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MUSIC IN POETRY AND POETRY IN MUSIC:
TUMANIAN'S *ANUSH*

By

BEATA NAVRATIL

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts,
The City University of New York

2015

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the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of
the dissertation requirement for the degree of
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Abstract

MUSIC IN POETRY AND POETRY IN MUSIC: TUMANIAN'S *ANUSH*

by

Beata Navratil

Advisor: Professor Stephen Blum

The poem *Anush* by the Armenian poet Hovhannes Tumanian (1869–1923) is rooted in traditional Armenian music. Tumanian's poem reflects a number of manifestations thereof: (1) It borrows in its style from Armenian lyrical songs (such as *lalik* and *khagh*), from the *parerg* style (the traditional dance-song), and from the *voghb* style (laments such as funeral laments, *bayati*, and tragic odes). (2) *Ashug* style of storytelling/singing as a main form of conveying the storyline and emotions of protagonists are present. (3) Dancing and music making during Armenian traditional rituals—in particular, the *Hambarsum* celebration (Feast of Christ's Ascension), the winter village wedding, and the *kokh* (wrestling dance)—are in the poem inseparable from the protagonists' fate. (4) Songs incorporated into the poem serve as personifications of characters and their fate. (5) The poet uses the folk music idioms such as a presence of natural phenomena to tell the story and emotions. The three dominant interconnected components of nature—mountains, flowers and bodies of water—create a psychological background and all songs in the poem are connected with them emulating every mood, emotion and physical attribute of the people, as there is no direct description of their feelings or appearances. Such transference and humanization of nature, combined with musical references (dancing mountains, crying-lamenting clouds, springs lamenting “as nymphs”, the river singing the hymns) are used as vehicles for telling/singing the story.

Tigranian conceived his opera *Anush* in 1908 and completed its first version in 1912. The libretto was written by the composer and he almost entirely preserved the 1903 version of the poem in it. The opera by Tigranian shows a close reading of the poem by the composer as the poem's "songs" come alive with traditional Armenian intonations.

Komitas started to work on his *Anush* in 1904 and only some portions of the score have been preserved. For the parts where Tumanian included traditional songs or rituals in the poem, Komitas used the traditional Armenian songs and composed his own melodies for sections pertaining to the "telling" parts. This musical approach closely matched Tumanian's poetic language.

Dedicated to my family

In loving memory of my father, Razmik Degoian

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Stephen Blum, for his support and genuine interest in the subject. I am grateful for his insightful suggestions, ideas, and endless patience while mentoring me.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and sincere gratitude to the committee member, Professor Zdravko Blažeković whose help has been crucial to finishing my work. His input has been invaluable.

I would like to thank Professor Tatjana Marković for her support and kind words which made my dissertation defense a wonderful experience. Her ideas and thoughts have given me inspiration for future work.

I would like to thank committee chair, Professor James R. Cowdery for his kind help and support.

I would like to thank Professor Norman Carey for his understanding and patience throughout all these years.

I would like to thank Jacqueline Martelle for her support and encouragement.

I would like to thank my family; my mother Lamara, my brothers Garry and Tigran. I am grateful for their love and support.

Last but not least, I would like to give my thanks to my beloved husband, Dr.-Ing. Jiri Navratil whose reliability and problem solving skills helped me work and succeed. His ability to never leave anything unfinished is inspirational. Finally, my children, Vincent, Philip, and Natalie remind me of what is important in life. For that I am thankful as well.

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Introduction

*Music is the magical art that with supernatural power and immediacy can fully conquer a human soul and take it to supreme heights. At the same time, among all the arts, music is the most emotional and intangible, and so it is the strongest expression of national spirit which, with its enchanting ways, acts as the highest form of culture.*¹

Hovhannes Tumanian

Hovhannes Tumanian (Հովհաննես Թումանյան; 1869–1923) stands out as one of the most beloved and prominent Armenian poets. His output was large: poems, ballads, stories, fairy tales, and numerous translations of world literature. In his work, he immortalized noble human aspirations – sublime dreams of happiness and justice, love and beauty, wisdom and integrity. Tumanian's poem, *Anush* (Անուշ) is often called the pinnacle of his poetry. It tells about the tragic love of a young shepherd boy, Saro, for a peasant girl, Anush. The poem portrays their endless devotion to one another and their youthful selflessness and readiness for self-sacrifice.²

¹ “Երաժշտությունը արվեստների մեջ էն կախարդ ուժն է, որ անմարմին արտահայտություններով կարողանում է անմիջականորեն ու միանգամայն տիրել մարդու բովանդակ գոյությունը, տրա մարմնին ու հոգուն՝ և տիրաբար տանել, ուր որ կամենա: Էսպեսով էլ նա, արվեստների մեջ ամենազգայականն ու ամենավերացականը միաժամանակ, հանդիսանում է ամենաուժեղ արտահայտությունը ժողովուրդների հոգեկան կյանքի և՛ բարձրագույն հաճոյքներ տալով հանդերձ դառնում է բարձրագույն կրթության միջոց:” Hovhannes Tumanian, *Arvesti masin* (About art) (Erevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hrat., 1969), 162. All translations are mine except when indicated otherwise.

² Eduard Jrbashian, “Hovhannes Tumanian. Biography.” Armenianhouse.org. <http://armenianhouse.org/tumanyan/bio-en.html> (accessed November 9, 2013).

The goal of this research is to discover musical aspects of Tumanian's poem, *Anush*, and to explore its revival in the operas of the same name by the composers Armen Tigranian (Արմեն Տիգրանյան; 1879–1950) and Komitas Vardapet (Կոմիտաս Վարդապետ; 1869–1935). To my knowledge, no previous study has been done on the innate “musicality” of Tumanian's language or on the value of using Armenian musical folklore traditions, rituals, song and dance, a) as a mode of telling the story, b) to be a “messenger” of fate, or c) to set mood and emotion. The poem's musical folklore and rituals are an important part of the plot and overall structure of the poem as a synthesis of folk customs, minstrel-style storytelling and classic tragedies. The types of folk music embedded in the rituals of Tumanian's poem reveal spiritual and earthly beliefs of an ancient civilization from early antiquity on.

The first version of the poem *Anush* was published in 1892 in a compilation of Tumanian's poetry. Its appearance brought immediate success and recognition to Tumanian and the young poet began rethinking and revising most of his work. The new, thoroughly revised *Anush* was published in 1903. This version of the poem was fundamentally transformed and it can be considered a new work. In scholarly literature, the 1892 edition is used to study the transformation of the author's language and style, as well as to follow the development of the promising young poet to his maturity. The 1892 edition contains more descriptive folklore material such as, for example, a detailed wedding scene with rituals removed by Tumanian in the new 1903 edition. After 1903, the poem was published in several versions, all being mainly based on the 1903 publication. This suggests that Tumanian was in a constant quest to edit and improve his work. In 1922, the last version of the poem was published.³ Tumanian's poem

³ All subsequent publications are reprints of the 1922 version. The version of the poem analyzed in this work is from Hovhannes Tumanian, *Erkeri liakatar zhoghovatsu tas hatorov* (Complete collection of works in ten volumes), ed. Eduard Jrbashian (Erevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hrat.,

denotes the divisions as *erg*, which translates as “song.” In his English translation, Kudian used Italian *Canto* for the six parts. I use *Canto* for the six large sections and *erg* (song) only for actual songs in the poem. For the prologue Kudian used *Prelude*.

By framing the poem as a tragic sung lament, Tumanian touches upon the deepest corners of the human soul, in ways that recall ancient Greek tragedies. Manuk Abeghian (1865–1944), a scholar of Armenian literature and folklore, called the ancient laments *lalyats banasteghtsutyun* (poetic cries).⁴ In many ancient cultures, laments belonged among the oldest literary forms such as epic poems and were an important medium for “telling” the tragedy. Tragic events told in laments are cries of suffering and pain, and evoke strong emotions of compassion. In his book *The Captive Woman’s Lament in Greek Tragedies*, Casey Dué explores the reasons for laments of Athenian women captured by the Trojans or Persians, which were included in Greek tragedies, and finds that their purpose was to create empathy for the captives.⁵ A paper examining Greek laments by Đurđina Šijaković gives a succinct definition of the therapeutic effect of laments on the laments and society in general. She writes:

Preserving archaic elements of ritual lament, Greek tragedy gives extremely precious and reliable testimonies about ancient funeral rites and about the way ancient Greeks used to deal with their beloved’s death. It says a lot on the role of woman in funeral ritual, on the power that traditionally belonged to her and was controlled by laws of many poleis. Lament is, even if it calls for revenge, a structured answer to death, an answer of a community, and furthermore an attitude of the same community towards life. This building of suffering into a song eases sores of the woman that laments, of a bereaved family, and wider of a whole community. Lamenting has different aspects, among them

1989), vol. 4. The poetic translation of *Anush* by Mischa Kudian is used throughout my work: Mischa Kudian, trans., *The Bard of Loree: Selected Works of Hovannes Toumanian* (London: Mashtots Press, 1970).

⁴ Margarita Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun* (Armenian traditional music) (Erevan: Luys, 1971), vol. 1, 149.

⁵ Casey Dué, *The Captive Woman's Lament in Greek Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006).

creative-therapeutic as a very important and interesting one. This art offers solace, it shapes the pain.⁶

In *Anush*, the village women feel the pain of Saro's mother as she cries over the loss of her son: "Women in mourning, with their wails of lament, /... Recalling anew their own lost ones also, /... They wept and wailed, their voices united." The line "Recalling anew their own lost ones also" functions as a reminder that internalization of "another's" tragedy is a form of unification for a nation and a means to cope with grief. The mourning rituals and traditional grieving over the death of Saro were denied to Anush, and so she never finds her "solace." She begs in her madness: "Put him down that I may / Loosen my hair over him..."

The musical sections of ancient tragedies were meant to stir empathy, thus lifting and redeeming an indifferent soul, something that Tumanian also saw as one of the most important purposes of literature. For Nietzsche, the musical dimension of the dramatic tragedy and music was of great interest. In his essay *Über Musik und Wort* (On music and words), he stated that music is a primary expression of the essence of everything, and lyrical poetry and drama are only secondary derivatives, thus concluding that tragedy is born from music. Nietzsche also argued that the Greek tragedy was the highest form of art due to its mixture of both Apollonian and Dionysian elements. The Dionysian element is represented in the music of the chorus, while the Apollonian element is found in the spoken dialogue. The Dionysian element was also found in the drunkenness and wild celebrations at the festivals manifested in musical representations.⁷

⁶ Đurđina Šijaković, "Shaping the Pain: Ancient Greek Lament and Its Therapeutic Aspect", *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* 60/2 (2012): 139-154.

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Über Musik und Wort*, (On music and words), ed. Oscar Levy (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911), vol. 2, 27-48 and Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (The birth of tragedy), ed. Oscar Levy (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), vol.1.

Likewise, in Tumanian's *Anush* we have the chorus and spoken dialogues and we have Apollonian and Dionysian elements saturating all the festivities and rituals.

Aristotle in his *Poetics* lays great emphasis on *mimesis* (imitation) and *catharsis* (cleansing) in explaining the purpose of tragedy. Especially important is his emphasis on “the language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament,” among which music plays a dominant role:

Tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play. In form it is action, not narrative. Through pity and terror it effects the purgation of these emotions. By ‘language embellished’ I mean language into which enter rhythm, harmony and song. By the ‘several kinds being found in separate parts’ I mean that some parts are rendered through medium of verse alone, others again with the aid of song.⁸

The idea of this thesis was born during my research regarding the influence of Tumanian on music. His poetry falls naturally into musical settings, and the sheer volume of musical compositions written on Tumanian's words attests to this. Composer Armen Tigranian remarked, “Almost all of Hovhannes Tumanian's work can be turned into a musical piece one way or another—by its disposition and sound.”⁹

Many composers seek and embrace a strong spiritual connection to Tumanian's world as well. No less important is Tumanian's involvement in creating the first Armenian musical society and his close friendship with many composers of his era. The poem *Anush* offers a perfect opportunity to explore the musical soul of Tumanian, to discover the hidden musical world behind his work, and to view him as a worthy son continuing the great traditions of poets whose works connect poetry and music, as did those of Grigor Narekatsi (Գրիգոր Նարեկացի;

⁸ Kenneth McLeish, *Aristotle* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 8.

⁹ *Armen Tigranian: hodvacner, namakner, husher* (Armen Tigranian: articles, letters, memoirs), comp. by Alexander Tatevosian (Erevan: Sovetakan Grogh, 1981), 31.

951–1003) and Sayat-Nova (Մայսաթ-Նովա; 1712–1795).¹⁰ For a musician, the transformation of the poem into the opera *Anush*, a masterpiece in its own right, presents another wellspring of information as the opera became a cornerstone upon which classical Armenian music found its inspiration.

Armenian poetry has largely remained unknown outside of the Armenian community. Translations worthy of the original works are scarce, probably because of innate problems associated with the attributes of any particular language, especially of such a different type as Armenian, which occupies a separate branch of the Indo-European family. Tumanian compared translations to a rose under glass: one can see the form but can't "hear" the smell.¹¹ Azat Egiazarian, in his book *Poet i perevod* (Poet and translation), finds the writings of Goethe an important prerequisite for understanding how translations "work" in his own quest for adequate translations of Tumanian's works. The German poet was deeply concerned with the difficulties of translation, and in his *Noten und Abhandlungen zu besseren Verständnis des West-östlichen Divans* (Notes and queries for a better understanding of West-Eastern divan) analyzed the inherent problems and methods for dealing with those issues as affecting translations of all of the world's literature. He outlines a three-step translation process for introducing foreign literature to the public, taking years to become truthful to the original.¹²

¹⁰ Grigor Narekatsi (Gregory of Narek) was an Armenian poet, musician, philosopher, and canonized saint. Sayat-Nova (born Harutyun Sayadian, 1712 or 1722–1795) was an Armenian poet, singer, ashug and ordained priest. As a renowned minstrel, he was in high demand in courts of kings and shahs. He wrote in many languages of Caucasia such Georgian, Azerbaijani and Persian. He was killed in an attack on Haghpat Monastery by the Persian shah's army for refusing to renounce Christianity and convert to Islam.

¹¹ Azat Egiazarian, *Poet i perevod* (Poet and translation) (Erevan: Sovetakan Grogh, 1979), 125.

¹² Jörg Waltje, "Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Theory of Translation in the West-Eastern Divan," gives a full translation of Goethe's "Translations" from *Noten und Abhandlungen zu*

In the case of Tumanian's poetry, which is full of colloquialisms and colors particular to his language, the issues of translation are magnified. The musicality of his rhythm, rhyme and sound-intonation combinations along with content and meaning are often lost in translation. A transliterated version of the poem may be of interest to a non-Armenian reader in that it can evoke perception of sound and rhythms of the folk music; therefore some parts of the poem are presented here with both the transliterated form and the English poetic translation. Tigranian's operatic setting of the poem can be looked upon as an international "translator" bridging the language barrier. Importantly, the libretto of the opera has retained almost the entire poem in the original form of 1903 edition, thus giving listeners an ideal opportunity to acquaint themselves with Tumanian.

Tumanian's language, rhythm and approach to the colloquial "sounds" are born out of and influenced by Armenian folk music. The words of Aram Khanalian (1903–1983), a scholar of Armenian language, poetry, and folklore, express these roots vividly: "With the masterful use of national folklore, Tumanian's work, its origin being an independent piece of literature, creates the illusion of the best specimens of national folk literature: often, it is very hard to recognize where the folk ends and the poet's own input begins."¹³

Each and every song, whether part of a ritual or a lyrical love song, is given in its entirety in the poem with full refrains and repetitions. This dominance of song warrants a special look. The songs bear hidden messages, genuine sentiments, and thoughts. Those elements are emphasized by slowing down the timeline, using the song to give the reader time to feel the emotions of the protagonists as reflected and embedded in the traditional folk music and rituals.

besseren Verständnis des West-östlichen Divans", *Other Voices* 2/2 (March 2002), <http://www.othervoices.org/2.2/waltje/> (accessed October 9, 2013).

¹³Hovhannes Ghazarian, *"Anushi" steghsagortsakan patmutiune* (Creative history of "Anush") (Erevan: Hayastan, 1975), 69.

The events of the poem take place through the passing seasons and different celebrations in a swirl of events. Only the songs, whether the lyrical or the ritual type, present the storyline in a timeless manner, as many rituals and songs are ageless by their inherent ability to absorb generations of traditions and customs.

Emulating Greek tragedies, the structure of the poem consists of a Prologue and Six Cantos in Twenty Nine Episodes.¹⁴

Prologue.

On the night before Hambartsum (Feast of the Ascension), tearful fairies gather on the mountain top to lament the tragic love of Saro, a shepherd, and Anush, a young peasant maiden. At the first rays of light, the nymphs disappear into the rivers and springs.

Canto the First (Episodes I–IX).

The poet recollects memories of his beloved Lori,¹⁵ and majestic images of the mountains and valleys bring back memories of people and events long gone. The love story of Saro and Anush is told.

The young shepherd Saro, while coming down a mountain, sings a love song for his beloved Anush with youthful ardor of passionate love. Under the watchful eyes of her traditional family, the young woman feels restless and tries to find a pretense to meet with her beloved. She joins her friends at the spring to collect water, sings *Ampi Takits jur e galis* (From under the clouds the water is coming) along with her friends, and eagerly waits for a meeting with Saro.

Canto the Second (Episodes X–XI).

¹⁴ The general structure of Greek tragedies is a) a prologue, b) a *parodos* (choral first song) c) followed by three or more episodes interspersed with *stasima* (choral interludes) and d) *exodus*.

¹⁵ Tumanian's birth place, a mountainous region of Armenia.

The village youth are celebrating Hambartsum with dancing, singing the ritual songs of *jan giulum* (dear flowers) and *vitchaki erg* (fortune-telling song). During the ritual of fortune-telling, Anush draws the dark lot foretelling a tragic fate. She believes in the prediction and surrenders to dark thoughts and deep sadness.

Canto the Third (Episodes XII–XVI).

Winter has come. There is a wedding celebration in the village. During the festivities, two friends, Saro and Anush's brother Mosi, are encouraged by the crowd to wrestle. During the wrestling, Saro breaks the age-old tradition forbidding friends to force an opponent's shoulders to the ground. Saro, seeing Anush in the crowd, forgets the rules and the "world" and pushes Mosi to the ground, thus insulting his honor in front of all. Mosi gives an oath of revenge and forbids Anush to see Saro ever again.

Canto the Forth (Episodes XVII–XXI).

After some time has passed, early in the morning the news has spread of Saro's and Anush's elopement. Attempts to find the young couple hiding in the mountains prove to be fruitless. All have returned but Mosi, who swore to find them at all costs, continues his search. Sometime later Anush returns to the village with hopes of forgiveness from her family. Saro remains in the mountains.

Canto the Fifth (Episodes XXII–XXVI).

The news of Saro's death reaches the village. Mosi returns home with a rifle behind his shoulders and the village folk understand that Mosi has satisfied his quest for revenge. People run to the valley to the screams of Saro's distraught mother. Saro is buried on the river bend far from the village.

Canto the Sixth (Episodes XXVII–XXIX).

The spring comes again. Distraught in her grief Anush is wandering on the banks of the river crying, lamenting, and singing mad songs. She hears the voices of the river Debed calling her to reunite with her beloved.

On the eve of new celebrations of Hambartsum, when time stops and nature becomes animate, two stars embrace and kiss each other in longing ardor.

Hovhannes Tumanian



Figure 1: Hovhannes Tumanian (1869-1923)

Like a stream he descended from the wild mountains of the legendary Lori, bringing along the entire world of nature—splendid and diverse, and the ancient nation with its songs and speech, feelings and imagination. And like nature—the great designer—he opened before our soul a sincere and genuine poetry. In the beginning this torrent was spontaneous and wild, but with time it brightened, became crystal and flowed into those wonderful legends and poems that amount to eternal glory and rise to the unsurpassed peak of our literature.¹⁶

Avetik Isahakian

Hovhannes Tumanian was born on February 19, 1869, in Dsegh village in the Lori district of Armenia. His father was a priest, an educated man who instilled a deep appreciation for the history and traditions of his country and people. He was a descendant of an Armenian princely family, the Tumanians, a branch of the royal dynasty of the Mamikonians that settled in

¹⁶ “Հեղեղի պէս իջավ նա առասպելական Լոռու վայրենի լեռներից, բերելով իր հետ մի ամբողջ բնություն, հուռթի և բազմատարր, մի ամբողջ հինավուրց ժողովուրդ, իր տոհմիկ երգով ու խոսքով, հույզերով ու երևակայությամբ: Եվ ինչպես ստեղծող մեծ բնությունը փռեց նա մեր հոգու առջև իսկական, անկեղծ բանաստեղծությունը: Պղտոր էր սկզբում այս տարերային հեղեղը, բայց ժամանակի մեջ զտվելով ու մաքրվելով, բյուրեղացավ ու ոնավորվեց այն սքանչելի անմահ լազենդների և պոեմների մեջ, որ կազմում են մեր գրի անմահ փառքն ու գոհարակերտ բարձունքը, որից այն կողմ չի անցել մեր թո՛ղչքը:” Eduard Jrbashian, *Tumaniani poemnere* (Tumanian’s poems) (Erevan: ERHH, 1964), 2.

Lori in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The historic land of Lori was at the crossroads of many historic events, a “country of tales and legends, every corner of it a testament, each stone a witness to the heroic past,” in the words of another Armenian writer, Avetik Isahakian (1875–1957).

Tumanian’s life coincided with major political and national events in Armenian history taking place at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Throughout these years, he became increasingly politically active and took on himself the role of an Armenian “ambassador” with the goal of bringing the world’s attention to the plight of Armenians. He traveled to places he felt his help was needed and was at the forefront of assisting refugees. Tumanian was a great humanitarian who believed that all nations desire peace and it was the responsibility of the intellectual communities to carry the word of love and peace. He would go from town to town and meet with officials to tell the good will of his beloved people. In the beginning of the 1900’s, Armenians, and among them Tumanian, become caught up in the rapidly changing borders and regimes. In 1908 in Tiflis (Tbilisi), Tumanian was imprisoned for aiding Bolsheviks (along with hundreds of other notable Armenians and his oldest son, Mushegh). The accusations were fabricated by the Russian Tsar’s regime to help to eradicate Armenian intellectuals.¹⁷

¹⁷ Further details of Tumanian’s biography can be found in a resource dedicated to the poet, at www.toumanian.am. Tumanian, as a politically active person (though with purely humanitarian motivation) was always under scrutiny of the public officials. On the other hand, Tumanian had powerful benefactors who understood the importance of his work and were protecting him. Most books on Tumanian are written in the Soviet era, and as such, the information published regarding his activities is not entirely reliable and complete. Tumanian had ten children—six daughters and four sons. One of his sons, twenty-four-year-old Artavazd Tumanian, was killed by Turkish officials in 1918 in Van (now Turkey) along with his two brothers. Tumanian never recovered from the loss of his son and his health was gradually deteriorating until his death in 1923. In the 1930’s, Tumanian’s other three sons were exiled and

Along with the loss of land and life, and despair about the very existence of Armenians, a rise of progressive thought in art and science took place. Many intellectuals tried to excite the nation with ideals that its survival lies in the preservation and cultivation of its arts, no less than in trying to defend its physical borders. Armenia, being on the crossroads of East and West, frequently found itself in the middle of battles and massacres.

Tumanian was a well-educated man with an excellent knowledge and love of world literature. He worked tirelessly to translate into Armenian many works of Shakespeare, Byron, Goethe, Longfellow, and many others. Shakespeare was and stayed the ideal for Hovhannes throughout his life, a monument of creativity. Tumanian studied Shakespearian dramaturgy for many years with a desire to understand the great English poet's heart and soul. That love and admiration can be felt in Tumanian's words: "Shakespeare is a universe, the macrocosm itself... philosophy, religion and poetry are concerted within him."¹⁸ An Armenian poet, Eghishe Charents (1897–1937), writes this dedication to the greatness of Tumanian himself:

While reading him I came to realize that Lori's genius son
Is a guest—equally welcomed—in conversation at a feast
With Homer, and with Goethe...¹⁹

Literary works of Tumanian exert a strong and profound influence on every aspect of Armenian culture and national identity. A typical Armenian becomes acquainted with him in early childhood through his fairy tales, then later through his legends and poetry. The unique, almost indescribable quality of Tumanian's work lies in the fact that his poetry is as simple or as complex as a national folklore can be. Tumanian's work ethic, his tireless quest for facts and the

executed by the Soviet regime. Nothing is known about whereabouts of their graves or burial places.

¹⁸ Hovhannes Tumanian, *Shekspiri masin* (About Shakespeare) (Erevan: AN Haykakan SSH, 1969), 16. In the foreword by Aram Inchikian, *Tumaniane ev Shekspire* (Tumanian and Shakespeare), 5-23.

¹⁹ Eduard Jrbashian, "Hovhannes Tumanian. Biography." Armenianhouse.org.

“right” words, and his absolute attention to detail, account for the complexity of his works.

Tumanian’s own words explain it perfectly: “The art must be clear and lucid like an eye, and as an eye complex as well.”²⁰

A few major points characterizing Tumanian help us understand his style:

1. There is no “suffering” antagonist/individual: All of his characters are ordinary people sharing common beliefs. There are threads of events and destinies that connect all participants, including nature that suffers and rejoices along with the people.
2. Monologues and soliloquies are rare: There is no misunderstood “individual-against-society” on a quest to find and analyze how different he is from others.
3. His realism is not based on a complicated morality but is rooted in the morals of regular people and on common values that all share.
4. Time and space are one: Tumanian’s past, present and future are all connected. Events move in a swirl of timelessness.
5. There is no exotic beauty in the description of nature: It is alive and integral to people, stories and events. It is never a passive background intended to add color. Most events happen outdoors.
6. Tumanian prefers to tell his stories in the first person: It is his unique ability to connect to us directly yet never impose his views and opinions on his readers. There is no physical or psychological description of characters to any degree.²¹

There have been many studies analyzing and interpreting Tumanian’s legacy and language. Most of them concentrate on understanding the philosophical value of the works for society. Some studies suggest that Tumanian was critical of old *adat* (deeply-rooted societal and

²⁰ Jrbashian, “Hovhannes Tumanian. Biography.” Armenianhouse.org.

²¹ Azat Egiazarian, *Poetika Tumaniana i ieie narodnie istoki* (Tumanian’s poetics and its national roots) (Erevan: Khorhrdayin Grogh, 1990). This is general summery of Egiazarian’s points in analyzing Tumanian’s style.

behavioral traditions), while others perceive Tumanian's writings as more non-critical and rather sympathetic to the world he describes. These analytical views become important in exploring the musical folklore embedded in his poem *Anush*, as the *adat*, beliefs and rituals become "participants" in the fate of the young protagonists.

The poem *Anush* and Armenian musical folklore

*Ye who love a nation's legends,
Love the ballads of a people,
That like voices from afar off
Call to us to pause and listen,
Speak in tones so plain and childlike,
Scarcely can the ear distinguish
Whether they are sung or spoken;—
Listen to this Indian Legend,
To this Song of Hiawatha!*²²

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Traditional Armenian music, in all its forms and genres, has found its main expression in dancing, singing, comic musical and serious dramatic plays, and celebrations of rituals, secular and sacred alike. Most of the traditions of common people have left their footprint in the musical heritage of the nation. Armenian musical folklore can be of great interest as it has absorbed centuries of religious traditions, popular beliefs, historical facts, and most importantly, musical excerpts from antiquity—often an oral art form most susceptible to vanishing. With its status as a masterpiece of Armenian poetry, *Anush* can be looked at as a musical snapshot of ethnographic musical collection as well.

²² Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “The Song of Hiawatha.” Henry Wadsworth Longfellow [online resource], Maine Historical Society, <http://www.hwlongfellow.org> (accessed October 20, 2013). H. Tumanian translated this poem into Armenian from both English and Russian (for the latter relying on a translation by the poet Ivan Bunin as the main source).

The often quoted words of Valery Bryusov ²³ give an insight into the national character of Tumanian's work to the non-Armenian reader: "The acquaintance with Tumanian's poetry (for example, his *Anush*) renders more knowledge about Armenia and the life of her people than tomes of special reference texts."²⁴ *Anush* can indeed provide a platform to acquaint oneself with Armenian folklore traditions—some of them surviving to the present day. However, for the Armenian audience, Tumanian's *Anush* provides more than a glimpse into the past or traditions. It connects them to previous generations through common musical rituals at events such as weddings, birth celebrations, funerals, etc, still practiced today.

Many aspects of Tumanian's work, deeply connected to folklore, have been studied in depth by Armenian scholars. The writer himself left us plenty of information regarding his folk resources, including numerous translations and transcriptions, articles and letters. The poem *Anush* can be looked upon as an artisan carpet woven from numerous threads of folklore coming alive with colorful musical manifestations embedded in each and every folk ritual and tradition.

In his book *Mir Tumaniana* (Tumanian's world), the literary critic Levon Hakhverdian (1923–2003) gives a succinct explanation of the importance of folklore to Tumanian and the ethnographic value of his work. At the same time, he cautions us that representation of folklore is not the main goal, though an integral part of it. He reminds us, "The reason we come back to 'Anush' again and again, is not because we restrict ourselves to the study of Armenian patriarchal life and lifestyle. We also re-read *Yevgeniy Onegin* not just to acquaint ourselves with

²³ Valery Bryusov (1873–1924) was a Russian poet, critic, historian, prominent translator of world poetry into Russian, a member of the Symbolist movement. His *Poeziia Armenii* (Poetry of Armenia) is a comprehensive collection of Armenian poetry translated into Russian.

²⁴ Valery Bryusov and Hovhannes Ghanalanian. *Poeziia Armenii* (Poetry of Armenia) (Erevan: Aipetrat, 1963), 38.

Russian lifestyle of the turn of nineteenth century (though Belinsky considered *Yevgeniy Onegin* to be an encyclopedia of Russian life)”²⁵

Hakhverdian correctly notes that the older, 1892 edition of *Anush* had more details about rituals and customs, which have been removed from the later, 1903 edition. Thus, as many scholars agree, the new edition has freed *Anush* from an unnecessary weight and given it “wings.” Most of the songs and dialogs, however, were added in the new edition (1903) as, for example, the scene of ritual fortune telling during the Hambartsum. To summarize, all the descriptive elements of the traditional rituals have mostly been replaced with actual traditional songs and dialogs in the revised *Anush*.

Tumanian had a deep understanding that the native components of art are understandable and valuable to all mankind. He directs our attention to folklore as a vehicle to develop the national arts. He says: “This is where the spring of Armenian literature lies, which every Armenian poet, Armenian *vipasan* (epic storyteller), and Armenian writer has to drink from to grow stronger.”²⁶ It is echoed by Komitas’ words about folk arts as “full of refinement and purity, depth, and breadth, simplicity, and sublimity, independence and courage.” Komitas, who saw folk music as the primary source of Armenian music, calls the common people “the greatest creators” and urges his students to “go and learn from them [people]”.²⁷

²⁵ Levon Hakhverdian, *Mir Tumaniana* (Tumanian’s world), trans. by M. Malkhazova (Moskva: Sovetskii Pisatel’, 1969), 144.

²⁶ Magdalina Janpoladian, *Tumaniane ev zhoghovrdakan epose* (Tumanian and the national epic poetry) (Erevan: EHH, 1969), 5.

²⁷ Khristofor Kushnarev, *Voprosy istorii i teorii armianskoj monodicheskoi muzyki* (Questions of History and Theory of Armenian monodic music) (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe muzykalnoe izdatelstvo, 1958), 149.

Magdalina Janpoladian, in her book *Tumaniane ev zhoghovrdakan epose* (Tumanian and national epos), poses a series of questions about Tumanian's endless quest for "language" in folkloric sources. She finds the answers in Tumanian's own words:

There are certain words and forms that within themselves contain complete stories. Such words can only be discovered either by great masters, or by the folk, who with thousands of eyes, with thousands of ears, with thousands of minds look, listen, examine and judge life for many-many years, and in the end, extricate a short conclusion and their decision with one exclamation, with one adjective or one single response. And they are formidable, implacable and irrecusable.²⁸

Many ethnomusicological accounts have documented folk song and dance as an organic part of people's lives, especially present in villages. Through this process, the folk music becomes enriched with local character, customs and events, and so documents the life of the local people.²⁹ Komitas Vardapet in his musicological treatises writes, "The music of both the Western and Eastern Armenian peasant is extraordinarily rich and complex, and condenses the entire inner and outer life of the Armenian. Each song is the genuine echo of his rustic heart and the clear mirror of his soul. Each song depicts a broad slice of life confined within a small frame."³⁰

Historians may find a wealth of historical facts embedded in Armenian folk songs since they were passed from generation to generation with love and care. For linguists, the songs form a treasure chest for studies in dialects and clarifications of genuine Armenian words as opposed to adaptation of neighboring languages. For example, Manuk Abeghian notes songs from the Akna region which have preserved a precise dialect of *hayrenn* (a specific type of poems) from

²⁸Janpoladian, *Tumaniane ev zhoghovrdakan epose*, 7.

²⁹One of the most important works documenting the ethnographic legacy of ancient Armenia is Nikoghos Taghmizian, *Teoriia muzyki v drevnei Armenii* (The theory of music in ancient Armenia) (Erevan: Izd-vo AN Armianskoi SSR, 1977).

