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A LEADING FIGURE IN ARMENIAN BYRON STUDIES AND A TIRELESS RESEARCHER OF DIASPORA ARMENIAN THEATER: ANAHIT BEKARYAN

The birthday anniversary of Anahit Arai Bekaryan, Senior Researcher at the Department of Diaspora Art and International Relations of the Institute of Arts of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia and Candidate of Philological Sciences, has been commemorated.

Anahit Bekaryan was born on January 28, 1950, in Yerevan, into the family of Ara Bekaryan, a talented painter and People's Artist of the Armenian SSR.

Ara Bekaryan (1913–1986) was born in Afyonkarahisar (Turkey) into a family of educators. In 1925, he moved to Armenia with his parents. He graduated from the Yerevan Art School in 1932 and later, in 1939, from the Leningrad Academy of Arts. From 1939 to 1945, he participated in the Soviet-Finnish War and the Great Patriotic War.

From 1945 until the end of his life, Ara Bekaryan was actively engaged in painting and teaching, serving as a faculty member at the Yerevan State Institute of Fine Arts and Theater. His works were exhibited in numerous national, all-Union, and international exhibitions.

Anahit Bekaryan's grandfather, Vaghinak Bekaryan (1891–1977), was a pedagogue, poet, and prose writer who carried out diverse, remarkable, patriotic, and nationally significant work in various Armenian-populated regions around the world. After graduating from the Central School of Constantinople, Vaghinak Bekaryan moved to Afyonkarahisar in 1908, where he taught at the

A Leading Figure in Armenian Byron Studies and a Tireless Researcher ...

National Central Secondary School. In 1915, he was invited to Jerusalem to teach at the Jarankavorats School, where his family also endured the years of the Armenian Genocide. Following the Genocide, Bekaryan moved to Port Said, Egypt, where he taught Armenian to the refugee Musaler Armenians living in tent camps. In 1916, at the invitation of the Armenian community in Ethiopia, he relocated to Addis Ababa and established an Armenian school there.

In 1922, the family moved to Paris, where Vaghinak Bekaryan studied at the Sorbonne University, developing an interest in the exact sciences. In 1925, they relocated to Soviet Armenia, where Bekaryan graduated from the Chemical Faculty of the Yerevan Polytechnic Institute while simultaneously teaching mathematics and physics in schools in Etchmiadzin and Yerevan, as well as at the Yerevan State Pedagogical Institute.

Growing up in such a family, Anahit Bekaryan developed an interest in and pursued both science and art.

In 1968, A. Bekaryan graduated from N.K. Krupskaya Secondary School No. 19 in Yerevan and enrolled at the Faculty of Philology at Yerevan State University she graduated from in 1973 with a degree in "Romance and Germanic Languages and Literature," receiving a qualification of a philologist and English language teacher. During her student years, while attending the insightful and brilliant lectures of Levon Nersisyan, one of the best experts in foreign literature, A. Bekaryan became captivated by Byron's poetry and decided to choose a topic closely related to Byron and his contemporaries for her diploma thesis. Little did she know that the works of the brilliant English poet would accompany her throughout her life and that through her research, she would become the torchbearer of Armenian Byron Studies.

All of that would come later. However, before that, starting in 1973, A. Bekaryan began her professional career at the Mechanics Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR as a bibliographer. In February 1974, she transferred to the Institute of Economics of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR as a senior laboratory assistant. From 1976 to 1981, A. Bekaryan worked at the All-Union State Design and Research Institute for Automated Systems in Construction (Soviet Union) in the Yerevan Complex Division as an engineer. She led the English language team in the division and translated articles from foreign scientific and technical journals.

Asatryan A.

In 1981, A. Bekaryan moved to the Research Institute of Construction Economics, and from 1982 to 1983, she worked as a junior researcher at the Computational Center of the State Planning Committee of the Armenian SSR.

On May 3, 1982, A. Bekaryan began working at the Institute of Arts of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR as a junior researcher in the Shakespeare Studies Department. From that day on, for more than four decades, A. Bekaryan's scientific and creative work became inseparably linked with her beloved institute. Years would pass, and in 2008, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Institute of Arts of the Academy of Sciences of Armenia, Anahit Bekaryan would be awarded a certificate of honor by the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia.

In a short period, she translated Byron's letters related to Armenians and Armenian culture into Armenian and Russian. By 1983, her first scholarly work in Armenian studies, "Byron on Armenia and the Armenians" (in Armenian, Russian, and English)¹, was published as part of the "Armenian Studies Abroad" series. The booklet included an introduction and annotations by A. Bekaryan, marking her first confident steps in Armenian Byron Studies.

