

YEGHISHE CHARENTS - YERVAND KOCHAR

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Abstract

The article is dedicated to the creative and human relations of two genius artists, poet and novelist Yeghishe Charents and painter and sculptor Yervand Kochar. Charents' 125th anniversary of birth was celebrated in 2022, and Kochar's will be celebrated this year, in 2024.

Key words: Yerevan, Tiflis, Paris, poem, painting, Stalinist persecutions, Kostan Zaryan, monumental art, creator's fate.

Yeghishe Charents and Yervand Kochar, two names worthy of each other, two geniuses, who are united by deep creative commonalities, for whom the novelty was as important as the national tribal tradition. With that aesthetic feeling, they navigated their difficult path and created enduring masterpieces.

Yeghishe, born in Kars on March 13, 1897, and Yervand, born in Tiflis on June 15, 1899, were contemporaries, one a poet, the other an artist.

It is not superfluous to write that Charents was also gifted with a vivid painting skill. Here is one interesting testimony: "One day, before the drawing class had started, Yeghishe drew the Kars island-park and the citadel a little bit far from this place with chalk on the blackboard. It turned out very nice. We sat silently waiting for the teacher. When he entered, he noticed the picture and asked: "Soghomyan, did you draw it, am I right?" When he found out that there was no mistake, he praised him. Yeghishe got up to clean the blackboard, and the teacher said: "Let it stay. Today you can draw whatever you want in the copybooks".

The other class was arithmetic. We all thought that the teacher would clean the blackboard to write examples. But how surprised we were when the teacher said with a smile: "I am dictating the examples, write them down." At the end of the lessons, Yeghishe erased what he had drawn."¹

This talent of Charents, the perception of visual images, line, color, shape, light and shadow, depth and surface, the trajectory of internal movement, arrangement and sequence of elements, had to be reflected in poetry with the texture of word images, the temper of portraits, the character of the hero. It is so, because the visual-object images representing a psychological outline are expressed very vividly in Charents' works. For

¹ Alexandryan 1979: 8.

example, we see this in the portraits of Abovyan, Nalbandyan and Chieftain Shavarsh in the poems dedicated to them.

The creative career took Charents to Tiflis, where they met because Yervand Kochar, a graduate of Nersisyan School, participated in exhibitions in Tiflis in 1919-1920. And before that, in 1918, Karo Halabyan met Vahan Teryan in the North Caucasus, who helped them to continue their education in Moscow after Nersisyan School. They study in Kanchalovsky's class, visit galleries, Karo stays in Moscow, and he, having become an educated person, returns back. After that, according to the document from the Museum, from 1919 to 1921 Kochar worked as a tutor at the 3rd Female Gymnasium in Tiflis.

Like Arpenik Ter-Astvatsatryan, wife of Charents, Arpenik of Kochar studied at the Gayanyan School. And this tells us how they had got acquainted.

At the beginning of July 1921, the newlywed Charents was in Tiflis with Arpenik, they were going to go to Moscow to study. Together with Arpenik, they visit his parents. During these days, Kochar also painted Charents, created "Portrait of Yeghishe Charents" (1921, paper, pencil, 17x12, Tretyakov Gallery). Charents is 24 years old in the picture, but he is presented with a more mature image, wise eyes, some slight smile on his face, which can also be perceived as hidden irony, a broad elbow, a hat on his head. In the same year, the portraits of Hovhannes Tumanyan and Isahak Alikhanyan were also created in the same style. It is possible that Charents had given his books to Kochar.

Acquaintance with Charents turns into close relations very quickly. On April 20, 1922, in a letter addressed to his relatives from Constantinople, Kochar also sent his greetings to Charents². And this means that Charents was in the Kocharyan family, got to know his relatives, and after his departure, the friendship remained.

The beginning of the 20th century, like the end of the 19th century, was a time of great changes in the world of art. The individual, the group of like-minded people struggled against the common values and value system that dominated in art. And all that was done with the help of press, journals, books, exhibitions, discussions and absolute bohemianism.

Charents also sought creative cooperation. His first attempt in June-July 1921 with Karo Halabyan and Tigran Hakhumyan was the attempt to publish the periodical "Korchi" ("Be Gone") with a combative-offensive negative attitude, each issue of which, according to Hakhumyan, "...should have been a bomb dropped on the bourgeois Olympus of art and literature against any old idol. Charents envisaged the unprecedented success of the first issue."³ The main conflict was the accepting-denying attitude towards Teryan's work. Hakhumyan was accepting, Charents was denying, which is the reason for their disagreement. The periodical was called "Be Gone" because time had set the question of the old and the new with all its severity, according

² Yervand Kochar Museum, 3517, f. 2389.

³ Gasparyan 1986 (ed.): 153.

to which the old would perish and the new would take its place. Moreover, Kochar must have been aware of this initiative, because those were the days when he was making the portrait of Charents.