³⁰ *Komitas: Essays and Articles. The Musicological Treatises of Komitas Vardapet*, trans. Vatsche Barsumian (Pasadena, California: Drazark Press, 2001), 14.

the Middle Ages, long lost from common speech.³¹ Many of these songs (especially the epic forms) reveal a rich world hidden behind the Armenian script; historical treasures not only of native Armenians but many specimens from Hellenistic culture, and ancient Persian traditions, along with the lost worlds of the Assyrians and Babylonians, still etched firmly in Armenian folklore.

³¹Kushnarev, *Voprosy istorii i teorii armianskoii monodicheskoi muzyki*, 203.

Tumanian's *Anush* in relation to ashug poetry

Poetic and musical forms as one

The ashug is a welcomed guest . . . He serves not only as an entertainer but as a teacher of wisdom responding to all perturbing demands of current life. On the fly he picks up the ideas and mood of the nation, colligates and gives them back to people embodied into high artistic representation. The ashug teaches to love the truth, he lifts feelings of national pride, and he awakens the belief in bright future.³²

Khristofor Kushnarev

In an essay on Tumanian's *Anush*, Eduard Jrbashian³³ refers to the study of another scholar, Kamsar Grigorian, who analyzed the compositional form and structure of the poem *Anush* and concluded that it combines epic-lyrical and dramatic-tragic forms like the musical dramas³⁴ that were popular at the time.³⁵ Grigorian argues that Tumanian was well acquainted

³²“Ашуг желанный гость... Он выступает не только в качестве увеселителя, но и в качестве учителя мудрости, откликающегося на все волнующие запросы текущей жизни. Он на лету подхватывает носящиеся в народе идеи и настроения, обобщает их и возвращает народу, воплотив их в высокохудожественные образы. Ашуг любит учить правду, он подымает в народе чувство национального самосознания, он будит веру в светлое будущее...” Kushnarev, *Voprosy istorii i teorii armianskoi monodicheskoi muzyki*, 240.

³³ Eduard Jrbashian (1923–1999) is a noted Armenian literary critic, philologist and author of many books on Tumanian.

³⁴ In Armenian, musical dramas are called *erazhshtakan tatron* which translates as “musical theater.” Both “musical drama” and “musical theater” imply different genres as understood in Western post-modern culture. *Erazhshtakan tatron* genre is closely related to the *pathos* (often presented by musical means) and *logos* (as logical, narrative sections) ideas of the ancient Greek theater.

with ashug traditions as the ashugs often traveled to and stayed in the poet's native Lori. Grigorian points to the ashug's practice of singing some parts of the drama and narrating others while acting out different characters. In making the switch from narration/ chanting to singing at the moments of high dramatic tension, some ashugs would announce the moment of transition to the song with words, "But this I cannot express in words, give me a *saz* and I will sing it for you."³⁶ In Tumanian's poem, at the moments of heightened emotions, only the songs reveal the inner thoughts and true feelings of the protagonists. Thus, in line with ashug traditions, Tumanian's protagonists expressed their emotions through songs when "words could not." However, Jrbashian found this connection to ashug style inadequate and concluded that even with possible musical influence, the form and substance of *Anush* was influenced by new developments sweeping the world of international poetry at the turn of the twentieth century, which marked a shift from classicism to romanticism and realism.³⁷

Opinions of the two scholars can be construed as subjective, and can be looked at as mutually inclusive. Tumanian's love of Armenian folk music and his ingenious ability to preserve and translate into poetry the world of the Armenian peasants with their song and dance, their traditions and hospitality to ashugs, is seen in all creative aspects of the poem. Stylistic elements of *antuni*, musical drama, traditional songs, and the variety of language styles employed (from refined to folk idioms) constitute the musical elements of the poem. In essence, it is a traditional form of telling/singing a love story and relating a historic event as a *pandukht*

³⁵ Jrbashian, *Tumaniani poemnere*, 187-188. He refers to the work of Kamsar Grigorian, *Ovanes Tumanian* (Leningrad: Molodaia Gvardiya, 1953).

³⁶ Kushnarev. *Voprosy istorii i teorii armianskoi monodicheskoi muzyki*, 241.

³⁷ Jrbashian, *Tumaniani poemnere*, 187-188. Tumanian's writings in literary periodicals of the time show his analysis and critique of all current and past literary movements of Russian, English, German, and other world literature. They are published in a compilation of Tumanian's works in ten volumes, Hovhannes Tumanian, *Erkeri liakatar zhoghovatsu tas hatorov*, ed. Eduard Jrbashian (Erevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hrat., 1988).

(an émigré working far from his motherland). *Anush* is a musical-poetic work, emulating, and, in a way continuing, the ashug traditions.

The Armenian *gusan* (bard) and ashug music are often looked upon as a part of oral folk music because borrowing was an acceptable practice and oral transmission of the songs created many authors. If studied in its pure tradition and style, their music (as a performing art) would reveal rather complex forms and varieties evident in different styles prevalent in historic western and eastern Armenia. The subtle differences are important for academic musicological studies in general, to separate foreign influence from genuine national roots and stylistic developments in professional music and to follow the development of refined professional art forms. However, the ashug tradition is firmly rooted in and born of folk traditions. All manifestations of Armenian national music—whether in music, poetry, or fairy tales—were equally important for Tumanian. In short, he believed that portraying the people without their folk music traditions would impoverish and misrepresent their behavior, which is shaped by historical memory of traditions and rituals.

Armenian national music is a monument of centuries-old culture, a natural synthesis of religious, folk and ashug music, poetry, and history. Movses Khorenatsi (Moses of Khoren, ca. 410–490 AD), an Armenian historian, hymn writer, and poet, and Pavstos Buzand (Faustus of Byzantium, fifth century), an Armenian historian, documented the art and rituals of ancient Armenians, including the traditions of the *gusan* (bard), *vipasan*, and *goghtan* (epic singer, interchangeable with the *vipasan*). Many poetic-musical genres, developing from late-medieval Armenia up to the turn of the nineteenth century, retained their connection to both art forms. Gusans, and later ashugs, played a significant role in the development of literature and music,

with the synthesis of both poetic and musical arts. The singer-poets provided a link between folk art and professional artists. The material of their songs was taken from events and lives of local people, and long poetic stories would naturally be told in a quasi-sung style. Such melodized speech and intonations helped to remember the long stories, as well as to emphasize the rhythm, rhyme, meter, feelings, and special moments of the story. Gusans, and later ashugs, as masters of music and poetic forms, were essentially the forefathers of Armenian poetry.

The noted Armenian ethnographer and historian Manuk Abeghian refers to literature and music as born of the same root. He gives thousands of examples of traditional songs collected from field trips around the country. With the help of these folk songs, he tries to decipher and classify Armenian poetic forms.³⁸ Consequently, the newly discovered poem-songs can be used for studying and classifying traditional Armenian music, which has been transcribed using a method known as *khazagriutun*, a type of neumatic notation of ancient Armenian music. Two major institutions sponsoring research and publications are Matenadaran (a research institute and museum, Yerevan, Armenia), housing one of the world's richest repositories of ancient manuscripts, and Charentsi Anvan Grakanutyan yev Arvesti Tangaran (the Charents Museum of Literature and Art, Yerevan, Armenia), housing a collection of thousands of manuscripts of music and literature.

Furthermore, Armenian poetic forms historically overlapped with similar forms in music such as *tagh* (monodic songs), *hayrenn* (songs following specific metrical structure), *viperg* (epic poetry), and *voghber* (laments). All of these musical genres have corresponding poetic styles and

³⁸ The two examples of Manuk Abeghian's work classifying poetic forms are *Hin gusanakan joghovrdakan erger* (Old Gusans Folk Songs) (Erevan: Pet. Hamalsarani Hrat., 1931) and *Joghovrdakan khaghikner* (Folk Ditties) (Erevan: Haipetrat, 1940).

meters. The dialogue form, prominent in the poetry of the Middle Ages, influenced other forms of performance art, such as musical duets and theatrical performances.³⁹

The popular genre of *tagh*, originating from folk poetry, emerged in the tenth century and developed into refined, professional literature. *Tagh* can refer to either a song or a verse and can be classified as either secular or sacred. The musical *taghs* became popular soon after the poetic ones, but it is important to emphasize that the value of these forms is not dependent on the presence of music, as they are works of highly skilled poets. One of the great poets of Medieval Armenia, Grigor Narekatsi, the author of many poetic *taghs*, set his own poetic *tagh* to music.⁴⁰ In short, many musical *taghs* can be read as poems.

The same can be said of many examples of folk music. Khristofor Kushnarev (1890–1960), composer and musicologist, characterized the relationship of poetry to music as an organic synthesis of words, often influencing the character of the music and in some cases the melodic form so as to emphasize certain words.⁴¹ He brings an example of “call” words such as *hei, hoi, jan*, etc., which often have a corresponding musical expression, thus proving the close relationship between rhythmic intonations of music and the spoken word.⁴² Kushnarev writes, “The texts of peasant lyrical songs are a result of centuries-old selection and refinement, and by

³⁹ Egiazarian, *Poet i perevod*, 11.

⁴⁰ Robert Ataian, *Armianskaia narodnaia muzika* (Traditional Armenian music) (Moskva: Muzika, 1965), 34-6.

⁴¹ The relationship of the rhythm of the word to the corresponding music is rather complex. Komitas writes: “In Armenian folk music metric accent and textual stress are independent of one another, therefore, these songs should be sung by following the words and the signs placed above the notes, and not according to the accent patterns of the meters in Western music.” *Komitas: Essays and Articles*, 179.

⁴² Kushnarev, *Voprosy istorii i teorii armianskoi monodicheskoi muzyki*, 170-1.

their content as well as their compositional quality, present examples of highly developed poetic art.”⁴³

In a letter to his friend (1891) Anushavan Abovian, Tumanian included a dedication of his poem *Anush* to him along with samples of a few chapters.⁴⁴ In it, Tumanian is “singing” the poem to his friend and hopes to touch his soul with “dear sounds”:

Նվեր իմ ընկեր Ան[ուշավանին]

Dedication to my friend An[ushavan]

Միբեւի ընկեր, շատ ոգևորվել,
Շատ ես հառաչել դու նրա մասին,
Որ այսօր հոգուս թռիչք է տվել,
Որ պիտի երգեմ ես քո առաջին:

My dear friend, with your excitement,
And your pleas,
That made my soul fly
I have to now sing for you.

Ընդունիր հոգիս, նրա ձայները
Գուցե ականջիդ հարազատ հնչեն,
Հիշեցնեն անցած օրերի սերը,
Եվ քեզ քո սիրած տանջանքով
տանջեն:

Accept my friend, the dear sounds
That might remind you of your home,
Remind you of the days long passed,
Torment you with your love bygone.

Derenik Demirchian (1877–1956)⁴⁵ calls Tumanian a national singer—an ashug. He believes that Tumanian’s style of creation is in many ways similar to that of the ashugs because they created publicly, as if collectively. This remark describes Tumanian’s style of writing; he

⁴³ Ibid., 167. Kushnarev, Abeghian, Komitas, and other ethnomusicologists collected many simpler folk songs as well, crude in their language and repetitiveness. They considered their importance to be in preservation of samples of historical developments as well as in studies of foreign roots. The sophisticated, poetically refined samples of folk songs showed a strong survivability as they were picked up and spread among the public quite rapidly.

⁴⁴ Ghazarian, “*Anushi*” *steghsagortsakan patmutsiune*, 5-6. The translation is mine. The verse is in three stanzas and I quote only the first and the third.

⁴⁵ Derenik Demirchian (1877–1956) was an Armenian writer and poet, a contemporary of Tumanian.

would seek any opportunity to read “raw” materials to his friends and visitors, retelling again and again, explaining his reasoning and choice yet always remaining open to honest criticism and ideas from others.⁴⁶

Probably the most direct description of “musical” Tumanian comes from the composer Armen Tigranian: “Tumanian was a born musician who has not noticed his own musical talent. His poetry flows like a music, like a song.”⁴⁷ The characterization of Tumanian as a “natural-born” musician, coming from a noted composer whose own work was deeply rooted in Armenian national music, gives a true understanding of Tumanian as a singer/poet. Tigranian wrote of the nation’s loss of the beloved poet in 1923: “The lyre of the great poet fell silent but his work has not.”⁴⁸ The composer felt the depth of Tumanian’s musical ashug soul, referring to a lyre—the instrument of minstrels and bards.

Tumanian’s most admired ashug was Sayat-Nova, lovingly called the “Caucasian nightingale.” Tumanian characterized Sayat-Nova as a “unique greatness, greatest poet-ashug of the East.”⁴⁹ He writes, “Sayat-Nova does not want consolation—he prefers seeing a tear behind the laughter than hearing the laughter oppressed by tears.”⁵⁰ About his own work, Tumanian tells his friend, “What I love the most in poetry is not what invokes tears, or delight, but saintly peacefulness.”⁵¹

⁴⁶ Egiazarian, *Poet i perevod*, 10.

⁴⁷ Tigranian, *Armen Tigranian: hodvatsner, namakner, husher*, 32.

⁴⁸ “...Լռեց մեծ բանաստեղծի քնարը, բայց մնացին նրա գրվածները,” *ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁹ Hovhannes Tumanian, *Sayat-Nova: hodvatsner ev tcharer* (Sayat-Nova: Articles and Speeches) (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Hrat., 1963), 9-10.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵¹ Hakhverdian, *Mir Tumaniana*, 149.

From Tumanian's working notes we also find the following: "Ashug. Lover—poet. With *saz*⁵² in his hand, he goes to praise his lover to the world, telling the joys and the sorrows of his people," "the ashug's tongue tells the truth," "the ashug's language is that of a nightingale—it has blessings and no curses."⁵³ "[The name] Sayat-Nova means king of songs (from Persian 'master of song'), master of music. With the seal of greatness on his forehead, Christian cross in his hand, dagger thrust into his honest and big heart."⁵⁴ Tumanian compares the dagger in the bleeding heart of Sayat-Nova to a dagger in the heart of the Armenian nation because Sayat-Nova's pain was the pain of his people, a "dagger" thrust in his heart, a pain he carried throughout his life. Tumanian says, "But we have to understand Sayat-Nova and introduce him to the world to persuade everyone that the dagger cannot be left in his heart for eternity."⁵⁵ Tumanian studied, analyzed, and wrote extensively about Sayat-Nova's life and work. One of the biggest concerns surfacing through Tumanian's essays on Sayat-Nova was the dramatic loss of the colors and of the poetic content in available translations of the ashug's poetry/songs. Tumanian's admiration of Sayat-Nova is deeper than poetic or musical appreciation; it resembles the sharing of a common soul in both its condition and understanding. Tumanian's writings about the great ashug guide the reader to the musical and poetic interconnection as one entity.

We know that Tumanian was well acquainted with works of many gusans and ashugs, which he would often use and rework. An example is his epic poem *Sassuntsi Davit* (David of Sassun),⁵⁶ an ancient Armenian ballad told/sung by ashugs for many centuries that is still popular

⁵² Long-necked fretted lute.

⁵³ Tumanian, *Sayat-Nova: Hodvatsner ev tcharer*, 29, 69.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵⁶ *David of Sassun* is an epic ballad about an Armenian herculean hero David (Sassun, historically part of Western Armenia, is currently in Turkey). It is one of four parts of a large epic poem *Sassna Tsrer* (Daredevils of Sassun) describing four generations of the Sassun family.

in Armenia today. Margarita Janpoladian, in her studies on Tumanian and the national epos, believes that epic ballads intertwine historical stories with fantasy, thus revealing the historical thinking of the nation, an important observation in regard to the poet's own studies of Armenian national epos.⁵⁷

Another poem by Tumanian, *Tmkaberti arume* (The siege of Tmuk fortress), is written as if it is told/sung by an ashug. The poem opens with an old ashug calling young and old to come to hear the story of love and betrayal and it ends with an ashug giving his judgment as the moral of the story. The poet's choice to have the legend sung directs us to the source of his material. The story unfolds with the siege of the fortress and the betrayal of Almast, the wife of the Armenian prince Tatul. The Persian Nadir-Shah's many attempts to storm the fortress of Tmuk prove futile. Court advisors counsel him to send his personal ashug to Tatul's court as the doors are always open for great musicians. The Shah's ashug entices Almast with charming songs and the promise of marriage to the Shah, which would give Almast unlimited wealth and influence. It is a story of the power to entice with music and words, a force that is said to be more powerful than the million-strong Persian army as the ashug succeeds in persuading Almast to open the gates of the fortress, thus causing the death and devastation of Armenian men and women.⁵⁸

In compilations of studies on Armenian ashugs, the authors often describe ashugs as homeless travelers who sing of their yearning for lost loves or their motherland. In his *Anush*,

Thousands of pages documenting different versions collected from oral and written sources dating from the eighth century AD on are preserved in the Matenadaran archives in Armenia.

⁵⁷ Janpoladian. *Tumaniane ev zhoghovrdakan epose*, 9. In 1920–1921, Tumanian started a monumental work titled *Haikakan eposi bararanits* (Dictionary of Armenian Epos). It was never finished but his manuscripts contain hundreds of pages of working notes and writings. Jrbashian, *Tumanian*, 181.

⁵⁸ Alexander Spendiarov wrote the opera *Almast* based on Tumanian's poem *The Siege of Tmuk Fortress*. The composer asked Tumanian to write the libretto but the poet was not able to do it due to time constraints. Instead, the libretto was written by the Russian poetess Sofia Parnok (originally in Russian, then translated into Armenian).

Tumanian does something rather uncommon in his style of writing: after the Prologue of Fairies lament, he makes his presence as an author audible in the “singing” of his nostalgia for his beloved Lori. Interestingly, the language, tone, and meter are different from the rest of the poem.

The first three parts of Canto the First present Tumanian’s voice as an ashug singing of his love of his homeland and people: “beloved faces, that are long gone . . . Breathe with life, live again.” The meter is a syllabic 5 + 5, with long sentences and imperative verbs in the first person. By “giving” life to his beloved characters, to “breathe to live again,” the poet gives them immortality. Those words are reminiscent of Tumanian’s desire to save Sayat-Nova from eternal pain by making his works and life known to the world. This desire of Tumanian to keep the history and old culture in the memory of the nation adds another dimension to the author’s painstaking and loving descriptions of rituals and customs in *Anush*. In an unusual way, Tumanian makes his presence felt directly—his “orphaned” soaring soul “searching valleys and mountains” to greet the memories of his youth. He is likened to *pandukht* singing his *antuni* (song of the homeless, as in those away from home).

Often, the *antuni* had a form similar to *hayrenn* (sometimes both terms were used interchangeably).⁵⁹ The songs were usually of a nostalgic nature, directed to the motherland by the expatriate. They were also closely linked to laments. The daughter of the poet, Nvard Tumanian (1892–1957), remembers, “One evening, when Komitas was singing his ‘Antuni,’ it was clear how my father was feeling and re-living every word, every sound of the song. He also

⁵⁹ Generally, the *antunis* followed a specific poetic rhythm of *hayrenn*. Brutian explains the rhythm of *antuni* as two line couplets—the first line with seven syllables and the second line containing eight. There are also doubled forms such as quatrains and octet stanzas. Brutian, *Armianskaia narodnaia muzika*, 240.

started singing along with Komitas and later said ‘my heart is like the ruins of those homes [in the songs].’⁶⁰ Here are the examples from Komitas and from Tumanian:

Komitas: *Antuni*

Սիրտս նման է էն փլած տներ,
Կոտրեր գերաններ, խախտեր է սներ,
Բուն պիտի դնեն մեջ վայրի հավքեր:

My heart is like a house in ruins,
The beams are in splinters, the pillars shaken.
Wild birds build their nest
Where my home once was.

Tumanian: *Anush*

Again and again, the unsleeping yearning
Of that fairest land ceaselessly calls,
And with wings imperiously outspreads
My soul now flies towards home...

With winged yearning is my soul searching...

Tumanian’s rather long interpolation (for a poem) of his presence resembles that of Komitas in its soulful affiliation. For example, an image of a bird is often the symbol of a *pandukht* (émigré) and is used by both the composer and the poet.⁶¹ Because of the complex language and form of *antuni* (similar to epic songs), they were sung by gusans/ashugs rather than by common people. Tumanian’s language in the interlude of the poem literary and stylistically follows a more refined use of epithets and metaphors common to the professional ashug style.

Margarita Brutian provides an interesting explanation of the nature of the *pandukht* songs, one which could also be used to explain the poet’s voice here as distinct from the rest of the poem: “The melancholy nature of the *pandukht* songs is aided by solo style, just as by the

⁶⁰ Nvard Tumanian, *Husher ev zruitsner* (Memories and conversations) (Erevan: EP, 2009), 56.

⁶¹ The most often used symbol of an émigré is *krunk* (crane). Songs about a *krunk* are numerous in Armenian music and come to us from ancient sources. The most beloved song of *krunk-antuni* is transcribed by Komitas.

calm and slow tempo. It is close to soliloquy. Indeed, it is not possible for the group to express in similar ways the pain of the suffering heart; just like the group cannot cry in a similar manner (laments and *lalik*).”⁶²

The two examples of Tumanian’s soulful affiliation with a “homeless” *pandukht* are his poem “Պանդուխտն երգեց օտար երկրում” (In foreign lands a *pandukht* has sung), written in 1890, the same year when he worked on the “old” first versions of *Anush*, and the short poem “Պանդուխտ եմ, քույրի՛կ” (Sister, exiled I am), written in 1902, the year of working on the new and revised *Anush*.

Պանդուխտն երգեց օտար երկրում (In foreign lands a *pandukht* has sung) [1890]

Պանդուխտն երգեց օտար երկրում
Եվ սրտաբեկ հոգոց քաշեց,
Երբ որ տխուր յուր երգերում
Անցած ուրախ օրերն հիշեց:

In foreign lands a *pandukht* has sung
And heaved his brokenhearted sigh
When in his sad and gloomy songs
He recalled his happy days from past.

Պանդուխտ եմ, քույրի՛կ (Sister, exiled I am) [1902].

Պանդուխտ եմ, քույրի՛կ, մանուկ օրերից.
Գընում եմ դեպի մի անհայտ երկիր՝
Կըտրված կյանքի ամեն կապերից,
Մենակ, տարագիր:

Sister, exiled I am from childhood days
And on the way to foreign place,
My life cut off from kindred souls,
Alone, a recluse.

Tumanian often refers to his own poetry as an act of singing a song. Even a brief excursion into his poetry yields many beautiful examples of his musical thinking:

Եթե մի օր (If Just one Day) [1894].

Եթե մի օր, անո՛ւշ ընկեր,
Գաս այցելու իմ շիրմին,

My dear friend, if just one day,
You will be visiting my tomb,
And flowers fresh

⁶²Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 245.

Ու նորաբույս վառ ծաղիկներ
Տեսնես փրոված չորս կողմին,

Դու չը կարծես թե հասարակ
Ծաղիկներ են ոտքիդ տակ,
Կամ թե գարունն է այն բերել,
Իմ նոր տունը զարդարել:

Նրանք չերգած իմ երգերն են,
Որ սրտումըս ես տարա,
Նրանք սիրո այն խոսքերն են,
Որ դեռ չասած ես մեռա:

You'll see around,

Don't think them plain
and growing wild,
Or that the spring has brought them here,
To decorate anew the nests.

They are the songs I never sang,
And carried hidden in my heart,
They are the words of love,
That never uttering, I died. ⁶³

The uniqueness of Tumanian's language still fascinates Armenian scholars; his voice cannot be mistaken for that of any other poet. Ghazarian, in his in-depth study of language in Tumanian's *Anush*, remarks, "Old Armenian *songs* and tales, fairy tales and proverbs, with Tumanian's serious studies, help him reach a deep understanding of the peculiarities of the Armenian language."⁶⁴ The old Armenian songs he refers to and their influence on Tumanian's language could warrant separate studies.

It can be said with confidence that Tumanian's work process (collection, absorption, and personal interpretation of folklore) is similar to that of the ashugs. Whether one considers the style, language, or traditions depicted, the result is the work of a singer-poet, not just of a writer who is skilled only in poetry. In *Anush*, the poet pays homage to all of them—gusan, ashug, and *goghtan*: (Canto the First, episode I).

My soul now flies towards home;
There, sitting before the family hearth,
They wait ever with yearning for me

⁶³ All translations are mine. Only some parts of the poems are quoted. None of them are given in their entirety.

⁶⁴ Ghazarian, "*Anushi*" *steghsagortsakan patmutiune*, 94.

And through the long, wintry nights
Tell about the ancient braves of Lori.

Music in the poem *Anush*

From the very first lines of the text itself, it seems, the sad, the frozen melodies will come alive the moment the words reach the sensitive ear and heart's strings.⁶⁵

Kamsar Grigorian

Nature and Folk Metaphors in Song and Ritual.

When speaking about the musicality of *Anush*, an audience would almost certainly think of Armen Tigranian's loved and widely known opera. One might say that the poem has become identified with the opera; however, the poem has its own musical language. This chapter will focus on the ethnographic musical thesaurus of folk rituals as told by Tumanian and show the musical influences of folk music on his work.

All Tumanian scholars have agreed on the folk nature of his language, but the core of his style seems to be born particularly from folk music—not simply the song sections of the poem but the entire work from beginning to end. Tumanian said with pride on many occasions that he

⁶⁵ “С первых же строк, в самом тексте, казалось, застыли грустные мелодии и они оживут лишь только слова коснутся чуткого уха, сердечных струн.” Kamsar Grigorian, *Ovanes Tumanian, 1869–1923* (Erevan: Aiastan, 1969), 126.

borrowed from folklore with great freedom: “Vortegh kefs tvel e” (Whenever it pleased me to).⁶⁶ He would often use words, lines, rhythms, rhymes, and any other material from national folk resources that he found carried the depth of the idea he was looking to express.⁶⁷ He was a tremendous ethnographer, collecting and transcribing folklore,⁶⁸ and his personal library contained thousands of publications on Armenian folklore and ethnography—as well as that of other nations.⁶⁹ Twenty two folktales by Tumanian are the most loved and known works by the poet and are published in numerous editions.⁷⁰

In the book *Tumaniane zhamanakitsneri husherum* (Recollections about Tumanian), Grikor Vantsian tells us that Tumanian had personal correspondents in almost all regions of Armenia. Their job was to collect fairy tales, legends, and songs and document the origins of these works and any additional details they could uncover.⁷¹ The poet was so dedicated to the task that an announcement was published on the last page as an addendum to the poem *Gikor* (1909): “The author kindly asks anyone who knows any great folktales, to write them down as they know them without changing the language and the content, even if of jocular nature. Please write your address and where you heard it and send to *Tiflis, Voznesenskaia ul., 18, to Ov.*

⁶⁶ From Tumanian’s article *Hayots drambianize u es* (Armenian Drambianizm and me), *Hovhannes Tumanian, Intir erker erku hatorov* (Hovhannes Tumanian, Collection of works in two volumes) (Erevan: Sovetakan Grogh, 1985), 361-362.

⁶⁷ Ghazarian, “*Anushi*” *steghsagortsakan patmutiune*, 73.

⁶⁸ Artashes Nazinian, “Mets banasteghtse ev zhoghovrdakan banahyusutyune” (The great poet and folklore), *Patma-Banasirakan Handes* 3 (1969), 25-36. The article provides in-depth analysis of Tumanian’s work and collection of folklore.

⁶⁹ Tumanian’s house-museum in Yerevan contains over eight thousand books from Tumanian’s personal library. Over one thousand books are the collections of world folklore. <http://www.toumanian.am/tangaran/tang.php?clear=1> (accessed April 4, 2014).

⁷⁰ *Hovhannes Tumanian: intir erker erku hatorov*.

⁷¹ Jrbashian, *Tumaniani poemnere*, 85. He refers to Aram Inchikyan, P. H. Hakobyan, and L. M. Karapetian, eds., *Tumaniane zhamanakitsneri husherum* (Recollections about Tumanian) (Erevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hrat., 1969), 307.

*Tumanian.*⁷² Romanos Melikian (1883–1935) and Spiridon Melikian (1881–1933) (no relation to Romanos), both beloved Armenian composers and ethnographers, would often ask Tumanian to perfect and polish some of the texts of the folk songs they had transcribed.⁷³

Jrbashian notes two general types of approach to folk material by scholars: one is literal (word by word) and the other involves creative “polishing” of the material. Tumanian often chose the middle ground by keeping certain elements in their exact form (even if coarse and unrefined) and by reworking others. By Tumanian’s notes we know that before starting his work on a particular subject, he would collect any existing versions and note the details of their place of origin and regional meaning. He also would search existing artistically refined pieces and conduct any other relevant research about these works as part of the process.⁷⁴

The *Erger: erger, romansner, arianer dashnamuri nvagaksutyamb / khosk Hovh. Tumaniani* (Collection of songs on Tumanian’s words), published in Erevan in 1969, represents a kaleidoscope of Tumanian’s poetry set to music by noted Armenian composers.⁷⁵ The first song of the collection is a simple melody composed by Tumanian. It offers a unique opportunity to imagine how the poet might have heard his own poetry and quite possibly (in my imagination) how he would have hummed many of his poetic verses as songs. The words of the song are originally from the first edition of *Anush*; it was later removed from the second, heavily reworked edition and published as a separate verse.

⁷² Nazinian, “Mets banasteghtse ev zhoghovrdakan banahyusutyune,” 26.

⁷³ Jrbashian, *Tumaniani poemnere*, 85.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷⁵ Artak Tonikian, comp., *Erger: erger, romansner, arianer dashnamuri nvagaksutyamb / khosk Hovh. Tumaniani* (Songs: songs, romance, arias for voice and piano/ words by Hovh. Tumanian) (Erevan: Hayastan, 1969).

Example 1 “Ախ, ինչ լավ են սարի վրա” *Ax, inch lav en sari vera* (Oh, how lovely on the mountain). Words and music by Hovhannes Tumanian.



Ախ, ինչ լավ են սարի վրա
Անցնում օրերն անուշ, անուշ,
Անրջային, թեթևասահ
Ամպ ու հովերն անուշ, անուշ:

Oh, How lovely on the mountain,
Pass the days, anush, anush⁷⁶
Dreamy and lightly gliding,
Breeze and cloud, anush, anush.

In this short ditty, nature is the dominant subject of the text, as in many folk songs of this type. The description of nature is consistently humanized in the metaphors relating to the spectrum of feelings that are so common in Armenian folk music. For an audience familiar with folk songs, the presence of nature forms a major part of the song's language. One can say that most Armenian folk music presents some natural phenomena at all times. Brutian notes that there is simply no Armenian lyrical song that lacks a reference to nature as a way of revealing the true feelings of the antagonist.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ The word *anush* can be translated in a variety of ways: sweet, mellifluous, aromatic smell, affable, pleasant, charming, etc. It is also a common female name. In this poem, it carries all of the above translations in one expressive word, therefore I did not translate it.

⁷⁷ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 219.



Figure 2: Lori region in Armenia with river Debed (Photo courtesy of Vahe Aghamyan, 2013)

Dialogues are omnipresent in *Anush*, not only as direct communications between two people but also in song rituals directed at imagined or exalted entities such as water, flowers, and mountains. Such an abundant use of dialogue is connected to folklore traditions rooted in natural speech. Egiazarian calls some of the dialogues dialogical monologues—that is, a type of a speech where the answer is implied.⁷⁸ There are only two soliloquy-like moments in the poem; both are sung as monologues framed as dialogue. Those are the *Bardzr sarer* (Tall mountains) monologue by Saro—“Let me disappear, weary and idle, / In your stony wilderness. Wearied of this world, I want / To disappear without trace”—and *Ach, im bakhte* (Oh, my destiny is calling me) by Anush, which bear the leitmotifs of fate.

⁷⁸Egiazarian, *Poet i perevod*, 10.

An essential characteristic of the poem *Anush* is nature's emulating every mood, emotion, and physical attribute of the people, as there is no direct description of either their feelings or looks. The transference and humanization of nature, deeply rooted in Armenian folklore, are another connection of *Anush* to folk music. As mentioned earlier, Tumanian marks seasonal changes throughout the poem with a consistent flow of the times of the year. For Tumanian, time is not of the essence, but such clear demarcation points to folklore sources where seasons are identified as similar to the emotional state of a person. Its cycles emulate a psychological state. Thousands of folk songs use the time of year as an important prerequisite for telling the story, and Tumanian's approach is based on these traditions.

The three interconnected components of nature (we might call them "humanized participants") depicted in *Anush* are mountains, flowers, and to a lesser degree bodies of water such as the young and pristine mountain springs and the old river Debed. The images of mountains and flowers create a psychological background for the reader as there is no direct description of the characters. All songs in the poem are strongly connected to these two images. We see young, strong Saro⁷⁹ as a broad-shouldered mountain-like youth dancing the "shurj par" (circle dance) "like the giants of legend who kidnapped the daughters of Aragats,"⁸⁰ and Anush⁸¹ as a gentle flower. And, of course, Saro's unmarked grave in the mountains becomes covered with flowers in the spring. Anush, in her mad lament, thinks that she sees Saro asleep, but he is asleep "drunk with the scent of flowers."

⁷⁹ Saro is a short form of the Armenian name Saribek. The root of the name derives from the word *sar* (mountain).

⁸⁰ Reference is to Canto The First: "huge, proud mountains, / That in drunken files dance around, / In a monumental dance against the sky:...For elegant Mount Aragats's fair daughters.../ Abducted and bore to the impregnable Loree."

⁸¹ See footnote 76. One of the meanings of the word *anush* is "fragrant" as related to the scent of a flower.

