



EDITED BY KATHRYN BABAYAN AND MICHAEL PIFER

AN ARMENIAN MEDITERRANEAN

Words and Worlds in Motion

MEDITERRANEAN
PERSPECTIVES



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Kathryn Babayan • Michael Pifer
Editors

An Armenian Mediterranean

Words and Worlds in Motion

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Editors

Kathryn Babayan
Armenian Studies Program
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI, USA

Michael Pifer
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI, USA

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PREFACE

An Armenian Mediterranean: Words and Worlds in Motion represents a critical turning point in the study of Armenians. In its pages, a growing cohort of scholars charts new vistas by recasting the Armenian people as significant actors within the context of Mediterranean and World History. Our volume brings these scholars together with the explicit aim to rethink Armenian history, literature, and visual culture for both specialists and non-specialists alike.

An Armenian Mediterranean therefore exhibits a collaborative reimagining of how we might do Armenian Studies today, and it furthermore arrives at a watershed moment of reflecting on Armenian history: one hundred years after the genocide of 1915. This intervention in the study of Armenian history, literature, and the visual arts reflects an ongoing institutional effort made by the Armenian Studies Program at the University of Michigan. Over the last decade, the Armenian Studies Program at U-M has fostered a critical dialogue with emerging scholars around the globe through various workshops, conferences, lectures, and fellowships. Our volume represents the first time the Armenian Studies Program has collected these critical discussions in a monograph.

To continue in the spirit of fostering a new dialogue on Armenians in the Mediterranean world, this volume resists conventional periodization and frameworks based on the nation-state as a unit of analysis. Rather, we have chosen to organize the volume around a series of theoretical frames that span across the medieval, early modern, and modern eras. These frames, adapted to the heterogeneity of Armenian experience, are meant to broadly engage with contemporary scholarship in frontier studies,

connected and world history, comparative literature, trauma, memory, diaspora, and visual studies. Hence we aim not only to rethink Armenian Studies through Mediterranean Studies and World History, but also to make our theoretical approaches accessible to a diverse audience across the disciplines. The figure of the Armenian woman on the cover of this volume visually announces the disciplinary work we are undertaking. With her boots grounded firmly between Asia and Europe, she gazes at us as she points to the liminality of Armenians between land and sea. This volume is a response to her invitation to engage in other ways of doing Mediterranean Studies across multiple geographies and cultural landscapes.

Few scholarly attempts have been made to place Armenian history or literature within these larger frames, despite the large presence of Armenians in the Mediterranean region over the last millennium. This volume invites scholars and students of Armenian Studies and Mediterranean Studies, as well as those invested in world history, world literature, and critical theory to embark on a Mediterranean journey through Armenian words and worlds.

Ann Arbor, MI

Kathryn Babayan

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We owe a debt of gratitude to many collaborators and friends who encouraged this project in sundry ways. First and foremost, we wish to thank our colleagues in the Armenian Studies Program (ASP) at the University of Michigan, particularly Kevork Bardakjian, Ronald Suny, Melanie Tanielian, Hakem Al-Rustom, as well as ASP's current graduate students, Dzovinar Derderian, Jeremy Johnson, Ali Bolcakan, and Tuğçe Kayaal, and finally its recent Manoogian Postdoctoral Fellows, Christopher Sheklian, Maral Aktokmakyian, Yaşar Tolga Cora, David Low, Vahe Sahakyan, Alina Poghosyan, Ruken Şengül, and Murat Yıldız. Karla Mallette has also generously offered valuable advice and criticism at various stages of this project.

Our editors at Palgrave Macmillan, Megan Laddusaw and Christine Pardue, were enthusiastic about *An Armenian Mediterranean* from the beginning, and we are grateful for their meticulous work in guiding the volume to completion. We also wish to acknowledge Sharon Kinoshita and Brian Catlos's support of this volume as the editors of the *Mediterranean Perspectives* series.

Many sponsors and partners with ASP have enabled us to undertake this work. The Alex & Marie Manoogian Foundation and the Manoogian Simone Foundation have been instrumental in the growth of ASP over the decades; many of the contributors represented in this volume were either Manoogian Postdoctoral Fellows or entered into collaboration with ASP through various workshops and conferences that were sponsored in part through the Foundation. Similarly, the idea for this volume

first germinated as a result of the State of Armenian Studies project, which was sponsored by the Harry Ardashen Paul Memorial Fund and run by Gerard Libaridian, the former director of ASP.

We also wish to thank the Ptuj-Ormož Regional Museum, which kindly granted the rights to publish the late seventeenth-century oil painting “Armenian Woman” on the cover. Thanks are also due to Amron Gravett, of Wild Clover Book Services, who provided a thorough index to the volume.

Finally, we wish to thank our families for their considerate and continual support of us and of this work.

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

To render the pronunciation of Armenian words more accessible for a non-specialist audience, transliterations from Classical, Eastern, and Western Armenian follow the Library of Congress's system.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Sebouh David Aslanian is Associate Professor of History and the first holder of the Richard Hovannisian Endowed Chair of Modern Armenian History at the University of California, Los Angeles. Aslanian is the author of *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa, Isfahan* (2011), which received the PEN literary award for the most outstanding first book of the year from University of California Press (2011) as well as the Houshang Pourshariati Iranian Studies Book Award (2011) awarded by the Middle East Studies Association (MESA). He is currently completing a book manuscript titled *Early Modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers Across the Armenian Diaspora, 1512–1800*.

Kathryn Babayan is Associate Professor of Iranian History and Culture at the Departments of Near Eastern Studies and History. She is currently the Director of the Armenian Studies Program at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her expertise lies in the medieval and early-modern Persianate world and focuses on the cultural and social histories of Persian-speaking regions in which Islam was diversely “translated” in the processes of conversion. She is the author of *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (2003), which earned her honorable mention for the Saidi-Sirjani Book Award in 2004. Babayan has also co-authored *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavi Iran*, with Sussan Babaie, Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe, and Massumeh Farhad (2004), and co-edited with Afsaneh Najmabadi *Islamicate Sexualities: Translations Across*

Temporal Geographies of Desire (2008). She is currently working on a monograph that explores cultures of literacy in early modern Isfahan.

Marie-Aude Baronian is an Associate Professor in Film and Visual Culture at the University of Amsterdam and a member of the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis. She has taught, lectured and written extensively on, for example, Armenian diasporic cinema and art practices, on media, testimony and memory, on ethics and aesthetics, on French thought, and on fashion and philosophy. Her most recent monographic books include *Screening Memory: The Prosthetic Images of Atom Egoyan* (Belgian Royal Academy Press, 2017) and *Mémoire et Image: Regards sur la Catastrophe arménienne* (L'Âge d'Homme, 2013). She is currently working on a new book on textile, fashion, and cinema.

Tamar M. Boyadjian is an Assistant Professor of Medieval Literature in the Department of English at Michigan State University. Her research and teaching interests focus primarily on the cultural and literary intersections between the different ethno-religious cultures of Europe and the Middle East in the medieval Mediterranean world.

Murat Cankara received his Ph.D. from Bilkent University with a dissertation titled “Empire and Novel: Placing Armeno-Turkish Novels in Ottoman/Turkish Literary Historiography.” He was a Fulbright fellow at Harvard University in the academic year 2007–2008 and a 2012–2013 Manoogian Simone Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Armenian Studies Program at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where he gave a course on Armeno-Turkish texts. He is currently a member of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the Social Sciences University of Ankara.

Vahram Danielyan received his Ph.D. from Yerevan State University in the field of Armenian Philology in 2009. He currently holds the position of Assistant Professor at Yerevan State University, Department of Modern Armenian Literature. Danielyan also teaches a course of Armenian Language and Literature at American University of Armenia. During the 2010–2011 academic year he was a Manoogian Simone Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Danielyan is co-editor of the volume *Negotiation of Differences in the Shared Urban Space* (American University of Armenia Press, Yerevan, 2017).

Myrna Douzjian holds a Ph.D. in comparative literature from UCLA. Her work tracing the evolving politics of Armenian literary publication has appeared in the Brill *Handbook of Oriental Studies*, and her translations of contemporary Armenian poetry and drama have been staged in the United States. Her current research focuses on post-Soviet literary culture as a paradigm for re-examining discourses on world literature. Dr. Douzjian has taught literature, composition, literary theory, and film at UCLA, Temple University, and California State University, Fresno. She is currently lecturer of Armenian language, literature, and culture in the Slavic Languages and Literatures Department at UC Berkeley.

David Kazanjian is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of *The Brink of Freedom: Improvising Life in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Duke, 2016) and *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America* (Minnesota, 2003), as well as numerous articles about Armenian diasporic cultural production. He is also the co-editor, with David L. Eng, of *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley, 2003) and the co-editor of *The Aunt Lute Anthology of U.S. Women Writers, Volume One: Seventeenth through Nineteenth Centuries* (Aunt Lute Books, 2004).

Sergio La Porta is the Haig and Isabel Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies at California State University, Fresno. His areas of research include Armenian intellectual and political history, philology, and apocalyptic literature. Dr. La Porta's publications include a three-volume study on Armenian commentaries on the works of Dionysius the Areopagite and several articles on political legitimacy and intellectual history in medieval Armenia. He recently co-edited with B. Crostini, *Negotiating Co-existence: Communities, Cultures and 'Convivencia' in Byzantine Society*; and a volume co-edited with K. Bardakjian entitled, *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition: A Comparative Perspective*.

G. J. Libaridian held the Alex Manoogian Chair in Modern Armenian History (2001–2012) and was director of the Armenian Studies Program (2007–2012) at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Prof. Libaridian was a co-founder of the Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Research and Documentation in Cambridge, Mass., and its director from 1982 to 1990; he also served as Director of the ARF archives (1982–1988) and editor of the *Armenian Review* (1983–1988). From

1991 to 1997, he served as adviser, and then senior adviser (foreign and security policies) to the first President of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, as well as First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (1993–1994) of the newly independent republic. Prof. Libaridian is the author and editor of a number of works and has published and lectured extensively and internationally on modern and contemporary Armenian history and politics. He resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts and currently working on a number of new books, including *Anatomy of Conflict: Nagorno Karabakh and the New World Order* and *My Turkish Problem*.

Karla Mallette studies medieval Mediterranean literature, mainly in Italian and Arabic. She is author of *The Kingdom of Sicily, 1100–1250: A Literary History* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005) and *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), winner of the 2011 Susanne M. Glasscock Humanities Book Prize for Interdisciplinary Scholarship, awarded by Texas A&M University. She was co-editor, with Suzanne Akbari, of *A Sea of Languages: Rethinking the Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History* (University of Toronto Press, 2013). She is currently working on a monograph, tentatively entitled *Lives of the Great Languages*, that studies the cosmopolitan languages of the pre-modern Mediterranean, comparing them to the national language system of modern Europe. And she has published numerous articles on medieval literature and Mediterranean Studies. She is Professor of Italian and Near Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan.

Michael Pifer studies the connective tissues that run through Armenian, Persian, and Turkish literary cultures, particularly in medieval Anatolia, but also beyond. His research has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities and a Manoogian Simone Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Michigan, where his thesis received the ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Award. Currently, he is working on a monograph, tentatively titled *Kindred Voices: A Literary History of Medieval Anatolia, 1250–1350*, that seeks to uncover shared cultures of poetic adaptation across Christian and Muslim communities. He is a lecturer in the Armenian language and literature at the University of Michigan.

Vahe Sahakyan received his Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from the University of Michigan in 2015. Dr. Sahakyan is broadly interested in the movements and circulation of people, discourses, and resources across

imperial and national contexts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By placing the Armenian experiences in comparative and trans-national perspectives, his dissertation and several articles in progress highlight the alternative forms and spaces of belonging, multiplicity of identities and discourses on homeland, ethnicity and nation, as they emerge within and beyond imperial and national contexts in the processes of intellectual exchanges, migrations, and diasporization.

Alison Vacca is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is interested in questions of transmission, particularly between Armenian and Arabic; intercommunal conflict; and women as cultural mediators in the eighth- and ninth-century Caucasus. Her monograph, *Non-Muslim Provinces under Early Islam: Islamic Rule and Iranian Legitimacy in Armenia and Caucasian Albania*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2017.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: A Movable Armenia

Michael Pifer

In 1045, Grigor Magistros, one of the most erudite figures of the Armenian world, entered into a heated argument with a certain “Manazi,” a Muslim, in Constantinople.¹ Magistros, who served in the office of *dux Mesopotamiae* and was learned in both Arabic and Greek, was clearly impressed with the intellectual prowess of his adversary. Manazi, he tells us, was skilled in the arts of rhetoric and versification, and he was especially “accomplished in poetry.”² Apparently, Manazi declared the Qur'an was superior to the New Testament in part because of its sublime language and poetic use of

¹ Many stimulating conversations have informed the spirit and argument of this introduction. There are too many generous interlocutors to thank here by name, but I am particularly grateful to Kathryn Babayan, Sergio La Porta, Karla Mallette, William Gertz-Runyan, Alison Vacca, Dzovinar Derderian, Kevork Bardakjian, Tamar Boyadjian, and Sebouh David Aslanian.

² See Abraham Terian's critical edition of Magistros's poem, Grigor Magistros, *Magnalia Dei: Biblical History in Epic Verse by Grigor Magistros*, trans. with introduction by Abraham Terian (Leuven: Paris, 2012), 33. See also S. Peter Cowe's discussion on Magistros's literary production in the broader context of Armeno-Muslim literary interchange, “The Politics of Poetics: Islamic Influence on Armenian Verse,” in *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, ed. J. J. van Ginkel, H. L. Murre-van den Berg, and Theo Maarten van Lint (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 384–385.

M. Pifer (✉)
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

rhyme. This argument seems to have touched a nerve. Magistros spent the following four days secluded in his room, composing a new version of the Bible in Classical Armenian. Not only did he versify his composition, but he also employed mono-rhyme, a literary form prevalent in Arabic poetry, in Armenian for the first time.³ When he had occasion to confront Manazi again, he recited his poem with great relish, reveling in the reported surprise of his Muslim counterpart.

There are many ways to frame this encounter, but one thing seems clear: it does not square so easily within a simplistic East-West binary, or even within the more traditional polemics one might expect of Muslim-Christian interaction. Quite obviously, Magistros enjoyed a fluency in multiple linguistic and cultural systems—Arabic and Armenian, but also Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Persian, and Syriac—that do not map onto any tidy dichotomy between Europe and the Middle East.⁴ For that matter, the same is true of his adversary, whom Abraham Terian identifies as *Abū Naṣr al-Manāzī*, an Abbasid poet and vizier to the Caliphate.⁵ Al-Manāzī likewise was a student of Greek, “highly esteemed for composing encomia and works in Homeric and Platonic meter and verse,” as Magistros observed over the course of their conversation.⁶ Whereas Magistros was an admirer of the Arab poet *al-Mutanabbī*,⁷ al-Manāzī was an avid collector of Greek scientific manuscripts. It seems clear that both men embodied multiple worlds at the same time.

The encounter between Magistros and al-Manāzī might seem extraordinary. But we should also ask: in what ways might it also be suggestive of a broader pattern, the mobility of Armenians across multiple cultural, linguistic, and religious domains? In other words, to what extent might Armenians represent a broader form of ‘Mediterranean’ experience? As Sergio La Porta observes in this volume, scholars occasionally do include Armenians within the larger tapestry of Mediterranean historiography, to different ends, and sometimes to diminishing returns. Often, such gestures

³ “Moreover, I could write it for you in lines ending with that magnificent rhyme of the letter *nūn*,” Magistros boasted. Magistros, *Magnalia Dei*, trans. Terian, 35.

⁴ For a succinct overview of Magistros’s life and education, see Avedis K. Sanjian, “Gregory Magistros: An Armenian Hellenist,” in *TO ΕΑΑΗΝΙΚΟΝ: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.*, ed. Jelisaveta Stanojevich Allen, Christos P. Ioannides, John S. Langdon, and Stephen W. Reinert, vol. 2 (New Rochelle, NY, 1993), 111–130.

⁵ See Terian’s discussion, Magistros, *Magnalia Dei*, trans. Abraham Terian, 10–12.

⁶ Magistros, *Magnalia Dei*, trans. Terian, 33.

⁷ Cowe, “The Politics of Poetics,” 384.

toward inclusiveness either serve to reinforce the larger assumptions about the region, or conversely to observe that Armenians do not fit those patterns, and thus, ostensibly, are not part of the “same” Mediterranean Basin. The inclusion of Armenian agents in Mediterranean Studies has rarely contributed to a more dynamic, cross-culturally integrated vision of the Mediterranean or its adjacent regions.⁸

The same might be said, of course, about other underrepresented peoples in western scholarship, even within rigorously comparative fields such as World History, World Literature, and World Cinema. The real issue is not simply a matter of teaching the Armenian language(s) to more graduate students, or promoting a deeper knowledge of a rich, if sometimes insular, Armenian historiography among non-specialists. Rather, this issue is both methodological and theoretical in nature, and has implications that extend beyond any single field. Certainly, we ought to ask how Mediterranean Studies (or, for that matter, World History, World Literature, or World Cinema) might shape the ways in which we approach Armenian history, literature, and the visual arts. But we should also ask what Armenian Studies might do to those other fields.⁹

Arguably, the problem of integrating area specialists within fundamentally comparative enterprises reflects a longstanding concern in the humanities. For instance, nearly twenty years ago, historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam drew attention to the challenge of reconciling the granularity of specialist knowledge—linguistic, historical, geographical—with fields that assume a cross-continental scale as their departure point. Thus, as he asks in his landmark essay “Connected Histories:”

⁸ A notable exception is *La Méditerranée des Arméniens: XIIe – XV^e siècle*, ed. Claude Mutafian (Paris: Geuthner, 2014), which sheds light on how Armenians participated in the political, economic, and cultural life of the medieval Mediterranean. In contrast, the present volume differs in scope (geographic, disciplinary, and temporal) and in its attempt to rethink how we might approach categories such as Armenian history, literature, and visual culture in relation to other comparative fields. In this sense, *An Armenian Mediterranean* seeks to engage the methods of Mediterranean Studies as much as—and sometimes more than—its geographies and historiographies.

⁹ On the integration of Armenian Studies among other fields and disciplines, see also the fruitful discussions in “Rethinking Armenian Studies: Past, Present, and Future,” ed. Marc A. Mamigonian, special issue, *Journal of Armenian Studies* 7, no. 2 (2003). For an analysis of contemporary trends and methods Armenian Studies, and on the continuing importance of linguistic training and philology to the field, see also Valentina Calzolari, ed., *Armenian Philology in the Modern Era: From Manuscript to Digital Text*, with Michael E. Stone (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

There is also something to be said for methodological skepticism concerning comparative exercises that are based on an acceptance of what appears to be the broadest conventional wisdom in each of the area-based historiographies under consideration. These area specialists will merely find themselves either ‘fitted in’ to a big picture, or ‘left out’; and no true dialectic engagement will be really possible here between the area specialists and the (even temporary) generalist. Is there a realistic methodological alternative, one that does not require one to become a specialist on everything?¹⁰

Subrahmanyam offers one of several alternatives. His focus, like that of Sebouh David Aslanian in this volume, is on what he terms “connected histories,” which seek to move beyond the comparison of disparate peoples only.¹¹ Instead, as Subrahmanyam argues, we ought to excavate “the fragile threads that interconnect the globe,” in particular by following the different ways that ideas and peoples circulated across a multiplicity of borders.¹² This volume makes a complementary intervention through its entwined approach to the study of Armenians and the Mediterranean, offering a foray not only into “connected” histories, but also connected literatures and visual cultures.¹³ As Grigor Magistros demonstrates, the boundaries that Armenians transgressed and translated were not always geographic. Rather, they were so often religious,

¹⁰ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” in “The Eurasian Context of the Early Modern History of Mainland South East Asia, 1400–1800,” special issue, *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 744–745.

¹¹ Aslanian introduced the framework of World History to the field of Armenian Studies in his study, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

¹² Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories,” 762.

¹³ Other fields, particularly world literary studies, should find resonance in Subrahmanyam’s “methodological skepticism” regarding the “fitting in” or “leaving out” of area specialists from broader critical debates. For instance, Douglas Robinson, writing of the “founder and greatest exemplar of Finnish National Literature” Aleksis Kivi (d. 1972), has similarly asked: “Aleksis Kivi may or may not be *taken as* World Literature. I pose this, however, not as a proposition but as a question—*is* Kivi World Literature?—and a series of theoretical meta-questions: what would it mean for the study of World Literature for Kivi to be taken as World Literature? What can the question about Kivi’s inclusion in or exclusion from World Literature tell us about the institutionalization of WL, its institutional viability as an academic discipline into which scholars/teachers are hired, as the name of an academic department, as the title of a university course, as a section of a bookstore?” Here we might simply substitute “Aleksis Kivi” for the name of any major Armenian author of the last century. See Douglas Robinson, *Aleksis Kivi and/as World Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1.

linguistic, ethnic, literary, and even visual in nature. To follow in the wake of this mobility, we will have to rebalance the calculus between area specialist and “generalist” knowledge in more ways than one.

In the case of Magistros, the transplantation of Arabic verse onto the soil of Armenian letters would have lasting consequences. As S. Peter Cowe has noted, other Armenians gradually began to treat poetry as a serious vehicle for discussing complex subjects, such as philosophy and history, using a similar mono-rhyme scheme.¹⁴ Magistros’s rewriting of the Bible was therefore the beginning of a new poetics, loosely modeled on Arabic literary standards, in Armenian letters. At the same time, if the context of this encounter seems to be typically “Mediterranean,” exhibiting a heightened cross-cultural and linguistic fluency, so too was its product. Although Magistros versified the Bible, it seems he wanted to prove his mastery in the very aesthetic tradition that al-Manāzī championed. As he argued to al-Manāzī, his adaptation was divinely ordained, guided directly by the Holy Spirit. What is most remarkable about this encounter, then, is that Magistros posited the superiority of Christianity to Islam through an argument about *poetic equivalency*, and not merely by composing a polemical treatise. This poetics moved, like the Armenian figures who mobilized it in verse, across multiple cultural and linguistic systems at the same time.

In a broad sense, one aim of this volume is to read an analogous “poetics” of cross-cultural interaction, pastiche, dialogue, exchange, competition, and collage in other contexts, each with an Armenian focal point. Thus, although we seek to offer fresh perspectives on Armenian experiences around the medieval and modern Mediterranean, we do not merely seek to shoehorn Armenians into Mediterranean Studies, World Literature, World History, or any other framework. Some chapters in our volume are aggressively comparative and connective, examining historical resonances and shared discourses between Armenians and their many counterparts. Other chapters, notably, do not attempt to place Armenians explicitly within a “Mediterranean” frame, instead seeking to use Armenian case studies as a way to make theoretical contributions to other comparative fields, or to rethink some of the basic premises of Armenian Studies. Finally, a few chapters are not concerned with the Mediterranean at all, but rather demonstrate that the cross-cultural mobility characteristic of an Armenian experience in and of the Mediterranean was never circumscribed

¹⁴ Cowe, “The Politics of Poetics,” 385.

by this region. Instead, as our contributors show, this mobility can be mapped in the Caucasus and Russia, as well as across a global stage. Simply put, the heightened mobility of Armenians across the landscapes of the Mediterranean world was not geographically exceptional, but can and should be excavated elsewhere.

To a limited extent, therefore, the widespread geographic scope of Armenian history, literature, and arts collectively can help to decenter the Mediterranean as the organizing frame through which we understand such cross-cultural fluency in the first place. In this sense, Armenian Studies can offer a more dialectic engagement with the field of Mediterranean Studies than a cursory “inclusion” of Armenian agents within Mediterranean historiography would suggest.

To help the reader navigate our broad disciplinary and temporal scope, we have organized *An Armenian Mediterranean* around five critical themes: rethinking boundaries, connecting histories, breaking national and imperial paradigms, texturizing diaspora, and placing statehood. These themes are meant to orient the reader broadly within the current state of Armenian Studies, but also to define our particular approach to the field and to suggest new directions for its future. In these pages, we therefore hope to offer a blueprint for an omnivorously comparative, deeply interconnected, vision of Armenian Studies: one that might serve as a model for other area specialists who must necessarily address broader questions of “inclusion” and “exclusion” within different frameworks of their own.¹⁵

In the first part, Michael Pifer, Alison Vacca, and Sergio La Porta each examine the question of boundaries within a pre-modern Mediterranean space. Pifer, for instance, traces a migratory discourse on estrangement, rooted in the figure of the *gharīb*, or stranger. As he shows, this loanword and loan-concept moved across Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Armenian speaking communities, eventually coming to shape an emerging discourse on Armenian dispersion in Eastern Anatolia. Therefore, Pifer argues, the *gharīb* can help us to reconfigure what we think of as “native” and “foreign” within a given culture, since it helped to shape notions of belonging

¹⁵This blueprint is, and always should be, provisional. It is meant to be suggestive of new present and future directions in the study of Armenians, but these are not, of course, the only directions. For instance, groundbreaking research in the fields of gender, sexuality, and Queer Studies is forthcoming by a cohort of scholars who recently convened at a workshop at the University of Michigan, “Gender and Sexuality in Armenian Studies,” organized by Jeremy Johnson and Kathryn Babayan, April 21–22, 2017.

within Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities alike. Whereas Pifer looks at the Mediterranean through the eyes of the stranger, Vacca defamiliarizes Armenia itself, which she understands as a frontier of Islam. She suggests the liminality of Armenia, on the cusp of the Mediterranean and Iran, helps to question received assumptions about cross-cultural interaction in any one of these regions. Thereby she turns the old trope of Armenia as interstice, a small country locked between greater powers, on its head. This part culminates with La Porta's essential chapter, in which he re-evaluates how Armenians both complement and depart from the broader patterns of a Mediterranean history. Ultimately, La Porta views those cases where Armenian Studies and Mediterranean Studies do not align as an opportunity. He therefore invites us to interrogate uncritical assumptions about Mediterranean-ness and Armenian-ness, in tandem.

In the second part, Sebouh David Aslanian and Tamar Boyadjian offer differing approaches to the problem of integrating pre-modern Armenian history with other historiographic and literary traditions. Aslanian offers a broad overview of the field of Armenian Studies over the last century, critiquing what he views as a trend toward insularism or exceptionalism in its historiography. He proposes the field of World History, which he introduced to Armenian Studies nearly a decade ago, as offering a necessary counterweight to historical approaches based on the nation-form. In this, his chapter might find resonance with other area specialists who are attempting to navigate a broader academic audience beyond the confines of their field, as it provides a critical language for rethinking, and rereading, Armenian history in a scrupulously interconnected mode. From a different disciplinary perspective, Boyadjian offers a comparative reading of Armenian experience in the multilingual city of Jerusalem. In trailblazing a path through a diverse panoply of historical and literary texts, Boyadjian examines how Armenians, Jews, and Muslims negotiated the spaces and geographic "placed-ness" of their city. Her critical mode of reading suggests another way of moving beyond comparison only, as it excavates the tensions and confluences in the construction of a polyvocal Mediterranean space. Even more, since this manner of reading does not discriminate between historical and literary texts, it provides an interdisciplinary model to read, and uncover, other mappings of Mediterranean experience.

The third part brings us out of the medieval and early modern period, allowing the reader to consider another formative moment of the Mediterranean world—the end of the Ottoman Empire and rise of disparate nation-states. Hakem Al-Rustom, akin to Boyadjian, proffers an

alternative mapping of Mediterranean space, although he does so on an entirely different scale. He proposes Post-Ottomanism, which refers both to a period in time and a geographic region, as the basis of a fresh methodology; a manner of charting the intertwined histories between peoples only recently partitioned by national borders. Through an ethnographic approach, he demonstrates what an intertwined Post-Ottoman history might resemble, as he places the annihilation of Armenians in 1915 into dialogue with other victims of the collapse of empire, such as the Anatolian Kurds and Muslims in the Balkans.

In an analogous manner, both Murat Cankara and Vahram Danielyan dismantle narrowly national ways of understanding Armenian literary production. Cankara is a pioneer in the little-explored field of Armeno-Turkish—that is, the Turkish language written in the Armenian script, which served as a literary vehicle for Ottoman Armenians and Turks alike. Instead of situating this phenomenon beneath an overly general umbrella of cross-cultural hybridity, however, he excavates different registers of linguistic cosmopolitanism among the Armenians and Turks who composed Armeno-Turkish texts. Hence, Cankara provides an alternative model for uncovering intertwined histories that complements the approach developed by Al-Rustom. Conversely, Danielyan examines a different kind of shared language. His focus is on the character of the *ashugh*, or minstrel, in one of the earliest Armenian novels, Khach'atur Abovean's *Wounds of Armenia* (*Verk' Hayastani*). Although the *ashugh* narrates a new story about the modern Armenian nation in the novel, this figure was common to Armenians, Turks, and Persians alike. By recasting the *ashugh* as a ceaseless wanderer across cultures—much like the novel-form itself—Danielyan simultaneously traces the genesis of modern Armenian literature across an interconnected literary landscape.

The fourth part seeks to add new historical textures to our understanding of the Armenian diaspora, whether on Mediterranean shores or across the North American continent. Marie-Aude Baronian, in her groundbreaking chapter, inauguates this journey by demonstrating how images have shaped diasporic practices of remembering the past in the present. Through an analysis of the films by Atom Egoyan and others, she unsettles an essentialized archive of Armenian visual culture—its textiles, churches, and manuscripts—as monolithic and somehow untouched by time. Diasporic cinema provokes a re-evaluation of this archive, Baronian shows, in part because it weaves together—and in fact creates anew—a patchwork of visual cultures far removed from their putative origins.

Joining her, David Kazanjian and Vahe Sahakyan chart dispersed pathways in complementary directions. Kazanjian, for instance, contrasts the *ruinenlust* of diasporic tourism against Walter Benjamin's understanding of the *flâneur*, a wandering figure who eschews ruin-gazing in favor of ignored and forgotten landscapes. Like the *flâneur* itself, Kazanjian asks in what ways the Armenian diaspora might experience the past and present of Armenia—both the modern Republic and other regions in the Mediterranean—in a decidedly non-narrative, non-national mode. His chapter finds affinity with both Pifer and Danielyan, who likewise see utility in following the movement of liminal figures, such as the *gharīb* or *ashugh*, across rigidly national boundaries. Finally, Vahe Sahakyan offers a border-crossing of another sort. Like Baronian, Sahakyan does not take “Armenian-ness” as a given, but instead seeks to show how Armenians created different spaces, and in some ways, different “diasporas” in Lebanon and France. He therefore upends an uncritical dialectic between the diaspora and its singular homeland, instead showing how Armenians in Lebanon or France did not necessarily consider themselves displaced in the same way, or at all.

The fifth part carries us farther afield from the Mediterranean as a region or frame. Appropriately, then, Myrna Douzjian and Gerard Libaridian both question the place of Armenia not merely in Armenian Studies, but also in broader scholarly debates. These chapters bring our volume full-circle, as they essentially conclude with questions of including and excluding area-studies specialists within the comparative and interconnected frameworks that have come to dominate western scholarship in recent decades. Douzjian examines the (lack of) place of contemporary Armenian drama in the world literary canon. In her reading of Aghasi Ayvazyan's absurdist play *Props (Dekorner)*, which thematizes its own displacement in the post-Soviet order, she demonstrates the necessity of reading world literature in political terms. Such readings, she shows, help to deconstruct the juxtaposition of “world” literature against “national” literature, as though the former was transparently neutral and democratic, with equal access for all, and the latter was entirely chauvinistic and retrogressive. Insofar as contemporary eastern Armenian literature has struggled to find a foothold in western scholarship—including studies produced from within the field of Armenian Studies—so too have histories of the modern Republic of Armenia. Libaridian likewise navigates the reader past the many pitfalls, and pragmatic difficulties, of writing history on the modern Republic. Thereby he calls for a new generation of historians to

consider how a critical understanding of the Republic of Armenia might contribute to broader comparative enterprises, such as World History or Mediterranean Studies. Although his chapter raises particular questions for historians in the field of Armenian Studies, it too might serve as a roadmap for other area specialists who are likewise grappling with the problem of writing “national” history in a globalized age.

Karla Mallette provides a necessary coda to the volume with her shining chapter, “The Mediterranean is Armenian.” In a playful thought-experiment, she explores what the Mediterranean might look like when the movement of Armenian actors (not to mention cultures, languages, and territories) replaces a static ecological fundamentalism of the Mediterranean Basin. As she writes, Armenia “is something of a moveable feast: a set of cultural markers which shift through time and space, changing as they are overlaid upon distinct geographies and interact with distinct local histories, remaining not self-identical but rather loosely legible as a code of Armenianness—like the ‘Mediterraneanity’ of the classic scholarship on the sea.” In turn, this volume represents a coordinated effort to read this loosely legible code, even as our contributors pull both “Armenianness” and “Mediterraneanity” onto new ground—a *terra mobilis* where an Armenian Mediterranean comes to life.

Our intention is therefore to provide a panoramic, yet highly selective, glimpse of the Mediterranean and its adjacent regions through Armenian eyes. In the end, we hope the movement of Armenians and Armenian Studies across disciplinary, cultural, and geographic boundaries will suggest fresh ways of charting the frontiers beyond them.

PART I

Rethinking Boundaries



CHAPTER 2

The Age of the *Gharīb*: Strangers in the Medieval Mediterranean

Michael Pifer

INTRODUCTION¹

In the mid-twelfth century, the Jewish poet and scholar Judah Halevi embarked on the final journey of his life. He intended to leave his native al-Andalus, a region in Spain under Muslim rule since 750 CE, and cross the Mediterranean Basin to see Palestine with his own eyes. We do not know if Halevi ever made it to Jerusalem; he seems to have died some time in 1141 after arriving as far as Alexandria.

It is difficult to select an appropriate term to characterize Halevi's long voyage across the Mediterranean, in part because Halevi resists easy categorization himself. As Raymond P. Scheindlin notes, Halevi's behavior "is so different from that of others that the word 'pilgrimage' hardly seems like the right word for his journey," since he did not intend to visit the holy sites of Jerusalem and return home, but rather "to die there and

¹I wish to thank Kathryn Babayan, Kevork Bardakjian, Karla Mallette, Kader Konuk, Catherine Brown, and Cameron Cross for their suggestions on various iterations of this chapter.

M. Pifer (✉)
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

mingle his body with the stones and soil of the Land of Israel.”² However, if we search for a period term in Hebrew to describe Halevi’s decision to leave home, we encounter a similar difficulty, as Halevi also conceptualized his voyage in ways that seem antithetical to common understandings of “exile” or “pilgrimage” in medieval Judaism. For instance, Jonathan Decter has shown that Halevi inverted the traditional Jewish notion of *galut*, or the experience of living under subjugation in foreign lands, by positing “exile” as an absolutely necessary state of alienation that one must cultivate to please God.³

Halevi presents this understanding of “exile,” as well as provides us with an alternative lexicon for conceptualizing pre-modern estrangement, in his famous *Kuzari*, or *Book of Refutation and Indication Concerning the Lowly Faith*, which he composed in Arabic. The *Kuzari* unfolds as a dialogue between a rabbi and the king of the Khazars over which monotheistic religion is best. In one exchange, the king tells the rabbi not to embark on the dangerous voyage to Jerusalem, since, he reasons, one can achieve closeness to God anywhere. However, the rabbi does not agree, and instead translates a Talmudic maxim, “*galut* atones for sin,”⁴ from Hebrew to Arabic, rendering *galut* as *al-jalūt*.⁵ As the rabbi simply notes, one must cultivate estrangement (*al-ighbirāb*) in a place that confers spiritual benefit. Decter has shown, by employing the Arabic term *al-ighbirāb*—the process of becoming a stranger (*gharīb*)—to supplement the meaning of exile, Halevi presents *galut* as something desirable and necessary. In this context, *galut* is transformed by a spiritual state of estrangement best fostered as a Jew *within* the Land of Israel.⁶

Perhaps we ought to look for an Arabic lexicon of estrangement, and not a Hebrew one, to conceptualize Halevi’s journey across the Mediterranean. In fact, Halevi employs an array of related concepts in Arabic to comment on Jewish dispersion. For example, in another exchange, the king rebukes the rabbi for favoring the outward signs of

² Raymond P. Scheindlin, *The Song of the Distant Dove: Judah Halevi’s Pilgrimage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.

³ Jonathan P. Decter, *Iberian Jewish Literature between al-Andalus and Christian Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 1.

⁴ Quoted from Decter, *Iberian Jewish Literature*, 1. See also Makkot 2b; Sanhedrin 37.

⁵ Judah Halevi, *al-kitāb al-khazari: kitāb al-radd wa-al-dalīl fī al-dīn al-dhalīl*, ed. Nabih Bashir (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Jamāl, 2012), 565.

⁶ Or, in Decter’s words, for Halevi “the actualization of atonement requires emigration from one’s homeland to the Land of Israel with its concomitant hardship of alienation.” Decter, *Iberian Jewish Literature*, 1.

religion—such as prostrating oneself toward the Land of Israel—whereas the rabbi's ancestors made real sacrifices by willingly abandoning their birthplaces to live in “exile” (*al-ghurba*), again in Israel, permanently. Even the rabbi concedes the excellence of this point: *al-jalūt* in Israel is best, although *jalūt* elsewhere still carries a degree of spiritual benefit.⁷ At other times, Halevi's Arabic terms for estrangement substitute their Hebrew counterparts, such as when the rabbi translates the commandment to “love the resident stranger (*al-gharib*)” into Arabic, for instance.⁸

In light of the *Kuzari*, it seems likely that Halevi considered his own journey from al-Andalus as a sojourn into *ghurba*: he was becoming, at least in terms of his own theology, a *gharib*. But what might that have meant to him—or, for that matter, to the heterogeneous Muslims and Christians who identified themselves in the same way around the Mediterranean world? This chapter will shed light on the little-studied phenomenon of the *gharib* (pl. *ghurabā'*), or stranger, a term that encompassed a broad range of theological concepts, social categories, affective states, and topics of literary production among medieval Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike. The fact that so many peoples were able to identify themselves as *gharib*, and recognize a similar claim made by others, speaks to the term's ubiquitous value as a referent across a variety of boundaries—geographic, cultural, and religious.

At the same time, the *gharib* also crossed a wide array of linguistic frontiers. As a highly mobile loanword and loan-concept, it migrated beyond the orbit of Arabic and entered the literary languages of New Persian, Anatolian Turkish, and Middle Armenian. In other words, although Judah Halevi marshaled an Arabic lexicon of otherness to reconceptualize the Hebrew *galut* as the Arabicized *al-jalūt*, the Hebrew *ger* (alien) as the Arabic *gharib* (stranger), he was not alone in adapting this highly migratory language of estrangement. The *gharib* in particular, and Halevi's lexicon of estrangement in general, reflect a manner of representing and recognizing “otherness” in both society and literature across a vertiginous

⁷ Halevi, *al-kitāb al-khazarī*, 269.

⁸ Halevi, *al-kitāb al-khazarī*, 345. For studies on Halevi's relationship with Islamic concepts and Arabic terms, see also Ehud Krinis, *God's Chosen People: Judah Halevi's Kuzari and the Shī'ī Imām Doctrine*, trans. Ann Brener and Tamar Liza Cohen (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2014); and Raymond P. Scheindlin, “Islamic Motifs in a Poem by Judah Halevi,” *Maghreb Review* 29 (2004): 40–52. For a study on the theme of exile and nostalgia in Andalusian poetry, see Fātima Tahtah, *al-ghurba wa-al-ḥanīn fi al-shi'r al-andalusī* (Rabat: Jāmi'at Muḥammad al-Khāmīs, 1993).

array of peoples in the pre-modern world. This manner of theorizing otherness is all the more significant, then, because it quite literally developed in the mouths of “others”—in Bakhtinian terms, populated by other intentions—before finding currency among particular religious communities like that of Judah Halevi.⁹

In this chapter, I will selectively examine an optic of estrangement that the *gharīb* offers, not only in Judaism, but also in Islam and Christianity, as part of a multilingual lexicon for theorizing estrangement. Because the *gharīb* offers an alternative terminology to contemporary understandings of otherness, as well as a re-evaluation of the divide between what is “native” and “foreign” in literature and society, it has relevance to the study of both the medieval Mediterranean and the humanities in general. As I will suggest, precisely because the *gharīb* travels across so many languages, literatures, and societies, it serves as a fruitful unit of analysis for characterizing some of the inter-relationships between such entities: for considering what is non-native, what is always on-the-go, about cultural production itself.¹⁰

DEFINING TERMS

Before we can examine how different figures mobilized the *gharīb* in their own sermons, poetry, and everyday speech, first we ought to sketch a broadly theoretical look at the *gharīb*, as well as to situate it conceptually within contemporary scholarship. Although the semantic field of “*gharīb*”

⁹ For Bakhtin, speech acts are dialogic in that they anticipate a response from others. By a similar token, he contends that “word in language is half someone else’s.” Or, as he puts it, the word “becomes ‘one’s own’ only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people’s mouths, in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one’s own.” Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 293–294. Rather than conceptualize the *gharīb*’s peregrinations across languages with relatively empty descriptions like “cross-cultural fertilization” or “cross-pollination,” my focus here will concern how and why different authors made the term their “own”—a process that was in part predicated on the widespread use of the term by “others.”

¹⁰ On other mobile motifs that have come to shape Armenian, Turkish, Arabic, and Punjabi cultural production, see my article, “The Diasporic Crane: Discursive Migration across the Armenian-Turkish Divide,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 18, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 229–252.

is perhaps better known today for conveying a sense of “strange” or “rare,” my focus here will be on the *gharīb* as “stranger,” or the outsider in our midst.

To begin, in Halevi’s *Kuzari*, the semantic field of the Hebrew “*galut*” encompasses a host of Arabic words such as *al-igh̄tirāb* (estrangement), *al-tagharrub* (emigration), *al-gharib* (stranger or strange), and *al-ghurba* (“exile,” or the state of being a stranger). This lexicon of otherness is woven together with the same Semitic root: *gh-r-b*, which generally means “to enter.” Franz Rosenthal has suggested the original meaning of this root is strongly associated with the *gharīb* itself, which, he suggests, is partly defined by the group it enters:

The noun “stranger” [...] strongly suggests a connection with the general Semitic root *gh-r-b* (Ugaritic ‘-r-b) in the meaning of “to enter”, best known for its use for the “entering” of the sun = “sunset” and hence “West.” (Hebrew *ma^c’rāb*, Aram. *me^c’ālē šimšā*, Ar. *maghrib*, Akkad. *erib šamši*). The standard Akkadian dictionaries list *errebu* (CAD)/*errēbu* (von Soden) as “newcomer, person accepted into the family, intruder” as well as the collective *errebu* “refugees, immigrants.” The Akkadian usage suggests that the *gharīb* was originally not one who removed himself from his group and environment. He was primarily seen from, so to speak, the receiving end, that is, the group faced with persons attempting to enter it, who were usually not welcomed with open arms, and even less so as equals.¹¹

By definition, the stranger is a relational creature, serving to foreground notions of inside and outside, us and them, native and foreign—what historian Cemal Kafadar would call a socially constructed dialectic of inclusion and exclusion.¹² Strangers represent someone unknown, something beyond us, but the *gharīb* can also signify the entrance of the outside in our very midst, attempting to become *us*. Broadly speaking, the *gharīb* may join our group, but it makes “us” a little more like the “outside,” too.

Halevi’s lexicon of otherness, and its etymological association with entrance, might offer a pre-modern counterpart to contemporary understandings of exile that have loomed large over literary studies in particular. Whereas we might consider the *gharīb* as one who enters a foreign society, voluntarily or involuntarily accepting the yoke of estrangement, the exile is conversely defined by her irrevocable departure from home. For instance,

¹¹ Franz Rosenthal, “The Stranger in Medieval Islam,” *Arabica* 44, no. 1 (1997): 38.

¹² Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 27.

Michiel de Vaan has posited a variety of possible etymologies for the Latin *ex(s)ul*, and all of them are dependent on the basic idea of “going out”:

It might be a derivative of a verb **ex-sulere* ‘to take out’ to the root *selh₁- ‘to take’, cf. *cōsul* and *cōsulere*; hence *exsul* ‘the one who is taken out’. It might belong to *amb-ulāre* < *-al- ‘to walk’, hence ‘who walks out’. It might even belong to *h₁elh₂-, the root of Gr. ἐλαύνω ‘to drive’: *ex-ul* ‘who is driven out’.¹³

Of course, this would have relatively little meaning if the etymological history of “exile” did not align with its contemporary theoretical formulations. As it happens, however, the exile as the “one who is taken out,” a person permanently defined by where she is not, largely reflects how prominent thinkers conceptualize this phenomenon. In this, perhaps no one has been more influential than Edward W. Said, who in his famous essay, “Reflections on Exile,” proposed exile as “the unsealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home.”¹⁴ Exile, for Said, is a condition of “terminal loss” which fundamentally characterizes modernity, since we are living in a period “spiritually orphaned and alienated, the age of anxiety and estrangement,”¹⁵ or, more simply, in “the age of the refugee.”¹⁶

Particularly in the discipline of Comparative Literature, scholars continue to align themselves with, or distance themselves from, Saidian exile in many ways. Aamir Mufti, for instance, has treated minority experience as essentially exilic in nature, as minorities are positioned to question “received notions of ‘nations, home, community, and belonging,’”¹⁷ much like the Saidian exilic intellectual. Others, such as Kader Konuk, have rightly pushed back against the notion of exile as a condition of detachment and distance from one’s host society, instead positing exile as a condition not only of loss, but also of multiple cultural and geographic attachments.¹⁸

¹³ Michiel Arnoud Cor de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 196.

¹⁴ Edward W. Said, “Reflections on Exile,” in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 173.

¹⁵ Said, “Reflections on Exile,” 173.

¹⁶ Said, “Reflections on Exile,” 174.

