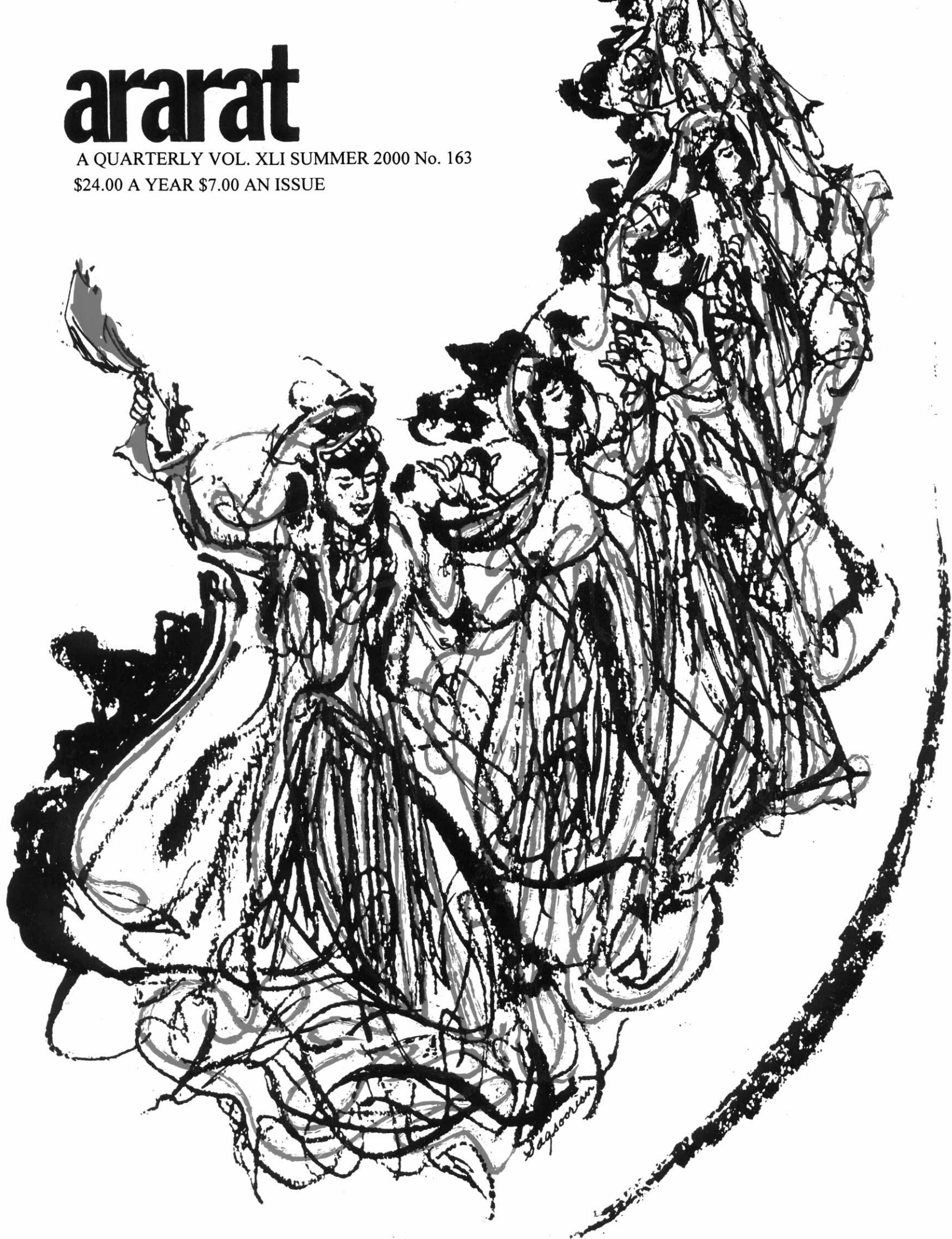


ararat

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Six Poems

by Michael E. Stone

ARAGATS

Masis from Aragats is scarce seen, hidden by high
day's haze.

Below, between, shining flashes off tin roofs,
Ararat's rich plain tween the two mountains.

There is much on Aragats.