The mountains of Lori become part of Saro's personality and physical looks, but most importantly the mountains emulate his state of mind as a proud and strong young *igit*. The connection to the mountains is deep for a *hoviv* (shepherd) who grows to know each and every stone of his beloved mountains. For an Armenian listener, the images of the mountains run parallel with thousands of folk songs carrying specific "encoded" information of the motherland.⁸²

The image of the mountains never leaves Saro; any dialogue/song or reference about him is always connected to it. From the very beginning of the poem, we read of fairies singing "Vush-vush, Saro, vush-vush, igit' / vush ku sirac **sarerin**" (Woe Saro, woe brave one, woe / Woe to the *mountains* you love!). In Canto the First, Saro sings his song, "**Sarere** kenknem, korchem angyuman" (I will take to the *mountains* and vanish). At their secret meeting, Anush gently scolds Saro: "Du **sari** lanjin khagher es kanchum" (Whereas you sing songs on the *mountain* slopes). Young maidens sing at the springs: "En um yarn e nestac lali hongur-hongur en **sarum**" (Whose lover is it sitting up there, / Sobbing away on that *mountain*.). During *jan giulum*, a group of young women sing, "You have at your back / A lover like a *mountain*!"

At the most critical time in his hopeless search for answers, Saro calls directly to the *Bardzr sarer* (Tall mountains). Later, after Saro's death, the women cry and wail with his mother, who says she will never again go up to the mountains to see her beloved son: "Vor hov **sareri** sovorac nane / El sar chi gnal arants Saroyi" (How his mother, used to the cool *mountains*, / Would no longer go without Saro there.).

⁸² Armenia is a landlocked mountainous region of the Caucasus. Mount Ararat (*Masis* in Armenian), currently in Turkish territories, is a symbol of the Armenian motherland and has sacred symbolism to Armenians as a "mother of the world" and is believed to be the place where Noah's ark came to rest.

The most touching image of Saro and the mountains is portrayed in Anush's lament. Mad in her grief, she sees the shapes of the mountain hills and thinks it is her beloved Saro asleep.

Akh, en kananch sari lanjin
Ov e kenac en tghen...

Oh, upon that green mountainside,
Who lies asleep in that place...

Jan, im yarn e, janin mernem,
Tsaghki hotov na harbel,
Sari lanjin, hovi mijin
Mush-mush⁸³, anush merapel.

Oh, it is my beloved one,
Drunk with the scent of the flowers
Slumbering sweetly in the cool air,
Lying on the mountain slope.

She imagines he is asleep, drunk from the scent of flowers: "Mush-mush, anush" (Calmly, sweetly). The metaphor is clearly a play on words referring to herself as a flower and to Saro as being drunk with love. The use of flowers as a metaphor to describe young women is found in folklore all over the world. In Armenian folk songs, the most common flowers are wild field varieties such as daisies, and daffodils. In the poem's prologue, we read of fairies singing, "Woe to you Anush, O mountain flower," and "Of seven flowers, she has picked flowers, / To bind silently into a posy of love." On the morn of Hambartsum⁸⁴ young women are likened to clusters of flowers: "Punj-punj aghchikner sarere elan" (In clusters have the maidens gone to the mountains). The festivities are also a celebration of the flowers, and details of rituals eulogizing the flowers are also present.

⁸³ *Mush-mush* means calm, sweet, and delightful.

⁸⁴ The feast of Hambartsum is celebrated in May, on the fortieth day after Easter as a day of Christ's ascension. Armenian Hambartsum celebrations have strong remnants of the pagan rituals of eulogizing the flowers and almost all rituals (without accounting the Church celebrations) have remained virtually unchanged in fate-foretelling tradition. It is still a popular celebration with young Armenians.

The true nature of Anush is revealed in her “dialogical monologue” directed at flowers, which identifies her psychological state of pessimistic inclinations and her premonition of a short life similar to that of a flower. Thus, they share the same destiny.⁸⁵

Oh, my destiny is calling me,
I know not, no, I know not where!
And my heart, sorrowful and dark,
Now trembles at its chill voice.

Oh, pretty flowers of the mountains,
You, too, bear a silent sorrow:
Your little eyes are filled with tears
And your hearts are black and cheerless.

Oh, all the flowers of this world
Always suffer thus in vain;
And likewise all saddened hearts
Become crushed and wild in their grief.

The call of destiny is persistently present in Anush’s premonitions. In Tumanian’s poem, the last lines of each stanza are the same with slight variations, such as “Im sirte sev u txur” (My heart is black and saddened). The first one is “im sirte” (my heart), connected to the first line, “Oh, my destiny.” The second stanza is “srterd” (your hearts)—“Oh, pretty flowers of the mountains.” The last one is “sirtner” (their hearts), with the first line, “Oh, all the flowers of this world.” Anush’s thoughts progress through her own feelings in order to create and understand her connection to others. Tigranian, in his opera *Anush*, found the correlation between the fate of the flowers and that of Anush’s life quite significant and used it as a leitmotif for her fate, which permeates the opera from the overture to the end.

⁸⁵ In his work *Inchu khelagarvets Anushe* (Why Anush became insane) (Erevan: Aghvank, 1994), Armenian psychologist V. Davtian concluded that Anush’s personality showed a predisposition for depression and mental susceptibility to stress. Tumanian had a large selection in his private library of studies on all the mental illnesses of his time (mostly writings of European authors current at the time).

The third natural element prominent in the poem is water, either spring waters—pure and pristine—or the river Debed. In the poem, the beautiful fairies are born of mountains, flowers, and water. They call themselves “sisters of the lofty mountains . . . overflowing with tearful dew.” “The mountain *flowers* sadly sighed” and disappeared back into the water: “They plunged deep into the spring . . . And into the sparkling waves / Of the mountain streams.”

In contrast, the river Debed is repeatedly referred to as old with murky, vicious waters. It becomes a prominent part of the backdrop of Saro’s and Anush’s death by singing a *sharakan* (church hymn) for the dead Saro: “The aged Debed, / the mourning stream... / Still lashes away... / As it laments” and later “calling” Anush to her death: “And it calls out, ‘Come, Anush, come, / Let me take you to your lover!’”. The old age of the river Debed relates to its timelessness: “The turbid Debed flows away, / Its waters swishing endlessly on.” The river is always the old, powerful keeper of “customs and traditions,” singing the last *sharakan* lament for the dead. Tumanian, as always, refers to ancient legends and thus creates the connection of the present to the past through a few words. Such is the legend of giants Dev-Al (the mountain Dval) and Dev-Bet (river Debed), who abducted the beautiful daughter of Aragats (the mountain Aragats).

Episode I:

As if rejoicing in that great wedding-feast
For elegant Mount Aragats’s fair daughters,
Whom Dev-Al, Dev-Bet and yet other giants
Those demented giants of the ancient world,
Abducted and bore to the impregnable Loree.

In episode XXIII we read,

And before them opened out horribly
The swishing valley filled with blood. ...
The roused Debed alone in the precipice
Glided downwards with a muted lament.

In episode XXV, the rhythm and the meter abruptly change in the second part with anxious, fast “waves” of words.

Then the night fell, the darkness grew deeper,
And the melancholy voices grew faint,
Wearied and died away... The aged Debed
Alone now mourned in the dark abyss.

The aged Debed,
The mourning stream,
With its heart rent
Its waters afroth,
Still lashes away
Its stony banks,
Its steep rocks,
As it laments...

Episode XXVI reads,

Whilst the aged Debed sang
Noble hymns in a stentorian voice.

The river Debed refers to himself as “home” when he calls to Anush to come to him to reunite with Saro: “The swollen stream rushes past, / Swishing with its fast currents; / And it calls out, ‘come, Anush. Come home . . . ! The valleys are silent, horribly silent; / The hostile Debed alone roars away there.”

In Tumanian’s work, all elements of the poem are constructed like motivic cells of a musical piece. In the first episode (Canto the First, episode I) of the author’s song-antuni, we hear a reference to the ancient legend of the river Debed as Dev-Bet. The demonic river reappears again at the end of the poem to abduct the beautiful Anush.

In the poem, the water of springs is considered pristine and pure as it is in most beliefs of the ancient world. During the night before Hambartsum, young women must collect water from seven springs, unseen by anyone in the darkness of night. In the prologue, the fairies sing,

Her virginal pitcher she has filled
With water from seven springs.
Of seven flowers, she has picked flowers
To bind silently into a posy of love.
The water and the flowers she has placed
Beneath the stars, to plead from them...

The pure water of springs is the birthplace of fairies where they also live. In the prologue, at the first rays of the sun, the fairies disappear into the springs:

They plunged deep into the spring;
They slid into the massive oak,
And into the sparkling waves
Of the mountain streams.

Komitas recaptures and explains the omnipresence of nature in almost all of Armenian folklore:

Read the book of Nature, which cannot be transcribed by any means,
by no sounds captured, by no colors painted, and by no tolls engraved...
The phenomena of Nature are forever astir: it is Life which is not possible
to contain with lifeless letters and sounds, pens and hoes, brushes and rulers.
It resembles the dawn, always fresh, always new, and always life-giving, always
Mother to the creative mind and heart, and like you, oh child, always
childlike and simple.⁸⁶

The abundant use of metaphors and their presence in folklore is not an artificial attempt to color the words and images but rather the deep belief that nature is alive and integrally connected to the well-being of man. For Anush, singing to the flowers and their pain is not only transference of an image to herself but also the compassion that she feels toward the flowers.

Tumanian's mastery of the word and its many meanings and possible interpretations, gives the poem life. With the use of recognizable images of nature in a song, Tumanian can express their true essence and presence in the song. Often the youths, being able to tell of their love only through a song's expressive music and language, would use figurative speech to "tell." In turn, those expressions came from the ancient traditions of humanization and transference of

⁸⁶ *Komitas: Essays and Articles*, 181.

feelings from and to nature. Ghazarian believes they awaken in the reader the memory of the ancient past of a vulnerable, mournful state of man set against the background of powerful nature.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Ghazarian, “*Anushi*” *steghsagortsakan patmutiune*, 63.

Music as an integral part of rituals and beliefs

*Ascension Day is here, the multi-colored flowers
Have adorned the pastures with beautiful rugs;
In clusters have the maidens gone to the mountains
With joyous songs for the drawing of lots.*

From Tumanian's *Anush*

National beliefs and values present in the rituals carry the historic memory of the nation. In turn, the rituals have the power to influence the behavior and beliefs of people, similar to the power of omens and signs. The poem does not present any specific time frame, but celebrations such as Hambartsum and the winter village wedding give clear points of reference, which become an inseparable part of the protagonist fate. In its traditional form, Hambartsum is a ritual foretelling of the prospects of marriage for a young woman. It resembles the “acts” of a wedding such as the presentation of a bride, who is usually a young girl dressed in wedding attire, wearing a veil. The young girl as a bride is called *tsaghkamer* (mother of flowers) and holds a pitcher with everyone's “fate” in her hands. In *Anush*, we read “The drawing of lots circles around anew, / As the veiled Mother of Flowers bids them.”

During Hambartsum, the dark lot of fate has fallen for Anush, and during the wedding a careless mistake of dishonor sows the seeds of enmity, which turn tragic later on. The poet's choice to frame the major events of the poem during important ritual festivities that are joyful and happy highlights the *ciaroscuro* of life. Festivities of Hambartsum and weddings are full of music and dance, dreams and expectations, contrary to the tragic fate of Anush and Saro, who

are admonished for their love. The picture of the wedding scene is vividly painted; the group is in motion, dancing and laughing: “The village multitude rejoiced unrestrained.” In contrast, Anush and Saro are “stopped” in eternal time: “In vain had Anush breathless grown / Standing there frozen like a very picture.”

The story unfolds seamlessly while seasons change in the background. In Tumanian’s work, time and space are one; past, present, and future are connected and events move in a swirl of timelessness. The poem starts with the prologue on the night before Hambartsum. Tumanian uses the subtitle in parentheses *Hambartsman gisher* (On Ascension Night) and points to the prominence of what is believed to transpire on the eve of Hambartsum. The legend says that time stops for a second and nature can speak. In the poem, the fairies born of springs become animate on the eve as well.

In his studies of Armenian folklore, Abeghian examines the beliefs in fairies and other spirits as an important part connecting life and death and the importance of rituals dealing with the spirits. The complete prologue is a lament of fairies about the love of Anush and Saro, and in it we are given full ritual description of the preparations of the night before Hambartsum. Fairies sing of Anush, who abided by all the traditions and rituals so that her fate might “smile kindly upon her lover,” but Anush’s fate is dark as we hear the fairies lament:

Okht⁸⁸ aghbyurits jur e arel
Kuys saporov, lur u munj
Okht tsaghkits tsaghik qaghel,
Kapel siro tsaghkepunj:

Her virginal pitcher she has filled
With water from seven springs;
Of seven flowers, she has picked flowers
To bind silently into a posy of love.

Jurn u tsaghik astghunk derel,
Khendirik arel astgherin,
Papag sertov xendirik arel

The water and the flowers she has placed
Beneath the stars, to plead from them,
Her heart filled to bursting with eagerness,

⁸⁸ *Okht* is an old colloquial form of *yot*, number seven. Tumanian’s use of the archaic (still used in some regions of Armenia) name for a number seven consistently connects us to the past.

Bari zheptan ir serin...

That they may smile kindly upon her lover...

In his book *Tumanian's World*, Hakhverdian touches upon the significance of believing in fate as a driving force in *Anush*. He wonders whether Tumanian's fatalistic views disconcerted scholars as these views conflict with an idealistic view of cause and consequence that many have tried to see in his poetry.⁸⁹ Canto the Second ("On Ascension Morn") is a colorful snapshot of Hambartsum celebrations. Tumanian achieves the vivid colors by minimizing description and maximizing the first-person direct singing. In this section, *jan giulum* and *vitchaki erg* (destiny song) are sung by the young women in a ritual of drawing a "lot" and foretelling the future based on the words of the song at that moment.

Armenian traditions of ritual observations almost all come from antiquity, and many are remnants of paganism. As the people of the first nation to establish Christianity as a state religion, Armenians clung to their rituals, which found their way into Christian rites and traditions.⁹⁰ Beliefs in fate, curses, and omens are omnipresent in the poem and show a vital part of societal functioning. Of all of these, the curse is the most feared. Anush recalls that as a child she was cursed to spend her life in tears. The reason, which seems rather unimportant, was her mother's careless and rude welcoming of a dervish who came to their door to sing his song and ask for a reward:

No, good fortune is not for me, I know it...
For I have been cursed from my infancy!
One day, when I in my cradle lay,
They say, an old dervish came to our door;
He sang his song and asked for a reward,
But my mother would give him none...

⁸⁹ Hakhverdian, *Mir Tumaniana*, 162.

⁹⁰ Historically, the Armenian Church tried to limit pagan rituals, which were seeping into Christian rites. The subject of fate prediction is frowned upon by the church, but it is firmly held in local beliefs.

And the dervish put a curse upon me, saying:
“May her days with sorrow and tears be filled!”
Oh, that old, wandering man’s merciless curse
And now this ill fate are well known to God.

Dervishes were usually of foreign birth (often Muslim) and traveled, begging for food and shelter. As ascetics, dervishes were believed to possess the power to curse and would not be refused bread and shelter, especially those who came to entertain and tell/sing stories.

Fear of a curse is very strong among the people in the poem, and Anush’s fate becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. A cursed person is cursed by all, which happens to Anush many times throughout the poem. Besides being cursed by the dervish, she is cursed by her own mother and father:

(Mother)

And her aged mother, grown angry,
Cursed her forgetful and timid Anush,

(Father)

And her white-haired father, with a frown,
Began to froth with anger, spat and cursed.
‘Get out, you impudent, shameless wench!
May black mourning be your wedding crown!
Away and perish for ever from my sight;
May you get buried under the ground!

The expression “may black mourning be your wedding crown” is one of the curses still strongly feared. Lamenting Saro’s death, the crowd also curses Anush: “With merciless curses they remembered / His poor and helpless love left behind.” Often, the curses are chanted in a quasi-singing style magnified by consistent rhyming and meter, increasing the mystifying and spellbinding power over the people.

Armenian wedding rituals are strictly observed as a means of protection from evil and bad luck. Other rituals, such as the elaborate orders of lamenting for the dead and *kokh* (wrestling

dance), were believed to influence future battles and even weather outcomes. Hambartsum's order of rites and rituals is believed to bring good luck in love and marriage; thus, the interpretation of dreams, signs, and many other methods emerged (in the poem the foretelling is also done by reading barley seeds). All these beliefs are reinforced by the events that seem to be a self-professed destiny, thus supporting society's firm faith in the importance of rituals. Most significantly, all such beliefs are strongly preserved in the musical elements of the rituals, which carry a major responsibility in bringing luck.

Hambartsum (The Feast of Ascension)

The Christian calendar marks the Hambartsum or Ascension of Christ forty days after Easter, but in Armenia, Hambartsum is also a relic of pagan times. Along with church celebrations, the ancient pagan festivities are still widely observed with rituals that eulogize blossoming flowers and nature and that are dedicated to the goddess of love and fertility, Astghik.⁹¹ Music constitutes the crucial element of the celebration. The name of each ritual is dependent on the name of the song sung in celebration of the day—for example, the *jan giulum* or *jan tsaghik* (dear flower) songs.⁹² Thousands of *jan giulum* or *jan-tsaghik* (used

⁹¹ According to ancient beliefs, on the eve of Hambartsum the universe stops, the heavens draw closer to the earth, trees and flowers greet each other, and stars exchange kisses. At dawn, the young women “steal” water from seven springs and carry it away without looking back. The water is placed in a jar with petals of seven flowers, seven stones from seven springs, and seven barks from various trees. The jar is left overnight on the crest of the hill where it is believed the starlight leaves the messages of marriage and love.

⁹² Both words mean “dear flower”—the former is the old form (from Persian) and the latter is the modern word for flower. The word *jan* is usually translated as “dear,” but in Armenia it is just an endearing exclamation added to names, as in Persian.

interchangeably) have been archived by ethnographers. They are usually sung by younger women and range from teasing ditties to slow, lyrical love songs.⁹³

Rituals like *jan giulum* have remained part of traditions that come mostly from deep-seated beliefs in destiny. The songs, as well as the circle dance performed during the rituals, have ancient roots in the mystic and cosmic powers of the circle of spheres (the cosmos, in its original sense, carries the meaning of order and rule). During the description of *vitchaki erg* (destiny song), we read, “They have formed a circle and are drawing lots,” and once more “The drawing of lots circles around anew, / As the veiled Mother of Flowers bids them.”

The celebration of Hambartsum is intimately connected to the ancient past of the nation (born from pagan beliefs) and the new Christian beliefs in Christ’s resurrection and ascension from earthly burdens. At the beginning of the poem (in the Prologue), Hambartsum is identified as an ancient pagan ritual, with eulogizing flowers and fortune telling: “Ascension Day is here, the multi-colored flowers . . . With joyous songs for the drawing of lots.” The poem (Canto the Sixth) ends with the ritual of celebrating of Hambartsum as Christian celebration (Ascension):

It is Ascension night, that enchanting night...
The golden gates of Heaven are opened...
And with divine, inscrutable conception
It is filled with God’s holy compassion.

In the years following the first publication of *Anush*, Tumanian grew interested in philosophy and cosmic infinity, resulting in a profound alteration of the poem. Issues of life and death, the purpose of human life, the secrets of the universe, and questions of eternity occupied his inquisitive mind. In 1902, the year he finished the revised version of *Anush*, Tumanian told his friend, “You know, I also got interested more in philosophy, and what I love the most in

⁹³ Ataian, *Armianskaia narodnaia pesnia*, 26-7.

poetry is neither what invokes tears nor delight but saintly peacefulness; Olympic-like contemptuous, ennobled flight to a better world and clear and pure atmosphere.”⁹⁴

Jan Giulum and Vitchaki Erg

Scholars consider Tumanian the most frugal poet in his choice of words and material. He is laconic and precise; no extraneous feelings or descriptions are given. The mature Tumanian concludes, “Each sound, each word, each image, each style is a big creation and complete universe in itself.”⁹⁵ Knowing that Tumanian was so economical in his choice of words and material, devoting the entire Canto the Second to the songs sung by the female chorus with the refrains and repetitions of *jan giulum* and *vitchaki erg*, points to the weight that it carries in the poem as a crucial verdict of Anush’s fate. Furthermore, the section uses simple rhyming with mostly auxiliary interjections. We, the readers, are almost drawn to sing along, to be part of the group, and to be part of the ritual as the prosody of the simple repetition creates its own melody.

Almost all *jan giulums* are in a genre of *parerg*, which is a group dance accompanied by singing. As *jan giulum* celebrations included the entire youth of the village, large singing/dancing groups would break into smaller groups with antiphonal singing. One group asks questions (sometimes puzzles or jocular teasing) and the other group sings the “answers.” The *jan giulum* and *vitchaki erg* in the poem clearly point to a large group singing and dancing, “In clusters have the maidens gone to the mountains / With joyous songs for the drawing lots.” The question-answer form of the *parerg* is observed in fate foretelling songs.

⁹⁴Hakhverdian, *Mir Tumaniana*, 149.

⁹⁵ “Ամեն մի հնչուն, ամեն մի բառ, ամեն մի ձև կամ ոճ մի մեծ ստեղծագործություն է ու մի ամբողջ աշխարհք։” Ghazarian, “*Anushi*” *steghsagortsakan patmutiune*, 86.

The scholar Manuk Abeghian collected thousands of versions of *jan giulum*. From his native village of Astapat, he gives a sample of a song sung in preparation for Hambartsum—specifically an image of a young bride asking for a wedding dress:⁹⁶

Գացեք մեծ վարպետ բերեք,
Աղվորին խաբդան ձևեցեք,
Արեգակն երես արեք,
Լուսնական աստառ ձևեցեք,
Ամպերով բոլորը նախշեք,
Ծովեն արբեշում թել քաշեցեք,
Աստղերը կոճակ շարեք,
Ինչ սեր կա մեջը կարեցեք:

Go, call the great master here,
Stitch the lovely gown,
Make the sun its front,
Engrave out its lining of the moon,
Decorate it all with clouds,
Draw the silk thread from the sea,
Place the stars for the buttons,
Sew all the love that exists into it.

Another folk song still popular in Armenia was transcribed by Komitas—“Tsaghik unem narnji” (I have a flower, orange color). In a surviving manuscript of Komitas’s opera, *Anush*, this popular song—its melody and solo with chorus refrains—is used as the basis for the scene of singing *jan giulum*. Robert Ataian believes Komitas’s choice to be a weak support of Anush’s tragedy, as the song is indeed happy and has no conflicting emotions.

The Hambartsum scene from Tumanian’s *Anush* impressed the librettist Sofia Parnok, who was working on Spendiarov’s opera *Almast* (based on Tumanian’s poem *The Siege of Tmuk Fortress*). She drew upon descriptive elements from *Anush* for the crucial moment in the opera when Almast is torn between her love for Prince Tatul and the Shah’s promise of power and wealth. Almast recalls her happy days and celebrations of Hambartsum, but those joyous moments are overshadowed by memories of her own dark lot. In light of Parnok’s letters to Spendiarov and suggestions about the scene with Hambartsum, it is clear that she used the text

⁹⁶ Manuk Abeghian, *Erker: hator E* (Erevan: HSSH GA Hrat., 1975), 56. The translation is mine.

and even a psychological image of Anush to add an element of predestined fate to the character of Almast.⁹⁷ Here is an example from *Almast* by Alexander Spendiarov, Act Two:

To each a different prediction,
To one—a lover, another—death,
The clouds gather in the sky,
And happy day, a gloomy one;
And when the turn was for my lot,
The dark “giulum” reverbed aloud.⁹⁸

Out of twenty-nine parts (episodes) of the poem, twelve are the scenes of gatherings of large crowds. In the poem, Tumanian uses the crowds as a dramatist, giving the scenes a certain volume and expansion. He achieves the vision of multitudes with words that evoke music and sound dynamics as crowds become loud and boisterous in celebration: “The piper now played a wrestling tune: / both the old and young into ferment were thrown,” and again late, “At the sounds of merriment and applause, / All the walls and ceiling shook and trembled.”

Tumanian’s use of time and space conveys the direct participation of large groups in the celebrations, a truthful depiction of what can be seen in many Armenian towns and villages that celebrate Hambartsum. Had he chosen to simply mention the celebration, the reader would most probably ignore it. But his curved spatial continuation (specifying first “chorus near” and “chorus from afar”) creates movement of audible sound. Both the rhythm and the rhyme of the simple exclamations automatically turn into quasi-singing or intoning because of the natural prosody of the language.

⁹⁷ Karine Khudabashian, “Avtor libretto operi *Almast*” A. Spendiarova—Sofia Parnok.” In the *Alexander Spendiarov: Statii i issledovania*, compiled by Georgi Geodakian (Erevan: Izd. Arm. SSR, 1973), 203-4.

⁹⁸ The translation is mine.

The ritual of Hambartsum is condensed into a kind of musical drama within the episodes X and XI of Canto the Second, which is interspersed with *jan giulum* singing. Time expands as the ritual is sung and observed for a prolonged period. The musical dynamics are also present with indications of loud and joyous singers approaching, and at the end a diminuendo effect indicates the group is moving away. Almost all parts of the rituals are sung as solos followed by an answer from the chorus, with many repetitions and small modifications.

Tumanian structured the ritual singing in an interesting way, namely as part of an unfolding drama with many detailed emotional and colorful indications of the song sounds. After the introduction of the morning of the Ascension (episode X) (“In clusters have the maidens gone to the mountains / With **joyous songs** for the drawing of lots”), the refrain of the song *jan giulum* is sung. Then again there is narration by the author: “**Song and scent mingled**, / Arm in arm they go.” Another refrain follows with *vitchaki* songs with refrains, followed by another interlude by the author: “The air is **filled with song and hearts with joy**.” The next episode (separated by Tumanian as XI) starts with the description, “**Destiny Song pours out** of tender hearts, / And **with it rumble** the flowered mountains.” A destiny lot is pulled by Anush, and the words sung predict death to the one who loves her. Her friends, trying to calm her fears, tell her not to break her heart: “Dance away and sing the Destiny Song!” She responds by telling them that she is luckless because she has been cursed as a child: “Old dervish came to our door; / He sang his song and asked for a reward, / But my mother would give him none.”

This is a section where Tumanian separates the group from Anush. He marks it as “group sings” as they continue with their drawing lots and singing *jan giulum*. After that, Anush’s dialogical monologue with flowers takes place. As the last quatrain of the episode, the author marks the “group from afar” and gives one more refrain of *jan giulum*. These details depict what

folk songs meant to the public—not just mere entertainment but a power to influence the fate of a person. Wedding and funeral songs also are believed to have power over the life or afterlife of the person; therefore the rites and songs were sung with great care so as to chase away the evil spirits or not to jinx.

Often, the original song or refrain (for example, *jan giulum*) would call the crowd to “create” another song on the spot, a common improvisatory tradition. This very common style of leading a “question” song would convey a long stretch of singing and dancing (sometimes lasting hours if the groups were feeling well challenged). The refrains would be used to connect different verses, signaling the group that the continuation of singing and dancing was expected. In *Anush*, for example, such a moment would be a call to improvise on the topic of praising somebody’s lover:

Come now, oh maiden
Your good fortune draw!
Let us praise in song
Your lover so brave!

One of the singers would grasp the opportunity to sing for her beloved, boasting about his masculinity. In *Anush*, we have the following response:

His lip has sprouted, and he is so very tall;
Cares have I none, when such a lover is mine!

This is how Abeghian describes folk love ditties in praise of young men: “and the young man (drives women crazy) with his ‘height,’ with his build, and with his handicraft. Especially attractive to a woman were his moustache, newly sprouted and twisted.”⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Manuk Abeghian, *Erker: hator B* (Erevan: HSSH GA, 1967), 297.

The common refrain *Hambartsum, yayla, yayla jan, yayla* is repeated six times, each with a slightly different mood by means of substitution of a single word. In the first refrain we have the following:

Hambartsum, yayla, ¹⁰⁰	It's Ascension Day,
Yayla jan, yayla,	Meadow, dear meadow;
Sev sarer , yayla,	Black mountains , meadow,
Yayla jan, yayla.	Meadow, dear meadow!

The consecutive refrains have variations on the third line *sev sarer* (black mountains), changing into *lav orer* (joyous days), *hur srter* (flaming hearts), *ser-orer*, (loving days), *sar-yarer* (mountain lovers), and *var caver* (ardent sorrows). The last refrain emulates Anush's mood.

When it is Anush's time to be told of her fate, the prediction is tragic:

Oh maiden with rich, dark hair
Maiden to the mountains schooled
A bullet will touch the heart
Of him who loves you, oh maiden!

Her friends try to calm her fears and call upon her: "Do not break your heart for what is not true, / Dance away and sing the Destiny Song!" The group repeats this phrase twice in an attempt to ease Anush's anxiety with the hope that song and dance will alleviate her dark mood.

Thus, it is not Anush walking away but the people distanced from her pain who leave Anush alone with dark thoughts. At the beginning of Canto the Second, the group of girls sings *jan giulum* with Anush (there is no mention of the chorus/group), but at the end of the scene, Tumanian writes a dramatic separation of the group/chorus from Anush. The author marks in parentheses "Khumbe ergum e'" (chorus singing), giving a continuation of the song that we hear at the beginning of the scene with two full verses, including the *jan giulum* refrains (as four

¹⁰⁰ *Yayla* is an old colloquial name for a circle dance and song. In repetitive songs, the word has no meaning but acts as an auxiliary word. In this translation, I used Kudian's poetic version, "meadow."

quatrains). At the same time, Tumanian marks once again in parentheses, “Anush alone,” as Anush succumbs to dark thoughts with “Oh, my destiny is calling me.” It is indeed a powerful moment when among the joyous songs we hear Anush completely lonely in her fears. The episode, even though unclear, if sung by Anush clearly resembles a lament with grieving for the “fate of flowers,” thus imposing transference of pain of torn and carelessly crushed flowers to herself:

Oh, pretty flowers of the mountains,
You, too, bear a silent sorrow:
Your little eyes are filled with tears
And your hearts are black and cheerless.

Oh, all the flowers of the world
Always suffer thus in vain;
And likewise all saddened hearts
Become crushed and wild in their grief.

Tumanian used some elements for the *jan giulum* from the lyrical folk song “Վարդն ի պաղվի” (*Vardn I batsvi*; Roses will bloom), sung on a different celebration called *Vardavar*:¹⁰¹

“Վարդն ի պաղվի” (Roses will bloom)¹⁰²

Վարդն ի պաղվի վարդըվերի կիրակին,
Քյո սերն ինզե մեջ իմ սրբոտի պըրակին.
Քյա նազերով, քյա խորոտիկ, տյու վիրն ես,
Աշխար գիտի, ալամ գիտի, տյու իմն ես:

Roses will bloom on the Vardavar’s Sunday
Your love came into my heart
With your coquetry, and prettiness,
Whose are you?
The world knows, you are mine.

Anush

Ekav Hambartsum
Tsaghkov zardarvats,
Mer baxtin hartsum.
- Ov e mez gervac:

Ascension Day is here,
Decorated with flowers,
Let us know our luck:
“Now, who is whose fate?”

¹⁰¹ *Vardavar* is a festival traditionally associated with the goddess Astghik, ruler of water, beauty, love, and fertility. In Armenia, the custom of pouring water on passers-by is observed. In the Christian calendar, Vardavar is marked as a transfiguration day of Christ on the 98th day after Easter.

¹⁰² Ghazarian, “*Anushi*” *steghsagortsakan patmutiune*, 72-73.

- Ay jan tgha, choban tgha, umn es du: “Oh tell me, dear shepherd boy, whose are you”
- Astvats giti, ashkharh giti imn es du. “God above and the world know, you are mine!”

Armenian peasant music often falls within different genres. Many ritual songs and dances borrow from lyrical or satirical ditties, as well as from *parerg* (dance-song) styles, as is the case in *jan giulum* (which in *Anush* is called *khagh*, or song).¹⁰³ Love is the most common subject of the dance-songs, but generally they differ from the lyrical genre as the rhythm and dance regulate the former’s structure. Their origin is usually connected to the ritual celebrations like *jan giulum* during Hambartsum or *Vardavar*. Often, dance-songs are of simple construction with clear and repetitive rhythmic figures. However, the rhythms, tempi, and character of the dance-song often change by shifting toward more improvisatory, complex rhythms, showcasing the agility and talent of the dancers. Regardless of the mood of the song, all dance-songs are joyous in their essence. Their melodies are usually short, correlate with small steps and skips, and are often accompanied by exclamations such as *jan*, *hoi*, and *hei*.¹⁰⁴ Even though musical instruments are popular in Armenian music, in the group dance-song dancers accompanying themselves only with singing. The *parergs* can be fully done by a chorus or antiphonally with a soloist (or two soloists, who are usually the leading dancers). Not uncommon are two choruses in dynamic relationship with each other. In solo and chorus versions, such as *jan giulum*, the refrain stays the same and can be inserted at the beginning, middle, or end of the couplet. It often achieves a lively movement with polyphonies by simply “layering” in a polyphonic form of certain sections.

Komitas describes *parergs* as the most volatile of all types of peasant music as they emerge and die out with virtually each performance since improvisation and changes in words occur at the moment of the performance. Interestingly, the invariable part most resistant to

¹⁰³ In traditional music, the dance-songs were called *khagh*, *yayli*, and *gyond*.