¹⁷ Aamir R. Mufti, “Auerbach in Istanbul: Edward Said, Secular Criticism, and the Question of Minority Culture,” *Critical Inquiry* 25, no. 1 (1998): 103.

¹⁸ See, for instance, Kader Konuk, *East-West Mimesis: Auerbach in Turkey* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010), as well as Angelika Bammer, ed., *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

Generally, however, this swelling discourse on “exile,” often taken as synonymous with modernity, does not engage with the voluminous body of pre-modern discourse on estrangement, spun out of the migratory root *gh-r-b*, that itself suggests other ways of parsing what is indigenous and exogenous in any culture. In fact, so much literature on the *gharib* exists in medieval Arabic and Islamicate sources alone that Rosenthal calls it “a tremendous—and if truth be told, in fact unmanageable—body of information.”¹⁹ And yet, save for a handful of studies by Rosenthal, Thomas Bauer, Patricia Crone, and Shmuel Moreh that largely examine the *gharib* in its Arabic and Islamicate context, as well as a study on the Arabic *gharib* among the Jewish community of medieval Egypt by Mark R. Cohen, this figure has largely remained unknown to scholarship in the West.²⁰

In Saidian terms, the exile is forever out of place. But the *gharib* is also very much of place; it is arguably defined as much by its entrances and encounters as by its exits and departures. Bauer, for instance, has argued that being a *gharib* does not necessarily reflect a geographical displacement in classical Arab civilization; nor does the *gharib*’s concomitant foreignness (*Fremdheit*) reflect “a feature of origin, ancestry, race, or language.”²¹ Rather, *ghurba*, or the state of being a *gharib*, primarily reflects a subjective state within the stranger itself; an affective condition of longing and loss, but also one that can be overcome. This conception of the stranger in turn suggests

¹⁹ Rosenthal, “The Stranger in Medieval Islam,” 35.

²⁰ For relevant studies on the “Arabic” *gharib*, see Thomas Bauer, *Die Kultur der Ambiguität: Eine andere Geschichte des Islams* (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2011); Patricia Crone and Shmuel Moreh, trans. with comment., *The Book of Strangers: Mediaeval Arabic Graffiti on the Theme of Nostalgia / Attributed to Abū al-Faraj al-Ifshāhānī* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2000); Mark R. Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Wadad al-Qadi, “Dislocation and Nostalgia: Al-ḥanīn ilā l-awtān, Expressions of Alienation in Early Arabic Literature,” in *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature: Towards a New Hermeneutic Approach: Proceedings of the International Symposium in Beirut, June 25th–June 30th, 1996*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth et al. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999), 3–31.

²¹ Bauer, *Die Kultur der Ambiguität*, 347. Bauer is far more cautious about explicating the possible etymology of “*gharib*” than Rosenthal, but does suggest a meaning closer to the etymological connotation of “exile” in English: “Die Etymologie von *gharib* ist nicht ganz sicher; als Grundbedeutung könnte eventuell ‘der, der weggegangen ist’ anzusetzen sein, was zum mentalitätsgeschichtlichen Befund passen würde.” (Ibid., 349.) However, it is important to note that unlike Said’s condition of “terminal loss,” Bauer argues the *gharib*’s state is contingent and potentially surmountable.

a more contextually contingent understanding of “otherness.” As I will show, even beyond classical Arab civilization, the contingent sense of “foreignness” that emerges from an encounter between two agents—the *gharīb* and the “native”—is loosely akin to Mikhail Bakhtin’s understanding of a speech act, which for him produces meaning within a particular exchange between speakers, locatable in a specific place and time.²² To be *gharīb*—and to recognize the *gharīb-ness* of others—is in part to occupy a dialogic position: it is so often a navigation, sometimes a concession, of what is other, foreign, and non-native in one’s midst. More importantly, it can also serve as an acknowledgement that these terms are often relational, shifting, and evolving through particular encounters with “others.”

At the same time, as I will argue here, the *gharīb* often provides a way to consider what is mutably foreign, what is provisionally other, what is not entirely “us” and not completely “them,” about *ourselves*, our own communities, and our own cultures. Being a *gharīb* does not reflect an ontology—it describes an ongoing, active relationship with one’s surroundings and subjectivity, while still remaining cognizant of the power differential between what is *gharīb* and what is “native.” Because the *gharīb* represents an otherness that is contingent, frequently devoid of meaning when stripped of context, it is not entirely equivalent to prevalent terms in literary studies, history, or philosophy, such as “exile,” which places a premium on geographic displacement, or even “cosmopolitanism,” which Kwame Anthony Appiah considers an “adventure and an ideal,” or a strategy for navigating co-existence in a globalized world.²³ After all, although Halevi was not trying to become a citizen of the world by traveling to Jerusalem; he was trying to cut ties, both symbolically and literally, with particular worldly attachments in order to please God. In other words, his journey may reflect an ideal, but it is an ideal that we should take care to disentangle historically from the aims of humanism and the humanities today—even though the *gharīb* might still make a conceptual contribution to those aims.

It is also worth differentiating the *gharīb* from seemingly analogous (but often incongruent) concepts across the humanities. Take, for instance,

²² See M. M. Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 60–102.

²³ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), xx.

Sigmund Freud's understanding of the uncanny (*unheimlich*), which, despite being an antonym of *heimlich*, the familiar or native, stimulates a feeling of "dread and creeping horror" in the observer.²⁴ However, in the abundant literature we find on strangers in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, or Armenian, the *gharīb* usually stirs in the observer an ethics of hospitality, or, conversely, arouses a cold indifference—but rarely, if ever, incites horror. By a similar token, Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, which she considers "more violent" than the uncanny,²⁵ concerns what is "other" within us, but, like the uncanny, this otherness is a burden "both repellent and repelled."²⁶ Conversely, it is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine that Halevi considered his journey into *ghurba* in such terms: certainly, being a *gharīb* was physically and emotionally taxing in many ways, but it was also a state that Halevi willingly cultivated by traversing the Mediterranean world. To characterize his voyage as a "terminal loss" or as a "repellent," "violent" confrontation with the otherness within himself would miss the mark. Quite obviously, Halevi was not living in the "age of the refugee," as Said put it. Rather, as I would contend, he lived in an age with a logic of its own: the age of the *gharīb*.

STRANGE COGNATES

"Words are important, and tracing a spreading network of cognate terms is more than merely an exercise in philology," writes Olivia Remie Constable at the beginning of her groundbreaking study, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World*:

People use words to indicate specific things and to convey ideas. Thus, the use of a particular word — and especially the adoption and integration of a word from one language and context into another — demonstrates its utility and relevance as a referent. At the same time, the regular choice of a particular word, especially a new or imported word, indicates a contemporary function and understanding of the thing to which it refers.²⁷

²⁴ Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" in *Collected Papers*, vol. 4, trans. Alix Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1959), 368.

²⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 5.

²⁶ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 6.

²⁷ Olivia Remie Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade, and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.

Constable's own network of cognates—the Arabic *funduq*, the Latin *fundicum*, and the Greek *pandocheion*—all refer to institutions that lodged strangers, travelers, merchants, and others around the medieval Mediterranean Basin. By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, European merchants began to frequent Muslim markets, leading to the creation of the *fondaco*, a complex designed “to accommodate, regulate, and segregate western business in Islamic ports,” that was modeled on the pre-existing Islamicate *funduq*.²⁸ However, while a cross-cultural understanding of these institutions spread throughout the Mediterranean at this time, so too did a remarkably widespread and multivalent understanding of who, and what, strangers are.

We know, for instance, that Arabic-speaking travelers across the Middle East and Mediterranean left behind graffiti, including short poems and laments, identifying themselves as *ghurabā'* in the tenth century. Crone and Moreh have noted that these inscriptions rarely communicated substantial information, but instead evoked a mood that would have been recognizable, and likely familiar, to other passers-by.²⁹ The fact that the *gharīb* had currency on a cross-continental scale is no small thing, but the self-identification as *gharīb* seems to have cut across different social strata as well: it was recognizable to a highly educated scholar like Judah Halevi, but also to impoverished Jews in medieval Egypt, who likewise described themselves as *gharīb* in letters preserved in the Cairo Geniza.³⁰ Of course, this does not mean they “read” the *gharīb* in the same way. It suggests only that a basic grammar of strangeness informed how these figures thought about themselves and felt about their very different predicaments. Any “speech act” uttered through that grammar—that is, the unique context that gave this multivalent affect of estrangement meaning—was obviously quite variable.

In fact, sometimes those “speech acts” were so contextually specific that even other members of the same religion and ethnicity had difficulty deciphering them. For instance, Rosenthal notes that “within the community of believers and wherever Muslims were in political control, there was, in theory, no such distinct category as a ‘stranger,’” since Muslims were supposed to live in unified brotherhood with each other.³¹ Still, even

²⁸ Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World*, 8.

²⁹ Crone and Moreh, trans., *The Book of Strangers*, 8.

³⁰ Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt*, 76–77.

³¹ Rosenthal, “The Stranger in Medieval Islam,” 35–36.

beginning from this simple premise, a considerable degree of ambiguity remains. Take, for instance, a well-known hadith that potentially upsets the idea that *gharībs* cannot exist within the unified body of Islam, as it quotes Muḥammad as declaring enigmatically, “Islam began as a stranger (*gharīban*), and it will return as a stranger (*gharīban*) as it began. Therefore, blessed are the strangers.”³² Although the large body of commentary on this hadith does not doubt its authenticity, we know little about the historical circumstances in which it arose. In part, the dearth of context has caused a proliferation of occasionally conflicting interpretations to develop over time, especially in regards to the troubling notion that Muslims would one day become “*gharībs*,” an exiled or outcast minority, perhaps at the end of time.³³

Pre-modern commenters on the hadith also capitalized on the *gharīb*’s ubiquitous utility as a referent, using it to explicate their own status in a particular society. Much like Halevi considered himself a *gharīb* in Israel, these commenters considered true *gharībs* to be Muslims within the abode of Islam. For instance, the influential theologian Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) provided an exegesis to this hadith in his epochal work, *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*). Primarily for al-Ghazzālī, the *gharīb* was a steadfast Muslim who was sent to restore Islam in an age of widespread heresy. He therefore explains:

All knowledge favored by the forefathers has been obliterated, and the majority of what people devote themselves to is innovation and novelty. The Messenger of God was correct when he said: “Islam began as a *gharīb* and will return as a *gharīb*. Therefore, blessed be the *gharībs*.” And who are the strangers (*ghurabā’*)? He said, “Those who restore what the people distorted of my sunna, and those who revitalize of my sunna what the people deadened.” And in another report: “They are those who persevere in what you do today.” And in another hadith: “The strangers (*ghurabā’*) are the few and upright among the masses, who are more loathed by the people than loved.”³⁴

³² Quoted from Rosenthal, “The Stranger in Medieval Islam,” 59. For the hadith in Arabic, see also Muslim, *ṣaḥīḥ* <http://sunnah.com/muslim/1/279>, accessed February 5, 2018.

³³ So much ink was spilled in an attempt to provide a satisfactory answer to this problem that the tenth century al-Ājurī even wrote the *Book of the Strangers* (*kitāb al-ghurabā’*), an entire work loosely devoted to the interpretation of this hadith. See Rosenthal, “The Stranger in Medieval Islam,” 60.

³⁴ Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī, *ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, ed. ‘Abd al-Rahīm ibn al-Ḥusayn ‘Irāqī, vol. 1 (Cairo: Lajnat Nashr al-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, 1937–38), 64–65.

Al-Ghazzālī's reading that true *gharībs* perform a restorative function by purging science and theology of false innovations, as well as his suggestion that *gharībs* belong to a righteous minority of otherwise educated people, also implies that he viewed the stranger as a model in particular for religious scholars. As Rosenthal has observed, a similar idea enjoyed currency with other scholars at this time, especially the eleventh century theologian Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, who posited that the *ghurabā'* are those religious scholars who restore the sunna.³⁵ For al-Ghazzālī, the *gharīb* likewise represents the sincere Muslim, who in this case is a figure both marginalized and endowed with divine authority.

What, then, is “foreign” or “strange” in this context? Nothing less than a manner of engaging with Islam from within Islam; a method of interpreting the sunna and articulating those interpretations in a way that was potentially at odds with al-Ghazzālī's contemporaries.³⁶ As Bauer suggests, the *gharīb*'s estrangement is thus not primarily dependent on physical displacement. Rather, in this case, it signifies a juxtaposition between different schools of thought within the Islamicate world: a relational foreignness, and likely a feeling of alienation, that generates meaning when placed in dialogue with those whom al-Ghazzālī considered heretics.

Although this example comes from the cosmopolitan language of literary Arabic, the *gharīb* had utility as a referent to speakers of other languages as well, as Persians and Turks adopted this grammar and lexicon of estrangement as their own. If we divert our gaze to Anatolia in the eastern Mediterranean, for instance, we find that the Persian poet and Muslim preacher Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) likewise conceptualized the *gharīb* in a similar manner.³⁷ In Rūmī's sermons and poetry, the *gharīb* often appears

³⁵ Rosenthal, “The Stranger in Medieval Islam,” 61.

³⁶ Al-Ghazzālī wrote these lines when he lived in exile and poverty, having vowed no longer to serve any government or take money from any ruler. His own status as a “*gharīb*” not only reflected a particular social condition, but it also mirrored his exegesis of the religious function of *gharībs* as well, since he ultimately sought to restore the “religious sciences” from the false innovations of heretics and philosophers.

³⁷ In fact, despite the fact that Rūmī found patronage and prestige in Konya, he was often identified by his companions as a *gharīb*. For example, the poet Fakhr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm 'Irāqī (d. 1289) reportedly used to praise Rūmī's greatness, often sighing and declaring, “No one understood Mawlānā [Rūmī] as he ought to be [understood]. He came into this world a *gharīb* and departed from it a *gharīb*.” (Shams al-Dīn Ahmad Aflākī, *manāqib al-'ārifīn*, ed. T. Yazıcı, vol. 1 (Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1959), 400). Although 'Irāqī did not

as a divine figure and true Muslim who has quit particular attachments to the world.³⁸ Perhaps tellingly, this manner of theorizing the *gharīb* seems to have been potentially at odds with the more mundane expectations of Rūmī's audience. He therefore clarifies on a few occasions who, exactly, *gharībs* are.

"A westerner is established in the west," he notes in one sermon, "and an easterner comes to the west."³⁹ Our expectation here, presumably, is that the easterner is the true *gharīb*, because he has abandoned his hearth and lands. Rūmī upends this expectation in a typical fashion, noting that the entire world is but one house, and going from one room to another does not really engender estrangement from hearth and home. The westerner, on the other hand, is the true *gharīb* because he has already severed ties with the world. Rūmī concludes this explanation by citing the hadith, "Islam began as a *gharīb*," which he adapts to declare the "Prophet did not say that *the easterner began as a gharīb*."⁴⁰ In this context, Rūmī thus considered the true Muslim and true *gharīb* as essentially the same person, much like al-Ghazzālī. And, much like al-Ghazzālī, the affect of estrangement the *gharīb* feels is not on account of his geographic position. We ought to remember that this is also how Judah Halevi employed his lexicon

explain himself further, he was not alone in making such declarations. For instance, Rūmī's own spiritual guide, Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī, told Rūmī's son: "The secret of [Rūmī] is veiled as is the secret of Islam. Like Islam, he has come as a *gharīb*. See how his secret shall be as '*Islam began as a gharīb and will return as a gharīb. Blessed be the strangers!*'" (Ibid., 308–309). Again, in this context, being a *gharīb* does not reflect an ethnic or geographic origin as much as it suggests a manner of engaging with the greater Islamic community as a "stranger" who paradoxically embodied the truest essence of Islam, just as we have seen in the case of al-Ghazzālī.

³⁸ For instance, the first tale in the *Mathnawī* concerns an otherworldly, divine stranger (*gharīb*) who guides a king and his beloved to estrange themselves from worldly attachments.

³⁹ Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *kitāb-i fībi mā fībi*, ed. Bādī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1983), 52.

⁴⁰ In this case, Rūmī plays with the expectation that true *gharībs* are those who have quit their native lands and gone to live among foreign "westerners." He utilizes the Arabic root *gh-r-b* to illustrate how the *gharīb* is a westerner (*maghribī*) who truly lives in the West (*magrib*), as opposed to the easterner (*mashriqī*) who merely arrives to dislodge *gharībs* from their temporary place of dwelling. In this literal sense (i.e., in this case of letters), Rūmī juxtaposes the inner root of "gharīb," located, again literally, inside the West, against the established assumption that the easterner would seem to be the stranger. Rūmī, *kitāb-i fībi mā fībi*, 52.

of estrangement in the *Kuzari*: in both contexts, becoming a *gharīb* reflected a way of actively cultivating estrangement within a particular socio-religious community—often one’s *own* community, broadly imagined. Here, being a *gharīb* reflects a particular manner of engaging with and practicing Islam, even as it may also connote the hardships that come with a lived experience of “exile.”

This underlying grammar of estrangement also shaped Turkish thought as well; the term *gharīb* entered the Anatolian Turkish lexicon essentially with the development of the language as literary. For example, the Sufi poet Yūnus Emre, whom Kafadar calls “the classical poet” of Anatolian Turkish,⁴¹ identifies himself as a *gharīb* (or *garīb*, reflecting an Ottoman Turkish transliteration), in much the same vein. In one poem,⁴² he begins with the provocative declaration:

I came here a *garīb*; I grow tired of this country.

The moment has arrived, I [shall] pull the snare of captivity down!⁴³

What did it mean for Yūnus Emre—or for the communities that recited works attributed to him—to be a *gharīb*? As we have already seen, being a *gharīb* does not necessarily reflect an ontological or geographical state; one is only a stranger or strange in relationship to something else. In this opening line, the word that Yūnus Emre uses for “country,” *il*, also denotes “tribe” or pastoral group. Hence, the “here” that Yūnus Emre contrasts himself against is not necessarily geographic in nature, but like Rūmī’s sermon on western *gharībs*, perhaps likewise connoted a distinction between social groups. The following couplet certainly reinforces this interpretation, as Yūnus Emre states that “I read this book of Love and studied it,” which he contrasts against “the four books,” meaning the Qur’ān and other canonical books revealed to the Abrahamic faiths, allowing him juxtapose his own religious practice against legalistic textual study.⁴⁴ This juxtaposition between the “*garīb*” Yūnus Emre and legalistic

⁴¹ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 5.

⁴² The poems in Yūnus Emre’s *Divan* are known as *ilahīs*, or devotional hymns, which would have been chanted aloud in small gatherings.

⁴³ Yūnus Emre, *Yunus Emre Divāni*, ed. Mustafa Tatçı, vol. 2 (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1990), 234–236.

⁴⁴ As Annemarie Schimmel has commented on Yūnus Emre, “there is scarcely a popular poet in the Muslim world, from Turkey to Indonesia, who has not elaborated this topic, attacking the bookish scholars who forgot the true meaning of the most important letter and

religious scholars becomes even more explicit when he subsequently declares that the men of religious law (*sharī'a*) cannot provide him with a spiritual direction. Again, one implication here is that Yūnus Emre felt himself a *gharīb* vis-à-vis other Muslims in general and a particular legalistic practice of Islam in particular.

Although these are only brief examples, my point here is also quite simple. In sketching this network of cognate terms that, like the *funduq* and the *fundicum*, was widespread across the Mediterranean world, I have sought to show that the *gharīb* was more than a mere loanword that simply substituted for “native” words in New Persian or Anatolian Turkish. Instead, as these examples suggest, the *gharīb* could convey a similar meaning across these religious cultures and languages, even while serving different purposes and addressing different audiences.⁴⁵ As a term, it had utility as a referent, evocative of a widespread conception of otherness, to a broad array of peoples across many levels of society. In these particular cases, the *gharīb* could be simultaneously “native” and “foreign” among her own people: native in the sense that the *gharīb* often appears in theological discourse as the true practitioner of a particular religion, but also

instead blacken the pages of their learned books.” (Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 418). To put this in somewhat different terms, Yūnus Emre arguably made such comparisons between himself and formal religious jurists precisely because many other authors were making similar claims in a wide variety of languages. Such a juxtaposition was widely recognizable, in other words, in the same manner the figure of the *gharīb* was widely recognizable.

⁴⁵ However, I do not wish to give the impression that this was the only manner in which the multivalent term “*gharīb*” was deployed. For example, beginning in the thirteenth century, interest in strange wonders and marvels, rooted in the terms ‘ajīb and *gharīb*, reached a watershed moment with the composition of Zakarīyyā’ al-Qazwīnī’s (d. 1283) *ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā’ib al-mawjūdāt* (*Wondrous Creatures and Strange Beings*) in Arabic. Al-Qazwīnī defined ‘ajīb generally as a phenomenon whose cause is beyond the comprehension of humans, whereas the *gharīb* represents a rare phenomenon that runs contrary to normative observation. This adjectival understanding of the “*gharīb*,” that is, as descriptive of phenomena capable of producing strange cognitive states, also overlapped with the *gharīb* as stranger to a limited extent. In fact, when ‘Aşık Paşa, a fourteenth-century Turkish Sufi, composed the first major didactic *mathnawī* in Anatolian Turkish, he named it the *Garīb-nāme* (*Book of the Garīb*) for similar reasons, as higher spiritual meanings—the Islamic episteme revealed in the Arabic and Persian languages—were “*garīb*” in the Turkish language.” (‘Aşık Paşa, *Garīb-Nāme: Tıpkıbasım, Karşılaştırmalı Metin ve Aktarma*, ed. Kemal Yavuz, vol. 4 (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 2000), 924). In other words, even though Turkish was not yet widely accepted as a literary language in the world of Islam, ‘Aşık Paşa thought it was necessary to introduce Sufi teachings—a strange episteme, and the episteme of strangers—to a Turkish-speaking audience, as this knowledge (i.e., Islam itself) was “*gharīb*” to Turks.

foreign insofar as this type of practice might put her at odds with other members of the same religion.

In western terms, the *gharīb* is therefore not the barbarian, who (supposedly) lived beyond the domain of the Roman empire. Nor is she the exile, who was driven from her home. The *gharīb* is more like the *peregrinus*, the outsider who lived within the Roman empire.⁴⁶ The Latin *peregrinus*, like the Semitic *gharīb*, evokes an “other” who shapes the same culture and society to which we belong: an “other” who is also us. Thus, the *gharīb* provides us with an affective grammar of estrangement, or a manner of being paradoxically foreign and native at the same time, that challenges conventional notions of what belongs within and without any given culture.

THE CHRISTIAN *GHARĪB*⁴⁷

As we have briefly seen, diverse inhabitants of medieval Anatolia were well-versed in this grammar of estrangement. Most strikingly, however, the *gharīb* found wide reception among Armenian Christians, who were a minority in the eastern lands of Anatolia.⁴⁸ Furthermore, as I will suggest

⁴⁶ As Thomas S. Burns notes, “A *peregrinus* was originally any person not from Rome or a Roman colony, but by the end of the republic almost everybody in Italy had become a citizen. [...] In the period after the initial conquests a native to the province, if living in a Roman colony, might be a *peregrinus*, even though living on his ancestral lands.” Thomas S. Burns, *Rome and the Barbarians: 100 B.C.-A.D. 400* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 32–33. For more general studies on “strangers” and “exile” in pre-modern society, see also *The Stranger in Medieval Society*, ed. F. R. P. Akehurst and Stephanie Cain Van D’Elden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); *The Stranger in Ancient and Mediaeval Jewish Tradition: Papers Read at the First Meeting of the JBSCE, Piliscsaba, 2009*, ed. Géza G. Xeravits and Jan Dušek (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010); *L’étranger Au Moyen Âge*, ed. Société des historiens médiévistes de l’enseignement supérieur public (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2000); *Exile in the Middle Ages: Selected Proceedings from the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 8–11 July 2002*, ed. Laura Napran and Elisabeth M. C. Van Houts (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004). For a study on Muslim “strangers” within Latin Christendom, see also Brian A. Catlos, *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom, C. 1050–1614* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 228–280.

⁴⁷ For consistency, this transliteration reflects the Arabic and Persian spelling of *gharīb*. From its spelling in Armenian texts, it would usually be transliterated as *gharip*.

⁴⁸ Although there is a sizable corpus of songs and literature on the *gharīb* in the Middle Armenian, Eastern Armenian, and Western Armenian language, the field of Armenian Studies has paid little attention to this figure. Instead, scholars have generally focused their attention on the figure of the *pandukht* (emigrant) and the *antuni* (homeless person), both

here, the *gharīb* also provided a way for Armenian speakers to consider what was “foreign” within their own Christian communities, much as it opened an analogous space within Islam.⁴⁹ Why then did Armenians

of which are not considered loanwords in the modern Armenian lexicon—unlike the *gharīb*. There are a few exceptions, however. Varak Nersessian offers a brief discussion of the *gharīb* in a survey of medieval Armenian poetry, arguing “there can be no doubt that the theme of the migrant and of emigration was first cultivated and perfected in the Near East, by Armenian poets.” Yet, as this chapter has labored to demonstrate, discourse on the *gharīb* cannot so easily be circumscribed to a single people or language. (See Varak Nersessian, “Medieval Armenian Poetry and Its Relation to Other Literatures,” in *Review of National Literatures: Armenia* 13 (1984): 93–120.) Petra Košt’álová offers a more creative approach to the Armenian *gharīb*, noting its importance as a “cultural keyword,” equivalent to the Jewish concept of *galut*, that helps to illuminate an Armenian position of “standing on the border or ‘threshold’ between two cultures, languages and worlds.” Petra Košt’álová, “Exile and Lamentation in the Armenian Historiographical Tradition of the 16th and 17th Centuries,” *ARCHIV ORIENTALNI* 82, no. 3 (2014): 460. See also Petra Košt’álová, “Vyhnanství a Exil Jako Jeden Z Ústředních Motivů Arménské Etnicity: Koncept Ghaributhjun,” *Cesky Lid* 4 (2014): 403–419. Conversely, my own aim has been to show how the loanword and loan-concept of the *gharīb* itself borders many languages and religious cultures, and consequently offers us a valuable heuristic for considering the interconnectedness of the diverse societies and cultures in which the *gharīb* circulated—a migratory discourse about who and what strangers are. This was also one of the aims of my dissertation, “The Stranger’s Voice: Integrated Literary Cultures in Anatolia and the Premodern World” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2014).

⁴⁹ There is a growing body of scholarship that examines the complicated dynamics of medieval Armenian-Muslim interaction and intellectual history, and is too extensive to list here. But, for a general starting point, see Seta B. Dadoyan, *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World: Paradigms of Interaction: Seventh to Fourteenth Centuries*, 3 vols. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2011–2014); James R. Russell, *Armenian and Iranian Studies*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2004); Rachel Goshgarian, “Futuwwa in Thirteenth Century Rum and Armenia: Reform Movements and the Managing of Multiple Allegiances on the Seljuk Periphery,” in *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yıldız (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 227–263; Sergio La Porta, “Re-constructing Armenia: Strategies of Co-existence amongst Christians and Muslims in the Thirteenth Century,” in *Negotiating Co-existence: Communities, Cultures and ‘Convivencia’ in Byzantine Society*, ed. B. Crostini and S. La Porta (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2013), 251–272; Alison Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces under Early Islam: Islamic Rule and Iranian Legitimacy in Armenia and Caucasian Albania* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). For studies on the interface between medieval Armenian and Islamicate literature, see also S. Peter Cowe, “The Politics of Poetics: Islamic Influence on Armenian Verse,” in *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, ed. J. J. van Ginkel, H. L. Murre-van den Berg, and Theo Maarten van Lint (Leuven: Peeters Publishers & Department of Oriental

welcome the “foreign” *gharīb* into their midst, especially when the concept was so prevalent among their Muslim counterparts?⁵⁰

To address this question, it would be fruitful to examine the multilingual figure of Mkrtich’ Naghash, who was one of the earliest Armenians to compose poetry on the *gharīb*. Much like Halevi in al-Andalus, Naghash inhabited many worlds. From a young age, Naghash, whose name means “painter” in Persian (the Persian transliteration is *Naqqāsh*), was enamored with learning, the arts of science, and clerical life. He quickly rose through the ranks of the Armenian church to become bishop in Amida (Diyarbakır) some time around 1420. As one contemporary declared, not only “Christian peoples,” but also “Turk, and Tat, and Tatar, and Kurd, and Arab, and Jew, and every nation,” would honor Naghash and attempt to serve him.⁵¹ Eventually, he caught the eye of the local Turkic sovereigns, such as Osman Beg, the Aq Qoyunlu governor of the greater region, who reportedly gave Naghash jurisdiction over all Christians and dressed him in fine clothes befitting a king.⁵² This position seems to have conveyed broad spiritual authority to an array of different peoples in the

Studies, 2005), 379–403; A. K. Kozmoyan, *Hayots’ ev parsits’ mijnadaryan k’ narergut’ yan hamematakan poetikan* (Yerevan: HH GAA “Gitut’yun” Hratarakch’ut’yun, 1997).

⁵⁰ “*Gharīb*” was never formally adopted as part of the Classical Armenian lexicon, but rather appeared with the rise of Middle Armenian as a literary language. Generally, the earliest known appearances of the *gharīb* in Armenian manuscripts occur as proper names, such as in the case of a twelfth century Armenian prince, Aplgharib, or “father of the *gharīb*.” (See Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia and the Crusades: Tenth to Twelfth Centuries*, trans. Ara Edmond Dostourian (Belmont, MA: National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, 1993), 220.) The Armenian colophon tradition, which provides a treasure-trove of historical information at the end of many manuscripts, similarly attests to a wide variety of men and women who were identified as “*gharībs*.” There was a certain Kharip’ Magistros, for example, who helped to rebuild Marmashēn in 1225; a female Gharib, the mother of a Fr. Vardan Baghishets’i, whose name was recorded in a colophon in 1384; and an old widow Gharip who helped purchase a New Testament in 1490. The frequency of these monikers only increases over time. See H. Acharyan, *Hayots’ andznanunneri bararan*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Hratarakut’iwn Sewan Hratarakch’akan Tan, 1972), 136–138.

⁵¹ E. Khondkaryan, ed., *Mkrtich’ Naghash* (Yerevan: Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakch’ut’yun, 1965), 203.

⁵² E. Khondkaryan, the editor of the critical edition of Naghash’s poetry, has suggested that Osman Beg and his son Hamza gave Naghash nearly autonomous control over the Christian population in order to stabilize a region that was under repeated attack from the Qara Qoyunlu, another Turkic tribal federation, to the East.

region, making Naghash loosely akin to charismatic Sufi leaders elsewhere in Anatolia, who were known to attract followers from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

After the destruction of a local church in 1443, Naghash departed from his home in Amida and spent years in voluntary exile, traveling to the Black Sea, Constantinople, and Crimea.⁵³ During the years he spent away from his homeland, he was able to meet and interact with other Armenians who had left behind their own cities and families. Although this moment was undoubtedly formative for Naghash, it is important to keep in mind that he had likely encountered a wide array of *gharībs* even before he left home, as incessant warfare had left eastern Anatolia destabilized for some time. For instance, at the end of the fourteenth century, Grigor Khlat'ets'i, a significant figure in the Armenian church, lamented the dispersion of Armenians, Persians, and Turks alike throughout the greater region.⁵⁴ Khlat'ets'i reports that foreign invaders “laid waste [to the land] and enslaved the Persian people and the Armenian people,” destroying indiscriminately as they went and causing widespread demographic upheaval.⁵⁵ Driven along the road, fathers wept openly for the loss of their families, mothers shed the last of their milk for their children, and “strangers roamed among strange places (*ōtark’ yōtars shrēin*) and begged for food.”⁵⁶ Others fell away from their religion altogether, Khlat'ets'i tells us, as “many rejected Christ and turned to the creed of Muhammad.”⁵⁷

It is therefore not surprising that Naghash was concerned with the question of how to integrate outsiders within the social and religious fabric of his city. What is significant, however, is how he chose to explore this problem in his poetry. The word Naghash chose to call these strangers, more than emigrant (*pandukht*), foreigner (*ōtar*), or sojourner (*nzhdeh*), all

⁵³ Khondkaryan, ed., *Mkrtich’ Naghash*, 33–34.

⁵⁴ Although Khlat'ets'i makes sure to describe the ubiquitous suffering of different genders, age groups, and social classes, he stresses this tribulation was common to the entire region, and not only to Armenians or Christians: “And this did not only happen to Christians, / but to the entire Tajik people, / For tribulation was common / to the Persian people, the Armenians, and Turks,” he wrote. See L. S. Khach’ikyan, ed., *ZhE dari hayeren dzeragreri bishatakaranner* (1401–1450 t’ t’.), vol. 1 (Yerevan: Haykakan SSR Gitut’yunneri Akademiyi Hratarach’ut’yun, 1955), 277.

⁵⁵ Khach’ikyan, ed., *ZhE dari hayeren dzeragreri bishatakaranner*, 274.

⁵⁶ Khach’ikyan, ed., *ZhE dari hayeren dzeragreri bishatakaranner*, 276.

⁵⁷ Khach’ikyan, ed., *ZhE dari hayeren dzeragreri bishatakaranner*, 274.

terms in the Classical Armenian lexicon, was *gharīb*.⁵⁸ Just as importantly, Naghash ushered the *gharīb* into a thoroughly Christian world, beginning with the first line of a poem:

Glory to God forever, the lover of mankind,
Who has created the various creatures.
Man is king and unequalled across
The east, north, south, and west.

But the *gharīb*'s life is mournful, lamentable,
Bitter and acrid, full of sadness in a stringent dungeon.
When he becomes a wanderer in a foreign land (*ōtar erkir t'ap' aրական*),
Strangers (*ōtar*) do not recognize the *gharīb*, they do not know him.⁵⁹

Naghash composed poetry in Middle Armenian, a literary language that was replete with loanwords from Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, so it is not unusual that the *gharīb* makes an appearance in a Christian context here—after all, Naghash was a bishop in the Armenian church, and he likely spoke the languages of his broader community to some degree, such as Turkish or perhaps Persian. However, his usage of the word also suggests that it served as more than a mere substitute for a “purely” Armenian equivalent. As Rosenthal has observed, the *gharīb* is often a person who attempts to enter another society, and the Armenian usage is consistent with that reading. The Classical Armenian word for stranger or foreigner is *ōtar*, and here the “strangers” are people who have already been established in a particular city. In contrast, the *gharīb* is a person who tries, and often fails, to be accepted as an equal in the *ōtar*'s eyes. This failure to be included in society—and not a scene of tragic departure from home—forms the central drama of Naghash's poem.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ For anthologies of Armenian poetry and songs that discuss a range of issues related to estrangement and emigration, see Manik Mkrtch'yan, *Hay mijnadaryan pandkhtut'yan tagher* (XV-XVIII dd.) (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1979); Manik Mkrtch'yan, *Hay zhoghovrdakan pandkhtut'yan erger* (Yerevan: Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1961).

⁵⁹ Khondkaryan, ed., *Mkrtich' Naghash*, 168–169.

⁶⁰ Both Rosenthal and al-Qadi define the *gharīb* in Arabic sources in terms of an entwined sense of alienation and total feeling of humiliation. Usage of the word in Middle Armenian is completely harmonious with this assessment. See Rosenthal, “The Stranger in Medieval Islam,” 42; al-Qadi, “Dislocation and Nostalgia,” 9.

In Naghash's poetry, the *gharīb* is an object of constant derision, a person utterly lacking in prestige. Others beat the *gharīb*, they hound him in the streets, and they deny him a place to sleep.⁶¹ But perhaps most damningly, Naghash implies that some members of the host society might be Christians themselves. For instance, in one telling scene, the *gharīb* looks in despair for an absent priest:

At the hour of death, the *gharīb* called for a priest,
No one was there, that they might pray [for him].
No loved one, no friend was near him,
From his bitter wound he weeped and sighed.

The *gharīb*'s Lord is God. He listened to him.
Compassion dawned in the heart of the priest,
And he came, on account of God, to administer communion:
Through communion he makes the *gharīb*'s soul rejoice.⁶²

It is not until God listens to the *gharīb*, and then compels the priest to deliver communion to the stranger, does the stranger receive any relief. Within the larger context of the poem, the message here is striking: God still cares for *gharībs*, although others might neglect their duty. Naghash reinforces this idea by directly addressing his audience at the end of the poem: "Take heed," he warns, "converse with the *gharīb* sweetly; give him compassion and atone for the thorn of sin."⁶³ As we have seen, just as the *gharīb* provided a manner for considering what is "other" or "foreign" within Islam or Judaism, here the *gharīb* opens a space for considering

⁶¹ In this sense, Jesus was the ultimate "stranger," since "foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20, NRSV). Elsewhere, Jesus makes it abundantly clear that his followers were to consider their treatment of the stranger (ξένος) as equivalent to their treatment of him: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matt. 25:35, NRSV). Christians in pre-modern Anatolia and its neighboring regions explored the meaning of these verses in diverse ways. Most notably, a hymn sung from the perspective of Joseph of Arimathea during the Matins of Good Friday in the Greek Orthodox church urgently repeats the phrase "*dos moi touton ton xenon*," or "give me this stranger," referring to the crucified body of Jesus Christ. When this hymn was later translated into Arabic, *xenos* was rendered as *gharīb*. See Gregorios Th. Stathis, "An Analysis of the Sticheron Τὸν ἄλιον κρύψατα by Germanos, Bishop of New Patras (The Old 'Synoptic' and the New 'Analytical' Method of Byzantine Notation)," in *Studies in Eastern Chant IV*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 1979), 177–227.

⁶² Khondkaryan, ed., *Mkrtich' Naghash*, 174.

⁶³ Khondkaryan, ed., *Mkrtich' Naghash*, 175.

what is foreign within a particular Christian community. Even more, it foregrounds the social and spiritual danger of refusing to acknowledge what is “foreign” *as part of* that community. After all, if the church and lay Armenians could not incorporate *gharībs* in their midst, displaced populations were at risk of leaving the fold.

Just as Judah Halevi differentiates between different degrees of *galut*, Naghash also distinguishes between different forms of *ghariput’ iwn* (the Armenian equivalent of *ghurba*). Although Naghash frequently depicts the hardships of life as a *gharīb*, he makes it clear in another poem that “strangers” are not defined by geographic dislocation only:

—We are all *gharībs*, brothers, no one truly has a homeland (*hayreni*),
We are all going equally, for that life is our homeland.
Obtain a means for yourself here, that your soul doesn’t suffer there,
Make the saints your brothers and the angels your loved ones.⁶⁴

Here, Naghash’s declaration that “we are all *gharībs*” has meaning precisely because the poem has already described the abject misery of living alone amongst “others.” He therefore asks his audience not only to welcome the *gharīb* into their midst, but also to reflect heuristically on *ghurba* as a paradigmatic human experience: one foisted upon us, but also one we can choose to embrace if we are to “make the saints” our kin. As we have seen, this is largely how Halevi conceptualized *galut*, which is simultaneously a social condition and a spiritual state that one must willingly bear. It is also how Muslim figures like Rūmī and Yūnus Emre theorized their own estrangement, as they did not consider what is “*gharīb*” in geographically determined terms. Similarly, for Naghash, life itself serves as a form of *ghurba*.

Hence, Naghash’s poems reflect a multivalent understanding of *gharībs* and *ghurba* that was not limited to Armenian speakers, but arguably was shared by his heterogeneous community—a community that consisted of “Turk, and Tat, and Tatar, and Kurd, and Arab, and Jew.”⁶⁵ That does not

⁶⁴ Khondkaryan, ed., *Mkrtich’ Naghash*, 167. For a short article on allegory in the works of Naghash, see S. Peter Cowe, “An Allegorical Poem by Mkrtich’ Naghash and Its Models,” *Journal for the Society of Armenian Studies* 4 (1988–1989): 143–156.

⁶⁵ Armenian communities also consumed Naghash’s poetry on *gharībs* far beyond the city of Amida. We know that Naghash’s poems were copied in Venice, Kafa, Constantinople, Sepastia, Tokat, Vostan, Julfa, Ardabil, and many other places by the seventeenth century. In

mean Naghash shared identical concerns, or mobilized the *gharīb* to represent identical situations, as did his Muslim or Jewish counterparts, of course; as I have argued, the foreignness produced by the *gharīb* is often highly contingent and contextually specific. What these poems demonstrate, however, is that the multivalent word “*gharīb*” had utility for Naghash as a referent in much the same way it did for others around the medieval Mediterranean, and not only because the “Armenian” *gharīb* is defined by an affect of alienation and a loss of prestige, or because the *gharīb*’s life is marked by an attempt to join another society. As we have seen in the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish cases, the Armenian *gharīb* likewise represents what is contingently other about *ourselves*, as we are strangers in this world, and what is foreign within our own communities, which comprise and are compromised by others. This is partly why Naghash, like some of his Armenian contemporaries, composed poetry on the “*gharīb*” and not the “*ōtar*,” which is the Classical Armenian word for stranger.⁶⁶

Instead, he drew from this widely recognizable grammar of estrangement, informed by an episteme that cut across religious and linguistic boundaries, in order to depict the existence of strangers in his own community. His chosen lexicon of estrangement was no more “Turkish” or “Persian” as it was “Armenian.” The *gharīb* belonged, and did not belong, to each of these languages and peoples at the same time.

THE STRANGER IN OUR MIDST

Though Decter has suggested that Halevi and his compatriots ironically developed their own manner of theorizing estrangement from Arabs in particular, Andalusian Jews were not alone in this process.⁶⁷ Instead, as I

fact, Hakop Meghapat, the first Armenian printer, published one of Naghash’s poems on *gharībs* in Venice, 1525 miles from Amida, only some four decades after Naghash’s death.

⁶⁶ For instance, Arak’el Baghishets’i (d. 1454), a prolific poet, musician, and prelate of Erkayn-UNKUZYATs’ monastery, likewise composed a poem (*tagh*) on the *gharīb* that shares many thematic and narrative similarities with Naghash’s poetry. Although both men were born in the same village, Arak’el’s poem on exile generally does not rely on Arabic and Persian loanwords—save for the “*gharīb*” itself. Why then use the term “*gharīb*” at all? As I have suggested here, the term had utility as a referent for Armenian speakers; it therefore carried a particular meaning that intersected with, and departed from, the semantic fields of other more “native” words for strangers in the Classical Armenian lexicon. Arak’el Baghishets’i, *Arak’el Baghishets’i: XV dar*, ed. Arshaluys Ghazinyan (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH Gitut’yunneri Akademiayi Hratarakch’ut’yun, 1971), 184–187.

⁶⁷ As Decter notes, “The Hebrew poetics of estrangement was shown to draw upon the repertoire of themes and motifs conveyed in the Arabic corpus; it might even be the case that

have argued here, a highly mobile “grammar” and lexicon of estrangement spread across many different peoples in the pre-modern Mediterranean, as well as beyond it. In this sense, the *gharīb* is highly performative. It describes the entrance of others into our midst, but itself comes to us from others. Consequently, the multivocal *gharīb* not only invites us to reconsider what we conceptualize as “within” and “without” any given culture or community, but also to examine the ways in which our subjects fluidly drew and redrew those divisions themselves. Or, to put it differently, the *gharīb* may represent the entrance of the “foreign” into our midst, but its historical migration across peoples and languages helps to deconstruct the idea that we were ever completely “native,” completely “us,” in the first place.

This point might be underscored by returning to the etymology of the stranger with which we began, which suggests the *gharīb* is she who “enters,” both “accepted into the family” and an “intruder” (even “usurper” in Old Akkadian), or someone familiar who bears an aura of the outside.⁶⁸ The general Semitic root *gh-r-b* can be traced back at least to some 2500 years before the Common Era, as our familial “intruder” was already present at the dawn of the Akkadian language’s cosmopolitan ascendency, entering into the Akkadian variants of Babylonian in southern Mesopotamia and Assyrian in the North. When Aramaic began to displace Akkadian as the regional language in the first millennium BCE, the intruding Semitic root was there. It “entered” the Ugaritic language; it entered the Ge’ez language; it entered the Phoenician language, whose speakers traveled on seafaring ships and traded with other peoples across the Mediterranean world.

Put simply, the origins of the *gharīb* stretch back so far into the mists of time that they pre-date many of the most fundamental and basic ways in which we figure the world today. It is difficult to think of the *gharīb* as truly “native” in any of the classical or vernacular languages of the last thousand years, including Arabic or Persian, just as it is increasingly difficult to figure the exclusively “native” in the *longue durée* of history. Broadly speaking, what endures across time is that which has come not just from elsewhere, but *elsewheres*, then. This reflects an important quality of

authors’ very experiences of displacement was shaped by the discourse on estrangement and longing in Arabic literature.” Deeter, *Iberian Jewish Literature*, 208.

⁶⁸ Jeremy A. Black, A. R. George, and J. N. Postgate, *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000), 79.

cultural production itself, especially over long periods of time, but the *gharīb* in pre-modern Anatolia and the greater Mediterranean also reminds us that this quality can ring true over much shorter durations as well, particularly across geographic spaces where religious cultures, classical and vernacular languages, and lived experiences intersect.

We therefore ought to consider not only the *gharīb*'s literal meaning, but also its employment as a heuristic that reflects, and was historically part of, the highly migratory nature of cultural production around the medieval Mediterranean. After all, this period in time—what I have loosely referred to as the age of the *gharīb*—coincides with greater linguistic transformations around the globe, or what Sheldon Pollock has termed the vernacular millennium.⁶⁹ During this time, new vernacular literary languages—such as Anatolian Turkish and Middle Armenian—were partly modeled on pre-existing literary standards from other classical literary languages. On a macro scale, we can observe a widespread migration of words, concepts, literary forms, and poetic conventions across languages during this period (consider the frame tale, the *ghazal*, the romance genre, or even specific meters and literary styles). In this sense, the *gharīb*'s far-reaching peregrination across languages and cultures was by no means unique.