The second initiative of Charents was “The Declaration of the Three” which was some sort of a shock in cultural life of Yerevan⁴. The third attempt in 1923 was the initiative of the futuristic-constructivist periodical “The Avangard”, which failed due to lack of supporters and lack of funding. The fourth step was the publishing of journal “The Standard” in Moscow in May 1924 in cooperation with Karo Halabyan and Mikael Mazmanyanyan, which had a short life⁵. These experiments were within the framework of the same theoretical program, and “The Standard” was a revised continuation and development of the principles of “The Declaration of the Three”.

The last fifth step was radically different from the previous ones. In cooperation with Mahari, Armen, Bakunts and others, Charents created creative group “The November”, which opposed proletarian schematism to the demands of high art. They published many valuable books. Its logical end was the brilliant article, authored by Mkrtych Armen “About Charents and related problems” on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Charents’ creative activity⁶.

In 1917, Kochar attended an exhibition of Armenian artists in Tiflis, where he met Hakob Gyurjyan, who was born in Shushi. Their friendship was to continue later in Paris, and Kochar wrote about him in 1956 the following: “Throughout his life, Gyurjyan was on the top, he never became a servant of his art. He had two studios in Paris, where Italian and French masters made his works on granite, marble and bronze”⁷.

Here are his notes on the nature of the new fine art of 1917-1918: “How miserable and poor life would be if from time to time new thoughts, new emotions did not come forward and find their place in people’s souls. And that is how the new Fine Art came about. A stormy battle ensued between the morals acceptable to the old society and the spurious inventions of the new individuals. Society does not want to accept the new Fine Art and considers it “decadence” - a “decline of fine art” and artists – “mental patients”. But always the individuality has attacked the prevailing morality of the society. It is the hygiene of human history. It is enough for an artist to go out of the usual framework, to break the rules, for the society to attack him, declaring him “crazy”, “shameless revolutionary...”⁸.

Let us not forget, before all of this, the report “The Coming Day of Armenian Literature” with the same demand of the review of the past, reevaluation of values, the yes and no of the new generation was made by Teryan in Tiflis in April, 1914⁹. Also Russian futurists made speeches in Tiflis beginning with 1914, and Kochar’s was quite

⁴ Gasparyan 2022: 157-175.

⁵ Gasparyan 2022: 256-260.

⁶ Gasparyan 2022: 301-341, 479-481.

⁷ Gyurjyan 2007: 98.

⁸ Gyurjyan 2007: 16.

⁹ Teryan 1975: 48-102.

likely to participate in these meetings, and his speech contains the ideas of Teryan of a new generation.

And most importantly, according to Kochar, “artists should strive to be revolutionary in art, but not revolutionary for the sake of being revolutionary.”¹⁰ In other words, not the external formal-demonstration, but the essential one: the demand for change should come from within and not just from the whims of being fashionable. Charents thought so, too. For that reason, they were also defenders of traditional values and never cut off their feet from their native land. Later, in 1969, Kochar formulated this approach as follows: “There is no abstract art, art is always concrete. It cannot be otherwise. And what about modern art? Modern art has its own laws. It is not anarchy and ignorance. The violation must be justified. Art is not an occupation, but a culture.”¹¹

In the period of formation of Armenian art in the 1910s-1920s-1930s, Kochar actively communicated with Charents. But Kochar left the country in April 1922, first to Constantinople, then to Venice, and in 1923 he settled in Paris, the city of arts, where Picasso and Dali lived. Before his return (May 1936), Kochar participated in many exhibitions, received fame and honor. In 1925 his works were exhibited in the same hall with Picasso at the “Art of Today” exhibition in Paris. His contacts were direct with the mentioned giants of art and culture, who also appreciated him¹².

There are many commonalities between Charents and Kochar and one is more demonstrative than the other.

In 1919, among other works, Kochar painted two paintings: “Portrait of the Painter’s Mother” and “De profundis”, Mother and Self.

Not long after, Charents’ “Gazelle for my Mother” was published (compilation from “The Book of Gazelles”)¹³. Native house, mother sitting under the shade of a mulberry tree in front of the house, memories of these days, image of the son who has left home and is lost in the unknown reality, from whom she has no news, and from whose longing bitter tears are flowing. It is the fate of the orphaned generation, which should have been called the lost generation. There is a portrait of his mother, here is a “Gazelle for my mother”, in connection with which Charents said with the same innovative spirit of the time: “I wrote fifty gazelles during my youth. I burned them all and left only the gazelle dedicated to my mother. The rest were trivial things and did not bring news either in terms of theme, form or style.”¹⁴

Like Kochar’s portrait, Charents gazelle had its predecessors (Shahaziz, Isahakyan, Teryan). The continuous traditions of mother’s theme are remarkable: Arshil Gorky’s (1904-1948) painting “The Painter and his Mother”, Hamastegh’s (1895-1966) unnumbered poem titled “My Sweet Mother...”, later Shiraz’s book “Monument to My Mother” (1968).