¹⁰⁴ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 189.

change is the refrain section, which can survive in its original form from generation to generation. The title of the *parerg* is usually the beginning words of the refrain as in the case of *jan giulum*.¹⁰⁵ Refrains in *parerg*—by themselves—are usually meaningless exclamations and do not contribute to the text of the couplets. Still, they express the feelings of and are the “soul” of the main text, which explains the text’s consistency and repetitions. According to Komitas, the color and tint of the folk melodies are in the refrains. Usually *parergs* do not have cadences; neither half nor full, *parergs* can end on any secondary tone (and start a new mode) except the tonic. This creates perpetual movement and gives flexibility for the group to end whenever they feel the music and dancing end.¹⁰⁶

Thus, a flexible time frame in ritual celebrations of dancing and singing can be the reason for the poem’s rather lengthy *jan giulum* ritual singing permeating Canto the Second. The importance of this particular celebration is also the celebration of the Ascension and of release from earthly burden. The ancient belief is that on the night of Hambartsum, the universe stops, the heavens draw closer to earth, and the stars exchange kisses. The last stanza of the poem portrays Anush and Saro as stars who can finally kiss again. Framing the poem in the heart and soul of the traditions and rituals of Hambartsum, Tumanian unites the lovers and gives them immortality. Tumanian thinks of their love as pure; therefore the “gates of Heaven” are open for them. The divine powers have “holy compassion” toward the lovers:

It is Ascension night, that enchanting night,
 When at a happy, wondrous moment,
 The golden gates of Heaven are opened:
 Down below all grows speechless and silent,
 And with divine, inscrutable conception
 It is filled with God’s holy compassion.

¹⁰⁵ Ataian, *Armianskaia narodnaia muzika*, 31-3.

¹⁰⁶ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 189-90.

At that sublime moment of the beauteous night,
Out of the distant depth of the infinite heaven
There fly out and come together the two stars
Of the dead lovers, their desires unfulfilled,
And, with yearning, tenderly they kiss each other,
In the azure vault, far away from this earth.

Wedding rituals and the wrestling-dance *kokh*

Episodes XII and XIII of Canto the Third depict a village wedding during the wintertime. Armenian weddings are accompanied by music throughout the ceremony and can last a few days with strict observations of customs and rituals (weddings of wealthy families would last as long as forty days). Armenian musical wedding traditions and styles are so rich and complex that they are classified by ethnomusicologists as a separate branch of ritual songs.

Brutian explains the classification as follows:

The term “wedding songs” refers to those songs that are part of the wedding “concert” and are performed during weddings. Often, the performance has been presented in a form of theatrical custom during which numerous *khakh* (ditty), fairy tales, humor, tearful cries, praises, *parerg* (dance-songs), dance, and other rituals took place. In villages, weddings were generally considered among the most important events and therefore everybody in the village would participate. Rituals and rites were performed in a celebratory fashion and many of the guests had their role in the process—each singing a specific type of a song appropriate for that ritual. Young maids and friends of the bride, for example, would sing songs throughout the night before the wedding called “tsaghkots (flower garden) thus comparing the bride to a flower grown with love and care in special garden.”¹⁰⁷

In *Anush*, the description of the wedding scene is not long, but it contains very clear images of traditional rituals. The tension is created by terse verses and language and rhythm that are different from the rest of the poem and are rather fast paced.¹⁰⁸ Once again, we are wrapped in Tumanian’s timeless “time” by events that seem to happen in the blink of an eye in the long time frame of a wedding ceremony. The apogee of the tragedy is the breaking of an age-old tradition. Thus, a ritual becomes part of the downfall. As mentioned earlier, rituals were believed

¹⁰⁷ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 139-140.

¹⁰⁸ The first edition of *Anush* (1892) included a more descriptive wedding scene, which was mostly edited out of the second (1903) edition. It is of interest because of its ethnographic value, but is beyond the scope of this study, which concentrates on the last (1922) edition.

to carry the power to foretell and influence the future. In the minds of the people, breaking with their rules was believed to carry punishment.

A few words about the style of Armenian male circle dancing may explain their value in society. The most typical circle-dance involves arms chained into a tight interlock; the circle can open or close but the linked arms stay strong. The male dance has primarily a military origin, and all the moves are connected to the imitation of a fight or battle scene. The linked arms symbolize the strength of the battle forts, as well as ancient beliefs in mystical powers of cosmic circles. One example of battling male dances popular in Armenia is *berdi par* (Fortress dance); it always involves a figure of a closed circle as walls of a fortress (up to three groups) of men standing on each other's shoulders. In *Anush*, references to dance and dancing have a dimensional aspect as well. Our memories take us back to the images of the mountains of Lori as compared to the monumental circle dance against the sky (Canto the First):

Towards those huge, proud mountains,
That in drunken files dance round,
As if rejoicing in that great wedding-feast
For elegant Mount Aragats's fair daughters,
Whom Dev-Al, Dev-Bet and yet other giants,
Those demented giants of the ancient world.
Abducted and bore to the impregnable Loree.¹⁰⁹

Srbui Lisitsian, an expert in original Armenian dance forms, has recorded in detail the rules of each dance, the steps, and the explanations for and ancient roots of the dance. In one of the dance-pantomime types, Lisitsian describes the *pailevani khakher/parer* (pailevan dance). She explains this pantomimed wrestling in detail—its significance, correct step order, jumps, and rhythm. She elucidates its origins from ancient times as a game/competition/dance of big groups that acted out the movements of armies in a field of battle. It was part of a ritual and was

¹⁰⁹The spelling of Lori region as used by Misha Kudian.

believed to possess magical symbolism predicting the future. For example, the movements of an unexpected attack might be depicted by one group with a jump forward to which the other group might respond with “the best defense” as steps or jumps back to the right side (considered lucky). The “fights” evolved into warrior-to-warrior—or, as it was called, hand-to-hand—fighting when both “armies” would unlink their hold and the bravest men from each opposing camp would start a wrestling match, what Lisitsian refers to as “duet-duel.”

Lisitsian regards the *kokh*, or wrestling dance, as one of the remnant forms from the ancient wrestling style, which was performed to the accompaniment of instrumental music.

In the poem *Anush*, we have a glimpse of this ancient wrestling-dance and the order of ritual:

And after the dance, they cleared a big space
The piper now played a *kokh* [wrestling] tune
Both the old and young into ferment were thrown.
They clamored ‘Drag them out, drag them out!’
And forcibly dragged out two of the youth...
And the whole village like a rampart stood:
They parted into two separate camps,
Each selecting one of the wrestlers
Each standing behind the youth of its choice

Lisitsian describes the ancient *kokh* as a hand-on-hand fight—a form of wrestling sometimes called *giulash kpnel*. It is an improvisational pantomime with moves dependent on choices made on the spur of the moment by both rivals. She further explains the rules: “Before the start of the ‘fight,’ the wrestlers shake hands as a sign that the match should not be perceived as a personal ill-will. Each one would circle his territory with some dance moves which, contributes to a deeper meaning of a path that each warrior had taken before their ‘meeting.’ Afterwards they would move towards each other, grab each other firmly at the waist and start the wrestling according to the strict rules. Music accompanied them at all times until one of them

could force the opponent's shoulder to touch the ground. It was also customary for the 'opponents' to shake hands in a sign of good will and peace.”¹¹⁰

The musical elements and our perception of the ceremony as filled with music are strongly present in the wedding narrative:

There was a wedding-feast one wintry night,
The village multitude rejoiced unrestrained;
There too, had descended the shepherds young,
To look at the maidens, to dance and wrestle (*kokh*).
And after the dance, they cleared a big space
In the middle of the spacious main room;
The piper (*zurna* player) now played a wrestling tune...

The imagery is reinforced with thunderous sounds of the multitude at the wedding. At first it is the “multitude rejoiced unrestrained.” Then the *zurna*¹¹¹ player's “blast” follows the *kokh* tune. A recollection of Komitas during his visit to Monastery Harich (in Shirak region, Armenia) for the Feast of Transfiguration gives us an interesting perception of the instrument and how it is used. As an ethnomusicologist who sought to preserve all forms of Armenian national music, Komitas recorded an episode at the festivities that was accompanied by *zurna*, which he calls a “cacophony of dreadful, unbearable, and coarse sounds.” He writes, “It is a shame that these natural, poetic, meaningful, and ingenuous dances have been harmed by the grotesque, tasteless and crude *zurna* . . . Imagine the ten *zurna* players scattered through the square, often playing next to one another and the people crowded together with no room to move. From the high mountains and the deep valleys one could hear the overwhelming sound of a dozen *zurnas* echoing . . . We went to our rooms and shut the doors, but to no avail—the sounds of the noisy

¹¹⁰ Srbui Lisitsian, *Armianskie starinnie pliaski* (Ancient Armenian dances) (Erevan: AH SSR, 1983), 67- 68.

¹¹¹ A *zurna* is a conical oboe made from the apricot fruit tree. It is a double-reed instrument that generates a sharp, piercing sound; therefore it is usually played outdoors or in large spaces during festive events such as weddings and holidays.

zurna were heard even through the walls. For exactly one and a half days, we surrendered our ears and nerves to the dictates of their whims.”¹¹²

Tumanian’s dynamics are amplified by the use of zurna in the poem’s wedding scene. Its loud, piercing sound has a deafening quality. What follows is a culmination of the “unrestrained rejoicing multitude” in the *kokh*. The young and old start calling out, “They clamored, ‘drag them out, drag them out!’” “The whole village like a rampart stood . . . They roared and called out from both camps,” “They beat the ground with their sturdy hands.” This loud clamor is followed by Saro wrestling Mosi (Anush’s young brother and Saro’s friend) in a wrestling dance *kokh*. Saro pushes Mosi to the floor accompanied by “thundering roars of joyous cries.” At the moment of Mosi’s vulnerability and shame, the volume of noise increases tenfold: “All the sounds of merriment and applause, / All the walls and ceiling shook and trembled.” The deafening cries and noise constitute not simply the background but also a unique sound backdrop of a bewildered, unrestrained crowd that shakes the foundation, rendering the individual voice and its sorrow unheard, undetectable. Mosi tries to scream over the crowd, likely over the piercing sounds of the *zurna*, attempting to convey Saro’s deception to the crowd and calling for a rematch. But his calls are ignored and mocked by even louder laughter: “they laughed merrily / And called aloud in biting mockery.” Mosi’s rage is amplified by the noise: “And from the noisy wedding house that day / Mosi came out wounded to the core; / With blood dripping from his sullen heart.”

The significance of honor and pride garnered from such seemingly insignificant acts as dancing, singing, and wrestling is only understood if regional customs are taken into account. In *Anush* we read, “There, too, had descended the shepherds young, / To look at the maidens, to

¹¹² Komitas: *Essays and Articles*, 26.

dance and wrestle.” Often, the village weddings were the place for future brides and grooms to meet and have the opportunity to display their skills—men in wrestling and dancing thus demonstrating their physical strength and women in graceful dancing and modest appearances.

This is how the wounded Mosi thinks of his dishonor:

‘Shame upon you, Mosi... such insults, too!
Shame upon such a known brave youth like you!
Remember who you are, have a look at yourself;
Your back had never before touched the ground.
You, who are like a mountain, how you fell
Before the eyes of all the villagers there!
You, how you curled up under Saro’s knees
And then appeared before the *womenfolk*...
Such a thing had never happened to you before!
You are now but a mockery to the whole village!
It would be better to die and enter the ground:
Go, fall off a roof... or twirl a spindle...’

These words are of a young, future groom who believes his chances of a good marriage are lost as he cannot appear before “womenfolk” any more. During the wedding, the scene of a rejoicing crowd dancing the traditional circle dance carries images of a broad-shouldered youth and an earlier mention of mountains as giants dancing their circle dance, thus, in a way, becoming one and the same.

Lisitsian specifies that often the defeated wrestler would hold a grudge and a desire for revenge for a long time, even though it was a stylized dance and not true wrestling.¹¹³ An observation—unrelated to the poem itself—about a hidden desire for revenge underlines the importance of these dances as expressions of manliness and highlights their place and function in society. The context of the wrestling dance also sheds light on why the suspicion of dishonesty in Saro’s victory during *kokh* eventually becomes a question of life and death between two friends. We read in *Anush*,

¹¹³ Lisitsian, *Armianskie starinnie pliaski*, 67-68.

And the youth now grown extremely heated
Thrust their hems into their belts;
They beat the ground with their sturdy hands
And ferociously sat upon each other...
And locked together in the friendly combat
Saro and Mossi tumbled down sideways

And again, we read in Lisitsian's studies, "[The moves] are created in the moment imitating the moves of the wrestling to the rhythm of the music. However, certain rules and methods of bracing have been developed through centuries just like prohibition of some dangerous and deceitful tricks, as, for example, things like forbidden footsteps, bracing from the legs and so on."¹¹⁴

In the poem we read:

There was a custom in those dark valleys,
And, ever obedient to old customs,
No youth would set his fellow wrestler
To the ground before an assembled crowd.

Such a dire warning had significant value, and even as portrayed in the dance, the rules and customs were to be respected. In many villages, in order to achieve a friendly end to those pantomimes the rules were set out and enforced strictly to prevent escalations of violence as honor was the most highly regarded quality of a man.

Saro forgets the centuries-old honored tradition:

He forgot friends, customs and the world.
And whilst Mosi, ever in playful mood,
Had momentarily released his hold,
Saro mustered up his strength and kneeling, /
Viciously floored his friend and held him down!

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

The *kokh* and the group dance *pahladjo* were often used as rituals to foretell the results of a battle, as well as for predictions of the weather and other important events in society.¹¹⁵ In *Anush*, breaking the rules of conduct ensured revenge. As in ancient times, the *kokh*-dance became a crucial foretelling force of honor or sin.

Choosing the wrestling dance as a moment of apogee of conflict, we are thrust into the ancient belief in the power of dance to influence and foretell the future. The stylized battle of *kokh* turns into the battle of lover against the beloved's family.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Cries and Laments

Historically, Armenia, situated on the crossroads of East and West, has witnessed numerous invasions and annihilations by neighboring Muslim countries and has lost most of its ancestral lands. Lamenting, in the form of *voghb* or *antuni*, is omnipresent in Armenian culture and has influenced every type of Armenian folk music. It is also closely tied to the style of religious chanting, with cries directed to divine powers. The church has absorbed secular laments into its *sharakan* (liturgical hymns), which in their turn have influenced folk music. Both share similar qualities of speech and singing (chanting) together, a narrow vocal range, repetitiveness, sustaining a note for extended periods in a chant-like manner, and so on. The intonation of laments is born out of native conversational speech and poetic intonations.

Armenian Church *sharakan* are believed to have preserved oral folk and professional written music traditions of ancient Armenia. The key to the neumes of Armenian music notation has been lost, but church music has the potential to help to solve this as the music has stayed largely unchanged through centuries, according to the in-depth study on *sharakans*, (their origins, time of creation, authors, etc) by Nikoghos Taghmizian in his *Music Theory of Ancient Armenia*.¹¹⁶

Laments, or *voghb* and *lalik*, are specific types of ritual songs representing an interesting category in itself. As Kushnarev remarked, they are ancient and have survived despite all odds;

¹¹⁶ Nikoghos Taghmizian (1926–2011) was a musicologist and historian of ancient and medieval Armenian music and notation. Nikoghos Taghmizian, *Teoria muziki v drevnei Armenii* (Erevan: Izd. AN Arm. SSR, 1977).

thus they have remained as a genre.¹¹⁷ Laments were told/sung by either the grieving family or women paid to attend funerals. These lamenters can be said to be the “composers” of the songs. Even though not necessarily composed by musicians or poets, some laments are of great interest as they often include many details about heroes and famous people and can be of high artistic merit. Abeghian named the laments “crying verses” and found them to be the root of the ancient epic story-telling genre.¹¹⁸

In his lecture in Tbilisi (1906), classifying Armenian folk music, Komitas defined tragic laments and wailing songs for the dead as a large subcategory of ritual songs. There is also a genre of *lalik* (cries) similar to *voghb* (laments), which is classified as a separate branch or variety of songs but do not include laments. Brutian explains the difference:

Although *lalik* (cries) and *voghb* (laments) share the same birth roots, the “cries” are not laments and laments are not “cries.” They are two different genres in their denotation: in laments, the suffering and anguish are much deeper, fuller of pain, level of affliction much higher than in “cries.” Because of that, in contrast to laments which tell a story, (typically in a narrow vocal range), the “cries” are melodic—its melodic line developing in a calmer manner within a relatively large vocal range.¹¹⁹

However, with all the classifications in folk music, the process remains subjective, as many types can be found under different categories and genres. *Lalik* can be part of ritual songs—for example, a bride’s *lalik*, an important ritual in every wedding where the bride, bridesmaids, and mother of the bride cry about “losing” their daughter or about the difficulties that lie ahead of her. *Lalik* can also be considered a lyrical song, such as for seeing off young men to war or depicting love.

¹¹⁷ Kushnarev, *Voprosy istorii i teorii armianskoi monodicheskoi muzyki*, 34.

¹¹⁸ Manuk Abeghian, *Hayots hin grakanutsian patmutsiun: I hator* (History of ancient Armenian literature) (Erevan: HSSH GA, 1944), 185.

¹¹⁹ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 163.

In the handwritten working papers of Tumanian, the opening Prologue of the Eve of Ascension was included in Canto the Second, immediately preceding the Hambartsum celebrations. Canto the Second consisted of “The Night before Hambartsum” followed by “Morning of Hambartsum.” Later, submitting the poem for publication, Tumanian completely separated the sections and made “The Night before Hambartsum” into a prologue.

To understand why Tumanian chose to have a lament of fairies as a prologue, we look at what kind of lament it presents. We read, “Ekek, jahel sirahari / Sere voghbank vaghamer.” (Come, let us mourn the untimely death / Of the young maiden’s impassioned love). The text is a call to lament the death of love, life, and the unfulfilled dreams of the young couple. We are summoned to *voghbanq* (lament) from the very first lines of the poem.

In studying the earlier editions, as well as scholarly analyses of the materials pertaining to the poem, a clear fact emerges—namely, that anything weakening the tragic lamenting tone was removed by the poet from the new edition of *Anush*. For example, the song previously mentioned, “Ax inch lav en sari vra,” was originally intended to be a continuation of the song sung by Anush and the young maidens at the spring, “Ampi takits jure gali” (From under the clouds water is coming). The above-mentioned song discontinues the lamenting tone and instead portrays an idyllic and calm background.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Jrbashian, *Tumaniani poemnere*, 192.

Fairies' Lament

In *Tumanian's World*, Hakhverdian identifies an important reason for the poet's choice of a fairies' lament. He believes that the prologue carries the poetic soul and the emotional tone for the rest of the poem, thus raising the love of the young couple to a higher level of mystical power. The poet thinks of love as a force that brings man closer to the infinite mystery of life and that the lovers are honored with sympathy from the fairies.

The opening lament of the poem *Anush* is similar in style to the Greek tragedies, where the chorus sets the mood in preparation for the tragedy that will ensue. "By announcing a tragic outcome in the Prologue, the poet—like the ancient Greek tragedians—denies the enticing storyline," observes Hakhverdian.¹²¹ The prologue's opening with singing fairies—the mystical animation of nature in the form of spirits and the like—is also deeply rooted in ancient tragedy.

Abeghian details the meaning and power of spirits in people's beliefs. Through his studies of thousands of folk tales and proverbs, he found descriptions of physical attributes of fairies to be a common element. Fairies were described as beautiful maidens with long, golden hair and blue eyes. They lived in the water element but could also be seen in the mountains, green forests, and blossoming fields. Thus, often it was believed that *hoviv* (shepherds) would see them while tending their sheep and try to pursue them. But, with the first rays of moonlight, the fairies would leave their springs and appear as brides, coming out in large numbers; their

¹²¹ Hakhverdian, *Mir Tumaniana*, 151.

breath left dew on the greenery of nature.¹²² The common presence of those beliefs in ancient Greek and Armenian folklore reveals strong ties to Hellenistic culture.¹²³

Brutian points out several attributes common to most Armenian laments: (1) repetition of similar sounds; (2) use of auxiliary exclamation (interjection words such as *alas* and *woe*); (3) description, mostly praising the qualities of the person lamented upon; (4) dreams and desires of the deceased; (5) repetitiveness of rhymes that create a meditative, trance-like quality, permeating the laments; and (6) typically starting the laments with story-telling intonations that evolve into a song, which as it progresses grows more emotionally heated with cries, wailings, and moans.¹²⁴

As a whole, the prologue might be seen as fitting the form of “telling” the laments as described by Brutian. The lament’s structure in the prologue is as follows: The fairies gather on the mountaintop at the fall of night, with “slender rays of the moon” and “the wing of the breeze.” They then call their sister fairies to join in and “mourn the untimely death of Saro and Anush.” Then they sing of Anush, who followed all the rituals so that the stars “may smile kindly upon her lover.” They tell us of her dreams and wishes. They tell us of her youth and beauty, “your soft and dainty form . . . your deep, thoughtful eyes!” They praise Saro “woe, the brave one.”

¹²² Abeghian, *Erker. E*, 84-85.

¹²³ A work by Arakelian supports the idea of Hellenistic influence on every aspect of culture in ancient Armenia starting from the third century BC through the third century AC. Babken Arakelian, “Hellenistakan ughutsian dzevavorume hin haikakan mshakuitum” (The formation of the Hellenistic inclination in the old Armenian culture). *Patma-banasirakan handes*, #2. (1995): 177-182. Also Grikor Lusavorich (St. Gregory the Illuminator, ca. 257–ca. 331)—the founder of an Armenian Apostolic church—had a Greek education.

¹²⁴ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 149-155.

The mournful section follows the traditional manner of repeating the auxiliary words in a steady, repetitive rhythm. In a way, it emulates some ancient Greek laments that consistently used anaphora for emphasis and emotional accentuation:

Apsos ¹²⁵ , Anush, sari tsaghik,	Woe to you, Anush, O mountain flower,
Apsos igit ku yarin.	Woe to your valorous lover, too!
Apsos boyid telik-melik,	Woe to your soft and dainty form,
Apsos ed tsov achqerin...	Woe to your deep, thoughtful eyes!

Komitas insisted that the most expressive parts of the songs are exclamations on prolonged vowels and diphthong sounds, and short interjections. They carry enormous emotional and notional range, expressing rage and laughter, encouragement and jubilation.¹²⁶ As the fairies sympathize with Anush's lot with heartfelt woe, their feelings become stronger with more emotional cries and tears. They cry, "their hearts and eyes, / overflowing with tearful dew," and "Thus did the fairies mournfully / Sing away right through the night."

In parallel with Brutian's description of laments getting stronger and emotions rawer, the seventh quatrain in the poem culminates with "woes" repeating nearly after each word:

Vush-vush, Anush, vush-vush, kurik,	Woe Anush, woe sister, woe,
Vush ku serin, ku yarin...	Woe to your love, woe to him!
Vush-vush, Saro, vush-vush, igit	Woe Saro, woe brave one, woe,
Vush ku sirac sarerin...	Woe to the mountains you love!

This same quatrain reappears once again at the very end of the poem when the desperate Anush kills herself.

Because the Armenian word *vush* (or the verbal form *vshvshal*) has a double meaning of burbling sounds of water and wind, it leads some to interpret the auxiliary word as word painting of the river sounds—*vush-vush*, or that of a wind or breeze. In Hrachya Acharian's Հայկերէն

¹²⁵ The word *apsos* directly translates as an exclamation of pity but I have used the poetic form used by Kudian. He uses the same "woe to you" in both stanzas, whereas in Armenian it is "apsos" and in the last stanza it is "vush."

¹²⁶ Alexander Shahverdian, *Komitas* (Erevan: AGI, 1956), 162.

Գաղաճառական Բանասիրական (Armenian provincial dictionary),¹²⁷ this interpretation of the word is explained as colloquial dialect from Lori (likely because the author assumed that Tumanian would use a dialect from his native region). But in 1917, Tumanian wrote about the poem's dialect: "Some assume that if the subject matter was taken from Lori, or if I use this or that form, it means that I am using Lori dialect. Regarding the subject, as well as the language, I consider myself free to use from any resource I choose. Lori's *vush-vush* is not a burble of a river but an exclamation of pity."¹²⁸ That he clarifies the meaning of *vush-vush* in a note, strengthens Tumanian's argument that *vush* is an "apsosanki batsakanchutyun" (an exclamation of soulful sympathy and pity), such as those found in a lament.

The person grieved for was often portrayed as pure, beautiful, and—if the deceased was male—strong and brave. About Anush we read descriptive words such as *sari tsaghik*, *boyid telik-melik*, *cov achker* (mountain flower, of soft and dainty form, deep eyes). Young Saro is called *igit* (the brave one).

The repetition of words, especially of auxiliary words such as *vush*, *vay* (which are different manifestations of the word "woe"), and the repetitive rhyming and similarity of sound create the underlying quality of the fairies' lament. The words *apsos* (woe or pity) and *vush-vush* are repeated many times, to emphasize their importance through elongation and accent marks, which dominate the four-line stanzas of the lament. Similar meditative sounds are enforced by the rhyming of *vush-vush* with *Anush*.¹²⁹

The lament of fairies acts as an opening prologue in the common tradition of lamentations in classic tragedies. The use of a chorus, especially one sung by mystical creatures

¹²⁷ Hrachya Acharian, *Hayeren gavarakan bararan*, Tiflis: Lazarian Tchemaran, 1913.

¹²⁸ Ghazarian, "*Anushi*" *steghtsagortsakan patmutiune*, 78.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

such as nymphs, pursues a specific goal to announce the ensuing tragedy, combining the beliefs in supernatural and fateful occurrences. Especially relevant to Tumanian's work are the ideals of Wagner's *Gesamkunstwerk* and the unification of arts through theater drama. In his essay "Die Kunst und die Revolution," (1849) Wagner uses the term *Gesamkunstwerk* in connection with Greek tragedies as a work of art that is an expression of a folk legend abstracted from its nationalistic roots to a universal humanist fable¹³⁰—a fitting epithet for Tumanian's *Anush*.

¹³⁰ Richard Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future, and Other Works* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 33-59.

The lament of Saro's mother

Canto the Fifth is the poem's most heartbreaking scene. The death of Saro becomes the climax of the tragedy and is painted by Tumanian in darkest colors. The scene of village people in the moment of grief envelops the reader. A sudden, shocking silence follows the screams and cries of the running crowd. Solely, the river Debed "sings" its muted lament:

Like the sudden surging of a deluge,
Descended from the dark clouds in the sky,
Like a tempest, impetuous and swift,
A group of youth from the village sped forth.
Inflamed by grief, they no longer questioned,
And flew away as if pursued by fear:
And before them opened out horribly
The swishing valley filled with blood.
The village emptied in but a moment
And, impatiently waiting on the cliff edge,
They listened silently, with throbbing hearts;
They looked below...there was not a sound:
The roused Debed alone in the precipice
Glided downwards with a muted lament.

The lament of Saro's mother loosely fits what ethnomusicologists categorize as a funeral lament. It brings forth the heartbreaking wailings of a mother over the corpse of her son. The true force of the tragedy of the grieving mother is revealed as the poem grows darker in colors laden with cries and curses:

Menak mi hogi anzusp kataghats
Haray e kanchum, erese pokum.
Merac chobani parav nann e na
tsavits khelagar barachum, lalis.

Except for one, who immeasurably enraged,
Tore at her cheeks and wailed with woe.
It was the dead shepherd's aged mother,
Who, mad with anguish, bellowed and wept.

Traditionally, village women always joined the lamenting, adding their cries and wailings to that of the family in genuine sympathy and understanding of the mother's pain. Tumanian

undoubtedly knew the ways in which *sgavor kanaik* (mourning women) behaved and how they wailed at funerals:

Segavor kanaik nera etevits
Haray kanchelov dzore vazetsin,

Women in mourning, with their wails of lament,
Went running to the valley after her,

Igitin vayel sertaruch voghbov
Lats u kots arin jen jeni tvats.

With worthy, tender laments for the brave youth
They wept and wailed, their voices united.

Dzen in Armenian means voice or sound (in some instances it can mean a melody). *Lats u kots* (cries and screams) and *dzen dzeni tvats* (voice with voice called out) are idiomatic expressions for wailing women crying in one voice. M. Abeghian gives this description of ancient funeral rituals: “Lamenting women were called *dzainarku* [the women who would call out loudly after the lamenting mother, calling in one voice, often repeating her words, from the word *dzen*/voice], to cry out loudly for the deceased. Men as well as women participated in funeral processions crying, singing, playing [instruments], clapping, dancing, and strutting right at the front.”¹³¹

Interestingly, the poem *Anush* does have a scene of a funeral procession with rituals similar to Abeghian’s description of ancient funeral rites. The “funeral” takes place in an earlier episode, before Saro has been murdered (in episode XX). It is seen in a dream by Manishak, a village woman. She is deeply disturbed by her dream and goes to the fortune teller Vartishakh¹³² to have it interpreted:

I saw a vision in my dream last night!
It was in a dark and narrow valley,
And unlucky Saro’s sheep were standing there,
They could all speak and were singing songs,
And they were all singing together...

¹³¹ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 150. She is quoting Manuk Abeghian, *Hayots hin grakanutsian patmutsiun* (Erevan: HSSH GA, 1944), 185.

¹³² Armenian female names. Often, the root of the name is taken from the name of a flower with the addition of a suffix.

The dumb lambs in the dark valley
Were singing away and weeping aloud,
Whilst Saro's mother before them all,
With kerchief in hand, was dancing away...

Vardishakh interprets the dream as a bad omen, with its obvious description of a funeral procession. The singing of the sheep is depicted in laments of wailing women; the dancing is the grotesque, uncontrolled behavior that provides an outlet for the extreme sorrow of the mother. With an *aghlukh* (a white kerchief) at the front of the line of sheep, the mother becomes the leader of the dance.

Lisitsian, describing the funeral and lament-commemorative dances, explains that along with many other nations (funeral rituals have a long history of honoring the dead) Armenians lamented the dead with song and dance. The dancing at funerals has been lost (partly because the Church has been a strong opponent of dancing, excessive beating of oneself, and hysterical screaming), but singing and music have remained. Still, according to Lisitsian, many of the funeral dances did not disappear but rather were transformed into regular dance types, even into those used for joyous events.¹³³

Why does Tumanian bring attention to Manishak's funeral dream before the actual event? And why such grotesque images of a dancing mother surrounded by singing/lamenting sheep? Although a majority of scholars tend to believe that Tumanian considered those beliefs as vestiges of a brute, uneducated population, such warm and detailed accounts of rituals and beliefs in the poem make one think of a rather loving and sympathetic poet (with both positive and negative elements).

¹³³ Lisitsian, *Armianskie starinnie pliaski*, 80-2.

One of the most important characteristics of the lament is the praising of the deceased's deeds and the description of life without that person for the grieving family and friends:

Women in mourning, with their wails of lament...
They stood round the body in a circle.
With worthy, tender laments for the brave youth,
They wept and wailed, their voices united...

They remembered the friends who called out to Saro...
And his dogs that, escaping from the mountains,
Would yelp and howl mournfully from the roofs;
And his heavy crook, with its studded knob,
That would grow sooty among the ceiling beams...
How his mother, used to the cool mountains,
Would no longer go without Saro there,
But dressed in black, she would sit at home
And recall in her mind those bygone days!

Komitas suggested in correspondence with Tumanian that “*kanants kotse pakas e*” (There is not enough of women's cries and wailing). Interestingly, it is the *kots* (cries) of *other* women that Komitas suggests are not enough. The word *kots* in Armenian denotes a specific shade of highly emotional cries and wailing and is usually used in combination with the word *lats* (cry). The wailing women would intentionally add the *kots* so that all gathered at the funeral would feel great sorrow and grief.¹³⁴

Sgavor kanayk nra etevits
Haray kanchelov dzore vazetsin,
Irents kortsratsn el hishelov norits
Diaki shurj kargov sharvetsin.
Igitin vayel srtaruch voghbov
Lats u kots aresin jen jeni tvac

Women in mourning, with their wails of lament,
Went running to the valley after her,
Recalling anew their own lost ones also,
They stood round the body in a circle.
With worthy, tender laments for the brave youth,
They **wept and wailed**, their voices united.

These cries of women add to the mother's enraged grief even more:

¹³⁴ Lisitsian, in her historical analysis of *sgo parer* (mourning dances), pays particular attention to the semantics associated with the words used in laments. As an example, she shows that the word *kots* besides meaning “to cry,” has a sense of “movement in it” as in crying, beating themselves in the chest, head, knees, pulling the hair, and putting ashes on themselves (a tradition that remained strong among neighboring Kurds). In short, *kots*-lament implies an action along with the cries. Lisitsian, *Armianskie starinnie pliaski*, 81, note 43.

And every word, every recollection,
The aged mother's heart tore to shreds;
And she pleaded for her dead son to speak
But once, to open his eyes for her...

And in her fury, with daring curses,
She reared up against the hostile heaven,
And, swearing the while, she pounded her breast;
And they all wailed together as they wept...

Saro's mother's lament is in a style of quasi-singing, intoning cry-songs sung at funerals.

Tumanian borrows the lament from a folk song called *Voghb mankan vra* (Lamentation for the child), which is from a folk collection of *Sgo erger* (Mourning songs) that amplify the true sorrow of a mother—any mother—losing a child.¹³⁵ The author leaves the words of the original song almost unchanged:

¹³⁵ Ghazarian, “*Anushi*” *steghtsagortsakan patmutiune*, 71.