The age of the *gharīb* arguably looms large in the history of national literatures today, which often look back anachronistically to their “vernacular” beginnings as the origin of their proto-national literary culture. However, it is important to understand how those traditions are, to some extent, also created by others, and therefore contain something of the “foreign” within them. In this figurative sense, then, the age of the *gharīb* has yet to come to a close. Naghash says it best: “We are all *gharībs*.”

⁶⁹ Sheldon Pollock, “India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000–1500,” *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (1998): 41–74. See also Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).



CHAPTER 3

Past the Mediterranean and Iran: A Comparative Study of Armenia as an Islamic Frontier, First/Seventh to Fifth/Eleventh Centuries

Alison Vacca

Modern historians frequently imagine Armenia as balanced between two worlds, sitting at times precariously at the crossroads between Sasanian Iran and the Roman Empire, then between the Islamic Caliphate and Christian Byzantium. Yet despite the remarkable tenacity of the model “l’Arménie entre Byzance et l’Islam,”¹ few have explored the ramifications of frontier theory on the study of Armenia from the perspective of Islamic history.²

¹ Joseph Laurent & Marius Canard, *L’Arménie entre Byzance et l’Islam depuis la conquête arabe jusqu’en 886* (Lisbon: Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, 1919/1980).

² I am aware of only two articles that discuss caliphal Armenia as a frontier: Aram Ter-Ghevondyan, “Arabakan sahmanayin amrut‘yunneri gotin (sughur),” *Patma-banasirakan handes* 2 (1981): 134–149; and Johannes Preiser-Kappeller, “Central Peripheries. Empires and Elites across Byzantine and Arab Frontiers in Comparison (700–900 CE)” (currently unpublished; preprint available online). My book also deals with the frontier, specifically Byzantine and Sasanian legacy in Arabic descriptions of the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid frontier

A. Vacca (✉)
University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN, USA

This chapter considers works about “thughurology,”³ the study of the Islamic frontiers, in search of a model to diversify the questions we ask about the history of Armenia from the arrival of the Arabs in the 640s to the appearance of the Seljuk Turks in the 1060s. This supplies a host of comparisons to inform the questions and conclusions of scholars working in medieval Armenian history.

Islamicists have found the theme of frontiers and borders to be a particularly useful organizational tool in a number of different ways. The frontier appears at first glance as a barrier fortified by geography and politics against a real or perceived enemy, but it is also a meeting point or bridge that connects a diverse mix of cultures, literatures, and religions.⁴ The definition of the frontier as either barrier or bridge is dependent on the type of sources we employ. Chronographic and prosopographical texts in Arabic support the idea of a political frontier, for example, making Syria the most apt comparison to Armenia. An Armenian polemical tract and canon law, however, potentially construct a legal frontier between Muslims and Christians, making Spain a better point of comparison. Accordingly, we embrace a certain geographical promiscuity here by considering studies about Khurāsān, Syria, Spain, and Sind as possible models to compare to Armenia in order

of Armenia and Albania; Alison Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces under early Islam: Islamic Rule and Iranian Legitimacy in Armenia and Caucasian Albania* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). There are several important studies of the Roman/Byzantine eastern frontier that may serve as an interesting counterpoint, such as Michael Dodgeon & Samuel Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Ralph Mathisen & Hagith Sivan (ed.), *Shifting frontiers in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996); Honigmann, *Die Ostgrenze des Byzantinischen Reiches von 363 bis 1071 nach griechischen, arabischen, syrischen und armenischen Quellen* (Bruxelles: Editions de l’Institut de Philologie et d’Histoire Orientales, 1935); C. R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

³ Cf. Asa Eger, “Hisn, Ribat, Thaghr or Qasr? The Semantics of Frontier Forts in the Early Islamic Period,” *The Lineaments of Islam: Studies in Honor of Fred McGraw Donner*, ed. Paul Cobb (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 427.

⁴ This appears in the study of European frontiers as “frontiers of separation” and “frontiers of contact” or “converging frontiers” (*Zusammenwachsgrenzen*) and “frontiers of separation” (*Trennungsgrenzen*); Daniel Power, “Introduction,” *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands*, ed. Daniel Power & Naomi Standen (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 2. In relation to Islamic history, see Walter Kaegi, “The Frontier: Barrier or Bridge?,” *The 17th International Byzantine Congress* (New Rochelle: Caratzas 1986); Mark Luce, *The Frontier as Process: Umayyad Khurasan* (University of Chicago, 2009).

to benefit from the advances of Islamicists working outside the immediate vicinity. In the process, we bypass a large amount of scholarly material about later periods, particularly the in-depth examinations about Seljuk and Ottoman Anatolia, in favor of more contemporary comparisons.⁵ The goal here is not to dismiss the relevance of such pivotal studies or the specificity of local issues in conceptualizing the Anatolian frontier, but to consider Armenia as an Islamic frontier in a broader sense.

The view from the other edges of Islam challenges the idea that Armenian history should be told exclusively through a Mediterranean lens by drawing attention to the relevance of Iranian frontiers. Categorizing Armenian history as straddling the Mediterranean and Iranian zones reinvents “l’Arménie entre Byzance et l’Islam” as “Armenia between the Mediterranean and Iran,” thereby perpetuating an unnecessary and unsustainable divide between West and East. To avoid civilizational implications in situating Armenian experiences, we need to approach advances in Mediterranean studies as significant contributions to world history and to integrate them into the scholarly work produced about the Iranian cultural sphere.

THE FRONTIER AS BARRIER

The Persian *littérateur* Abū Dulaf al-Yanbūī describes Tiflīs as a frontier by stating that “it is a town beyond which there is no Islam.”⁶ Islam, whether this means the religion or the realm, flourishes on one side and is absent on the other. The frontier thus separates one people from its neighbors and one Empire from its rival. We look here at two ways that the frontier can be construed as a barrier to separate and to block the passage of ideas, people, and goods from one place to another: the geographical frontier and the political frontier.

⁵ Linda Darling, “Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context,” *Studia Islamica* 91 (2000): 133–163; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: the Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley, 1995); Andrew Peacock (ed), *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Sara Nur Yıldız, “Reconceptualizing the Seljuk-Cilician Frontier: Armenians, Latins, and Turks in Conflict and Alliance during the early 13th Century,” *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis*, ed. Florin Curta (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).

⁶ Abū Dulaf Mis'ar b. Muhalhil, ed. & trans. Vladimir Minorsky, *Abū-Dulaf Mis'ar ibn Muhalhil's Travels in Iran = al-riśālat al-thāniyya* (Cairo, 1955), 35 and 6.

The Geographical Frontier

The geographical frontier is not necessarily a place that can be plotted and drawn on a map. Geographical frontiers are, like most others, imagined spaces built with texts as much as with walls.⁷ But the geographical frontier is described in terms of place, such that modern scholars debate the difference between borders (*ḥadd*, pl: *ḥudūd*) and frontiers (*thaghīr*, pl: *thughūr*),⁸ and compare the descriptions and archaeological remains of fortresses (*ḥiṣn*, pl: *ḥuṣūn*), coastal forts (*ribāṭ*, pl: *ribāṭāt*), and castles (*qaṣr*, pl: *quṣūr*).⁹ Mapping the geographical frontier might sometimes (albeit rarely) be possible with archaeology, but geographical treatises provide the clearest pictures.

The geographical treatises written in Arabic in the ninth and tenth centuries, particularly those of the Balkhī school,¹⁰ provide a nostalgic view of the unity of the Islamic world by describing a more-or-less intact Caliphate. By the time most of these geographies were written, Armenia was only tributary to the Islamic realm, yet it appears, even in works written at the

⁷ Asa Eger, *The Spaces between the Teeth: Environment, Settlement, and Interaction on the Islamic-Byzantine Frontier* (University of Chicago, 2008), 419; Asa Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier: Interaction and Exchange among Muslim and Christian Communities* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 20; Zayde Antrim, *Routes and Realms: the Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 125.

⁸ Ralph Brauer, *Boundaries and Frontiers in Medieval Muslim Geography* (Philadelphia: American Oriental Society, 1995); see also Michael Bonner, “The Naming of the frontier: ‘awāṣim, thughūr, and the Arab geographers,” *BSOAS* 57 (1994): 17–24.

⁹ On *ribāṭ*, see Antoine Borrut & Christophe Picard, “Rābata, ribāṭ, rābita: une institution à reconstruire,” *Chrétiens et musulmans en Méditerranée médiévale*, ed. Nicolas Prouteau & Philippe Sénac (Poitiers: Centre d’études supérieures de civilisation médiévale, 2003). The study of the *ribāṭ* is not relevant here, since there are no *ribāṭāt* in Armenia. On *ḥuṣūn*: The *ḥuṣūn* are “mainly eighth to tenth century sites with very little pre-Islamic occupation but were sites near Byzantine sites” and may have been associated with agricultural land along trade routes; cf. Asa Eger, “Hisn, Ribat, Thaghīr or Qasr?” (2012), 433. *Ḥuṣūn* in Armenia include Dabīl/Duin and Ḥiṣn Ziyād. On the *quṣūr*, see Lawrence Conrad, “The *quṣūr* of medieval Islam: some implications for the social history of the Near East,” *Al-Abbāth* 29 (1981): 7–23. The *qaṭṭāt* appear more frequently in Armenia, such as *qaṭṭāt* Ibn Kandamān, the Artsruni-held *qaṭṭāt* Yūnus, or *qaṭṭāt* al-*kiṭāb*.

¹⁰ The Balkhī school of geographical literature gets its name from Abū Zayd Alīmad b. Sahl al-Balkhī (d. 322AH/934 CE). A native of Balkh in Khurāsān, he wrote a geographical treatise in Arabic that is no longer extant. Later geographers follow his lead by producing maps to accompany their texts and by omitting discussion of the non-Islamic world. The famous geographers of the Balkhī school include al-İṣṭakhrī, Ibn Ḥawqal, and al-Muqaddasī.

height of Bagratuni and Artsruni power,¹¹ as one of “the most pleasant places in the Realm of Islam [*dār-i Islām*]”.¹² Only a select few geographies, such as Ibn Hawqal’s tenth-century *Kitāb sūrat al-‘ard*, note contemporary problems in Armenian society and the existence of local Armenian kingdoms.¹³ As a result, the Arabic geographical tradition produces the perception of an unchanging and perpetual frontier. Functional control of the frontier may have passed from Sasanian to Umayyad hands, and then to the ‘Abbasids and thence to the Armenians themselves, but the frontier itself is treated as temporally and physically static.

Even with the occasional reference to juridical terms such as *dār al-Islām* in geographical texts, religion does not define the geographical frontier, which presumably predates the appearance of Christianity and Islam. Geographers writing in Arabic were certainly well aware that the majority of Armenians were Christians, but Armenian churches appear in Arabic geographical treatises mainly because of the marvels (*‘ajā‘ib*) pertaining to them. For example, the church three parasangs from Dabil/Duin, according to al-Muqaddasī, boasts a nearby rock that cures the ill, while Ibn al-Faqīh notes that one of the churches of Qāliqalā/Karin produces a powder that protects people from venoms and poisons.¹⁴ These marvels help build the frontier by identifying physical

¹¹ The Bagratunik[‘] and the Artsrunik[‘] were two of the main noble families in medieval Armenia. The Bagratunik[‘] controlled the western region of Tārūn/Tarōn and built their capital at Ani, in what is now eastern Turkey. They also controlled several other Armenian provinces such as al-Sisajān/Siwnik[‘] and Tayr/Tayk[‘]. While many of the Bagratunik[‘] served as “Prince of Armenia” (*ishkhan Hayots*), they gained more power when Ashot Bagratuni was crowned king in 886 CE. The Artsrunik[‘] controlled the southern region of al-Basfurrajān/Vaspurakan, including al-Zawazān/Andzewatsik[‘] and their famous church at Aght[‘]amar on Lake Van. They came to the forefront of Armenian politics in the ninth century, at least according to the tenth-century family historian T‘ovma Artsruni, and Gagik Artsruni was crowned king of Vaspurakan in 908 CE. Both of these Armenian kingdoms fell to Byzantine expansion in the eleventh century.

¹² *hudūd al-‘ālam min al-mashriq ilā l-maghrib*, ed. Manūchihr Sutūdah (Tehran, [1962]), 157.

¹³ Muhammad Ibn Hawqal, *kitāb sūrat al-‘ard*, ed. M. J. de Goeje & J. H. Kramers (Leiden: Brill, 1939) refers to the Artsrunik[‘] (*banū l-dayrānī*) and complains about the sale of Armenian slaves who should have been protected as “People of the Book” under Islamic law. He complains that these are the result of “the pleurisy of our times,” locating his description of Armenia squarely in the tenth century instead of a timeless constant.

¹⁴ Shams al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Muqaddasī, *kitāb ahsan al-taqāsim fi ma‘rifat al-aqālim*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1906), 381; Abū Bakr Ahmad b Muḥammad Ibn al-Faqīh, *kitāb al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1885), 295; on

space where the knowable and natural are delineated as separate from the unknowable and miraculous.¹⁵

With this very physical establishment of a stable frontier, the question of whether Armenia is part of Iran (*ērān*) or non-Iran (*anērān*) shifts neatly into whether it is in the Realm of Islam (*dār al-islām*) or the Realm of War (*dār al-harb*). “The domain of the Iranians” (*Ērānšahr*) turns into “the kingdom of Islam” (*mamlakat al-islām*).¹⁶ Accordingly, Arab and Iranian geographers writing in Arabic describe the frontier as a product of Persian expansion during the Sasanian period: Qubādh constructed Bardh'a/Partaw, while Anūshirwān built Dabīl/Duin and al-Nashawā/Nakhchawan; so, then, did the Umayyad governor of Armenia ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Hātim b. al-Nu‘mān al-Bāhilī (r. 705–709 CE) rebuild Dabīl/Duin, al-Nashawā/Nakhchawan, and Bardh'a/Partaw.¹⁷

The geographical frontier that provides the most useful comparison to Armenia is Khurāsān.¹⁸ Like Armenia, it is a province that sits on the edge of both Iran and Islam. Arabic sources describe both the Sasanian and caliphal frontiers in terms of walls, barriers, and fortifications. The best example of this trend is the wall at Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband, which is comparable in many respects to the Sasanian walls in the East, and particularly the iron wall (*bāb al-hadīd* in Arabic or *dār-i āhanīn* in Persian) at al-Rāshṭ, as described in the geographies of Ibn Khurradādhbih, al-Ya‘qūbī, and Ibn al-Faqīh.¹⁹ The Arabs inherited and maintained these walls, such that our

¹⁵ *‘ajā’ib* near mosques in the area, see Zakariyyā b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, *athār al-bilād wa-akhbār al-‘ibar* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādr, 1960), 508–509.

¹⁶ See also Travis Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers across Medieval Islam: Geography, Translation, and the ‘Abbāsid Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 34: “Anecdotes of marvels and monsters offer a means of engaging with the foreign and liminal spaces of the frontier.”

¹⁷ J. H. Kramers, “L’influence de la tradition iranienne dans la géographie arabe,” *Analecta orientalia* (Leiden, 1954): 147–156; cf. Andrew Peacock, “Early Persian Historians and the Heritage of pre-Islamic Iran,” *The Idea of Iran: Early Islamic Iran*, ed. Edmund Herzig & Sarah Stewart (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 68–69.

¹⁸ Ahmad b. Yahyā al-Balādhurī, *kitāb al-futūh*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1886), 194–195 on the Sasanians and 205 on the Arabs. Ibn al-Faqīh (1885), 288 identifies Qubādh as the Sasanian emperor who fortified Dabīl/Duin.

¹⁹ See Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces*, Chapter 3 on the comparison between the Armenian and Khurāsānī frontiers and Chapter 5 on settlement.

¹⁹ On al-Rāshṭ, see Robert Haug, *The Gate of Iron: the Making of the Eastern Frontier* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Michigan, 2010). On the comparison of Sasanian walls in the North and the East, see James Howard-Johnston, “State and Society in Late Antique Iran,” *The Idea of Iran: the Sasanian Era*, ed. Vesta Curtis & Sarah Stewart (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 125; Eberhard Sauer et al., *Persia’s Imperial Power in Late Antiquity: the Great Wall at*

sources repeatedly inform us about efforts at fortification. Further, caliphal efforts to populate the frontier by importing Arab tribes finds an analogue with Sasanian attempts to build the frontier through settlement in both the North and the East. As al-Mas‘ūdī explains, “when Anūshirwān built the town known as al-Bāb [Darband] with its wall protruding into the sea, and extending over the land and mountains, he settled there various kings for whom he fixed ranks and special titles and defined their frontiers, on the pattern of what Ardashīr b. Bābak had done with regards to the kings of Khurāsān.”²⁰ Just as ‘Abbāsid-era authors saw common ground in the immigration of Persians into Armenia and Khurāsān, so too might we look to the studies of Arab immigration into Khurāsān as an attempt to bolster the frontier, and thus as a good model to understand the movement of Arab tribes into Armenia.

The Political Frontier

Geographical treatises in Arabic present us with a timeless frontier built by the efforts of the Sasanians and ‘Abbāsids alike in both Armenia and Khurāsān, dotted with fortresses and filled with settlers. By contrast, the political frontier is decidedly historicized and grounded in the attempts to defend and expand the Islamic world. The political frontier is not static and does not rely on the tested strength of fortified walls. It is dynamic, and conceived in the minds of caliphs, emperors, and soldiers. The political frontier is necessarily transitory, at least in theory, because otherwise it renders expansionist philosophy unsustainable. It is consequently easier to describe in the context of specific reigns. The study of the Syrian frontier

Gorgan and the frontier landscapes of Sasanian Iran (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013); Richard Payne, “The Reinvention of Iran: the Sasanian Empire and the Huns,” *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 294.

²⁰ Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Mas‘ūdī, trans. Vladimir Minorsky, *A History of Sharvān and Darband in the 10th–11th centuries* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1958), 144. On Sasanian settlement of Persians in Armenia, see J. H. Kramers, “The Military Colonization of the Caucasus and Armenia under the Sassanids,” *BSOAS* 8, no. 2/3 (1936): 613–618; on Arab settlement in Armenia, see Aram Ter-Ghevondyan, *Arab Emirates of Bagratid Armenia* (Lisbon, 1976). Many scholars interested in frontier studies highlight the significance of settling populations along the frontiers. See Eduardo Manzano Moreno, “The Creation of a Medieval Frontier: Islam and Christianity in the Iberian Peninsula, eighth to eleventh centuries,” *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700–1700*, ed. Daniel Power & Naomi Standen (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 35.

is the most useful example here, as the Arab-Byzantine frontier has provided a mooring for the study of Islamic frontiers.

The primary theme of the political frontier is raiding (*ghazw*) or holy war (*jihād*) against a political rival, making the frontier a meeting place of the Realm of Islam (*dār al-Islām*) and the Realm of War (*dār al-ḥarb*). One of the hallmarks of the political frontier is the direct participation of ‘Abbāsid caliphs because the territorial integrity of their caliphates depended on the maintenance of the frontier and, more importantly, the caliph’s claim to legitimacy rested at least in part on his efforts to expand Islamic territory. The “*ghāzī*-caliph” was personally involved in maintaining the frontier, as Marwān b. Abī Ḥafṣa’s poetry attests: “The *thughūr* are blocked by Ḥārūn, and through him the ropes of the Muslim state are firmly plaited.”²¹ This takes the form of caliphal participation in the expeditions (the *sawā’if*, or summer raids), which frequently included either the heir apparent or a close relative of the caliph.²² Both Abū Ja’far, who would later become the caliph al-Mansūr, and Ḥārūn al-Rashīd fought on the Syrian frontier and, not incidentally, were also governors over the North (Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan) before becoming caliphs.

Due to the historicized descriptions of the political frontier, these discussions rely mostly on chronography, the annalistic accounts of Arabic histories composed from the ninth century on. But the focus on *jihād* prompts other manifestations of the political frontier that are visible in prosopography. The frontier is formed by the *mujāhids* who inhabit it and give it meaning. It is in this context that the political frontier may take on a religious dimension. Arabic biographical dictionaries preserve the names and notices about knowledgeable Muslims and so *littérateurs* (*udabā’*), men learned in religious sciences (*‘ulamā’*), military leaders, and politicians jumble together. In this case, biographical dictionaries inform us about the scholar-*mujāhids* along the frontier whose very presence both Islamizes and fortifies territory.

The scholar-*mujāhid*, a title that was coined in modern works about the Syrian frontier,²³ plays a significant role in the history of Armenia. Histories and biographical dictionaries in Arabic inform us about individuals such as Abū ‘Alī Ismā’īl b. al-Qāsim b. ‘Aydhūn, d. 356AH/966–7 CE, a famous

²¹ Michael Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1996), 69.

²² Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War*, 57.

²³ Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War*.

Kurdish Muslim who was born in Malāzkert and claimed to be from the city of Qālīqalā/Karin through the adoption of the *nisba* al-Qālī. Another famous *mujāhid* related to Armenia is ‘Alī b. Yahyā l-Armanī (“the Armenian”), d. 249AH/863–4 CE, known as “the master of raiding and holy war” (*sāḥib al-ghazw wa-l-jihād*), who governed both Syria and Armenia.²⁴ Through the examination of the people who formed the frontier, we find that some texts are less concerned with territorial gains, which were largely unremarkable or even undetectable,²⁵ as with the orthodoxy of the *mujāhids*. These warriors of the frontier frequently appear as Sufis and ascetics (*zāhids*). Along with this come passing references to Sufi lodges (*khānqāhs*) and Islamic institutions in Armenia, such as the *khānqāh* at Arjīsh/Archēsh.²⁶

The study of *jihād* in the ‘Abbāsid-era Arabic texts about Syria can inform the types of questions we ask about Armenian history in the early Islamic period. The questions relevant to the Syrian frontier cannot necessarily be projected without emendation onto the Armenian experience, but inasmuch as there are noticeable differences between the frontiers (for example, the lack of local nobility like the Armenian *nakharark*‘to defend the Syrian frontier’),²⁷ these differences offer their own series of possible inquiry. The perception of the frontier produced with Arabic chronography and prosopography is markedly different than that of the geographical treatises, despite some common interests such as building and settling the frontier. Both the geographical and political frontiers as imagined here suppose that the frontier is a barrier, a militarized zone that modern scholarship has since deconstructed. The political and geographic frontiers discussed here do not present a physical barrier to movement, but rather construct the perception of difference and/or opposition.

²⁴ Alison Vacca, “*Nisbas* of the North: Muslims from Armenia, Caucasian Armenia, and Azerbaijan in Arabic Biographical Dictionaries,” *Arabica* 62 (2015): 521–550. ‘Alī’s title is listed in Șalāh al-Dīn Khālīl b. Aybek al-Şafadī, *al-wāfi bi-l-wafayāt* (Beirut: Dār iḥyā’, 2000), XXII 190.

²⁵ John Haldon & Hugh Kennedy, “The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the eighth and ninth centuries: military organisation and society in the borderlands,” *Zborník Radová* 19 (1980), 82 and 114. On this same issue in Spain, see Moreno, “The Creation of a Medieval Frontier,” 40.

²⁶ Vacca, “*Nisbas* of the North,” 548. The *khānqāh* at Arjīsh/Archēsh is mentioned in Shihāb al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *mu’jam al-buldān* (Beirut, 1995), I 144.

²⁷ Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War*, 139.

THE FRONTIER AS BRIDGE

While the geographical and political frontiers revolve around territory, empires, and armies, the cultural side of frontier studies sparks the discussion of frontiers as bridges. From this perspective, the frontier is not where one empire is delineated from the next, but a space where some of the distinctions between “us” and “them” break down: Christians, Muslims, and Jews, whether Arabs, Iranians, Turks, or Armenians, inhabit shared spaces and find a common language to engage questions of mutual concern. This frontier, where people from one linguistic, religious, cultural, and/or ethnic group meet their neighbors, is more of a lived frontier, in contradistinction to the frontier-as-barrier constructed on the pages of geographies, histories, and biographies.

The Cultural Frontier

A clear example of the frontier-as-bridge model is the shared cultural milieu and so-called “syncretic” practices of frontier populations, such that societies on either side of the frontier demonstrate more in common with one another than with their respective imperial centers. We can glimpse at the cultural frontier in a number of different ways, but here we focus on architecture.

The Armenian church at Aght‘amar with its curious high-relief carvings occupies a stunning setting on a small *khach‘k‘ar*-strewn island in Lake Van.²⁸ Built in 914 CE by the Artsruni king Gagik Artsruni, known as Jājiq b. al-Dayrānī in Arabic, it illustrates the idea of Armenia as the meeting place between Byzantium and the ‘Abbasid Caliphate and between Christianity and Islam. All while using techniques and a visual language familiar to the empires on either side, the figural agenda of the church at Aght‘amar demonstrates Gagik’s local concerns. For example, the depiction of Gagik on the façade mediates Sasanian legacy in the province by depicting Iranian trappings of power, comparable in fact to the famous Sasanian rock reliefs at Taq-i Bustan.²⁹ This puts the image in an Iranian

²⁸ Lake Van sits in the eastern reaches of the modern state of Turkey in formerly Arcruni territory. The Church of the Holy Cross at Aght‘amar, in Turkish: Akdamar, is the only building remaining on the island. It is surrounded by *khach‘k‘ars* (literally: cross stones), steles engraved with a cross. The church itself is famous for its imagery and high-relief designs depicting biblical and royal imagery.

²⁹ Sirapie Der Nersessian, *Aght‘amar, Church of the Holy Cross* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 31.

context, but it also has a local purpose. Both Arabic and Armenian sources, as well as a contemporary Armenian inscription, provide the Sasanian title *shāhanshāh* to the Bagratunik³⁰. The cultural fluency of Armenian artists is visible in the way that they navigate Iranian, Sasanian, Islamic, Byzantine, and Christian imagery in order to make a political claim that is primarily relevant to the rival Armenian family.³¹ This same process is also possible for earlier monuments, such as the cathedral of Mren. The conclusion is not merely that Armenian architects transmitted Byzantine ideas, but that we need to “rethink political and cultural concepts of imperial center and explore the ways in which Armenia generated, rather than received, visual ideas.”³² The primary concern here is that Armenian churches will be dismissed as local hacks of Byzantine (or, in the case of Aghtamar, caliphal or Iranian) culture, without appreciation of the role of the people inhabiting the frontier in translating the political, cultural, and religious messages of multiple groups.

We also should not stop short with broad conclusions about the innovation and merits of Armenian architecture, which should be obvious even to the casual observer. Instead, we can move forward by looking at such heteroglossia elsewhere to provide models for our own conclusions, as well as to contribute Armenian examples in broader conversations of world history. We face the same problems in approaching the Sindī frontier, namely: locating a Sindī voice in the midst of multiple layers of “inheritances” from the Shī‘ī Fātimids (via maritime trade), the Sunnī Ṣaffārids, and the Hindu Gurjara-Pratiharas, not to mention the ‘Abbāsids and Rashtrakutas even further afield. In his recent study on Muslim-Hindu

³⁰ See Munajjim Bāshī, *sahāif al-akhbār*, ed. & trans. Vladimir Minorsky, *Studies in Caucasian History* (London: Taylor’s Foreign Press, 1953), 5. On the use of the title *shāhanshāh* in Armenia, see Aram Ter-Ghevondyan, “L’Arménie et la conquête arabe,” *Études arméniennes en Memoriam Haig Berbérian* (Lisbon, 1986), 790; Aram Ter-Ghevondyan, “Haghbati araberen ardzanagrut‘yuně ev Bagratuni t‘agavorneri titghosnerě,” *Lraber Hasarakakan gitut‘yunneri* 1 (1979): 73–80.

³¹ Particularly interesting is the discussion of Gagik Artsruni’s portrait in comparison to other examples in the Islamic world: Lynn Jones, *Between Byzantium and Islam: Aghtamar and the Visual Construction of Medieval Armenian Rulership* (Burlington: Routledge, 2007); Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 73–74.

³² Christina Maranci, “Building Churches in Armenia: Art at the Borders of Empire and the Edge of the Canon,” *The Art Bulletin* 88 no. 4 (2006), 657. See also Christina Maranci, *Vigilant Powers: Three Churches of Early medieval Armenia* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), for further discussion on Mren, as well as Ptghni and Zuart‘notn’s.

encounters, F. B. Flood uses examples of heteroglossia to expound on religious and political diversity by focusing on the theme of translation. One possible point of comparison here is the tenth- or eleventh-century mosque of Thambo Wari, which includes enough Indian ornamentation and materials that scholars at one time thought that it was built with *spolia* from local temples. Its plan, though, is reminiscent of other contemporary mosques across the Islamic world, specifically in Egypt and Iran, indicating a local fusion of Egyptian, Iranian, and Indian elements combined, presumably on purpose, into a single edifice. In his discussion of this mosque, Flood argues persuasively that we cannot look at these examples as “simple reproduction across space of already formed structures and notions,” but does not specify what this “mingling of nonindigenous forms and indigenous decorative idioms” means, specifically, in a Sindī context.³³ Presumably, like our Armenian examples, the mosque of Thambo Wari would have been read differently by different audiences.

The earliest mosque of Sind is at Banbhore, which boasts dated Kūfic inscriptions from the eighth and tenth centuries. It is typically, albeit contentiously, associated with the mosque of Daybul (or Dībal), the location of which has been identified, curiously, in part on the testimony of Anania Shirakats’i’s Armenian *Ashkharhats’oyts’*.³⁴ The mosque includes Qur’ānic inscriptions chosen to navigate the claims of contemporary intrafaith polemics, specifically verses harnessed to convey anti-Mu’tazilī views.³⁵ This ties the Sindī mosque to the far-off ‘Abbāsid inquisition (the *miḥna*),³⁶ but we also find evidence of more local concerns. The Muslim Sindīs inserted a *linga*, a Hindu symbol of the god Shiva, into the thresholds of

³³ Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 46–47.

³⁴ On the appearance of Daybul in Arabic, see Josef Markwart, *Erānsahr nach der Geographie des Ps. Moses Xorenac’i* (Frankfurt am Main: Institut für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften, 1901); Monik Kervran, “Le port multiple des bouches de l’Indus: Barbariké, Deb, Daybul, Lahori Bandar, Diul Sindé,” *Res Orientales* 8 (1996): 45–92; S. Qudratullah Fatimi, “The Twin Ports of Daybul,” *Sind through the Centuries*, ed. Hamida Khuhro (Karachi/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 99–100. The studies of Sind refer instead to Movsēs Khorenats’i, since the *Ashkharhats’oyts’* was once attributed to him.

³⁵ The Mu’tazilīs are a school of rationalist theology in medieval Iraq. The ‘Abbāsid caliphs supported Mu’tazilī doctrine by insisting that scholars recognize the createdness of the Qur’ān (i.e., by arguing that the Qur’ān cannot have been eternal, as that would place it as a co-eternal with God). This instigated the inquisition, which demonstrated that religious scholars were not beholden to caliphal determination of Islamic doctrine.

³⁶ Flood, *Objects in Translation*, 19; Muhammad Abdul Ghafur, “Fourteen Kufic Inscriptions of Banbhore, the site of Daybul,” *Pakistan Archaeology* 3 (1966): 86 and 88.

their mosque at Banbhore. This *linga* marked the separation between Hindu and Muslim space because Hindus were presumably loathe to step on the *linga* and so refrained from entering the mosque.³⁷ Al-Bīrūnī offers a comparable eleventh-century example with a story of Maḥmūd of Ghazna placing the Hindu “idol” of Somnath at the entrance of the mosque of Ghazna so that Muslims could clean their feet on it before entering.³⁸

This is directly relevant to our interpretation of the Armenian frontier. Alp Arslan took the cross from the cathedral in Ani and inserted it into the threshold of a local mosque. According to Mattēos Urhayets‘i, Alp Arslan’s goal was to show disrespect for Armenian Christianity every time a Muslim trampled on the cross, but in dialogue with the Sindī frontier we can speculate on other motivations. Lodging *lingas* in the threshold of mosques was a statement of Ghaznavid victory, just as the cross in the threshold of a mosque in Ani was a clear and public announcement of the loss of both Bagratuni and Byzantine power. More importantly for our purposes here, this also meant that Christians did not enter the mosque. This constructs non-Christian space in Ani comparable to the non-Hindu space in Banbhore and Ghazna, thereby identifying the precise border between Islam and Christianity in a local setting of mixed urban communities. Such clear boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims were important specifically because such identities were not universally discernable in frontier societies.

The Legal Frontier

With the mosques of Banbhore and Ani, our frontier constructs and defines the space between Muslims and non-Muslims, built locally within communities instead of on the edges of empire. This approach has gained ground on other frontiers, in particular with the study of religious law as a development to clarify and codify religious boundaries. Despite the focus on religious differences, the legal borders between Christians and Muslims, paradoxically, can only be built on interreligious engagement.

³⁷ Derryl Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 49–50; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 38.

³⁸ S. M. Ashfaque, “The Grand Mosque of Banbhore,” *Pakistan Archaeology* 6 (1969), 198–199.

Ghewond, an Armenian priest living under Arab rule in the eighth century, may indeed dismiss Islam as “quackeries born of heathen and hellish folly,”³⁹ but he also preserves a text that demonstrates that Christians in the Near East had in-depth knowledge about Islamic beliefs, orthopraxy, and law. This polemic, in the guise of letters between the Umayyad caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and the Byzantine emperor Leo the Isaurian, defines the boundaries between Christians and Muslims in theological and, specifically, Christological argumentation. Yet the process of refuting religious claims demonstrates the close relationship between different religious groups in the Islamic world. The text preserved in Ghewond’s *History*, for example, even paraphrases *ḥadīth al-tafrīqa*, a famous saying about sectarian disunity attributed to the Prophet Muhammad.⁴⁰ The correspondence between ‘Umar and Leo is a complicated case study because it was not originally written in Armenian (it was instead translated from Greek) and because we cannot know with any sense of surety about its reception in Armenia. Armenians did not produce polemics against Islam before the fourteenth century.⁴¹ The correspondence between ‘Umar and Leo appears in Armenian, Arabic (both Christian and Muslim), Aljamiado, and Latin.⁴² The common ground between the Christian Armenian and Muslim Aljamiado versions demonstrates that these should be construed as different iterations of the same text, reworked to fit the religious claims

³⁹ Ghewond, *Arshawank‘ Arabats‘ i Hays*, ed. Chahnazarian (Paris, 1857), 125–126.

⁴⁰ Ghewond, *Arshawank‘ Arabats‘ i Hays*, 85–86. On the *ḥadīth*, see Roy Mottahedeh, “Pluralism and Islamic Traditions of Sectarian Divisions,” *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 82 (2006): 155–161.

⁴¹ Seta Dadoyan, “Grigor of Tatev” Treatise against the Tajiks,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7, no. 2 (1996): 193–204.

⁴² Denise Cardaillac, *La polémique anti-chrétienne du manuscrit aljamiado No 4944 de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Madrid* (Université Paul Valéry de Montpellier, 1972); J. M. Gaudel, “The Correspondence between Leo and ‘Umar: ‘Umar’s letter rediscovered?” *Islamochristiana* 10 (1984); Stephen Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the reign of Leo III, with particular attention to the Oriental Sources* (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1973), 153–171; Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: a Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2007), 490–501; Arthur Jeffery, “Ghevond’s text of the correspondence between Umar II and Leo III,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 37, no. 4 (1944): 269–332; Dominique Sourdel, “Un pamphlet musulman anonyme d’époque abbasside contre les chrétiens,” *Revue des études islamiques* 34 (1966): 1–33; Cecilia Palombo, “The ‘correspondence’ of Leo III and ‘Umar II: traces of an early Christian Arabic apologetic work,” *Millennium* 12, no. 1 (2015): 231–264; Seonyoung Kim, *The Arabic Letters of the Byzantine Emperor Leo III to the Caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz* (Ph.D. Diss., Catholic University of America, 2017).

of their respective authors. Even if the ‘Umar-Leo correspondence was not originally Armenian, its translation into Armenian demonstrates that the delineation between Islam and Christianity was important there at a particular time. Presumably, Ghewond inserted the correspondence because it fit with his own sense of purpose when he wrote his history.⁴³

The need for such reassurance about the supremacy of one faith over the other and the knowledge and awareness to debate theological grievances in-depth demonstrates sustained interaction between Muslims and Christians. Studies of the Spanish frontier can inform our approach to Armenian history, not only because of the appearance of this particular text in both Christian Armenian and Muslim Aljamiado, but because Spain has attracted a strong and, significantly, multidisciplinary cadre of scholars that has built a robust tradition about polemical discourse. A modern study of a Latin anti-Jewish tract from Spain suggests that, paradoxically, polemics serve to negotiate room for tolerance, not bigotry. Polemics intended to “stabilize relations between religious groups.” Accordingly, these texts may not aim to discredit Christianity or Islam or to encourage conversion, but to concretize the differences between Christianity and Islam in a way that allows Christians and Muslims to coexist in a “pattern of mutually beneficial cooperation shadowed by a degree of fear and mistrust.”⁴⁴

The Muslim-Christian frontier is not only built with polemical texts, but also with codes of religious law. In Spain, we conceptualize this frontier with close examination of Arabic works about Islamic (specifically: Mālikī) law as a way to investigate the social circumstances of Muslims living in proximity to Christians and Jews. “These texts are part of a diffuse and multivocal discourse about how to be Muslim and who is and is not Muslim in a context of cross-confessional interaction, intermarriage, and conversion, or, more broadly, social differentiation and cultural transmutation.”⁴⁵ This conversation hinges on Arabic texts in the Spanish

⁴³ Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm*, suggests that the ‘Umar-Leo correspondence was added to Ghewond’s *History* much later than the eighth century. As a separate issue, Timothy Greenwood, “A Reassessment of the History of Lewond,” *Le Muséon* 125, no. 1/2 (2012) argues that Ghewond’s *History* as a whole was later.

⁴⁴ Lucy Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence: Archbishop Rodrigo and the Muslims and Jews in medieval Spain* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 17–18.

⁴⁵ Janina Safran, *Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Islamic Iberia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 17; on the use of legal texts in circumscribing religious boundaries through Mālikī law in Spain in the later period, see Alan

context because there are no comparable Christian sources extant today, but in Armenia we find several Armenian texts that can elucidate the religious boundaries in Armenia.

If we look at the legal frontier through Armenian canon law, we fall unexpectedly flat. While scholars of Spain contend with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, scholars interested in Armenia instead encounter a stronger concern with Chalcedonianism and heresy. If the codification of religious difference is an aspect of frontier studies, the Armenian frontier in the early Islamic period is focused squarely on Byzantium, not Islam. Hovhannēs Odznets‘i’s eighth-century *Kanonagirk‘ Hayots‘* expresses the delineation between Armenian and Byzantine belief: “It is fitting to present the bread unleavened and the wine unmixed on the sacred altar according to the tradition entrusted by Saint Gregory unto us and not to bow down to the traditions of other Christian people; for the holy Illuminator brought this tradition from him who fulfilled the Laws [i.e., Jesus Christ].”⁴⁶ Odznets‘i also identified “the most wicked sect of obscene men” as the Paulicians.⁴⁷ The *Kanonagirk‘ Hayots‘* reads: “It is not befitting at all to be indifferent and to commune with heretics, but rather to turn away from them with disgust and not to share with them in spiritual altars and material [lit. physical] tables, so that they should be ashamed and should desire to join with those who teach orthodoxy.”⁴⁸ Armenian canon law, then, suggests that the legal frontier of eighth-century Armenia drew lines between Armenians, Chalcedonians, and Paulicians. It does not engage with Islam as a religion, but rather clarifies the authority of the Armenian church to adjudicate correct belief, a process that illustrates the role of the church as the arbiter of a protected “People of the Book” (*ahl al-kitāb*) under Islamic law.

Verskin, *Islamic Law and the Crisis of the Reconquista: the Debate on the Status of Muslim Communities in Christendom* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

⁴⁶ Hovhannēs Odznets‘i, trans. Manuel Jinbashian, *Church-State Relations in Armenia during the Arab Dominion: from the first invasion to the time of the early ‘Abbāsids* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2000), 173; for the Armenian, see Hovhannēs Odznets‘i, *Kanonagirk‘ Hayots‘*, ed. Vazgen Hakobyan (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH gitut‘yunneri Akademiyai hratarakch‘ut‘yun, 1964), 519.

⁴⁷ Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: a Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), 32; Jinbashian, *Church-State Relations*, 174; Nina Garsoian, *The Paulician Heresy: a Study of the Origin and Development of Paulicianism in Armenia and the eastern Provinces of the Byzantine Empire* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967), 135.

⁴⁸ Hovhannēs Odznets‘i, trans. Jinbashian, *Church-State Relations*, 174; for the Armenian, see Hovhannēs Odznets‘i, *Kanonagirk‘ Hayots‘*, 533.

The legal frontier constructed by a polemical text and canon law does not present a cohesive message about Armenian responses to Islam and non-Armenian Christianity in the eighth century, but the comparison with Spain helps tease out multilayered responses to religious interaction.

THE MEDITERRANEAN FRONTIER

The descriptions and definitions of the Islamic frontiers, and consequently the relevance of any comparison from one frontier to the next, are wholly dependent on our preferred sources. While the goal here was to identify conceptual frameworks developed outside of our traditional toolbox, these examples also provide something else: an occasional glimpse at the connectivity of the medieval world ranging beyond the Mediterranean.

There are a number of different ways to define Mediterranean history, some of which are more relevant to Armenia than others. By the geographical definition, Greater Armenia is not Mediterranean. Numerous studies over the past few decades have instead oriented Armenians as a part of a broader Iranian *oikoumene*. Garsoian notes that, notwithstanding some famous exceptions, Armenia was closely tied to Iran and “remained an Oriental society alien to the Mediterranean world.”⁴⁹ Of course, Cilicia touches the Mediterranean and we cannot neglect the innumerable Armenians living outside of Armenian territory. Are Armenians “Mediterranean” if they live near or travel over the Mediterranean? Armenian involvement in Fatimid administration in particular appears at first glance as a perfect illustration of a Mediterranean reality. Badr al-Jamālī, an Armenian convert to Islam, moved via Syria to Egypt and served as the vizier of the Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir. He acts as corroboration that the tidy lines of ethnicity and religion crossed frequently in the Mediterranean area. But Badr al-Jamālī’s cultural expectations were embedded in the broader Iranian world, even if he expressed them in a Mediterranean territory: he named his son Shāhanshāh and went by the Iranian title “vizier of the sword and the pen” (*wazīr al-sayf wa-l-qalam*).⁵⁰ Badr al-Jamālī is

⁴⁹ Nina Garsoian, “Reality and Myth in Armenian History,” *The East and the Meaning of History* (Rome: Bardi, 1994), 118; see also Nina Garsoian, *Interregnum: Introduction to a Study on the Formation of Armenian Identity* (Lovanii: Peeters, 2012), X for an elaboration of this idea.

⁵⁰ Shams al-Dīn Abū l-‘Abbās Ahmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān, *wafayāt al-a‘yān wa-anba abnā’ al-zamān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1978), II 448–449. For the comparison between Badr al-Jamālī and Nizām al-Mulk, see Carole Hillenbrand, “Nizām al-Mulk: a Maverick

not the Mediterranean counterpart to Nizām al-Mulk; the two are comparable because they both rely on Iranian expressions of legitimacy and perceptions of statecraft. We should not see this as common ground between the Mediterranean and Iran, but rather the persistence of Iranian perspective in Armenian culture even after Armenians are rooted in Mediterranean territory. As such, even when Armenians are in the Mediterranean, it cannot *a priori* be assumed that a Mediterranean perspective can adequately make sense of Armenian history.⁵¹

If we forgo the use the Mediterranean as a geographical distinguisher, we may suppose that Mediterranean history is the tradition of vigorous scholarship that stresses the cultural fluency, interconnected histories, and relatability of different religious, ethnic, linguistic, and social sub-groups. For example, Samuel ha-Nagid, known in Arabic as Abū Ishāq Ismā‘il b. al-Naghrla, is frequently singled out as an example of Mediterranean diversity. A Jew who rose to the position of vizier under a Zirid (i.e., a Berber and Muslim leader) in Spain, he wrote Hebrew poetry influenced by Arabic. The boundaries, or rather lack thereof, between religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups identify Ibn al-Naghrla as a product of a Mediterranean environment, where legal decisions about the acceptability of Jewish rule over Muslims are eclipsed by the lived reality of social mixture. We should shift, then, to another famous medieval Jewish vizier, Sa‘d al-Dawla b. al-Ṣāfi b. Hibbat Allāh b. Muḥāsib, who served under an Ilkhānid (i.e., a Mongol and Buddhist leader) in Iraq and Iran. Fluent in Mongolian and Turkish, he is also said to have produced poetry, although we can only guess at its contents.⁵² So if Mediterranean history is defined by an approach and a perspective

Vizier?” *The Idea of Iran: the Age of the Seljuks*, ed. Sarah Stewart (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

⁵¹ The example of Badr al-Jamālī fits with Horden & Purcell’s “history *in* the Mediterranean,” to be distinguished from “history *of* the Mediterranean” (emphasis added). Their point underscores that history *of* the Mediterranean is integrated across the expanse of the Mediterranean, as opposed history *in* the Mediterranean, which is made up of discreet events that happen to occur in the vicinity of the Mediterranean. See Peregrine Horden & Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: a Study of Mediterranean History* (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 43–45.

⁵² Reuven Amitai, “Jews at the Mongol Court in Iran: Cultural Brokers or Minor Actors in a Cultural Boom,” *Cultural Brokers between Religions: Border Crossers and Experts at Mediterranean Courts* (Paderborn: Fink, 2013), 39–41; Moshe Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries in the Middle Ages*, trans. David Strassler (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 483–484. I would like to thank Yoni Brack for bringing these works to my attention.

instead of by a geographical boundary, then how is Ibn al-Naghila “Mediterranean” while Sa‘d al-Dawla is “Iranian”?

