarchal version of his poem. In one of his papers there is also a note that reads: '[w]henever a man had a defeat, always a woman allied his enemy.'<sup>6</sup> This could well be read as a remark that the concept of betrayal is, in fact, a making of romantic poets.

*The Capture of Fort Temuk* is a story of passionate love; the love of Almast for the Shah Nadir. Passionate love – the Stendalian *amour passion* – is always positioned against the mediocrity of life; it is conflictual and asocial. Passionate love is stubborn and inflexible, and calls for a transgression of duties and obligations. Passionate love is charismatic; it detaches a person from an existing identity and inflicts a revolutionary fervor for radical deeds and radical sacrifices.

Another Armenian writer, Yeghishe Charents, brings to the forefront the following conflict in his *Khembapet Shavarsh* (Commander Shavarsh). Commander Shavarsh, together with his combatants, reenters a Turkish village to punish and destroy the enemy, when a young Turkish beauty runs up to him in the hope of his mercy. At one point it seems that this encounter sows the first seeds of a passionate love in the heart of the commander. He, however, extirpates from his soul the germs of love there detected, and so the Turkish woman dies. Faithful to his identity, it seems, the patriot had killed inside what was human, and what the Mistress of Fort Temuk, on the contrary, had preserved so unbendingly.

In Romanticism, passionate love is a preferred means with which to communicate with the transcendental within the realm of the secular, without rejecting that love. But what it denies is the drive of passionate love to total destruction. Instead, Romanticism transforms passionate love into a romantic ethos so that, by keeping alive the drive to deny antiquated feudal identities, it could reaffirm itself as a fulcrum of new identities, a locus where one's identity can assert itself through the discovery of another. Passionate love and betrayal appear hand in hand in a mutual nexus. However, in Romanticism passionate love is a source of devotion that rests upon principles of freedom and autonomy. If, in that sense, the final and inevitable shares of *amour passion* are tragedy and destruction, romantic love, on the contrary, opens up a future for relations.

An account of the differences between romantic love and passionate love is available in Anthony Giddens' *The Transformation of Intimacy*.<sup>7</sup> According to Giddens, men have displayed a less pronounced involvement in this process of transition from

4) See; [http://www.armeniapedia.org/index.php?title=Hovhannes\\_Toumanian:\\_The\\_Capture\\_of\\_Fort\\_Temuk](http://www.armeniapedia.org/index.php?title=Hovhannes_Toumanian:_The_Capture_of_Fort_Temuk)

5) Toumanian's archives. Trans. by D. Isajanyan

6) Ibid.

7) Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation Of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love And Eroticism In Modern Societies*. Stanford University Press, 1993.

passionate love to romantic love than women, who have helped to bring that change about actively.

Men... have also over the last two centuries been influenced by the development of ideals of romantic love, but in a different way from women. Those men who have come too much under the sway of such notions of love have set apart from the majority as "romantics", in a particular sense of that term. They are, as it were, foppish dreamers, who have succumbed to female power. Such men have given the division between unsullied and impure women so central to male sexuality. The romantic does not, nevertheless, treat women as equals... He is not really a participant in the emerging exploration of intimacy, but more of a throwback to previous times. The romantic in this instance is not someone who has intuitively understood the nature of love as a mode of future time and to the construction of self identity.<sup>8</sup>

I believe that Giddens' argument is the best interpretation of my short story *Trains*.

In the opening of *The Capture of Fort Temuk*, the minstrel, and later also the Shah, mystify female nature by referring to it as changeable and unknowable, and therefore also as a riddle. A woman's betrayal and her nature are analogous to state treason, or the secret of a revolutionary underground. But the woman is not a mystery for the 'romantic' man; or at least, as Giddens has us believe, not for a while yet. And this is the reason why the 'romantic' man is not so inclined to distinguish 'between unsullied and impure women so central to male sexuality.' In this regard, a greater mystery is perhaps the 'romantic' man himself – but 'in a particular sense of the term', of course.

The poem mentions innumerable dying men, but nothing is said about the death of women and children. In a feminist reading of the text, one could then claim that Almast is a man-hater, Tatul is a bore, and Nadir is cunning. Think of the legend of Penthesilea, for example. In the legend, Penthesilea, the queen of the Amazons, joins Troy's defenders in the Trojan War, and is slain in a battle against Achilles. After her death, Achilles falls in love with the vanquished queen as he removes her helmet and realizes her beauty. Similar is the story of the Armenian legend about *Ara the Beautiful and Shamiram / Semiramis*, where Shamiram, reputed for her Amazonian moods and manners, falls in love with the dead corpse of Ara the Beautiful and prays to her gods – the dog-spirits Aralezes – to lick Ara's wounds and raise him from the dead. In another adaptation of the legend of Penthesilea, a tragedy with the same name written by Heinrich von Kleist, Penthesilea meets Achilles in a battle, where she is not slain but smitten in every possible way. Obvious are the parallels with

the story of Fort Temuk, for Kleist envisions an Amazonian attack on Achilles and his Greek army as they lay siege to the city of Troy. Deeply hurt Penthesilea still falls in love with Achilles. However, as an Amazonian woman she can only choose the father of her children among the men she met in battle and also defeated. Aware of this law, and disarmed by a desire for Penthesilea, Achilles looses a battle to Penthesilea intentionally so that he can be led to her city as Penthesilea's love slave. As later Achilles realizes that the queen has found out about his trickery, he challenges her to an unarmed duel to save the situation. Blinded by pride and volcanic fury, Penthesilea appears at the battle with her carnivorous dogs and sets them on Achilles to tear him apart. Achilles is wounded, but Penthesilea dies from the 'fire of grief' that becomes a 'cold ore' for her. Almast is not a Penthesilea or a Shamiram, and the Shah, thereby, is not torn apart by her dogs – something that well fits the traditional Armenian understanding of justice. Instead, what happens is that '...wolves and foxes came in from the plains/ And devoured her base heart with wild cries.' For obvious reasons, the archaic plot is changed in the story of Fort Temuk to ideologically better fit the agrarian-patriarchal context of Tumanian's writing.

Now, all that has been said so far is well in line with the true word of the poem, and is driven by it. What if we step outside of the textual realm in recourse to 'reality'? It may strike one as being an unthinkable undertaking; for isn't *The Capture of Fort Temuk* a piece of literary work based on imagination and a roving plot? So it is! But to put the discussion to reality's test, we could turn to the other Great Betrayal at issue, the case of Vassak Siuni. I find obvious and significant parallels between the betrayals of Almast and Vassak Siuni. In the Middle Ages, as we have already discussed, apostasy was associated with high treason, and Vassak Siuni is exactly that apostate as he is portrayed elsewhere in Armenian clerical historiography.