Soon after, with the endorsement of the administration of the Institute of Arts of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR, A. Bekaryan applied to the M. Abeghian Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR. Her doctoral dissertation topic was "Byron and Armenian Literature.

At the suggestion of the Director of the Institute of Arts of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR and Head of the Shakespeare Studies Department, Academician Ruben Zaryan, A. Bekaryan prepared the bibliography of works for the Shakespearean conference held in Yerevan, which was included in the 7th volume of the "Shakespearean" collection. She also actively participated in the preparation of the 8th volume of the "Shakespearean" collection.

In 1993, A. Bekaryan was appointed Senior Researcher, and from March 1, 2009, from the very founding of the department, she has been serving as a

¹ See the Scientific-Informational Bulletin of the Scientific Information Center of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR, G. Series "Armenian Studies Abroad," Yerevan, No. 1, 1983, 58 pages.

A Leading Figure in Armenian Byron Studies and a Tireless Researcher ...

Senior Researcher of the Department of Armenian Diaspora Art and International Relations.

Bekaryan actively participated in the public life of the Institute of Arts of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR. For many years, she was a member of the Trade Union Committee. As part of the delegation of the Institute of Arts of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, she delivered lectures within the framework of the "Pages of History and Culture" program organized by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia. For her active participation in the awareness-raising process for military personnel, as well as her contribution to military construction, she was awarded a Certificate of Honor by Military Unit 68617 of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia in 2010.

At the meeting of the Scientific Council for the Conferral of Academic Degrees in "Literary Studies" (003 specialization) of the M. Abeghian Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, held on December 19, 2008, A. Bekaryan defended her candidate dissertation on the topic "Byron and Armenian Reality" (J.01.01 – "Armenian Medieval and Modern Literature"), under the scientific supervision of Elena Aleksanyan, and was awarded the degree of Candidate of Philological Sciences.

Anahit Bekaryan has twice (in 2009 and 2012) been recognized as the winner of the grant competition of the "Armenian National Foundation for Science and Education" operating under the auspices of the Armenian Relief Fund (USA), which is a rare achievement for scholars in the field of humanities.

Her scientific research has followed two directions: Byron Studies, and since 2009, also Diaspora Studies, particularly the history of the Armenian Diasporan theater.

She is the author of eight books, as well as more than sixty scientific articles published in reputable academic journals and collections in Armenia and abroad, including in Italy (Venice), the USA (Delaware), Japan (Kyoto), France (Paris), the United Kingdom (London), Greece (Athens-Missolonghi), Spain (Valladolid), and Lebanon (Beirut) in Armenian, English, and Russian. She has also presented scientific reports at international conferences held in Armenia and abroad (including the USA in 2001, Japan in 2002, France in 2006, Greece in 2009, Spain in 2011, Lebanon in 2012, Italy in 2023, and more).

Anahit Bekaryan's contribution to the field of Armenian Byron Studies is particularly significant. Here, we would specifically highlight two of Anahit

Bekaryan's important works, which, in our opinion, are major achievements in the fields of Armenian Studies and Byron Studies. In 2004, the prestigious two-volume scientific collection "Byron's Reception in Europe" was published in London, and the 20th chapter, titled "Byron and Armenia: A Reflection of Similarities,"² was authored by A. Bekaryan.

This two-volume work is the sixth in the series "The Reception of British Writers in Europe" (published under the initiative of the University of London and sponsored by the British Academy), organized and edited by Professor Richard A. Cardwell of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Nottingham. On October 19, 2000, Cardwell sent a letter to A. Bekaryan, requesting her to write the chapter "Byron and Armenia" for the aforementioned book. So why did Cardwell decide to approach Bekaryan? He justifies his decision as follows: "I am turning to you as an expert in the field of Byronian Studies. I hope you will accept my proposal and contribute to making a significant contribution to the field of Byronian Studies."

After a rather lengthy remote collaboration, Richard A. Cardwell noted that the author of the article included in his "edited volume," Bekaryan, "joins the ranks of specialists in the international academic field."³

In this work, Anahit Bekaryan for the first time presents in detail to the English-speaking reader the connections between Byron and the fathers of the Mekhitarist Congregation of Venice, their scientific collaboration, Byron's learning of Armenian, his interest in the history and culture of the Armenian people, his Armenian studies, as well as the influence of Byron's lyric poetry on Armenian poets.

Anahit Bekaryan's next significant achievement in Byron Studies is the monograph⁴ "Byron and Armenian Reality" (in Armenian and English), published by the Galust Gulbenkian Foundation's Armenian series, with the decision of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Art of the National Academy of Sciences of

² See "The Reception of Byron in Europe," Volume II: Northern, Central, and Eastern Europe, edited by Richard A. Cardwell, Thoemmes Continuum, A Continuum imprint, London • New York, 2004, Chapter 20: "Byron and Armenia: A Case of Mirrored Affinities" and "Bibliography," pp. 386–405, 471–473.