Mediterraneanists are producing compelling work *on world history* by conceptualizing problems in defining identity and exploring cultural fluency. The relevance of Mediterranean Studies is not located in the Mediterranean, but in the practice of challenging categorical presumptions about diverse religious, linguistic, and cultural identities. As such, the methodologies and inquiries of Mediterranean history are exportable and relevant far beyond the Mediterranean region.⁵³ Laurent’s famous *L’Arménie entre Byzance et l’Islam* in fact complements this theoretical framework by highlighting the originality and the agency of Armenians *vis-à-vis* their neighboring powers. Yet framing this discourse territorially renders Armenians “other” or “exotic” instead of integrated into Near Eastern history. Despite our haste to challenge monolithic definitions of identity, we retain the shadows of Huntington with an East-versus-West paradigm by making the discussion about cultural fluency either “Mediterranean” or “Iranian.” From this perspective, Armenia will always be the alienated outsider, on the edges of both East and West looking in. The recent advances in Mediterranean Studies are particularly relevant to Armenia if we scale back to look at the “entangled worlds” of the Mediterranean and Iran.

⁵³ David Abulafia, “Mediterraneans,” *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, ed. William Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), gets at this when he suggests that the Baltic and North Seas are a “Mediterranean of the North” or that the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea are a “Japanese Mediterranean.”



CHAPTER 4

A Fish Out of Water? Armenia(ns) and the Mediterranean

Sergio La Porta

In 401 BCE, the Athenian soldier and student of Socrates, Xenophon, participated in a hasty retreat from Persian Mesopotamia to the Black Sea.¹ Passing through Armenian territory, Xenophon remarked upon the food available to his men:

There [in the Armenian villages] they had as many good things as needed—sacrificial animals, grain, fragrant old wine, raisins, and all kinds of beans.... For many unguents were found there, made of lard, and sesame, and from bitter almonds, and terebinth, which they used instead of olive oil. From these very same ingredients also a sweet oil was found.²

¹ He and his men had been hired as mercenaries by Cyrus the Younger in his fight against his brother, the Achaemenid Shah Artaxerxes II. With Cyrus's defeat in 401 BCE, the Greek soldiers were forced to flee home.

² ἐνταῦθα εῖχον τὰ ἐπιτήδεια ὅσα ἔστιν ἀγαθά, ιερεῖα, σῖτον, οἴνους παλαιούς εὐώδεις, ἀσταφίδας, ὅσπρια παντοδαπά....πολὺ γὰρ ἐνταῦθα ηύρισκετο χρῆμα, ὃ ἐχρῶντο ἀντ' ἐλαίου,

I would like to thank Dr. Michael Pifer for his insightful comments and suggestions.

S. La Porta (✉)
California State University, Fresno, CA, USA

Approximately 460 years later, the Arsacid king of Armenia, Trdat (Tiridates), travelled to Rome to pledge his loyalty and receive the royal diadem from the Emperor Nero.³ Cassius Dio recounts the impressive journey to the imperial capital and reflects upon the manner in which Trdat travelled:

And Tiridates was led up to Rome, bringing not only his own sons but also those of Vologases and Pakorus and Monobazos; and their procession through all the lands from the Euphrates was like that for a victory.... And this continued in the same manner for the nine months they journeyed. He rode everywhere up to Italy, and along with him rode his wife, wearing a golden helmet in the place of a veil so as not to be seen, in accordance with her ancestral customs.⁴

The two above reports from classical antiquity exemplify much of Armeno-Mediterranean dynamics. On the one hand, both accounts point to the personal interactions that linked Armenians and the Mediterranean, whether of “Mediterranean peoples” traveling across the Anatolian plateau as in the case of Xenophon’s march through Armenia during his escape from the Persian empire,⁵ or of Armenians journeying to the Mediterranean basin as the Arsacid King Trdat journeyed to Rome.⁶ On the other, they also indicate Armenia’s and Armenians’ distance from the

σύειον καὶ σησάμιον καὶ ἀμυγδάλινον ἐκ τῶν πικρῶν καὶ τερμίθινον. ἐκ δὲ τῶν αὐτῶν τούτων καὶ μόρον ηύρισκετο, Xenophon, *Anabasis*, ed. Carleton L. Brownson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1992), IV.14.9,13.

³ Trdat (Tiridates) I was the first Arsacid (Arshakuni) king of Armenia. By the terms of the Treaty of Rhandea (63 CE), the Romans and Parthians agreed that the king of Armenia was to be a member of the Parthian Arsacid royal family, who would be crowned by the Roman Emperor. The Arsacids ruled Armenia until their removal by the Sasanians in 428 CE.

⁴ καὶ ὁ Τιριδάτης ἐξ τὴν Ἀρμενίαν, οὐχ ὅτι τοὺς ἔαντοῦ παῖδας ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς τοῦ Οὐόλογαίσου τοῦ τε Πακόρου καὶ τοῦ Μονοβάζου ἄγων, ἀνήχθη, καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτῶν πομπὴ διὰ πάσης τῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ Εὐφράτου γῆς ὡσπερ ἐν ἐπινικοῖς.... καὶ τοῦτο ἐπ’ ἐννέα μῆνας, οἵς ὠδοιπόρησαν, ὁμοίως ἐγένετο. Ἰππευσε δὲ πανταχῇ μέχρι τῆς Ἰταλίας, καὶ αὐτῷ καὶ γυνὴ συμπαρίππενε, κράνος χρυσοῦν ἀντὶ καλύπτρας ἔχοντα, ὡστε μὴ ὄρασθαι παρὰ τὰ πάτρια, Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, vol. 8, ed. Earnest Cary (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1925), LXIII.1–2.

⁵ On the Greek idea of anabasis as a descent from coastal lands into the interior, see Nicholas Purcell, “The Boundless Sea of Unlikeness? On Defining the Mediterranean,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 18, no. 2 (2003): 15.

⁶ As noted above, King Trdat was a Parthian Arsacid, not an Armenian. His voyage is evoked here as indicative of personal travel from Armenia to the Mediterranean. The problematic question of “Armenian identity” is discussed more generally below.

Mediterranean. Elements of the “Mediterranean diet,” for example, are conspicuously absent.⁷ Although there were delicious wines and meats to be found in Armenia, Xenophon distinctly remarks upon the lack of olive oil; and his men do not appear to have enjoyed any fish dishes as part of their Armenian hosts’ hospitality. Even wine preparation customs differed between Armenians and the peoples of the Mediterranean in that the former, in good Persian style, did not add water to their wine; a difference that has been preserved in the Armenian church’s unique celebration of the Eucharist with an unmixed chalice.⁸ And despite sharing a Christian faith with a number of inhabitants in the Mediterranean, the Armenian church was organized differently from Greco-Roman Christianity, developed a separate ecclesiastical hierarchy, practiced unique rites, employed its own liturgical language, and adhered to its own theological tradition.

Similarly, sea-faring, a very Mediterranean mode of transportation, obviously does not loom large on the land-locked Armenian plateau. Cassius Dio observes that King Trdat completed the lengthy journey from Armenia to Italy overland, which Pliny the Elder (*Nat. hist.* XXX.6) attributes to the king’s desire not to pollute the water, considered sacred in Zoroastrianism.⁹ Armenians certainly did transport themselves across various types of water, but while it would be an exaggeration to assert that Armenians did not conduct any navigation, they did not develop notable navies or shipping fleets even when settled in littoral areas.¹⁰ Perhaps Christian Armenians could be forgiven their thalassic hesitations given that the most renowned sea-faring expedition in the region ended up on top of Mt. Ararat.

⁷ On the factiousness of the “Mediterranean diet,” however, see Michael Herzfeld, “Po-Mo Med,” in *A Companion to Mediterranean History*, ed. Peregrine Horden and Sharon Kinoshita (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 123–124.

⁸ Nina Garsoian, “Le vin pur du calice dans l’Église arménienne,” in *Studies on the Formation of Christian Armenia* (Farnham-Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), XI.

⁹ Cassius Dio, however, notes (LXIII.6) that the Arsacid king did cross the sea from Brundisium to Dyrrachium on his return home. Although Trdat was Parthian, his mores were arguably shared by the Armenian population he ruled.

¹⁰ The thirteenth-century historian, Kirakos Gandzakets’i. *Patmut’iwn Hayots’* (History of the Armenians), ed. Karapet Melik-Öhanjanyan (Yerevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1961), 159–160, recounts that when King Lewon I set out to return from Cyprus, his enemies planned to attack him at sea. Learning about the planned attack, Lewon turned back to Cyprus and gathered “his warships” (*iwr naws paterazmakan*s) and rammed the main ship of the naval ambush. Why, however, King Lewon supposedly kept his own warships in Cyprus is unexplained, as is the ethnicity of the sailors on these ships.

It may further be observed that the Mediterranean, whether as a sea or an imagined space, held little fascination for Armenian historiographers and writers of the pre-modern period. Referred to simply as the Sea or as the Greek Sea, it only makes rare appearances for most of Armenian literary history. In the fifth-century histories attributed to P'awstos and Agat'angeghos, the Mediterranean is referred to as the “fearsome” (*ahagin*) sea,¹¹ a far cry from today's idealization of the Mediterranean, but a description with which many current refugees would concur. The awe invoked by the sea in these authors suggests that although Armenians were not renowned for oceanic adventures, they were well aware of the hazards of sea travel.¹² Anania Shirakats'i (7th c.), refers to the Mediterranean as the sea of the Greeks in both recensions of his *Ashkharhats'oyts'* (Geography), but uses the Armenian calque on Mediterranean, *mijerkreayk'* (lit. midlands), to refer to Anatolia as the land between the Greek and Pontic seas.¹³ Movsēs Khorenats'i, in the eighth-century *History of the Armenians*, uses *mijerkreayk'* to designate both Anatolia and the lands of Syria-Palestine.¹⁴ He also cites a letter of Archibishop Vrt'anēs (sed. 333–41) to Emperor Constantius II in which the ecclesiastic requests military assistance from

¹¹ “fearsome Ocean sea”: P'awstos, *Patumut'iwn Hayots'* (History of the Armenians) (Venice: Mekhitarist, 1889), Engl. trans. Nina Garsoian, *The Epic Histories* (Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk') (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1989), IV.6; Agat'angeghos, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'* (History of the Armenians), trans. Robert W. Thomson (Albany: SUNY, 1976), §867. Cf. the list of names for the sea given by David Abulafia, *The Great Sea, A Human History of the Mediterranean*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), xxiii.

¹² Although Agat'angeghos is dependent on the *Buzandaran* for this characterization of the Mediterranean Sea, his repetition of it indicates that the conception of the Mediterranean as a dangerous space may have been somewhat commonly held.

¹³ Anania Shirakats'i, *Ashkharhats'oyts'* (Geography), trans. Robert Hewsen (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1992), 43–45A, 47–48A, and 100n1.

¹⁴ Movsēs Khorenats'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayots'* (History of the Armenians), ed. Manuk Abegyan and Sargis Yarut'iwnean (Tiflis: Aghaneani, 1913); Engl. trans. Robert W. Thomson, *Moves Khorenats'i, History of the Armenians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1978), I.8, II.64, III.12. The date of the composition of this text remains contentious among scholars. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to engage in that debate, but I think the text *as we now have it* was completed around the year 800. See Nina Garsoian, “L'*Histoire* attribuée à Movsēs Xoreanc'i: Que reste-t-il à en dire?,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 29 (2003–2004):29–48, and the bibliography cited there; however, cf. Aram Topchyan, *The Problem of the Greek Sources of Movsēs Xorenac'i's History of the Armenians* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006).

the latter as “God has made you lord not only of Europe but also of all the Mediterranean.... And we desire that you rule over an ever-greater [empire].”¹⁵ In addition to the interesting juxtaposition of Europe and the Mediterranean, it is clear that the Arsacid kingdom was not considered to belong to either. Focus on eastern Mediterranean politics and cultural dynamics naturally intensifies with the conquest by and settlement of an Armenian elite in the Cilician coastal region, but there is no sense that the Armenians in Cilicia belonged to a larger “Mediterranean oikoumenē.”¹⁶

The above observations would, *prima facie*, seem to render dialogue between Armenian and Mediterranean Studies unpromising. In actuality, however, these differences emphasize the superficialities that often underlie Mediterranean stereotypes and force us to rethink static notions of both “Mediterraneanness” and “Armenianness.” This chapter attempts to do that by first looking at how the Armenian presence in the lands around the Mediterranean has either been included or excluded from the Mediterranean conversation and how the dynamics of that presence are illustrative of, and may also help refine, Mediterranean frameworks. It then turns to the questions of whether methodological approaches developed in Mediterranean Studies can be usefully applied to Armenia and how the Armenian example may contribute to the Mediterranean project through decentering the historiography. I have limited the scope of my comments primarily to the pre-modern period, although this is a nebulous construct for Armenologists. The literature cited in the notes has also been restrained as it is intended to be representative rather than exhaustive. Furthermore, I have generally foregrounded a cultural conception of the Mediterranean rather than taking a maritime or ecological / geographical approach, although studies by scholars working on the latter two aspects of Mediterranean history have been taken into account.

¹⁵ Topchyan, *The Problem of the Greek Sources*, III.6.

¹⁶ Matthew of Edessa refers to it simply as “the great sea Ocean” (*mets tsven Orkianos*) in his twelfth-century *Chronicle*, Matt’eos Uṛhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn* (Chronicle), ed. Mambrē Mēlik’-Adamean and Nersēs Tēr Mik’āēlean (Vagharshapat: Holy See of Ejmiatsin, 1898), 66; Engl. trans. *Armenia and the Crusades: The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, trans. Ara Dostourian, Belmont: NAASR, 1993), 56. Dostourian, however, translates the phrase as “the vast large Mediterranean Sea.” The thirteenth-century *Chronicle* attributed to Smbat Sparapet similarly refers to the Mediterranean as “the sea,” or “the sea Ocean.”

THE ARMENIAN MEDITERRANEAN

Even before the defining work of Fernand Braudel and the rise of Mediterranean Studies, Armenologists had turned their attentions to aspects of relations between Armenians and the Mediterranean and continue to do so. These can be roughly categorized in the following manner with the caveat that these are not exclusive categories, but ones with a good amount of overlap. First, one of the earlier “Mediterranean fields” to be developed was concerned with the Armenian migration to and eventual establishment of a kingdom in Cilicia.¹⁷ Ghewond Alishan’s monograph, translated into French as *Sissouan ou l’Arméno-Cilicie*, provided an overview of the interaction between Cilician geography and human history.¹⁸ Armenian involvement in the Crusades and in Mediterranean politics of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries brought Armenian history and literature within a broader Mediterranean context.¹⁹ The work of Édouard Dulaurier in the second half of the nineteenth century of publishing and translating into French primary historical sources helped open the way for

¹⁷ The province of Cilicia rests in southeastern Anatolia along the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean sea. In antiquity, the province was to the east of Pamphylia and was bordered by the Taurus mountains to the North and East. The region was considered to consist of two parts: mountainous Cilicia (Kilikia Trakheia) and level Cilicia (Kilikia Pedias), the latter referring to the littoral plain.

¹⁸ Ghewond Alishan, *Sissouan ou l’Arméno-Cilicie* (Venice: Mekhitarist, 1899). It is to be noted that Alishan, who was a monk in the Armenian Mekhitarist monastery on the island of San Lazzaro in the Venetian lagoon, was a student of the same nineteenth-century Romantic geographic tradition as Braudel.

¹⁹ The literature that draws upon Armenian settlement in Cilicia and involvement with the Crusades is very large. In addition to the work of Alishan mentioned above, a few other works may be listed here: Claude Cahen, *La Syrie du nord à l'époque des croisades et la principauté franque d'Antioche* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1940); Sirarpie Der Nersessian, “The Kingdom of Cilician Armenia,” in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. Kenneth Setton, et al., 6 vols. (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1969–89), 2:630–659; *The Cilician Kingdom of Armenia*, ed. Thomas S. Boase (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1978); Claude Mutafian, *La Cilicie au Carrefour des Empires*, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1988); Angus Donal Stewart, *The Armenian Kingdom and the Mamluks: War and Diplomacy during the Reigns of Het'um II (1289–1307)* (Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2001); Gerard Dédéyan, *Les Arméniens entre Grecs, Musulmans, et Croisés. Étude sur les pouvoirs arméniens dans le Proche-Orient méditerranéen (1068–1150)*, 2 vols. (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2003); Christian MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008); Claude Mutafian, *L'Arménie du Levant (xi–xve siècle)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012).

scholars without Armenian to access important sources in that language.²⁰ Interest in the connection between the Armenian rulers of Cilicia and the Crusader states continued to grow in the twentieth century. Second, we may mention the study of Armenian communities and their significance within parts of the Mediterranean world. Thus, for example, there have been studies devoted to documenting Armenians and their role in the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, in Syria and the Levant, in Egypt, and in Italy.²¹ Third, an area of particular interest has long been dialogue and conflict between the ecclesiastical hierarchies of the Armenian, Latin, and Greek churches.²² Finally, a number of works have focused specifically on Armenian pilgrimage to the Holy Land, including the Sinai Peninsula.²³

²⁰ Édouard Dulaquier, ed. and trans., *Recueil des historiens des croisades. Documents arméniens*, 2 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1869), vol. 1. On the need for caution in using these translations, see the remarks of Timothy Greenwood, “Armenian Sources,” in *Byzantines and Crusaders in Non-Greek Sources*, ed. Mary Whitby (New York: Oxford University, 2007), 228.

²¹ E.g., Peter Charanis, *The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1963); Marius Canard, “Notes sur les Arméniens en Égypte à l’époque fatimite,” *Annales de l’Institut d’Études Orientales de la Faculté d’Alger* 13 (1955): 143–157; Seta Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians* (Leiden-New York-London: Brill, 1997), cf. Paul Walker’s review, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120, no. 2 (2000): 270–271; Avedis Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1965); Levon B. Zekian, ed., *Gli Armeni in Italia* (Rome: De Luca edizioni d’arte, 1990).

²² E.g., Bernard Hamilton, “The Armenian Church and the Papacy at the Time of the Crusades,” *Eastern Churches Review* 10 (1978): 61–87; Levon B. Zekian, “Saint Nersès Chnorhali en dialogue avec les Grecs,” in *Armenian Studies/Études Arméniennes In Memoriam Haig Béberian*, ed. Dickran Kouymjian (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1986), 861–883; Gerard Dédéyan, “Le rôle complémentaire des frères Pahlawuni Grigor III. Catholicos et Saint Nersès Šnorhali, coadjuteur, dans le rapprochement avec les Latins à l’époque de la chute d’Edesse (v. 1139–1150),” *Revue des études arméniennes* 23 (1992): 237–252; Peter Halfter, *Das Papsttum und die Armenier im frühen und hohen Mittelalter. Von den ersten Kontakten bis zur Fixierung der Kircheunion im Jahre 1198* (Köln: Böhlau, 1996); Isabel Augé, *Byzantine, Arménien, et Francs au temps de la croisade. Politique religieuse et reconquête en Orient sous la dynastie des Comnènes 1081–1185* (Paris: Geuthner, 2007).

²³ E.g., Mkrtich‘ Aghawnuni, *Miabank‘ ew ayts‘eluk‘ hay Erusaghēmi* (Monks and visitors to Armenian Jerusalem), (Jerusalem: St. James, 1929); Michael E. Stone, *The Armenian Inscriptions from the Sinai* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1982); Michael E. Stone, ‘Holy Land Pilgrimage of Armenians before the Arab Conquest,’ *Revue Biblique* 93 (1986): 93–110; Michael E. Stone, Robert R. Irvine, and Nira Stone, eds., *The Armenians in Jerusalem and the Holy Land*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2002).

On the whole, to evoke and slightly modify the distinction articulated by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, Armenologists have concentrated more on the question of Armenians “in” the Mediterranean than how they may have been “of” it.²⁴ Likewise, and in particular with regards to studies on Armenian rule in Cilicia, Armenian “exceptionality” has been emphasized over the integration of Armenian actors into a Mediterranean context. We may take as representative the following remarks of Alain Duccellier as cited without criticism by Gerard Dédéyan: “The maps and texts also convince us that this Armenian mobility, often forced on them, is above all proof of a rare ability to adapt to countless different territorial and socio-political conditions.”²⁵ Many of the hallmarks of the elite of the Cilician kingdom—multilingualism, widespread use of intermarriage as political diplomacy, cultural adaptability and mobility, negotiated identities, and engagement in both local and longrange trade—are less indicative of any particular Armenian genius than they are representative of the complexities, paradoxes, and connectivities that define relations in the Mediterranean. This is not to deny that Armenians’ success in employing these strategies and situating themselves in a Mediterranean context may have been facilitated through historical experience with a similar density of ethno-religious cultural exchanges that contoured life in eastern Anatolia.

Moreover, little consideration has been given to the question of “Armenian identity” in the pre-modern dispersion.²⁶ Too often scholars are at pains to designate an individual as Armenian, rather than unpack

²⁴ Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 2–3 and *passim*; Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, “The Mediterranean and the ‘New Thassology’,” *American Historical Review* (June 2006): 729–730; cf. also the remarks of Brian Catlos, review of *Byzantines, Latins, and Turks in the Eastern Mediterranean World after 1150. Oxford studies in Byzantium*, ed. Jonathan Harris, Catherine Holmes, and Eugenia Russell, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2014.04.37. The focus on a history of Armenians in the Mediterranean is also true of the collection of many valuable essays in *La Méditerranée des Arméniens*, ed. Claude Mutafian (Paris: Geuthner, 2014).

²⁵ Alain Duccellier, preface to Claude Mutafian and Eric van Lauwe, *Atlas historique de l’Arménie* (Paris: Autrement, 2001), 8, as cited in Gerard Dédéyan, “The Founding and Coalescence of the Rubenian Principality, 1073–1129,” in *Armenian Cilicia*, ed. Richard G. Hovannissian and Simon Payaslian (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2008), 79. Cf. the judicious conclusions of Angus Stewart, “Alliance with the Tatars: The Armenian Kingdom, the Mongols and the Latins,” in *La Méditerranée des Arméniens*, 225.

²⁶ See the remarks of Christina Maranci in her review of Dédéyan, *Les Arméniens entre Grecs*, in *Speculum* 84, no. 2 (2009): 415–418.

what the supposed significance of that statement is. Thus, Melisende is the Armenian Queen of Jerusalem, Emperor Basil I was of Armenian ancestry, Badr al-Jamālī and his descendants were the Armenian viziers of Fatimid Egypt. How they are “Armenian” is rarely explained, as though having an Armenian ancestry was sufficient to define identity and determine its import. Are we to assume that all these individuals are Armenian in the same way, either *vis-à-vis* each other or, for example, a monk in a monastery on Lake Van? Beyond the problem of essentializing “Armenianness,” such reductionism obscures the multiple identities these historical actors could and did inhabit as well as the contextual, contingent, and complex nature of identity itself²⁷ by imposing anachronistic notions of “ethnic identity” developed within nationalist discourses or within the framework of American “percentage-identities” (i.e., half-Armenian).

The above remarks are not intended as a criticism of the substantial, necessary, and valuable work Armenologists have achieved through documenting the presence and role of Armenians in various parts of the Mediterranean region, but as a support for the development of a different line of inquiry that brings Armenian Studies into greater conversation with Mediterranean Studies. For their part, scholars of Mediterranean Studies have not been ignorant of Armenians in the Mediterranean, but also have seemed hesitant about integrating them in a Mediterranean framework and have similarly essentialized them. Thus, while Fernand Braudel discusses Armenians as sharing a similar fate as other mountain people, he also depicts them as the quintessential merchants, attributing their success to “their Christianity, and in large measure because they would take on hard work, had great resistance, and were very sober, that is real mountain people.”²⁸ Merchants they remain throughout his massive tome, and it is precisely their wide and successful mercantile dispersion that Braudel credits with the cessation of their statehood and the loss of “Armenia.”

In his *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*, David Abulafia attempts a chronologically broader (stretching from 22,000 BCE until 2010 CE), but geographically narrower, analysis of the Mediterranean

²⁷ See, for example, the essay of James G. Schryver, “Identities in the Crusader East,” in *Mediterranean Identities in the Premodern Era: Entrepôts, Islands, Empires*, ed. John Watkins and Kathryn L. Reyerson (Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 173–189.

²⁸ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972–73), vol. 1, 51.

Sea than Braudel. Abulafia's theme "is the process by which the Mediterranean became in varying degrees integrated into a single commercial, cultural and even (under the Romans) political zone, and how these periods of integration ended with sometimes violent disintegration, whether through warfare or plague."²⁹ From his presentation, Armenians, however conceptualized, were not active participants in that process at any time. The kingdom established in Cilicia seems only to have provided a door for western merchants to reach more "exotic" lands further East.³⁰ Later in the volume, Armenians feature as part of the landscape of Smyrna during the burning of the city in 1922.

The collection of illuminating essays entitled *Mediterranean Identities in the Premodern Era* engages a number of essential topics problematizing the question of "identity" in the pre-modern Mediterranean. However, none of the contributions even touches upon how Armenian identities may have figured in the various negotiations of cultural interaction in the Mediterranean.³¹ Similarly, *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, a volume dedicated to reconsidering the legacy of Horden and Purcell's *Corrupting Sea*, omits any mention of Armenians, as did Horden and Purcell's *magnum opus*. Armenian identities are not the only identities of the Mediterranean unexplored in these volumes, and any collection of essays that attempts to address such a broad topic will contain lacunae.

In general, then, Mediterranean Studies has either nearly completely ignored the Armenian presence in the region, or when attempting to include it has tended to reproduce the same essentialized and static notions of Armenianness as that established by scholars of Armenian Studies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This criticism is not meant to imply that a useful history or discussion of the Mediterranean cannot be written without reference to Armenians, but given the multiple locales, identities, languages, and social strata they inhabited and the cross-cultural transactions in which they engaged, the Armenian experience seems to offer an opportunity to productively expand the Mediterranean conversation.

²⁹ Abulafia, *The Great Sea*, xvii.

³⁰ "From Cyprus trade routes extended to another Christian kingdom, Cilician Armenia, on the south-east coast of modern Turkey. Western merchants supplied wheat to Armenia by way of Cyprus, and they used Armenia as a gateway to exotic and arduous trade routes that took them away from the Mediterranean, to the silk markets of Persian Tabriz and beyond," Abulafia, *The Great Sea*, 392.

³¹ John Watkins and Kathryn L. Reyerson, eds., *Mediterranean Identities in the Premodern Era: Entrepôts, Islands, Empires* (Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate, 2014).

Although “Armenian merchants” certainly figured prominently in the Mediterranean, it would be fruitful, on the one hand, to transcend this stereotype that possesses a derogatory and condescending patina to involve Armenians from different levels of society—e.g., rulers, warriors, peasants, shop owners, writers, mystics, thieves—and, on the other, to delve more deeply into the merchants themselves so that they are not represented as a monolithic block, but as historical actors with agency.³² For example, the recently published *A Companion to Mediterranean History*, edited by Peregrine Horden and Sharon Kinoshita, provides a hint at new perspectives for conceptualizing how Armenians may be incorporated into Mediterranean frameworks. Not only do Armenians appear as the ever-present merchants,³³ but also as part of the multilingual networks of literary translation and transmission as well as being engaged in the dynamics of cultural interaction between majority and minority ethno-religious communities whose density is one of the characteristics of the Mediterranean World.³⁴

In sum, there appears to be ample room for both Armenologists and Mediterraneanists to reconstruct the substantial documentation of Armenians “in the Mediterranean” within the framework of “of the Mediterranean.” In order to do this, however, it will be necessary to deconstruct the essentialized notions of Armenian identity that have been prevalent in scholarly discourse; and here, in particular, Mediterranean Studies can serve a very useful methodological purpose for Armenologists. With its emphasis on the polyvalence of cultural symbols, on the fluidity and contextuality of ethno-religious identities, on processes of cultural interaction rather than on states of conflict or co-existence, and on complexity and even contradiction over reductionism, the methodological experiments conducted in Mediterranean Studies can help Armenologists shed certain preconceptions and reimagine what it meant to be Armenian in and of the Mediterranean world.

³² As, for example, Sebouh Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California, 2011).

³³ See Molly Greene, “The Early Modern Mediterranean,” in *A Companion to Mediterranean History*, ed. Peregrine Horden and Sharon Kinoshita (Oxford: Wiley & Sons, 2014), 91–106.

³⁴ See the contributions of Sharon Kinoshita, “Mediterranean Literature,” in *A Companion to Mediterranean History*, 314–29, and Brian Catlos, “Ethno-religious minorities,” in *A Companion to Mediterranean History*, 361–77.

A MEDITERRANEAN ARMENIA

So far this chapter has broached the subject of the relationship between Armenian Studies and Mediterranean Studies as it relates to Armenians who inhabited areas around the Mediterranean. Another question that may be posed is whether Mediterranean Studies bears any utility for conceptualizing the history of “Armenia.” On a very basic level, as Alison Vacca points out elsewhere in this volume (see Chap. 3), Armenia is definitely not in the Mediterranean; and given how Armenia differs from the Mediterranean environmentally, climatically, linguistically, and culturally as well as in terms of food production and consumption, Mediterranean Studies would seem to be of little use or consequence for Armenology. So one most certainly does have to ask whether there is any point to this comparison beyond possibly making a “foreign subject” a bit more familiar.³⁵

Clearly, I think that there is a point. Before I lay out some possible ways in which the Mediterranean may be a useful frame of comparison for Armenia, I should mention what I do not intend by such a proposal. I am not claiming that Armenia is a part of the Mediterranean or a Mediterranean society or somehow “Mediterranean.” Furthermore, this framing of Armenia is not meant to be exclusive. I do not think that the Mediterranean is the only lens through which we can conceptualize Armenia; However, I do think that it is a particularly powerful one. Part of the reason for this conclusion is simply the amount of methodological experimentation that has occurred in Mediterranean Studies relative to other cognate fields which offers the Armenologist numerous opportunities to expand his or her vision of inquiry. In addition, many of the problems faced by scholars of the Mediterranean are similar to those that Armenology faces.

To start with, Armenia and the Mediterranean are ideological or discursive constructs, often ill-defined, sometimes deployed for the sake of convenience, sometimes for political or commercial ends.³⁶ The geographic limits of the Mediterranean have not been decidedly determined, nor does it seem can they be with absolute agreement. As already noted, Braudel and Abulafia, for example, have very different conceptions of the limits of

³⁵ Cf. Michael Herzfeld, “Practical Mediterraneanism: Excuses for Everything, from Epistemology to Eating,” in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, ed. William V. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 48. On the applicability of comparing “Mediterraneans,” see David Abulafia’s contribution to the same volume.

³⁶ Herzfeld, “Practical Mediterraneanism.”

the Mediterranean. In addition, these boundaries shift as one moves from an environmental conception of the Mediterranean to a cultural one. Similarly, the term “Armenia” carries much ambiguity. While the Armenian plateau or highlands may be a recognizable geographical entity, it constitutes only a part of a cultural sphere that encompasses Eastern Anatolia and the southern Caucasus, an area roughly defined by Cappadocia to the West; Mesopotamia and the Araxes river to the South; Pontus and the Kur river to the North; and the confluence of the Kur and Araxes rivers near the Caspian Sea to the East. B. Zekiyán has recently argued that this geographic unit should be designated Subcaucasia.³⁷ An advantage of Subcaucasia is that it disentangles the political constructs of Armenia from the geographical region that includes and surrounds the Armenian plateau. A disadvantage, however, is that it is a stretch to imagine the westernmost part of the Armenian highlands as ‘beneath’ the Caucasus mountains. More importantly, the use of a term that has no historical resonances and is imbued with a false sense of scientific objectivity deproblematises the issue and allows scholars to avoid the thorny question of the constructed nature of “Armenia.” I will therefore employ the term “Armenia” henceforth without quotes to indicate this larger region, not to make any territorial or definitional claims, but because the designation is—or should be—contested. Regardless of what term is used, there is a perceived historical sense of unity for this area much in the same way that there is for the Mediterranean basin. Rooted in a geographical reality—the Armenian highlands and the Mediterranean Sea—these unities were seemingly articulated and made manifest, even if for a relatively brief period of time, through political entities—the Arsacid kingdom and the Roman Empire. In both cases, the constructs of Armenia and the Mediterranean are heuristically useful, but require problematization.

Ian Morris points out, not uncritically, that “mobility, connectivity, and decentring (sic) are at the heart of recent historical/anthropological treatments of the Mediterranean.”³⁸ Although none of these ideas are uncontroversial, they do provide a fresh perspective through which to explore Armenia, which is a fragmented space. Divided by mountain chains and

³⁷ Levon B. Zekiyán, “Towards a ‘Discourse On Method’ in Armenian Studies: A survey of recent debates with special regard to the problem of textual hermeneutics,” in *Armenian Philology in the Modern Era: From Manuscript to Digital Text*, ed. Valentina Calzolari (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2014), 533 n2.

³⁸ Ian Morris, “Mediterraneanization,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 18, no. 2 (2003): 37.

river valleys, dense forests, rocky expanses, plateaus and slopes, Armenia consists of a series of “microregions” that have nonetheless been linked through their political, economic, and social interdependence. Each microregion possessed its own productive possibilities, whether related to agriculture, viticulture, fishing, transhumant pastoralism, long-distant and local trade, as well as their own risks including environmental, pestilential, cattle rustling, and banditry. The famous dynasts or *nakharars* of “classical Armenia,” many of whom descended from different tribes or tribal confederacies, and were connected through the Armenian language and a social hierarchy that evolved apparently beginning in the second century BCE, continued to protect their ancient and hereditary prerogatives jealously, including their own legal customs.

Religiously, the variegated pre-Christian religions of Armenia appear based in local cults that incorporated in manifold ways the practices, deities, and narratives of neighboring cultures. In the aftermath of the Christianization of the area, other religious belief systems and practices either persisted or were introduced, while variety in doxology and praxis remained among the Christianities followed by the region’s inhabitants. Even the dominant Armenian Apostolic Church, despite the sporadic efforts of its *catholicoi*, maintained a multilocal power structure that constantly shifted. Despite the long, privileged position of the literary language *grabar*, “classical Armenian,” linguistic variation and accommodation obtained throughout the region.

Mobility was another constant feature of pre-modern Armenian history that contoured economic production, linguistic accommodation, and cultural interaction. The dynast or king and his large retinue including family and retainers seasonally circulated through his territory and required either an equally mobile economy, or a somewhat regular shift in economic production to manage such changes in population demands. Military campaigns, too, would seemingly have added to the decentralization of economic production, but also required logistical co-ordination. While temples, estates, and monasteries developed their own local economics, pilgrims, monks, and traders wandered among the many holy sites both within and outside the region. Scholars have justly emphasized the importance of trade routes across the region, but it should also be recalled that terrestrial cabotage, local markets, and unfixed loci of exchange possibly contributed more to the transmission of goods, services, and knowledge.

In addition to appreciating the Mediterranean as decentralized, recent studies have also attempted to decenter the history of the Mediterranean itself by moving away from elites, cities and states, hegemonic institutions, and Mediterranean exceptionalism, towards ethno-religious minorities, women, peasants, cultural connectedness and interdependence, and comparative approaches.³⁹ A focus on decentered history serves a dual purpose with respect to Armenia. On the one hand, Armenian history needs to be decentered itself away from elites, essentialized notions of Armenianness, Armenian exceptionalism, privileging articulations of “statehood,” and a discourse of dominance towards exploring the dynamics of interaction with different internal ethno-religious corporate entities, not to mention further analysis of women in Armenian societies. As alluded to earlier, anachronistic notions of a “national church” also require deconstruction. The rise of urban centers in Armenia, particularly after the seventh-century, their relationship to trade routes, and their role as loci of cultural exchange has been a focus of study since the work of Manandyan,⁴⁰ but Horden and Purcell have reintroduced the attractive notion of “ruralizing” the Mediterranean, in which, in the words of Harris, the “whole category of town or city is made to shrink into insignificance.”⁴¹ While one may not wish to go as far as Horden and Purcell, the question of the relationship between urban, ex-urban, and rural environments and cultures in Armenia still needs to be clarified.

On the other hand, Armenia can help decenter imperial narratives and core-periphery models, redirecting attention away from Constantinople, Ctesiphon, Baghdad, etc. towards the region where many empires met for trade, war, or diplomacy. Such decentering should also undermine reflexive applications of notions of the frontier. As Garsoian has argued, “Armenia,” however conceived, was a frontier (*limes* or *thughūr*) or a peripheral zone only from the perspective of the military-political centers of the Byzantine Empire and the Caliphate.⁴² Furthermore, the idea of

³⁹ The volume, *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia*, ed. Andrew Peacock, Bruno de Nicola, and Sara Nur Yildiz (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), contains many valuable essays that will help advance conceptualizations about ethno-religious interaction in the area.

⁴⁰ Hakob Manandyan, *The Trade and Cities of Armenia in Relation to World Trade*, trans. Nina Garsoian (Lisbon: Bertrand, 1965).

⁴¹ Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea*, 96–101; William V. Harris, “The Mediterranean and Ancient History,” in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, ed. William V. Harris, 29.

⁴² Nina Garsoian, “Frontier-Frontiers? Transcaucasia and Eastern Anatolia in the Pre-Islamic Period,” in *Formation of Christian Armenia* (Farnham-Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), III.

frontiers, even as zones, emphasizes linear boundaries that did not exist in pre-modern Armenia or elsewhere, even if the concept of linear boundary was present.⁴³ Geopolitical maps are particularly deceptive in this instance as they reinforce the misconception that there were indeed identifiable borders.

The interconnectedness of the region with the Iranian and Anatolian plateaus and the Mediterranean can further assist in deconstructing a discourse of a polarized “East” and “West.” Grigor (Gregory) Part‘ew (the Parthian) provides an example of the kaleidoscopic range of linkages across sea and land as well as time. Of Parthian noble ancestry, Grigor was raised in Greek-speaking Roman Caesarea and became the patron saint of the Armenian Apostolic Church. According to tradition, his relics were brought to Constantinople, whence nuns fleeing persecution by iconoclasts brought the head of Grigor to Naples. A church and convent were thus dedicated to him in Naples upon the remains of a Roman temple to Ceres, and are located on Via San Gregorio Armeno, known for its makers of *presepi*/*crèches*. In November, 2000, the relics of Grigor were transferred by Pope John Paul II to Catholicos Karekin II in anticipation of the celebration of 1700 years of Armenian Christianity. In April, 2015, the skull of Grigor Part‘ew was returned to the church of San Gregorio Armeno by Catholicos Karekin II and President of the Republic of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan, along with a cross-stone, in commemoration of the centenary of the Armenian genocide. The wanderings of Grigor and his relics thus depict a recurring cycle of transmission—as opposed to a unidirectional transference—of both artifact and meaning.

Even in the case of a more direct set of ties, as provided by the life of Gregory of Nicopolis who died at the beginning of the eleventh century, we observe a cyclic pattern of reinforming significance.⁴⁴ Born in Second Armenia (possibly near Melitene), he seems to have fluctuated between Imperial and Armenian forms of Christianity as a youth. Gregory studied in a monastery near Nicopolis (modern Koyulhisar), where he became an assistant to the bishop, whom he succeeded after the latter’s death.

⁴³ Nora Berend, “Medievalists and the Notion of the Frontier,” *The Medieval History Journal* 2, no. 1 (1999): 55–72; Ronnie Ellenblum, “Were there border or borderlines in the Middle Ages? The example of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem,” in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. David Abulafia and Nora Berend (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 105–119.

⁴⁴ Paul Guérin, *Les Petits Bollandistes. Vies des Saints*, 7th ed., vol. 3 (Paris: Bloud and Barral, 1876), 450–455.

Desiring the spiritual life, he abandoned his office and with two Greek friends headed West. He eventually settled in a cave near Pithiviers in Orleans, where he became somewhat of a local celebrity. What is remarkable is that, according to his life composed around 1050, his reputation as a holy man reached his homeland and his family set out to find him. Reaching Pithiviers, they sadly discovered that Gregory had died. The voyage was not in vain, however; it was from Gregory's family that the locals learned about Gregory's past as they had been unable to communicate with him.

People did not only travel to the West, of course, but also to the East as the famous frescoes of the church of Saints Peter and Paul of Tat'ew monastery attest; the artists who painted them were Franks hired by Bishop Yakob around 930 CE.⁴⁵ We may also mention Marco Polo's journey through Armenia, as well as the missionary houses that established themselves there in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as two other prominent examples.⁴⁶ The Latin missionary expansion in the East, in particular, resulted in reforms within the Armenian monastic pedagogic system and a crystallization of Armenian doctrines, while simultaneously altering Roman Catholicism's image of itself.⁴⁷

In addition to bridging the imagined distance between East and West, Armenia reveals the postulated stark divide between Christianity and Islam or Christian and Muslim societies to be illusory. Although religious belief and identity were significant factors of pre-modern Armenian society, so too were the processes of political, economic, and cultural integration and accommodation. Despite the diversity and fragmentation of ethno-religious communities, claims of political legitimacy, economic

⁴⁵ Cf. Jean-Michel Thierry and Nicole Thierry, "Peintures murales de caractère occidentale en Arménie: l'église Saint- Pierre et Saint-Paul de Tat'ev (début de Xe siècle). Rapport préliminaire," *Byzantion* 38 (1968):180–242.

⁴⁶ See the new translation of Sharon Kinoshita, Marco Polo, *The Description of the World* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016); on the missionaries, see Raymond-Joseph Loenertz, *La Société des frères pérégrinant: étude sur l'Orient dominicain* (Rome: Institutum Historicum FF. Praedicatorum, 1937) and Jean Richard, *La Papauté et les missions d'Orient au Moyen Age (XIIIe-XVe siècles)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1977); Claudine Delacroix-Besnier, "Les missions dominicaines et les Arméniens du milieu du xive siècle aux premières années du xve siècle," *Revue des études arméniennes* 26 (1996–97): 173–191.

⁴⁷ Irene Bueno, "Avignon and the World. Cross-cultural Interactions between the Apostolic See and Armenia," *Rechtsgeschichte*, 20 (2012): 344–346; Sergio La Porta, "Armeno-Latin intellectual exchange in the fourteenth century: Scholarly traditions in conversation and competition," *Medieval Encounters* 21 (2015): 269–294.

terminology and instruments, as well as symbolic vocabularies were by necessity mutually intelligible.⁴⁸

It is worth reiterating that I am not arguing that Armenia is a Mediterranean society or is a part of the Mediterranean, although it is naturally interconnected with it. Nor do I wish to privilege a Mediterranean context over other cultural spheres with which Armenia was intimately entwined, most prominently the Iranian, which contoured the cultural topography of Armenia more profoundly than the Mediterranean. If we step back from the specifics of historical incident and the particularities of geographic proximity, however, we can recognize analogous processes and characteristics of cultural dynamics between Armenia and the Mediterranean. The greater amount of attention that has been directed towards Mediterranean history and the methodological awareness exhibited in the new Mediterranean historiography warrant that Armenologists look to Mediterranean Studies not for answers, but for possible lines of inquiry and of debate in Armenian history. On the opposite side of the coin, Armenia and the fragmented complexity of its history offers a contested space within which to deconstruct heuristic categories whose utility is being challenged.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a more methodologically sophisticated approach to Armenians in the Mediterranean region that appreciates both the contextuality of that identity and the diversity of historical experience that contoured it would contribute to challenging essentialized notions of ethno-religious communities in the Mediterranean as well as pre-conceptions of what constitutes “the Mediterranean.” Similarly, expanding Mediterranean frameworks to include Armenia would facilitate the deconstruction of “Mediterraneanism” and the decentering of Mediterranean Studies. At the same time, increased engagement on the part of Armenian Studies with Mediterranean Studies should lead scholars to question facile categorizations and foster the navigation of dynamic

⁴⁸ Sergio La Porta, “‘The kingdom and the sultanate were conjoined’: Legitimizing Land and Power in Armenia during the 12th and early 13th centuries,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 34 (2012):73–118; on the notion of mutual intelligibility, see also Brian Catlos, *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom c.1050–1614* (Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University, 2014), 485, 509.

processes of cultural negotiation and (re)interpretation as opposed to the presumption of static cultural entities; the tracking of a pluripartite, contested Armenian tradition against the plotting of a single dominant, linear tradition; and the foregrounding of historical agency over a reduction to “national characteristics.” There thus appears to be ample room for further communication between these two fields.

PART II

Connecting Histories



CHAPTER 5

From “Autonomous” to “Interactive” Histories: World History’s Challenge to Armenian Studies

Sebouh David Aslanian

In recent decades, world historians have moved away from more conventional studies of nations and national states to examine the role of transregional networks in facilitating hemispheric interactions and connectedness between

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S. D. Aslanian (✉)

University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA

cultures and regions.¹ This shift from what may be called the optic of the nation(-state) to a global optic has enabled historians to examine large-scale historical processes of cross-cultural, biological, and economic exchanges unfolding across vast bodies of land and water and has yielded a growing corpus of scholarly literature on different hemispheric regions, including Eurasia and even maritime regions of interactivity such as the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.² The emphasis in the new subdiscipline of world history has rested, first, on a downplaying of the role of nation-states and their territorially defined national communities, whose histories have for the most part been studied as autonomous histories; and, second, on interactive histories that take into account “the complex interplays between different layers of the analysis: the local, the regional, the inter-regional, the national, the continental, and the global.”³ Similar to interactive histories, a third approach has focused on what Sanjay Subrahmanyam, building on the work of Joseph Fletcher, calls “connected histories” or histories that are characterized by the circulation of ideas and mental constructs across political boundaries and “cultural zones.”⁴ In his study on early modern Eurasia, Subrahmanyam demonstrates that what

¹ For a general introduction to the field of world or global history, see Jerry Bentley, “The New World History,” in Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza, eds., *A Companion to Western Historical Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 393–416; idem., “Introduction: The Task of World History,” *The Oxford Handbook of World History*, ed. Jerry Bentley, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1–18; and Patrick Manning, “Defining World History” and “Global Studies,” in *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 3–15 and 163–180.