Vassak Siuni is condemned by Armenian clerical historians for his betrayal of the Armenian loyalists led by General Vardan Mamikonyan in a rebellion against the Sassanid rule, and for his treason by fighting on the side of the Persians in the decisive 451 A.D. battle of Avarayr. Upon the suppression of the revolt, Vassak Siuni pays a visit to the king of Persia Yazdgrid II in Ctesiphon, 'cherishing the extravagant dream that he would be appointed king of Armenia,' reports the chronicler Ghazar Parpetsi<sup>9</sup>. Parpetsi's tone resembles that of Toumanian's, and the latter's condemnations of the blinded Almast for her madcap dreams about becoming the queen of Nadir. Another Armenian chronicler-historian, Eghishē, who documented

9) Ghazar Parpetsi, *Patmutyun Hayots. Sovetakan Grogh*: Trans. D. Isajanyan. Yerevan, 1977.

8) Ibid, p. 59.

the history of the fifth century, including the events of the revolt, writes: 'These annals are written about him – to reproach him for his deeds and to hold him in condemn. So that anyone to hear and to know about this act would utter curses upon him, and so that none would approve of his doings.'<sup>10</sup> The analogy with Toumanian's text, where he is making a subtle reference to his heroine, is clear: 'Yet the evil-doer lives too without end,/ Cursed be his baneful deed.'

In a recent revision of the historical events involving Vassak Siuni, in his book *The Vartanants Battle Unknown to Us*, historian Hamlet Davtyan argues strongly in favor of Siuni's exculpation, for the first time, indeed, after centuries-long denunciations of the highest treason. The author makes convincing arguments that the efforts Vassak exerted were aimed at restoring the Armenian monarchy, and bringing an end to the protracted civil war. By the same token, the book also warns us that the severe censure that Siuni's adversaries passed upon him throughout centuries was nothing but sheer fabrications on ideological grounds. Characteristically, in a quote he cites from the thirteenth-century historian Stepanos Orbelian, we read the following about Siuni: 'And this man should have also ascended the throne as ruler of Armenia; for he was, indeed, a remarkable man, and stood so high among his contemporaries; much respected, he was a prominent figure in the court.'<sup>11</sup> As the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century historian Nicholas Adonts puts it:

During his rule as marzpan [governor] of Armenia, the country was flourishing and foreigners. Twice, at the very least, did he redeem the country from falling into imminent disasters. By, once ... forcing the army of Mihrnerseh to turn back halfway along his Armenian invasion in Paytakaran (and he would enter Armenia just like Shahpur II had done – caught up in a furious fervor and inclined to ruin everything on his way), and secondly, by preventing the whole of the country from falling into a dreadful bloodshed.<sup>12</sup>

As Hamlet Davtyan puts it, all of this notwithstanding, he had to retire from this place with nothing but a bitter taste of ingratitude.<sup>13</sup>

I cannot but agree with Hamlet Davtyan. In the context of the Middle Ages, when betrayal was predominantly associated with

10) Eghishē, Vardanants Patmutyuny. Trans. E. Ter-Minasyan. Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1958. Trans. by D. Isajanyan.

11) Stephanos Orbelyan, *Patmutyun nahangin Sisakan*. Tiflis, 1910. Trans. by Davit Isajanyan.

12) Nikolas Adonts. *Marzpan Vasaky patmutyan datastani araj*. Yerevan, 2007. Trans. by D. Isajanyan.

13) Hamlet Davtyan. *Mez antsanot Vardanants paterazme. Erkrord hratarakoutioun*, Yerevan, 2007, p. 145. Trans. by D. Isajanyan.

being in defiance of the interests of the Church, Vassak Siuni was sure to be pilloried and condemned as traitor. But in a secular world like ours – and especially in the light of the importance that is now attached to national interest – the understandings of betrayal have undergone a revision, and have been reinvested with a new meaning. Is then the so-called national interest of any relevance to the case of Almast? Let us give an answer to another simple question first: Who was the Armenian prince Tatul fighting against? The answer, it seems, is readily available – Nadir, the Shah of Persia, and his army. But, then again, what army was it? The Academy of Sciences' multivolume publication *Armenian History*, documents:

According to the accounts of the chronicler Abraham Kretatsi [Abraham of Crete], there were six Armenian military units serving in the Persian army as far back as the fights against Topal-Osman Pasha, and the border wars of Hamadan and Persian Iraq...The number of Armenian units in the army of Nadir increased especially during the months of the siege of Gandzak in 1735. And when Nadir's army marched towards Kars for a confrontation with Abdullah Pasha, he was joined by the troops of Artsakh and Siuniq who, under the command of their meliks [semi-autonomous princes], accompanied Nadir all around...As the Armenian meliks had pledged allegiance to Nadir, they both contributed troops to the wars against the Turks, and ensured the collection of military taxes and tributes in their territories.<sup>14</sup>

Now, it can well be that the Armenian prince Tatul had allied with the Ottomans and was, therefore, levying a war against other compatriot-princes. If this is the case, then the choice that Tatul had made was nothing but a betrayal of a national cause.

In light of it, the betrayal of Almast no longer seems like a betrayal at all. For if the status of queen was what she was longing for, why would she give it up so easily; why would she not deny the courage and nobleness of Tatul; and why would she, instead, choose to meet an early death? If this hypothesis is to be taken seriously, then Almast reemerges as a martyred saint; not a traitor, but a great patriot and a tragic character. In a recap then, Almast's betrayal is exposed to three alternative hypotheses: a) the true traitor is the minstrel; b) Almast acted as a descendant of the Amazons, and could be considered the founder of Armenian feminism; and c) the actual traitor is, in fact, Tatul. But altogether, Almast's Great Betrayal remains to symbolize a great renaissance of romantic love.

14) Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmoutioun, *chorrord hator*, Yerevan, 1981, p. 181-182.

*"He never knew where he belonged in society.  
Thus he could only act either as an arrogant  
master or as a lowly servant."*

Mahmoud El Ansari sat behind his shiny polished desk. It was a large expensive thing made out of thin sheets of highly flexible, specially treated, Swedish pinewood. The desk was very intentionally placed smack-center in his spacious, plush office – all chrome-finish and sharp modern steel lines. He cherished his image as youngish and trendy but was also well aware that this was what it was – only an image. He breathed in the design as he surveyed his new office with the satisfaction of achieving a long wished-for goal. To his right, the entire wall was made of one-way soundproofed and enforced glass. Behind it he stood, in his AC-ed silence, surveying the scene. There it was: the beast that was the city, seething in barely contained fury underneath El Ansari's gaze. 'Whore,' he softly whispered to himself.

Hassan Khan, *Mahmoud El Ansari*, narrative text written by the artist (139 words / Times font), title handwritten in Edwardian Style (23 words), 2010, courtesy of the artist.

## Celibacy is Corruption<sup>1</sup>

### Benik Ts. Vardabet

*Benik Ts. Vardapet was Archimandrite in Echmiadzin, the Holy See of the Armenian religious patriarchy, and also a close friend of Komitas Vardapet—a prominent early 20<sup>th</sup> century composer. An initiator of a reformation movement, he dissociated from the church by a voluntary excommunication after the failure of the attempts he had undertaken. The current text was written in 1924.*

Armenian people, take notice of this title, and lend me your ears!

The question of marriage is one that Christ has left completely open. Anyone who so desires should contract a marriage, for marriage is better than fornication. The apostle Paul commands that:

[to avoid] fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband./1 Cor. 7:2/

The same Apostle also commands:

‘but if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.’