³ The letters from Richard A. Cardwell related to this work are kept in Anahit Bekaryan's personal archive.

⁴ See **Anahit Bekaryan**, *Byron and Armenian Reality* (in Armenian and English), Yerevan, YSU Publishing, 2013, 404 pages + 4 pages of insert.

A Leading Figure in Armenian Byron Studies and a Tireless Researcher ...

Armenia, and the Publishing House of Yerevan State University. This work is a culmination⁵ of nearly thirty years of scientific research by the Armenian Byron scholar. In this comprehensive and foundational study of the connections between Byron and the Armenians, individual episodes of the relationship between Byron and the Mekhitarists are examined in detail, including the works of Byron published by the Mekhitarists, and the works of foreign authors analyzing the connections between Byron and the Mekhitarists. The monograph also examines Byron's "Armenian correspondence," based on which specific episodes in the formation and development of Armenian studies in Western Europe (particularly in England and France) during the 18th and 19th centuries are revealed. It discusses the studies Byron conducted in the field of Armenian Studies, as well as articles, translations, and research about Byron and his works published in the Armenian press. The work also draws parallels between some of Byron's works and those of Armenian poets, uncovering and correcting the frequent inaccuracies, ambiguities, and mistakes that had appeared in the Armenian press regarding Byron.

The appendices of the monograph include excerpts from Byron's correspondence and Thomas Moore's "The Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron,"⁶ as well as Byron's translations from Armenian. As noted in her review, Gayane Harutyunyan writes: "The book is interesting and valuable both for the breadth of materials it covers regarding the poet's creative and life quests, and for its compositional structure: it presents materials on Byron's collaboration with the members of the Mekhitarist Congregation, the poet's Armenian epistles,

⁵ For the work, see: Byron and Armenian Reality: A Remarkable Study, Science Journal of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, 2014, No. 4 /269/, p. 6. **Asatryan Anna**, Anahit Bekaryan, Byron and Armenian Reality (in Armenian and English), Yerevan, YSU Publishing, 2013, 404 pages, Banber Hayagitutyan Journal, 2014, No. 1, pp. 200–204 (in Armenian and English). **Seferyan Sona**, Anahit Bekaryan, Byron and Armenian Reality (in Armenian and English), Yerevan, YSU Publishing, 2013, 404 pages, Banber Yerevan University Journal, 2014, No. 2, pp. 67–71. **Ter-Gabrielyan Anushavan**, Anahit Bekaryan, Byron and Armenian Reality (in Armenian and English), Yerevan, YSU Publishing, 2013, 404 pages, Patmabanasirakan Handes Journal, 2014, No. 2, pp. 215–216. **Arutyunyan G. G.**, Immortality of Genius, A. Bekaryan, Byron and Armenian Reality (in Armenian and English), Yerevan, 2013, YSU Publishing, 403 pages, Lraber Hasarakakan Gitutyunneri Journal, 2014, No. 2, pp. 330–334.

⁶ See Th. Moore, "The Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron", John Murray, London, 1908.

his Armenian studies, as well as the Armenian literary and public thought about him. In essence, this is a mini-encyclopedia, containing a vast amount of information about that part of the poet's life connected with Armenian reality, which left an indelible mark on his thoughts and heart."⁷

It is noteworthy that John Clubbe, President of the International Byron Society, after becoming acquainted with A. Bekaryan's monograph, sent a letter⁸ on behalf of himself and his wife, congratulating her, expressing gratitude for her work, and emphasizing: "I admire your research and all the new information you have shared with us. As far as I know, this is the first comprehensive study presented in English on this very important yet overlooked period in Byron studies... Thank you for your wonderful and essential research."

A. Bekaryan's latest published work dedicated to Byron is the monograph "Armenia George Byron's Destiny," which was published in 2023 by the "Science" publishing house of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, following the decision of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Arts of the NAS RA.⁹ As Albert Kharatyan, Corresponding Member of the RA NAS, Doctor of Historical Sciences, noted in his extensive review: "With its thematic coverage, research volume, and impressive results of detailed work, A. Bekaryan's work stands out as a unique work in Armenian Byron Studies and its convincing evidence for summarizing it."¹⁰

⁷ **Arutyunyan G.**, Immortality of Genius, *Lraber Hasarakakan Gitutyunneri* (Journal of Social Sciences), No. 2, 2014, p. 330.

⁸ J. Clubbe's letter is kept in A. Bekaryan's personal archive.