² The locus classicus of maritime history qua world history is of course Fernand Braudel’s trailblazing 1948 work, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II*. 2 vols., translated from the French by Sian Reynolds (New York, Harper & Row, 2nd edition, 1972). For representative works in the wake of Braudel’s contribution, see Jerry Bentley, “Sea and Ocean Basins as Frameworks of Historical Analysis,” *Geographical Review*, Vol. 89, No. 2, Oceans Connect (Apr., 1999), 215–224; and Kären Wigen, “AHR Forum Oceans of History: Introduction,” *American Historical Review* (June, 2006): 717–721.

³ Tony Ballantyne, “Putting the Nation in its Place? World History and C.A. Bayly’s *The Birth of the Modern World*” in *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective*, ed. Ann Curthoys and Marylyn Lake (The Australian National University Press, 2005), 32.

⁴ Joseph Fletcher, “Integrative History: Parallels and Interconnections in the Early Modern Period, 1500–1800,” in *Studies on Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia*, by Joseph Fletcher, ed. Beatrice Forbes Manz, Variorum, (1995): 1–46; and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Islamic Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3, Special Issue: The Eurasian Context of the Early Modern History of Mainland South East Asia, 1400–1800. (Jul., 1997): 735–762.

seem to be closed “cultural zones,” from a nationalist or area studies perspective, are in fact porous and connected to each other in complex ways that generally elude scholars influenced by nationalism, area studies, or comparative history. What connects these cultural zones or the “local” to the “global,” as Subrahmanyam suggests, are networks of circulation and transmission, not merely of merchants and commodities, which have received the lion’s share of scholarly attention to date, but also of cultural elites, ideas, and mental constructs.

Despite the proliferation of the interactive approach of world history across campuses in North America and Europe, Armenian Studies scholars, and especially historians working on the Armenian past(s) both in Armenia and in North America and Europe, have not thus far demonstrated serious interest in or awareness of some of the methodological perspectives elaborated by world historians and their colleagues in the cognate field of “connected histories” in exploring the rich and complex past of Armenians. On the whole, the field of Armenian Studies has remained rather insular and reluctant to engage in constructive self-criticism. There has not been substantive or significant change in its approach since Ronald Grigor Suny wrote the following lines over twenty years ago:

Often directed toward an ethnic rather than a broader international or scholarly audience, Armenian historical writing has been narrowly concerned with fostering a positive view of an endangered nationality. Popular writers and activist journalists both in the diaspora and Armenia handed down an uncritical historical tradition replete with heroes and villains, and scholars who might otherwise have enriched the national historiography withdrew from a field marked by unexamined nationalism and narcissism. Criticism has been avoided as if it might aid ever-present enemies, and certain kinds of inquiry have been shunned as potential betrayals of the national cause.⁵

The kind of scholarship suggested by world historians, one that is cognizant of cross-cultural interactions and sensitive to the “connected histories” of cultures and regions and the circulation of elites, capital, and cultural forms across vast areas that nonetheless leave their socio-cultural traces or “deposits” in cultures that are otherwise studied in isolation and

⁵ Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 2.

insulation, has been largely absent in the way scholars have studied the Armenian past. An unwillingness or inability to contextualize the study of the Armenian past(s) in an interactive framework has resulted in the development of a field characterized by high levels of insularity and by perspectives on Armenian history seen largely as “autonomous” and standing apart from other histories and peoples instead of creatively interacting with them. Awareness of the insularity of the field and some of the inherent problems this may cause to its future development is nothing new; many notable scholars have themselves intelligently written or spoken about this matter in the course of the past three decades.⁶ What follows is a set of provisional reflections on the writing of Armenian history and to a lesser extent on the field of Armenian Studies that builds upon past discussions but also adds a new level of analysis informed by recent scholarship done in the burgeoning field of world/global history. My reflections below are not meant to be definitive statements; rather, they are invitations to further debate and exploration. To quote the formidable scholar of Central Asia, Joseph Fletcher, I shall be writing “in the indicative, hoping to provoke discussion, but my spirit is properly that of the subjunctive or the interrogative.”⁷

THE RISE OF THE “NEW” WORLD HISTORY

Contrary to a common misconception, world history as an academic or research discipline is not the history of the world. According to one of its most well-known practitioners, Jerry Bentley, world history “does not imply that historians must deal with the entire history of all of the world’s peoples, and certainly not at the same time.”⁸ Neither does it connote the metaphysical prognostications of thinkers of the earlier part of the twentieth century, such as H.G. Wells, Oswald Spengler, Arnold J. Toynbee, Jawaharlal Nehru, and others, few of whom were professional historians. It is also not to be confused with world-systems analysis of the type espoused by Immanuel Wallerstein or Andre Gunder Frank although the latter can be said to have influenced its rise. Rather, as Bentley suggests,

⁶See the collection of essays in *Rethinking Armenian Studies, Past, Present, and Future*, a special issue of the *Journal of Armenian Studies* 7, no. 2 (2003), especially the contributions of S. Peter Cowe, “The Future of Armenian Studies: 1,” 169–184, and Richard G. Hovannisian, “The Role of the University Chairs: 3,” 25–30.

⁷Joseph Fletcher, “The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspectives,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46, no. 1 (Jun., 1986), 11.

⁸Bentley, “The New World History,” 393.

the “new” world history “refers...to historical scholarship that explicitly compares experiences across the boundary lines of societies, or that examines interactions between peoples of different societies.”⁹

Most world history scholarship over the past few decades has often involved focus on what David Christian has called “networks of exchange” that are transregional, hemispheric, or global in scope.¹⁰ Topics that have engaged the attention of world historians have included: (1) the study of long-distance trade and the role of diasporic groups as cross-cultural “go-betweens”; (2) the expansion and consolidation of empires across the world and the proliferation of imperial, missionary and mercantile networks connecting different regions and cultures into an increasingly dense global web thus paving way for “globalization”; (3) the mass migration of peoples across vast spaces, most notably of African slavery and the making of the transatlantic world; (4) biological diffusions and the exchange of diseases and pathogens on a global or hemispheric scale that results from cross-cultural encounters and imperial expansion, as is the case with the “Columbian exchange” resulting from the expansion of Spanish and other imperial networks in the New World and the spread of the black plague in the wake of the *Pax Mongolica* in Eurasia;¹¹ and (5) the “Great Divergence” marking the “rise of the West” in relation to China and other parts of the world. As the above sampling of themes common in the work of world historians demonstrates, the leitmotif of such work is focus on large-scale processes involving cross-cultural encounters, interactions, and comparisons between and among societies on a global scale.

In some sense, credit for making the study of such large-scale processes integral to the work of professional historians is due to a generation of historians who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s and included such pioneers as Marshall G.S. Hodgson, Lefton Stavrianos, Philip D. Curtin, and especially William H. McNeill.¹² Although these scholars are often

⁹ Bentley, “The New World History,” 393.

¹⁰ Christian discusses “networks of exchange” in his *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2003).

¹¹ The most well-known study in this genre is William H. McNeil’s *Plagues and People* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976).

¹² Bentley, “The New World History,” 397. See also Gilbert Allardyce, “Toward World History: American Historians and the Coming of the World History Course,” *Journal of World History* 1, no. 1 (1990): 23–76. McNeil, Stavrianos, and Hodgson were all from the University of Chicago. See David Christian, “Scales,” in *Palgrave Advances in World Histories*, ed. Marnie Hughes-Warrington (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 72–73.

seen as the founding fathers of the world history movement, the field only rose to prominence in North America beginning in the 1980s and 1990s. It acquired institutional backing with the establishment in 1982 of the World History Association (WHA), as a branch of the American Historical Association, and especially with the creation of its flagship journal, *The Journal of World History* in 1991, based in Hawaii, and its European counterpart, the London-based *The Journal of Global History* in 2006.¹³ In the United States, world history has since become a central component of teaching in departments of history across many campuses, becoming even a mandatory part of the history curriculum in the state of California, where it has largely replaced the conventional staple of “western civilization” courses.

As a number of world historians have already noted, the field can perhaps be best understood as a reaction to two ideological assumptions that the discipline of history acquired almost as a “birthmark” when it became “professionalized” and university-based in the middle of the nineteenth century.¹⁴ The first is the Eurocentric legacy of nineteenth-century imperialism that saw European history and Europe as “the site of genuine historical development, as opposed to other regions that they considered stagnant and unchanging,” and therefore not worthy of being studied by professional historians.¹⁵ The second birthmark, perhaps more relevant for our purposes in this study and one to which I will periodically return

¹³ On the WHA, see Allardyce, “Toward World History,” 62ff.

¹⁴ My account here is heavily indebted to the work of Bentley. For a different reading of the complex genealogy of world history, one that does not pay sufficient attention to the important break occurring in the 1960s in the way the field was conceptualized in North America at least, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Aux origines de l'histoire globale, leçon inaugurale prononcée le jeudi 28 novembre 2013* (Collège de France, 2013) as well as the same author’s characteristically witty review, “Global Intellectual History Beyond Hegel and Marx,” *History and Theory* 54 (February 2015): 126–137. Also useful as a foil to Bentley is Bruce Mazlish, “Terms” in *Palgrave Advances in World Histories*, ed. Marnie Hughes-Warrington (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), and idem., “Comparing Global History to World History,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 28, no. 3 (Winter, 1998): 385–395, and Patrick Manning, “Defining World History.”

¹⁵ Bentley, “The New World History,” 395. Thus, while professional historians studied the national communities and states of the (European) Mediterranean and northwestern Europe and EuroAmerica, “orientalists” were given the task of studying the complex, but “unchanging” societies of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, India, and China, while the study of the “unlettered” peoples of Africa, Southeast Asia, Oceania, and the Americas, the so-called “peoples without a history” fell “to the tender mercies of anthropologists.” Bentley, “The Task of World History,” 5.

below, is the intimate relationship between the discipline of history and the nation-state. It bears remembering here that what Peter Novick has called the “professionalization project,” which resulted in the shift from amateur narrators of the past to university-trained and archivally grounded professional historians in nineteenth-century Europe, beginning with Leopold von Ranke and continuing with his followers, occurred in “an era of dynamic state-building.”¹⁶ As Bentley points out,

professional historical scholarship emerged at a time of intense nationalism and energetic state-building projects in Europe. In light of this context, it is not surprising that professional historians devoted attention to states, and particularly to national states—their creation, their institutions, constitutions, cultural traditions, collective experiences, relations with neighbors, and sometimes their decline and collapse. Historians lavished attention on national states, which they construed as discrete and internally coherent communities, rather than the many other social, cultural, religious, ethnic or racial groupings that they might have taken as units of analysis.¹⁷

At this point, it is necessary to emphasize that while world historians have been conscious of the limitations imposed on the historical profession by the nation-state, they have conceptualized such limitations in terms of the territorial matrix of the national state as a “natural unit” for historical writing. For most world historians, the singular advantage of their discipline is the expansion of “scale” beyond that of the national community or the nation-state to a broader sense of scale that may include a larger region or “world” in the sense of an internally coherent area such as the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, or Eurasian “worlds.”¹⁸ This expansion of

¹⁶On the professionalization of the discipline of history, see among others, Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: Norton, 1994); and Howell, Martha C. and Walter Prevenier. *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 2001), and D. R. Woolf, *A Global History of History* (Cambridge, UK ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2011), 364–377.

¹⁷Bentley, “Globalizing History and Historicizing Globalization,” *Globalizations* 1, no. 1 (September 2004), 70. On the nexus between the nation-state and professionalized history, see also Georg G. Iggers; Q. Edward Wang; Supriya Mukherjee, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (Harlow, England ; New York : Pearson Longman, 2008) and Woolf, *A Global History of History*, 352–364.

¹⁸On the place of scale in world history, see Christian, “Scales.” For a discussion on scale that critiques Christian’s views and argues for a reduction of scale through a marriage of

scale not only enables world historians to study large-scale processes of cross-cultural encounters and comparisons, but, as we shall now see, can also enrich scholarship carried out in Armenian Studies.

ARMENIAN STUDIES AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Armenian Studies as a scholarly field goes back to the eighteenth and especially nineteenth centuries when European philologists followed by Armenian ones first became interested in the study of Classical Armenian (*Grabar*) and the manuscripts written in this language.¹⁹ The field had some notable practitioners and blossomed after the sovietization of Armenia during the second decade of the twentieth century. In its institutionalized form, it is a relatively young field in North America and can be traced back to the 1960s with the endowment of Armenian Studies chairs first at Harvard University in 1962 followed by UCLA in 1969.²⁰ The field comprises a series of disciplines: history, linguistics, philology, comparative literature, art history, and ethnomusicology. It is made up of a handful of scholars with a dozen or so graduate students. Given the small size of the field and its limited resources, it has been difficult to generate diversity of opinions and to cultivate a rigorous scholarly engagement with other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences although recent publications indicate a gradual but noticeable change in that direction. This, however, should not preclude us from highlighting some of the “pernicious postulates”²¹ that have contributed to making the field insular and offering alternative avenues of research.

microhistory and global history, see my comments in Sebouh David Aslanian, Joyce E. Chaplin, Ann McGrath, and Kristin Mann “AHR Conversation—How Size Matters: The Question of Scale in History,” in *American Historical Review* (December, 2013): 1468–1469.

¹⁹ For an early episodic history focusing on individual scholars dedicated to Armenian literature and letters, see Father Garegin Zarbanalian, *Usumnasirut‘iwnk‘ Hay Lezui ev Matenagrut‘iwnk‘ Yarevmut* (XIV–XIX Dar) (Studies of the Armenian Language and Literature in the West (XIV to XIX centuries)) (Venice: The Mekhitarist Press, 1895).

²⁰ Needless to say, interest in Armenian Studies chairs in North America predates the establishment of the first chairs and dates to the early part of the twentieth century. For an account of this history, see Marc Mamigonian, “From Idea to Reality: The Development of Armenian Studies in the U.S. from the 1890s to 1969,” *Journal of Armenian Studies* 10, no. 1–2 (2012–2013): 153–184.

²¹ I have borrowed this term from Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984).

THE NATION-FORM AND HISTORY: “CAUGHT IN A BAD ROMANCE”²²?

The first and most important pernicious postulate of Armenian Studies is the belief that the best and often the only way for scholars to study the Armenian past is to do so through the prism and category of what Etienne Balibar calls the “nation-form.” It would not be an exaggeration to claim that Armenian historical writing, whether done by professional historians or by amateur popularizers, is oversaturated with the nation-form. Though the same cannot be said about philologically oriented scholarship, especially during the first part of the twentieth century by formidable scholars such as Nicholas Adontz, Hakob Manandian, Cyril Toumanoff, Sirarpie Der Nersessian, Nina Garsoian, and others, one could also argue that the nation-form and its attendant methodological pitfalls examined below are not entirely absent in such works either.

Given the hegemonic role of the nation-form in the writing of Armenian history, it is imperative for us to take a brief detour and discuss the conceptual and narrative underpinnings of national(ist) historiography, or what Cemal Kafadar in another context has called “nationism,” before we return to examine other pitfalls characterizing Armenian Studies as a field.²³ For the purposes of my discussion in the first part of this section, I will be addressing the conceptual “tool kit” of *nationalist* discourse and historiography and not necessarily the Armenian Studies scholarship that is devoted to *national* history. I believe the two are significantly different from each other and may even be seen as diametrically opposed in their

²² “Bad Romance” is the title of a chart-topping song from 2009 by American singer Lady Gaga.

²³ “It might thus be useful to refer not merely to nationalism but to ‘nationism’ as a broader problem, because the implied conception of history and identity can be shared between nationalist and, say, colonialist discourses and in fact derives its very power partly from that double imbrication. Many non-nationalists, or those who embrace (the illusion of?) the downfall of nation-states in an age of globalization, still write history through national identities as primary analytical categories. So long as continuous ethnic-national units and their cultures (*Volksgeist* defined by *Stamm*, to use the ur-vocabulary of this discourse) are taken as the main analytical units of historical study, the Turks naturally get to be the descendants of Inner Asian nomads and warriors, and their culture reflects those twin essences: nomadism and militarism.” Cemal Kafadar, “A Rome of One’s Own: Reflections on Cultural Geography and Identity in the Lands of Rum,” *Mugarnas* 24 (2007): 7–26 (8). My use of national(ist) to include both national and nationalist is broadly similar to Kafadar’s usage here.

goals, method of inquiry and research, and political implications. What I wish to do, however, is to begin an experimental exploration about the conceptual assumptions these two disparate ways of writing the “Nation’s” history may share whether or not their practitioners are aware of these similarities/differences.

Writing more than fifteen years ago in *Rescuing History from the Nation*, Prasenjit Duara deftly pointed out how nationalist discourse is undergirded by a post-Enlightenment model of history (hereafter “History”).²⁴ Initially shaped in Europe and “pirated” by the non-European nationalist elite in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, post-Enlightenment History is premised on two related postulates, both of which are necessary for imagining the existence of nations. First, the narrative sustaining such a History is plotted along a time-trajectory that is essentially linear and teleological: it has a beginning, middle, and end. Although, as avid consumers of history, we may take linearity for granted due to its ubiquitous nature in historical representations, we should not underestimate its centrality and novelty for historical writing on the nation-form. After all, what other modality of time would be more suitable for representing and imagining the progressive, ineluctable self-unfolding of the national personality on its historical path toward the nation-state? We shall return to this briefly below.

The second postulate of post-Enlightenment History is the existence of a unitary subject that gives coherence and a sense of purpose to the past. For nationalist discourse, the historical subject par excellence is the Nation. The latter is the “master subject” of history in the sense that it is a governing consciousness that animates the past and impels forward its own self-manifestation. It is a subject that “changes as it remains the same”; while it undergoes alterations in time, it also retains its underlying essence or “spirit.” Its presence permeates the entire historical field, so that even in the midst of foreign occupations and catastrophes, the Nation’s “spirit” is seen to be continuously present as the driving force in its own narrative.

Part of the magic and efficacy of nationalist discourse lies in its ability to tell a morally redemptive story about the national subject’s self-unfolding in time. To tell such a story, nationalist discourse relies on a mode of “emplotment” that belongs to a literary genre that historian Hayden White identifies as being supremely preoccupied with the drama

²⁴ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), especially Chapters 1 and 2.

of redemption through “self-identification”—that of Romance (hence my allusion to a popular Lady Gaga song in the title of this section). The story begins with the unity of the subject and narrates its fall from grace, its period of alienation or “splitting,” only to conclude on a redemptive note.²⁵ With minor variations, nearly all types of nationalism, even those that are mutually antagonistic, tell this story by classifying historical time into three general periods or stages.²⁶ The initial period of this drama is coeval with the founding moment of the national subject, its first appearance on the historical stage in the process of self-formation or constitution. From this “originary” or pure state, the Nation then continues to generate itself by using the time of history and the space of territory as its raw materials. Writers of nationalist narratives regard this foundational moment as the “ancient” or “classical” stage of the history of the Nation, its golden age of purity and glory. This is the time when the national subject is seen to be in a state of “authenticity.” It is authentic in the sense that it is assumed to be uncorrupted and free to manifest its personality without external impediments or constraints. The crowning achievement of this period is the establishment of an independent kingdom or state, often portrayed as the pinnacle of national civilization.

This period of purity proves to be short-lived, for in the course of its unfolding, the national subject inevitably encounters other subjects and clashes with foreign substances that gradually intrude into its own orbit. A process of corrosion sets into the body of the nation as its essence is subverted,

²⁵ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: University of John Hopkins Press, 1975), 8–10. To my knowledge, scholars have not adequately explored the “Romance” mode of nationalist discourse. White, who was one of the pioneers of the theory of narrative in historiography, does not devote much attention to national(ist) histories. According to White, “The Romance is fundamentally a drama of self-identification symbolized by the hero’s transcendence of the world of experience, his victory over it, and his final liberation from it—the sort of drama associated with the Grail legend or the story of the resurrection of Christ in Christian mythology. It is a drama of the triumph of good over evil, of virtue over vice, of light over darkness, and of the ultimate transcendence of man over the world in which he was imprisoned by the Fall.” (8–9). As a genre of emplotment, White suggests in his close reading of Jules Michelet’s work that Romance is a “narrative form to be used to make sense out of the historical process conceived as essential virtue against a virulent, but ultimately transitory, vice.” (150).

²⁶ See Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, Chapter 1 for a stimulating discussion on linear history and the importance of periodization for the writing of nationalist histories. See also the particularly perceptive comments of Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (London and New York: Verso, 1996) (second edition), Chapter 4, and Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), Chapters 4 and 5.

its mark of distinction removed, its seal of authenticity adulterated and defiled from without. The inevitable consequence of this “enfeebling” of the nation’s body is the loss of statehood, either as the immediate result of foreign occupation or through the gradual decay of the Nation’s spiritual values because of alien influences. Nationalist grand narratives represent this stage as constituting the “long dark ages” or “medieval decline.”²⁷ However, even in the midst of these sudden upheavals, often of a catastrophic nature, the Nation is not entirely corrupted. As a result of external or internal subversion, the members of the national community may be “asleep” or “slumbering,” but the National Idea or vitalist principle is not irretrievably lost. In fact, it continues to exercise its sway over the general trajectory of the Nation’s self-manifestation.

It is this vitalist principle that paves the way to the third and most critical stage of the Nation’s history, namely the period of revival and resurgence, hence the tropes of “renaissance” or “rebirth” one encounters so often in the writing of national(ist) histories. In this stage, the need to recover or reappropriate the lost purity of the national personality becomes imperative. This resuscitation of past glory can be viewed as a species of “ontological irredentism”: the “attempt to retrieve an essence that the vicissitudes of time and the designs of enemies, rather than change of any intrinsic nature, has caused to atrophy.”²⁸ It is characterized by the quest for authenticity—the return to the “inner core” of the Nation’s body—that is displayed in two domains. First, the nation’s identity and essence must be rescued or retrieved from the adulterating elements that intrude into the nation’s history as a result of its confrontations with external or “other” (malevolent) subjects. In other words, the domain of culture must be cleansed from the privations of the contingent. Second, this essentialized culture, the very self-consciousness of the Nation-subject, must find its inevitable embodiment in the domain of politics by resurrecting the “lost state” of the classical period, albeit under the novel form of the nation-state. Here, an internal tension confronts nationalist History: an atavistic pull towards the past versus a modernist aspiration for the future. In Tom Nairn’s felicitous term, we are dealing here with the “Janus face” of Nationalism.²⁹ Thus, nationalist historians must negotiate between

²⁷ See Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, 98, for an incisive account of the construction of Indian nationalist history and its treatment of the Mughal past.

²⁸ Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, 83.

²⁹ Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain* (London and New York: Verso, 1977).

History as a return to “origins” (where the end is the beginning and vice versa) and History as progress. To sum up, let us reiterate the general tenets of nationalist discourse, as Aziz Al-Azmeh cogently presents them:

[The discourse of the Nation] postulates a historic subject, which is self-identical, essentially in continuity over time and positing itself in essential distinction from other historical subjects. For the viability of a historical subject such as this, it is essential that its integrity must be maintained against a manifest backdrop of change of a very rapid and profound nature. It therefore follows that change should be conceived as contingent, impelled by inessential matters like external interference or internal subversion, the effects of which can only be faced with a reassertion of the essence of historical subjectivity. History therefore becomes an alternance in a continuity of decadence and health, and historiographical practice comes to consist in the writing of history as a form of classification of events under the two categories of intrinsic and extrinsic, the authentic and the imputed, the essential and the accidental.³⁰

So far, my discussion has focused on the narrative strategies that go into the making of nationalist historiography; we can readily identify some of the conceptual features I have touched upon above in most Armenian nationalist historical writing, ranging from the eight-volume capstone to Soviet Armenian national(ist) discourse set out within a pseudo-Marxist framework, *Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmut'yun* (History of the Armenian People) published from the 1960s to the early 1980s, or in the more unadulterated post-Soviet nationalist discourse characterizing some narrow circles in Yerevan in recent years.³¹ Critiquing such works is rather a straightforward and easy task requiring little theoretical sophistication. What is a more important task is to ask whether the conceptual discussion above has any relevance to the scholarship produced by Armenian Studies scholars in North America or Europe. Much of this scholarship is in one way or another engaged in writing “Armenian history” whether it takes the form of specialized monographs on a particular aspect of the Armenian past,

³⁰ Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, 83.

³¹ The principal work here is Armen Aivazian, *Hayastani Patmut'yan Lusabanumě Amerikian Patmagruty'an Mej: K'nnakan tesut'yun* [The History of Armenia as Presented in American historiography] (Yerevan: Artagers Publications, 1998). For a critique of this work and the nationalist discourse it fomented in its wake, see Sebouh Aslanian, “The ‘Treason of the Intellectuals?’ Reflections on the uses of Revisionism and Nationalism in Armenian Historiography,” *Armenian Forum* (Spring 2002): 1–37.

general surveys of Armenian history, or in edited collections. Most of it is not nationalist in the narrow political sense of the term and often sets itself apart from nationalist historical writing by presenting itself as a scholarly engagement in writing national history or a critical history of the formation of Armenian national identity.

How crucial are the distinctions between these scholarly national histories and the polemical nationalist histories against which the scholarly national histories are often engaged? That this is not a simple question is perhaps obvious, and it is certainly not a question that I seek to resolve given the scope of my reflections here. However, we must at least begin by posing the question and exploring its implications on the work that we produce as Armenian Studies scholars and historians. Do scholarly national histories unwittingly end up reaffirming and reproducing the very thing they set out to deconstruct or criticize? While the aims of these national history scholars, or “nationists”, and the non-academic nationalist historians (even racist ones) are starkly different, are their assumptions similar and indeed rooted in the same “nation form”?³²

Let us look at some of the standard national history surveys produced over the past few decades in North America. Some of this work, such as Razmik Panossian’s *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*, R. G. Hovannisian’s two-volume edited collection of essays, *The History of the Armenian People*, Simon Payaslian’s *History of Armenia*, George Burnoutian’s *A History of the Armenian People*, A. E. Redgate’s *The Armenians*, or Ronald Suny’s conceptually perhaps still unsurpassed *Looking toward Ararat*, are impressive works of synthesis and have raised the bar of scholarship in Armenian history. As respectful and appreciative as I am of some of this diverse body of scholarship, I am also somewhat concerned about two general patterns in these works that warrant special mention.

First, these national histories are works of synthesis and as such they rely almost exclusively on the secondary source literature in the field. As a practicing world historian, I am aware of the potential value of works of

³² Cemal Kafadar makes a similar observation with regards to the relationship between Turkish national and nationalist historiography when he writes: “True, the majority of historians have scoffed at this sort of thing, but without directly tackling the assumption of a continuous national identity, a linear nationhood or national essence that underlies even their own nonchauvinistic historiography.” Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 26. See also his thoughts on “nationism” quoted in footnote 23.

synthesis that are grounded on secondary source research. However, while the field of world/global history has a vast and rich corpus of fairly reliable secondary source material upon which to build, the same cannot be said for the small and relatively new field of Armenian Studies. Much of the secondary source material in the field is of dubious value. Therefore, excessive reliance on secondary source literature runs the risk of reproducing some of the drawbacks already found at the source.

The second trend has to do with the way historical narratives are framed in histories of Armenia generally, sometimes in otherwise sophisticated works that are not themselves “nationalist.” At the risk of oversimplification, historical accounts of the Armenian “nation” or “people” have necessarily relied upon a linear narrative to chart the unfolding of the Armenian national subject in History. For the most part, this unfolding is presented as internally driven by the “National Subject” as it smoothly unfolds from its “originary” moment of birth, followed by a period of “splitting” from its originary, essential identity (usually as a result of some “foreign agent” or substance, identified as “Turkic nomads” or overzealous Muslim conquerors eager to proselytize their vanquished subjects, drifting into its orbit). Then, in a romance mode of emplotment, the “National subject” reconciles with its pristine self, usually described as the period of “awakening” from its “slumber” as in the eighteenth/nineteenth-century Armenian “revival” or “renaissance,” and finally attains its cherished *telos*: the modern nation-state of its own like other “civilized” nations (mostly in Europe, of course). Of course, this critique might generally be made of any history that assumes, or presumes, the development of a singular people as its focal point—it is not meant to discount the serious work that many scholars have done in critiquing “nationalist” accounts of history, even in works that still assume a singular people as their focus. It goes without saying that, unlike nationalist history, scholarly national history does not usually represent this process as an *inevitable* unfolding of a national essence. Writers of national histories may emphasize their break (in terms of narrative deployment) from the nationalist discourse they seek to criticize by presenting the nation’s history as a negotiated and “conjunctural” outcome highly fraught with contingencies (though this is not always the case with all the works referred to above). Still, absent the political element of nationalist discourse and the illusion of inevitability, the linear, teleological narrative of these national histories often bears a resemblance to the very same nationalist narratives some of these works set out to deconstruct. Such resemblance includes a near-exclusive focus

on the survival and persistence of the Armenians as a recognizable national community across time and space. While concentration on survival is understandable given the often tragic history of the Armenians, as Suny noted many years ago, it has also led to “unfortunate intellectual practices,” one of which is the assumption that there has always been an Armenian “spirit” or “soul” characterizing all Armenians and acting as the master subject of their national history.³³ Thus, in the introduction to his valuable two-volume edited collection, Hovannisian characterizes Armenian history as “the unceasing struggle for national survival” and singles out for attention how, despite the “turbulence” and “long periods of foreign domination,” Armenians “created a rich and colorful culture and defensive mechanisms for survival”³⁴ that ensured the unfolding, in linear history, of what we have called above the national subject.³⁵ To be sure, while Hovannisian does not resort to using terms like “soul” or “spirit” when referring to the Armenian nation-form, he does on one occasion at least aver that Armenian cultural forms such as music, architecture, theater, and art are “reflectors of the spirit and soul of a people.”³⁶ A similar concern for survival characterizes other works such as most obviously Christopher Walker’s *Armenia: Survival of a Nation* and Bournoutian’s popular history mentioned above. After devoting his first volume to covering the period from prehistory to 1500 CE, in the course of which Bournoutian narrates the emergence of the Armenian people in the classical age, he concludes the volume with a chapter on “Armenia under Turkish, Mongol, and Turkmen Domination.”³⁷ At the “dawn of the modern period,” he writes,

the East [i.e., the Islamic world] entered a gradual period of hibernation and decline. Armenia, which in the past had been at the forefront of cultural exchange, was cut off from the West by the Ottomans. Four centuries of nomadic invasions had turned most of Armenia into a leaderless and bleak landscape, its people a minority in their own homeland. Now, but a small

³³ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 2.

³⁴ Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1 (New York: St. Martin’s Press), vii.

³⁵ The same characterization of history as an “unceasing struggle for national survival” applies equally for Georgian and Azerbaijani historiography.

³⁶ Hovannisian, *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1, x.

³⁷ George Bournoutian, *A History of the Armenian People*, 2 vols. (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1993), 1: 145.

Christian enclave *in a sea of Muslims and nomads*, Armenia and its inhabitants fell into *stagnation* which lasted until the nineteenth century.”³⁸

After this low ebb in history, the “national spirit” of the Armenians, to use Bournoutian’s terminology, migrates West to the “major cities of Europe” as well as to European-ruled cities in Asia (Madras, Calcutta, etc.) where “the revival of Armenian culture and the next, crucial chapters of Armenian history would be played out.”³⁹

In his landmark essay, “The Nation-Form,” Etienne Balibar alludes to the place of the nation-form in the writing of both national and nationalist histories as follows:

The history of nations, beginning with our own, is always already presented to us in the form of a narrative, which attributes to these entities the continuity of a subject. The formation of the nation thus appears as the fulfillment of a ‘project’ stretching over centuries, in which there are different stages and moments of coming to self-awareness, which the prejudices of the various historians will portray as more or less decisive...but which, in any case, all fit into an identical pattern: that of the self-manifestation of the national personality. Such a representation clearly constitutes a retrospective illusion, but it also expresses constraining institutional realities.⁴⁰

The “logic” inherent in the writing of national(ist) historiography outlined in Balibar’s passage above can be detected in the work of Bournoutian and some of the other authors of Armenian national history mentioned above. By privileging the “nation-form” as the master subject in the writing of Armenian nationalist history, these historians by necessity frame their narrative of the “formation of the nation” around what Balibar calls a linear “project stretching over centuries” where the emphasis is on describing or analyzing the “different stages and moments of [the Nation’s] coming to self-awareness...of the self-manifestation of the national personality.” Charting such a “self-manifestation of the national personality” involves at least two strategic modes of narrating the past implicit in the writing of most Armenian national histories. One is the privileging of what I shall call, following Joseph Fletcher, “vertical”

³⁸ Bournoutian, *A History of the Armenian People*, 1: 145. Emphasis added.

³⁹ Bournoutian, *A History of the Armenian People*, 1: 145. The expression “national spirit” in the above passage is Bournoutian’s.

⁴⁰ Etienne Balibar, “The Nation Form,” in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (Verso Press, 1991), 86.

continuity of the national subject at the expense of exploring “horizontal continuities” or “lateral” connections that are “englobing” in nature.⁴¹ The other is the displacement from the Nation’s history of other possible histories that, as Balibar suggests, national historians would regard as less rather than more decisive for the formation of the nation’s personality. We shall return to both of these points later.

The model of national(ist) historiography described above developed in Europe during the nineteenth century, coinciding with the professionalization of the discipline of history and the consolidation of the world system of nation-states. Its “mode of historiographical operation,”⁴² to use Michel De Certeau’s term, can be reduced to the following key postulates, all of which bear the marks of the interpolation of the nation(-state) into the profession of history: (1) that history is a smooth and *continuous* narrative of what Balibar calls the Nation’s “coming to self-awareness”; (2) that this self-awareness is only and ineluctably incarnated in the avatar of the nation-state, which along with the national subject pervades the historical field, albeit concealed or “dormant” due to the vagaries of time and the absence of “favorable” conditions; and (3) that the role of the historian is to chart the continuous and linear unfolding of the “national personality” from the *retrospective* lens of the nation-state and with the purpose of fostering national identity and loyalty to the nation(-state). Along with the discursive and political package of nationalism, these postulates also became “modular” and were later “pirated” by historians of

⁴¹ The idea of “vertical” versus “horizontal continuity” is discussed by Joseph Fletcher in the context of his critique of area studies scholarship. Exploring the parochial consequences of area studies training, Fletcher writes: “Under these conditions, historians are alert to vertical continuities (the persistence of tradition, etc.) but blind to horizontal ones.” (Fletcher, *op. cit.*, 5). It should be noted that Fletcher was not concerned with national(ist) historiography and his usage of vertical continuity is not framed in that context as such. The notion of “lateral” connections is discussed by Subrahmanyam in his inaugural address as the chair of South Asian Studies at Oxford University. As he writes, “There is thus a good case to be made here for “rescuing history from the nation” (to borrow a celebrated phrase), not only by bringing to the fore the local and the regional, or by scaling down as a form of “bifurcation” (in Prasenjit Duara’s vocabulary), but by moving laterally, in the sense espoused by Joseph Fletcher or Serge Gruzinski. This lateral movement is not only an englobing one, but also one that stresses a certain sort of interaction...” Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “On the Window that was India,” in Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11.

⁴² Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992) Chapter 2.

the non-European world. They were then used to create national histories for peoples who had no prior history of state institutions of their own until the modern period (i.e., parts of the so-called Third World) or once possessed states but spent long centuries “stateless” and often scattered and dispersed (i.e., the Jews and the Armenians, to name only two prominent examples). It would not be an exaggeration to say that since its rise 200 years ago, the grip of nation-state and its corollary of the nation-form on the historical imagination of modernity have been truly hegemonic.

In recent decades, however, national(ist) historiography has come under increasing scrutiny in the emergent field of world history as well as post-colonial scholarship. Scholars have for some time now begun to call for the “rescuing [of] history from the nation.”⁴³ They have done so primarily on the grounds that historical writing that takes the nation(-state) as its premise and point of departure tends to produce linear narratives that are “repressive” of non-national modes of being and reflect more the contemporary political and social needs and values of the nation(-state) than historical realities in the past.⁴⁴ As in European and other historiographies, the oversaturation of the field of Armenian studies with the nation-form has also tended to displace other types of non-national histories from the larger narrative of Armenian history. Historical events and processes that have appeared to Armenian historians as going against the grain of their perception of the nation-form or the continuous self-manifestation of the Armenian “national essence” unfolding in history have either been retrospectively displaced from the larger narrative or been downplayed and marginalized in favor of putatively national elements seen as more constitutive of Armenian national identity as it exists today. Such marginalized or displaced topics include, but are not limited to, gender and sexuality that might come across as “deviant” from the perspective of Armenian national historiography, as well as Armenian interactions with other cultures and peoples especially from the Islamicate world. The latter would be displaced/marginalized on account of posing threats to the “purity” of the unfolding national essence. That this is the case not only of crude nationalist tracts on the Armenian past most often written by individuals with little if any training in scholarship not to mention the discipline of history, but also of historical accounts written by professional scholars not otherwise affiliated with nationalist projects of

⁴³ See Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*.

⁴⁴ See Balibar and Duara, Chapters 1 and 2.

various sorts can be seen in the negligible attention these scholars devote to the interaction of Armenians with other peoples or cultures. Neither Panossian, nor Bournoutian, for instance, devotes more than perfunctory treatment to Armenian cross-cultural relations with others in their otherwise informative volumes; the only authors who substantively look outside the narrow scope of Armenian history in their contributions to Hovannissian's two-volume *History of the Armenian People* are Nina Garsoian, Robert Thomson, S. Peter Cowe, and James R. Russell. Each of these authors was pilloried by extremist elements in the Armenian nationalist fringe in Yerevan and Glendale, California for having "betrayed" the Armenian nation.⁴⁵

The hegemonic role of the nation-form in Armenian historiography has, on the whole resulted in the downplaying or displacing of "cross-cultural" interactions between Armenians and the "others" around them, even or especially when Armenians were living as diasporic communities in foreign states. This has given the false impression that Armenian communities whether in the "homeland" or in dispersion maintained an unchanging national essence (a national "soul" or "spirit") unfolding continuously across time and space. Needless to say, the standard textbook surveys (produced both in Yerevan and in the Armenian Studies establishment in the West) of Armenian diasporic communities perfunctorily make mention of the fact that there were *indeed* other cultural traditions around the Armenians, but such mentions, for the most part, have rarely constituted rigorous attempts at studying cross-cultural interactions. Rather than look horizontally or laterally to seek possibly important cross-cultural relations or processes of creative mixing, *métissage*, or "transculturation," to use Fernando Ortiz's term, with other traditions or cultures that enrich Armenian identities, scholars of Armenian national history have on the whole preferred to look for "pattern recognition" that would confirm national(ist) historiography's fixation on vertical or linear continuity.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ For background on these campaigns, see Aslanian, "The 'Treason of the Intellectuals'?"

⁴⁶ "Transculturation" was coined in 1942 by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz to refer to the creative admixture of several cultural traditions, of a chain of "complex cultural transmutations" that results in the making of novel cultural formations. For Ortiz, the history of Cuba and Cuban culture is "the history of its intermeshed transculturations." Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 98. Timothy Brook offers perhaps the most effective definition of Ortiz's concept of transculturation which he takes to be "the process by which habits and things move from one culture to another so thoroughly that they become part of it and in

What I mean is that the field has tended to privilege the vertical transmission of Armenian “identity” (usually in the singular) passed on like a sacred torch from one generation to another across space and through time. To be sure, this fixation with the torch of survival and identity is a reflection of certain underlying historical realities, not least of which is the close encounter with cultural and physical extinction that Armenians experienced during the genocidal campaigns of 1915. The Great Crime of the genocide in all of its enormity and complexity has cast a long and dark shadow on Armenian identity and scholarship. As a result of genocide trauma and the state-sanctioned denial of this event, many Armenians around the world have succumbed to what I have called elsewhere, following the work of the great Argentine writer, Jorge Luis Borges, the “Funes el Memorioso effect.”⁴⁷ Borges, let us recall, brilliantly explores the perils of being crippled by a bloated memory of the past in his fascinating fictional tale, *Funes el memorioso*, where the central protagonist one day falls from his horse and instead of suffering from amnesia becomes a repository of the whole world’s memory. Unable to filter out anything from his memory, Funes becomes a living encyclopedia of all the events, sensations, moments and so on that have taken place since the beginning of the world. His memory is disabling. The continued denial of the Armenian genocide has created a hypertrophied or Funes-like, bloated historical memory for most Armenians that has held them captive to a tragic chapter of their past. Even more vexing is the fact that in Armenia the trauma of the genocide has lent itself to shoring up a politics of paranoiac nationalism among some scholars and, elsewhere in the diaspora, has contributed to making suspect attempts by scholars to emphasize the cosmopolitan, connected,

turn change the culture into which they have moved.” Timothy Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 126.

⁴⁷ See Aslanian, “The Marble of Armenian History: Or Armenian History as World History,” *Études arméniennes contemporaines* 4 (December 2014): 129–142. For Borges’ short story, see Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*, trans. James E. Irby (London: Penguin Classics, 2000). I have elaborated on this story and the problematic nature of a hypertrophied memory of the Armenian genocide in my unpublished essay, “The Funes El Memorioso Effect,” and in “Too Much Memory? Remembrance and Forgetting at the Crossroads of the Centenary of the Armenian Genocide,” *Jadaliyya*, 21 April 2015. <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/21445/too-much-memory-remembering-and-forgetting-at-the-> My thoughts here are largely influenced by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi’s classic discussion in “Postscript: Reflections on Forgetting,” in *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Washington D.C.: University of Washington Press, 2005).

and transcultural aspects of Armenian identities and histories, especially where Turks and the “Islamic world” are concerned. One cannot and should not underestimate the heavy burden of the post-genocide trauma on the writing of Armenian history, and I would in no way wish to suggest that this dark chapter in Armenian and world history should be bracketed in any attempt to do a stock-taking of Armenian historiography. However, as far as *scholarship* in Armenian history is concerned, the post-genocide fixation with maintaining identity in the singular and vertical modes has more often than not precluded interest in other kinds of histories and identities in which Armenians in the past have also engaged.

This privileging of the representation of the nation-form’s identity in the vertical mode as opposed to the complex world historical study of cross-cultural interaction of identities in the horizontal or lateral mode, becomes perhaps most obvious in historical writing on Armenian “diaspora” communities, which make up a significant part of the scholarship on Armenian history. Thus, in what is arguably the first multivolume study of Armenian diaspora communities across the world, *Patmut‘iwn Hay Gaght‘akanut‘ean* (The History of Armenian Emigration), published in Cairo in 1941–1961, Arshak Alboyadjian (Alpoyachian) provides the following conceptual model underpinning his study of Armenian diasporan history:

They [i.e., the exiled multitudes from the homeland] would see, in the lands they settled, the hatred of the foreigners against them, especially the religious intolerance that would tinge the conscience of the exiled multitudes who desired to preserve their patrimonial faith, maintaining their place of residence and its life under the arches of their church. In this fashion, everywhere persecuted and crushed [*trorvats‘*] and continuously encountering blows and disrespect, but “swallowing” and digesting silently and with slavish accommodation, they would continue to march...By accommodating themselves to the conditions of their new location(s), through creativity, cunning, and especially stubbornness, they would *keep their eyes fixed on Ararat*. The Armenians enduring their existence at the foot of Ararat with supreme efforts and unusual permanence, along with their religious center, Ejmiatsin and its other sacred sites, would always exist as a living vision in the eyes of the exiles and a [simple] command or word coming from them [Ararat and the Armenians in the homeland] would give [the exiles] spirit and breath and inspire them to persevere and endure.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Arshak Alpoyachian, *Patmut‘iwn Hay Gaght‘akanut‘ean: hayeru tsrvumē ashkhari zana-zan maserē*. 3 vols. (Cairo: Sahak Mesrob, 1941–1961), 1: 93–94. Emphasis added.

Having thus established this general framework of inquiry where the focus is squarely placed on perseverance and continuous hardship along with the responsibility of not dropping the torch of identity but tenaciously clasping it while fixing one’s gaze at Ararat and Ejmiatsin, Alboyadjian then proceeds to examine separate Armenian diasporas on a global scale. Much of his findings were pioneering at the time he collected the available and scattered information within his history, and scholars may still fruitfully consult his separate chapter-length studies of various Armenian communities living in dispersion. However, due caution must also be exercised when consulting the *Patmut‘iwn Hay Gaght‘akanut‘ean* since, like subsequent work in this genre, Alboyadjian almost exclusively relies on Armenian language sources to narrate his history, which in turn reinforce his pattern recognition for vertical continuity. While this is understandable for a pioneering work conceived in the 1930s when scholarship on the regions covered by the author was scant, scholars relying on this work today have a substantially larger corpus of scholarship and methodological approaches that they must consult to add more nuance and complexity to the schematic sketches evoked by Alboyadjian. Moreover, scholars consulting Alboyadjian today must also exercise special caution since the narrative he crafts to understand the history of diasporan Armenians and how they maintained or lost their “national identity” is necessarily insular and suffers from some of the drawbacks of national(ist) discourse, including a singular fixation on the nation-form, described above.