Folk song, “Voghb mankan vra”:

*Karmir arevits enkats, bala jan,
Kananch terevits enkats, bala jan,
Terevatapotsits tapaharvats, bala jan,
Jreri het tarvats, bala jan.*

*Fallen from the red sun, dearest child
Fallen from the green leaves, dearest child
Shaken from a tree as a fallen leaf, dear child
Taken by the waters, dear child.*

Mother’s lament from *Anush*:

*Karmir arevits enkats, Saro jan,
Kananch terevits enkats, Saro jan,
Arevs hangav, Saro jan,
Gishers enkav, Saro jan.*

*Fallen from the red sun, dearest Saro,
Fallen from the green leaves, dearest Saro,
My sun has gone down, oh dearest Saro,
Night has fallen for me, dearest Saro...!*

Tumanian only replaces *bala* (a colloquial endearing form of “child”) with *Saro*. The folk song keeps the rhyme consistent while Tumanian changes it to shorter and quicker syllables. The mother’s words, *Gishers enkav* (The night has fallen for me), are emulated by nature: “Then the night fell, the darkness grew deeper, / And the melancholy voices grew faint, / Wearied and died away.” The style and words of the lament are similar to the ancient Greek laments. One example is a dirge of Dianteia for her son Hysminias: “I had my child as the sun, and now that my child is obscured, I his mother, am without sun. My child was a bright star, but now he is hidden, and the gloom of night has enshrouded me, his mother. My child was light to me, but he is quenched, and now I walk in darkness.”¹³⁶

The last sections of the poem make clear that *Saro*, even though he is loved by all, is not given a proper burial because he broke the centuries-old traditions. He is buried on the banks of a valley in a hurriedly made grave, left unmarked and nameless. No proper Christian burial rites were observed (time wise), no church’s blessings of his soul were made, and the burial was done without the important use of incense for sending a soul to another world. But Tumanian, who

¹³⁶ Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament In Greek Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 188.

was a great humanitarian in his heart, “gives” Saro the proper farewell: “flowers and trees . . . breathed forth sweet incense,” and the old river Debet “sang Noble hymns.”

The river Debed bids its goodbye as it sings the *sharakan* (hymn):

The aged Debed
Alone now mourned in the dark abyss.
The aged Debet,
The mourning stream,
With its heart rent,
Its waters afroth,
Still lashes away
Its stony banks,
Its steep rocks
As it laments...

The flowers and trees, as they rustled,
Breathed forth sweet incense-like scent;
Whilst the aged Debed sang
Noble hymns in a stentorian voice.

Bringing in a new character, Saro’s mother, only for the funeral lament and dream of a funeral, Tumanian expanded the tragedy to universal dimensions, as the lamenting women, especially members of the family in funeral processions, were an important part of tragic laments.

Anush’s lament

Canto the Sixth shows Anush’s madness through her songs. Hakhverdian, in *Tumanian’s World*, calls Anush a heroic image similar to Shakespeare’s Desdemona or Juliet, who for the sake of love go against their families. He continues, “The young woman of the Armenian

mountains extends her hand to Shakespearean heroines. This way, Tumanian, by his assertion of freedom of love, extends his hand to his favorite poet.”¹³⁷

Anush’s madness, along with laments of lost love and consequent suicide by drowning, parallels the fate of Shakespeare’s Ophelia. Both works represent a universal depiction of tragedy—a trajectory of love, family betrayal, shame, abandonment, and death expressed in their songs. The complexity of the drama derives from the family’s involvement in murder, with no solution available for a woman torn between her honor and obligations to family versus her love for a man. In Shakespeare, Hamlet kills Ophelia’s father, Polonius, which prompts her brother Laertes to avenge their father’s death. In Tumanian, Anush’s brother Mosi avenges his own dishonor by killing Saro. Anush and Ophelia share the same pain of abandonment by a lover, family, and society. The only way each heroine expresses her heart’s sorrow is through song-laments, which, in turn, cast them as insane further on in the eyes of society.

Many studies have discussed Ophelia’s songs; their meaning, style, and root. The studies of Ophelia’s mad songs act as a vehicle to understand the “sane” Ophelia. Similarly, Anush’s personality and actions are openly exposed in the songs when she is no longer restrained to hide her feelings. Hakhverdian notes that each stanza in Tumanian’s poem resolves aesthetic or psychological problems. Their common purpose is to reveal Anush’s inner world.¹³⁸

In essence, Anush’s lament is a plea for her dead lover to return. It is a mosaic of “recapitulation” of events. She scolds Saro for not loving her enough and making her wait for him. She envisions a wedding with no groom or bride. She sees a funeral and begs those in the procession to take her along.

¹³⁷ Hakhverdian, *Mir Tumaniana*, 170.

¹³⁸ Ghazarian, “*Anushi*” *steghsagortsakan patmutiune*, 157.

Canto the Sixth opens with a stranger who encounters a wandering and distraught Anush asking her what is her sorrow. Tumanian uses the words of a folk song from a cycle of *Sgo erger* (Mourning songs):

- Ay, im kheghchaber xatun	Oh, unfortunate woman
Inch kulas khghchuk voromac	What do you seek so pitifully lost

The stranger asks Anush (*Anush*):

- Sirun aghchik, inch es lalis	Why are you crying, pretty maiden,
Edpes menak u molor?	Wandering thus all alone?

Tumanian's choice of a stranger to introduce Anush's madness is reminiscent of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Act 4, Scene 5), where a "gentleman"—a character previously not in the play—presents the now insane Ophelia. He says, "Her speech is nothing, yet the unshaped use of it doth move / The hearer to collection," thus directing the audience to pay attention to her songs. Both the stranger and the gentleman are sympathetic voices, not dismissive of the young women as simply insane but rather indicating that their songs have meaning to those to whom they are directed. Thus, the authors extend their understanding to their heroines, indicating sanity within their insanity. Anush is thankful for the sympathy of the stranger and reveals her understanding of her hopeless situation as she responds to him:

I thank you, oh passing friend,
May God preserve your love...
The Lord has given me tears,
And I will cry and cry...

Tumanian makes a powerful gesture by telling us what he thinks of her songs before he gives us her lament (the latter, just like all the songs in the poem, are written from a first-person perspective). He persistently tells of the songs that she sings in her madness—they are the "mournful songs"—thus connecting her love lament to Saro's very first song of love:

And she roams about,

Singing as she weeps.
Her disjointed *songs*, her *mournful songs*,
Flow away like so many tears, in vain;
Yet she weeps, *singing endless songs*
And ever uttering that senseless complaint:
As to how the whole universe had changed,
How life had grown devoid of everything;
How the mountains had turned into orphans,
How without a shepherd they were left now;
How he had suddenly gone far away,
Never to return, never to return...!

He calls her songs disjointed but tells us they clearly portray her as someone with a clear mind in stark contrast to her actual lament, which follows the author's words. Moreover, she basically laments as if at a funeral; there is a chanting calls to return, singing about the empty world without her beloved. Her first-person words of the song are diametrically opposite to the last statement, "never to return, never to return," with her call to Saro to come back: "Come back, my brave one!" In many ways, her lament is close to the *lalik* (cry) type of lyrical love song. The lines between insanity and lovesickness are often blurred as love is often described as "losing one's head."

Generally, the singing itself characterizes both heroines as insane. David Lindley considers the association with music in this particular period to be connected with "madness and melancholy—which it might express, incite, or cure," and suggests that Ophelia suffers from "love-sickness," or "erotomania," to which women were thought to be prone.¹³⁹ As for Anush, there is also the possible insinuation of such an understanding of her insanity as love-sickness. The stranger says to Anush, "Why do you in vain extinguish / The youthful light of your eyes? . . . Go, seek yourself another lover, / That is the law of the world."

¹³⁹ David Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music* (London: Thomson Learning, 2006), 158.

To a sympathetic reader, the reasons for insanity are more complex; the feelings of shame, love, and hate are all present in the songs. The parallel worlds of Ophelia and Anush intersect at a point of human tragedy. Certain lyrics of their songs bear a strong resemblance, revealing the general concept of similarity between tragedies:

Ophelia:

They bore him, are-faced, on the bier
And to his grave there rained many tears

Ophelia:

He is dead and gone, lady
He is dead and gone
At his head is grass-green turf
At his heels a stone.

Anush:

They are bringing him here,
In front of our house

A Stranger to Anush:

Oh, he has gone away, away...
Your slave you will not return.
Upon its bank the lonely grave
Of the brave youth has turned green.

Gentleman (*Hamlet*)

She speaks much of her father, says she hears
There's tricks i'th' world, and hems, and beats her
heart,
Spurns enviously at straws, speaks things in doubt
That carry but half sense.¹⁴⁰

Author (*Anush*)

Yet she weeps, singing endless songs
And ever uttering that senseless complaint:
As to how the whole universe had changed.

The structure of Anush's "madness" song is rhythmically and metrically fast paced. The change of mood and visions happen abruptly. Brutian explains the common characteristics of Armenian laments in this manner: "The lamenter, unstable from suffering, often expresses thoughts disconnected from each other, which tend to get exacerbated by expressions of sympathy from others, each one of them waking in a lamenter a new memory, which he starts to immediately tell."¹⁴¹ Anush's "madness" songs and Ophelia's seemingly incoherent thoughts are condensed snippets of intense emotions that brew in each woman's mind for a long time. In

¹⁴⁰ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.5.20.

¹⁴¹ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 151.

Anush, her songs are pleas for the return of her beloved. They come back with intermittent variations (with shifting metric rhythms and accents) throughout her song, interpolated between the mad visions that Anush tells to “others.”

Anush pleads for Saro to return, recalling the pleas of Saro’s mother begging him to open his eyes. Anush laments, “Come back, my brave one! / With endless waiting, / wearied are the eyes / Of the one you yearn.” Anush’s pleas turn into visions of Saro as she looks at the mountains. She sees the silhouette of her beloved, convinced he must be alive, resting in the meadows, drunk on the aromas of flowers. She continues as she tries to awaken him: “Arise, my brave one, / Bring your sheep in.”

A shift toward a hallucination-like vision happens in her mind when she thinks she sees a wedding with joyous music but with no bride or groom in sight:

Look, oh look, with tabor and drum,
What a wedding this will be!
People in a gay horse-contest,
Beating time, in rain and snow!
Oh what a vision is this I see!
Look, maidens! Look, Look!
Who has ever seen a wedding
With neither bridegroom nor bride...

“With tabor and drums, beating time, in rain and snow” is an ancient ritual of funeral processions. In Anush’s mind, the funeral and the wedding, become one.¹⁴² In the original Armenian form, this section is full of question marks, and because of the specific prosody of the Armenian language, it would be read with rising intonation. The question form creates a dialogue or, better said, a query that carries a feeling of guilt transference directed at others.

¹⁴² Lisitsian mentions the description of lamenters imitating the deceased by acting out their deeds, voice and so on accompanying the procession with clapping in a rhythmic manner.

In folk laments, the rhythm is often described as choppy and the meter as unstable and shifting, with repetition of common exclamations. A motive also might be incomplete, as it may be omitted at the beginning or end of the lament.¹⁴³ These rhythmic shifts and changes are present in Anush and tell us about her state of mind. Thus, the meter of Anush's lament is similar to that of folk laments in many ways—as, for example, the common iamb-anapest, 7-8 syllabic meter, is reversed to 8-7.¹⁴⁴ Every few lines or so, her thought is incomplete, with ellipses. An example of “breathlessness” in its speed (iambic one-line meter with ellipses) is a moment of seeing a funeral procession (the shortness and urgency in the original lost in its English version). The following lines are directed at the people in the procession, thus revealing another level of Anush's anxiety:

Berum en heren
Aman, mer tan dem...
Ver derek, veren
Hyuseres kandem...
Es el em galis,
Ed ur ek tanum...
Indz el taghetsek
Ir gerezmanum...

They are bringing him home
In front of our very house...
Put him down that I may
Loosen my hair over him...
Where are you taking him?
I am coming with you...!
Bury me, too, with him,
Together, in his grave...

She begs them to put Saro down so that she could loosen her hair over him, something that grieving women traditionally did over the corpse to say their farewells. A lamenting woman is likened to a mad one who would usually also have her hair undone—a familiar stereotype of an insane person.

This image is followed by a gruesome vision of the dead man:

They say, oh that is but a corpse,

¹⁴³ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 154.

¹⁴⁴ Ghazarian, “*Anoushi*” *steghsagorcakan patmutyune*, 72.

Silent and vile of odor...
The blood drained away from the face,
The eyes unblinking and blanched.

For others, Saro is dead and gone. He is silent, vile of odor, with unblinking and blanched eyes.

But for Anush, he is alive in her memory and her unfulfilled desires. She immediately counters what “they say” with:

He was handsome and of sweet fragrance,
His eyes were filled with laughter;
He would come with dew all over him,
Full of pleasantries and songs...

For the last section of the lament, Tumanian borrows a folk song from the *Harsanekan erger* (Wedding songs) cycle—a type that is sung by a bride, thus maintaining the image of young Anush as a bride. The bride’s song from the “Wedding songs” folklore collection is as follows:

Ari, tsov-tsov acher, zis mi latsener, Zis shat em latsoutsats, dun mi latsener ¹⁴⁵	Come, with eyes deep like a sea, Don’t make me cry, I have cried so much already, Don’t make me cry.
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Mad Anush (*Anush*):

Ari,jan igit, Ari, anirav, Karotats yarid Achke jur darav: El mi ushatsni, Es shat em spaselel, El mi latsatsni, Es shat em latsel...	Come, my brave one! With endless waiting, Wearied are the eyes Of the one you yearn. Do not be tardy, I have waited long; Do not make me cry, I have cried too much...
--	---

Even though the poem does not mention what really happens to Anush, the author gives

¹⁴⁵ “Արի, ծով-ծով աչեր, զիս մի լացըներ, / Զիս շատ է լացուցած, դուն մի լացըներ:” Ghazarian. “*Anushi*” *steghtsagorcakan patmutyune*, 72.

us the last “duel” of forces, which most likely is the battle in her mind. It is the sharp juxtaposition of two seemingly simultaneous calls of the river Debed to come with him to take her to her lover and her mother’s call to come home, thus placing the “lover” and “home” at the opposite ends of choice. It is a powerful choice of the author to repeat the word “come” and not to substitute it with something else. As such, it becomes a persistent, nagging thought that has to come to resolution:

The swollen stream rushes past,
Swishing with its fast currents;
And it calls out, ‘Come, Anush, come,
Let me take you to your lover!’
‘Anush, my child, Anush, come home...!’
Thus her mother keeps calling from above.

Anush’s lament, content- and mood wise, is a combination of a funeral lament, an ode-like lament, and a lyrical love song. According to the Armenian ethnomusicologists, all laments (sometimes also called *mahergs*, or dead-marches) share the same manner of free improvisation; they can change, shorten, elongate, and repeat the form of construction. Many lyrical love songs share the same improvisational and highly emotional forms of creation. Thus, the songs that are most emotional do not follow a specific restricted form but rather give the performer freedom of expression.

Anush’s lament is the young woman’s reaction of grief over the death of her beloved in the manner of a family member—something that was denied to her as Saro’s death was blamed on her. Usually, the closest female family members, such as wives, mothers, and sisters, would use laments as a way to express their sorrow.¹⁴⁶ The lament, in its deeply touching sadness, also is a love song for her beloved. Tumanian opens the poem with the love song of Saro toward Anush and closes it with a love song of Anush to Saro.

¹⁴⁶ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 149.

Lyrical Songs

Saro's song "Aghchi, anastvats" (O, Godless maiden)

Armenian lyrical folk songs comprise the largest, most developed musical form of the culture. Kushnarev distinguishes the lyrical quality of peasant music as “pure” and “condensed” in its quality of expressing thoughts and feelings. He refers to the folk lyrical arts as deeply personal and void of excessive emotions, expressed instead with laconic definitions of mood and image.¹⁴⁷ Lyrical songs in *Anush* are closely related to the genre of *laliks* (cries), which are often called “love *laliks*” because of their pervasive sad tone. Brutian differentiates the *laliks* from *voghbs* (laments) by the level of expression of sorrow and suffering. The latter is associated with true tragedies such as death, funeral laments, and so on. *The laliks* are more of a complaining tearful song style and represent a rather small part of lyrical songs that boast a variety of moods. Because of the ensuing tragedy in *Anush*, every song and event has an element of preparation for the characters’ downfall. Saro’s serenade is not simply a love song; it is a premonition, a drama within a drama.

In an essay, Komitas explained three major styles of singing by peasants: (1) *bar asel* (to intone), (2) *khagh asel* (to sing), and (3) *khagh kanchel* (to chant). He clarified the latter type further on: *kanchel* implies a high-voiced, embellished, stylized manner of singing, with ornate flourishes mostly in solos. Often, the ashug’s highly melismatic, high-voiced, quasi-chanted

¹⁴⁷ Kushnarev, *Voprosy istorii i teorii armjanskoj monodicheskoj muzyki*, 166.

singing might be called *khagh kanchel*.¹⁴⁸ In *Anush*, the “shepherd calling” refers to Saro singing of his love of Anush. His love-song is a type of popular song of a lyrical nature.

In a seamless manner, Tumanian effortlessly removes his presence from the poem using a cinematographic-like effect of zooming in from an image of nature to the young *hoviv* singing: “And upon the fresh, dewy mountain slopes . . . Hush! Harken! The shepherd is calling.” So, Tumanian interrupts his own “song” to give the first words to Saro; the young lad in love. All operatic, theater, and movie productions of *Anush* show this scene as Saro coming down from the mountain singing aloud, and Anush, with her mother in their hut, hearing and responding to the song. Anush says: “Oh, who was it, *nanni*, that was calling us? / Can you not hear...? Listen, there it is!” We first meet Saro through his lyrical song, in which he refers to himself as an *ashug* “Ashugh es shinel, chem hangestanum, Khagher kapelov” (You have made me a minstrel and I cannot rest: / Weaving my songs). Recalling the root of the word *ashug*—“the one who is in love”— identifies Saro as a lover distanced from his beloved.

He is a simple young lad tending his sheep in the mountains; yet almost all images of Saro are connected with music—singing, dancing, and playing the *shvi* (pipe). Our first acquaintance with Anush is through Saro’s serenade as well. We see an image of female beauty from the mountains of Lori. The serenade is full of folkloristic epithets like *kamar unker* (arched brows) and common expressions of beauty such as *sev, tsov achker* (black, deep eyes). The shepherd sings,

Oh, mountain maiden,
You, beautiful maiden,
Oh, your rosy cheeks,

¹⁴⁸ Komitas, *Komitas: Essays and Articles*, 103. The literal translation of A) *bar asel* is “to say a word,” to intone, or to recite. B) *khagh asel* is “to say in a playful manner,” to sing in stylized and elaborate manner; and C) *khagh kanchel* is “to call in playful manner,” that is to chant in an embellished manner. It also means singing with a high voice, mostly in solo music.

You, dark-haired Anush!

With eyes so black
And so profound,
And brows well arched!

Saro's song and Anush's emotional response to it show us her character—one of the few instances where we can imagine what she is like. Basically, Saro's song can be said to be Anush's introductory portrait, which never really is or needs to be developed. In three verses of the song, the author—without extraneous methods but by simple folk-like lyrical song—fully reveals to us her fragile beauty and soul. Along with it we read, “Oh, you have scorched my heart with your love, / And have bound my feet with your loose hair,” which opens to us another side of Anush—the audacious woman who has the will to go against the traditions to “announce” her love to a man. In their secret meeting she tells Saro, “You do not love me, in the way I love you.” This was rather unusual and daring behavior in a society where the modesty of a woman is guarded and expressions of passion are unwelcomed.

The subject of unhappy love is common in folk songs and can be broken down into two major categories. The first is “unreciprocated love” while the second type is reciprocated but problems the couples encounter are the obstacles often associated with marriage prospects because of social and family conflicts. The most common reproach in such conflicts was toward those young people who dared to break social customs by meeting each other before the wedding. As a punishment for breaking such customs, quite often, the parents would forbid the couple to marry.¹⁴⁹ Possibly, the parental disapproval might have been the cause of Saro's and Anush's anxiety. Saro sings,

I will steal you away...

¹⁴⁹ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 225.

If your parents will not give you to me,
I will shed blood like a river;
I will take to the mountains and vanish.

The tragic tone of the song portrays the fate of the young couple that will ensue. Anush's family will forbid her from seeing Saro, and the young couple will elope in a manner that is commonly called "stealing away the bride." Saro will hide in the mountains, and Mosi will shed Saro's blood. Among Armenian peasants, singing what is on one's mind was an acceptable form of communication while the direct expression of emotions in conversation was not. Lyrical songs in *Anush*, born of folk music, carry a special meaning to the person they are directed to. Saro's song lets his beloved know how he feels as young lovers oftentimes did not have an opportunity to meet with their beloved in private. It also provides a background regarding what has taken place before the first scenes.

The first words of the song—"O Godless maiden, sit inside your tent, / Why do you come out to drive me insane? You have made me a minstrel and I cannot rest"—reveal Saro's distressed psychological state. He desires to see Anush but tells her to stay at home because seeing her makes him crazy. The fateful line comes true as seeing Anush during the wedding ceremony makes Saro momentarily lose his sanity and break the age-old rule of conduct in a wrestling match: "Saro spotted her standing there thus . . . And his heart throbbed and beat faster: / His eyes became shrouded in a mist, / He forgot friends, customs, and the world."

Tumanian, without any direct description, shows us Saro's nature by references to music. This portrait of a person in love, a joyful and social personality who loves to sing, dance, and play his *shvi* (pipe), is tinted with dark premonitions of a broken heart—one reason he compares himself to an ashug. By becoming an ashug, he cannot be anything else; his sheep are left unattended, his heart scorched with love, his "feet bound by her loose hair." All he can do is

sing. A reference to ashugs implies a lost sense of home and comfort. Later, Saro is forced to flee to the mountains as a recluse—a severe punishment for breaking with tradition. Saro’s serenade is a prism of his personality. We imagine a young and reckless *igit* (brave one) who boasts to “take her away if her mother and father do not agree” to the marriage.

The powerful image of Saro associated with music grows stronger after Anush’s realization at the end of the poem that he is dead and gone forever. Even though she had scolded him for his songs, in her memory Saro was full of songs, humor and *khagher* (ditties of jocular nature). In Canto the Sixth, a delirious Anush, realizing that Saro is forever gone, remembers him as full of music, singing and dancing ditties, which is in stark contrast to the images of the decaying corpse: “He was handsome and of sweet fragrance . . . Full of pleasantries and songs.” So, Tumanian indirectly referencing Saro’s first serenade reminds us of Saro’s personality—a young *igit* in love, full of songs in his heart.

Bryusov has remarked that the texts of Armenian lyrical songs are particularly abundant with “refined expressions” and “sharp epithets” that carry deep meaning. Many exclamations common to *lalik*-like (cry) songs appear as well. For example, *ay aghchi* (oh girl) and *ay* (oh) are repeated five times in short syllabic lines at a tighter, faster pace. As Brutian notes, in folk music these expressions and exclamations (Kushnariiev calls them “call” words) act to deepen the meaning of songs, making their characters memorable and salient, expressive, and emotional.¹⁵⁰ Saro’s song is an emotional appeal to Anush with the intention of coercing her into a meeting. It has the desired effect and she burns with longing to see him: “Thus sang Saro, and the maiden could not / Settle down peacefully inside the tent (home).” Not only does his singing make her restless, but it also spurs her to respond with her own need to sing. She tells her *nani* (mother):

¹⁵⁰ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 224.

“See how thickly the green sorrel has grown! / Let me go and pick some to weave into plaits, / And sing The Destiny Song over there!” Saro’s song, with its tragic undertones, and her need to sing underscore the emotions of young lovers—their happiness and exaltation in love, overcast with sadness and anxiety about the unknown. Anush confesses to her mother in a soliloquy-like moment: “Oh, I know not, why my heart now weeps, having turned sullen and sad, / And now takes wing, anxious to fly away.”

The *ciaroscuro* of Saro’s song arouses conflicting emotions in her—the praise of her beauty along with the images of blood that will be shed. Anush’s response to Saro’s song reveals her rather melancholic personality. She seems to believe that her life is predestined. For Anush, a loving person is the one who suffers as an ultimate proof of love. She compares herself to the *ureni* (willow) tree, which according to a legend was a young maiden in love who turned into a tree and withered away from waiting for her beloved. At their long-awaited meeting, she scolds Saro, “You do not love me in the way I love you; I am the only one who suffers and weeps, whereas you sing songs on the mountain slopes!” He replies to the accusation, “Oh, Anush, Anush, what is that you say . . . ? Can you not hear then . . . That when on the mountains I sing, to whom it is I speak . . . ? When by night I play my flute, whom it is I call?” He affirms his love to her by saying that all the music and songs are born of his love for her. Saro’s song gives the reader the immediate impression of his and Anush’s personalities. He is joyous and sings ditties all day long while Anush is melancholic and believes every dark premonition and sign that comes her way.

Saro’s lyrical song presents us with the characters of both Saro and Anush—it tells us of their mutual love and functions as the nucleus of the story. Furthermore, choosing a folk song

with hints of ashug style and personification, the author is able to connect the reader to the protagonists' inner most emotions.

Bardzr sarer

Saro's second lyrical lament, *Bardzr sarer* in Canto the Fourth (episode XXI), Tumanian calls a *bayati*: "Nra bayatin voghbum e tkhur, / Enker sarerin xosum, gangatvum" (And it is a sad lament that he sings, / he talks to his friends the mountains, and grumbles). This song could be classified as a lament, but because categories of folk music are often mutually inclusive, the lyrical nature of this song encompasses a lament of lost love and ensuing death, and a lament in *antuni* style (without a home, friends, and family). Shahverdian writes, "The afflicted song, a fugitive's monologue in the mountains, characteristic of national elegies (*bayati*) is a particular type of folk song, known as *antuni*."¹⁵¹ Laments were often called *bayati*,¹⁵² said to be derived from the word *beyt* (couplet), which might also be doubled as a quatrain, or sextet, and so on. Saro's *bayati* consists of four quatrains. By Tumanian specifically calling it *bayati*, we are directed toward one of its meanings as a "lament over the deceased." In a way, Saro is singing his farewell song which explains his seemingly intentional return from his hiding and into plain sight: "And when evening falls, silent and serene, / He descends from the mountains."

As with almost all of the songs in the poem, Saro's song proves to be fateful: "upon your valleys . . . I want to disappear without a trace . . . Let me disappear, in your stony wilderness." Saro will be murdered in the mountains, his lonely, unmarked grave soon disappearing under

¹⁵¹ Tigranian, *Hodvacner, namakner, husher*, 189. From an article by A. Shahverdian in *Sovetskaia muzika*, 1950, #4.

¹⁵² Two Armenian dictionaries define the word *bayati* as "sad melody of eastern origin (from Persian-Arabic *beyt*)."
Bayati asel, atsel (to say or to "pour" *bayati*) means to loudly cry and lament. Stepan Malchasians, ed., *Hayeren batsatrakan bararan* (Erevan: Hay SSR Pet. Hrat, 1944) and Eduard Aghaian, ed., *Ardi hayereni batsatrakan bararan* (Erevan: Hayastan Hrat, 1968).

overgrown grass on a river bank. Saro also understands what will happen to Anush: “Oh, I would die: but were she / To hear of it suddenly, / Though I were freed from the torment, / She would be left with tearful eyes.” Upon hearing the news of his death, Anush suffers an intense psychological shock that “bring tears” that would never end for her. Saro tells the mountains that though he will be freed from the torment, the suffering of his beloved Anush will have just begun.

This lament is significant on many levels—it is Saro’s last song, his last words, and it reveals a level of desperation not evident in his character before. His previous joyousness, his readiness to conquer the world for Anush, has weakened as he understands the danger to which Anush is exposed. Tumanian opens the *bayati* with the following:

And in the mountains Saro roams about
Like a deer in flight, between evils caught:
Pending death ahead, a bullet behind;
The pastures, a hell; his companion, the foe!

He is not the brave *igit* anymore but rather “a deer in flight,” which runs parallel with an earlier episode where Anush is likened to a roe:¹⁵³ “From under the feathery clouds emerged / Anush, like a roe in flight.” At his most desperate, Saro still sings of his sorrows as the only way to cope with his suffering.

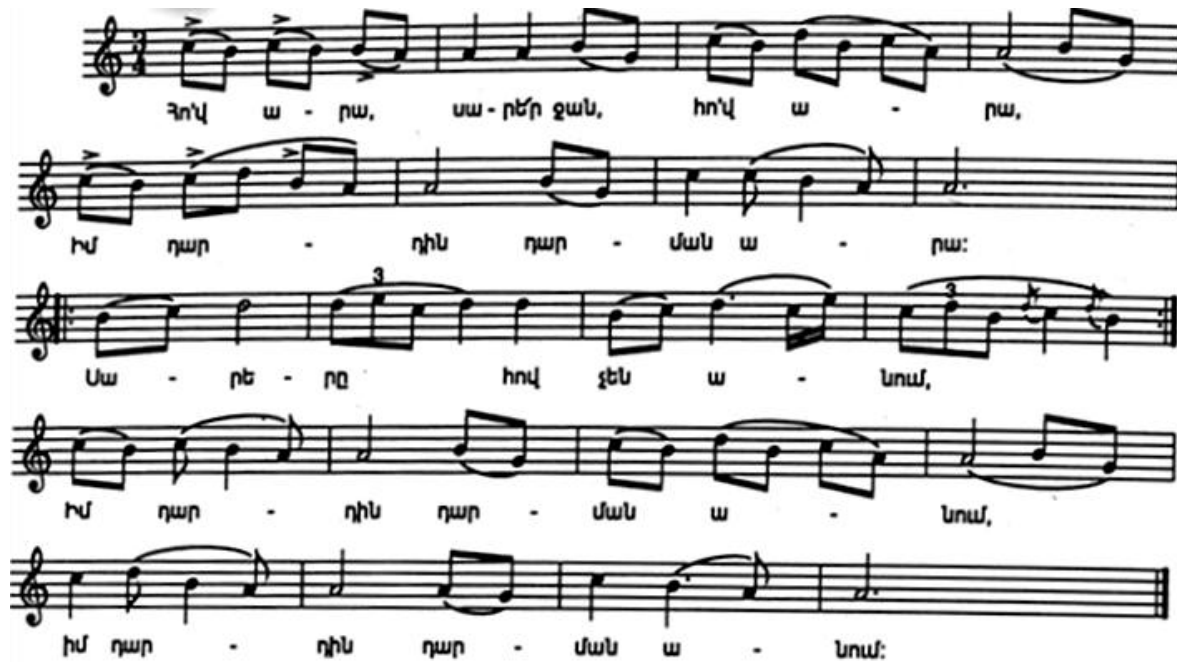
Lalik-type cry-songs of a similar nature, directed at the mountains, are common to Armenian folk songs with their anthropomorphizing of nature and mountains as a “home” that remedies the heart’s illnesses. An example is a folk song in a collection by Komitas, *Hov ara, sarer jan* (Cool me with breeze, dear mountains).¹⁵⁴ The singer asks the mountains to cool his

¹⁵³ A small type of deer found in Europe and Asia.

¹⁵⁴ Komitas, *Komitas: erkeri zhoghovatsu* (Komitas: collection of works), ed. Robert Ataian (Erevan: Hayastan, 1969), vol. 3, 152-157.

heart with a breeze to cure it of sorrow, but there is no breeze at the mountains to remedy his heart.

Example 2 Folk song *Hov ara, sarer jan* (Cool me with breeze, dear mountains)¹⁵⁵



Cool me with breeze, dear mountains,
 Cure my sorrows.
 But mountains don't cool me,
 They don't cure my pain.

Tumanian chose to make Saro a singer of love. He sings because he loves, and his way to express his love is through music. As mentioned earlier, Saro's image is fully associated with mountains. As Anush sings of the fate of flowers as her own, Saro's song is directed at himself, a quest to find answers in a seemingly desperate situation. He is completely alone. As soliloquies generally are not common in Armenian folk songs, Saro's song is directed to the mountains. In a way, it makes Saro a national symbol as he becomes one with his beloved mountains.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

Parerg “Ampi Takits” (Beneath the clouds)

The song *Ampi takits* is sung by a group of young maidens on their way to the spring to collect water. Tumanian describes their singing as “Laughing and with shoulders linked, / Their song ringing up the mountains.” We can almost hear the bell-like, high-pitched voices singing ditties and carries an important role in the poem.

Most folk music about a daily chore was directly connected to the task. For example, the plow songs would be sung only while doing the plowing. They are usually classified as *ashkhatankain erg* (work-songs), many of which have a close resemblance to *parergs* (dance-songs). These songs, whether work-songs or *parerg*, were connected to certain tasks, therefore, as a musical form, they were most volatile. Oftentimes, their presence was to inspire and lift the spirits of the group. Komitas wrote that during his field trips collecting and recording songs, peasants were surprised at his requests to sing specific songs for him (for example, he would ask villagers to sing well-known songs so that he could compare local variations). They did not understand the purpose in singing such songs out of context.¹⁵⁶ Komitas’s observation demonstrates that folk songs removed from their original place and purpose often lost their original meaning.

In “Ampi takits,” as the young women go to collect water from the spring, they naturally sing about water, which might symbolize emotions and feelings of the moment. Younger people’s singing reflects rather optimistic overtones, but carrying the water in heavy jars for a considerable distance was not an easy task. Therefore, the underlying mood of the singing would change accordingly since music was an organic extension of speech. “Ampi takits” is similar to the *parerg*’s style of question-and-answer antiphony and can be assumed to be sung by different

¹⁵⁶ Komitas: *Essays and Articles*, 45.

sung by soloist and a chorus (Ex.3).