¹⁰ Teryan 1975: 23.

¹¹ Teryan 1975: 28.

¹² Hovhannisyan, Martirosyan-Kochar 2016 (eds): 10-11.

¹³ Cooperation of Armenia, 1920, N 12, July 1.

¹⁴ Gasparyan 2008: 169.

So, let us focus on Kochar's painting "De profundis". "De profundis" is the beginning of the Latin Penitential Psalm 6, one of the liturgical episodes of the Catholic Church. It was used by Verlaine in the poem "Jesuitism" in the book "Saturnian". Time was familiar with the novel-trilogy "De profundis" (1900) by Stanislaw Przybyszewski, the confession "De profundis" (1905) by Oscar Wilde. So "De profundis" - far or near - existed and gave signals... Przybishevsky was quite popular author at the beginning of the century, whose works, apart from Charents, were known to Kochar, too.

Under the title "De profundis", Charents has two references. The first is the poem of the same name written in early 1927 after the death of Arpenik in the Yerevan Correctional Institution and the desire to collect under that title the poems written on the occasion of Arpenik's death, which he did not do and wrote about it in the poem "The Burnt Songs" (1929). "De profundis" was used by Charents in 1926 in the sense of compensation. In connection with the planned "De profundis" book, Charents said: "The poem and these poems are one whole, and I intend to publish them in a separate book, De profundis." And then we learn about the following from one source: "The reader, however, will not find that poem and that series of poems in any collection, because he burned them later. The reader can get some idea about that "De profundis" from "The Burnt Songs", "I am Not the One I used to Be", "My Muse" and other poems.

The penitentiary and the death of his wife filled him with despair: "I am not Charents I used to Be," he continues in the poem (1929) beginning with the line "Listen, my priceless"¹⁵.

Charents' second work, entitled "De profundis", is the note made, on April 13, 1937, in his apartment, "in bed as usual", on the occasion of his 40th birthday. "De profundis" is already used here not in the sense of retribution, but from the depths. So, "...a week ago, that is, on the 1st of March (the actual birthday according to the old style), I completed forty years of my life. I was lying in bed that day, as now, as I have been doing continuously for the last three years, in the bedroom: in front of me is the wardrobe, in the door of which there is a huge beautiful mirror. Every morning when I wake up, opening my eyes, I see my face in that mirror - always the same, as if more than familiar, forever the same face, the same person who is me, as long as I live, my unique earthly form... Is there anything more painful and, essentially, meaningless, than staring at one's own gaze - you look into the depths of your own eyes - and how much you struggle to understand something, to feel it internally, as if you know it, - your image becomes so unclear and unrecognizable to you - you seem to want to catch something, something that eludes you endlessly, the more you strain your mind to get closer to it - so far it recedes, becomes immaterial, devoid of meaning, as an empty space, like the idea of eternity or infinity, when you want to imagine them in your brain. - On the other hand, it is like the repetition of the same word, when the more you repeat the same word, so it becomes pointless and meaningless - and if you insist on repeating it more than necessary - you can just go crazy. - That's why I avoid looking at myself in the

¹⁵ Khoren Radio, "Armenian Language and Literature", 2017, N 4, pp. 48-50.

mirror more or less constantly. - Moreover, not only do I avoid I am, but also afraid, as one can be afraid of any haunting thought or doubt. - And indeed. - There is no more pointless and fruitless occupation than that fictitious self-examination through the mirror. - But this act, as an epistemic, spiritual act, should never be to confuse with the action that women usually like to engage in <...>. The difference is that a woman is the least eager to see her insides in the mirror. Oh, no, he doesn't instinctively think about that. <...>. When a woman looks at herself in the mirror, that is, alone with herself, she sees her image simply as an external object <...>. So the act I propose (when a person immerses himself in his gaze in the mirror - wants to feel, penetrate, sink into the depths of his being) - is a spiritual, essentially, of course, metaphysical act, when the subject (i.e., I) seeks to see himself in his reflection (that is, to the subject) - it turns out to be a real "squaring of the frame"... <...>. ... subject and object (which is the same subject) and wants to understand, recognize himself internally, as an object, which is at the same time a subject - this is where the madness really begins - and in this sense, this mental act is very similar to the same to the repetition of the word".

Then he goes to the "stream of thoughts": "Each idea has recently begun to branch out in my brain and develop in a "branching" sequence. An internal uncontrollable urge pushes the given idea to develop in all possible aspects, with a "twig" system - that is, how a tree grows.

The main idea becomes the trunk of the tree, which starts to give branches and each branch in turn, twigs, which in turn become new branches and so on endlessly: "But is it possible to develop any idea, even the tiniest one, with this method? - Of course. , no..."