Regrettably, most scholarship relying on Alboyadjian has uncritically reproduced what Salo Baron, historian of the Jewish diaspora, in a different context called the “lachrymose”⁴⁹ conception of history along with its

⁴⁹The reference here is to the work of the great historian of the Jewish diaspora, Salo Baron, who criticized what he called the “lachrymose conception of Jewish history” for its disposition to “view...the destinies of the Jews in the Diaspora as a sheer succession of miseries and persecutions.” Writing as early as the 1930s, Baron noted that “Jewish historiography has not been able to free itself [from its grasp] to this day.” (Quoted in David Engel, “Crisis and Lachrymosity: On Salo Baron, Neobaronianism, and the Study of Modern European Jewish History,” *Jewish History* 20, no. 3/4 (2006), 247. A similar critique of the “lachrymose” nature of much of Armenian (diasporan) history has yet to be made. I thank David Myers for bringing Baron’s work to my attention. For an application of Baron’s views to post-1967 Jewish revisionist historiography that has a “a gloomy representation of Jewish life in the lands of Islam that emphasizes the continuity of oppression and persecution from Muhammad to the demise of Arab Jewish communities in the aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war,” (Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora*, Berkley: University of California Press, 1998, 14) see Mark

attendant insular narrative. On the whole, the trend has been to emphasize the miseries, hardships, and persecutions of diasporic life for the Armenians. This lachrymosity, also present in conventional Jewish historiography, has resulted in sketches of diasporic Armenian life that downplay creative interactions occurring in the interstices of the nation-form as it were and leave Armenians undisturbed in their national essence as they follow a linear, vertical path of historical evolution away from the “corrupting” influences of other cultures and histories to the ultimate resting place of their historical motion, that is, the “homeland” of the nation-state. Consider, for instance, the following programmatic statement from a standard (and widely-cited, including by some of the scholars mentioned above) popular work on the history of Armenian diaspora settlements published during the Soviet period:

The history of Armenian diaspora settlements is the history of migration, of living amidst foreigners, of migrancy [*bandkhtut‘iwn*]. In other words, it is the history of misery and wretchedness. It is difficult to seek periods of happiness in its pages; and in recording that history, we would have considered ourselves to be tragic historians had we not been fortunate enough to see the resplendent dawn of Armenia under the Soviet sun, and the [*realization of the*] centuries-long and arduously pursued goal of the Armenian people to return to the homeland, which was the desired and sacred dream of innumerable generations of Armenians.⁵⁰

The “misery and wretchedness” and “migrancy” the above author associates with “living amidst foreigners” makes it difficult to imagine how such a lachrymose conception of Armenian history could seriously accommodate within it an exploration of *real* cross-cultural interactions/connectedness and transculturation between Armenians and foreigners amidst whom they were living for centuries.

R. Cohen, “The *Neo-Lachrymose* Conception of Jewish-Arab History,” *Tikkun* 6, no. 3 (1991): 55–60, and idem., *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (revised edition) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). See also Beinin’s work cited above. Needless to say, the lachrymose conception of Armeno-Turkish/Islamic history is a direct response to the denial of the Armenian genocide and will likely begin to change only after proper recognition of this event is made.

⁵⁰A. G. Abrahamyan, *Hamarror urvagits hay gaghtavayreri patmut‘yan* [A Concise Overview of the History of Armenian Settlements] 2 vols. (Erevan: Haypethrat, 1964–1967) 2:421. Emphasis added.

It would not be unreasonable to suggest that this linear and teleological approach to Armenian history as the (often) inevitable unfolding of the national essence to its historical *nirvana* of the nation-state would result in the downplaying if not displacement of interactions with the “other” on the grounds that such interactions would “pollute” or at the very least disturb the nation-form, which scholars of national(ist) discourse have described as the paradoxical subject of History that “changes as it remains the same.”⁵¹ This would be *particularly* the case where the influences and interactions involve the world of Islamic Asia, the “civilizational other” often identified by Armenian historians, consciously or not, as the foreign agent to have deflected the Armenian nation-form from its linear odyssey in history; exceptions are sometimes made for (Christian) Europe or Russia, however, where the influences and cross-cultural interactions are deemed as “creative” and often as (re)generative of the Armenian national essence. For instance, works on the eighteenth-century “revival” movement that discuss the role of the Catholic Armenian order of erudite monks in Venice known as the Mekhitarist Congregation, often lavish praise on these monks for being conduits of regenerative European cultural flows into Armenian life, while similar cultural influences, occurring contemporaneously or at an earlier period, from the world of Islam are rarely mentioned or studied. When, on occasion, Islamic influences are given proper recognition, they are almost immediately neutralized by resort to Orientalist tropes about Islam and Asia as lacking in “agency” and being incapable of generating internal change and momentum. Consider for instance, the treatment of Armenian cultural history by the otherwise erudite and sensible Soviet Armenian historian Leo (Arakel Babakhanian). In volume two of his acclaimed and pioneering study of Armenian printing and cultural history, published at the turn of the twentieth century, Leo compares Constantinople/Istanbul and Venice as the two leading cultural-literary sites in eighteenth-century Armenian history and asserts that while Istanbul outpaced Venice in terms of the *quantity* of books published during the eighteenth century, Venice was clearly ahead in *qualitative* terms, that is, in terms of the “progressive” ideas and *contents* of the Armenian books published there. After making this assertion, whose credibility is certainly open to debate, Leo then goes on to state that Venice’s superiority over Constantinople/Istanbul “is natural since Constantinople represented the

⁵¹ The formulation belongs to Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (London: Verso, 1996), Chapter 5.

same Asia, whose much-tormented corner was Armenia, but Asia, not only in its geographical sense but also in the intellectual-cultural [meaning of this term]. *Independent intellectual thought was incapable of developing there.*⁵² To be sure, Leo does not deny Islamicate or Arab influence on Armenian culture, especially during the reign of the Islamic Caliphates in Armenia (seventh to tenth centuries CE). On the contrary, he goes out of his way to suggest that such influences are visible in the realms of architecture, poetry, language, science, and so on,⁵³ but also suggests in the same breath that the (backward) cultural predicament of the Armenian people was to a large extent predicated on the fact the Armenians had been residing in “Asiatic darkness and stasis.”⁵⁴ This reference to Asia, or rather Islamdom, as characterized by darkness and inertia/stasis (*ansharzhut‘yun*) is a recurring theme in Leo’s and other Armenian historians’ works and serves as the natural foil or civilizational other for both the Armenian nation-form as well as for “progressive Europe,” hence precluding the study of horizontal connections and continuities between Armenian and Islamic history other than perhaps in negative terms.⁵⁵

While the insular historical writing stemming from a nationalist mode of imagining the Armenian past has been particularly entrenched in Armenia (both of Soviet and especially post-Soviet periods as the recent and unfortunate campaigns against Armenian Studies scholars in North America has indicated)⁵⁶, it has not been altogether absent from the way the field is practiced in North America where it has been compounded by yet another problem more characteristic of academic life in American universities. What I have in mind is the culture of area studies that has proliferated across American universities partly as a result of the Cold War. Certainly, the area studies experiment in the United States should not be categorically written off as a scholarly disaster as some critics have made it out to be. It has, after all, allowed some disciplines and the histories they seek to represent to survive in an environment dominated by Eurocentric and Euroamerican scholarship as well as scholarship linked to large and

⁵² Leo (Arakel Babakhanian), “Haykakan Tpagrut‘yun” (Armenian Printing), vol. 2 in *Erkeri Zhoghovatsu* (Collected Works), vol. 5 (Yerevan: Hayastan Hratarakchut‘yun, 1986), 383. Emphasis added.

⁵³ Leo, “Haykakan Tpagrut‘yun,” 387–388. See also vol. 2 of the above work for Leo’s discussion of this period in Armenian history.

⁵⁴ Leo, “Haykakan Tpagrut‘yun,” 390. “Asiakan khavari u ansharzhut‘yan mej nstats mi zhoghovrdi.”

⁵⁵ Leo, “Haykakan Tpagrut‘yun,” 383.

⁵⁶ Aslanian, “The ‘Treason of the Intellectuals?’”

recognized “civilizations” with imperial pasts to boast of. In this context, the establishment of Armenian Studies chairs in major universities such as Harvard, Columbia, the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and UCLA to name a few, can justifiably be credited with rescuing Armenian scholarship and history from oblivion and safeguarding it from the catastrophic effects of the Armenian genocide. They have also set the foundations upon which a new generation of scholars can begin to reassess critically the field—although one could also argue that much of Armenian scholarship has only recently begun to go beyond the foundational basis. However, the area studies mold into which Armenian Studies was born and soon institutionalized has also come at a cost, since it has further reinforced some of the pernicious flaws already present with national(ist) modes of imagining the past. In other words, the area studies scaffolding of Armenian Studies has reinforced the kind of isolation and insulation of the Armenian past from the pasts of other civilizations and histories. In a sense, both area studies and nationalism can be seen as having conspired to sever the rich and complex connections and interactions that have gone into the making of the Armenian past.

A third pernicious flaw has been the tendency to sever connections not only with other histories but perhaps more troublingly with other social science and humanities disciplines. The dominant discipline that has largely fueled the growth of Armenian studies in North America and elsewhere has been philology or the study of the “classical” texts produced by Armenian scholars and scribes in the late antique and “medieval” periods. This textual tradition (akin in many ways to the Orientalist approaches characterizing some approaches within Islamic and Middle Eastern Area Studies in so far as both tend to study entire cultures on the basis of a select and often small collection of “elite” texts) has been a mixed blessing for the field. On the one hand, for much of the first half of the twentieth century and even later, the scholarship produced by Nicholas Adontz, Hakob Manandyan, Sirarpie Der Nersessian, and Nina Garsoian was path-breaking in exploring horizontal connections and interactions between Armenian history and Greco-Roman (Adontz⁵⁷ and Manandyan⁵⁸),

⁵⁷ Nicholas Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian Political Conditions Based on the Naxarar System*, ed. and trans. N. G. Garsoian (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1970).

⁵⁸ Hakob Manandyan, *K'nnakan tesut'yun hay zhoghovrdi patmut'yan* (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1944–1960).

Arsacid/Sassanian-Persian (Garsoian⁵⁹ and Russell⁶⁰) and Crusader and Byzantine (Sirarpie Der Nersessian) traditions and histories. The wave of philological scholars and scholarship also brought with it some of the first serious attempts not only to study the rich corpus of Armenian manuscripts dating back to the fifth century CE, but also their scholarly translations into European languages. This has been particularly the case with Robert Thomson and Nina Garsoian whose English translations of pivotal works have made Armenian classics accessible to a broader group of scholars and students who would otherwise not have access to these works. On the other hand, however, while important in terms of familiarizing scholars and students with some of the surviving primary sources from the past, the philological orientation of Armenian Studies has meant that in practice, there has been little scholarship devoted to exploring the social, economic, and environmental foundations, which sustained the literary culture(s) that produced these texts.⁶¹ The study of social and economic history, historical sociology, anthropology, and environmental history has not been, on the whole, part and parcel of the way Armenian Studies has been practiced or taught outside of Armenia, at least, where the “economic base” of Armenian history was given special emphasis due to the Soviet Marxist ideology characterizing all aspects of academic life.

A similar tendency of methodological parochialism has also afflicted Armenian Studies even when the discipline has been housed in departments of history and practiced by professional historians. Much of the focus of historical work produced in this area, as late as the 1990s, has been framed in the outmoded genre of political or diplomatic history in some ways eerily reminiscent of the “l’histoire événementielle” criticized and largely subverted in the wake of Fernand Braudel’s monumental work and the consolidation of the “Annales paradigm” in the mid-twentieth century.⁶² For

⁵⁹ See her two classic essays, “Prolegomena to a Study of the Iranian Aspects in Arsacid Armenia,” and “The Iranian Substratum of the ‘Agat’angelos Cycle’,” in *Armenia between Byzantium and the Sasanians* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985).

⁶⁰ A representative sampling of Russell’s work may be found in *Armenian and Iranian Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁶¹ See Zachary Lochman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004) for a critique of the Orientalist tradition in the West and its effects on Middle Eastern studies. The locus classicus of a critique of Orientalism is, of course, Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

⁶² For useful introductory surveys of the Annales school, see Peter Burke, *The French historical revolution: the Annales school, 1929–89* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990),

understandable reasons as well, work by professional historians in Armenian studies has been mostly centered on the genocide of 1915 with results that have been less than compelling due to a myriad of reasons, not all of which have to do with personal or scholarly deficiencies. With very few exceptions, awareness of larger debates within the discipline of history has largely been absent both in the scholarship devoted to the history of the genocide as well as in historical scholarship in general. For example, while the influence of the Annales School and the tradition of “L’histoire du Livre” has permeated scholarship on print culture produced in both European and Asian history, one will not find any awareness of, let alone necessary engagement with, this highly seminal school of scholarship in works produced on Armenian print history.⁶³ Theoretical training in the social sciences and humanities has been almost unheard of until recently either in the works published by Armenian Studies scholars or in the curriculum used to train students of the field.

Clearly, a significant paradigm shift is in order if the field is to survive and grow in coming decades. I do not intend to offer a blueprint for such a paradigm shift in the remainder of this chapter but merely to suggest a number of possible avenues in which Armenian Studies and historical work on the Armenian past might be charted in the future. What I have in mind here is to present a few examples or vignettes where a more theoretically informed and sustained use of the world historical notions of “interaction,”

and Lynn Hunt, “French History in the Last Twenty Years: The Rise and Fall of the Annales Paradigm,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 21 (1986): 209–224.

⁶³The most important work in Annales scholarship on book history remains Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin’s 1956 classic *L’Aparition du Livre* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1956), which appeared in English translation as *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450–1800*, trans. David Gerard (London: New Left Books, 1976). For l’histoire du livre, see Roger Chartier, “Frenchness in the History of the Book: From the History of Publishing to the History of Reading,” *American Antiquarian Society Proceedings* 97 (1987): 5–35, and Robert Darnton, “What Is the History of Books?” in *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1990). For a discussion see Sebouh D. Aslanian, “Port Cities and Printers: Reflections on Five Centuries of Global Armenian Print,” *Book History* (2014): 51–93, and ibid., “Reader Response to and the Circulation of Mkhitarist Books Across the Early Modern Indian Ocean,” *Journal of the Society of Armenian Studies* 22 (2013): 31–70, and my forthcoming book *Early Modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers Across the Global Armenian Diaspora, 1512–1800*. The only other scholar of the history of Armenian print culture who is aware of the Annales Paradigm of book history and engages with it is Raymond H. Kévorkian whose dissertation, later published as *Catalogue des ‘incunables’ arméniens (1511–1965) ou chronique de l’imprimerie arménienne* (Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1986), was supervised by Henri-Jean Martin.

“networks of circulation and exchange,” and the hemispheric or global connectivity that results from them may be pursued. The examples I draw upon below are meant to highlight the importance of hemispheric connections/interactions that vitally influenced the making of Armenian history. Since my enterprise here is a humble attempt at building on the work of an earlier generation of Armenian Studies scholars and not at all meant to diminish the importance of their legacy, it is only fitting that I begin with some comments on the seminal work of Nina Garsoian.

VIGNETTES OF ARMENIAN INTERACTIVE HISTORY: PUSHING THE FRONTIERS OF “GARSOIAN’S LAW”

Looking back at the development of Armenian Studies in North America in the course of the twentieth century, Nina Garsoian’s prolific career stands out as a critical juncture for the emergence of a more interactive and cross-cultural approach to the study of the Armenian past(s). After all, it was she who made arguably one of the most penetrating observations on the general pattern of pre-modern Armenian history. Known to many of her students and colleagues informally as “Garsoian’s Law” (a label probably coined by Ronald Suny), this observation appears to have never been elaborated in any systematic fashion in Garsoian’s published work.⁶⁴ The closest Garsoian came to putting her “law” into writing was in the opening lines of her entry on Armenian history in the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, for which she served as the Associate editor:

From Antiquity, Armenia’s geographical position at the meeting point of Greco-Roman and Iranian worlds created a situation that favored the country’s cultural life, enriched it with two major traditions but playing havoc with the continuity of its political history. As a general pattern, therefore, Armenia flourished only when the contending forces on either side were in near equilibrium and neither was in a position to dominate it entirely.⁶⁵

What Garsoian seems to be saying here is that the very fact of being a juncture, a point of articulation between two societies and cultures, enriched

⁶⁴ For an insightful account of Garsoian’s intellectual legacy and a brief discussion of “Garsoian’s Law,” see Levon Avdoyan, “Magistra Studentorum per Armeniam et Byzantium,” *Women Medievalists and the Academy*, ed. Jane Chance, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005): 808.

⁶⁵ Nina Garsoian, “Armenia, History of,” *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer, vol. 1 (New York: Scribner, 1982), 474.

Armenian culture through cultural “flows” from either direction. Except at moments of equilibrium, however, being between two mighty civilizations and states created an atmosphere of political discontinuity, instability, on occasion havoc, as one dominant power rushed in to fill the vacuum left by the other.⁶⁶ The centrality of this “law” to Garsoian’s larger scholarly project can only be fully appreciated when her contribution to Armenian Studies scholarship is placed in the context of work that preceded her. Prior to Garsoian, scholars such as Hakob Manandyan and especially Nicholas Adontz had been conscious of Armenia’s unusual geographic location as a frontier region between Greco-Roman and Iranian worlds. However, as Garsoian soon came to realize, the focus of this earlier scholarship was almost entirely on the cultural and other flows enriching Armenia’s cultural traditions from only the western, Greco-Roman side of the frontier “at the expense of one half of the evidence.”⁶⁷ To counteract this scholarship and “reestablish the balance between the influence of both Armenia’s neighbors,” Garsoian recalls in her recent memoir, she began, in the late 1960s, to devote her attention to revealing the Iranian-Parthian elements of early Armenian history, “which the sources, both contemporary and subsequent, acting as distorting mirror systematically obscured or omitted altogether.”⁶⁸ The result of this decision to expand the earlier “received tradition” of Armenian history in antiquity as merely “Rome beyond the imperial frontier,” was a rich and stimulating repertoire of historical writing that we would today call a “connected history” of Greco-Roman and Iranian elements in Armenia’s cosmopolitan heritage. For instance, in her seminal essay, “Prolegomena to a Study of the Iranian Aspects in Arsacid Armenia” published in 1975, Garsoian challenged her colleagues and students to integrate the suppressed Iranian components of Armenian culture and history and set herself the task of illuminating the “diverse, though scattered, links connecting Iran and Armenia during this [i.e., the Arsacid] period.”⁶⁹ Enumerating the many intellectual contributions that made

⁶⁶ For useful comments, see Levon Avdoyan, “The Past as Future: Armenian History and Present Politics,” *Armenian Forum: A Journal of Contemporary Affairs*, Volume 1, Number 1, Spring 1998.

⁶⁷ Garsoian, *De Vita Sua* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2011), 203.

⁶⁸ Garsoian, *De Vita Sua*, 203.

⁶⁹ Nina Garsoian, “Prolegomena to a Study of the Iranian Aspects in Arsacid Armenia,” in *Armenia between Byzantium and the Sasanians* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), 3. See also idem. “The Iranian Substratum of the ‘Agat’angelos Cycle’,” in *Armenia between Byzantium and the Sasanians* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985).

Garsoian one of the twentieth century's towering Byzantinists and scholars of Parthian-Sasanian Iran is not my concern here. Other scholars have already written on the importance of her scholarship not only to Armenian history but also to Byzantine and Iranian history in ways that I am not able to do myself.⁷⁰ However, what is perhaps not adequately understood or conveyed is how Garsoian's trailblazing work—much of which written in the 1960s and 1970s, at a time when the scholarship of world or global history was yet to be properly formulated—offers our generation of Armenian Studies scholars the opportunity of expanding the geographic frontiers of her connected histories approach to Armenian history to include not just the Greco-Roman and Parthian-Iranian worlds but the entirety of Eurasia. Recent scholarship in the rapidly growing field of pre-modern Eurasian and hemispheric/world history has shed important light on how the so-called “silk-roads” (emerging as early as the first century BCE) played an important role in “unifying” much of Eurasia by providing hemispheric-wide “networks of exchange” through which “goods, ideas, [diseases,] and people were exchanged between major regions of Afro-Eurasia.”⁷¹ Given the new findings of this scholarship, it will be a challenge for the new generation of Armenian Studies scholars and especially historians to reformulate “Garsoian’s Law” in light of world history’s challenge to the field in order to accommodate Armenia’s geographical location not only as a “meeting point of Greco-Roman and Iranian worlds” but rather more globally as a “connectivity node” on a much larger Eurasian network of exchange spanning from the Han empire in China, the Parthian and Kushan empires in Central and West Asia, the Roman Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Arsacid/Arshakuni state in Armenia. Looked at through this larger hemispheric optic, many of the putatively Iranian or Greco-Roman cultural and social practices informing Armenian history and society (the centrality of the “royal hunt” in rituals of power⁷²

⁷⁰ See Avdoyan, “Magistra Studentorum.”

⁷¹ David Christian, “Silk Roads or Steppe Roads: The Silk Roads in World History,” *Journal of World History* 11, no. 1 (2000): 3. For a cautious approach that questions the validity of some of the conventional historiography and its assumption that a single “silk road” directly connected China and Rome, see Khodadad Rezakhani, “The Road That Never Was: The Silk Road and Trans-Eurasian Exchange,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30, no. 3 (2010): 420–433.

⁷² On the royal hunt and its significance in important centers of power in Eurasia, ranging from China, Afghanistan, North India to Iran and Armenia, see Thomas Allsen’s important book, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). For

and authority in Arsacid Armenian courtly culture or the importance of the color purple/*tsirani* as a symbol of royal “distinction” and legitimacy,⁷³ to give but two examples) in the period of antiquity and late antiquity could be seen as important local adaptations of cultural practices circulating across important “peer polity centers” in the interactive world of Eurasia, as opposed to merely creative borrowings/emulations from either Greco-Roman or Parthian-Iranian worlds between which Armenia was located for much of its history in the period of antiquity and late antiquity.

My second vignette concerning interactivity comes from the Mongol period of Eurasian history (c. 1209–1368 CE) during which Armenia and Armenians became much more tightly integrated into a larger Eurasian world created by the expansion of the Mongol Empire than they were during antiquity. Despite the existence of multiple primary source accounts from this period written by Armenian scribes and the obvious potential of studying significant changes in Armenian culture and history resulting from cross-cultural encounters made possible by Mongol expansion, Armenian scholars have, on the whole, remained largely indifferent to such concerns. Here again, the tendency in the historiography has been towards an autonomous and insular reading of Armenian history at the expense of an interactive conception.

In this connection, I think the first time I was struck by how entrenched the insular view of the Armenian past was in Armenian Studies and history in particular was about twelve years ago while I was doing research in Yerevan for my dissertation. During a brief conversation with a senior scholar at one of the most reputable academic institutions in Yerevan, I was taken aback when this person launched into a verbal assault about how “incompetent” and “corrupt” Armenian scholars in North America were. He then said some unflattering things about Garsoian and dismissed her as a “charlatan” all because (according to this person) she had once dared to suggest Chinese and/or Mongol influence in a piece of medieval Armenian

scattered references to it in Arsacid Armenian courtly culture, see Garsoian, “Prolegomena,” where Garsoian writes: “Parallels between Armenian and Iranian usages can be maintained even in the seeming trivia of daily practices. The ceremonial of the Armenian Arsacid court revolving around the royal hunt is an unmistakable reflection of Iranian customs and tastes.” (27). While this is a prescient and compelling insight, one can equally argue that Garsoian’s focus on Parthian Iran prevents her from seeing the Eurasia-wide striking parallels and horizontal connections behind the ceremonial of the royal hunt.

⁷³ Meyer Reinhold, *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity* (Brussels: Latomus Revue d’etudes Latines, 1970).

art.⁷⁴ The point he was trying to make was the absurdity of Chinese influence on Armenian art given the great distances between China and Armenia. The irony in this exchange is that it occurred during a conversation about the Mongol postal system (known as the Yām)⁷⁵ and how some Mongol terms related to postal horses had entered the Armenian lexicon.

Needless to say, world historians have long discussed the impact of the *Pax Mongolica* in fostering “hemispheric integration”⁷⁶ across Eurasia through networks of circulation along which not only destructive diseases and bacilli such as the bubonic plague, as well as world conquerors, were able to circulate from China to Europe in a remarkably short time, but also merchants, commodities, and cultural or mental constructs such as Chinese artistic motifs usually on Mongol silk robes of investiture presented as gifts to rulers who submitted to Mongol rule all across Eurasia. As Thomas Allsen notes in his book, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, the *Pax Mongolica* acted essentially “as a zone of contact and transmission, a lengthy conveyor belt on which commercial and cultural wares traveled between the major civilizations of Eurasia.”⁷⁷ That this conveyor belt also could have transferred artistic forms from China to Cilician Armenia (a Mongol vassal state following 1254) would not strike anyone familiar with world history and its interactive approach to the study of the past as being “absurd” or “insulting” as they evidently were to the senior scholar I mentioned above. Indeed, in several pioneering essays written in the early 1970s, Dickran Kouymjian demonstrated that Armenian miniature artists at the Cilician court did, in fact, introduce Chinese patterns in their Gospel illuminations during the late thirteenth century. Commenting on some specific Chinese patterns that probably reached Armenian manuscript illuminators at the court of Cilician Armenia through royal gift exchanges or possibly through trade networks across Mongol Eurasia, Kouymjian states that

⁷⁴ To the best of my knowledge, Garsoian has never written on Chinese motifs in Armenian architecture or art. Her detractor in Yerevan was probably confusing her with Dickran Kouymjian, who has written on this topic. See below for references to his work.

⁷⁵ For a brief overview, see David Morgan, *The Mongols*, 2nd edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 90–94.

⁷⁶ Jerry Bentley, “Hemispheric Integration, 500–1500 C.E.” *Journal of World History* 9, no. 2, (Fall 1998): 237–254.

⁷⁷ Thomas Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 210.

“little doubt can be cast on their Chinese borrowing or inspiration.”⁷⁸ He even suggests the real possibility of the influence of Chinese landscape painting on Armenian art during the same period.⁷⁹ In a similar vein, Mathew P. Canepa explores how the Mongol custom of presenting silk robes of honor and investiture to subordinate rulers served “as a powerful imperial tool of political and cultural integration” across Eurasia.⁸⁰ As he writes:

The wide distribution of Mongol textiles had the secondary and unintended consequence of providing a prestigious conduit for the robes’ imagery, spreading it throughout Eurasia. The earliest appearance of dragons, phoenices, and lions inspired by the robes of honor emerges in one of the most distant kingdoms over which the Mongols ruled: Armenian Cilicia on the southeastern Mediterranean coast of Anatolia.⁸¹

Another example of cross-cultural interactions, connectedness, and transculturation again from the medieval period, but on a smaller scale, concerns the influence of Islamic cultural constructs or practices on Christian Armenians in Eastern Anatolia during the Seljuk period. Here, one of the pioneers to bring to light the interactive and transcultural nature of Seljuk/Muslim and Armenian/Christian histories was Levon Khachikian who, in a 1951 essay,⁸² pioneered the study of medieval Armenian interactions with the Islamic Akhi brotherhoods of Seljukide Anatolia, a topic that Seta Dadoyan has studied and Rachel Goshgarian has also expanded upon in her innovative dissertation.⁸³ In a similar vein, S. Peter Cowe has also recently explored the interactive environment dur-

⁷⁸ Dickran Kouymjian, “Chinese Elements in Armenian Miniature Painting in the Mongol Period,” in *Armenian Studies in Memorium Haig Berberian*, ed. Dickran Kouymjian (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1986), 429.

⁷⁹ Kouymjian, “Chinese Elements in Armenian Miniature Painting,” 429.

⁸⁰ Mathew P. Canepa, “Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction Among Ancient and Early Medieval Visual Cultures,” *Theorizing Cross Cultural Interaction*, ed. M. Canepa *Ars Orientalis* 38 (2010): 7–19 (15). On Mongol textiles and their role as vehicles of cross-cultural exchange, see Thomas Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁸¹ Canepa, “Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction,” 16.

⁸² Levon Khachikian, “1280 T‘vakanin Erznkayum Kazmakerpvats ‘eghbayrut‘iwn’ [The ‘Brotherhood’ Organized in Erznka in the year 1280].” *Teghekgir*, no. 12. Erevan, 1951 (reproduced in Levon Khachikian, *Ashkhatut‘iwnner*, ed. Shushanik L. Khachikian, vol. 1, 200–215).

⁸³ Rachel Goshgarian, “Beyond the Social and the Spiritual: Redefining Urban Confraternities in Late Medieval Anatolia,” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2007).

ing the period of Arab/Islamic rule in seventh to tenth century Armenia and how during this period Arabic influence on Armenian poetry became prevalent.⁸⁴

Historiographic insularity of the sort discussed thus far is also present in historical scholarship produced in my area of specialization, namely Julfan economic and social history during the early modern period. Shortly after their forced displacement from the town of Old Julfa on the Aras River and resettlement at New Julfa on the outskirts of the Safavid imperial capital of Isfahan, these merchants accomplished a remarkable feat by coming to preside over one of the greatest trade networks of the early modern period. The “trans-imperial cosmopolitan” world of the Julfa merchants, stretching from London, Amsterdam, and Cadiz in the far West to Calcutta, Madras, Canton, and Manila in the far East, covered all the major empires of the early modern world, both Asian and European. Perhaps more than any other community in Armenian history, the Julfans are thus quintessential subjects of world history and its global, interactive methodology of historical writing. Yet as Edmund Herzig has noted in his important study of Julfa, “existing studies of Julfan trade have drawn few comparisons between the Armenians and other Asian communities, perhaps owing to the influence of the often inward-looking preoccupations of Armenian historiography.”⁸⁵ Rather than compare and connect the Julfans with larger processes characterizing early modern world or global history, Armenian historians working on this community have for the most part “viewed the Julfans more or less in isolation, as a unique, specifically Armenian phenomenon.”⁸⁶ My own work on the Julfans has attempted, in part, to study the economic and cultural interactions of the Julfan mercantile community in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean while foregrounding the connected nature of Julfan history with larger processes characterizing early modern global history.⁸⁷ It has in particular

⁸⁴ S. Peter Cowe, “The Politics of Poetics: The Islamic Influence on Armenian Verse,” in *Redefining Christian identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, ed. J.J. van Ginkel, H.L. Murre-van den Berg, T.M. van Lint (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 379–404.

⁸⁵ Edmund Herzig, “The Armenian Merchants from New Julfa: A Study in Premodern Trade” (Ph.D. diss., St. Antony’s College, University of Oxford, 1991), 8.

⁸⁶ Herzig, “The Armenian Merchants from New Julfa,” 8.

⁸⁷ Sebouh Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). See also *idem.*, “Julfan Agreements with European East India Companies: Overland

shed light on the Islamicate identities of Julfans by exploring how many aspects of their cultural and commercial practices ranging from the vocabulary of their peculiar dialect to their commercial law, partnership contracts, accounting systems, the architecture of some of their churches, as well as their sartorial customs were creative adaptations from the world of Islam. Armenian scholars before me had readily suggested that the Julfans had indirectly borrowed some of their commercial practices from the medieval world of Christian Venice, but had precluded the more likely possibility of the direct borrowings from the nearer world of contemporary Islamicate Eurasia or South Asia.⁸⁸ My book on Julfan trade, building on the groundbreaking work of Edmund Herzog, has suggested that it is more likely that some Julfan commercial practices and institutions such as the *commenda* contract of long-distance partnership like that of their Venetian counterparts were probably borrowed from the *Mudaraba* contract commonly used in the Hanafi school of the Shari`a, as were most likely many important aspects of Julfan commercial law.⁸⁹ The principal reasons for the downplaying of the Islamicate elements in Julfan economy and society are probably the lack of knowledge of “world history” in the medieval and early modern periods and of the prominent role of “Islamdom” and Muslim merchants in the trading world of the Eurasian *ecumene*. Coupled with this, the “romance” mode of emplotment characteristic of Armenian national(ist) historiography and to some extent of Armenian Studies scholarship can also be seen as contributing factors for the “insular” mode of studying early modern Armenian history.

Finally, let me conclude with an example from a more recent period, the study of a literary tradition produced by Armenians residing in the Ottoman Empire in a macaronic or “heterographic” language known as Armeno-Turkish or vernacular Turkish spoken in Ottoman Anatolia but written in

Trade, Protection Costs, and the Limits of Collective Self-Representation in Early Modern Safavid Iran,” in *Mapping Safavid Iran*, ed. Nobuaki Kondo (Tokyo: University of Foreign Studies, 2016), 189–222.

⁸⁸ Shushanik L. Khachikian, *Nor Jughayi hay vacharakanut’yuně ev nra arevratntesakan kaperě Rusastani het XVII–XVIII darerum* [The Armenian Trade of New Julfa and its Commercial and Economic Ties with Russia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries]. (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakchutyun, 1988), 119–120.

⁸⁹ See Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, Chapter 6, and Edmund Herzog, “The Commercial Law of the Julfan Armenians,” in Kévonian Kéram, and Chaudhuri, Sushil, eds., *Les Arméniens dans le Commerce Asiatique au début de l’ère Moderne* (Paris: Presses d’universités, 2007): 63–82.

the Armenian script.⁹⁰ From 1727, when Abbot Mkhitar published, in Venice, his *Turn k'erakanut'ean ashkharhabar lezuin hayots'* [Gate to the Grammar of the Vernacular Language of the Armenians], the first grammar manual in Armeno-Turkish for Western Armenians, to 1967, approximately 2000 separate titles in Armeno-Turkish were published in fifty different cities and 200 printing houses scattered across several continents.⁹¹ Covering multiple genres, including short stories and the novel,

⁹⁰ My thoughts here are drawn from my essay “Prepared in the Language of the Hagarites”: Abbot Mkhitar’s 1727 Armeno-Turkish Grammar of Modern Western Armenian,” *Journal for the Society of Armenian Studies* (2017): 54–86. The scholarship of Armeno-Turkish is quickly burgeoning. For reliable studies, see the dated but pioneering study by Haig Berbérian, “La Littérature Arménio-Turque,” *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, volume 2, (1964) and the influential works of Hohann Strauss, “Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th–20th Centuries)?” *Arabic Middle Eastern Literatures* 6, 1 (2003): 39–76; idem, “Is Karamanli Literature Part of a ‘Christian-Turkish (Turco-Christian) Literature?’” in *Cries and Whispers in Karamanlidika Literature*, ed. Evangelia Balta and Matthias Kappler (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 153–200; idem., “The Millets and the Ottoman Language: The Contribution of Ottoman Greeks to Ottoman Letters (19th–20th Centuries),” *Die Welt des Islams*. N.S. 35, 2 (Nov. 1995): 189–249; Laurent Mignon’s work is also quite innovative. In addition to “A Pilgrim’s Progress: Armenian and Kurdish Literatures in Turkish and the Rewriting of Literary History,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 48, 2 (2014): 182–200, see his “Lost in Translation: A few remarks on the Armeno-Turkish novel and Turkish Literary Historiography,” in *Between Religion and Language: Turkish-Speaking Christians, Jews and Greek-Speaking Muslims and Catholics in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Evangelia Balta and Mehmet Ölmez (Istanbul: Eren, 2011), 111–123. Also useful are Börte Sagaster, “The role of Turcophone Armenians as literary innovators and mediators of culture in the early days of Modern Turkish Literature,” in *ibid.*, 101–110; Murat Cankara, “Rethinking Ottoman Cross-Cultural Encounters: Turks and the Armenian Alphabet,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 51, 1 (2015): 1–16; and finally, Garo Aprahamyan, “A Note on the Bibliographic Catalogues of Armeno-Turkish Literature,” in Balta and Mehmet Ölmez, *Between Religion and Language*, 147–152. The best Armenian-language examination is Hrachya Acharyan’s lengthy chapter on Turkish loanwords in Armenian,” in Chapter 24 of *Hayots' lezvi patmut'yun* [History of the Armenian language] (Yerevan: Haypethrad, 1951), 155–195. See also Hasmik Stepanyan, *Hayatar T'urk'eren grk'eri ev Hayatar T'urk'eren parberakan mamuli matenagit'ut'iwn* [Bibliography of Armeno-Turkish books and periodicals] (Istanbul: Turkuaç Yayınlari, 2005), and idem., *Hayatar Turkeren grakanutyunč (aghbyuragitan betazotut'yun)* [Armeno-Turkish literature: A source-critical investigation] (Yerevan: Yerevani Hamalsarani Hratarakch'ut'yun, 2001). I owe the term heterographic to my colleague Bert Vaux, while macaronic is a term I have borrowed from Rachel Goshgarian.

⁹¹ Garo Aprahamyan, “A Note on the Bibliographic Catalogues of Armeno-Turkish Literature,” in *Between Religion and Language: Turkish-Speaking Christians, Jews and Greek-Speaking Muslims and Catholics in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Evangelia Balta and Mehmet Ölmez (Istanbul: Eren, 2011), 147–152. His source is Stepanyan, *Hayatar T'urk'eren grk'eri ev Hayatar T'urk'eren parberakan mamuli matenagit'ut'iwn*, 17.

journalism and history, religious and evangelical writing, science and works on hygiene, this hybrid literary print tradition has only lately begun to attract scholarly attention from a handful of specialists. For reasons that are perhaps understandable yet unfortunate, Armenian historiography on this literary tradition and on the history of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in general have suffered most from the insular and lachrymose tendencies I have outlined thus far. Nowhere is this perhaps more evident than in Hasmik Stepanyan’s useful but problematic history of Armeno-Turkish literature.⁹² Widely regarded as the leading Armenian authority on Armeno-Turkish, Stepanyan has done much excellent work preparing bibliographic catalogues of published periodicals and other works in Turkish written in Armenian characters.⁹³ However, her methodological orientation and adoption of a lachrymose conception of Armeno-Turkish history has led to unfortunate conclusions. Thus in the Preface to this work, the author has this to say about her topic:

Armeno-Turkish literature is an inseparable part of Armenian culture.... For more than 500 years, Armenians lived under Turkish rule. This was not the usual sort of submission; rather, it was the continuous and terrible oppression of a people with a profound cultural past by a military-feudal authority inspired by the raging frenzy of religious fanaticism. The Turkish rulers not only took from them the beneficial material goods created by the Armenian people, the results of its physical labor, but also in every possible way, they strove to destroy or appropriate for themselves the fruits of their intellectual creations, to assimilate and Islamize the subject peoples. Armeno-Turkish literature was born as a means of self-preservation and a weapon in the struggle against estrangement.⁹⁴

⁹² Hasmik Stepanyan, *Hayatar T'urk'eren grakanut'yunč (aghbyuragitan betazotut'yun)* (Yerevan: Erevani Hamalsarani Hratarakch'ut'yun, 2001).

⁹³ Stepanyan, *Hayatar T'urk'erēn grk'eri ev Hayatar T'urk'erēn parberakan mamuli matenagit'ut'iwn.*

⁹⁴ Stepanyan, *Hayatar Turkerengrakanutyunč*, 5. “Հայատար թուրքերեն գրականությունը հայ մշակույթի անբակտեկ մասն է կազմում:... Ավելի քան 500 տարի հայերն ապրել են թուրքական տիրապետության տակ: Սա սովորական հայատակություն չի եղել, այլ կրոնական մոլերանության մոլուցով տարված ռազմա-ֆեոդալական իշխանության տեսական ու ահաւոր ճնշում մշակութային խոր անցյալ ունեցող վի ժողովովի վրա: Թուրք տիրապետությունը ոչ միայն վերցրել էն հայ ժողովոյի սուլեհած կորական բարիները, ինս ֆիզիքական աշխատանքը արյունուրը, այլ ամեն կերպ աշխատել են ոչխանենել կամ յուրացնել նրա մոռավոր տօենագործության արքայիները, ձևել ու մահեմտականացնել հայատակ ժողովուրդներին: հայատար թուրքերն գրականությունը ծնունդ է առել որպէս ինքնապահպանման ու ուժացման դեմ պայքարի միջոց:”

Leaving aside the cultural chauvinism of this passage contrasting predatory nomads (the civilizational other of the Armenians whose intrusion into the orbit of the Armenian nation-form deflects the natural trajectory of the Nation's History as outlined above) with a people with a “profound cultural past,” this passage is noteworthy for laying out Stepanyan’s main argument in the book. Armeno-Turkish literature was, for the author, a “weapon” and a “means of self preservation” by a weak and defenseless population subjected to “continuous and terrible oppression.” The views outlined here correspond to what Aron Rodrigue describes as the “nationalist historiography of the ‘Ottoman yoke’.”⁹⁵ Such a view *ahistorically* and anachronistically confuses Empire with Nation-state, the pre-modern with the modern, and instead of conceptualizing empire as a “coercive” and “large political unit” that is predicated on the hierarchical maintenance and even perpetuation of difference,⁹⁶ mistakes it for a nation-state whose logic is to homogenize as opposed to perpetuate difference. Here is Stepanyan once again:

From the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the Western Armenians of the Ottoman Empire were subjected to unspeakable persecutions and violent alienation.... The threat of physical annihilation hung like a sword of Damocles on the heads of the Christian peoples subject to Turkish and Persian rule. Striving to realize its ‘one state, one people, one religion’ ideal, it [the Ottoman Empire] was even prepared to annihilate the Empire’s Christians.⁹⁷

Against Stepanyan’s and other scholars’ readiness to project backwards into Ottoman and Armenian history assumptions and realities associated with the genocide and especially post-genocide history of Armenians and Turks, we must stand steadfast as historians and acknowledge areas and times in

⁹⁵ Nancy Reynolds, “Interview with Aron Rodrigue: Difference and Tolerance in the Ottoman Empire,” *Stanford Humanities Review*, 1.

⁹⁶ For a useful discussion of the meaning and nature of Empire, see Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, “Imperial Trajectories,” in *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 8–11.

⁹⁷ Stepanyan, *Hayataq Turkeren grakanutyunē*, 21.

“15-18րդ դարերում Օսմանյան կայսրությունում արևմտահայությունը սովորական ու ֆիզիկական անասելի հետապնդումների եւ բռնի ուժացման է ենթարկվել:... Թուրքիայի, Պարսկաստանի հայտակության տակ գտնվող քրիստոնյան ժողովուրդների գլխին դամելիյան սրբ Խոստ միշտ էլ կախուած է եղել ֆիզիկական ոչնչացման վտանքը:... Զանազան իրականացնել իր մեկ պետրովյան, մեկ ժողովորդ, մեկ կոո՞ն» զաղափարը նա պատրաստվել էր բնաջնշել նաև կապրության քրիստոնյաներին:”

the Ottoman past where both Armenians and Turks, as well as others, partook of cross-cultural interactions and encounters with relative freedom from violence and destruction. As Johann Strauss and more recently Murat Cankara⁹⁸ have demonstrated, Armeno-Turkish literary culture and the complex factors that lead to its emergence provides us with an opportunity to probe such cross-cultural interactions without falling prey to the two myths regarding the multicultural dimension of the *millet* system as either a “yoke” of Muslim or Turkish domination or an “interfaith, interracial utopia in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews worked together in equality and harmony in a golden age of free intellectual endeavor.”⁹⁹

CONCLUSION

In a brilliant yet largely neglected essay on South Asian history, historian David Ludden warns of the inherent pitfalls with using “civilizational” and national(ist) thinking in exploring the complex pasts of places such as South Asia.¹⁰⁰ Ludden makes a plea instead for historians *not to* neglect the “importance of mobility for the study of historical cultures—as opposed to civilizations—in southern Asia.”¹⁰¹ Incorporating the idea of mobility, circulation, and interconnections in the study of South Asia’s past, Ludden suggests, allows historians to be open to the cross-cultural mixing and transcultural mutation that usually occur in South Asia’s “shifting zones of human mobility” as they inevitably do across many of the world’s societies and histories.

Armenian history, as this chapter has tried to argue, is especially rife with mobility and its attendant episodes of transculturations. Even when Armenians themselves have not moved across the world taking their culture(s) and ideas with them, the world has moved towards them. Given their chronic history of dispersion, the skill and expertise with which some Armenians have historically navigated between multiple cultural, religious, and regional divides, and their ability to speak numerous languages, not to

⁹⁸ See the perceptive thoughts of Cankara, “Rethinking Ottoman Cross-Cultural Encounters.” On cross-cultural interactions, see also Aslanian “Prepared in the Language of the Hagaries.”

⁹⁹ Lewis and Braude, “Introduction,” *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. I, *The Central Lands* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), 2.

¹⁰⁰ David Ludden, “History Outside Civilization and the Mobility of South Asia,” *South Asia* 18, 1 (1994): 1–23.

¹⁰¹ Ludden, “History Outside Civilization and the Mobility of South Asia,” 13.

mention the geographic location of their homeland on the hinge of the great Eurasian continent, where Greco-Roman empires and civilizations and their heirs have periodically bumped up against Perso-Arabic, Islamic and Turco-Mongol civilizations and empires, a fact that has both wreaked havoc with Armenian political, institutional, and environmental history but also enriched its culture and identity as Nina Garsoian's formidable work has taught us—given all of this, Armenians are unusually suited to be the ideal-typical subjects of world historical analysis. Yet, it seems that the field of Armenian studies in general and Armenian historiography in particular have not developed the suitable methodological insights from connected histories and world history to appreciate the depth with which mobility and border-crossing (quintessential traits in the history of Armenians) have shaped the making of the Armenian past(s).

To conclude on a brighter note, while insular tendencies have characterized some—but not all—of the work of an earlier generation of Armenian Studies scholars and historians, there are reasons to be optimistic that younger members of the most recent crop of Armenian Studies scholars are in fact working to overcome these obstacles. Michael Pifer's recent work exploring the complex nature of cross-cultural interactions and exchange among Armenian, Turkish, Persian, and Arabic literary and musical cultures is a bold and innovative step in this new direction.¹⁰² Indeed, during the past ten years alone, the field as a whole seems to have gradually moved in the direction of interactive history, with its practitioners at least aware of the need to integrate and connect Armenian scholarship to the larger concerns of world history and Middle Eastern Studies. Houri Berberian's book and several recent essays on the role of Armenians in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911¹⁰³ and Bedross Der Mattosian's recent trailblazing book¹⁰⁴ comparing Armenian, Jewish,

¹⁰² Michael Pifer, “The Diasporic Crane: Discursive Migration across the Armenian-Turkish Divide,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 18, no. 3 (2009): 229–252.