Philologie, i/I, 1901)¹⁵⁷

Allegretto amabile ♩ = 100

SOLO

Andz - revn e - kav — sha - gha - len,

CHORUS

sha - gha - len,

sha - gha - len, vay, le, le, le, —

andz - revn e - kav — sha - gha - len,

le, le, le, le, — le, le, le,

le, le, le, vay, le, le, le, —

¹⁵⁷ Alina Pahlevanian, et al., “Armenia.”, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. ‘Armenia, republic of (I) Folk music, (8) Theoretical basis and structure.’ Oxford University Press, (accessed November 10, 2014), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/42078>.

This is basically a traditional responsorial singing style by soloist and a chorus, or two soloists and/or two choruses.

The song “Ampi takits” consists of five verses, the first three presenting questions and the last two, the answers. Those questions can be summarized verse by verse: (1) “Whose lover is the *igit* with burning heart?”, (2) “Did the lover drink from those cool waters?”, and (3) “Did he drink . . . did it cool his heart . . . did the anguish leave his breast?” The fourth and fifth verses supply answers: (4) “The chill waters did not cool it (his heart),” and (5) “Yes, it indeed is her lover” (directed most likely to Anush). Once again, the poet gives us an extended piece, not simply a fragment or reference to a song but a fully developed choral antiphony, thus magnifying the importance of this “exchange” of information for Anush.

A closer look at how Tumanian “frames” his songs with descriptions of what is happening (or being said) before and after—as a natural cause and effect—makes every scene complete in the mind of the reader. Despite limited detail, the reader has a sense of continuation at all times. Anush, hearing Saro’s serenade, tries to gain her mother’s permission to go out and join her friends. Her mother is rather adamant about the modesty of a young woman and worries what “People will say . . . What kind of girl is that?” This dialogue, or duel, ends with Anush’s last words: “Oh, nanni (mother) dear, nanni, let me take the pitcher / And go to the spring with the other maidens!”

In the following section (episode VI), Anush goes with her pitcher to the spring, singing with her girlfriends “Ampi takits.” The question-and-answer form of the song’s exchange shows a kind of secret sisterhood as the young women let Anush know that Saro has been there and he

is waiting for her. Usually, the young women would understand Anush's situation, being of the same cultural upbringing. Many folk songs intentionally carry messages about or are directed to the intended recipient.

Recalling once more the questions of the song of "who was at the spring and was his heart cooled by drinking the water," the answers given stir Anush's emotions and give her strength and the will to defy the custom forbidding meetings between young lovers. The "unquenched thirst" also indicates Anush's doubts of whether Saro had come to the spring to drink water (then, of course, his thirst would have been quenched) or if he came looking for her. The women's response—"No, he did not quench his thirst"—would mean he came for her only and his thirst to see her was not satisfied.

In Tumanian's flow of events, without descriptive references to the feelings of the protagonists, the emotional background is set by nature. At her meeting with Saro, nature emulates the anxiety of Anush's mother. At the very moment when Anush is about to meet Saro, at the moment of long-awaited passionate words of love, the author interrupts the narrative with Anush's mother's psychological state. She becomes highly agitated and worried over Anush's absence: "And all of a sudden a dark, hidden doubt / Within the old mother's heart gave voice: / 'It is some time since Anush took the pitcher / To go to the spring: she has not returned.'" The mother's intuition tells her that Anush's going to the springs was indeed a pretext to meet Saro and her anxiety is echoed by nature: "The clouds have enveloped the mountains / And filled the valleys, *embracing* them all." The word *embracing* emulates the mother's suspicions and worry about what must be taking place.

In contrast to the dark premonitions of the elders, the youths are portrayed in bright and happy tones. The author frames rather melancholic song "Ampi takits" with words "laughing

(maidens) . . . their song ringing up the mountains.” At the Feast of Ascension ceremony, the maidens are again joyous and likened to butterflies and flowers: “The air is filled with song and hearts with joy.” “In clusters have the maidens gone . . . with joyous songs.” “Song and scent mingled . . . Adorning the mountains.”

Young maidens sing of clouds and the water “flowing from beneath them” while the mother sees these clouds as embracing the mountains and valleys. Villagers would strongly identify their moods with nature and see them reflected by nature. Anush’s mother thinks, ““A thousand evil perils, a thousand robbers, a thousand youth must be swarming there now!”” These idiomatic uses of the word *thousand* magnify the dangers that the mother imagines to be present. If we look closely at how and why Tumanian inserts this part amid the lovers’ meeting—which is repeated once more later on with the same words, “a thousand perils,” changed from a mother’s thoughts to an author’s statement—we understand that her worries are well founded. In an unfinished sentence, ending the scene of their meeting (episode VIII), we read, “Listless and drunk with love, / Sighed the shepherd thus, deeply grieved, / Then pined, and ended his song. . .” In Tumanian’s unique language, without specifics, he connects this meeting to Saro’s first serenade. Saro sang to let Anush know that he burns with desire to see her and “ends his song” when they at last meet.

The song “Ampi takits” thus becomes a central point of Canto the First, connecting all other events (and parts) through the prism of images of a burning heart and the need to cool it with water. In his serenade, Saro sings, “Oh, you have scorched my heart with your love . . . I can bear it no more.” In “Ampi takits,” the women sing, “Aflame and drunk with your love; / And his burning heart.” The metaphor is emulated in Anush’s daring confessions: “I am all

burning / And turning into fire; / I am melting away / And turning into water!” The water that flows from “under the cloud” are the cries of the lover:

From beneath the clouds, flows the water,
And, breasting its way down, it froths;
Whose lover is sitting up there,
Sobbing away on the mountains?

The lyrical song “Ampi takits”—even though a rather ordinary song sung by the group of young women at the spring—carries a major burden of the tragedy. Anush’s “turning into water” expression is connected to a common colloquial expression used to express great sorrow; as an idiom for the word *tears*, they use “achks jur darav” (my eyes turned into water). Saro in his *bayati*/lament sings, “oh, I would die . . . Though I were freed from the torment / She would be left with a tearful eye.” The “tears” are present in the poem from the very beginning of the fairies’ lamenting “their hearts and eyes / overflowing with tearful dew.” In Anush’s lament of the fate of the flowers, the dew of fairies’ tears are emulated in tears of flowers: “Oh, pretty flowers of the mountains . . . Your little eyes are filled with tears.” In folklore beliefs recorded by Abeghian, the morning dew was believed to be the tears of fairies.

Canto the First ends with “The old pitcher she had brought back empty,” recalling the scene before “Ampi takits” in which Anush pleaded with her mother to let her go to the spring to collect water. The last image of Anush returning with her empty pitcher reveals her level of nervousness; she has forgotten to collect water at the spring:

With her disheveled hair down her back
And strewn across her flushed cheeks,
From under the feathery clouds emerged
Anush, like a roe in flight.

The connection between seemingly distant events forms a full circle and completes the story line, thus reaffirming its integrity. Fairies lament at the beginning and end of the poem. Saro sings of his desire to see Anush and ends that song when at last they meet. Anush goes to the spring to collect water and returns home with an empty pitcher—a moment to which the author gives special attention and which he uses to close Canto the First:

She brought back the pitcher still empty,
But without its pad at her shoulder,
Which she had left beside the spring also...

And her aged mother, grown angry,
Cursed her forgetful and timid Anush,
And thereupon brought down from her shoulder
The old pitcher she had brought back empty.

In essence, Canto the First is Saro's love song and the chorus-group validating the young couple's love. In triangular conflict with them is Anush's mother, whose presence is dominant in this canto. All of the singing about love proves more powerful than Anush's mother's words of caution and no water would be able to cool the burning, loving hearts of Saro and Anush.

Abeghian in his study *Zhoghovrdakan khaghikner* (Folk ditties) analyzes various roots and versions of songs that share subjects or types of metaphorical use of water.¹⁵⁸ Here are a few samples of folk songs of a similar nature. In the first, a young girl wants to meet with her beloved and pretends to go up the mountain with her pitcher to collect water:

¹⁵⁸ Manuk Abeghian, *Zhoghovrdakan khaghikner: gyughakan poqr erger irenc popoxaknerov* (Traditional ditties: short village songs and their variations) (Erevan: Haypet Hrat., 1940), 71.

Example 4 Folk song *Կուջն առա ելա սարը* “Kujn ara ela sare” (I took the pitcher and went to mount)¹⁵⁹



Կուջն առա ելա սարը,
վայ լե, լե, յար,
լե, լե, յար, լե, լե, լե լե.

I took the pitcher and went to mount
Vay, le, le, yar,
le, le, yar, le, le, le, le, le.

Folk song *Պաղ ջուր կրգեր վերին սարեն* “Pagh jur kger verin saren” (The cool waters came over the mount).¹⁶⁰

Պաղ ջուր կրգեր վերին սարեն,
Կուգեր, կաթեր մարմար քարեն.
Զխովցուցեր սրտիս յարեն,--
Էրված մնաց քո կարոտեն:

The cool waters came over the mount
Came dribbling down on the marble stone
My heart's love did not speak to me
Burning remained of longing for you.

Another folk song, *Աղջի, դու հուր ես, մուր ես* “Aghji, du hur es, mur es” (Hey, girl, you are fire and ashes),¹⁶¹ is sung at Hambartsum celebrations with metaphors of water and thirst for a beloved:

Աղջի, դու հուր ես, մուր ես,
Ես ծարավ եմ, դու ջուր ես.

Hey, girl, you are fire and ashes,
I am thirsty, you are water.

¹⁵⁹ Ataian, *Armianskaia narodnaia pesnia*, 15. Also in Komitas, *Komitas: erkeri zhoghovatsu*, no.11, ed. Robert Ataian (Erevan: HH GAA Gitutsiun, 2000), 72.

¹⁶⁰ Manuk Abeghian, *Erker, hator B* (HSSH GA Hrat., 1967), 347.

¹⁶¹ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 218. Refers to Komitas and Manuk Abeghian, *Hazar u mi khagh*, vol. E, no. 23.

Ես Համբարձման գիշերը,
Քեզ ման կգամ, դու ուր ես:

This Hambartsum night,
I am searching for you, where are you?

These examples of folk music illustrate Tumanian's inspiration. They function as a direct reference to common musical forms known and fully absorbed by the general population. The song "Ampi takits" connects the image, sound, and action to the emotional background of events mirrored by nature. The dark clouds "cry" and "embrace" as do the young lovers.

Tigranian and his opera *Anush*



Figure 3: Armen Tigranian (1879–1950)

*The national form must be felt one hundred percent. The composition must be emotive and laden with native intonations. The connection of the melody and text is to be inseparable thus enhancing its psychological image.*¹⁶²

Armen Tigranian

The musicality of the poem *Anush* and its lyric-dramatic quality have inspired many composers to undertake the task of creating a musical work worthy of the original. Works based on the poem extend from unfinished operas by Komitas, Eduard Bagdasarian,¹⁶³ and Vardan Sargsian, to ballets and symphonic works by Sargis Barxudarian, Boris Nersesov, and others.¹⁶⁴ Armen Tigranian's opera *Anush* took the poem to a new height, certainly worthy of the

¹⁶²“ Ազգային ֆորման պետք է զգալ հարյուր տոկոսով, երկը պիտի լինի հուզական, ինտոնացիան հարազատ (մանավանդ ռեչիտատիվը): Մելոդիան տեքստի հետ պետք է կապված լինի անբաժան կերպով և տա նրա հոգեբանական պատկերումը:”

Tigranian, *Tigranian: hodvatsner, namakner, husher*, 13.

¹⁶³ According to an eyewitness, Baghdasarian's opera *Anush* was completed by the composer; however, only fragments of the manuscript survive. Robert Ataian, *Komitasakan* (Erevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hrat., 1981), 49.

¹⁶⁴ A complete list of known published musical pieces of all genres (including musical dramatic theater works) based on Tumanian's *Anush* can be found in *Hovhannes Tumaniane*

original. The importance of this opera for Armenian professional music and for the development of the national operatic genre is noted by many musicologists such as Matevos Muradian, Robert Ataian, and Nikoghos Taghmizian. Almost all critical analyses of Tumanian's opera relate to the general perception of the opera, development of the leitmotifs, its musical strengths and weaknesses, questions of orchestration (in particular, eastern modality in western orchestration), its transformation from early incomplete versions to the masterful gem many years later. No studies that I looked at have viewed or analyzed in depth the issue of "hearing" the poem in the music of the opera. On many occasions Tigranian remarked that he spent years trying to absorb and to re-live the poem within himself. From his letters we know that he corresponded with Tumanian, shared the same aspirations, and lived in somewhat similar conditions (political and otherwise). These letters reveal Tigranian seeking friendly advice from Tumanian and eventually becoming the poet's protégé.¹⁶⁵ From Tigranian's correspondence, we know that Tumanian was invited and expected with great anticipation to attend the premiere of the opera in Alexandropol on July 29, 1912 and to give his "mark of approval" to the new work, but the poet could not attend because of urgent matters he had to address in a remote village.¹⁶⁶ Tumanian learned of the great success of the opera and sent a congratulatory letter to Tigranian with sincere apologies

erazhshtutsian mej: teghekatu (Tumanian in music: reference guide), ed. N. Azarian (Erevan: Tumanian Museum, 1999).

¹⁶⁵ There are at least three known occasions when Tumanian was asked to write a libretto—by Komitas for his *Anush*, by Tigranian also for *Anush*, and by Spendiarov for *Almast*. The general feeling was that Tumanian could not do it because of the time constraints, but quite possibly, the poet avoided the serious undertaking of basically reworking his own material again and again to accommodate a musical piece. According to recollections by A. Chopanian (in 1908), in one of his visits to the Tumanian family, Komitas asked Tumanian once again about the libretto to which the poet laughingly answered: "I wrote the poem, let somebody else 'take on' the libretto." Ataian, *Komitasakan*, 54.

¹⁶⁶ Tumanian and Tigranian knew each other in absentia as both were prominent figures in Armenian artistic circles (in Armenia and Georgia). Their first face-to-face meeting took place in 1913, a year later after the first production of the opera 1912 in Alexandropol.

for missing such a great event “due to causes beyond his control.”¹⁶⁷ In a letter to Armenui Tigranian (the composer’s sister, a poetess), he says: “I wish a success to Mr. Armenak¹⁶⁸ and to the rest of the participants for their love and hard work. [Please] give my heartfelt greetings to Anush, Saro, Mosi, to our beloved nymphs and all the participants; my love and respect to all and especially to my dearest Armenui.”¹⁶⁹ Tigranian wrote after the premiere: “I could deeply feel the triumph of the great poet’s art. That day was truly festive for me.”¹⁷⁰

Armen Tigranian was born in Alexandropol (the second largest city in Armenia, now called Giumri) in 1879 in a well-to-do family of jewelry and watch makers. The Tigranian family was well-educated and of many artistic talents. Their doors were always open to artists, musicians and poets, and the literary-musical soirees organized by family members were well-known and loved.

Throughout Armenian history, the small and typical town of Alexandropol of Shirak (a regional prefecture) prided itself as the place where Armenian professional troubadour music traditions have flourished. Agriculture was almost absent, but skilled trade was highly regarded and developed. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the region witnessed a strong revival of ashug and gusan music traditions and the town of Alexandropol continued to be the epicenter of

¹⁶⁷ Armen Tigranian, *Armen Tigranian: hodvatsner, namakner, husher*, 31.

¹⁶⁸ Endearing form of the male name Armen.

¹⁶⁹ Tumanian, *Intir erker*, 506. Published letter from Tumanian to Armenui Tigranian written on August 2, 1912.

¹⁷⁰ *Armen Tigranian: hodvatsner, namakner, husher*, 31. For this study, most references, quotes from Tigranian, and other details of the composer’s work on the opera are taken from the collection of letters, notes, and memoirs by Armen Tigranian, *Armen Tigranian: hodvatsner, namakner, husher*, comp. by Alexander Tadevosian (Erevan: Sovetakan Grogh, 1981). The musical examples in this work are taken from the published vocal and piano score: Armen Tigranian, *Anush. Opera 5 Gortsoghutiunov 7 Patkerov ist Hovhannes Tumaniani Hamanun Poemi*, libretto by Armen Tigranian (Erevan: Sovetakan Grogh, 1981). This edition is the latest published piano vocal score that I was able to find. A few earlier editions are available as well but were not used for this study.

musical life in Armenia, teeming with new generations of highly skilled bards. Typically, professional musicians and poets would come to Alexandropol to participate in competitions to show off their skills. The general public would be fully involved with their “critical ear” so much so that no subtle differences in styles, traditions and skills would go unnoticed. At the same time, skilled musicians performing on the traditional instruments saw a rise in popularity with concerts taking place virtually in all venues. This rich musical environment, aided with a love of literature and music instilled from a very young age, had a profound influence on Tigranian who absorbed it with ease and pleasure.¹⁷¹ Young Tigranian learned to play the flute at the local school, and his talent did not take long to be noticed. Without any difficulties, he conveyed the folk and minstrel music into skilled improvisations.

In 1894, Tigranian’s family relocated to Tbilisi, Georgia, which, like Armenia at the time, was a prefecture of the Russian Empire. Georgia had a large and influential Armenian population and was the center of Armenian culture. Armenian aristocracy and educated craftsmen as well as skilled tradesmen were at the frontier of cultural developments in Tbilisi. Numerous Armenian schools, publishing houses, and musical and literary societies were regarded as the most progressive in the region. At that time, classical music, especially opera, enjoyed a height of popularity with operas of Tchaikovsky and Verdi as part of the permanent repertoire at the Tbilisi Opera Theater. During those years, young Tigranian starts dreaming about writing an Armenian opera that could be true to its national roots.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ *Armen Tigranian: kianke, erazhshtakan-hasarakakan gortsuneutiune ev steghsagortsutiune*, (Armen Tigranian: life, music-public work and compositions) eds. Robert Ataian, Matevos Muradian (Erevan: Haikakan SSR Hrat., 1955), 27-28.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 24. The first Armenian opera is considered to be *Arshak II* (Arshak II was an Armenian king who died in 369 or 370), composed by Tigran Tchukhajian (Տիգրան Չուխաճեան 1837–1898, rediscovered in 1941 by the musicologists Gevorg Tigranian and Alexander Shahverdian.

In 1898, Tigranian was admitted to the music academy in Tbilisi to study flute but his interests extended also to composition and music theory. He attended corresponding classes under tutelage of Nikolai Klenovsky (1857–1915).¹⁷³ He also took private composition lessons from Makar Ekmalian (1856–1905).¹⁷⁴ Soon after graduating from the music academy in 1902, Tigranian returned to Alexandropol with a firm intent to establish music education in schools and create opportunities for stage performance on a more professional level. He became a proponent of organizing amateur choral groups with the intent to travel to and perform in different regional towns and villages. Parallel to his teaching and directing various schools and musical groups, he devoted his compositional attention to writing music on lyrical poetry of Avetik Isahakian (1875–1957) and Hovhannes Hovhannisian (1864–1929). Throughout these years, the composer was fully preoccupied with finding a suitable subject for an Armenian national opera and in 1908 started his work on the opera *Anush*. From 1913, Tigranian settled in Tiflis (Tbilisi) and became an important member of Armenian music society there. He organized concerts, music education classes, collected and revised folk songs, composed vocal and piano music, as well as music for the theater. In the 1940's, during World War II, he started his work on an epic opera *Davit Bek* (David Bek). Sadly, his great desire to see this opera on the stage has not materialized because of his death in 1950. The premiere of *David Bek* took place in 1950 soon after his death.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Nicolai Klenovski (1857–1915) was a Russian composer, ethnographer and conductor. He studied with Peter I. Tchaikovsky and was a friend and collaborator of Anton Rubinstein.

¹⁷⁴ Makar Ekmalian (1856–1905) was an Armenian composer, teacher, and choirmaster. He is a graduate of St. Petersburg Conservatory where he studied with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

¹⁷⁵ Tigranian composed the music for the *David Bek*, but some of the orchestration and instrumentation was completed by Gevorg Budaghian and Levon Khoja-Eynatov.

The Opera Anush

*The music of Anush—as if fully ingrained in nature’s fragrance—is equally modest, unpretending, and pure like flowers of the fields.*¹⁷⁶

Moisey Grinberg

Tigranian first conceived the idea of writing an opera based on the poem *Anush* in 1908, almost immediately upon hearing the poem. He writes, “It was clear from the very beginning, that the poem *Anush* presents enchanting material for an opera, picturesque and colorful, which with unique precision communicates the past life and lifestyle of an Armenian village.”¹⁷⁷

According to the composer, he began his work with great excitement and enthusiasm and with relative speed and ease. In 1912, the first amateur production of the opera took place with a high school student production and small orchestra. Noted musicologist Alexander Shahverdian epitomized the birth of Armenian classical opera with a phrase “born in [of] tatters.”¹⁷⁸

Robert Ataian remarked that Tigranian’s opera proliferated purely by oral transference and singing among the general public before the printed musical score was available. It was even heard in remote villages, sung from beginning to the end from a printed copy of Tumanian’s poem, often with no realization that they were singing portions of an opera.¹⁷⁹ Ataian found this manner of absorption to be embedded in the established form of “national traditional opera,” a term he uses to refer to the common tradition of villages collecting songs connected to an event or as a continuation of events. He writes, “No composer or dramaturge, no conductor or director

¹⁷⁶ “‘Անուշի’ երաժշտությունը կարծես ամբողջովին ներծծված է բնության բուրմունքով, և նույնքան համեստ է, անհավակնոտ ու մաքուր, ինչպես դաշտային ծաղիկները:” Moisey Grinberg, “Komsomolskaya Pravda, Oct. 23, 1939.” In *Tigranian: hodvatsner, namakner, husher*, 177.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 16.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹⁷⁹ Ataian, *Komitasakan*, 49.

has led the traditional ‘synthesis’ of an extended and embracing improvisational process. On its own, the peasant’s ‘spontaneous’ but historically cultivated colorful insight of musical-dramaturgic forms became an exposition and development, and culmination, and reprise, in one word, an ‘amateur’ musical dramaturgy.”¹⁸⁰ It can be said that the melodies of the opera “returned” to the folklore, becoming part of national music through absorption. Such an occurrence was not uncommon in folk music generally as there were often anonymous “authors,” whose work, being so close in its spirit to tradition, blended into collective music within a certain period of time. In a way, this opera sublimates the classical operatic style back into a national folk music via its melodies, songs and arias. Scholars love to mention that the popularity of the opera came from “below,” implying that its acceptance and the almost instantaneous absorption of its music by regular people made the opera *Anush* so successful. Many of Tumanian’s works became absorbed into folklore in the same way. For example, many fairytales or even epic poems such as *Sassuntsi Davit* (David of Sassun), in the skilled hands of Tumanian are often perceived by the general public as folklore.

The folklore and the subject of the poem *Anush* gave Tigranian an inspiration, vision and direction for his opera. The libretto, written by Tigranian himself,¹⁸¹ kept the poem in the original form almost in its entirety, with some additions needed for such a grand musical genre.¹⁸² Most of the additions are of a musical nature, such as scenes of mass celebrations with

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹⁸¹ Tigranian made successful libretto translations into Armenian of Verdi’s *Rigoletto* and Bizet’s *Carmen*.

¹⁸² In one of his writings, Tigranian states that to obtain permission for a production of the opera, an authorization from the Russian (Tsar’s) government agency was necessary and was a difficult task to accomplish. To simplify the process, Tigranian in his request mentioned the permission granted to Tumanian some years earlier with publication of the poem which he, the composer, was planning to use for the libretto. To his great surprise and joy, he was granted the permission

national dances and rituals. All other additions to the libretto were done in a style and a tone as close to the original as possible. Although Tigranian's libretto for *Anush* preserved the poem almost completely, the opera went through revisions and additions. Most of the mass scenes saw the addition of new characters and scenes such as a "Fire scene."¹⁸³

Hearing Tumanian's *Anush* in 1908, the composer writes of his first impressions: "H. Tumanian's 'Anush' fully captivated me. Without even mentioning the high artistic quality of the poem, its form, its marvelous prologue, its lament of fairies for the youth's tragic love, Saro's serenade at the sunrise, etc., deserve corresponding musical means to turn this magnificent poem into an opera."¹⁸⁴ Tumanian's way of thinking, his deep understanding of traditions, and his poetry, resonated in the heart and soul of Tigranian. He perceived the poem's musicality inherent in the poetic word in its language, rhythm, and content.

The affinity of Tigranian's music to folk music as a "building" material runs parallel to Tumanian's poem's affinity with folk material. As great authors found their inspiration in the culture of their people, misunderstandings from some of their contemporaries and accusations of folk "plagiarism" were common. On the opposite end were the accusations of misrepresenting folk material by revising the material too much, thus making it harder to keep the folklore "pure." One cannot stay indifferent reading Tumanian's article "Hayots drambianizm u es" (Armenian *drambianism* and me)—a term he coined for a movement in Armenian print (after Drambian, a literary critic) who attacked all who either used folklore sources in their work or

but with a single caveat, that the opera can only be performed "without any changes to the text." From Tigranian, *Armen Tigranian: hodvatsner, namakner, husher*, 17.

¹⁸³ In the poem, there is only a passing reference to the fire as the last words in Canto the Third: "And likewise it could happen suddenly / For the stack of the one—a whole year's crop— / In the dark hours of the night to catch a fire / And singe the stars with flames reaching the sky."

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 28.

published them in refined literary form. In this article, Tumanian explains that his use of folklore is to draw inspiration and truth from existing models “polished” by the nations throughout generations. Tumanian called himself a “bigger criminal and plagiarist than they think they know.”¹⁸⁵ Along with Tumanian, ethnographers Manuk Abeghian and Komitas were not spared by “*drambianists*” either. Tigranian was often compelled to defend himself too: “The melodies of my music, which were created under the strong influence of folk songs, sound similar to the latter, and that circumstance gave some people an opportunity to assume that the melodies of the opera are borrowed by me. However, those opinions are wrong. I did not use a single folk song [supposedly] replacing [their lyrics] with Tumanian’s text.”¹⁸⁶

Tigranian believed that separation of the text and original music was generally not desirable. He writes, “I have always been against separation of the original text from the traditional song. Moreover, I am also against any artificial use of texts of the songs with a different melody.”¹⁸⁷ Tigranian’s main concern and desire was to stay “true to the roots” of Armenian music: a task of conveying essentially monodic Armenian folk music style in a dramatic opera with its large orchestra and a synthesis of modal scales with classical harmonization. Instrumentation was also important, since Armenian traditional music used very few or almost none of the classical instruments (in towns, the wealthy and educated population was well acquainted with European music and many owned pianos). Another logical reason would be the thematic, melodic and dramatic scope of the opera for which folk songs might not be suitable. But more than these reasons, we have Tigranian’s own statement: “In terms of thematic material, I always used my own melodies. All the arias and solos were written

¹⁸⁵ *Hovhannes Tumanian: intir erker erku hatorov, II*, (Hovhannes Tumanian: collected works in two volumes, II), comp. by Levon Hakhverdian (Erevan: Sovetakan Grogh, 1985), 361-62.

¹⁸⁶ Tigranian, *Armen Tigranian: hodvatsner, namakner, husher*, 18.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

impromptu; they were fostered by the poet's magnificent language and profound wisdom in his work.¹⁸⁸

For his work on *Anush*, Tigranian kept notes and correspondence with people involved in the production of the opera. The letters and recollections by Tumanian and Tigranian and others, shed light on some of the ideas, influences, successes and failures that took place in the captivating synthesis of the poem and the music. Tigranian's notebooks detailing his work on *Anush* indeed provide a wealth of information. The dominant apprehension that permeates the notebooks is his deep concern to stay true to the original poem, his personal responsibility towards the poem, and its author, and above all, his accountability towards preservation of national traditions encoded in the poem. Tigranian's notes also reveal enormous attention and diligence dedicated to the productions of the opera (interspersed through many years as well as through radical political changes), with seemingly endless issues regarding addition or deletion of scenes.

The early production and publication of the opera fell in the pre-revolutionary (1917) times of the Russian Empire, when the subject matter of unhappy subordinates could be seen as a criticism of the Russian Tsar. Years later, after the Russian revolution, the censorship of any perceived sympathy towards the Tsar took firm hold in publishing. With respect to the former, we have Tigranian's writings where he recorded the difficulties in getting the regime's permission to have any operatic production.¹⁸⁹ But in the Bolshevik era, such evidence is very limited since most of the musicological books on Tigranian were published under strict

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Tigranian, *hodvatsner, namakner, husher*, 17-8.

censorship of Soviet-era bureaucrats.¹⁹⁰ The political turmoil throughout the world at the beginning of the twentieth century further heightened the national sentiments.¹⁹¹ This deep-rooted concern was based on admiration for Tumanian's poem along with a concern for loss of the Armenian spirit in yielding to external forces to become a generic subculture of the Russian Empire. A frustrated Tigranian writes about one of the scenes that he was told to rewrite: "Continuing with changes and shortening (the poem), we will distance ourselves from Tumanian's 'Anush'." One has to be very careful with such a work of literature. At the same time, I am asking not to be impeded in my work, let me reproduce Tumanian's *Anush* in a manner that is consistent with my understanding [of it] after many years of research."¹⁹² In another note we find, "I've spent years living with this beautiful poem created by our talented poet Hovhannes Tumanian and have intensely scrutinized every question in regard to the poem or opera *Anush*."¹⁹³ Proof of such deep understanding and the organic synthesis of music with the poem can be found first and foremost in the tragic mode of the music enveloping the opera. To summarize, Tigranian struggled to preserve "Tumanian" in Tumanian and "Tigranian" in

¹⁹⁰ There was a general consensus at some point that the opera should emphasize the old *adat* (custom) of feudal society. Another example was Alexander Spendiarov's opera *Almast*, based on Tumanian's poem. After Spendiarov's death, it has seen dramatic changes when soviet directors felt free to change certain parts of the opera. In one production, the overture-prologue was changed, so that an ashug addressed the audience with the words, "Da zdravstvuet narodov bradstvo! Da zdaravstvuent SSSR" (Long live national friendship! Long live the USSR!). Georgi Tigranov, *Alexander Afanasievich Spendiarov* (Moskva: Muzika, 1971), 235.

¹⁹¹ The years of 1914-1925 were fateful for Armenians and their motherland with widespread massacres, war, hunger, and a deep concern among the intellectuals over Armenia's fate. On one hand were Turkish atrocities with Europe's tacit agreement; on the other was the Russian Bolshevik revolution and a promise of survival if Armenians join the revolution. The turmoil touched each and every intellectual and artist; many were imprisoned (including Tumanian and Spendiarov), killed, or eked out a miserable existence like Komitas. Tigranian, despite all the difficulties, albeit with long interruptions, continued his revisions on *Anush*. Only in 1935, in a newly created Armenian republic, did a production of the revised version of the opera take place at the new Spendiarov Opera and Ballet Theater in Erevan.

¹⁹² Tigranian, *Armen Tigranian: hodvatsner, namakner, husher*, 30.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 20.

Tigranian. Any thoughtless suggestions by administrative bureaucrats in regard to changing details in the libretto, Tigranian perceived as an insult to the great poet. To a criticism that Tigranian “is after insignificant details” in following Tumanian, and that there is no need to follow the poet’s writings blindly, the composer gave a heartfelt response: “Yes, we can [change] but only if we truly find literary faults in that work.”¹⁹⁴

Tigranian’s notes and remarks are concise and direct on their own and often do not require summarization. They convey his thoughts with an endearing sense of humor and genuine admiration for the poem. In one of his writings, we see a frustrated Tigranian giving an “answer” to the requirements by stage director Armen Gulakian to change certain parts of the opera. For example, Gulakian requested a separation of the wedding scene from the episode that immediately follows it of an enraged Mosi taking an oath of revenge forbidding Anush to see Saro again. He suggested connecting Mosi’s scene of rage to Act Four—the scene of eloping youth. Tigranian writes:

So what is the consequence of this [suggestion]? From the winter wedding, after the insult received from losing honor after the *kokh* incident, Mosi leaves, digests all this and ... then one day (during the next Act), already in the spring, the thought of that incident passes through his [Mosi’s] mind, and after the opening of the curtains he immediately sings: “And since that incident on the wedding day, / The brotherly youth became enemies.” Or what follows soon after: “Shame on you, Mosi, spit and dishonor, / How you curled up as a mountain under his knee!” ... Anush, as if seeing her own brother for the first time [months later after the wedding] is walking by Mosi [at that very moment when he had recollection of an insult] thus prompting Mosi to take his dagger out in rage and threaten to kill her.¹⁹⁵

The sarcastic tone, mocking such an impossible and senseless order of events, calls our attention to his personal plea to stop blatant disregard of Tumanian’s poem by meaningless changes.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 30.

¹⁹⁵ Tigranian, *Armen Tigranian: hodvatsner, namakner, husher*, 24-25.

Tigranian was especially adamant in regard to the seasons of the year as portrayed by the poet. Tumanian clearly connected all celebrations to seasons—the time of Hambartsum, winter wedding and so on. The questions concerning the seasons, and problems connected to the change of stage decorations and other issues, surface through Tigranian’s notebook. Along with the above-mentioned episode of Mosi’s rage, comes an example of a scene after the wedding when it was suggested to Tigranian to combine the wedding scene with elopement of the lovers. Tigranian argued that eloping in the winter was not customary simply because of the extreme hardship that the young would endure, and therefore he deemed it inappropriate and not true to Tumanian. Another conflict arose regarding Anush’s scene of “madness.” It was suggested to connect this scene to the farewell chorus of fairies at the end of the opera. Tigranian argued that if Tumanian wrote *garune ekav* (spring has come) then it must be separated from previous events because the changing seasons reflect the emotional background of the events. Also, the poet ends the poem with fairies, once again, singing on the eve of Hambartsum, thus indicating that summer is about to come and the life cycle continues with its blooming fields and joyous song and dance.