After all this, Charents concludes and summarizes with the words of Narekatsi: "If this continues - it is hardly possible to ever return to the material itself - what is most amazing among great geniuses is an internal iron control, so that not the material masters the author, but the author masters the material - but in such a way that it is not lost and not an important branch, not even a branch, not even a stem... Give me, O Apollonian sun, this spiritual light, so that I can not only desire, but also fulfill, not only strive, but also - achieve - not only go - but also - proceed in a conscious and uncomplicated way..."

The note continues: "...I cannot pass and the line already branches, like a seed, like a tree and every line becomes a tree - and every word - becomes a branch and branches are endless, how, how, how can let me move on to the next line... <...> ...whatever you touch - even the simplest stone - a thousand thoughts come out of you - <...>. When you read your previous songs, you are surprised that you were able to extract so little from that material (gold, diamond). And I am afraid to touch my old songs now..."¹⁶

¹⁶ Museum of Literature and Arts; Yeghishe Charents Archive, 85; Charents 1967: 484-490; Charents 1996: 323-325.

This deep psychoanalytical self-examination continues and ends with a twig-like branching diagram of thinking, from what the mind got its impulse, and, deriving from it, where it reached. Mainly monosyllabic words written in three columns follow. Continues reasoning about networked thinking.

Accordingly, he was not able to pursue the free creative element. In fact, he wrote constantly, but he also complained that he could not keep even a small part of his inspiration; the reason was the networked thinking manner of his mind.

The best manifestation of creative commonality is the image of Gozal in Charents' "Tagharan" (1920-1921) and the image of Huri in Kochar's pictures "Huri" (1925), "The Portrait of a Girl" (1925), "The Girl with Apples" (1926), "The Eastern Women" (1926). In general, it is the East, a unique orientalism, which is represented by the image of an oriental girl. Charents' Gozal rejects the love of the poet, and Kochar's Huri turns into a mask of a girl with a full face with arched eyebrows, as if she is also one of the rejecters, perhaps one of those who are hard to convince, because there is no expectation or illusion of love on her face.

From here, the transition to the image of Sayat-Nova is made, which is present both in Charents' "Tagharan" and in the latest version of "The Road Book". The portrait of Sayat-Nova as an oriental troubadour was painted in 1945, and also sculpted by Kochar in 1963 (his remarkable explanations have been preserved)¹⁷.

Woman and dance: dance movement in poetry, such as the dance of two nice girls in black and white in Charents' "The Knight" (1922), and in painting, such as Kochar's painting "The Dance" (1971). As parallel examples in poetry, we can recall the scene of Nazenik's dance in Varuzhan's poem "Harch" (written in 1910, fully published in 1912), and Hakob Gyurjian's "Dancer" in sculpture. There are also many other examples, not stillness as inherent, but the temptation to paint movement (Chagall, Picasso, Dali).

Charents arrived in Paris on March 31, 1925 on the way to a foreign trip. Chopanyan, Shirvanzade, Kostan Zaryan, Zapel Yesayan, Hamlik Tumanyan, Hakob Gyurjian, Yervand Kochar were in Paris... Among many others, Charents also meets Yervand Kochar. In Paris, Charents had a plan to publish the periodical "The Steering Wheel" and invited Armenian literary figures to cooperate. It is not at all excluded that, as an artist, he invited Kochar to participate in that initiative as well.

Charents took the next step in the preaching of new art in the collection "The Epic Dawn" (1930).

Charents achieves the aesthetics of monumental art, something Kochar was also moving towards.

According to the schematic requirements of the theorists of socialist realism, monumentalism was imagined as a volume-spatial inclusion. This dimensional monumentalism influenced literary genres - the novel in verse - N. Zaryan: "Rushan's Cliff", "Tsaritsinian Episodes", the corresponding series of Charents in "The Epic Dawn".

¹⁷ Gasparyan 1986 (ed.): 191, 253.

The same in other fields of art: architecture, music, painting, sculpture, also urban planning, industrial enterprises, collective economies replacing individual economies. In the great and endless country, everything had to be great, starting with the great October revolution - a tendency that ultimately reaches a morbid grandiosity, gigantomania (the production of unusually and superfluously large works).

Kochar wrote the article "The monumental landscape", the title of which is the landscape of Armenia: "It is the landscape of Armenia that can simultaneously form the axis and the background of our painting."¹⁸ By the way, before "The Epic Dawn" collection, "The monumental landscape" was an obvious embodiment of Charent's poem "For my sweet Armenia..." with the entire artistic system of inclusion: the graceful dance of Nairian girls, dark sky, dark waters, inhospitable black walls of huts, thousand-year-old stone of ancient cities, mournful songs, Narekatsi, Kuchak, white peak of Ararat shining in eternal snows, and with all this, a complete geographical and historical landscape of Armenia.

For monumentality, Kochar singles out "duration and immobility", "the big whole", and at the same time, monumentality is conditioned by the requirement of the machine and communal life of the day. The second prominent impulse is the universality or grandeur of the monumental landscape. Kochar's landmark is the constant greatness, the statues of David of Sassoon and Vardan Mamikonyan created by Charents along with "For my sweet Armenia..."