¹⁰³ Houri Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1905–1911: “The Love for Freedom Has No Fatherland”* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001); idem., “Traversing Boundaries and Selves: Iranian-Armenian Identities during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25, no. 2 (2005): 279–296, idem., “Connected Revolutions: Armenians and the Russian, Ottoman, and Iranian Revolutions in the Early Twentieth Century,” in “*L’ivresse de la liberté*”: *La révolution de 1908 dans l’Empire ottoman*, ed. François Georgeon (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2012), 487–510.

¹⁰⁴ Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014); idem. “Formation of

and Arab responses to Ottoman constitutionalism at the turn of the twentieth century have gone a long way towards integrating Armenian history and historiography into the larger field of Middle Eastern history. In the field of Ottoman-Armenian history, the publication of the edited volume *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities, and Politics* by Ali Sipahi, Dzovinar Derderian, and Yaşar Tolga Cora is a sign of the times that promises to open up new vistas of reimagining Ottoman-Armenian history as interactive, connected histories.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the recent work of Seta Dadoyan and S. Peter Cowe in exploring the interactive dimension of Armenian and Islamicate history also seems to be a symptom of a larger sea change in the field.¹⁰⁶ Scholarship carried out on Armenian art and architecture particularly on the medieval period has been, in a sense, more open to an interactive approach than work by professional historians, but it too has in recent years seen a pronounced development, possibly as a result of what may be called the “cross-cultural turn” in historical scholarship, that many world historians and Middle East scholars in particular should find as a welcome sign of things to come. Here, the recent scholarship of Amy Landau, Christina Maranci, and Lynn Jones suggests that the interactive as opposed to the autonomous approach to writing Armenian history is gaining new momentum, one that is perhaps a response to a larger shift in historical scholarship towards a more cross-cultural and interactive methodology discussed above.¹⁰⁷ Lastly, in the field of ancient and late antique Armenian

Public Sphere(s) in the aftermath of the 1908 Revolution among Armenians, Arabs and Jews,” in “*L’ivresse de la liberté*,” 189–220.

¹⁰⁵ Yaşar Tolga Cora, Dzovinar Derderian, and Ali Sipahi, eds., *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities, and Politics* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

¹⁰⁶ Seta Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians: Cultural and Political Interaction in the Middle East* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997); idem., *Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2011); S. Peter Cowe, “The Politics of Poetics: Islamic Influence on Armenian Verse,” in *Redefining Christian identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, ed. J. J. van Ginkel, H. L. Murre-van den Berg, and Theo Maarten van Lint (Leuven: Peeters Publishers & Department of Oriental Studies, 2005), 379–403.

¹⁰⁷ Amy K. Landau, “Farangi-sazi at Isfahan: The Court Painter Muhammad Zaman, the Armenians of new Julfa, and Shah Sulayman (1666–1694)” (Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 2008), idem. “From the Workshops of Julfa to the Court of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich: Armenian networks and the Mobility of visual Culture.” Paper presented at the 124th annual meeting of the American Historical Association, San Diego, January 8, 2010; Christina Maranci, “The Architect Trdat: Building Practices and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Byzantium and Armenia,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 62, no. 3 (2003): 294 – 305; and more recently her *Vigilant Powers: Three Churches of Early Medieval Armenia*

history, Stephen H. Rapp's contributions to the history of the Caucasus as a zone of mobility in the sense discussed above by Ludden aims at nothing less than the laying bare of the “extraordinary connective, multicultural, and cosmopolitan dimensions of a shared Caucasian experience.”¹⁰⁸ As Rapp explains:

Visualizing Caucasia as a coherent cultural landscape in its own right and on its own terms, and not merely as a context for disconnected ethnic and national historiographies, exposes the entire isthmus as an integrated cosmopolitan zone of intense cross-cultural exchange. ... [The] master narratives today endorsed by the three nation-states of southern Caucasia... frequently shroud the cosmopolitan and multicultural condition, which has characterized a shared Caucasian experience since antiquity.¹⁰⁹

Giusto Traina's acclaimed recent work *428: An Ordinary Year at the End of the Roman Empire* also expands the frontiers of Armenian history by embedding it within the larger history of the Eastern Mediterranean.¹¹⁰ Perhaps this new crop of scholarship is a reaffirmation of how one world historian has recently characterized the relationship between the global and the local in world history scholarship: “World historians have not denied the significance of local, national and regional histories, but have insisted on the need to locate those histories in larger relevant contexts.”¹¹¹

Let me conclude by reiterating how despite the near-exclusive hold of the nation-form and of “nationism” in the writing of Armenian history, the mobility of the Armenians, their sophisticated role as “go-betweens,” if not the location of their ancient homeland have all conspired to make Armenian history a textbook case for the application of the interactive methodology of world or global history. World history almost seems like it was crafted with Armenians and others like them, such as the Jews, in mind. But have the Armenians anything of theirs to offer world history? They may not have rich archives of their own since the custodians of the latter have usually been either aristocratic families or more commonly

(Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), and Lynn Jones, *Between Islam and Byzantium: Aght'amar and the Visual Construction of Medieval Armenian Rulership* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).

¹⁰⁸ Stephen H. Rapp, “Recovering the Prenational Caucasian Landscape,” in *Mythical Landscapes Then and Now: The Mystification of Landscapes in Search of National Identity*, ed. Ruth Bütner and Judith Peltz (Yerevan: Antares Publishing, 2006), 13–52 (22).

¹⁰⁹ Rapp, “Recovering the Prenational Caucasian Landscape,” 17.

¹¹⁰ Giusto Traina, *428: An Ordinary Year at the End of the Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

¹¹¹ Bentley, “The Task of World History,” 2.

states and their juridical bodies, neither of which has existed much for the Armenians since the fourteenth century at least.¹¹² But they do have a rich heritage of scribal culture some of which has survived many wars and the shifting of political frontiers and has come down to us in the form of approximately 31,000 manuscripts preserved in half a dozen collections the world over. There are also tens of thousands of primary source documents, especially from the early modern period, written by the border-crossers themselves in their own language, dialect, or script and preserved in over thirty archives of the host states and societies where Armenian merchants and others not only succeeded but also prospered during the early modern period.¹¹³ The surfeit of these sources makes Armenian history not only relevant but also, in some ways, *necessary* for world history where the bulk of primary sources used has usually been of European provenance often with little in the way of original primary source documentation written by non-European actors themselves. At least this seems to be the case for the two areas where I can claim some degree of expertise, namely global trade in the early modern Indian Ocean and the history of early modern global print culture.¹¹⁴ Integrating a more world historical approach to the field of Armenian studies can only help showcase Armenian history and attract the attention of a new generation of global historians to a rich and complex world that for too long has been studied on the margins of world history.

¹¹² On centralizing states, noble families and juridical institutions and their role in constructing archives, see Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 87–90 and *passim*.

¹¹³ For a brief discussion on these mercantile sources, see Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 18–22.

¹¹⁴ Aslanian, “The Early Arrival of Print in Safavid Iran: Some New Light on the First Armenian Printing Press in New Julfa,” *Handes Amsorea* (2014): 383–468; *idem.*, “Reader Response and the Circulation of Mkhitarist Books”; and “Port Cities and Printers: Reflections on Early Modern Global Armenian Print.”



CHAPTER 6

Mapping Jerusalem: Re-reading the City in the Context of the Medieval Mediterranean

Tamar M. Boyadjian

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

According to the Arab jurist and chronicler Bahā' al-Dīn, “On the evening of Friday 4 Rabī' I 588 (20 March 1192), a letter came from Humfrey, an envoy of Richard the Lionheart [to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn], claiming that the land should be divided between the two leaders: ‘Jerusalem will be ours and you can have the Dome of the Rock.’”¹ What “Jerusalem” is being spoken of here? Is not the Qubbat al-Ṣakhra, or the Dome of the Rock, part of what we would consider Jerusalem? Or is this statement reflective of only a Jerusalem of the crusaders? Then what of the Jerusalem of the Armenians or of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn?

¹ Bahā' al-Dīn, *al-nawādir al-sultāniyya wa'l-mahāsin al-yūsufiyya* (*Sultany Anecdotes and Josephly Virtues*) RHC, Or, III, (Paris, 1884); trans. D. S. Richards, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 238.

T. M. Boyadjian (✉)
Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA

Jerusalem is multifarious—if we read her as a Mediterranean city. But crusader Jerusalem is oftentimes not read as a Mediterranean city. Though the city is argued to embody a communally sacred space, the general trend in western crusading historiography and literary studies has come to represent a city that is “ours” rather than “theirs.”² Jerusalem is spoken of as either European or as the Islamic “other”; depending on the period, the ruler, the war, she is sometimes one, then the other; she is rarely both, and she is almost never Armenian.

A majority of past scholarship surrounding the study of crusader Jerusalem reflects this type of antagonistic and fragmented approach to the period, though the evolution of the scholarship towards an interdisciplinary approach should simultaneously be credited here. In the past, crusading anthologies and volumes have for the most part relied on literary and historiographic productions of Western European authors, failing to consider the works produced in Armenian, Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, and other traditions (in their original languages) as significant sources to the study of this period.

Bearing in mind perhaps the challenges of accessibility, the lack of translations, and the problematic and partial translations of sources present in the aforementioned traditions, the general position towards “eastern” material of the period by crusading scholars of the past can be summarized as follows: these sources have for the most part been overlooked or not considered in crusading histories and literary studies; when these primary sources are consulted—oftentimes in problematic or partial translations—they have been dismissed for being inaccurate and lacking in style and content; and editions and translations which have drawn from non-European sources have done so in order to inform a European perspective on the period by focusing on those portions which contribute to European history and the crusading movement from Western Europe.³

² In his three volume, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in World Civilizations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), Marshall Hodgson provides an eloquent assessment of the ways in which the Mediterranean and Islamic worlds have been divided including analyses of terms such as *Levant*, *oikumene*, and *modern* (esp. Vol I: 48–63). See also Palmira Brummett, “Visions of the Mediterranean: A Classification,” in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 1 (2007): 9–55.

³ There are numerous examples of the ways in which European scholars and sources have viewed and framed “eastern” material of the period as inferior to those produced in Western Europe. These opinions can be found in introductions to crusading histories, appendixes, as well as in large volumes devoted to providing “translations” and excerpts from “eastern”

These types of partial, hierarchical, and preferential approaches to the study of the crusades in the past have contributed to the understanding of this period as solely antagonistic: “west” versus “east,” Christian versus Muslim (or sometimes Eastern Christian), and European versus non-European. The term “crusade,” from the French *croisade* or literally the “one bearing the cross,” has come to represent an understanding of religiously motivated campaigns of Western Europeans conducted roughly between the late eleventh to the fourteenth century (or as some scholars argue to even the fifteenth century), in territories in and outside the Levant usually against pagans, heretics, and similar groups and argued to be initiated through religious, political, and economic motivations. The crusades are presented largely in scholarship as battles purely between “Islam” and “Christianity”—terms oftentimes reflective of the current political climate and used as symbols for national identities. The notion of “crusade” has been translated as an embodiment of Western European and Christian heroism, a political and cultural war on *jihad* and terrorism, and a battle against Islam. The application of the term “crusade,” or “crusading history and literature,” I argue represents a limited scope in that it confines our understanding to the perspective of Western Europe and the views of a European, Christian Occident towards and in conflict with an Islamic Orient.

This strictly dualistic approach views cultures and their textual narratives in continual conflict rather than exploring these ethno-religious interactions as collaborative and interdependent. As a result, texts from this period have continuously been read *against* one another rather than *alongside* each other. The purpose of this study is to therefore challenge these types of limited and anachronistic approaches to the crusading period and the city of Jerusalem by considering sources in their original languages as non-opposing, concurrent, and analogous.

material of the period. Some examples include: a compilation of histories translated from Arabic to Italian by Francesco Gabrieli and Italian to English by E.J. Constella, entitled *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); the multivolume *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades (RHC)* published through Gallica, and Runciman’s three volume *A History of the Crusades* where he claims that “Arab sources...give us very little assistance over the first [crusade],” (I:333). Runciman’s statement has been riposted through the work of Carole Hillenbrand in “The First Crusade: the Muslim perspective” in *The First Crusade: Origins and Impact*, ed. Jonathan Phillips (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), 130–141; and Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

Rather than following the trajectory of early crusading scholarship which has framed its perspective within individually defined hegemonic and national discourses (i.e., French, Latin Christendom, Islamic Empire, etc.), this study will consider as its overarching framework the Mediterranean as proposed by Horden and Purcell in their watershed book, *The Corrupting Sea*.⁴ Horden and Purcell paradoxically argue for the unity of the Mediterranean precisely in its inherent fragmentation—principalities and polities that were ethno-religiously diverse but integrated culturally and politically. The process of acculturation and exchange operates within antagonistic but also collaborative enterprises in this period and it is this very framework which allows us to look at individual representations of Jerusalem, each of which amalgamate into a larger understanding of the recursive image of the city across the medieval Mediterranean.

The endeavor of this chapter, therefore, is to succinctly examine the ways in which the following three texts from the early crusading period envision and map the city of Jerusalem in their narratives: the reaction to the crusader conquest of Jerusalem as it appears in the history of Ibn al-Athīr; the representation of Jerusalem in the chronicle of Fulcher de Chartres, focusing on the text's description of the city after the Frankish victory in 1099; and the Armenian reaction to the victory of Șalāḥ al-Dīn in the lament composed over the loss of the city by the Armenian High Patriarchate Grigor Tghay. The critical objective of reading these texts alongside one another is to argue for shared modes of envisioning Jerusalem across different ethno-religious cultures of the Mediterranean, who were both in conflict and contact with one another during the early crusading period over the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is represented as an envisioned locus constructed through the mapping of a geotopographical space, its sacred character, and its position that is (and remains) contested. The city becomes a reflection of each of these traditions' contemporary socio-political circumstances. Jerusalem is the Qubbat al-Şakhra, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and Mount Zion. Her representation is produced in textual space and is also produced by textual space. Jerusalem is mirrored as the intimacy between the ethereal and the earthly; the body occupied, and singularly and collectively a metonym for all.

⁴ Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: The Study of Mediterranean History* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2000).

IBN AL-ATHĪR'S JERUSALEM: AN ISLAMIC SACRED GEOGRAPHY

According to the *al-kāmil fī'l-ta'rīkh* (*Universal History*) of the Arab historian and biographer 'Izz al-Dīn Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Jazarī, more commonly referred to as Ibn al-Athīr, after the fall of Jerusalem to the Franks on Sha'bān 489 [July 1099], Muslim refugees from the Levant arrive in Baghdad and recount the story of the conquest of Jerusalem to the Caliph's ministers. On Friday they make a journey to the main mosque in the city, weeping and begging for military aid from the Caliph. There they describe the tribulations of the Muslims in the Holy City as a result of the Frankish invasion of Jerusalem.⁵

The city of Jerusalem, which had been in Muslim control for over four centuries before the appearance of the Frankish crusaders, held an important significance for Islam dating back to the time of Muḥammad. The specific sanctity of Jerusalem for the Islamic faith is reflected in the Qur'ān and the traditions attributed to Muḥammad, known as the *ḥadīth qudsi*. The Nocturnal Journey (*al-isrā' wa-al-mi'rāj*) taken by Muḥammad, as described in Sūrah 17:1 of the Qur'ān, has been recognized by a majority of scholars as a reference to Jerusalem.⁶ One interpretation was that the *al-aqṣā*, where Muḥammad was carried at night by the winged animal called al-Burāq and where he left his left footprint on the rock where Abraham had prepared to sacrifice Ismail (Isaac), was the heavenly Temple or the heavenly Jerusalem. There he is believed to have conversed with God, Moses, and other prophets, and to have set the five prayers which Muslims are required to recite daily, and then returned to Mecca. Jerusalem

⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-kāmil fī'l-ta'rīkh*, 13 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1965–7). Trans. D.S. Richards, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period*, 3 vols. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), I. Ibn al-Athīr was a Kurd born in 1160 at Jazīrat Ibn 'Umar (modern day Cizre). His father Muḥammad and his eldest brother served in the administration of the Zangid dynasty, a successor state of the Seljuk sultanate. He records that he was a companion of one of the viziers, Jamāl al-Dīn, and during his visit to Jerusalem he spent some time with Salāḥ al-Dīn's army. He is believed to have completed his history in 628/1231, having worked on multiple segments for many years.

⁶ “Glory to (Allah) Who took His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest [al-aqṣā] Mosque, whose precincts We did bless in order that We might show him some of Our signs: for He is the One Who hears and sees (all things)”; Ed. 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary* (New York: Tahrike Tarsil Qur'an, Inc, 2007). All subsequent references to the Qur'ān are taken from this translation.

as the scene of Muhammad's two-part journey *al-isrā' wa-al-mi'rāj* is also mentioned in Saladin's letter to Richard Coeur de Lion, where Saladin uses the journey as the major proof for Muslim claims to the Holy Land in the late twelfth century.⁷

Another opinion was that the *al-aqṣā* represented the physical city of Jerusalem since other Sūrahs in the Qur'ān (i.e., 17:7; 21:71) call the Temple by the name *al-masjid* ("the mosque"), which was later interpreted as a reference to the al-Aqṣā mosque near the Dome of the Rock. The Islamic *ḥadīth* tradition and the commentaries on the Qur'ān came to understand the reference in Sūrah 17 to mean the terrestrial Jerusalem, which connected the city to certain events in the life of the prophet.⁸ Jerusalem in the early days of Islam was also positioned as the first direction of prayer or the *qibla*, also known as '*ula al-qiblatayn* ("the first of the two qiblas").⁹ Under the Umayyads, the status of the city of Jerusalem was further emphasized as a holy place in Islam. The erection of edifices within the city—the prime example being 'Abd al-Malik's construction of the octagon shaped Qubbat al-Ṣakhra—promoted Jerusalem's status as a significant city for the Islamic faith.¹⁰

⁷ Ed. C.P. Melville and M.C. Lyons, "Saladin's Ḥaṭṭīn's Letter," in *The Horns of Hattin*, ed. B.Z. Kedar (London: Variorum, 1992), 208–212.

⁸ For a discussion on the various interpretations of this verse see: Josef van Ess, *Anfänge muslimischer Theologie* (Beirut: Orient-Institut, 1977), Trans. Jane Marie Todd, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Izhak Hasson, "The Muslim view of Jerusalem in the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth," in ed. Joshua Prawer and Haggai Ben Shammai, *The History of Jerusalem: the Early Muslim Period* (New York: NYU Press, 1996), 353–359; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "The Sanctity of Jerusalem in Islam" in *Jerusalem*, ed. M. Osterreicher and A. Sinai (New York, 1974), 216–218; S.D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 135–148; among others. See also: Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *ta'rīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk* (*History of the Prophets and Kings*), ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1879–1901), 1158–1159; M. Montgomery Watt and Michael V. McDonald, trans., *The History of al-Ṭabarī* (Albany: State University of New York, 1985–1999).

⁹ Maurice Borrman, "Jerusalem dans la tradition Religieuse musulmane," *Islamochristiana*, 7 (1981): 1–18; Emmanuel Sivan, "La caractère sacré de Jérusalem dans l'Islam aux XIIe–XIIIe siècles," *Studia Islamica*, no. 27 (1967): 149–182.

¹⁰ Ibn Kathīr, *al-bidāya wa-l-nihāya fī'l-ta'rīkh*, XI, 226 (Cairo, 1932); al-Muqaddasī, *ahsan al-taqāṣīm fī ma'rīfat al-aqālīm* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1866) III, 166–168; al-Ṭabarī, *ta'rīkh*, II, 1139. See also: Chase Robinson, *'Abd al-Malik* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) and *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 76–80; Oleg Grabar: "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem," *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959): 33–62; *Dome of the Rock* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); *The Shape of the*

The account of Ibn al-Athīr, and the section recounting the victory of the crusaders, posits its narratives within an established system of commonplaces already associated with the sanctity of the city of Jerusalem for the Islamic faith, and links the city's Islamic past to its own contemporary social and political moment. In this account, Jerusalem reflects a geographical and sacred space associated most specifically to the Qubbat al-Šakhra, or the Dome of the Rock.

Just prior to his description of the attack on Jerusalem by the European enemy, Ibn al-Athīr makes reference to the rule of Jerusalem under the Seljuks Tāj al-Dawla Tutush (d. 1095). In 1079, Tutush murdered the Turkic Emir Atsiz ibn Uvaq al-Khwarizmi, a general of his brother Malik-Shāh I, who had captured Jerusalem in 1070/1071 and transferred the rule of the city from the Fatimid caliph at Cairo to the rule of the 'Abāssids. In 1077, returning to Jerusalem after a fruitless mission to overtake Cairo, Atsiz besieged the city a second time as a rebellion had occurred during his absence. Tutush, who was fighting his brother Malik for control of greater Syria, had murdered Atsiz and established firmer 'Abbāsid rule within the city. Tutush then appointed Emir Suqmān ibn Artuq as the ruler of Jerusalem in 1086. After Artuq's death in 1091, his two sons Suqmān and Īlghāzī, who were bitter rivals, were expelled from the city in 1098 by the Fatimid vizier al-Afḍal ibn Badr al-Jamālī.¹¹ According to al-Athīr, al-Jamālī demolished parts of the walls of Jerusalem, and after forty days of fighting the city fell to the Fātimids on Sha'bān 489 [July 1096].¹²

Ibn al-Athīr begins his section on the fall of Jerusalem to the European crusaders by drawing attention to these adversities of the Islamic world. The great religious schism between the Fātimids of Egypt, an Ismaili Sh'ite sect, and the neighboring Sunni Muslim Seljuks, is viewed by this

Holy: early Islamic Jerusalem (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 159–160.

¹¹ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-kāmil*, X, 187–190. Trans. D.S. Richards, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period: Part I* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

¹² Carole Hillenbrand argues that it is highly plausible that the Byzantines had warned the Fātimids about the arrival of the western army and that the Fātimids saw the Seljuks as a greater threat than the crusaders, which might have enabled the capture of Jerusalem in 491/1097–1098 by the Fātimid vizier al-Afḍal ibn Badr al-Jamālī (*Islamic Perspectives*, 44–45). Ibn al-Athīr's chronicle maintains the perspective that the success of the Fātimid capture of Jerusalem was also based on the disunity of the Seljuk Turks, their lack of cohesion, and the weakening of their power as a result of the battle of Antioch (282–283).

narrative as the reason for the diminishing power of Islam. The disunity and general sense of disorganization and disorientation of this period are characteristics that according to Islamic historians, mark the success of the crusader capture of Jerusalem.¹³ Following the information about the transfer of power from the Seljuks to the Fātimids, the narrative then provides a brief description of the crusader invasion of Jerusalem as follows:

The Franks did indeed take the city from the north in the forenoon of Friday, seven days remaining of Sha'ban [15 July 1099]. The inhabitants became a prey for the sword. For a week the Franks continued to slaughter the Muslims. A group of Muslims took refuge in the Tower of David and defended themselves there...In the Aqsa Mosque the Franks killed more than 70,000, a large number of them being imams, ulema, righteous men and ascetics...The Franks took forty or more silver candlesticks from the Qubbat al-Ṣakhra [Dome of the Rock], each of which weighed 3,600 dirhams, and also a silver candelabrum weighing forty Syrian rotls...The booty they took was beyond counting.¹⁴

Ibn al-Athīr's section recounting the crusader attack on Jerusalem is one which presents an Islamic Jerusalem through its focus on the *ḥaram* or holy sites such as the Aqṣā mosque and the Qubbat al-Ṣakhra. These places are described as being disrespected by the Frankish invaders, who kill the inhabitants of the city and loot these sacred spaces. These monuments, which are reminders of the glory of the Islamic past, are set in contrast to the internal Islamic strife of the contemporary present, which the chronicle presents as the cause of the contested nature of Jerusalem. The reference to the Mihrāb Dāwūd or Tower of David also points to the position of the battle with the Franks and the defeat of the Muslims in the city, since in contemporary sources (though not consistent), the crusaders

¹³ Primary sources: al-Maqrīzī, *itti'āz al-hunafā'*, ed. J. Al-Shayyal (Cairo, 1948); Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Die Chronik des Ibn al-Dawādārī*, 6, ed. S. Munaggid (Cairo: Sami al-Khandji, 1961); Ibn Taghrībirī, *nūjūm al-zāhira fī mulūk miṣr wa'l-qāhira*, 5 (Cairo: Matba'at dār al-kutub, 1939); trans. William Popper (New York: AMS Press, 1976); Al-'Azimi, "La chronique abrégée d'al-'Azimi, ed. C. Cahen, *Journal Asiatique*, 230 (1938), 353–448. Secondary Material: Carole Hillenbrand, *Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 31–88; Ed. Gerhard Endress, *Islam: A Historical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 110–121; Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 307–345; S. Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen & Co, 1901), 160–170; Hans L. Gottschalk, *al-malik al-kāmil von Egypten und seine Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1958).

¹⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-kāmil*, X, 283–284. Trans. D.H. Richards, 21–22.

were believed to have entered the city here first. This section is then followed by panegyric verses composed by the jurist and poet Abū al-Muẓaffar ibn al-Abīwardī, who in turn reinforces the metonymic position of the Qubbat al-Şakhra.¹⁵ The poem's main thrust of Islamic unification functions as a transition point: calling to "fa'ayyuhā banī al-Islām" ("sons of Islam"), and moving the narrative forward from the transgressions of the past to the future political and military fronts of 'Imād al-Dīn, Nūr al-Dīn Zangī, and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, as outlined in the remainder of Ibn al-Athīr's historical composition.

FULCHER'S TOPOGRAPHY: A CRUSADE JERUSALEM REALIZED

"Jerusalem will be ours and you can have the Dome of the Rock."

Richard the Lionheart's statement to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, as noted at the beginning of this section, serves us here as a transition point to further understand the metonymic function of Jerusalem in the multiple ethno-religious cultures that occupied the city in the medieval period, and the way in which Jerusalem comes to be represented by these same cultures. Just as the Qubbat al-Şakhra functioned in Ibn al-Athīr's account as a symbolic and almost synonymous representation of the city of Jerusalem, Richard's statement then reflects a "Jerusalem" that is both integral and separate to that of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Richard's "Jerusalem" is a Christian crusader Jerusalem signified through the Church of the Holy Sepulcher—the church believed to contain the two holiest sites in Christendom: the site of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, and his empty tomb where he is said to have been buried and resurrected. What we are seeing across these accounts is what the French art historian and archeologist Oleg Grabar refers to as "petrification"—*a priori* memories associated with the city which transfer into monumental loci which now stand as symbols for the city as a whole.¹⁶

¹⁵ Also in 'Abd al-Bāsit al-Anīṣī, ed., *dīwān al-abīwardī abī al-muẓaffar muḥammad ibn ahmad ibn iṣḥāq al-matūfi* (Dimashq: Majma' al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah bi-Dimashq, 1975) II, 106–107. Sixteen verses of this lament have been loosely translated by Francesco Gabrieli in *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 12.

¹⁶ Oleg Grabar, *Jerusalem*, II (2005), 196.

The movement of European Franks towards the Levant in the late eleventh century is attributed by most scholars to a series of speeches delivered on November 18–27 of 1095 during the Council of Clermont in the Auvergne by the Roman Pope Urban II.¹⁷ According to a handful of contemporary sources, the pleas of the Greek Emperor Alexius I Comnenus and the attacks of the Seljuks on Byzantine lands, encouraged the Pope to preach for the liberation of the city of Jerusalem from the hands of the Muslim powers.¹⁸ The most extensive of these accounts (upon which other sources have relied) belongs to a participant of the First Crusade, Fulcher de Chartres and his *Gestis Francorum Iherusalem Peregrinantum*—a historiography composed in Latin which provides the most detailed account of not only the Pope's speeches at Clermont but also of the crusader victory of Antioch and Jerusalem.¹⁹

What is striking about Fulcher's account of Urban's speeches at Clermont is that there is no mention of the city of Jerusalem or the Holy Land, by name.²⁰ Crusading scholars have for many years interpreted Pope Urban's reference to the "Ecclesia sancta" as the Holy Church in the city

¹⁷The accounts of Pope Urbans' speech(es) at Clermont are recorded by the following authors: Fulcher of Chartres, *Gestis Francorum Iherusalem Peregrinantum*; Robert the Monk, *Historia Iherosolymitana*; Baldric of Dol, *Historia Jherosolimitana*; Guibert of Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos*; and William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*. Apart from these five accounts, there are a number of letters and references to Urban's presence at Clermont, as well as fragmentary reports of other sermons he preached in France. Due to the detailed nature of his account, some historians such as H. Hagenmeyer (*Historia hiersolimitana (1095–1127) Mit Erläuterungen und einem Anhange herausgegeben*, 90) and Molinier (*Le Sources de l'Histoire de France*, no. 2123) argue that Fulcher might have been present at Clermont. Robert the Monk, Raymond of Aguilers, and William of Malmesbury have relied on Fulcher's descriptions in their accounts of Clermont. These aforementioned accounts can be found in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens Occidentaux*, ed. Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 5 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1844–95).

¹⁸An exception is the account of Albert of Aix, or Aachen, produced between 1125 and 1130, which attributes the preaching of the crusade to Peter the Hermit.

¹⁹*Gestis Francorum Iherusalem Peregrinantum: Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens Occidentaux*, ed. Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, III (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1866), 322–324; 355–359. Trans. Frances Rita Ryan, *Fulcher de Chartres: A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem 1095–1127* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), 61–69; 116–125.

²⁰Some scholars such as the notable Karl Erdmann, Janus Moller Jensen, and others have relied on this point to support their argument that Jerusalem was not the main intention of the crusading movement, since Fulcher, the most significant source, does not mention it by name: Erdmann, *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1955); Jensen, "War, Penance and the First Crusade: Dealing with a Tyrannical Construct" in *Medieval History Writing and Crusading Ideology*, ed. Tuomas M.S. Lehtonen and Kurt Villads Jensen (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 2005).

of Jerusalem. Many editions and translations of this text also include a rubric at the beginning of Chapter III which states, “Urban’s exhortation concerning a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.”²¹ Although the heading claims that the pilgrim’s objective is the city of Jerusalem, the section itself does not reflect this conviction. Fulcher’s description of the nobleman and laymen, who prepare for their journey in Chapter VI, also does not specify the destination as the city of Jerusalem or the Holy Land.²²

So what is the goal of the armed pilgrims who seem to have followed the call of the Roman Pope to “liberate” the city of Jerusalem from the hands of the Muslim powers? Within Fulcher’s narrative (and arguably those of other European chronicles of the First Crusade), the Church of the Holy Sepulcher functions metonymically as the city of Jerusalem. Liberating the Holy Sepulcher means the freedom of “Jerusalem” from the hands of the enemy—an opinion that is also reflected in the claimed statement made years later by Richard I of England.²³ Fulcher’s narrative envisions Jerusalem as a space inhabited by the Franks, a Christian pilgrim’s city, and the Holy Sepulcher freed from the hands of the infidels. Jerusalem is therefore formulated in this narrative through theological understandings of the city as both a sacred space for the European Christian believer, and a geographic space of the Christian crusader. The eventual victory and retrieval of the Holy Sepulcher are events used in the narrative to both support Christian claims to this space and justify the rule and inhabitance of Jerusalem.

Upon the pilgrim’s arrival to Jerusalem, Fulcher offers a topographical description of the city by naming three specific monuments, as follows:

In the same city [Jerusalem] is the Temple of the Lord, round in shape, built when Solomon in ancient times erected the earlier magnificent Temple. Although it can in no way be compared in appearance to the former building, still this one is of marvelous workmanship and most splendid appearance. The Church of the Lord’s Sepulcher is likewise circular in form. It was never closed in at the top but always admits the light through a permanent aperture ingeniously fashioned under the direction of a skillful architect...

²¹ “Item exhortatio ipsius de itinere Iherosolymitano.” Ryan, 65; *RHC, Occ*, III, 323. I suspect that this rubric is a later edition and I am currently in the process of examining the manuscript tradition surrounding this account to see which manuscripts, from where and at which date, include this particular rubric.

²² Ryan, 71–74; *RHC, Occ*, III, 327–329.

²³ Another example appears in the first recession of Fulcher’s chronicle which includes a letter written by the illustrious leaders of the victory of Antioch dated September 11, 1098 (H. Hagenmeyer, *Epistulae et Chartae*, no. XVI, 161–5).

Another Temple, called the Temple of Solomon, is large and wonderful, but it is not the one that Solomon built. This one, because of our poverty, could not be maintained in the condition in which we found it. Wherefore it is already in large part destroyed.²⁴

Fulcher maps a Jerusalem where monuments of a Judaic and Islamic past become transferred into a (sacred) Christian topography.²⁵ The description calls to mind the *Templum Domini*, a Christian church given to the Augustinians during the crusader period and set up on the site of the Dome of the Rock (*Qubbat al-Ṣakhrah*). The headquarters of the Knights Templar, the Temple of Solomon, set up at al-Aqsa Mosque adjacent to the Dome of the Rock, is also named. Fulcher makes specific note of its dilapidated appearance caused from the stripping of its roof by Baldwin. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher—the site venerated as Golgotha, the place of burial, and the purported site of the resurrection—also receives specific attention.²⁶

Fulcher's assessment of the boundaries of Jerusalem in his description of the city, further exhibit an understanding of Jerusalem within his own contemporary moment. He states:

It is generally conceded that the city [Jerusalem] is laid out in such proper proportion that it seems neither too small nor too large. Its width from wall to wall is that of four bowshots. To the west is the Tower of David with the

²⁴ Ryan, 116–117; *RHC, Occ*, III, 355–357.

²⁵ For a detailed topographical study of the city during the Crusader period see: Adrian J. Boas, *Jerusalem in the Time of the Crusades: Society, Landscape, and Art in the Holy City under Frankish Rule* (London: Routledge, 2001).

²⁶ The construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher under the Constantine's proclamation of a New Jerusalem, or ὁμφαλός, was a conscious effort to separate the Jerusalem of the pagan past from the Christian present. Constantine's plan included an erection on an area where all the soil for the past two centuries was to be removed and a new foundation was to be placed on the location declared to be the site of Christ's crucifixion, Golgatha, as attested by the Emperor's mother Helena. The Emperor's project became viewed as a newly built Jerusalem, which was divinely inspired—an opinion conveyed by Eusebius in his *De vita Constantini: Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.P. Migne, 20, col. 1094 (Paris: Apud Garnier Fratres et J.-P. Migne Successores, 1857–1905). Trans. J.H. Bernard, *Palestine Pilgrims' Texts Society*, I (London: London Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1896), 6–7. The literature on the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is quite extensive. One notable work is that of Paul Ciholas, *Omphalos and the Cross: Pagans and Christians in Search of a Divine Center* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003). The Fātimid Caliph, Abu 'Ali Mansur Tāriq al-Hākim, had the Holy Sepulcher destroyed in 1099. After negotiations between the Fātimids and the Byzantines his son agree to rebuild and redecorate the church in 1027–1028.

city wall on each flank; to the south is Mount Zion a little closer than a bowshot; and to the east, the Mount of Olives a thousand paces outside the city.²⁷

The boundaries of Jerusalem, set by Fulcher in the measure of bowshots, connect the physical space of the city to the victory of the Frankish army, since they call to mind the various points of entry the crusaders considered to besiege the city. Fulcher mentions Mount Zion, the positioning of the army on the first day of battle. The Tower of David is also cited, not as the site of David's palace, but as a durable structure that could be used against enemy attack: "The aforesaid Tower of David is of solid masonry half-way up, of large squared blocks sealed with molten lead. Fifteen or twenty men, if well supplied with food, could defend it from all assaults of an enemy."²⁸ The Tower of David was the successful point of entry for the crusaders who breached the walls on Friday, 15 July 1099.²⁹

As for the eastern border, Fulcher extends his layout outside the city walls to the Mount of Olives. The inclusion of the Mount of Olives further recalls earthly Jerusalem's position as a destination of pilgrimage, since various sites in this region were a significant part of the pilgrim's ritual of the Palm Sunday procession. The re-enactment of the Palm Sunday procession, together with the observance of the Raising of Lazarus, had been part of the Christian ritual since the fourth century, as attested by the nun Egeria.³⁰ Albert of Aachen in fact testifies that the Palm Sunday procession was interrupted by the funeral cortège of Baldwin I, who was brought back to the city after his death in Egypt in 1118.³¹ Pilgrims would exit the walls of the city out of the gate of St. Stephen, into the valley of Josaphat, passing through St. Mary's tomb. The proposed route included some of the following sites—Church of our Lady, Grotto of the Betrayal, Gethsemani garden and Church, Church of the Ascension—ending at Bethany, the place where Mary and Martha met Jesus. Inside the city gates, the communities of the Holy Sepulcher, the Hospital of St. John and St. Mary Latin gathered at the Templum Domini. After blessing palm and olive

²⁷ Ryan, 117; *RHC, Occ*, III, 355.

²⁸ Ryan, 117; *RHC, Occ*, III, 356.

²⁹ *RHC, Occ*, III, 357–359. See also: Benjamin Z. Kedar, "The Jerusalem Massacre of July 1099 in the Western Historiography of the Crusades" in *The Crusades* (Vol. 3), ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar and Jonathan Riley-Smith (London: Routledge, 2004), 15–76.

³⁰ *Itinerarium Egeriae*, ed. and trans. J. Wilkinson (London: Liverpool University Press, 1971), 73–74; 131–133.

³¹ *RHC, Occ*, IV, 708–709.

branches, the party moved to the Valley of Josaphat to meet those coming back from Bethany, and then proceeded to the Golden Gate where they entered the city, ending the procession at the Templum Domini.³²

Fulcher's map of Jerusalem reflects attempts to create a permanent ritual topography by reconstructing a city through the resanctification and transfer of Islamic and Jewish holy sites within a contemporary Christian Crusader context.³³ The boundaries set by Fulcher, and particularly the inclusion of the Mount of Olives, displays an understanding of the crusader journey to earthly Jerusalem as an act of pilgrimage, and a means to the heavenly city of the afterlife. Fulcher's narrative presents the obtainment of the earthly city as an extremely significant victory for the present and future Christian believer. The desire for the princes and the Christian pilgrims, to both enter and liberate the earthly Jerusalem, further demonstrates the connection between the earthly and the heavenly as sequential—the entrance into the terrestrial Jerusalem is a means by which one can enter into the heavenly.³⁴

³² Clemens Kopp, *The Holy Places of the Gospel*, trans. R. Walls (Freiburg: Herder, 1963), fig. 6; A. Schönfelder, “Die Prozessionen der Lateiner in Jerusalem zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge,” *Historisches Jahrbuch* 32 (1911): 584–586; Molly Linder, “Topography and Iconography in 12th century Jerusalem” in *The Horns of Hattin*, ed. B.Z. Kedar, 87–91.

³³ The foundations of Christian thought clearly identified the earthly Jerusalem as a Jewish city. Christian exegesis attempted to disassociate itself from the centrality of the Temple in Jerusalem by focusing on the heavenly or new Israel (Revelation 14:1), as evident in the two synoptic Gospels of Luke (19:42–44) and Matthew (24:1–2). As such, the heavenly Jerusalem represents the Christian realization of Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 65:17–18) of the new heaven and the new earth, God's dwelling place (Revelation 21:1; 22:3–4), and the locus for the future Jerusalem (Baruch 32:2–6; Zechariah 8:3; Revelation 21:9–21). This position towards the earthly Jerusalem held an internal contradiction, since Christianity attempted to both inherit the Old Testament and the essential position of Jerusalem, and reject it at the same time. For a summary of Christian attitudes towards the city of Jerusalem see: Joshua Prawer, “Christian Attitudes Towards Jerusalem in the Early Middle Ages,” in *The History of Jerusalem: the Early Muslim Period*, ed. Prawer and Shammai, 311–348, esp. 312–314; See also: Sylvia Schein, *Gateway to the Heavenly City: Crusader Jerusalem and the Catholic West* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 1–8; R. Konrad, “Das himmlische und das irdische Jerusalem in mittelalterlichen Denken,” *Speculum historiale, Festschrift J. Spörl*, ed. C. Bauer (Munich, 1965), 523–540; A. Bredero, “Jerusalem in the West,” *Christendom and Christianity in the Middle Ages: The Relations between religion, church, and society*, trans. Reinder Bruinsma (Michigan: Eedermans Publishing Co, 1994), 259–271.

³⁴ This attitude is not reflective of the historiographic works produced in Western Europe during the period of the Kings' Crusade. Such works maintain the belief that the earthly city is a means to the heavenly, but one that does not necessarily need to be in Christian hands. In the anonymous English chronicle *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi* (and its source text, Ambroise's Anglo Norman verse chronicle *Estoire de la Guerre Sainte*), for

But Fulcher's "Jerusalem" is the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of Solomon, and most specifically the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It is a space of "proper proportion" whose borders extend from the Tower of David to Mount Zion and all the way east to the Mount of Olives. Akin to the city of Ibn al-Athīr, Jerusalem is envisioned simultaneously as an earthly, heavenly, and contested space; she is mapped textually as also such a space. These sacred edifices which become threatened by an enemy invasion both come to represent the city of Jerusalem as a whole, but also expose the anxiety and desire to reclaim these holy sites, to reclaim victory over their own Jerusalem—a Jerusalem that also belongs to the Armenians.

GRIGOR TGHAY'S MAP OF THE CITY: JERUSALEM REMEMBERS THE ARMENIANS

The success at the Battle of Hattin and the subsequent capture of the city of Jerusalem in 1187 by the great Islamic leader, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb, better known as Saladin in the West, became a significant turning point in Jerusalem's history. One of the major players in this period were the Armenians and their Prince Levon II (later King Levon I of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia), and the Catholicos of all Armenians Grigor Tghay (Grigor "the boy"), who composed his "Asats'eal ban oghbergakan vasn armann Erusaghēmi" ("Poem of lamentation over the capture of Jerusalem") as a reaction to the conquest of the city by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn.³⁵

Two years after Saladin's capture of Jerusalem, the Armenian Prince Levon and Catholicos Tghay received a letter from Pope Clement III not only informing them that the Third Crusade (also known as the Kings' Crusade) had been organized, but also formally requesting financial and

example, on a number of occasions Richard disassociates himself from the physical Jerusalem and delays his entrance into the city. Rather than presenting Richard as a possessor of the earthly Jerusalem, this narrative reflects his position as the exemplary pilgrim who will lead his soldiers to salvation (more than victory). See: Tamar M. Boyadjian, *Bridging East and West: A Study of Crusader Jerusalem in the Literature and Chronicles of the Early Crusades* (UCLA, Ph.D. Diss., 2010), Ch. IV.

³⁵ A. Sh. Mnats'akanyan, ed., *Grigor Tghay: Banasteghtsut'yunner ev poemner* (Grigor Tghay: Shorter and Longer Poems) (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1972), 244–333; notes, 431–434. An abbreviated form of the poem (lines 1–2395) accompanied with a French translation: E. Dulaurier, "Élegie sur la prise de Jérusalem," *Recueil des historiens des Croisades, Documents Arméniens* (RHC, Doc Arm hereafter), vol. I (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1869), 269–307. All translations are my own and all subsequent references to the poem are noted in the body of the text through line numbers.

military assistance for the crusading army. After the capture of Jerusalem by Șalāḥ al-Dīn, Prince Ruben II, the ruler of the principality of Cilicia, handed over his rule to Levon and retired to a monastery. The crusaders and Levon had found common opponents in a variety of peoples and cultures, including Șalāḥ al-Dīn, the Emperor Isaac Angelus, the Seljuks, and the Turkomen tribes who invaded Anatolia. Levon drafted a letter to Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and the Pope asking for a crown when Barbarossa arrived for the crusade. He also offered a loan to Bohemond of Antioch and married Sybil an Antiochene princess. Both the Pope and Barbarossa responded in agreement to combining the Armenians lands in Cilicia into an independent kingdom.³⁶ According to the colophon, Grigor Tghay composed his poem of lamentation in the year 1189, the same year the exchange of these letters was taking place.³⁷

Grigor's lament reflects an attempt to further its political motives of establishing an autonomous kingdom of Cilicia by reinforcing and bringing to the forefront the presence of the Armenians in the city of Jerusalem. The poem includes numerous references to Mount Zion, most notably among a 300-line refrain midway through the text where "Jerusalem" occupies the second part of each line of verse. In this section, Jerusalem is equated with a number of things. She is a "bride" (1352); "the city of David" (1389); "the son of the virgin" (1422); and a "city of mourning" (1504). But most interestingly, in this section and through the lament, Jerusalem is frequently paralleled to Mount Zion: "Learn Sion, Erusaghēm" ("Mount Zion, Jerusalem"; 1348). For Grigor's lament, Jerusalem is metonymically represented as Mount Zion in an attempt to reimagine and remap Jerusalem as a space that is also mindful of the Armenians.³⁸

³⁶ Yerevan, Matenadaran MS 1206, ff.167v–174v; Venice, Mkhitarist Monastery at St. Lazarus: MS 297, f.173r; Vienna, Mkhitarist Monastery: MS 610, f.11. The Armenian translation by Nersēs of Lambron of the series of letters between Levon, Grigor Tghay, and Pope Clement III is printed in Gh. Alishan, *Sisuan hamagrut'iw Haykakan Kilikioy ew Levon Metsagorts* (Venice: S. Ghazar, 1885), 463–476. My extensive search for the original letters of Pope Clement III has been so far unsuccessful, which brings me to believe that perhaps the Armenian translations might be the only surviving copies.

³⁷ According to the colophon (lines 2793–2796) the poem was composed in the year 668 of the Armenian calendar, which corresponds with the year 1189 in the Gregorian calendar.