‘A bishop then must be ... the husband of one wife.’

‘Marriage [is] honourable in all, and the bed undefiled.’<sup>2</sup>

‘The unity of marriage is an institution of chastity that gives couples here on earth a foretaste of the Kingdom of God’/Tertullian/.

‘Celibacy goes against the laws of nature; the church – by instituting that marriage be prohibited – falls into exaggerations.’/Nersess Archbishop Melik-Tankian/.

‘Let not a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, put

away his wife under pretence of religion; but if he put her away, let him be excommunicated; and if he persists, let him be deposed.’/Apostolic Cannon V (VI.)/

‘If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, or any one of the sacerdotal list, abstains from marriage, or flesh, or wine, not by way of religious restraint, but as abhorring them, forgetting that God made all things very good, and that he made man male and female, and blaspheming the work of creation, let him be corrected, or else be deposed, and cast out of the Church. In like manner a layman./Apostolic Cannon LI./

‘The Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea defended the sanctity of married episcopacy, and left to each cleric the responsibility of deciding the point as he would’/General History of the Church/

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Up until the fifth century, the celibacy of the clergy had not been enforced in any of the canonical enactments of the Armenian Church. The Armenian Catholicos was married. Bishop Khad himself, celebrated by the church as a saint, was married. His daughter was the wife of the Lord of Apahounik.<sup>3</sup> Our Church has no official enactments enforcing the principle of celibacy. This unnatural law appeared increasingly under Greek influence. Mandatory celibacy was adopted by the Christian Church via paganism – and particularly, through the Mithraic religion, [and was influenced by other elements of paganism] such as the vestal virgins of Rome and their commitment to celibacy, and the Indian religions... Celibacy is unnatural and is a source of much current licentiousness. The introduction of clerical celibacy amongst the Armenian priesthood has instilled much impurity into the Church. Evidence to this is the vast record of innumerable ecclesiastical laws enforcing punishments against bishops and priests for clerical concubinage and fornication. All of this notwithstanding, in recent years the Armenian Church has seen a growing degeneration of celibacy into nothing but lewd impurity. The monasteries have become schools of clerical debauchery wherefrom corruption scatters wildly among the general population.

Concerns about this state of debauchery were raised some

3) A province of historical Armenia. [Editor’s note]

1) This text was originally published in a periodical called ‘Free Church’ in 1924. It was recently republished in Armenian daily newspaper Lragir on 20.11.2010. [Editor’s note]

2) The quotes in English are taken from the King James’ version of the Bible. [Translator’s note]

years ago, and voices campaigned for an ecumenical council to be held in Echmiadzin were heard. The clergy of Tiflis had even passed a resolution abandoning celibacy at a local council, and sent a printed copy of their enactment to Echmiadzin. But those voices of complaint were stifled by the celibates now accustomed to a polygamous lifestyle, and the reforms thereby remained unsanctioned. Because of celibacy and rare female visits, the older clergy used to be maimed by a number of unnatural diseases, such as posterior spinal sclerosis and leg paralysis, and would normally drag on a miserable existence until they sank into an early grave. Homosexuality too became rampant in monasteries; and as the many innocent, but also deluded, seminary boys reached puberty they also make formidable foes to the monasteries and the clergy. And one cannot blame those monastery-educated young men who now rained curses on the clergymen and propagated viciously against the life in the monasteries. One of them, a student of the Seminary,<sup>4</sup> threw himself from the second floor of the Seminary building, suffered fractures, and caused his own death. All because – as he grew older and developed a sense of dignity – he was no longer able to stand the insinuations of his friends about the bleak and bitter childhood he had endured.

Those with lesser fervor, and with a greater resentment towards vicious passions, resorted to more natural practices. It is no legend that at nights, after the gates of the Echmiadzin were shut, women started swarming over the walls of the monastic precincts in baskets swung there by the clergy. Nor is it a legend that in the dark of the night, monastic cells occasionally hosted female visitors who entered the precincts wrapped up in long military cloaks, concealed under big hats. The fact is that the newer generation of the 1890s, those from wealthier families, used to hire loose women from Tiflis by telegram, and hold ‘nights in paradise’ with them inside the rooms of the Labyrinthos located right across the Patriarch’s chambers. Things, at one point, went so far that the now defrocked Tachat Archimandrite (one of the few who had not defiled himself) started threatening them with a revolver, and so also frightening the women.

Once a priest from Leninakan drew up a complaint against his ill-reputed wife, and submitted an appeal to the Synod to disband their marriage. His wife, subsequently, decided to take revenge on all the monastery’s various bigwigs by paying them individual visits. The monastic ‘saints’ were, of course, happy to host her kindly. ‘The youngling dropped by on her own free will,’ they would say. Yet, all

4) Here the author refers most probably to the Gevorgian Jemaran Seminary in Echmiadzin. [Translator’s note]

of a sudden – and for well nigh two to three months – all of those priests stopped attending Mass; they had all been taken ill. What had happened? Nothing extraordinary; ‘they had simply been hit by a breeze and caught cold.’ I have discussed this incident in a previous paper, where I emphasized ‘marriage and love are a taboo in Echmiadzin, but prostitution is the norm.’ Another bishop would twice every week have a woman visit him by carriage from the nearby village. The clergy used to say, ‘The bride of the monastery has arrived.’ In the end, this abject ‘bride of the monastery’ was dragged by her family to the walls of St. Hripsime Church, and there slain to death. Another beautiful innocent girl named Nvard, fell into the clutches of a bishop who had hired her as his housemaid. The bishop corrupted the girl and infected her with a disease. The girl moved to another monk and passed on to him all that she had ‘legitimately’ received from the bishop. Vard and Nvard had much fun;<sup>5</sup> months later, that ‘erroneous’ monk was dispatched by Echmiadzin –so prone to condoning such deeds– to undergo an eight-month medical treatment in Tiflis. The girl, I heard, later got married; but as rumors took their toll and her disease was divulged to her husband, she was slain by a sword her husband thrust at her.

A military officer attacked another Archimandrite with his sword right at a dinner table in New Bayazid. The monk, in an attempt to make his escape, left his veghar (headgear) at the dinner table and sneaked out into the street. So, what had happened? He had batted eyes at the wife of that officer. That very same monk, two years later, was knocked around with a wooden stick during a liturgy in the Kislovodsk church; this time by a man who saw the monk making a pass on his wife. The monk then broke away from Kislovodsk, resigned from priesthood, moved to Nakhidjevan, and got engaged there. This did not work either, and he moved back to the monastery, took the orders back, and became a favorite of the Supreme Council...

Years ago there was a group of Russian washerwomen in Echmiadzin. The clerics, under the pretext of getting their laundry done, used to invite these ladies to their homes every now and then. This created a huge scandal, and the matter was submitted for consideration by the district governor. The latter was kind enough to have mercy on the clerics, who were in a privileged position also by the laws of this time. There is another example of a monk who lived his entire life in sin and fornication. Once, Housik Vardapet (now a

5) This is a word play in Armenian where Vard means rose but is also the first syllabus of the word Vardapet, which means Archimandrite. The author plays also with the rhyme of the words Vard and Nvard, the latter being the young woman’s name. [Editor’s note]

bishop) and I witnessed how that 'virtuous' cleric came to blows and put up a fight with a harlot woman who had come to request her pillows back and her 'remuneration.' Feeling shame about having witnessed the scene, I had to menace the woman and force her out of the monastery...[] There are many other examples; far too many to all be presented here.