The name “song-opera” has stayed firmly with *Anush* because of its melodic continuity and absolute singability, so much so that upon a first hearing the audience was able to remember the melodies. No lesser role was played by the traditional intonation and feeling of traditional song style that permeates the opera from beginning to end. For a layman, it is full of *bayati*, *parerg*, *lalik* and *voghb* (lament). However, from a musicological point of view, Geodakian argues that the epithet common among musicologists and the general population for Tigranian’s opera, “erg-opera” (song-opera), is incorrect and diminishes the overall value of the work. He argues that all the general forms of the classical opera such as aria, arioso, recitative, ensemble

numbers, chorus and large dance numbers are present. Some solos, which Tigranian calls arias, don't fit the classical ABA aria form. Nevertheless, Geodakian points to the principles of classical thematic development in Tigranian's work: "The theme [classical], standing out from the general flow of music, figuratively speaking acquired its 'face' and became a 'character'." On the example of Saro's *Bardzr sarer* (Tall mountains) aria (which many consider to be more an arioso), he argues that its melodic-thematic structure is not only similar but identical to the classical. He believes that a classical "theme" has a specific periodic structure with development of its cell, fragmentation, conclusion and closing—in short, "structural fragmentation and closing" as a major developmental technique. In a similar manner, Tigranian's fragmentation and development of the theme creates the "protuberance and, typical for the opera, broad breath."¹⁹⁶ Geodakian hopes that understanding the compositional structure of the opera *Anush* would put it on the world stage as a fine example of an Armenian national opera along with such works by Stanisław Moniuszko (Poland), Bedřich Smetana and Leoš Janáček (Czech Republic), Ferenc Erkel (Hungary), Modest Petrovich Mussorgski (Russia) and other national operas, which were able to capture the genuine intonations and character of their people.

From the very first notes, the opera enticed its listeners into the world of Tumanian's protagonists. As was mentioned earlier, the general form and tragic sound of the poem are reminiscent of old tragic laments. Tigranian's musical language in *Anush* is permeated by the professional music of ashugs and gusans—with their particular style and intonation. Geodakian remarks that Tigranian's opera is one of the first and most likely still unsurpassed works in

¹⁹⁶ Georgi Geodakian, *Puti formirovaniia armianskoi muzikalnoi klassiki* (Erevan: Institut Isskustv, 2006), 138-9. Komitas in his essays and lectures was able to break false premises of simplicity and the narrow form of Armenian folk music. In detailed analyses of *horovel* (plow song), he showed the wealth and complexity of developmental ways, including the use of variation form, motivic fragmentation and others. From Alexander Shahverdian, *Komitas i armianskaia muzikalnaia kultura* (Erevan: Arm. Goss. Izd, 1956), 156.

taking the true traditions of Eastern professional music into the world of classical opera with its improvisatory freedom of musical language as the main *melos* of the opera. He writes, “Typical eastern melody, etched in a logically complete, classic European melodic and thematic structure, became an entirely new phenomenon in the world of opera. Once again, the convergence of the great cultures of the East and West saw a burst of amazing creative insight.”¹⁹⁷

Poetry in Music

Tigranian followed the form of the poem which fits the general outlines of operatic librettos in structure and dramatic development. The poem *Anush* consists of a Prologue and six Cantos, and Tigranian’s opera is in five Acts and seven Scenes.¹⁹⁸ As mentioned in earlier chapters, the dramatic content and the structural form of each Canto resemble the style of musical drama and therefore the poem maps naturally into the structure of the opera.

Musicologist Gevorg Tigranian (not related to the composer Armen Tigranian) believes that the music of the opera *Anush* is influenced by traditional laments, wailings and *antunis*, displaying

¹⁹⁷Geodakian, *Puti formirovania armianskoi muzikalnoi klassiki*. 140. Tigranian’s legacy is deeply connected to the dramatic theater for which he wrote a lot of music. The ancient heroic past of Armenia told in epic songs became the impetus for Tigranian to turn the music he wrote for the dramatic play *David-Bek* in 1942, into a historical opera of the same name with use of gusan and ashug music. The story is based on historical novel *David-Bek* by Raffi (1835-1888), an Armenian novelist.

¹⁹⁸ For this study I used the vocal-piano score: Armen Tigranian, *Anush. Opera 5 Gortsoghutiunov 7 Patkerov ist Hovhannes Tumaniani Hamanun Poemi*, libretto by Armen Tigranian (Erevan: Sovetakan Grogh, 1981). After the first amateur production in 1912, the opera went through major revisions in 1935, 1939, and 1956. The 1912 version of the opera is not considered representative of the work but rather as a historical moment of instantaneous love and appreciation by the public. Orchestral scores were not used for this study.

an array of “accentuated use of the afflicted tones” and as such penetrates the opera with tragic-lamenting intonation.¹⁹⁹ Tigranian’s opera starts with an overture with a powerful *fortissimo*, all-brass unison presenting the leitmotif of *adat* (custom), full of tragic anticipation. It emulates the majestic grandness of the mountains and masculine power in its battle-like fanfare. In the major key of Bb, the two opposite colors of dark and light are present. The opening of the overture sounds ominous even though it is in the major key of Bb, and fanfare sounds give it a bright and positive sound. One might say that the leitmotif of *adat* represents an Armenian character and tradition, combined in a stately hymn. The lament of fairies is woven into the opening overture after the statement of all motives and leitmotifs. It is ephemeral and creates a strong contrast to the opening fanfare.

Example 5 Tigranian, *Anush*, Overture, mm. 1-12.

The image shows a musical score for the Overture of *Anush* by Tigranian, measures 1-12. The score is for Piano and is in Bb major. The tempo is Maestoso (♩ = 80). The score consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows the initial fanfare with a *ff* dynamic. The second system includes a *sf* dynamic and a *con moto* marking. The third system features a *p* dynamic and a *cresc.* marking. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and articulation marks.

¹⁹⁹ Gevorg Tigranian, *Hai erazhshtakan tatron: 100 tarin, 1868-1968* (Erevan: Hayastan, 1968), 46.

Nikoghos Taghmizian found the music of the opera to carry elements directly from old sacred gusan works such as *Sasna tsrer* (Daredevils of Sassun) and *Mokats Mirza* (Mokats Mirza). The leitmotiv of *adat* traces a similar movement as in an old epic song from *Mokats Mirza*.²⁰⁰

Example 6 Tigranian, *Anush*, leitmotif of *adat*



Example 7 *Mokats Mirza*



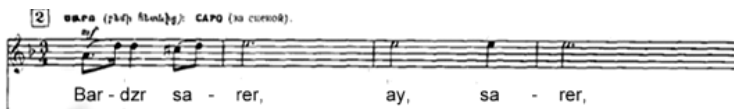
The *viperg* (epic song) *Mokats Mirza* is thought to have survived in the Armenian oral tradition from the Middle Ages. It is a lament-praise of the handsome and courageous Mokats Mirza, murdered with a poisoned dagger by the cunning Persian, Kolot Pasha.²⁰¹ The pasha invites Mokats as an honorary guest to his house with a malicious intent to trap and kill him. The *viperg* is rooted in an ancient form of laments praising the glorious life, great deeds, and heroic acts of

²⁰⁰ Nikoghos Taghmizian, *Armen Tigraniane ev nra "Anush" operan*. Pasadena: Drazark Press, 1998, 18-19. Musical examples are also taken from this book with substitution of transliterated words for Armenian script.

²⁰¹ *Kolot* is a colloquial word for short statue, short person.

the deceased. Taghmizian also found Saro's dramatic arioso, *Bardzr sarer* (Tall Mountains), to resemble the *sharakan* (church hymn) motive dedicated to Nerses Mets (Nerses the Great, Armenian Patriarch, c. fourth century) by Hovhannes Erznkatsi (c. 1250–1326):

Example 8 Tigranian, *Anush*, Act Five, Scene One, Saro's aria *Bardzr sarer*.



Example 9 Hovhannes Erznkatsi, *Sharakan* (hymn)



The first and second acts present the three main characters Saro, Anush, and Mosi. Various aspects of their personalities, their fate, and their emotions take the form of leitmotifs presented in the overture of the opera such as leitmotif of *adat* (part of Mosi's second leitmotif, Ex. 6), Anush's love leitmotif and Saro's and Mosi's leitmotifs (Ex. 10).

Example 10 Tigranian, *Anush*, Overture, # 1, mm. 18-28. Leitmotifs of Anush, Saro, and Mosi



In the third act, we have the wedding scene and the breaking of rules during the wrestling match of two the friends, Saro and Mosi. Act Four further deepens the conflict as the lovers elope against the will of a patriarchal family. It is then followed by the “Fire” scene in the village. The Fifth Act is Saro’s murder and Anush’s consequent insanity and death.

To analyze Tigranian’s setting of the poem, I used only a few musical sections such as *Jan giulum*, Saro’s “Serenade” and aria *Bardzr sarer*, and the group *parerg* “Ampi takits.” I chose them because 1) They are original songs present in the poem, 2) Tigranian kept the text of these sections almost identical to the original, 3) They provide a good sample of ritual, lyrical, lament, and group *parerg* styles, 4) They are the most popular and best known musical sections of the opera.

Hambartsum Yayla and Jan Giulum.

Recalling earlier descriptions of the rituals and the music connected to them, long chains of improvisations and “duels” were customary in every major celebration with large crowds present. The creative process of synthesis of “real” and “staged” is an interesting issue in the

operatic genre in general. In national operas, composers often desire to connect the subject matter to folklore, thus staying true to the original intonation and the traditions rather than presenting a “formalized” version of folklore. In *Anush*, for example, we can follow Tigranian’s writings directed specifically at the question of national ritual versus theatrical performance. Tigranian writes that some dance types were performed by women separately from the men but in some sections he combined their dancing together to create scenes of singing and dancing crowds at Hambartsum. He writes that it is unusual to see *jan giulum* sung or danced with men and women together.²⁰² He says, “In the mass scenes of the opera (though not in all of them), I have slightly evaded our national traditions and added men’s group/chorus to the women’s and vice versa due to the need to add colors to the chorus, otherwise, both the music and the staging would have suffered.”²⁰³

The scene of *jan giulum* has captivated Tigranian from the very first hearing of the poem. In his memoirs, Tigranian recalls that in 1908, as a music teacher in Alexandropol, he was invited to attend a lesson on Armenian literature and the reading of the day was Tumanian’s *Anush*. He writes of his first impressions of the poem: “The musical language of the poem has immediately captivated me. Soon after, still under the influence of strong impressions, I composed the music for the quatrain ‘Hambartsum yayla,’ which later on became the foundation of the whole opera as a leitmotif. Like a red thread it passes through the opera, sometimes coming across with calmly peaceful and joyous colors, and sometimes—with gloomy tones.”²⁰⁴

²⁰² Having men and women sing and dance together has become customary in recent years as traditional separation is not observed in modern times. Nevertheless, professional groups specializing in traditional dance do observe the separation.

²⁰³ Tigranian, *Armen Tigranian: Hodvatsner, Namakner, Husher*, 15.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

As pointed out earlier, the ritual of Hambartsum and all the music sung during the ritual are quite abundant in folk music, and we can safely assume that Tigranian must have known many versions of *jan giulum*. This particular scene, Tumanian's description of a Hambartsum celebration, was most memorable and inspirational for the composer. Moreover, making the leitmotif of *jan giulum* the main "thread" connecting and consistently present in all manifestations (in vocal and orchestral parts equally) shows a close reading of the poem. Tumanian's poetic "threading" of the events through celebration of Hambartsum resembles a leitmotif-like theme. If we recall how the festivities are presented in various parts of the poem (in rather long and interconnected rituals), we see that the Prologue opens on the night before Hambartsum. The ritual of collecting water from seven springs and petals of seven flowers, and placing them under the stars is followed by rituals of fortune-telling, singing *jan giulum* and *vitchaki erg* in Canto the Second. The poem ends with another night before Hambartsum. In the poem, the major emphasis is on Anush's fate which was strongly believed to be predestined; all events that transpire lead to fulfillment of all the predictions culminating in "curses," thus all converging in the ritual of drawing lots at Hambartsum as an affirmation of Anush's fate.

What role does the *jan giulum* play in the opera? Tigranian saw the *jan giulum* as the leitmotif enveloping the love of young Anush and Saro. Virtually all leitmotifs of the opera have common elements of similar melodic cells. For example, leitmotifs of Anush, Saro, and Mosi (inverted), are part of *jan giulum* motive (Ex.11).

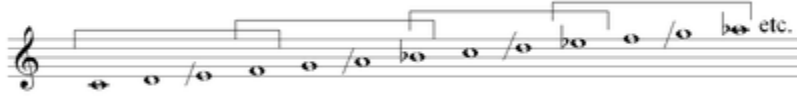
Example 11 *Hambartsum* (*Jan giulum*), “Fate” leitmotif



Though motivic and modal-tonal colors of leitmotifs are similar, Tigranian accomplished variety of melodic lines within a narrow frame of the small motivic cells. The melodies are not similar sounding and cannot be confused with each other. The fact that the melodic material is derived from the same motive prompted some critics to call it an “opera in G.” This view shows a one-sided look at the music. Ignored are the mode-intonational relationships deeply rooted in Armenian folk music (which was wrongly perceived as narrow in range and somewhat static or non-developing). Tigranian’s use of the *Hambartsum yayla* motive as a “building” material for almost all major leitmotifs proves his mastery in both classical opera and folk music.

A quick excursion into the construction of Armenian modes will explain the variety of melodic developments that Tigranian was able to achieve. As described by Komitas, Armenian modes are constructed by juxtaposition of tetrachords which in turn are based on segments of natural modes (mostly Dorian, Mixolydian and Lydian). As such, the last note of a preceding tetrachord acts as either a new tonic (*finalis*) or a secondary tone. In folk music the scale is not equal-tempered and the third degree of each tetrachord is slightly flattened (Ex. 12: horizontal brackets show the tetrachord construction and slanted lines show untempered flattened third degree of the tetrachord).

Example 12 Armenian Mode construction by tetrachord imposition



This scale structure does not rely on the notion of tonic and dominant but certain tones function as such or carry a function of a secondary tonic (called primary and secondary functions). It can be said that the scale is endless. The modes can change very rapidly yet stay within the same sound system. Depending on the location and repetition of primary or secondary tones which can move freely, the so-called “modulation” stays within the same sound system. In classical European music, modulation is an important prerequisite of complexity of music and the limited use of such a mechanism in modal music was believed to restrict the musical forms to smaller genres and to a seemingly narrow range of intonation.²⁰⁵ The underlying reason for such perceptions is the general tendency of peasant song to be in a small form and narrow vocal range yet the instrumental music obliterates those constrictions. Komitas consistently proved that tetrachordal construction of Armenian modes presents an unlimited sound system.

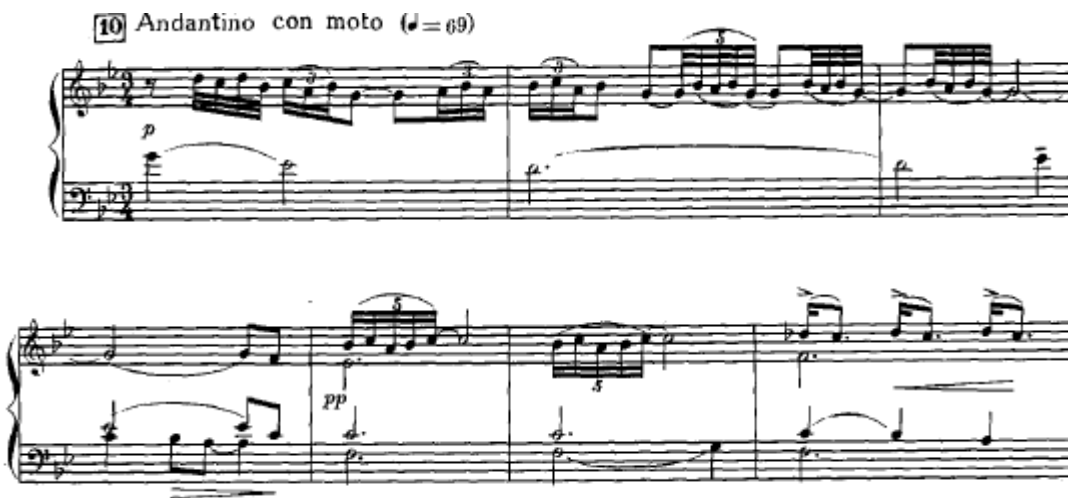
Tigranian's superb mastery of Armenian modal systems and ease of improvising on traditional music, yielded a well-developed composition technique which helped him navigate through the classical genre without the weight of artificiality and labored juxtapositions.

²⁰⁵ Geodakian, *Puti formirovania armianskoi muzikalnoi klassiki*, 133.

Saro's Serenade

The first solo piece of the opera is Saro's *Serenade* (Act 1, Scene 1). As mentioned in earlier chapters, to introduce the first song of the poem, Tumanian interrupts his own "soliloquy" with the words: "Sus... aka' nj ara,— hovivn e kanchum..." (Hush! Hearken! The shepherd is calling...).

Example 13 Tigranian, *Anush*, Act One, Scene One, #10, introduction to Saro's Serenade



Recalling Komitas' explanations of peasant vocal music categories, *kanchel* (calling) meant to chant in an embellished, stylized manner and sung with high voice and ornate flourishes.²⁰⁶

Tigranian wrote the vocal part of Saro for a young tenor. The serenade is melismatic with a feeling of unmeasured time flow. Tigranian achieved the improvisatory flow by metric shifts from 3/4 to 4/4. The sense of free improvisation is also conveyed by shifting note values from dotted halves to triplets of varying rhythmic figures and speed. A skilled Armenian singer, though

²⁰⁶ Komitas: *Essays and Articles*, 104.

following the clearly outlined rhythm of the song, would know how to naturally treat the melismatic figures. The secondary “tonal” centers are established by moving from G center to notes C and D.

Example 14 Tigranian, *Anush*, Saro’s Serenade, Act one, Scene one, #21

21 Moderato (♩ = 92)

ԱՐՈՅԻ ՍԵՐԵՆԱԴԱՆ (Arroyi Serenadani) СЕРЕНАДА САРО

Agh - chi an - ast - vats

- սիր - քր - տա - նիւմ. Ի՞նչ ես դուք գի -
 - крой - ся вша - тер, ТОМ - ЛЮБ, ЛИШЬ ТЕ -

Tigranian marks the score as “Saro’s Serenade” thus underlining the minstrel nature of the song with a lost sense of comfort and unfulfilled desires. In folk music, Manuk Abeghian would classify it as an “unhappy” love song or *lalik*, typically sung solo with free rhythm and structure.

Tigranian is keenly attuned to the shifting rhythms and rhymes of the song in the poem; it is not so much an attempt at word coloration as a general feeling and colors that the national intonation possesses. Tigranian is quite true to Armenian music which usually is not pictorial but

rather expresses the mood of the words. The Armenian language does not place importance on the order of the noun and verb, therefore the intonation and pitch fluctuations play a role in clarifying whether it is a question, a statement, or an exclamation. In this sense, Tigranian brings the natural intonation of speech to influence a melody line (which occurs naturally in folk singing as well).

In his writings, Komitas discusses the different ways of singing such as “intoning” the words where the text dominates music when the singer feels the need to convey particular information. The words “Ashug es shinel, chem hangestanum” (You made me a minstrel, and I cannot rest) are emphasized with the first melismatic quintuplet reflecting the ashug style of improvisatory melismas. Where Tumanian has an accent or a stop in the poem, Tigranian shifts the “anchor” *finalis* notes (in this first serenade notes C and D) to reflect the poem’s rhythm. Even though Komitas described the independence of metric rhythms in Armenian folk songs from the speech accentuation, the rhythmic word accentuation brings out the poetic beauty and the musical prosody of the words.

In the poem, the rhythm speeds up midway into the stanza, shortening the lines into two-word lines and tightened rhyming in nervous impatience (to show the original rhyming, the endings are highlighted in bold script). It also coincides with Saro’s direct descriptive reference to himself or to Anush (Anush’s descriptive sections follow in the subsequent two verses not shown).

Aghji, anastvats, nestir ver**anum**,
Inc es durs galis, khelkamahg **anum**,
Ashugh es shinel, chem hangest**anum**,
Khagher **kapelov**,

O Godless maiden, sit inside your tent,
Why do you come out to drive me insane?
You have made me a minstrel and I cannot
rest:

Choler chapelov,
Vochkhares **anter**,
Inkel em **hander**

Weaving my songs,
I roam about the wilds;
Unattended have I left
My sheep in the fields.

In the opera, the change of the rhythm is marked with a clear change of the meter from free flowing 3/4 and 4/4 to a steady 3/4 (which would be conducted in one) with a change from *Moderato* to *Più mosso* and getting more and more excited with each reiteration.

Interpolated through Saro's serenade is a dialogue between Anush and her mother (in Tumanian they are separated; first, it is Saro's song, then the mother-daughter dialogue).

Example 15 Tigranian, *Anush*, Act One, Scene one, #24, Anush's dialogue with mother

ԱՆՈՒՇ ԱՆՄՍ

24 Allegretto (♩=104)

En ov er, na - ni, vor kan - chum er mez,

pp *grazioso*

*) „անի” — мать (народное выражение)

Tigranian's interweaving" of Saro's aria with the mother and daughter dialogue, shows a psychological interpretation of the characters with musical means. Saro's serenade displays improvisatory freedom and some change of the mood. The mother's response is the same in each reiteration, showing her strong beliefs. Anush displays a wide gamut of emotions and dramatic change from one part of the song to the next. Anush's and her mother's musical dialogue traces a natural intonation present in regular Armenian speech and in the poem. Tigranian follows the Armenian intonation of question mark falling on the second word "En **Ov** er, nani" (**Who** is it,

nani). Tigranian set the scene as it would have occurred in a village setting where a conversation could continue while somebody is singing because the “singer” does not perform for an “audience.”

***Bardzr sarer* (Tall mountains).**

Saro’s second aria is a *bayati*, *Bardzr sarer* (Act 5, Scene One). Tired and lonely Saro agonizes about his love and the irresolvable situation that he is in. Once again, lament is permeating the underlying mood of the *bayati*. In Tumanian it is “Dzen em tali, vai sarer, duk el indz het dzen tvek” (I am /singing to you, mountains, talk/sing back to me to ease my pain). If we recall one of the meanings of *dzen tal* (lit. give voice, join voices with lamenter) in laments, it implies crying and lamentation by a group of lamenters, thus, Saro calling all to lament with him.

Example 16 Tigranian, *Anush*, Saro's aria *Bardzr sarer*, Act Five, Scene One, #2

(♩ = 63)

2 **ԱՅՔԱ** (բնիկ հեռուից): **ՇԱՐՁ** (ա սուսով).

Bar - dzr sa - rer, ay, sa - rer,

Անձ Լս աւ - լի վայ, մի - ընդ,
Вас я зо - ву, вай, мой край,

3 **ԴԻՄ Է՛ ԻՍԱ ԲԵ** **ԱՆՁ ՏՐ - ՎԵՐ,**
я жду от - вет здесь от гор,

The key of D is strongly affirmed with consistent interplay of the raised seventh C# resolving into D (Saro's first song-serenade in Act One is also anchored around D but with a secondary tonic in G, creating a different sound quality though the motives are similar).

Tumanian's *bayati* consists of four stanzas, each four lines long and seven syllables per line. The first, second, and fourth lines have strong rhymes with repetition of the words such as *sarer* (mountains), and by rhyming several syllables such as "arats" and "bezarats." The orchestra persistently plays the leitmotif of Saro's fate while Saro's vocal part is the *bayati*. It is in the style of *antuni* with many melismas in the ashug style of singing, as Saro is still in love, still "ashug" with a burning heart, reminding us of his first song to Anush "I will take to the mountains and vanish." The aria's structural phrasings are long and reminiscent of open spaces and the grandeur of the mountains. It can be perceived as pictorial, but we can assume that by calling to the mountains to respond to him, an echo is what Saro expects to hear. Singing towards mountains affects the melody line and the breaks between the stanzas would give enough time to clearly hear the echo back. Strong rhyming and staying within the same sounds (such as "d" and "s") also would give an echo.

Understanding the poet's intent to give the young ashug-like lover the first word, Tigranian opens Acts One and Five with Saro's love songs as a significant component of Saro's image. After all, Saro's *bayati* is also a love song and he suffers because of his burning love for Anush. Both songs are integrally connected to each other in their improvisatory style, reflecting Saro's emotions at the moment. At the beginning of the poem, his love made him into a fearless *igit* (brave one) boldly reflected in the music of the orchestra. His second song is the desperate "deer in flight," with the orchestra playing the leitmotif of Saro's suffering and desperation in D minor.

***Ampi takits* (From under the clouds).**

With full conviction one might say that Tigranian's "Ampi takits" (Act One, Scene Two) has become a part of traditional Armenian music. This particular song can truly act as a "postcard" of traditional Armenian *parerg* (dance-song). This group scene with choral singing and dancing showcases some of the most beautiful music of the opera. In a unique manner, Tigranian was able to give the "people," the peasant, a character of his own. These group scenes not only bring grandeur to the operatic scenes, but act as equal to the main protagonists, voices.

In the poem, we read of all the group gatherings—during the water collection, Hambartsum, and the wedding, as happy. The poet generously uses epithets and adjectives to create the images of laughter and joy. They are exactly what Tumanian seemed to desire to convey in his poem: graceful, happy young women dancing and singing, and young *igit* images consistently connected to the hearts and souls of the young maidens. Tumanian gave a generous space in the poem for this category of music as an inseparable part of Armenian village life. Tigranian, with great mastery, showcased the common expansion of the song and dance that would take place if a good leader of song and dance would be present. Recalling the classifications of ritual songs, it can be said that "Ampi takits" can be looked at as a work song, a lyrical song or a *parerg* (dance-song). Usually, ritual songs would be sung by a group or a chorus, most often equal to the soloist and rarely in the accompanying role.

Tigranian greatly expanded all the large mass scenes that have any importance in the poem. Saro and Anush are an integral part of that larger group: there is no Anush and Saro if

there are no others. The breaking of *adat* is a break from the group and from everybody's morals (including Saro's and Anush's). Recalling Egiazarian's points, in Tumanian there is no protagonist against society because the moral codes are the same for all.

If we refer to Brutian's analysis of any *parerg* form, we see that the refrain is often sung at the beginning to set the subject and the mood of the song. The songs were named after the first line of the refrain. Tigranian's expansion of the "Ampi takits" with group singing, solo interludes, and dance has another tradition, described by Komitas as a *khagh*. If there was dancing during the *khagh*, it could often last for hours as many songs would be connected and the best singer would act as a kind of "conductor"/ organizer. The rest of the participants would listen to him or her with great attention and with amazing precision of memory and honed skills in improvisations would repeat and expand on the leader's cues.²⁰⁷ "Ampi takits" follows the general form of a traditional *parerg* with genuine colors, intonation, rhythmic variety, and changes of tempo.

Tigranian expands and at the same time contracts the "Ampi takits." The second scene of the opera is basically fully dedicated to this particular episode. Young women going to the springs to collect water (often a long trip) would go in groups and never alone and singing would accompany their trip all along. Expansion of the song happens with the needed repetitions of the refrains but also inserting solo sections sung by young women, something that would normally take place as part of group singing. The chain of songs would lead to a performance complete in its dramatic content and resolution, something Ataian labeled as national precursors of opera.²⁰⁸

Tumanian's text is in 8 /7 syllabic lines in five stanzas following general strophic form. The form of Tigranian's *parerg* is strophic with a clear meter and rhythm typical for the peasant

²⁰⁷ Shahverdian, *Komitas*, 132.

²⁰⁸ Ataian, *Komitasakan*, 47-8.

chorus singing and dancing. In the opera, the song starts with the chorus refrain “Ampi takits jure gali” setting the mood and style of the song. The first reiterations of the song are all directly connected to Anush while the later expansions are group or solo continuations of the song by other young women (not present in original poem) in contrast to Anush. To emphasize that the first refrains are directed at Anush, her solo dramatically changes the feeling of the song with the first change from 4/4 *Moderato* of the chorus beginning to 3/4 *Andantino con moto*.

Example 17 Tigranian, *Anush*, Ampi takits, Act One, Scene Two, #37

Ա.Յ.ՏԻԿՆԱՆԻ ԽՈՐ ԴԵՅՄՈՒՔ

a tempo (բեմի վրանից) (առ կուսանալով)

pp

Am - pi ta - kits jur e - ga - lis dosh-e ts - lis

a tempo

ppp

փր - փր - ցա՛ւ, Լի ու՛ր շնո՛ւ Է: Երի - անձ լի - լի
 ւե - րե՛ծ - րե, ա՛հ, չե՛յ յը*՝ տա՛մ տա՛կ ըն - ձ - ւո՛ւ

Example 18 *Ampi takits*, Anush's solo interlude, # 39

39

Andantino con moto (♩ = 84) Հայտնվում է Անուշը հորձե առի՛ն: Появляется Ануш с кувшином. *mf* ԱՆՈՒՇ ԱՆՈՒՇ

Yarab -

ԱՂԱՅԻՆՈՐԻ ԽՈՐ ԴԵՅՄԵԿ

poco rit.

- րար ա՛նի - ցա՛մ ա՛նի - քանի ցա - լի ջի - քա - ռի,
 за - бы́ла - ся бо́ль и жа́ж - ду у - то - лия.

ջի - քարնի ե - կա՛մ ա՛նի - ցա՛մ: Վա՛յ լի, լի,
 про - шёл, спа - лён, сож - жён. Ва՛յ! ле, ле,

poco rit.

էր - ված ջի - քարնի ե - կա՛մ ա՛նի - ցա՛մ, լի - լի,
 при - шёл, про - шёл, вай, ле, про - шёл, вай - ле,

In the Armenian language, the question mark is written as an open circle “^o” and is placed over the last vowel of the question word, which can be any word. The tone rises in natural speech on the question word (a leap of a fourth or fifth). In Tigranian, the music follows the rise of the intonation as well. Anush's solo is all questions with the word *yarab* repeated at each turn with the same musical intonation. She sings “Yarab²⁰⁹ khmec'..., yarab hove'av..., / Yarab

²⁰⁹The word *yarab* is a colloquial old word used mostly in old songs and means ‘whether’ or ‘indeed’.

hove'av..., yarab anc'av..." (Did he drink..., did it cool? / Did it cool, did it pass?). Tigranian treats Anush's solo differently from the rest of the solo and chorus antiphony. First, he combines the third and fourth stanzas into one. The third stanza is sung by Anush "yarab khmets" which is the question "did he drink?" and the fourth stanza is sung by the chorus as an answer "ko yarn ekav antsav" (your lover came and walked away) in a polyphonic layering between two groups of the chorus. The emotionality is heightened with restlessness in combining the question and answer in solo and double chorus in polyphony, which is hidden in layering the choral answer with Anush's solo. It also separates the moment out of general homophonic progression into independent lines.

If we compare the rest of the scene with different solo and dance numbers preceding one another, putting the most important "answer" stanzas (the third and fourth) together indeed acts as a climactic moment of genuine emotion. Moreover, an important line is omitted from the poem's answer in the fourth stanza, "chhovatstav pagh jrov" (chilled waters did not cool it). In her nervous anticipation to meet Saro, Anush cannot and does not need to hear the answer from the group while she is asking her questions. The fifth stanza, which is the answer to all four previous question-verses, is omitted as well. For the rest of the solo interludes, dance numbers and chorus singing the refrain "Ampi takits" Tigranian keeps the chorus line in pure monophonic style.

To summarize, in Tigranian's "Ampi takits" one can note that within a large expansion of a group scene at the water spring with the addition of many songs and dance numbers, Anush's solo condenses the original five stanza song (from the poem) into a four stanza song with omitted last lines, leaving a sense of the unfinished, in the restless moment of eagerness. The group is emotionally set apart from Anush, something that we see once again later on during *jan giulum*

singing (where the poet at some moment puts in brackets “Anush alone” while the rest are singing around her). Anush’s solo “Ampi takits” is the only time when the chorus is not singing in unison and splits into two polyphonic groups, thus marking this as a very special moment. Tigranian ends the scene of “Ampi takits” with Anush singing *Akh, im bakhte kanchum e indz* (Oh, my destiny is calling me) which in the poem takes place at the end of *jan giulum* (Canto the Second) where we read “Anush alone.”

Such a sensitive reading of the poem by Tigranian resulted in an effortless treatment of the songs as extensions of true feelings and a genuine response to the feelings of others, and not as mere performance of songs or presentation of songs. It also consistently puts an image of Anush as separated from the group, something that the poet might have suggested by calling the poem by her name only.

The rebirth of Tumanian’s poem in the opera *Anush* is fascinating to uncover. The wedding scene, the lament of the mother, the madness of Anush and many other scenes showcase the depth of Tigranian’s understanding of each and every line of the poem and its musical language. Tumanian’s words “There, too, had descended the shepherds young, / To look at the maidens, to dance and to wrestle” come alive in the wedding scene of the opera which in itself is a celebration of traditional dance and song and their ancient roots. The scene of Anush’s madness is a kaleidoscope of folk songs from *lalik* and *khagh* to lament and lyrical. This is the scene that was suggested to Tigranian to be cut but the composer fought for it to stay; He fought for Tumanian who gave Anush an opportunity to openly lament in her last madness scene; to lament her fate, to tell of her love, and mourn the loss of the beloved one.