Kochar also spoke about socialist realism. Taking a general look at the world history of art, he says only this: "...all arts are realistic, but these realisms have different colorings, and there is no art outside of realism."¹⁹

Contrary to the vulgar theorists of socialist realism, Charents perceived monumentality in "The Epic Dawn" as a requirement of noble and heroic, perfect and lasting art. Accordingly, monumentality had a different explanation for him. Monumental, i.e. filtered from unimportant details, characteristic thick lines and condensations of time, also mobility and speed against the dead immovable, also a personality that condenses the breath of time, a living person with his complex and contradictory psychological movements. Charents accepted monumentality with the requirement of novelism precisely as epicness. It is needless to add that at the same time, with the same novelistic demand, Pasternak reworked the previous poems and summarized them in the series "The Epic Motives" and included them in the book "On the Barrier"²⁰.

Kochar achieved monumentality both in painting and sculpture. In the first case, wonderful examples are the design of "Daredevils of Sassoun" on seven graphic sheets or pages (1939), which he did for the Russian edition of the epic on the recommendation of Hovsep Orbeli using the stone drawn on the cardboard as a support, as if by Kurkik Jalali, Lion Mher, David of Sassoun, Little Mher and other

¹⁸ "Greek-Armenian yearbook", 1928, Second year, Athens, p. 254.

¹⁹ Kochar 2007: 22.

²⁰ Pasternak 1929.

characters were also depicted on the stone. For the academic edition of the first Russian translation of the Armenian heroic epic novel, the world-famous Orientalist Hovsep Orbeli (he was the author of the book's foreword and the direct organizer of the publication) chose only Kochar's illustrations from the many suggestions presented. In the case of sculptures, "David of Sassoun" (1939, plaster; 1959, tempered copper) and "Vardan Mamikonyan" (finished in 1962, erected in 1975). In these works, monumentality is evident both as a whole and in individual episodes.

"The Eagle of Zvartnots" (1933) is also a wonderful condensation of monumentality even in small dimensions: simple, clear and eternal.

The character of David of Sassoun was also commemorated by Charents. In 1933 he also organized the printing works of the first volume of the stories of "Daredevils of Sassoun".

There were plenty of critics of Kochar and Charents: "And Ara Sargsyan was walking around with the file under his arm, trying here and there to prove that "David of Sassoun" is a copy of Michelangelo's "David", there is nothing independent, it has nothing national, the topic of David of Sassoun is not historical, it is a myth, an epic. What is the need to erect such a statue?"²¹

In the depths of monumentality, it is the unique memory of the artist that brings him to the seemingly inaccessible deep folds of the history of humanity and nationality. Such is the whole poetry of Charents, starting from the ballad "Mari, female bird" (1916) up to the poems "As a bird of the sky with lights..." (1930) and "Ecclesiastes" (1935) and then, starting with "Blue Motherland" (1915) and "From The Dante Fable" (1915-1916) up to "The Four Paths of History" (1933), "The Vision of Death" (1933), "In Praise of Grapes", "Wine and the Fair School" (1932), "Nork" (1933) and so on. That memory passes through the folds and sieve of thoughts of centuries and brings impulses from the depths. Kochar considers it "prenatal memory" and adds: "...our ideas depend on memory."²²

Charents and Kochar were urbanists in terms of art-thinking; theirs was the urban culture that is always present in the work of both. Their hero is the city resident and it is no coincidence that Charents wrote a verse novel entitled "Homo Sapiens" (1928-1929), which is the complete inner world of his teenage years in the obscurity of the dusty streets of Kars, and Kochar painted the picture with the same title "Homo Sapiens" (1933) where the person from the chest to the belly is exposed to the world with his inner essence, his eyes are dark and sad, and his face is like a metal mask. In other paintings, instead of a tree and a flower, there is a piece of faded newspaper, a cafe meeting: "Cafeteria" (1918), "Outdoor Cafe" (1918), "Three Men Sitting Around a Table" (1918), "Reflection" (1920) "Conversation" (1923), "Woman with a Necktie" (1923), "Two Women in a Cafe" (1923), "The Man with a Cigarette" (1926) or "The Muse of Cybernetics" (1972). It was this city life, the fate of the creator, that led Charents to

²¹ Gasparyan 1986 (ed.): 107.

²² Gasparyan 1986 (ed.): 260.

poems with delirious titles: “Delirium” (1935), even “Delirium in Delirium” (1937), and Kochar to “Vision” (1931, canvas), “Melancholy” (1959, sculpture), “Ecstasy” (1960, canvas) works. In front of eyes of Charents was a bifurcated man, “Homo Soveticus” – the reborn “Homo Sapiens”. Later, with the same mindset, Kochar created the painting “The Bifurcated Individual” (1954). Both Charents and Kochar created their self-portraits with the same urban psychology. Charents - “Monument” (1934), “The State with all its apparatus” (1935), “To Me” (1936), “Untitled” (1936), Kochar - “Self-Portrait” (1918, 1936).