Another source of fornication was the divorces. Spouses used to file for dissolution of their marriage to the synod, and the latter would turn it into a protracted process that would last years and even decades. Many couples were often compelled to travel all the way to Echmiadzin to press for their appeals. As a rule of thumb, if the wife was good-looking, then beauty would win a victory, and the wife would thereby acquire the right to a second marriage. If the wife was less attractive, but the husband rich, then wealth in this case would ultimately gain the upper hand. The legates of the synod used to be at constant frays every time they communed for job assignments; all because they all desired more cases dealing with divorce. The synod once had a hearing and decided on the case in favor of a husband, whose gorgeous wife then hurried to Echmiadzin, and stayed there with the head of the synod for two days and two nights. On the third day, there was a new verdict: the wife was innocent; she had the right to remarry, and the husband was deprived of that right. In another instance, a young woman arrived in Echmiadzin with a relative and her new fiancé. A monk (now a bishop) gave them his promise to ask the judges to rule in favor of the woman. In the face of the facts, the synod decided on a favorable verdict, and the lady, before departing from Echmiadzin, paid a courtesy visit to the monk to thank him for his help. The monk asked for a reward for his service. The naïve lady accepted his words for a face value and replied: 'I have no money on me, but I will write my father and ask him to send you the sum of a hundred rubles.' 'No,' replied the monk, 'money is not what I am seeking', and knelt down beside the woman and clutched his arms tight around the beauty's legs. This time however, the monastic 'celibate' was well off in his calculations. The woman spat at the eye of this 'devotee', roared at him, and exited the room to impart all that had happened to her fiancé. The fiancé decided to march inside and simply throttle him to death, but was stopped by the woman. The affair was managed in the end with a scandalous letter sent by the fiancé to the 'holy father'.

In recent years, corruption has acquired a systemic dimension. There are some who restrain from hiring married housemaids altogether; others engage the services of young 'chambermaids' only and try to give them away in marriage as early as possible; and some only bring in day-maids for work. There are also some

who 'honor' prostitution under the pretext that these women are 'relatives', 'nieces' and 'third cousins' who they falsely call their maids. The misery that fell on the Armenian nation has filled the monasteries with deprived and starving refugee girls and women, something that has well contributed to the emergence of this system of 'maids'. This has now reached such proportions that T. Tadevosian in a lengthy article he published in The Horizon labeled Echmiadzin a 'great whorehouse'. Influenced by the publication, the Catholicos issued strict orders to the Cloistral Council that all the women and girls be dismissed from the monastery as early as within three days. All those high ranking clergymen however, who were now demanding the obedience of their junior colleagues, simply flung aside the orders of the Catholicos, and nobody discharged a single 'housemaid'. This was in the year of 1920.

Catholicos Mkrtich Khrimian always spoke against celibacy, and so also attacked the idea with ridicule.

Catholicos Izmirlian used to say, 'As an individual whose name is Izmirlian, I do acknowledge that celibacy promotes libertinism; but as a Catholicos, it is beyond me to amend this order. These matters are in the authority of the National Assembly.'

Catholicos Gevorg V issued an enactment allowing priests a second marriage. He did so without the consent or consideration of the National-Ecumenical Council, and rightfully so, because his decision was aimed at saving the clergy from impurity, and at protecting young people from pernicious influences.

Fornication is closely linked with theft and robbery. It is well apparent where that robbery is heading. Armenian people, it is not my malevolence that compels me to write these lines; never so. This is how things should have been, and will be, as long as false celibacy is practiced and cherished in the church. I am not even all that inclined to blame all those 'celibate' fornicators, for it is in the nature of man that he is like an animal: he needs his own crib so that he does not pry into that of the other.

You, Armenian people, you are the ones who constitute the 'living' church of Armenia. So, abolish the adverse practice of celibacy; just like the Anglican, the Germanic, the Swedish, and now also the Russian 'living' churches have already done.

I do grieve for this entire hypocrisy, one so offensive to me. I also grieve for your male and female offspring who will internalize the ugly morals and the manners rampant in the monasteries, and then carry them into the outer world. Stand guard for the dignity of your children, hold them away from the monastic establishments, and be prompt to eradicate celibacy from those places.

The truth is that in the monasteries, if there is still any relative degree of purity of sanctity, it dwells with those who have been in a conjugal union for years, and who, therefore, have wives, children, extended families, and the right to marry. Only they will die a natural death, whereas 80% of all those 'celibate' clergymen simply die of venereal infections.

Raise the alarm and raise a vehement clamor, Armenian people!

May celibacy be eradicated from the Church.

May desecration be eradicated from the cells, the altars, and the temples.

May the clergy-fornicates be eradicated.

Benik Ts. Vardabet

Erevan, 1924

### **Editor's Post Scriptum**

*After the recent republication of this paper in Armenian daily newspaper Lragir, bishop Hovakim Maohukian wrote a critical response to the editors. The response was published in the same newspaper on 23.11.2010 and claimed that the article was not worthy of republication, and the brief introduction contained misinformation regarding Benik Ts. Archimandrite's ideological affiliations. In the introduction the editors of the newspaper had mentioned that the Archimandrite belonged to the group of church reformers active in the second part of 1920s. Debunking this information, the bishop argues that in reality the Archimandrite was helping the Bolsheviks to oppress the church which started in the 1920s but reached its peak during high Stalinism in 1930s. Moreover, he claims that the publishing organ 'Free Church' came out at a time when the official Patriarchy in Echmiadzin was banned from publishing its own newspaper.*

## **The Rails**

### **Vardan Jaloyan**

I hear noise from behind my girlfriend's door. I walk inside, and I find workers demounting her floor. Confused, my girlfriend explains: she'd gone out to pay for a gas connection, but, all off the guard, she footed the bill for a rail track installment. I at once get jealous over her friend from the train station. He is surly behind this entire thing.

The men finish up their job; we are having a shot; they retire away.

We lie down. She refuses sex. She's way too excited about all the prospects she sees ahead. We chat about journeying, distant places, very big cities. She makes me name all the capitals and the big centers in Latin America. I put it to her: the trains do not run all the way to Latin America. She is not convinced. I map for her all the likely routes and all the directions she could possibly take. I give her a fair warning not to climb onto the first train she will see passing. She argues against:

"Can't you get it, it's so romantic to just catch any train, whichever one may pass first?!"

The next morning she boards onto the very first train, and departs away."

I come again the following day; I find her sitting with someone from abroad. We get some drinks. I go past my limits. They offer me a Turkish coffee. I spill it over the foreigner's head. They chuck me out. I am then thinking: did I keep up with my national stereotype? I rejoice: I put a black slur on that foreigner's national stereotype.