⁹ Bekaryan, A.A. *Armenia in George Byron's Destiny*. Yerevan: Gitutyun Publishing House of NAS RA, 2023, 198 pages. See also: **Harutyunyan, Gayane**. "A Little Encyclopedia About a Great Poet." *Gitutyun*, NAS RA monthly journal, 2023, No. 5, p. 8. **Kharatyan, Albert**. "Anahit Bekaryan. Armenia in George Byron's Destiny. Yerevan: Gitutyun Publishing House of NAS RA, 2023, 198 pages." Review. *Lraber of Social Sciences*, 2023, No. 2, pp. 297–304. **Harutyunyan, Gayane**. "Armenia in George Byron's Destiny." Review of Armenian Studies, 2023, No. 2, pp. 244–247.

¹⁰ **Kharatyan, Albert**. Review of Anahit Bekaryan. *Armenia in George Byron's Destiny*. Yerevan: Gitutyun Publishing House of NAS RA, 2023, 198 pages. *Lraber of Social Sciences*, 2023, No. 2, p. 297.

A Leading Figure in Armenian Byron Studies and a Tireless Researcher ...

And it was quite logical that the article dedicated to the 200th anniversary of Byron's death in "Lraber" was authored by Anahit Bekaryan herself.¹¹

Since 2009, A. Bekaryan's research interests have centered on the study of the Armenian diaspora theater, particularly the Armenian-Canadian theater. Within this framework, she was the first in Armenian art studies to examine the production of "The Crane Calls", a play by diaspora poet Jacques Hagopian. This play was performed multiple times across various Armenian diaspora communities and received enthusiastic acclaim. In 1981, under the direction of Lebanese-Armenian actor, director, and translator Georges Sarkissian, Montreal's "Petros Adamyan" theater group staged the play six times in Canada. Later, at the Toronto Multicultural Festival competition, the "Petros Adamyan" theater group won the Best Theater Group Award, while Georges Sarkissian was honored with the Best Director Award.

Based on contemporary press reactions from the Armenian-Canadian ("Apaga"), Istanbul-Armenian ("Kulis"), and American-Armenian ("Paykar") publications, as well as the memoirs of Perch Fazlian, A. Bekaryan has documented a significant chapter in the history of Armenian-Canadian theater. For the first time in Armenian art studies, she examined the prolific career of the renowned theatrical figure and director Perch Fazlian, focusing on his 1984 Armenian-language production of Shakespeare's "Othello", staged by the "Hay Bem" theater group in February of that year. This production marked a new phase in the history of diaspora Armenian theater, solidifying its artistic and cultural significance.

For the first time, A. Bekaryan has introduced the creative portraits of two prominent figures in Armenian-Canadian theater, Selma Keklikian and Khoren Teteyan, shedding light on their artistic contributions. Additionally, her research has led to significant discoveries in the study of Armenian-Canadian music, as it presents the previously unknown musical and performance activities of Selma Keklikian, which had remained unnoticed by musicologists until now.

Through her research on various theatrical groups, directors, and actors who have staged performances in different Canadian cities, A. Bekaryan is set to complete and present a comprehensive history of Armenian-Canadian theater in the near future.

¹¹ **Bekaryan, Anahit.** "In Memory of the Freedom Fighter: George Gordon Byron." *Herald of Social Sciences*, 2024, No. 1, pp. 350–363.

A significant achievement in the field of theater studies is the extensive collection titled "Petros Adamyan in the Memoirs of His Contemporaries." published in 2020 by the RA NAS "Science" Publishing House, the volume was supported by the RA Science Committee of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports and approved by both the RA NAS Scientific Publishing Council and the Scientific Council of the Institute of Arts of the RA NAS.¹² The collection, compiled by Anahit Bekaryan, presents for the first time a summary of the memories of contemporaries about the brilliant Armenian actor Petros Adamyan. The collection includes memoirs about Petros Adamyan published in Armenian and Russian periodicals and collections and is supplemented with rich annotations. The appendices of the collection present poems dedicated to Petros Adamyan, photographs, original texts of Russian texts, and Adamyan's repertoire.¹³

Once again congratulating our energetic and charming colleague on her anniversary, we wish her good health, inexhaustible vitality, new scientific and creative achievements, optimism and personal happiness for the benefit of the development of Diaspora Studies and Byron Studies, for the sake of the progress of Armenian Studies.


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¹² Bekaryan, Anahit (Ed.). Petros Adamyan in the Memoirs of His Contemporaries. Yerevan, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, "Gitutyun" Publishing, 2020, 660 pages.

¹³ **Asatryan, Anna.** Memories of the Contemporaries about Petros Adamyan (edited by R. Zaryan, A. Bekaryan). Journal of Social Sciences, 2021, N2, p. 358–364. **Asatryan, Anna.** Petros Adamyan in the Memories of His Contemporaries. Historical and Philological Journal, 2021, N3, p. 262–266.

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