Kochar’s picture series “The Man-City” (1933) is a condensation of urban images, and the scene of Charents was both a noisy city and urban life with its individual heroes, one of whom is the hero of the verse novel “The Great Daily Routine” (1929), the accountant thrown out of life. Maybe that is also the reason why the natural world outside the city - forest, river, mountain and valley, rural landscape with its relative idyllicness is not typical for them at all.

The character of Komitas was dear to both Charents and Kochar. On October 21, 1935, the news of Komitas’ death shocked Charents. His poem “Komitas” is a direct expression of that feeling. His poems “Komitas” and “In memory of Komitas” are different works, different expressions of the same inspiration.

In connection with the transfer of Komitas’ ashes to the motherland, “The Literary Newspaper” informs: “On May 9, two large groups of French-Armenian workers immigrated to Soviet Armenia. The immigrants bring with them the embalmed body of the greatest master of our folk music, Komitas, who will be buried in the pantheon of Armenian literary and artistic figures. The archive of the great musicologist is also being transferred to Armenia. The immigrants will be in Armenia on May 25.”²³

Kochar returned to the USSR in May 1936 on the same steamship “Sineya” with 1,800 French-Armenian immigrants that was transporting Komitas’ ashes to the motherland. The group included actor Levon Harut, director Yaghubyan and other famous people. The coffin of Komitas’ “...ashes unclaimed for a long time in a disconnected carriage at the Navtlugh station (Tbilisi)²⁴. They could not transport it to Yerevan, nor could they leave it at the Naftlugh station. Komitas’ ashes will be brought to Yerevan on the eve of the funeral, on May 27. On that rainy spring day, Charents begins the initial version of the poem “In Memory of Komitas”: “You are our motherland’s song // Back to the homeland...”²⁵ He continued his work until November 30 of the same year, the night of the Sovietization of Armenia.

For him, Komitas becomes the symbol of the Armenian nation, the native land, the Armenian spirit, the universal motherland and the fate of the Armenian nation, according to which the people must gather and unite in the motherland. Here, the expression “Oh,

²³ Grakan tert, 1936, N 11, April 30.

²⁴ Gasparyan 1997 (ed.): 108.

²⁵ Charents 1983: 612.

Armenian people, your only salvation is in your collective strength” gets a sense of a certain “advice”.

The ashes of Komitas were buried on May 28, 1936. The civil funeral was in the House of Culture. A large crowd gathers. Manuk Abeghyan, Panos Terlemezyan and others were present. Suddenly the crowd parted and made way for Charents. He expresses his farewell to Komitas, embalmed in a closed coffin, bows before him, then bends down, kisses the glass covering his face and, rubbing his hat in his hands, leaves.

Another memoirist describes that moment in a different way: “Charents bent over the coffin and said: “My father, Sghomonyan.” And the people didn’t know that Charents is Sghomonyan, too.”²⁶ Here is another memory: “...Charents entered. He was very sad. No one knew that he was being taken to the Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage for interrogations and it was forbidden to him to leave Yerevan. We, the students, considered him inviolable. The attention of those present was drawn to Charents. Very sad, he approached the coffin, knelt down and kissed the glass. Everyone was excited; the Great Poet was even more excited. When taking the ashes of Komitas, according to custom, the people came out. Then I heard that the officers of the ECCCR from Tiflis had broken the glass and searched the coffin. Charents furiously tried to intervene, but was barely restrained and removed from the coffin. I have never known anything like it. And then when burying the ashes of Komitas, I was standing at the edge of the cremation pit, if the glass had been broken, I would have noticed. I can neither confirm nor deny that story.”²⁷

Charents did not participate in the burial ceremony. They said that he turned his face and cried silently. He had already written “The Return Song”.

As we mentioned, he writes the poems “Komitas”, “In memory of Komitas”, “Requiem aeternam” (“The Eternal Rest”) poems. Several poems and fragments have also been preserved: “To your ashes, Komitas”, “The Inscription”, “Epitaph”, “With Crazy Eyes”, “The National Requiem”.

Charents was essentially with Komitas: “Among the many paintings of Panos Terlemezyan, there was a remarkable etude. The artist himself, Komitas, Siamanto and the object of the latter’s love, young beautiful writer Mannik Perperyan, while on a boat in the Bosphorus. Charents was fascinated by that painting and tried in every way to get it, or buy it, or get it as a gift. But Terlemezyan didn’t want to part with that work in any way. <...>. Once, in my presence, Charents, with the stubbornness of a child demanding a toy, pushed Terlemezyan and was persuading him to sell that etude to him. The artist could no longer resist and had to give the painting to the great poet. Charents, having received such a gift, emitting a cry of joy, pressed the picture to his chest...”²⁸

²⁶ Gasparyan 1997 (ed.): 49.