I come back the next day. Outraged she is. Nor does she want to let me in. I give her a reason: I have no other place I can go. She hints at my grandma's. Both of my grandmothers have long been dead. I sleep the night outside her door.

I see a dream. My flat is turned into a parachute station. We get on one of them with my girlfriend, and we sail away. The parachute breaks down halfway. We are collapsing to the ground. My girlfriend, in fear, snuggles up to me; she's kind of the faint-hearted type. I am so happy, I could simply die. As I am dying of happiness, at the same moment, the parachute crashes into the ground.

I wake up to the whistle of a train. It's a train from Yerevan to Peking. My girlfriend makes it plain for me: she is up for a trip to China. There is a civilization which is so interesting; on the other hand, the line to Peking covers five and a half billion kilometers, or

maybe slightly less . One month for her outbound trip, and another one month for the inbound journey.

I see her off, and I head to drink. I get over my hangover three months after. I go over; she refuses to let me in. I am a drunkard, she says. I turn back, and I drink for another six months.

It has been a week since I beat my hangover. I call on my girlfriend. The rail tracks are gone. I walk inside. She breaks down in my arms; she is sobbing. A blockade is underway, and the trains stopped running. I cheer her up: you can have your gas lines installed now. She bursts into tears: the Azeris have blown up the pipeline.

Damned be the country where the planes are the only thing you can travel with.

Showily, I pull out an airplane ticket from inside my pocket. This cheers her up; the destination is still unspecified; it is simply blank. It's an unpaid ticket, she reacts derisively.

It's a paid one – I give her my cunning smile, and I pull out weed from inside my pocket.

We smoke it up, and we set off flying.

## Traduttore, Traditore: Translating How, Betraying What?

### Shushan Avagyan

The role of the artist as a disturber of habitual perception is critical in Viktor Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie* (defamiliarization), which, in essence, is a literary technique used to renew and revise habitual or mechanical perception of phenomena. Shklovsky posits that after encountering objects or phenomena several times, the process of recognition switches to an automated mode in our minds, and in order to renew perception of the familiar, language must shift the familiar into an unfamiliar semantic axis. Hence the function of defamiliarization is to render the familiar in unfamiliar terms in order to slow down automated perception and increase difficulty by impeding and retarding the processes of recognition. '*Ostranenie*,' writes Shklovsky in *Bowstring: On the Dissimilarity of the Similar*, 'is the sensation of surprise felt toward the world, a perception of the world with a strained sensitivity.'<sup>1</sup>

In our conceptualization of the performance that we provisionally titled '*Togh lini pat(k)erazm*' (Let there be im(war)ge), Arpi Adamyan, lusine talalyan, and I used the function of defamiliarization to critique and unsettle concretized ideological assumptions (and silences) about experimental queer art that abound in contemporary Armenian culture. The partially scripted and partially improvisational performance took place in the circular basin of a temporarily dysfunctional fountain in the Republic Square in front of the National Gallery of Armenia. It was aimed at queering and reinscribing a space that has been consistently used as an active official arena during the Soviet age, bearing the statue of Lenin with a platform at its base for Party leaders to address the nation, and later, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, as a site for protests and demonstrations against the political regime. By the late 2000s, the Republic Square was reclaimed by the new government to hold its military parades and further degenerated into a tourist zone, attracting hundreds of tourists both from abroad and from the provinces of the country. The fountain complex, which was a part of the Square's architectural composition designed by Aleksandr Tamanyan, was built in 1939 and reengineered in the 1970s to become the most modern spectacle of water and sound in Yerevan. It was repaired and reopened in 2007 on Independence Day, having been reassigned to a new set of symbols

1) Shklovsky, Viktor. *Bowstring: On the Dissimilarity of the Similar*. Trans. Shushan Avagyan. Dalkey Archive, 2011. 260.

## Երկրաչափականից անմիջապես հետո ու շուրջը նորից շրջան

(պահեստների մի մասը փոխադրեցին վճռական գիծն անդին ու կասկած չկա, որ այս պատշաճ որևէ բանը կարող է լույ նշան լինել և ոչ գեղագիտական իրողություն)

(վիկիլային ժապավեններից, փողոցային դետրիտից կախված կամ կոնստրուկտիվիզմից մղվող ուղղաձիգ դաստակների դատակարարում)

(ցանկության լեզվով, Օրեստես, որով յուրաքանչյուրս արդեն որոշակի շրջահայացությամբ պիտի բացահայտենք ինքնակարգավորող ապարատների ու պատկերի արտադրության ստանդարտացման՝ հանուն արվեստի իհարկե, նորարարությունները)

(ու հստակ է հիմա, ոչ էլ որտեղ պարտադիր կոչ են անում վերադառնալ)

(եղածը լավագույն կերպով օգտագործելու ունակությամբ, կամ արձակվելով երկաթուղային տողերի կայ/ցարանից, քանի որ չես կարող չփոփոխել առարկաների ու նրանց հարաբերությունների այնպիսությունն ինչպես որ «են» ասելու համար)

(վիրակապերով մարդիկ ու հազարավոր մարդիկ իրենց ամենօրյա շարքերում ու որքան արագ կը հետեւին ընդհանուր շարժումին եւ որքան երկար կ'ընկերակցին անոր)

(օրինակից առաջ ու դրանից հետո իր գետեղումով, թարգմանությունը արվեստի կարողականացման առիթն է)

(բայց տես, ասում են Յակով Խաչիկյանները, տես թե ինչեր են անցկացնում «նորի» անվան տակ. չկա միատարրություն, միայն ցից խոչընդոտներ ու անսովոր տերմիններ, չգոյ եզրեր ու անպետք եզրաբանական բազմապատկումներ)

(տարածքների նկատմամբ տեղի ունեցող ու սև ցուցակներում հայտնվելու մասին այս կրկնակի կապակցությունն է, որ տալիս է հետագա ապօրինությունների դրդումը)

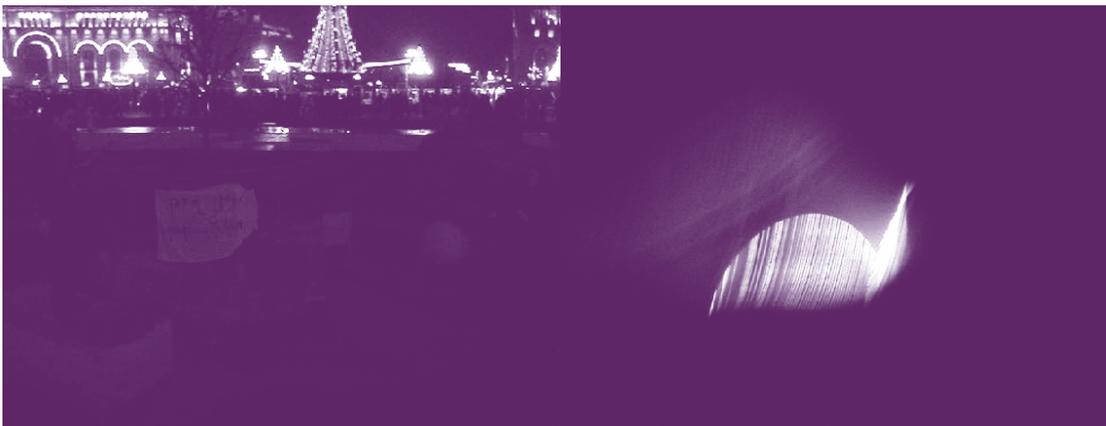
(ուր կա նաև անելանելիության հնարավորություն, սիրուհիս, այդ գծվածից էապես տարբերվելու)

(դրսից եկող, վաղաժամ անընդունելի(ս)որը քայքայում է սեփական էականը և այլն)

(թվարկումը կարելի է շարունակել, որովհետև ոչնկարագրական է ու հստակորեն ցույց չի տալիս)

(սահմաններում տիրող անիրազեկությունն ու ստույտացումը, սակայն ինչպես, դատողության ներսում, հարաբերել

such as nationalism, militarism, consumerism, pop culture, etc. As we descend into the fountain basin on January 1, 2010, at 2:11am, the panopticon-like Republic Square is still overcrowded with mostly young people celebrating the new year.