We pass long empty villages,
turns marked white on the black tarred road.

Above the trees, Ambert's black bastion bulging
outward towers, broken, broken open.

Beyond, a church's path beaconing beflagged
bushes burning with faith and yellow rosehips.
Deep green gorges, and the bluish plain glimpsing
through haze below.

On to the top! High mountain pastures with nomad
herders;

electric pylons' horizontal scars cut green hills,
valleys' folds gouged by snow-melt's rock dregs,
dotted with flocks.

At the round blue cold crater lake below the peak
thin air, heart beats;
a bus turned coffee house shouting Coca Cola red
discord;
a heap of rubbish on a hairpin bend.
Height's cool; birds of prey hanging still in the air.

And then down, down to the plain again.

GOSHAVANK

An upper storey reaching wooden ramp
like a pictured ziggurat building (was it done so?).
This time's renovation, abandoned for a moment.

Within, tenebrous tremendum of sculpture of space;
a polygon drum playing God's tune with torque and
tower.

Mexitar's students' voices sounding in still memory
but dead, and learning is dead.

An outside wall,
a delicate decorative wall,
with false and arched deepset windows.

HAGHARTZIN

Dank dark soil, seated on rocks in the holy grove of
overhanging green.

Eating on the green high place with three xachars
sooted;
yellow candle drippings fluttering lit by Tigran's
lighter and a tree with votive rags.
Old sanctity and damp humus.

Sausage pink,
round brown bread flat scored on a flat mossy stone
white-yellow village cheese,

outside smooth and inside pumiced.

Like us.

MASIS FROM THE ARARAT PLAIN

Through the plain of Ararat it takes an hour
to drive from one side of Masis to the other.
It looks, this clichéd wonder;
always there and over there.

A plain with cows,
yellowed hay stretching
to the mountain's foot
in another country.

Green stripped watermelons,
summer's wintery ones,
heaped up at the roadside.

The Ark stopped there,
at Ichevan's otevan,
descent's khan.

Late afternoon's sun sends seen rays
through haze on the mountain's shoulder
like a Netherlandish painting.

Did Noah drink the wine of Areni?
He would have had to walk a bit.
Perhaps he tired and fell asleep
and look what happened!

SEVAN FROM THE NORTH

The Dilichan road winds up the mountain;
 lips of green thick forest curling back from the road's
 sharp tooth.
 A roadside oasis;
 spring water forced freezing into pipe.
 A palm across the pipe's end and cold water arcs into
 dry throat,
 but the palm is cold, very cold.
 A gas driven truck, its flatbed lying on metal bottles
 and the driver drinks.
 A soldier too.

Then on up, beyond the tree-line,
 yellow field's hay heaps newly hoarded
 and dung patties heat drying for the winter warmth.

I saw a vision on the crest between yellow and blue,
 between sleep and waking; or is it truly waking?
 With blue Sevan fading off into mist ahead;
 the promontory (once island),
 domes and drums scarce seen
 and incense lingering as the song of service fades.
 And Noratuz
 a petrified harvest of stone memories.

Sevan, Kegham's lake,
 Bluer than Galilee, turquoise like Hawaii's crater,
 darker patches like weathered skin; bigger too.
 Here and there merge.

The past burns through their convex glass,
 I'm at its focal point that blinds the eye.
 Now and then merge.



EGHEGNATZOR

High cliffs along the valley;
 The silk road guarded by a fort;
 A city's ruins;
 An open church on the cliff's shoulder
 for dead sentries who patrolled the ridge

Half-way up, a mule trail
 To crumbled monastery walls,
 Ruined cells.

Across the river, a graveyard.
 Rounded, long stones most buried in the ground.
 Some with ancient Hebrew on them,
 mute memories of a forgotten exile.
 The monastery opposite and the river.

An old, bent man came,
 "these stones are from another age" he said.

They are all still there:
 They Jews of that village,
 The caravans of the Asia merchants,
 The monks,
 The guards along the crenellated ridge.

Now a wedding feast in a village,
 Long tables of food and people,
 Talking, living.

We ate there,
 on a platform
 hanging over the water like the willow branches.
 And drank coffee.