²⁷ Arakelyan 2003: 77-78.

²⁸ Alazan 1967: 302.

The image of Komitas was too dear to Kochar: he made both painting and sculpture. The picture (1946) is a light and bright image, as if it is not the tortured priest, but his bright, bright song. The sculpture (1971, Vagharshapat) is simple and calm in its solutions, it is monumental and noble, as if a traveler from a distant history has stopped for a moment to rest, to continue his journey after a while.

The destinies of Charents and Kochar are very similar. The commonality of some episodes of the lives of the two great men in those bloody and dark years of the history of the USSR is obvious.

After returning to the USSR in 1936, Kochar went to Tiflis, his father's house. The Union of Artists of Georgia did not accept him well: his application for membership was rejected, after which he moved and settled in Yerevan in the autumn, became a member of the Union of Artists of Armenia, but here his life did not pass in a calm rhythm: "In Yerevan, Kochar was severely and unnecessarily criticized. The highest art elite of Armenia was unfriendly and also hostile towards Kochar."²⁹ The accusations were so heavy that in 1937, Kochar was expelled from the Union of Artists. What happened: "...during one of the discussions, he suddenly took off his shoe, lifted it above his head, and showed it to all of us. "Look, look, the sole of my shoe has a hole. I am an artist. None of Mussolini's workers has a hole in his shoe."³⁰ After that incident, he left for Moscow, returned in 1938 and was reinstated in the ranks of the Union through the mediation of Karo Halabyan.

After being fired from his job in "Armenian State Publishing House" and his noisy "Declaration" of leaving the Writers' Union, as the expression of protest, Charents was expelled from that organization on March 13, 1935. After being reinstated in June, Charents was expelled from the same union for the second time in July 1937, then arrested and ended his life in Yerevan prison.

Kochar also faced political criticism. Finally, he was accused as a propagandist of anti-Soviet ideas. On June 23, 1941, the day after the start of the Great Patriotic War, he was arrested, tortured, they never forgave him his years spent in Paris. But they released him on October 23, 1943. At one time, it was believed that one of his Nersisyan School schoolmates, a member of the USSR Defense Committee, Anastas Mikoyan, Minister of Food Supply to the Red Army, and Karo Halabyan, Vice President of the Union of Architects of the USSR, mediated. As we learnt from the museum, it was recently found out that there were no such petitions.

After settling in Yerevan, the relations of Charents and Kochar were restored. On May 30, 1937, Charents addressed a letter to Kochar (it is unpublished, we quote it in full):

"Dear Yervand!

I think I told you once that I dedicated that wonderful book to Karo Halabyan.

Therefore, I am sorry that I cannot meet your wish.

²⁹ Alazan 1967: 31.

³⁰ Gasparyan 1986 (ed.): 56.

My greetings!
 Ye. Charents
 1937. 30. V"³¹

It is not clear what book we are talking about, but the question continues: "To Dear Yervand Kochar as a sign of respect and friendship. 937. 9. VI. Charents, Yerevan, the book "Issues of the Combination of Arts" with the inscription. Charents gives it to Kochar³². Is this the same book or another, it is not possible to say, but it is possible to note another important fact that the path of compositional art, to which this book is dedicated, was related to both of them.

Charents spoke about compositional art at the 1st Congress of Writers of the USSR. And the mentioned book brings together the materials of the first creative consultation of architects, sculptors and painters. Illustrated (in black and white), from Egyptian frescoes and Greek sculptures to Raphael, Giotto, Titian and Michelangelo and contemporaries. The book is kept in the Kochar Museum.

Probably during these days, Charents also gave Kochar a pipe, which is also kept in the artist's museum.

The attitude towards Stalin was also common for both artists. Charents looked at Stalin from two perspectives: one as a historical symbol of a powerful country, that is, as a leader, and this approach was serious ("The Paper...", "The Third Dawn", "Anthem to the Leader", "Hello to the Leader", "The Ode to the Leader"), and secondly, as a tyrant, and this view was so critical that it turned into a fatal caricature in the corresponding works ("There was a naive poet...", "A surprising son...", "I smell blood again...", "Oh, the genius Lenin was right", "They wore high boots", "Giant leader? - equal to Marx", "Stalin", "Medieval Ax", "A Kinto from Tiflis").

In an outwardly acceptable formal form is inward respect. Stalin was sculpted by Kochar with the same grotesque in 1936: a hollow head, a bust of Lenin instead of eyes in the eye sockets, eyebrows like balconies...