For us, the concept of *im(war)ge* is suggestive of a representation of a mechanism that is at war with itself—a self-conflicted, unsettled and unsettling image of a Foucauldian panoptic space that is constructed by the continuous gazes of disciplinary powers (such as the city mayor, the city architect, the museum curator, the security, etc.) and the discontinuous gazes of dissident collectivities that aim to re-translate the space by queering the familiar, the normalized and the habituated construct.<sup>2</sup> The space then is transiently inhabited by three artists who are making up their own absurdist ‘realities’ and reinventing the space from the bottom of the Singing Fountains, the main function of which is to enhance the grandeur and power of the state structures such as the House of the Government, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that encircle us. Of course, at this opportune moment the fountains have been turned off and are not functioning and this conditions our *kairos*, which is the classical measure of highly interpretive, situational, and thus

2) Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. Vintage, 1995.

ընտանեցնողների խնդիրքը. նրանք շուտով՝ անկախ իրենց «հեղինակությունից», կկանչվեն հետ)

(ու հետևանքներից բացի, այս անհատական հիմա-ռեժիմը)

(ինչը հիմնականում պայմանավորված է «եղածի» հետ, որ բերում է մեզ ոչ թե արդենին այլ վաղվանը)

### Le voyeur

(գուցե ընդհատվում է այս քաղաքացիական)

(դիտորդ ու դիտված Ուրարտույի մանյակով կնոջ քանդակը, արված ոչ 1988ին, ու ոչ էլ Լոյենբերին, երբ մտցվեց պարետային ժամ և արտակարգ դրություն, այլ ժամանակից շատ ավելի շուտ)

(ու եթե կրկնությունն այսպես ես փորագրում գալիքի մեջ, պաշտպանելով ինքդ քեզ ուրիշից, ու եթե այս պակասի սաստկության թափի հետ մեկտեղ, պարփակվում ես ինքդ քո տարբերակներում, հսկելով քո ուրիշությունը)

(քնակչության մասցորդը իրավամբ վերագրավելով մեր ամայությունն ու կրճատումները, միմյանց դիմելու միակ ընդունելի ձևը «ընկեր»-ի փոխարեն դարձնելով)

(մինչդեռ այստեղ ամեն ինչ լավ է, գուցե շատ ավելի լավ քան Նախորդ տարիներին, չնայած գեղեցիկ մատուցողներն այլևս չկան, բայց սրանք գալիս են իմ երևակայությունից ու սրանք ավերող մատուցողներ են, ովքեր անախորժ, անդուր զգացումով են լցնում և իհարկե սրանց շփոթված գայրույթն

subjective timing.

Moving freely in the demarcated space of the basin and swinging a large yellow yarn ball filled with paper like a pendulum, Arpi Adamyan performs a movement that imitates the motion of timekeeping. But the irregular movement that often breaks from the oscillating back and forth pattern also perhaps evokes the swinging wrecking ball, a demolition weapon aimed at the image of both the artist as an inert waiter and the museum as a regulatory institution that closets art(ists) in storage vaults. This controlled ideological image of subservient artists producing uniform 'realist' art, whether conforming to the (Communist) Party or national needs, still drives the cultural politics of Armenia today. To deflect this conforming gaze, which operates by holding woman artists such as Aytsemnik Urartu (1899-1974) in the waiting rooms of museums that serve as reformatory institutions for future nonconformists, Adamyan *carnivalizes* the repressive processes of such archivization. She proposes a scenario in which the masked artist perverts the silent waiter, who deftly and unobtrusively serves what has been ordered, by temporarily suspending and subverting the rules and regulations at the asylum-museum.

I am partially in drag with painted-on moustache, brandishing a blue dildo in my right hand and 'shooting' passers-by. I am also reading out loud an excerpt from my unfinished novel *Zarubyan's Women* in Armenian. The sounds of music and firecrackers mute my voice. The selected passage is a contemplation of the mechanisms that automatize and disindividualize power that resides in a complex distribution of bodies, lights, sounds, and gazes in which the unhistoried characters are caught up.

Lying prostrate on the ground, lusine talalyan's gaze is interrupted by transitory death, boredom, desertion, an erotic dream-if the image is an image of war and if the image is at war with itself, then talalyan participates only through an absented presence, a presence that flickers like the Derridian cinder: 'By its retreat it still feigns having abandoned the terrain. It still camouflages, it disguises itself, beneath the multiplicity, the dust, the makeup powder, the insistent pharmakon of a plural body that no longer belongs to itself-not to remain nearby itself, not to belong to itself.<sup>3</sup> Her gender is indiscernible; like the cinders, she changes sex, she re-cinders and 'androgynocides' herself. Lying on a headscarf that is nearly identical to the keffiyeh famously worn by Yasser Arafat, talalyan frames war

ու անտրամաբանական պահվածքն իրական է, ու եթե մեկը տեսներ այս պատկերը երբեք չէր ճաշի այստեղ առանց կասկածելու, որ բոլորը մասնակցում են ինչ-որ սարսափելի ֆարսի)

(ինչն է հնարավորություն տալիս այս ներամտնելուն մի տեղ, որից մեկը տարօրինակված է)

(այս շեղմանը, որ աղճատում է ամենուրեք ընդունվածին, սահուն շրջանառության մեջ հայտնվողին)

(այս տեսնելուն, որ ընդհանրացվածում չկան քիմիական ռեակտորներ, բարձր ջերմային կատալիզային քայքայման, օքսիդացման կամ վերականգնման աշտարակներ, որ ինչպես Ուրարտուն էր ասում, ոչինչն է լավ բացի նորից)

### Պետք էր հերոսանալ ստ(եղծ)ելով

(չիմանալով ինչպես վերգտնել կորող-կորած ժամերն ու եզերված գծավոր շրջանագծով, անբնականի բարձրահարկ շենքերով, այստեղ)

(այստեղից այն կողմ)

(ըստ սովորության կորստի, գրածդ սփոփում է, ու բոլորը հավաքվում են հաջորդ նախադասության մեջ, որպեսզի մոռանան)