Komitas and his opera *Anush*



Figure 4: Komitas Vardapet (1865–1935)

*The roots of our music date to antiquity
and to the very origin of the Armenians, to a
time when music flourished inseparable
from its creators; now it comes back to
us.²¹⁰*

Komitas

Komitas Vardapet (born Sghomon Sghomonian²¹¹, 1869–1935) is considered to be a founder of classical Armenian music. He was an ordained priest, pedagogue, choir director who possessed a beautiful voice, a composer, and most importantly a musicologist who is credited with preserving the music of Western Armenia, which otherwise would have been lost after the Turkish massacres of 1915 as Western Armenia ceased to exist. Komitas was well-educated and proficient in the European classical traditions. He studied under the tutelage of Richard Schmidt,

²¹⁰ Komitas, *Komitas: Essays and Articles: the Musicological Treatises of Komitas Vardapet* (Pasadena, Calif.: Drazark Press, 2001), 11. From published letter by Komitas written in Berlin in 1898.

²¹¹ In 1894, Sghomonian was ordained a *Vardapet* – a celibate priest (or monk)– and renamed himself Komitas after a seventh-century religious poet. In 1895, Komitas was elevated to archimandrite.

Max Friedländer, Heinrich Bellermann, and Oskar Fleischer in Berlin from 1896 to 1899 and graduated from Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm University with a doctorate in musicology. In September of 1899, Komitas returned to Etchmiadzin²¹² and started teaching music in the seminary implementing new standards of excellence in singing and music education. He also initiated systematic serious research of folk and church music and began working on the transcribing of Armenian *khaz* (neumes) as well as the theory of *eghanak* and *dzayn* (melody and voices or tones).²¹³ Komitas visited many countries giving choir concerts and lectures on Armenian music. These activities took away from his other commitments and strained his relationship with the church officials, eventually leading Komitas to send a letter to the Catholicos²¹⁴ asking to release him of his duties. The letter remained unanswered and in 1910, Komitas decided to leave Etchmiadzin for Constantinople (Istanbul) with hopes of continuing

²¹² Etchmiadzin (Vagharshapat) is one of the historic capitals of Armenia and the main religious center of the Armenian people with the the main cathedral *Mayr Tatchar Surb Etchmiadzin* (Mother Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin) located in the center of the city. It is one of the oldest cathedrals in the world built by St. Gregory the Illuminator in 301–303 when Armenia became the first nation in the world to adopt Christianity as a state religion. *Mayr Tatchar* is a part of bigger complex of churches (almost all of them part of UNESCO World Heritage sites); it houses the administrative headquarters of Armenian Apostolic Church and it is Pontifical residence of Catholicos of All Armenians.

²¹³ In a footnote to his translation of Komitas' "Armenian Ecclesiastical Melodies," Vatche Barsumian explains the meaning of the words "melody" and "voice" or "tone" in relation to Church Modes as described by Komitas. He writes: "In the Eastern church, the system of tonal classification of melodies were referred to as *tones*, *dzayns* (Armenian), or *echoi* (Syrian and Byzantine), corresponding to the system of Church modes of the Roman chant. The eight tones (*out'dzayn*, *oktoechos* as they were called collectively) differed from the modes in that they were not abstract scale formations but melodic formulas (melody types) that included the characteristic features (tonic, cadential endings, stereotyped figures, typical progressions, ornamentations, rhythmic patterns) of all the melodies written in that *tone*." *Komitas: Essays and Articles*, 135.

²¹⁴ Catholicos (the full title is Նորին Սրբութիւնն Ծայրագոյն Պատրիարք և Ամենայն Հայոց Կաթողիկոս, His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians) is the spiritual leader of all Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Christians.

folklore research, organizing concerts as well as plans to work on own pieces including his *Anush* and *Sassna Tsrer* (Daredevils of Sassun). In April 1915, Komitas was arrested by Ottoman government along with other Armenian prominent public figures and deported to the mountains where he witnessed the brutal extermination of his compatriots. Witnessing the Turkish atrocities, Komitas had a mental breakdown from which he never recovered and spent twenty years in a psychiatric ward in France, where he died in 1935.²¹⁵

No aspect of Armenian music can be discussed without looking at Komitas' teachings, collected work, and his generous soul that has left a historic mark on generations of Armenian musicians. His work is like a prism that every so often all Armenian composers must pass through to "cleanse," to understand, and to get "anchored" in their roots.

To understand the unmatched heritage of Komitas (there were quite a few other ethnomusicologists who also collected and analyzed thousands of pieces) we can look at his methods of collection, classification and theoretical analysis. We know that Komitas had great interest in Armenian instrumental music, dance, ashug and gusan music, etc., but the large bulk of his work was directed at collecting folk songs—songs of peasants that originated in the village. All the other forms mentioned have ancient origins and often were refined art forms created by

²¹⁵ The true facts of the continuous presence and death of Komitas in psychiatric institutions in France still remain unresolved. A specialist of two Paris psychiatric clinics, Louise Fauve-Hovhannessian, established that Komitas was not mentally ill and did not suffer from schizophrenia. A group, the so-called "Komitas Assistance Committee," deceived him into believing that the International Music Association had invited him to make a report at the congress in Paris and become a member of that Association, which prompted Komitas to take the long trip to France. A young man by the name Gevorg Kamlamaian, a stranger to Komitas, a student traveling on the same ship, on the instructions of the Committee took Komitas to a mental hospital and put his name down as a warrantor. On the recommendation of a Turkish military doctor from Istanbul (where he was imprisoned for four years from 1915 to 1919), in 1919, Komitas was admitted into a mental clinic in Paris. In August 1922, he was relocated to another institution where he died in 1935. Virtual Museum of Komitas, "Komitas' Illness: Myth and Reality," <http://www.komitas.am/eng/illness.htm> (accessed October 26, 2013).

professional musicians. The folk song, on the other hand, is the true snapshot of a national character. For Komitas, the song exists only in conjunction with traditions, place and lifestyle. Shahverdian writes that Komitas came close to identifying the aesthetic principles of internal unity of music and word in the song.²¹⁶ In Shahverdian's summary, "Folk song to Komitas [is] a complex synthetic art combining the expressiveness of a melody and words, and often a movement (dance, game)."²¹⁷

Komitas says: "It is impossible to separate the words from the music, because in the creative thinking of a 'librettist' and 'composer' they achieve complete unity."²¹⁸ Therefore it is not inconceivable that Komitas viewed the poem *Anush* as a song and that song, in turn, as a poem. In short, Komitas' attention to text, music, movement and place as an inseparable and living entity connected to its local mentality, ensured a comprehensive grasp and presentation of the piece. By taking into consideration all aspects of peasant musical creativity, he helped demarcate Armenian modes and intonations and presented them as unique.

The surviving excerpts from Komitas' opera *Anush* present a comparative interest, though to a lesser degree since not much of the actual material of Komitas' opera survives to allow for conclusive opinions about the quality of Komitas' experiment with writing Armenian opera rooted in traditional forms.²¹⁹ From Komitas' notes, we know that he was deeply interested in writing an opera fully born and grown out of folk music; however, in his correspondence, Komitas never used the word "opera" in connection to his *Anush*. This suggests that though the

²¹⁶Alexander Shahverdian, *Komitas i armianskaia muzykalnaia kultura*, 128.

²¹⁷Ibid., 164.

²¹⁸Ibid., 164-165.

²¹⁹Robert Ataian, *Komitasakan*, 47.

ideal of writing an opera might have preoccupied his mind, he might have abandoned the idea of *Anush* as such.²²⁰

At different times, Komitas had planned and worked on music with theatrical settings: a historical opera *Vardan* about the fifth-century general Vardan Mamikonian, an epic-heroic opera *Sassna Tsrer* (Daredevils of Sassun), a comic musical production of *Kaghakavarutian vnasnere* (Harm from Courtesy) by Hakob Paronian (1843–1891, a satirical writer), and the lyrical opera *Anush*.²²¹

Komitas met Tumanian in 1904 while working on *Anush* and stayed in close communication with the poet throughout the years. In Komitas' letter to Mariam Tumanian, dated January 2, 1904, we read of his first interest in *Anush*. Most likely, considering this letter and many others addressed to her, she was the one who suggested the work and the idea of opera to Komitas. He writes, "I read 'Anush' of Mr. H. Tumanian and found it truly *anush* (delightful).²²² I am ready to fulfill your request..."²²³ The next one from Komitas to Tumanian, expressing a desire to work together on *Anush*, is dated May 24, 1908²²⁴—the year Armen Tigranian hears the poem and is fully captivated with an idea to start a national opera.

Although infrequent, their meetings were deeply personal and they eagerly showed to one another their work and plans. Komitas often sang folk songs for Tumanian and played parts from his work *Anush*, which means that Tumanian most likely highly approved of it. Judging

²²⁰ Ibid., 49.

²²¹ Shahverdian, *Komitas*, 340 (in commentaries to the book).

²²² Komitas intentionally used both meanings of *anush* as a female name and as an adjective meaning sweet, delightful, fragrant.

²²³ Shahverdian, *Komitas*, 311.

²²⁴ Ibid., 312.

from recollections of many, this appears to be case. For example, Mariam Tumanian,²²⁵ a friend and benefactor of the poet noted that “[Komitas] wrote quite a bit for his opera and even played a few pieces at my house to my great delight.”²²⁶ During one of those meetings Komitas sang a folk tune *Es saren kugai, dun dur batsir* (I came from the mountains, you opened the door). The mesmerized poet repeated the quatrain from the song and immediately said, “What a beautiful comparison! What a depth and clarity..! With great love I would sign my name under such precious quatrain.”²²⁷

Es mi chor tsar ei,
Dun garnan arev,
Qo sirov tsaghketsav
Im tchughn u terevn...²²⁸

Parched tree was I,
You—spring sun,
From your love did bloom,
My leaf and stem.

Komitas suggested to Tumanian to add the cries of the women for the funeral scene with reference to folk songs the author could use. He even asked Tumanian to remove any accidental use of Turkish words (which in some villages were used as Armenized but are known as Turkic) and to visit Lori and research his description of events and rituals. He said, “I could even visit your village [Tumanian’s] and write down and analyze intonations of the local dialects.”²²⁹

Unfortunately, a significant part of the opera by Komitas has been lost, and so far any attempts to find it have been unfruitful. The existing material reflects a work influenced by traditional Armenian intonation and rhythms. Leitmotifs or melodic dependency on motivic

²²⁵ Princess Mariam Tumanian (1870-1946) was a patroness of Hovhannes Tumanian and publisher of his works. Most likely, Miriam and Hovhannes were related because the Tumanians are descendants of the royal family of Tumanians.

²²⁶ Ataian. *Komitasakan*, 42.

²²⁷ Ghazarian, “*Anushi*” *steghtsagortsakan patmutiune*, 67. Ghazarian cites the original source from Aram Inchikian and Pion Hakobian eds., *Tumaniane zhamanakakitsneri husherum*. Erevan: Haykakaan SSH GA Hrat., 1969, 573-574.

²²⁸ “Ես մի չոր ծառ էի, / Դուն, գարնան արև, / Քո սիրով ծաղկեցալ / Իմ ճուղն ու տերև.”

²²⁹ Ataian. *Komitasakan*, 47.

developments are either absent or not of major importance. However, in numerous notes Komitas mentions that in the orchestration he was planning to fully use leitmotif-like developments. How much of the orchestration existed is unknown, so any conclusions as to how it might have sounded along with traditional songs are difficult to draw.²³⁰

From the surviving parts that are in archives,²³¹ we can infer that Komitas used existing folk song melodies for the parts of the poem where Tumanian has traditional songs or rituals (such as Saro's love song and *jan giulum* and others) and composed his own melodies (such as *Asum en urin* "They say the willow tree") for any sections pertaining to the "telling" parts. This approach matches Tumanian's language very closely; the sung sections have colloquial expressions, dialect and mannerisms along with distinctive syllabic structure and accentuation. In short, for the direct word-songs, the language of the author is colloquial, thus for those parts Komitas freely used existing folk songs that fit the words very well. Comparing the unfinished snippets from the opera of a musician who spent most of his productive years as a mature composer in a mental institution (possibly by force) to Tigranian, who has seen a great success and support of the public (without even mentioning the many revisions that "chiseled" the opera into the great sculpture jewel it is now), can only be done if looked at in their connection to the poem. Komitas first and foremost looked at music as an ethnographer. Possibly, when reading

²³⁰ Ataian, *Komitasakan*, 52.

²³¹ To my knowledge, no printed score of Komitas' *Anush* exists. All information regarding this work was obtained from an article, *Komitasi "Anush" anavart operai urvagrere* (Prospectus of Komitas' unfinished opera *Anush*) by Robert Ataian published in *Komitasakan*, ed. Robert Ataian (Erevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hrat.), 1981. The musical examples given in the article were transcribed from handwritten notes and the author mentions that work is ongoing to publish all available sections in a comprehensive edition. The original handwritten Komitas' fragments are kept in Eghishe Charents Museum of Arts and Literature in Erevan. In the above-mentioned article, Ataian gives nineteen examples of various songs from the scene of lament of fairies to the scene of Anush' madness. There are also three facsimiles of Komitas' handwritten scores. This is the only publication that contains fragments of Komitas' *Anush* as well as his direct notes and directions in regard to the production.

the poem, the beloved songs and rituals would become associated with sounds dear to his heart and forms that enveloped his whole being. Possibly, it was not so much Anush's and Saro's suffering and tragedy that captivated Komitas' mind but the plethora of rituals with song and dance of the villagers—the second collective character of Tumanian's poem which is presented with the same importance and presence as Saro and Anush throughout the poem. The musicality of the language and of Tumanian's rhythms of poetic verse fully rooted in traditional song no doubt would captivate Komitas as well.

Both composers used Armenian modal intonations and all other aspects of musical traditions to the fullest extent. Komitas' intonations and rhythmic figures resemble more a pure folk style. The scarcity of available material does not allow for a conclusive interpretation of key and mode relationship and for understanding this sample as a classical opera because Komitas seemed to intentionally refrain from homophony-based harmony.

Tigranian's mentality was that of a composer. He clearly read the poem as a tragic lament. He tends to use minor scales with augmented seconds, which are prevalent in Armenian music. The concept of leitmotif plays a dominant role in operatic form with their easily recognizable melodic cells, thus giving the listener aural–visual associations. Each and every leitmotiv in Tigranian's *Anush* is highly memorable and all of them, though closely related, have a very different sound. What for Tigranian was a dramatic, passionate and tragic love story worthy of operatic drama, was for Komitas a pure, rather simple love story reflected in common folk songs. Whether Komitas planned to have any type of overture or not is unclear. His clean, handwritten notebooks containing some of his opera's music start with fairies singing “Ekek kuirer” (Come, sisters) as in the poem. Poetic and musical parts are in mellifluous harmony in a calm and pure melody.

Example 19 Komitas. *Anush*, Fairies lament “Ekek kuirer”

[illegible]

The lament of fairies, especially the last quatrain of “Vush, vush, Anush,” is similar in the colors and rhythmic figures to Tigranian’s. Ataian described Komitas’ “Vush, vush, Anush” as unusual, akin to the romantic mysticism of German composers like Weber and Wagner (whom Komitas greatly admired), or of “extraterrestrial” sounds.²³²

²³² Ataian, *Komitaskan*, 58.

Example 20 Komitas, *Anush*, Fairies lament “Vush, vush, Anush”

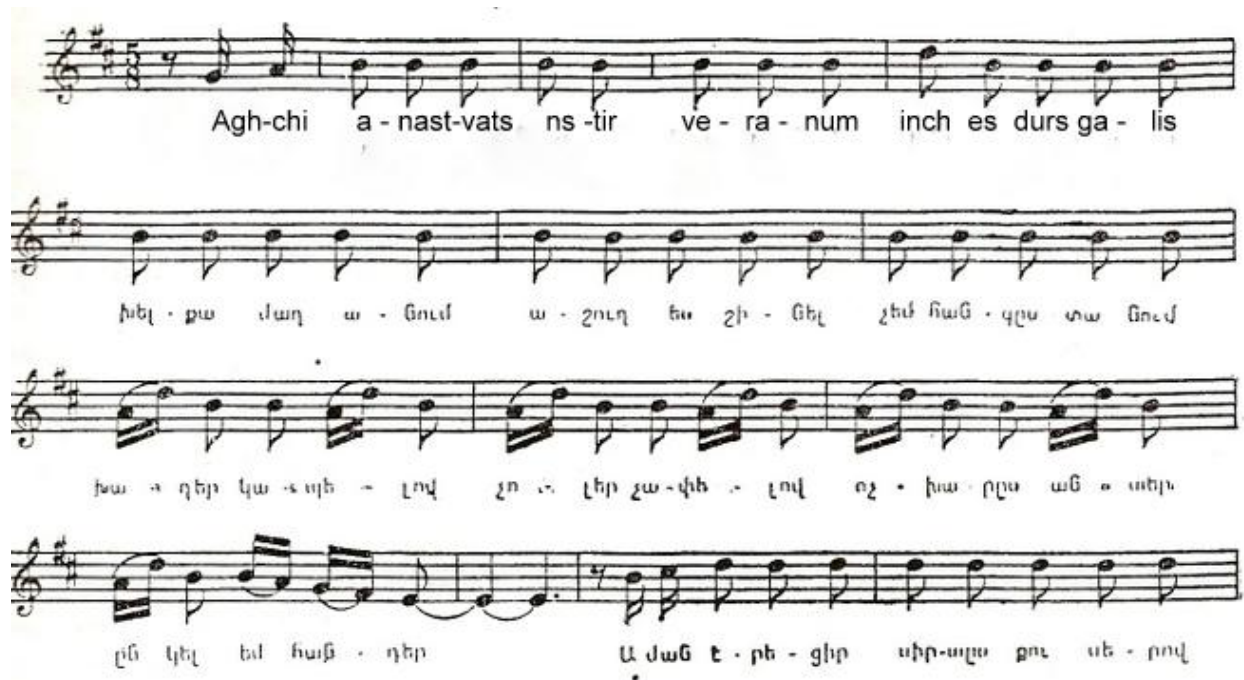
Example 20 is a musical score for Komitas' *Anush*, Fairies lament. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has two staves, S (Soprano) and A (Alto). The lyrics are: Vush - vush, A - nush, vush - vush, ku - rik, vush, ku. The second system also has two staves, S and A. The lyrics are: ut - phfi, qn'2 - qn'2, qn'2, ju - phfi, qn'2 - qn'2... The music is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Example 21 Tigranian, *Anush*, Overture, Fairies' lament “Vush, vush, Anush” # 6, mm 4-7

Example 21 is a musical score for Tigranian's *Anush*, Overture, Fairies' lament. It is marked Andante (♩ = 66). The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two systems. The first system has four staves: S (Soprano), A (Alto), T (Tenor), and B (Bass). The lyrics are: Vush vush, A - nush, vush vush, ku - rik. The second system has two staves: S and A. The lyrics are: ut - phfi, qn'2 - qn'2, qn'2, ju - phfi, qn'2 - qn'2... The music is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano part is marked *pp* (pianissimo).

Saro's first song is also quite telling about how Komitas envisioned the characters. For the melody, Komitas uses a Kurdish melody played on *sring*²³³ called "lur-ga-lur" (music of Armenian and Kurdish shepherds share common elements).

Example 22 Komitas, *Anush*, Saro's Aria "Aghchi anastvats"



This particular song was played for Komitas on a violin and he wrote it down right on the spot.²³⁴ Ataian finds Komitas' choice to be true to Tumanian's melodism. He writes, "There is no single grandiloquent turn, no fashionable pattern expressions, no posing, but clear and immediate, full of young ardor, generously flowing with excitement, 'told' (not sung) melody"²³⁵ Variety and excitement are present only through modal and pitch level changes, while the rhythm stays in the same few patterns.

²³³ *Sring* is a shepherd's flute originating in Eastern Armenia. It is made from the wood of the apricot tree or cane and has seven or eight finger holes producing a diatonic scale.

²³⁴ Ataian, *Komitasakan*, 59.

²³⁵ Ibid.

Komitas' Saro is most likely a simpler character—a shepherd whose singing is less refined, a quasi-chanting manner versus the melismatic improvisatory ashug style serenade in Tigranian. What Komitas has is a simple *khagh*, a ditty. Saro sings “Khagher kapelov” (Weaving, [i.e., composing] ditties). Anush scolds Saro “Du sari lanjin khagher es kanchum” (Whereas you sing ditties on mountain slopes). The melodic contour of folk songs is natural and balanced and is close to spoken intonation; some songs can be perceived as melodized speech.

Tigranian, on the other hand, pays attention to the word “ashug”—an epithet Saro used to describe himself. As an ashug, his musical skills are in “weaving songs,” likely with a pleasant voice (we recall Anush's words: “Na galis er tsoghot, shaghot, / Hanaknerov u khaghev” (He would come with dew all over him / Full of [drollery]²³⁶ and songs).

For Saro's second song, *Bardzr sarer*, Komitas first used folk music²³⁷ but left it unfinished and wrote his own melody that carried more individual characteristics of Saro. He found the folk song unsuitable to the tragic tone of the moment. Example 23 is one of the versions composed by Komitas.

Example 23 Komitas, *Anush*, Saro's song *Bardzr sarer*.

²³⁶ “Hanaknerov” could also mean songs of a jocular nature which are very popular among the youth.

²³⁷ The melody is from the popular folk song “Esor urbat piter” (It should be Friday today). The original melody is a well-known ashug tune which is considered a melody that fits certain types of verse and as such has been used in all possible forms and with many different texts. Ataian, *Komitasakan*, 68.



Komitas often wrote (as he did this song) right in between the lines of the poem and remarked that there is no space for embellishments (grace-notes, melismas, etc). One has to look at these unfinished pieces with the understanding that either Komitas would write down melismatic details later (as he has done in many of his arranged songs which showcase a brilliant purity with beauty) or expect a singer to improvise some of them, as was customary in many solo folk songs.

There is another version of *Bardzr sarer*, written down by Komitas' student Hakob Hovhannisian. Yet another one may have been in the workings, therefore what would have been Komitas' final choice is unknown.²³⁸ Without an orchestral background, judging the tragic intonation within it is difficult.

If we compare Tigranian's *Bardzr sarer* in this instance, the orchestra plays a major role in the ominous leitmotif of Saro's suffering.

²³⁸ Ataian, *Komitasakan*, 69-70.

Example 24 Tigranian, *Anush*, Saro's aria *Bardzr sarer*, Act Five, Scene one, #1, mm. 1–5



The vocal line without the orchestral background would have a less tragic tone. Armenian monophonic folk music, especially of laments and *lalik*, has a plaintive, lamenting sound but not the tragic emotionality that multi-voiced (polyphonic or homophonic) music can add. It very well could be that Komitas had struggled with trying to find folk idioms to add to the dramatic sound of his *Anush*.

A better parallel can be drawn from the group song “*Ampi takits*,” as both composers would take their inspiration from common and, in a way, similar *parergs*.

Example 25 Tigranian, *Anush*, Chorus “Ampi takits,” Act One, Scene Two, # 37, mm. 1-6

a tempo *ppp* (բնժի հետևից) (за кулисами)

Am - pi ta - kits jur e ga - lis, dosh e ta - lis

a tempo *ppp*

pr - pr - um, իմ միջև լինի քան իմ հետևից լինի քան իմ հետևից

ax, чей яр* там так ры - да - ет

Example 26 Komitas, *Anush*, Chorus “Ampi takits”

a tempo *ppp*

Am - pi ta-kits jur e ga - li dosh e ta - li pr - pe - rum

ա՜մբի տակիտս յըր եղալի՜նք զոհ եղալի՜նք զոհ եղալի՜նք

ա՜մբի տակիտս յըր եղալի՜նք զոհ եղալի՜նք զոհ եղալի՜նք

ա՜մբի տակիտս յըր եղալի՜նք զոհ եղալի՜նք զոհ եղալի՜նք

Motivic and rhythmic similarities are based on step-skip patterns. Narrow skips of a third or fourth occur in the opening structures, usually upwards, followed by wave-like movement downwards. Most *parergs* have two *finalis*-like tones (Ex. 27, tones T1 and T2), which Geodakian considers to be one of the main ways the Armenian modes became rooted in trichords' and tetrachords' special relationship and their semantics.²³⁹

Example 27 Folk *Parerg* “Hop shurma” (Hop shurma)²⁴⁰

The musical score for "Hop shurma" is written in 5/8 time. It features four staves of music. The first staff is labeled 'T1' and the fourth staff is labeled 'T2'. The lyrics are written in Armenian below the notes. The melody is characterized by step-skip patterns and wave-like movement.

Melodic structures of all *parergs* are based on repetition of a rhythmic pattern. However, mixed meters, with different internal divisions, assure an endless variety in these dance form.

²³⁹ Georgi Geodakian, “Funktsionalnie sviazi tonov v zvukovisotnoi sisteme armianskoi narodnoi muziki” (Functional Tonal Relationships in Sound-Pitch System of Armenian Traditional Muzik). In *Traditsii i sovremennost: voprosi armianskoi muziki, kniga 2*, compiled by G. Geodakian (Erevan: Gitutsiun, 1996), 91 .

²⁴⁰ Brutian, *Hay zhoghovrdakan erazhshtakan steghcagorcutyun*, 192. The example is from musicologist H. Harutjunian’s collection of folk songs, no. 84.

They can be of different moods and tempos. Both pieces use duple meters with simple triplets for ornamentation, thus keeping a steady rhythm for the dancers to follow, ending on a half note.

Both follow Tumanian's eight-syllable line followed by a seven-syllable one (again, very typical folk poetic form, usually the other way around as 7+8). For his "Ampi takits" at measure seven, Komitas shifts the rhythm to a triple meter of 6/8. Such changes of meter create a variety of music and dancing—one of the reasons why *parergs* could last hours if the leader was skillful and the group was up to it on that particular day. Komitas used two well-known folk songs he previously arranged which reflect modal-intonational and rhythmical figures common to rural music forms. Tigranian thought of this number as more stylized for a stage piece. With steady duple rhythms only reserved for the chorus section, the shift to triple meter happens only at Anush' short solo.

For his *jan giulum*, as was mentioned earlier, Komitas used a popular song "Tsaghik unem narenji" (Flower I have, orange color).

Example 28 Folk song *Tsaghik unem narenji* (Flower I have, orange color)

Умеренно

Մա - դիկ սւ - նեմ նա - րեն - ջի. զան, ծա - դիկ, զան, զան,

այ ար - դա, տ - ռի փրմ - ջի. զան, զի - նակ, զան, զան,

իմ մե ռը նեգ ադ - ջիկ չի աւ. զան, ծա դիկ, զան, զան,

էա նի մանն զանա յա զան ջի. զան, զի նակ, զան, զան:

Tsaghik unem narnji,
Ja'n, tsaghik, ja'n, ja'n
Ay tgha ver ari p'nji,
Ja'n, vitwak, ja'n, ja'n.

I have a flower, orange color
Dear flower, dear, dear,
Hey lad, come over to weave
Dear fate, dear, dear.

Along with it he used a few other folk songs with different moods, most likely keeping it close to what he had frequently observed and heard in villages. They lack a dramatic conflict and as such do not add to the tragic anticipation and Anush's anxiety, which could be his personal reading of Tumanian and taking the celebrations of Hambartsum as a joyous event. There are almost no sad songs of *jan giulum*, though drawing a token with a bad omen was always possible in foretelling one's fate. Tumanian also refers to a few others having been dealt a bad hand.

We read:

The air is filled with song and hearts with joy;
They have formed a circle and are drawing lots;
The dream of love desired by one comes true,
The yearning of another remains in the heart.

The existing materials broaden our perception of Komitas as a composer interested in developing large musical forms. Along with musical sketches notated in Armenian notation, there are numerous notes describing scenes, events, instrumentation, sets and decorations, leitmotif developments in the vocal and orchestral parts and quite a few complete vocal numbers (without accompaniment). They all show the use of music of *gusans*, *ashugs*, town-songs and in some cases, full extracts of existing folk songs. There is no libretto found, and historians assume that Komitas wanted to use Tumanian's text in its entirety, with minor changes as he wrote most of his notations on the margins of the text (many in Armenian notation). Nevertheless, there are notes with sketches of the opening scene and detailed description of the first scene, which leads one to believe that Komitas planned a large-scale work and that orchestration was of major importance to him.²⁴¹

Conclusion

This study was set to explore the musical manifestations in Hovhannes Tumanian's poem *Anush* through folk songs, ashug style of storytelling, rituals and musical traditions. The main objective was to reveal the roots of the songs in the poem and their meaning, to analyze the

²⁴¹ Shahverdian, *Komitas*, 341-342.

influence of traditions on the fate of the protagonists and to show music as a powerful tool used by Tumanian in describing the characters.

Ancient Armenian theater, music, architecture, astronomy, etc., has close ties to Hellenic culture which is considered to be the cradle of Western civilization. Tumanian genuinely admired and studied in depth the great writers of the world and saw the traditions of his native Armenia not in contrast to other cultures but in close relationship to them. Tumanian's great desire was to see Armenian literature recognized as one of great ancient relics of history. It is my deepest belief that the rituals and songs beautifully expressed in Tumanian's language are a valuable addition to world literature. Furthermore, it is my sincere hope that the music deeply rooted in the poem and re-born in the opera overcomes any language barrier to reach the hearts of listeners across the world.

Tigranian's opera *Anush* has been a staple of the Yerevan Opera Theater program since its first premiere in 1935 and has enjoyed a strong popularity among the general public to the present day. It is one of the most frequently performed operas in Armenia.

One of the more significant productions of *Anush* outside of the former Soviet countries is by the Michigan Opera Theater in 1981 presenting the opera in a translated and abridged form thus giving the American public a wonderful opportunity to acquaint themselves with Armenian opera. In 2001, David DiChiera, the general director of Michigan Opera House, revived the production with a version in the original Armenian (in three acts by condensing some of the elaborate village scenes) with the hope of bringing the national opera to the American public. The beloved work of the two great Armenian masters, Tumanian and Tigranian, brought the Armenian "Romeo" and "Juliet" to the international scene.

The idea of preparing a production or even a concert version of Komitas' *Anush* has been a question that Komitas specialists (such as Ataian and Shahverdian) have been asked on many occasions. The underlining deep concern is that the unfinished work could leave wrong and unfair impressions.²⁴² It is not uncommon for an unfinished opera to be edited and finished by someone else, but in the case of Komitas the task would require monumental research. Ataian hopes that finding more material and special research will make it a feasible task in the future.

The two Armenian composers who have left an indelible mark on the development of Armenian music, Komitas and Tigranian, were Tumanian's greatest admirers. They shared the same dreams, ideals and hopes of saving Armenian folklore traditions from oblivion and created lasting masterpieces that inspire and uplift to this day. The three giants of Armenian culture brought to life a story of the peasant girl Anush who sacrificed her life for love. Whoever she was, along with her eternal name and her tragic story, the ancient traditions, superstitions, rituals, came alive in song and dance, in joy and mourning. Indeed, the music in the poetry becomes one with poetry in music.

²⁴² Ataian, *Komitasakan*, 42.

Appendix: Armenian Alphabet and Transliteration Table

The Armenian language is an ancient language representing an independent branch of the Indo-European family of languages. The alphabet consists of 38 unique characters and was developed in 405 AD by Mesrop Mashtots (Մեսրոպ Մաշտոց; 362–440), an Armenian theologian, linguist, historian, and hymnologist. Armenian is spoken by around six million people worldwide in two main dialects: Eastern Armenian (spoken in Armenia) and Western Armenian (used in western diaspora). To transliterate texts in this work I chose Eastern Armenian dialect as originally used by Tumanian. I applied a simplified transliteration in order to avoid using special characters and letters. Many phonemes in Armenian do not have a corresponding equivalent that can be written solely using Latin characters; therefore, I chose to use a Latin approximation. A transliteration was used only for selected parts of the poem *Anush* with the purpose of conveying a general form of the language, but at the same time, to minimize the burden on readers not familiar with the language.

Transliteration Table

Printed	Romanization	Pronunciation
Աս	Aa	f ather
Բբ	Bb	b ook
Գգ	Gg	g irl
Դդ	Dd	d oor
Եե	Ee	y es
Զզ	Zz	z oo

Էէ	Ee	al bow
Ըը	Ee	a bout
Թթ	Tt	te am
Ժժ	Zh zh	plea su re
Իի	Ii	be e
Լլ	Ll	lo ok
Խխ	Kh kh	Jo se or Ba ch
Ծծ	Ts ts	plosive “ts”
Կկ	Kk	sto ck
Հհ	Hh	hu mor
Ձձ	Dz dz	odds
Ղղ	Gh gh	French “ r ”
ՃՃ	Tch tch	plosive “tch”
Մմ	Mm	mo ther
Յյ	Yy	ye s
Նն	Nn	no ok
Շշ	Sh sh	sh ine
Ոո	Vo vo	vo cal
Չչ	Ch ch	ch air
Պպ	Pp	co pp er
Ջջ	Jj	J ay
Ռռ	Rr	rolle d “r”
Սս	Ss	sa y
Վվ	Vv	Vi ctor
Տտ	Tt	ro tt en
Րր	Rr	ro om
Յյ	Ts ts	lo ts
Փփ	Pp	pa per
Քք	Kk	ki d
Օօ	Oo	a ll
Ֆֆ	Ff	fo ot
Ու ու	Uu	to ol
Է	Ev	This last letter is a combination of the sounds “ye” and “v” and represents the word “yev” (and) when it is written by itself.

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