As we have already said, the discovery of the commonality of Kochar's spatial painting and Charents' poetry, especially of the 1930s, is a separate episode. Spatial drawing, that is, a three-dimensional volumetric image. The surface of the picture changes, it gets an open sculptural solution. Can you see the reverse side of the picture, the inside, or the sides? Charents entered the depth of the word with a burst of thought and reached the core, where the mystery of existence is like fiery magma. Such is the "The Road Book" collection (1933/1934) and the whole unpublished heritage. And that is in voluminous poems and not only. Read again the poems "Vision of Death", "Like gray yellow leaves...", "Heinrich Heine", "Untitled (On the day of my death there will be silence)" and mentally compare them with Kochar's three-dimensional paintings and it will become clear that and both the poet and the artist tried to break down the material to the last particle, to penetrate even the darkest corners.

³¹ Yervand Kochar Museum, 1379, document 452, Archives, C. 589.

³² Problems of Arts Synthesis 1936: 152.

Here art and science go hand in hand. Physicists split the atom, reach the nucleus and electrons, and the nucleus reaches the proton and neutron, try to make visible the primary material, and the writers and artists try to reach the inner first ray of the soul, which illuminates the future ontology of man, which is at the same beginning, as a preface. It is so, however different, but science and art speak to each other in languages that are equally understandable to each other over time. Here is Kochar: “Modern art is very complex and versatile. <...>. Our dreams and visions on earth are not earthly. Before going into space, man had already found the cosmic forms. <...>. Sculpture became small, reached neutrons, atoms, electrons, but gained great creative freedom. You can sculpt anything and in any way. You have to find the way to greatness”³³.

Kochar also referred to the progress of art caused by the development of science in the article “Picasso” published in 1966: “If the theory of Cubism was supported by the theories of Einstein, Riemann and Lobachevsky, then the concept of surrealist art was strengthened by the theories of Freud and Berkson. Subconsciousness began to assert its rights and was far ahead of consciousness. Artists sought the unexpected beauties of the hidden subliminal self. The impermissible unchaining of dreams, hidden desires, desires became the sign of the liberation of the soul”³⁴.

And a wording from the same article that is also characteristic of him, and not only him but also Charents, and not only Picasso, Kochar and Charents, but also all geniuses. And what does he write? “Picasso does not like to keep what he has won, he leaves it those who come, and he moves to a new arena” (ibid). Although geographically far from each other, how many creative periods did both Charents and Kochar go through? They passed and left their conquests to be enjoyed not only by their immediate followers, but also by surrounding opponents.

Another commonality that unites them as creators is related to influences. From the first steps to “The Road Book” and the unpublished works, Charents was in the gravitational field of far and near influences: Teryan, Verlaine, Blok, Mayakovski, Pasternak, Pushkin, Narekatsi, but always remained independent. The same is the case with Kochar, from Michelangelo to Braque and Picasso... In his article “Color and Form”, written in 1920, but published in 1968, Kochar addressed the issue and gave the following explanation: “...my works remind many of Picasso’s paintings, but this is the simple fact that proves that they neither understand my paintings nor understand what Picasso wanted. <...>. In my paintings, the question “why?” seems to constantly pass, and in Picasso’s paintings, “how?” I am interested and occupied by the state of the form, and Picasso by the obsession. Picasso in this case comes from Van Gogh and I come from Cézanne. Cézanne and Van Gogh are completely mutually neutralizing and opposing forces.”³⁵

³³ Kochar 2007: 26-27.

³⁴ Gasparyan 1986 (ed.): 95.

³⁵ Kochar 2007: 31-32.

Later he gave such a wise explanation to the question: "Influence is the development of one's own personality through the experience of another."³⁶ If it is not the development of one's own personality through the experience of another, then what are the characteristics of Picasso and his commonalities and differences that he so delicately explains? Since the article was written in 1920, let us go ahead and take a look at the next steps, to what extent is the comparison of Picasso's "Guernica" (1937) and Kochar's "Tragedies of War" (1963) not a development of one's own personality due to someone else's experience? The styles, shapes, colors, structure are completely different, but the same thing can be said: war is evil. Kochar's explanation is the same: the influence gives birth to a new piece of art that takes on a life of its own.

And finally, the experience of the other referred to by Kochar is the path of national and world art, which is also called tradition, and which is the normal course of art development. He wrote, didn't he, that Picasso came from Van Gogh and he - from Cézanne? This coming is the very way of tradition. Without that experience, an artist is like an illegitimate birth. Only with that experience does even the most extreme quest become acceptable. It is clear that one seeks and finds the gifted, the "search" for the ungifted is a delusion.

Kochar's painting "Family, Generations" (1925) is an artistic embodiment of the tradition. Three generations, the grandfather, the son, his wife and their son, is the life with its temporal transitions from the very basis. Charents saw that chain as a continuation of the inheritance of art, Dante and himself "as two different ages of the same humanity" ("Vision of Death", 1933), after which he depicted the hundred-year chain of generations that forged the Armenian national-liberation thought.

The Charents-Kochar relationship covers a wide range, has a far-reaching field of opening and unfolding, gives place to the world searches of the 20th century, and also reveals the commonality of the creative life of geniuses and human destiny during the years of the Soviet regime.

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