(առաջին սկիզբը, որից հետո արդեն անհնար է պատկերացնել նրանց 2:11ին ազգային պատկերասրահի դիմացը, մարտավարական ու ինչ-որ տեղ վաղանցիկ, բովանդակող որոշիչներ շռայլելիս)

(ցանցի ներսում)

(գտնվողների մի մասը հայտնվել է միջնորդի դերում և, ինչու չէ, նախապատրաստում է պիտանիության նորմերի ավարտունակության կտրուկ)

(վերաբերմունքն իհարկե կստիպի վերանայել աֆորիզմի որ արժեքների դավաճանումը)

(և արդյոք չէր զգուշացնում արվեստագետն իր հեղգործնելության մասին, երբ ասում էր, «Ես եմ տերը լռության», միայն նրան են ենթարկվում այս խստագույն երկու տառերը)

3) Derrida, Jacques. *Cinders*. Trans. Ned Lukacher. U of Nebraska P, 1991. 61.

and its dehumanizing rhetoric that untraces the lives of Palestinian wo/men. This is the iconic image of war that both contaminates and numbs the viewer-it contaminates with a desire to participate, and it numbs through its proliferation in various forms of mass media-one becomes accustomed to life in war.

So when a group of young men notice and approach us at the end of our seventeen minute act, they immediately identify and isolate the familiar visual codes of militarism and war, including the placard with the title 'Let there be im(war)ge,' choosing to read it-'Let there be war.' The performance is perceived as an act of treason, and the artists as polluters of high cultural values such as masculinity, nationalism and military pride. And yet there is a lingering sensation of surprise among the viewers, as the familiar representation of war naturalized by those very cultural values that they dogmatically uphold is re-experienced in a new heterodox translation.

### Ու «հիմա»-ն այլևս չի ազդանշի ինտունականները

(Եթե մեկը պատեհութիւնն ունենայ մօտէն քննելու հրադադարն այն կէտին վրայ ուր մէկն ու միւսները կազմուած են միաժամանակ)

(անպայմանական կապիտուլյացիայի թանգարանում անձնատուր եղողները պարտավորվում են նեո-ֆորդիստական հարահոսի վրա արտադրել, և հիվանդագին լաւատեսութիւն մը կը տիրէ տակավին, հակառակ բոլոր անհանդուրժելի առարկաներուն)

(մտածումս իր կատարին կհասնի չափազանցությամբ, հորդումով)

(ինչ որ կը զանցէ տեսնելու կարելիութիւնը, ինչ որ անտանելի է նայուածքին)

(ձևը գուցե ոչ թե ձևի փոխակերպումս է բովանդակության, այլ բովանդակության համեմատելիի ու համեմատվածի արանքում բացատրության փլուզումը, այսինքն, նորի՝ դեռ չձևավորվածի, անզուգահիշությունը)

(զարթնուլ յանկարծ ի քնոյ, զարթնուլ ընդոստ այս քաղաքում ու չիմանալ)

(որ հեղձամահ ենք լինում, Բարոնես, ասում ես զնուստերի ներ(քո) մեջ լցվող գնացության)<sup>1</sup>

1) An excerpt from *Zarubyan Kanayq* (Zarubyan's Women).

**Port of Flowers**

Sherif El Azma



Since his wife passed away, the count still could not understand why one of his daughters had been acting so strangely for several weeks. "She wakes up in the early evening, and misses most social events and family gatherings."<sup>1</sup>

She was seen by the "Ghafirs" (local porters) leaving the house after midnight on one occasion. The count's acquaintances and in particular his friend the Greek shipping merchant had spotted her amongst the locals in the harbor waiting for the Turkish ships to arrive. It was easy to spot her in the midst of a crowd of curious Egyptian fishermen, hustlers and beggars. It was as if she was waiting for a secret lover. The ship was a fortnight late already; her spirit was broken and her body weary.

She displayed no particularly strange symptoms as far as the doctors could see – a general fatigue, light delirium, slurred speech, bed sweats, back pain, loss of appetite and sleep. If she had some kind of illness, the Count's physician would have detected it immediately. Only her teeth were browner than usual, and her appetite lost.

Her cries during the night sounded almost lewd to the count, and echoed in the far corners of his townhouse. Her cries sounded to him like the sounds of sexual pleasure. The maid had checked on her, and to her surprise, had found her fast asleep in the dark; alone in her bed covered from head to toe by white cotton sheets.

Could this be the work of the devil?

Alexandria, Egypt<sup>2</sup>

1932

## Endnotes

1) 'Raya and Sakina [notorious female Egyptian serial killers] began their series of ruthless crimes in Alexandria in November 1919. It is not inconsequential that the Egyptian port city at this time also saw the famous popular uprising that pitted its major protagonists – stone-throwing children – against the forces of the British Empire. With security forces preoccupied with quelling the disturbances, Raya and Sakina were afforded the opportunity to act with impunity.' *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 17 – 23 June, 1999, Issue No. 434.

By the 1930s, during the British rule, the port of Alexandria and surrounding areas had become a rife playground for smugglers, drug dealers and common criminals. Jankowski, James. *Egypt's Young Rebels 1933 – 1952*, (1975) Hoover Institute Press, Stanford University, p. 47.

2) 'It is their image of Egypt's recent past which is most important for understanding the nationalist attitudes and positions of the men of young Egypt.

'I will tell you, gentlemen, a reality which I discovered in Europe. It is that most of its peoples are close to the primitive, primal stages of life. The only thing responsible for their progress in life is the great amount of learning which they receive all over Europe. Their knowledge, their character, their virtues, their peculiarities – all of these have been acquired by striving and only by that. This means that if you only strip from them this learning and this knowledge which they have won through striving and study, you will find Europeans close to the barbarism of prehistoric times.' Ahmad Husayn, From a speech of August 1938, as quoted in *Jaridah Misr al-Fatah* (journal), August 23, 1938, p. 12, as quoted in Jankowsky, p. 52.

As we have seen, Egypt's last period of greatness was the reign of Mohammed Ail. But glory came to an end in 1840, and since then Egypt has counted for little on the world scene. The blame for this termination of Egypt's playing a proper role in the world, rested primarily with Great Britain.

With the economic decline of the British textile sector in the 1920s, which was set in an economy losing its international competitiveness to Europe and North America, the search for new export markets in the third world (mainly concerning cotton and textiles) became a necessary step towards British

economic expansion of large firms and local industries at large. By the mid 1920's and until the early 1930s, one of these British investment areas was Egypt. Tignor, Robert L. *Egyptian Textiles and British Capital* (1989), The American university in Cairo Press. p. 18

In a 1933 speech, after reviewing the moral laxity which he found so prevalent in Egypt, Husaybn declared:

'All that is due to the despicable policy of the English. For the English know how to rule this country. They know the path by which to do it is by separating the young generation from religion and its principals... so they allow wine and usury, prostitution and gambling, all on the pretext that this is the 'civilizing' of Egyptians.' From a speech by Husayn of December 1933 as quoted in *ibid.*, p. 221.

