VAHÉ-VAHIAN – GREAT POET OF W. ARMENIAN LITERATURE

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I know about **Vahé-Vahian,** through the work of Professor Hovhanness I. Pilikian. At the peak of his career in the Seventies, as a legendary theater-director of classical Greek Drama in Britain – Pilikian had discovered ***for the first time ever in the history of world-drama***, among other original features, a gold-mine of ***white-on-Black racism in classical Greek Drama*** (Euripides' *Helen*), in the words of the most eminent translator into English of ***Ibsen*** and ***Strindberg***, Michael Meyer – *"Pilikian single-handedly affected a revival of classical Greek Drama in Britain"*, while the egregious Principal of *the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art*, Hugh Cruttwell, the Doyen of the British Theatre, had referred to young Pilikian as "***a man of original genius***". Pilikian had also created unique theatre-companies, the first of their kind in Europe – ***Hanano***, an exclusive Mask-theatre Company, and ***Cervantes Players***, an all-black theatre-actors' company.

Directing on both sides of the pond … a position first achieved by Pilikian, and hugely envied by London theatre-directors, in a rare and unique co-operation between *Harvard* and *Princeton Universities* (the Oxford and Cambridge of the USA), Pilikian was invited from London personally by a special envoy Professor Daniel Seltzer of Princeton University, to direct an original modern version of *Agamemnon* by William Alfred (a Harvard Professor) to launch the *MacArtur Theatre* at Princeton University as a professional venue.

Pilikian never forgot his Armenian roots and introduced the work of **Vahé-Vahian**, to the English speaking world. Vahian (so abbreviated by friends to his great annoyance as he preferred the full double-barreled pen-name he had meticulously selected from millennia-old Armenian Pagan culture of temple-worship) had been teenage Pilikian's teacher of Armenian literature in the *Hovagimain-Manougian Secondary School for Boys* in Beirut, Lebanon.

Vahé-Vahian had survived a great tragedy of classical Greek proportions … his darling child, **Vahram,** second to his eldest son Tsolak, had qualified as a Mechanical Engineer in Soviet Armenia. Vahram was then employed by a foreign company in *the Emirates*, had climbed quickly to the top of his profession in ***Abu Dhabi*** by 1972.

"*Vahram was an angel*", confirms Professor Pilikian, still in tears today, when he reminisces about the family who were very close friends with his own family. The Professor's father **Israel Pilikian**, a prominent Entrepreneur/Businessman, had helped financially the publication of the Literary Magazine **ANI** founded and edited by Vahé-Vahian for several decades as the most distinguished literary enterprise in the Armenian Diaspora. One of its leading contributors was **Armén Tarian**, an unsurpassed master of Armenian prose-fiction (and the Professor's brother-in-law).

Great Poetry Saves Life

On a Sunday night, in 1976 (on March the 28th to be precise), on his return from an evening with his

English friend, alone in his car, Vahram had swerved into a ditch and alas breathed his last. To this day, his death remains unexplained, and totally mysterious.

"*Vahram was devilishly handsome, like his father, and a totally decent and upright human being – He died as a saint at the age of 32*", states Pilikian, and continues with moving melancholy, "*father Vahé-Vahian, who had survived as a child the genocide of the Armenians by **the Young Turks**, then the sudden death of his most beautiful young wife, Ashkhen, could hardly survive this time his own child's demise. It is very difficult for non-Armenians to grasp this – in the classical Armenian tradition, **one's child is everything! Parents breathe by the breath of their children …** Frankly, **what saved Vahé-Vahian*** from a sudden death in shock, ***was his poetry***", states Professor Pilikian with a tearful sadness in his voice. He continues;