Were it not for English policy, intervening and enticing against us, we would be over all today.' (16) This view of nineteenth century Egyptian history provided the rationale for one of the most frequently expressed themes in the propaganda of young Egypt; opposition to the British position in Egypt.' Husayn, Imani, Murafa' at al-Rais, quoted in *ibid*, p. 31.

## Against Betrayal

### Vardan Azatyan

Marx describes the communist society as follows:

In communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic.<sup>1</sup>

It is quite obvious that in such a society the discourse of betrayal becomes redundant and unnecessary; subtracted. However, as opposed to communism, betrayal, and the world that makes it possible, exists. Thus, emancipatory practices must be situated within the nodes of the existing order of things and be capable of cultivating strategies to create possibilities of heterodox acts and practices within that order. Betrayal is the figure of this heterodoxy as a possibility of emancipation.

With the proposition of communism by Marx, an intervention into the factual situation took place that revealed the limits and conditions of the discourse of betrayal. According to Alan Badiou, in this radical move, there appeared a tension between facts and truths.<sup>2</sup> Here, communism is primarily a figure of truth, which, because of its mutiny towards facts, allows for an 'imaginary projection of the political real into the symbolic fiction of History,' thus opening a way for 'possibility of possibilities.'<sup>3</sup> At the same time, it makes it possible to see the inner truth of the factual; that is, the existence of the State and its coming into being – in this particular case – in terms of betrayal.

Let us delve deeper into this truth; Marx proposed the above mentioned image of communist society in the context of the analysis of the division of labor. This image of communism was

aimed at showing that the reification of social activity through division of labor and its proliferation is the main factor of historical development as a supra-human and objective force. It is in the context of this process that betrayal becomes possible. Thus, it is only inside an ethics which justifies and guarantees a society based on the division of labor that the discourse of betrayal becomes meaningful. To betray means to transgress the socially reinforced lines of division; to 'disclose' a truth of one sphere or one role to another sphere or role positioned as diametrically opposite to the former. The traitor, who appears sometimes as excess, sometimes as reversal and at times as lack acts as a transgressor of the ethics of the social division of labor. Therefore, its existence and revolutionary potential are conditioned and limited by the boundaries of the division of labor and by the ethics that reinforces it. This way, the traitor is the necessary product of the normalized social order as the ethical anti-figure of the latter.

The personified sanctification of the discourse of betrayal (St. Ejneb) is the self-proclaimed traitor who is universalized. This universalization is based on the seduction of negative dialectics: the declaration of oneself as negativity as an exposure of those structures that have produced you. The impossibility of the existence of the traitor's figure is the possibility of its existence. Giorgio Agamben states that the traitor is the author as gesture; 'A subjectivity is produced where the living being, encountering language and putting itself into play in language without reserve, exhibits in a gesture the impossibility of its being reduced to this gesture.'<sup>4</sup> The traitor is the failure of the subject as a gesture of the latter's production. It is a self-acclaimed gap in the reign of language and can be so since, according to Agamben, it gives itself to language without reserve. This supposes a diving move, which results in the universalization of one's own position. We may consider this a reaction against the capitalistic universalization of love and happiness.

Paraphrasing Marx, we can say that in the self-absorbed poetics of the possible-impossible, betrayal does not question the connection between the critique it proposes and the latter's material environment.<sup>5</sup> As the product of a world order based upon the division of labor, betrayal is attached to the institution of private property. This might sound rather strange, but there can be no betrayal without private property: the dividing lines of labor

1) Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *German Ideology*, in Marx/Engels Internet Archive (marxists.org) 2000. <http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm#a4>.

2) Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event 2* (London, New York: Continuum, 2009), pp. 4ff:

3) Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis* (London, New York: Verso, 2010), pp. 252, 243.

4) Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), p. 72

5) Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, <http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm#a1>.

are also the dividing lines of private property.<sup>6</sup> From this point of view, betrayal is an attack on the right to private property, and thus a crime. It is this figure of the criminal that Ejneb produces as social critique without articulating its connection with the division of labor and the institution of private property. By not recognizing this connection, betrayal gains a critical power that is characteristic for the freedoms of liberal democracies that leave the institution of private property intact.

Betrayal can never present real political economic or political strategic claims as its revolutionary potential is bound to create emancipatory moments within the existing power relations by declaring its own negativity, rather than ultimately destroying power relations and its own foundations as a real possibility. From the point of view of liberal democracy, even the thought of this is incriminating. That is why the revolutionary potential of the traitor is reduced to heterodoxy, which is not only left untouched, but is encouraged within the contemporary methods of defending the existing division of labour. Similarly, the propagation of undivided labour and the value of public property serve the preservation of the institution of private property and division of labour. The accumulation and circulation of capital is more effective when it takes place through combined efforts and for the sake of the common good.<sup>7</sup> When it comes to the supposed overcoming of the disciplinary boundaries of the inter-, trans – and multi – disciplinarity within the last three decades, these trends have not overcome the professional divisions but rather exacerbated them. Socialism has become the ideology of capitalism.

Gilles Deleuze has exposed the connection between heterodoxy and liberal democracy in Spinoza's example. Deleuze's Spinoza is a true figure of Ejneb in which we can trace the move described by Agamben: by adopting ascetic virtues the philosopher uses these towards ends that are entirely non-ascetic and towards the expression of his own singularity, which is nothing more than the 'effects' of philosophy as such played in opposition to any type of environment. But which is the most appropriate environment in which this heterodoxy can flourish? Deleuze is very clear: 'Doubtless it is in democratic and liberal milieus that he finds the best living

conditions, or rather, the best conditions for survival.'<sup>8</sup> Deleuze repeats once again: 'It is certain that the philosopher finds the most favourable conditions in the democratic state and in liberal circles.'<sup>9</sup> He consequently rushes to add that this does not in any way mean that the philosopher accepts the values of a given environment. In reality, the latter tolerates him as it accommodates heterodoxy as a liberal value.

This is the image of the Ejneb that Deleuze consistently renders in social terms. To defend the revolutionary potential of the discourse of betrayal as heterodoxy and ignore the liberal democratic dimension of this defence is a theoretical irresponsibility with ethical consequences. In order to escape the liberal democratic heterodox defence of the institution of private property, one needs to abandon the discourse of betrayal altogether and radically shift the perspective of the critique from the 'gesture' into the subject of truth. But if we continue to defend the discourse of betrayal and believe in its emancipatory potential, the best we can do is to betray the betrayal.

6) In this regard, here is what Marx has to say: "Division of labour and private property are, moreover, identical expressions: in the one the same thing is affirmed with reference to activity as is affirmed in the other with reference to the product of the activity." Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, <http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm#a4>.

7) Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London, New York: Verso, 2005).

8) Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), p. 3-4.

9) Ibid.

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The cover photo was taken during the Spanish Civil War, on August 7th, 1936 at Cerro de los Ángeles near Madrid. It shows the symbolic execution of Christ by Spanish Revolutionaries.

The first sentence of the prologue is taken from the opening line of William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, only the location is changed. The words attributed to the mad woman character on page 10 of the epilogue are taken from the title song of Mozaik's *Çook Alametler Belirdi* (Istanbul, 1988) album, and are originally attributed to Persian poet Omar Khayyam on the album cover.