"*What is even more extraordinary is the subtle literary critical fact, that the poems Vahian produced and published as **Houshartzan Vahramis (= A Memorial Stone to my Vahram)**, in Beirut, 1977, carved for the poet Vahé-Vahian a unique pedestal in the history of world literature. Moreover, even within the context of the Western classical Armenian Poetry that counts **VERY great poets** like Daniel Veroujan, Missak Medsarents, Siamanto … most murdered by the Ottoman genociders, Vahé-Vahian upgraded his poetry by a notch or two – until the son's tragedy, the poet Vahian was unable to liberate himself from the shadow of **Vahan Tékéyan**, a very great poet whose distinctive stamp was the simple but telling inversions in the Armenian poetic diction, e.g. haigagan yegeghetsin = the prosaic 'the Armenian Church', would become in his poem yegeghetsin haigagan = 'the Church Armenian', suddenly releasing in the exuberant Armenian language all kinds of percussive new rhythms and hidden meanings impossible to translate … Vahé-Vahian was poetically trapped in Tékéyan's bewitching rhythmic mazes … his son's unbearable tragedy suddenly freed him entirely from Tékéyan's poetic prison – he found his own voice and flew with it, soared to unconquered Himalayan heights of intense poetry … the great evil of sweet Vahram's death turned into poet **Vahé-Vahian's victory song over Death itself**, securing for Vahian a unique place in the history of world literature*".

Vahian's eldest son, **Tsolak**, a distinguished architect internationally, and a childhood class-mate of Professor Pilikian, surprised the latter recently by discovering in his archives the latter's translation of his Father's poem. Tsolak copied it to the Professor, with the Introduction Pilikian had published in the ***Ararat Quarterly*** (New York, 1982, a first-class Magazine of Armenian culture), edited by the very well-known American Armenian Literary critic, **Léo Hamalian**.

Mother-and-Child Society – a Sociological Paradigm

Pilikian had done something very subtle and complex with Vahé-Vahian's memorial poems – he had edited a selection into a single whole, justifying even *in Platonic Form* his claim for world-uniqueness of Vahian's poems.

Léo Hamalian himself was an expert (and author of books) on D.H Laurence's works. Léo absolutely loved Pilikian's introduction of Vahé-Vahian's work, for its very original and specific content,

advocating the constitution of a Child-welfare centered Society … it took British governments several decades (the ***Children's Act*** of 1989 – a major re-write of the British Law) to catch up with Professor Pilikian's ideas, yet still simultaneously abused horrendously by the Euro-pedophiles whose ring of rape and mutilation of children is not still fully uncovered …

We just heard the posh version of it by the Australian Prime Minister apologizing for the state-crimes committed in that country against ignorant teenage single-mothers, whose children were taken away for adoption in the name of fraudulent Christian morality, only to be abused as slave-labor (and who knows whatever else!) by Anglo foster-parents!

Professor Pilikian's proposition to achieve the ideal ***Utopian Platonic Republic*** is to construct the social structure upon the non-feminist woman's love of her children – men must learn from such women to love **all** children and not only their own, which should eliminate all wars and genocides, while teaching Men simultaneously to love their women first and foremost as the potential mothers of their children;

"The British ruling classes have nursed a huge cultural tradition of child-rape; at the peak of Victorian times, child-prostitution was institutionalized by those mustachioed fat-bellied Victorian nouveau-riche capitalist Industrialists. Capitalism constructed its monetary system on the exploitation of men and women, and children most of all, sending them down the mines (as miners) and up the chimneys (as chimney-sweepers), and behind the huge textile machines in factories as cleaners, shredding them into bits …

I can see that Professor Pilikian is hardly able to contain his livid fury and polite conversation.

Léo Hamalian loved the Professor's sociological constructs of a mother-and-child-welfare society, and used to tell how he would read Pilikian's text to his wife frequently every week … His young wife grasped the depth of Pilikian's sociologically innovative ideas – they visited London merely to make the personal acquaintance of Professor Pilikian, in appreciation of his rendering of Vahé-Vahian's unique child-centered poetry published in the ***Ararat Quarterly***.

And here it is, 36 years later, as fresh as almost four decades earlier …

Publisher's Note: The Sequel will be published in Keghart.org's next issue.