³⁸ Grigor's poem of lamentation assumes a system of commonplaces already associated with the representation of fallen cities as they appear in the Hebrew Bible, and posits the loss of Jerusalem to Saladin into this model. For an extensive study of city-laments in the Armenian tradition see: P.M. Khach'atryan, *Hay mijnadaryan patmakan oghber* (Medieval Armenian Historical Laments) (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH Gitut'yunneri Akademiyi

Armenian presence in Jerusalem dates back to early Christianity with a documented history from the fifth century.³⁹ According to the study of Adrian J. Boas, the Armenians were predominantly concentrated around the area of Mount Zion during the crusader period.⁴⁰ Armenian inhabitants in the southwest portion of city were also linked to the history of the Cathedral of Sts. James. In the middle of the eleventh century the Georgians secured the ancient martyrium of St. Minas on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, and in 1070 they built a church on the same site dedicated to St. James the Major. In the following century, for an unknown reason, they ceded this church and monastery to the local Armenian community. Subsequent to the visit of Catholicos Grigor, the Armenians erected the large cathedral of Sts. James, consisting of a complex of sanctuaries including the chapels containing the tombs of St. Makar and St. Minas. The accommodations of the Monastery were also enlarged not only for the benefit of the local monastics but also for the large number of Armenian pilgrims who annually arrived in the Holy City.

According to the Armenian tradition, Mount Zion was also the location of the house of the high priest of the Jews, Caiaphas, and the locus of Christ's arrest and delivery to crucifixion (John 18:24). Armenian claim to their quarter near Mount Zion comes from the belief that the small room in the upper level of the house of Caiaphas on the mountain was being used as a church in the early years of Christianity. Following the Ascension, it is also an accepted tradition among Armenians that the apostles elected as the first bishop James the Younger, who establishes his seat on Mount Zion, the location of the site of the Armenian Cathedral of Sts. James. The

Hratarakut'yun, 1969). For a study of comparative city-lamentations in the crusader period see: Tamar M. Boyadjian, *The City Lament: Jerusalem in Crusading Narrative* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

³⁹ Kevork Hintlian, *History of Armenians in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1976); Victor Azarya, *The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem: Urban Life Behind Monastery Walls* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 57–73; A.K. Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 4–8; Amnon Linder, “Christian Communities in Jerusalem,” in *The History of Jerusalem: the Early Muslim Period 638–1099*, ed. Joshua Prawer and Haggai Ben-Shammai (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 157–159; Joshua Prawer, “The Armenians in Jerusalem under the Crusaders” in *Armenian and Biblical Studies*, ed. Michael Stone (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1976), 228–229.

⁴⁰ Boas, *Jerusalem in the Time of the Crusades*, 39. According to the Arab historian Muīr al-Dīn, in 1191 Saladin carried out plans to repair the city. This included the rebuilding of a new wall in the south to include Mount Zion within the fortifications of the city and the Armenian quarter, a measure which was carried out by Saladin's brother al-Malik al-‘Adīl.

Cathedral is also believed to be the site of the beheading and burial of James the great, brother of John the Evangelist, by Herod Agrippa in 44 AD.⁴¹ Arab historians from the period record an edict from Saladin in 583/1187–1188 stating that that the Church of Sts. James, the House of Caiaphas, the Church of St. Helena, and the chapel of St. John in the Holy Sepulcher are properties of the Armenians in the Holy City.⁴²

In addition to Grigor's lament drawing consistent attention to the area of Mount Zion as not only a general synecdoche for Jerusalem, but specifically as a metonym for an Armenian presence and claim to Jerusalem, the poem also provides a textual representation of the map of the world which aims to envision an Armenian "Jerusalem." Around twenty lines into the poem appears a geographic description of the world through the point of view of the city of Jerusalem herself:

I am not unfamiliar to the four corners of the earth,
 Which they call the tripartite world.
 I am neither a foreigner to Europe,
 Nor am I distant from Africa,
 Asia is near the border
 And close to my region... (23–28)
 What shall I say of the Pontus?
 Or about the Black, which is somewhat resembling...
 Or what of the ocean they name
 The great Caspian
 And what of the sea of Egypt
 Which is close to Mount Sinai...
 That, which they call the Red.
 The same and the sea Mediterranean. (35–36, 42–45, 49, 51)

These references to both the landmasses and bodies of water textually recreate a view of the world through the concept of the medieval *rota terrarum* or *orbis terrae*. This construction is better known today as the Psalter map or T-O (*terra-oceanus*) map of the world.⁴³ The T-O model in

⁴¹ Ewsebius Kesarets'i, *Patmut'wn ekeghets'woy* (Church History), ed. Abraham Charian (Venice: Armenian Press of St. Lazarus, 1877), II, 1; Sanjian, *Armenian Communities*, 95–101; Azarya, *Armenian Quarter*, 59, 109.

⁴² Sources for the letter: Abu Shama, *RHC, Doc. Or*, 4:435–436; Bahā' al-Dīn, *RHC, Doc. Or*, 3:164–166; Trans. and discussion in Assadour Antreasian, *Jerusalem and the Armenians*, 46–48.

⁴³ The schematic for the cartographic representation of the world through the T-O structure was first introduced by Cosmas Indicopleustes, or Cosmas, at the beginning of the

this Armenian poem not only uncovers the map's form as a symbolic product of interpretations of the world, but also exposes the uniqueness of this textual map through its addition of the Caspian and the Pontus. The Black, Red, and Mediterranean are the three bodies of water characteristically featured in medieval T-O maps, with some maps including variants such as the River Don and the Azov. This lament also names the Caspian as one of the featured bodies of water. The three continents, Europe, Africa, and Asia, are also accompanied with what seems to be an uncharacteristic reference to the geographic region of the Pontus.

Although the reference to these regions may seem atypical, the inclusion of the Pontus and the Caspian Sea within the poem's reconstruction of the T-O map through the point of view of the city of Jerusalem is an attempt to link Jerusalem to the Armenians. The geographic region between the Pontus, the area south of the Black Sea, and the Caspian, is the area of Greater Armenia in its historical-geographic setting. The seventh century *Ashkharats'uyts'* attributed to Ananias of Shirak, which provides detailed information on the provinces attributed to Armenia, also locates Armenia Major and Minor between the Pontus Euxinus and the Caspian (Hyrcanian) sea.⁴⁴

The geographic area of the Pontus and the Caspian also calls to mind the significance of the area in the time of early Christianity. Under Diocletian, the area of the Pontus was divided into four provinces, one of which was Armenia Minor, with Sebastia as its capital.⁴⁵ Inhabitants of the

Christian era in his *Topographia Kristianikē*. Moving away from the science of cartography to the teachings of the scriptures, Cosmas replaced the spherical structure of the earth with a disk shaped one divided into continents and replaced by oceans. His model was further developed by the seventh century scholar Isidore of Seville, who became the influential figure of the T-O map structure through the Middle Ages. Isidore's description produces a map where the three landmasses—Asia, Europe, Africa—are in the form of a "T," the edges of which are surrounded by an "O," which corresponds to three bodies of water, typically the Black, Red, and Mediterranean seas.

⁴⁴ Ed. Robert H. Hewsen, *The Geography of Ananias of Širak: Aškarac' oyc', the Long and the Short Recessions* (Weisbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1992), 45a. See also: Robert H. Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 127; and "The Geography of Armenia," in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1, ed. Richard G. Hovannissian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 1–17. According to Robert Hewsen's study of Shirak's *Ashkharats'uyts'*, the allusion to the land of Armenia through a reference to the geographic area of the Pontus and the Caspian Sea is the result of the influence of the Byzantine cartographic tradition. This map at the onset of Grigor's lament is therefore utilizing both the Isidorian and Ptolemy structures in its representation of the world.

⁴⁵ Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas*, 64–74; maps: 57, 59.

Pontus were believed to be the very first converts to Christianity, and are mentioned as one of the groups present during the Day of the Pentecost (Acts 2:9). Acts 18:2 mentions a Jewish couple from Pontus that convert to Christianity, and Peter the Apostle addresses the Pontians in his letter as the *εκλεκτοῖς* or “chosen” ones (1 Peter 1:1). Thus, the Pontus also connects the Armenians to the early days of Christianity and calls to mind their conversion under King Trdat (Tiridates).⁴⁶

The link between the Armenians and Jerusalem is utilized in the poem to promote its political motives of appeasing Rome and gaining an autonomous kingdom of Cilicia. In the lament, Jerusalem reprimands other cities (i.e. Antioch) and other groups (i.e. Greeks, Franks, the people of Tanais, etc.) for not coming to her aid and preventing her capture. It is only Rome who receives the adjective of “pantsali” (“glorious”). The failure of these groups makes the greatness of Prince Levon—who is compared to the fearless warriors of the Old Testament and other great leaders in history—more apparent. Levon becomes the symbolic figure through which the text can both anticipate the upcoming advancement of the new crusade, at the same time expose Levon as the champion of Jerusalem, an ally of Rome, and the leader who will regain the city back from Saladin.

CONCLUSION

Early crusading scholarship has traditionally confronted the interpenetration of the medieval Mediterranean world through nationalized frameworks that exerted hegemony over all of the Mediterranean. Arabic, Armenian, Byzantine and other sources were viewed as inferior and less significant to those of Western Europe and the age of nationalism brought about—as Edward Said argues—epistemological enterprises constructed through ontological and antagonistic approaches. In this model, the accounts of Ibn al-Athīr, Fulcher of Chartres, and the lament of Grigor Tghay would be read as reflections, which offer competing images of the city of Jerusalem. Early crusading scholars have weighed these narratives continuously against each other, attempting to search for an authenticity that reinforces the power of the European perspective. However, considering these texts and their representations of Jerusalem within the larger framework of Mediterranean history and literary culture had enabled us to explore textual interconnectivities, and

⁴⁶ Robert W. Thomson, ed. and trans., *Agat’angelos: History of the Armenians* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976).

the different types of exchanges and intersections between these ethno-religious groups. Reading these texts from various traditions alongside one another furthers our understanding of the way in which different religious ideologies confront one another and how this contributes to a larger understanding of the range of representations of Jerusalem within the medieval Mediterranean.

Although these three texts provide different maps of Jerusalem, their techniques are similar. Each of these narratives understands the city as a physical, sacred, and contested space. Each interprets and reimagines sacred topography within its own respective religious, social, and political context. These narratives together further their conceptualizations of Jerusalem as an organic mediation between earth and heaven, which then not only elevates the significance of topographical space as both a reflection of the heavenly, but also subsequently promotes political campaigns to liberate the city from those they deem the “enemy.” Each of these narratives transfer communal and religious attitudes towards the city into monumental loci which stand as symbols for the city—the Qubbat al-Şakhra, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and Mount Zion. Jerusalem is a palimpsest upon which each of these authors inscribes their own cartographic syntax and interpretations. In Fulcher’s narrative, Jerusalem is a Christian Crusader city; for Ibn al-Athīr she was and remains an Islamic city tied to the prophet and lost as a result of Islamic disunity; and for Grigor Tghay she is a city with a historical connection to the Armenians. Jerusalem functions as a space, which allows for the recursive translation of different traditions. At the same time Jerusalem is translated. She is fashioned as an individualized city, her body mapped by both the past and the contemporary moment of each individual tradition that has come to dwell in her presence.

These characteristics reflect the very nature of the Mediterranean and Mediterranean cities. Jerusalem is represented textually as a space with distinct borders, but at the same time one able to transcend boundaries. She is represented as a locus of both conflict and contact; she reflects mutability and permanence. She is a city with many different genealogies, but also a place where all these lineages can textually co-exist. In many ways, Jerusalem functions as a doubled metaphor for the past and the contemporary, interconnection and differentiation, and the communal and the individual.

The three texts discussed in this chapter represent a small sample of material among the many other possible literary and historiographic works

of similar and different ethno-religious groups that provide their own textual mappings of Jerusalem. However, reading these three texts alongside one another exposes the multidimensional character of Jerusalem and reveals that “Jerusalem” both embodies and reflects many different beliefs, practices, and traditions. The representations of Jerusalem within these texts further demonstrate that one cannot assume a particular character or portrayal of “Jerusalem.” Moving away from a compartmentalized reading of medieval texts to one that considers them as part of a larger corpus of material belonging to the medieval Mediterranean contributes better to our understanding of other Mediterranean cities, the ways in which space is represented in the Mediterranean, and how texts themselves formulate their own individual spaces. As Horden and Purcell propose, these types of considerations enable us to not just read narratives *in* the Mediterranean but *of* the Mediterranean.

We can now understand Bahā’ al-Dīn’s testimony of Richard’s statement to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in the following way: Jerusalem [the Church of the Holy Sepulcher] will be ours and you can have the Dome of the Rock [Qubbat al-Ṣakhra].” Perhaps there is a lacuna in the text here, which might have at one point also acknowledged Mount Zion for the Armenians.

PART III

Breaking National & Imperial Paradigms



CHAPTER 7

Between Anatolia and the Balkans: Tracing Armenians in a Post-Ottoman Order

Hakem Al-Rustom

Out of approximately 2 million Ottoman Armenians alive in 1914, approximately 77,433 remained as Turkish citizens when the republic was founded in 1923. Out of this number, 53,129 were in Istanbul, and 24,304 lived in the vast Anatolian plateau, according to the 1927 national statistics. Like thousands of Armenians, Mihran's parents were among those who remained. Mihran was born in 1943 in the town of Arapgir, in the eastern Anatolian province of Malatya. He now lives in Istanbul, where I met him. He is keen to document the Armenian history of his town through old photographs. Before World War I, he said, "there used to be at least ten Armenian churches in Arapgir. ...When I was growing up, there was no functioning church left....Out of 2,000–3,000 Armenians who lived in the village [in the early republican period], currently only four are left." Why did he leave Arapgir along with so many other Armenians who left Anatolia? And how

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H. Al-Rustom (✉)

The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

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might we understand post-Ottoman regional history through the lives of a few thousand Armenians who remain largely undocumented?

As with many Armenians who immigrated to Istanbul in the 1950s, Mihran left Arapgir in 1955 to attend the Armenian high school/seminary of Surp Haç Tibrevank (the Seminary of the Holy Cross) on the Asian side of the city, leaving his family behind. He emphasized that, while many Anatolian Armenians chose to leave, the Turkish state made systematic efforts to fragment the Kurdish population from the areas where Kurds constituted a demographic majority. The ethnographic examples presented in this chapter through the stories of “Mihran,” “Ara,” and “Bahri” are based on my ethnographic fieldwork in Paris and Istanbul between 2008 and 2011.¹ The ethnography and supporting historical studies employed here suggest that the Anatolian Armenian predicament was intertwined with the Kurdish one, since the post-genocide Armenian population was integrated into the Kurdish tribes, families, and society and, in some instances, state policies targeting the Kurdish population also implicated them. While Armenians were implicated with the Kurds who were targeted by the nation-wide Settlement Law (*iskan kanunu*) of 1934, Armenians experienced locally specific incentives to leave for Istanbul. They were either asked to leave their homes or Arapgir altogether on short notice so that Muslim refugees from the Balkans could be settled in these places, or to host Balkan Muslim families in their houses. “So many Armenians *chose* to leave,” Mihran said. He uttered the word “chose” with hesitation to insinuate that he thought that Armenians did not have a real choice to stay after being asked to leave or to share their homes with refugees from the Balkans. This becomes more apparent, given that, at the time, Armenians were still living in the shadow of the genocide and deportations that had taken place in their recent past.

* * *

Fragments of these silenced histories, such as those that can be traced through life stories, memories, songs, and other immaterial “archives,” invite us to examine the experience of Armenians, who remained in the vast Anatolian plateau, to suggest a different conception of population boundaries and state borders in the Balkans and the Middle East. I employ the term *Anatolian Armenians* to refer to the population that remained in their homeland—Anatolia or Western Armenia—outside of Istanbul, after the

¹ All names employed throughout this chapter have been changed to protect anonymity.

genocide of 1915, and became Turkish citizens when the Republic of Turkey was established in 1923. As Armenians survived in Turkey without a titular ethnic polity and became citizens of a state that once sought their annihilation, the historical experiences of Anatolian Armenians became intertwined with Balkan Muslims, and their geographical experience came to overlap with other Anatolian populations, especially the Kurds.²

The perception that the “Balkans” and the “Middle East” are two separate geopolitical entities is not only symptomatic of a particular perspective of conflict managers and international relations experts, but can also easily be found within and outside the academy. Yet, ethnographic inquiries into populations and geographies, where established categories are inadequate to reflect social and historical realities, are necessary to probe into the ways ethnographies and other texts create and represent their subjects.³

It is noteworthy that overlooking the interconnected histories, geographies, and experiences among regions and populations continues to be symptomatic of area studies, which sustains and propagates a scholarly world that is divided in compartmentalized geographical and identitarian regions.⁴ Scholars and policymakers alike, working on post-Ottoman societies, continue the colonial legacy of dividing the ex-Ottoman territories into the Balkans and the Middle East as two conceptually and ideologically separate regions. This results in the ideological construction of each entity through silencing the historical, demographic, geographical, and cultural realities that bleed into each other, much like the colors of a rainbow, since they arose in part due to consecutive imperial governance and the intersecting circulation of people, goods, and ideas.

More specifically, the anthropology of Arab societies, which I would extend to the non-Arab Middle East,⁵ has been critiqued because of the

²Similarly, the Armenians who survived in the diaspora forged new connections and relations to their home and host societies in places such as Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus, France, and the United States that require mapping.

³Dale Eickelman, *The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach* (New York: Pearson, 2001).

⁴Ella Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 206.

⁵So as to move beyond the nation-state-centric approach, I advocate that the study of the non-Arab Middle East should not only include non-Arab states such as Turkey, Iran, and Israel, but the populations that do not affiliate with Arabic culture and language in “Arab majority” societies, especially when they constitute a demographic majority in the regions they live in, such as the Kurds in northern Iraq, Berbers in some parts of Algeria, and Palestinian citizens of the State of Israel.

under-representation of inter-communal interactions, mixed populations, and the fact that minorities—especially non-Muslims—are represented as contained in their societies and treated within the purview of the single-group monographic approach.⁶ In addition, the critique points to the fact that studies lack a convincing explanation of the processes that turned confessional communities into ethno-sectarian⁷ minority groups.⁸

Against this background, looking at Anatolian Armenians as an ethnographic site compels us to think critically about established ethnic categories and the ways in which such categories influence ethnographic perceptions. It does so in the following ways: first, by positioning Armenians within the larger regional and international contexts to account for the developments that had taken place in the Balkans and the Kurdish regions in Anatolia in order to understand the events that influenced the making of the contemporary Middle East; and second, by contextualizing Armenian lives in post-genocide Turkey beyond the narrow scope of the single-group ethnographic approach that dominates the ethnographies of the region.

⁶ Steney Shami and Nefissa Naguib, “Occluding Difference: Ethnic Identity and the Shifting Zones of Theory on the Middle East and North Africa,” in Sherine Hafez and Susan Slyomovics, eds., *Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa: Into the New Millennium* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 39, 43–44.

⁷ I employ the term “ethno-sectarian” to indicate the racialization of the sectarian communal identification that turned the affiliation to a sect into an inherent marker of ethnic nationalism. I prefer the term “sectarian” to “religious” in this case, because post-Ottoman societies witnessed the ruling in the name of a “sect” among the other sects within the larger religious tradition, and not merely ruling in the name of a religious affiliation or organization. For example, Turkey and Greece were established on the rule of Sunni Islam and Eastern-Roman Orthodoxy respectively, and not merely Islam and Christianity, to the extent that other sects of the same religion were rendered as outliers within the body of each state, as is the case with Alevis in Turkey and Catholics or Armenians (albeit their small numbers) in Greece. The second reason is that the term “sectarian” is indicative of the existence of a multiplicity within a given society (in a similar ways that racist ideologies assume the existence of “a multiplicity of racialized populations”; see Robert Miles, *Racism After “Race Relations”* (London: Routledge, 1993), 60) where there are competitive efforts of superiority that accompany the inclusion and exclusion of rights among sectarian and racialized groups, which was the case in the late Ottoman period. As I shall state toward the end of the chapter, employing the term “ethno-sectarian,” rather than “ethno-religious,” brings to surface “other” sects within Islam that are excluded and discriminated against as a legacy of the late Ottoman *millet* governance.

⁸ Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar, “Anthropologies of Arab-Majority Societies,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 537–538, 549.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE “POST-OTTOMAN”

In an attempt to account for the connections between and among hegemonic and marginal groups, and avoid propagating the worldviews established in the wake of European colonialism and nationalism, one must appeal to a critical historical inquiry where nation-states and geopolitical regions are problematized. Edward Said advocates that one should imagine alternative maps that would reveal the “overlapping territories, intertwined histories common to men and women, whites and non-whites, dwellers in the metropolis and the peripheries, past as well as present, and future.”⁹ Said’s critical project is “oppositional” to power in an attempt to oust systems of creating hierarchical relations, asserting racial and regional divisions, or establishing moral superiorities of one group over another.¹⁰

In line with Said’s critique, I take “oppositional” knowledge production to mean the decolonization and denationalization of knowledge, which I understand as challenging colonial and nationalist construction of regions, states, and population categories. This could be achieved by bringing to the foreground historical continuities and cultural relations between peoples to defy the segregation of cultures and polarization of identities that serve colonial or nationalist projects. Contextual reading of the regions within their common past thus offers alternatives to the scope of area studies, which risks dividing the world into “nearly fenced-off areas of expertise,”¹¹ thus also advancing categories established by colonial and nationalist orders that shape the way we perceive and study different regions. After all, bordering nation-states and geopolitical regions contribute to the production of knowledge about each other. Such an approach acknowledges the common geopolitical past and the imperial legacies with respect to contemporary societies, especially since partisans involved in ethnic and sectarian tensions and border disputes continue to invoke the late Ottoman period as they argue differences and negotiate disputes. The inclusion of the Balkans in the analysis of the Middle East as a “post-Ottoman” space is thus an endeavor to move away from colonial

⁹ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 72.

¹⁰ Edward W. Said, “Secular Criticism,” in *The World, the text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 29. See also to the commentary of Gil Anidjar, “Secularism,” *Critical Inquiry* 33 (2006): 52–77.

¹¹ Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994), 6.

and nationalist constructions of each region by critically mapping ruptures and continuities within and between the two regions in relation to one another, instead of falling back on more mainstream isolationist approaches.¹²

Thinking of the “post-Ottoman” as a continuous space aims at critiquing the barriers in historiographies and categories that were instituted with colonialism and ethno-sectarian nationalisms in both regions. Assuming the overlapping of territories among many communities with intertwined histories leads us to probe the factors of regionalism and state borders that led to the emergence of two “regions”: the Middle East being eastern (and predominantly Muslim), while the Balkans are *marginally* European.¹³ Juxtaposing these two geopolitical entities offers an alternative perspective on the contested borders of “Europe” and the “Middle East” and the implications for their societies. The predicament of Ottoman Armenians necessitates such a perspective, since Armenians in Anatolia were targeted by policies of mass annihilation in a series of events that took place following the expulsion of Muslims from the Balkans, as this chapter discusses.

The ethnography of Anatolian Armenians therefore bears important distinctive characteristics that offer a critical approach to the two “post-Ottoman” regions. The importance of taking the perspective of Anatolian Armenians stems from their communal specificity. This population is a small fraction of a large Ottoman population whose members have continued to live on their ancestral homeland. They have survived a genocide, assimilation into Turkish and Kurdish cultures, and many ventures to convert them to Islam. Unlike the Armenians of Istanbul who were better protected by the legal system established by the Lausanne Treaty, the Anatolians had very few communal institutions to serve them; Armenian schools and churches in Anatolia were destroyed or closed during World War I and the early republican period, and the functioning ones eventually shut down due to state policies, war against the Kurdish population, and Armenian migration to Istanbul. Furthermore, Ottoman Armenians, unlike other communities, did not have an ethnic state to defend their rights, such as Greece for the Ottoman Eastern-Roman Orthodox population, Turkey for

¹² Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, 6.

¹³ Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), xxxiv, discusses the ambiguity of the Balkans as being “in Europe but not of it.” For a discussion of the way Greece and the Balkans are considered to be part of Europe yet remain marginal to it, see Michael Herzfeld, *Anthropology through the Looking-Glass: Critical ethnography in the margins of Europe* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1987) and Sarah Green, *Notes from the Balkans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Balkan Muslims, and, later, Israel for the European Jewish population. Armenians remained a stateless minority and hence characterized by organizational and institutional informality, a specificity that allows us to investigate the operation of power as it was brought to bear upon them and the ways it marginalized a whole population.

The next two sections discuss Armenians in regard to two webs of connection following Said's critical approach of "intertwined histories and overlapping territories": the first is their intertwined history with the Balkan Muslim population, and second the overlapping of their territories with those of the Anatolian Kurds. By seeking to denationalize categories and to contextualize knowledge on the empirical grounds of Anatolian Armenians' lived experiences, I argue that the author is able to present knowledge as "oppositional,"¹⁴ "situated,"¹⁵ and relational.¹⁶

INTERTWINED HISTORIES: THE BALKANS

The decade between the end of the Balkan Wars in 1913 and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 witnessed a series of cataclysmic events that would alter the face of the "Middle East," geographically and demographically. These events are: the Armenian genocide (1915); the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), which divided the remaining provinces between British and French colonial endeavors; the Balfour Declaration (1917), promising southern Syria (to which the British ascribed the Biblical name "Palestine" in 1881) to the World Zionist Organization to become a state for the European Jewish population; and the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey according to the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty (1923). It is notable that all four events had an important dimension of altering the demographics of different parts of the region based on sectarian divisions. While Sykes-Picot and the Balfour Declaration are often discussed as decisive in the making of the modern Middle East, the legacies of the Armenian genocide and the Lausanne Treaty are largely ignored. This chapter brings into context these two events to shed new light on the process of racialization of populations in the wake of nationalist movements, and demonstrates the conditions that

¹⁴ Said, "Secular Criticism," 29.

¹⁵ Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–599.

¹⁶ Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*.

turned the diverse Ottoman Muslim population into a demographic majority that constitutes the country's citizenry under the label "Turk;" in particular, it highlights the predicament of this for Anatolian Armenians. From a wider perspective, the process of racialization and the conditions that led to the formation of a demographic majority out of a diverse Ottoman population left behind a complex legacy that drastically altered the demographic make-up of the region and continues to influence sectarian politics in the two areas.

The Armenian Genocide: Echoes from the Balkans

The independence of the Balkan Ottoman provinces as Christian-majority ethno-sectarian states affected the status of the non-Muslims (Jewish, Armenian, Eastern-Roman Orthodox, and Syriacs) of Anatolia. As non-Muslims, these communities were racialized and turned into minorities as non-Turks, and the Turkish nationalists perceived their existence as a potential reason for Europeans to intervene in the empire's affairs. But more importantly, as Erik Zürcher argues, Turkish nationalists regarded the Armenians as a threat, assuming that if they were to achieve national sovereignty in Anatolia, following the example of the Balkan Christians, they would have posed a threat to the Muslims in that Ottoman heartland. In this sense, the Armenian genocide was an outcome of the conflicts and nationalisms that emerged in the Balkans as Vahakn Dadrian, Ronald Suny, and others argue.¹⁷ Consequently, it was the inner circle within *Ittihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (the Committee of Union and Progress),¹⁸ under the direction of the Young Turk interior minister Talat Paşa,¹⁹ that

¹⁷ Erik J. Zürcher, "The Late Ottoman Empire as Laboratory of Demographic Engineering," a paper presented at Le Regioni Multilingui Come Faglia E Motore Della Storia Europea Nel XIX–XX Secolo (Napels September 16–18, 2008), 9. Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucuses* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995), xx. Ronald G. Suny, "They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else": A History of the Armenian Genocide (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015).

¹⁸ The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) ruled the Ottoman Empire between 1909 and 1918. This period witnessed the Armenian massacres in Adana in 1909, and some of CUP's members were responsible for the Armenian genocide and deportations during World War I.

¹⁹ Mehmet Talat Paşa (1874–1921) was the Ottoman interior minister during World War I (1914–1918). He fled to Germany in 1918 and was assassinated by an Armenian in Berlin in 1921 for his involvement in the Armenian massacres during the war; see Erik Zürcher, "How Europeans Adopted Anatolia and Created Turkey," *European Review* 13 no. 3 (2005) 392. The assassin of Talat Paşa was found not guilty by a German court.

wanted to “solve” European claims to Ottoman territory—the “Eastern Question” as it was known in European diplomatic circles—by exterminating the Armenian population in Anatolia during World War I.²⁰

The annihilation of the Armenian population of Anatolia therefore needs to be understood against the background of the Balkan Wars, when the Ottoman Empire lost important European provinces.²¹ In this environment, the Young Turks, the ruling elites of the empire during World War I, were key players.²² A disproportionate number of them were Muslims who had lost their homeland upon the creation of ethno-sectarian polities with Orthodox Christian national identities in the Balkans and the Caucasus.²³ According to Mark Mazower, there have been policies of de-Islamization, de-Turkification, and destruction of Muslim monuments in the Ottoman Balkans, a process that started with the rise of Christian nationalisms in the Balkans in the early 1800s and continued through the 1990s with the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It has been estimated that a total of 5 million Muslims were forced out of the Ottoman Balkans and the Black Sea region between the 1820s and 1920s, out of which, between 1.7 and 2 million Muslims, voluntary or involuntary, left the Balkans to Anatolia between 1878 and 1913; that is two years before the genocidal policies against Armenians started in Anatolia.²⁴

In drawing a group portrait of Turkish nationalist leaders and state elites, Erik Zürcher concluded that they shared the following characteristics: they were all men who were born in the 1880s, came from Muslim families, and were raised in urban centers in southeastern Europe (the Balkans) and in the coastal areas of the Marmara and Aegean seas (western Anatolia). They were educated in Ottoman institutions modeled upon European schooling systems, knew at least one European language, and had entered politics from various positions in the civil service of the

²⁰ Zürcher, “How Europeans,” 121. See also Zürcher’s “Who were the Young Turks” and “The Young Turk Mindset” in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk’s Turkey* (London and New York: IB Tauris, 2010).

²¹ Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 112–199.

²² The Turkish for Young Turks is *Jön Türkler*, from the French *Jeunes Turcs*.

²³ Young Turk politicians, such as the interior minister and party leader Talat Paşa (who is known to have given the orders to exterminate Anatolian Armenians); administrators such as Evrenoszadeh Rahmi, the governor of Smyrna (İzmir); and army officers such as Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), all of whom were born in the Balkan provinces, are prime examples. See Zürcher, “The Late Ottoman Empire as Laboratory of Demographic Engineering,” 7.

²⁴ Mazower, *The Balkans*, xxxvii–xxxviii.

Ottoman state. As is reflected in the title of his article, Zürcher suggests this was “how Europeans adopted Anatolia and created Turkey.”²⁵ Üngör echoes Zürcher’s argument by describing the Young Turk leadership as “traumatized” and committed to launching a “violent project of societal transformation” in order to secure a Turkish nation-state. The Young Turks’ policies thus took place in the ethnically heterogeneous Ottoman eastern provinces of Anatolia, which also had a significant portion of the Ottoman Armenian population.²⁶

Thus, the perpetrators of the genocide were not “terrible Turks” or “alien Asiatics,” as Europeans used to describe the rulers of the Ottoman Empire; they were “secular,” European-born and -educated Turkish nationalists fighting to establish a nation-state, and were following European models of modernity.²⁷ In the imagination of the founding state elites, Anatolia was a substitute for the lost homelands in the Balkans and Muslims were a substitute for Armenians in Anatolia. Although Anatolia was a foreign country to them at that time, the terrain was constructed by Balkan-born Ottoman Muslims as compensation for their lost homelands in the European Ottoman provinces and the Caucasus. Throughout the twentieth century, as we heard from Mihran earlier, Anatolia would continue to host many expelled and massacred Muslims (such as Bosnians, Bulgarians, and Crimean Tatars) from the Balkans, the Russian Empire, and the Soviet Union; as Muslims, they were then received and assimilated within the Turkish majoritarianism of the state. Thus, the racialization and annihilation of the Armenian population of Anatolia took place as Turkish nationalists were reinventing Anatolia as a Turkish homeland and forging a demographic majority out of the diverse Muslim populations from the Balkans and those who already existed in Anatolia.

²⁵ Zürcher, “How Europeans.”

²⁶ The eastern provinces are defined as Sivas, Erzurum, Mamuretu'l-Aziz (Harput), Van, Bitlis, Diyarbekir, Trabzon, and Aleppo. The first six provinces, which had a substantial Armenian population, are known as the Six Provinces (*Vilayat-i Sitte*). The Ottoman census of 1914 estimated that Armenians made up 17.1% of the population of the Six Provinces, while the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul estimated the number to be 39.93%, making Armenians the largest ethnic group in the Six Provinces. See Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Seeing Like a Nation-State: Young Turk Social Engineering in Eastern Turkey, 1913–50,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 10, no. 1 (2008): 15–39, and Zürcher, “How Europeans.” A summary of these statistics is available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_vilayets (visited September 22, 2017).

²⁷ Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 111.

This vision was formally realized during the last session of the Ottoman Parliament on January 28, 1920, which defined “Turkey” as an ethno-sectarian “Muslim” state. During this session, Ottoman parliamentarians, who included the members of the Ankara Government led by Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk), consolidated the *Misak-i Milli* (National Pact), which defined the territories that would become “Turkey” in terms of the ethno-sectarian categories of the Ottoman populations.²⁸ Article 1 of the Pact states:

The territories inhabited by an Ottoman Muslim majority (united in religion, race and aim) formed an indivisible whole, but the fate of the territories inhabited by an Arab majority which were under foreign occupation should be determined by plebiscite.

It is notable that it did not advocate a “Turkish” national sovereignty but rather an “Ottoman Muslim” one, following the Ottoman practice that those who belong to (Sunni) Islam are the “ruling sect” (*millet-i hakime*) of the empire. This fact meant that the Pact’s authors were turning the diverse Muslim ethno-linguistic and sectarian groups—Kurds, Alevis, Turks, and others (with the exception of the Arabs)—into a “majority” that would later be forced to assimilate into a Turkish ethno-sectarian state.²⁹ This definition was asserted by Mustafa Kemal in many of his speeches in the 1920s, where he emphasized the Muslim character of the nation, saying that “... the people whom this Assembly represents, are not only Turks, are not only Çerkes [Circassians], are not only Kurds, and are not only Laz. But it is an intimate collective of all these Muslim elements.... *The nation* that we are here to preserve and defend is...composed of *various Muslim elements...*”³⁰ The founders of the republic followed a European imagination of modernity in establishing a “secular” nation-state, where the diverse Muslim populations were racialized under

²⁸The meeting of the Turkish nationalists led by Mustafa Kemal on April 23, 1920, became the foundation of the Grand National Assembly (*Büyük Millet Meclisi*), which also became the interim “Ankara Government” (1920–1923) and existed parallel to the imperial Ottoman government in Istanbul. The Assembly became Turkey’s parliament when the republic was declared on October 29, 1923.

²⁹Erik Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: IB Tauris, 1993), 144.

³⁰Quoted in Ayşe Güл Altınay, *The Myth of the Military Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 19, emphasis added.

the single category “Turk” rendering non-Muslims populations non-Turkish “minorities.”

Following the example of the Balkan ethno-sectarian states, where Christian affiliation became the ethnic identity of the majority, Turkish nationalists made adherence to Islam a marker for Turkishness. The annihilation of the Armenian population and forced exchange of the Eastern-Roman Orthodox Christians (commonly labeled as “Greeks”) with Muslims of Greece were two critical events that contributed to the realization of Turkey as an ethno-sectarian state for the non-Arabic speaking Ottoman Muslims.

The Lausanne Treaty

Following the Balkan Wars and the Armenian genocide, the Greco-Turkish Treaty that was negotiated and signed at Lausanne (1922–1923) was another critical event for racializing and altering the demographics of what was to become Turkey and the Middle East. After the defeat of the Greek campaign in Anatolia by the Turkish forces led by Mustafa Kemal, Turkey negotiated a peace treaty with Greece under the auspices of Britain and France.

The Lausanne Treaty provided grounds for the first large-scale ethnic cleansing in the international legal system. Under the treaty, as many as 350,000 Muslims, many of whom were Greek speakers, were forced into Turkey as “Turks,” simply because they were Muslims, and around 1.2 million Orthodox Christians, many of whom were Turkish speakers, were forced into Greece as “Greeks,” because they were Orthodox Christians.³¹ The Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians of Cappadocia (known as the Karamanli) were forced to leave in return for enabling the Eastern-Roman

³¹ See Renée Hirschon, “The Consequences of the Lausanne Convention,” in Renée Hirschon, ed., *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), 14–15; Zürcher, “The Late Ottoman Empire as Laboratory of Demographic Engineering,” 12. For an excellent in-depth study of the population exchange in the Lausanne Treaty, see Onur Yıldırım, *Diplomacy and Displacement: Reconsidering the Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations, 1922–1934* (London: Routledge, 2006). Bruce Clark, *Twice a Stranger: Greece, Turkey and the Minorities They Expelled* (London: Granta Books, 2006) offers an overview of the treaty, with personal narratives from the exchangees. He also highlights the arbitrary choices made by the Greek and Turkish diplomats concerning who should and should not be exchanged.

Orthodox population (read “Greeks”) and the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople to remain in Istanbul. Reciprocally, Greece retained an equal number of Ottoman Muslims (read: “Turks”) in Western Thrace. Consequently, the criteria for the exchange were largely sectarian; language and cultural affiliations were hardly a factor in the final outcome of the treaty.

What is silenced from the final text of the Lausanne Conference and historiography is the centrality of the Armenian question to the negotiation of the treaty. The Armenian question has been largely ignored in assessments of the final text of the treaty and, until recently, in many subsequent studies of the Armenian citizens of Turkey and the Conference itself.³² What must be highlighted for the purposes of this chapter is the fact that the Armenians who remained in Turkey after the conclusion of the Conference started to be governed according to a treaty negotiated by the Greek and Turkish states, each of which sought to defend its respective ethno-sectarian “minority” retained within the border of the other state. The Armenians, who were not allowed to have a representative in the official proceedings to advocate for their loss of lives and properties in Anatolia, had no say in their future in the newly founded state that began to govern them.

The treaty had three implications for Turkey, the Balkans, and the Middle East. First, it contributed to the racializing of the Ottoman populations based on sectarian lines, turning the diverse Ottoman Muslims into “Turks.” To this end, the Turkish delegation at the conference prevented the diverse Muslim populations in Anatolia such as the Kurds, Alevis, Laz, and Circassians from being racialized and recognized in the international system as “minorities” because they were made to constitute the demographic majority of the newly founded Turkish state. If these diverse Muslim

³² Some of the recent works that discuss some aspects of the Armenian question in Lausanne include: Fatma Müge Göçek, “The Politics of History and Memory: A Multidimensional Analysis of the Lausanne Peace Conference (1922–23),” in H. Erdem, I. Gershoni, and U. Wokoeck, eds., *Histories of the Modern Middle East: New Directions* (New York: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002); Fatma Müge Göçek, “Reconstructing the Turkish Historiography on the Armenian Deaths and Massacres of 1915,” in Richard Hovannian, ed., *Confronting the Armenian Genocide: Looking Backward, Moving Forward* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2003); Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2004); Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Yıldırım, *Diplomacy and Displacement*.

populations were divided on ethnic and sectarian terms similar to non-Muslims (who were historically divided by religion and sect as *millet* in Ottoman governance),³³ it would have been hard for the Turkish delegation to argue that it was a representative of the “majority” on the territory that would become the Republic of Turkey.

The residual non-Muslim populations in Turkey—the Jewish, Armenians, and the Eastern-Roman Orthodox—were consequently prevented from becoming full Turkish citizens because their sectarian affiliation rendered them non-Turks. Kurds, on the other hand, were forced into the Turkish majoritarian culture because, as Muslims, they had no right or international protection to maintain an ethnic or linguistic specificity within the Republic of Turkey. Since the international system functions primarily through the participation of states, individuals and non-state actors had limited or no access to it. For this reason, the Turkish delegation at the Lausanne Conference vehemently objected to the inclusion of the Ottoman Armenians in the negotiations, because they were not represented by any state.³⁴

Therefore, the second implication of the Lausanne Treaty was leaving certain populations as stateless and with limited rights in the body politic of ethno-sectarian states. And the third implication of that treaty was establishing ethnic cleansing as a legal solution in international conflicts through treaties that impose involuntary expulsions of unwanted populations to which Yıldırım gives the examples of Palestine and India. The Zionist movement also discussed the model of the treaty, whereby Jews from Arab states would replace Palestinians to achieve the demographic majority of the Jewish ethnosectarian state as per the recommendation of the Peel Commission (1936–1937). With regard to numbers, the most significant is the expulsion of 11 million people in the British colony of

³³ Ottoman governance divided the population based on confessional belonging; Sunni Muslims were the “ruling sect” (*millet-i hakime*) of the empire. Other Muslim sects were not officially recognized separately but under the broader umbrella of Islam. Non-Muslims however were divided into Jewish, Armenians, and Eastern-Roman Orthodox (“Greeks”). For the evolution of the term *millet* in the Ottoman Empire, see Benjamin Braude, “Foundation Myths of the *Millet System*,” in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982).

³⁴ For details on the Armenian question during the Lausanne Conference negotiations, see Hakem Al-Rustom, “Anatolian Fragments: Armenians between Turkey and France,” (Ph.D. Diss., London School of Economics, 2013).

India as Pakistan and India became independent. In that case, Pakistan was designated as the territory for Southeast Asian Muslims, a step that allowed India to have a significant Hindu population majority.³⁵ Meanwhile, the founders of India were also keen on keeping Muslims in the post-independence polity in order to assert the secular character of the Indian state as opposed to the more exclusively sectarian Pakistan.³⁶

OVERLAPPING TERRITORIES: THE KURDS

While Mihran pointed to the effect of resettlement of Balkan Muslims in Anatolia, the predicament of many other Armenians in the southeastern provinces was connected to that of the Kurds. In the Kurdish areas, tension over land, cattle, or the abduction of Armenian girls influenced the way in which Armenians lived as Turkish citizens. For example, Armenians from Kayseri province like Ara's family were implicated by power struggles between Kurdish landlords and Armenians. Ara narrates the story of his family:

Back in 1954 [one year before Ara's birth in Istanbul], an Armenian girl from the village, related to the family, was kidnapped by the Kurds for marriage. These kidnappings were common....My uncle, Harut, fought to bring back the abducted girl, and he ended up killing the man who kidnapped her and brought back the girl to the family. After this incident, the *ajja*, village head, told him your safety cannot be guaranteed and all the family had to leave. So, my father with the rest of the family moved to Ankara for a while as we had some relatives there and then to Istanbul; shortly afterwards I was born in Istanbul. That was 1955.

The stories around abducting Armenian girls for marriage frequently emerged during my fieldwork among Armenians who had left Anatolia after the foundation of the republic. They draw attention to the ways in which power dynamics shifted after World War I between Kurds and Armenians (both as suppressed communities under the Turkish state), and the ways in which Armenians experienced this in their everyday encounters with Kurds. While violence against Armenians existed in the late

³⁵ Yıldırım, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 12–13.

³⁶ This also explains why Jammu and Kashmir, as a Muslim-majority state, has been important for India. I am indebted to Ankur Datta for bringing this to my attention.

Ottoman period, kidnapping of Armenians in Anatolia intensified for reasons such as the dispersal and weakening of their social networks after the genocide, leaving Armenian girls vulnerable. This is manifested in Ara's story when the family had to leave because his uncle challenged the abduction of a family member. Yet, the fear of being kidnapped also instigated migration, as is the case with Bahri.

The members of Bahri's family, natives of Sasun, survived the genocide because a Kurdish *ağrı* (landlord) and his family protected them. They became part of the Kurdish *aşiret* (tribe) structure, where loyalty to the *ağrı* is expected. "After 1915, Armenians belonged to whomever had saved them....[T]hey are our owners (*sahip*)," Bahri explained. Such "ownership" meant loyalty and obedience, especially in matters of marriage alliances, the naming of a newly born child, and whether an Armenian child is registered as Muslim or Armenian on his or her birth certificate. Despite their good relationship with the *ağrı*, when her father died in 1972, Bahri and her mother moved to Istanbul. As two Armenian women, Bahri stated with regret, "We became vulnerable to kidnapping." While Bahri was not kidnapped, some female relatives were, and kidnapping became a haunting fear for women of a certain age and their families, regardless of its occurrence.

The Kurdish and Armenian predicaments continue to be intertwined. A few years after the 1925 Kurdish rebellion of Şeyh Said, the Turkish state issued the Settlement Law (*iskan kanunu*) in 1934 to resettle Kurds around the country so as to decrease their demographic concentration in the southeastern provinces. Through this forced internal migration, the Turkish state treated many Armenians as Kurds, Bahri explains:

In 1938, my family was asked to leave for Izmir. Between 1938 and 1948 there was forced migration of Kurds in areas where there had been rebellions. These policies also influenced us as Armenians, who were adopted by Kurdish *ağalar* (landlords)....While in Izmir, my family was not revealing their identity because they were considered "Kurds." When I asked them if they revealed their identity, they replied, "Are you crazy?! We saw what happened to those who revealed it; they were pelted with stones."

The efforts of Bahri's parents to hide their Armenian identity is not uncommon in post-Ottoman Turkish Anatolia, due to the (self-)imposed sanctions about the past experiences of Armenians during the genocide and their very presence in Turkey. While there have been few recent studies

that bring to the surface the sanctioned past of Armenians in Anatolia, I want to highlight one ethnography by Zerrin Biner that demonstrates well the complexity of fieldwork and intertwined histories between Kurds and Armenians. When Biner started her fieldwork in the southern Anatolian city of Mardin, she did not question her informants about the 1915 genocide, and people generally did not discuss it.³⁷ Knowledge about this past, however, was present in people's silence about it. Information started to erupt during her stay with a family when one of Biner's informants, Nazire, was surprised that Biner was not seeking answers about the "Armenian issue;" Nazire then volunteered information about the local Armenian past. After a few meetings, Nazire revealed the "secret" that everyone shared in Mardin but no one talked about: "There is an Armenian-ness rooted in the origin of every Kurd. In every house, there is an Armenian no one knows;" this includes Nazire's uncle's wife.³⁸

Ara and Bahri's stories as well as Biner's ethnography testify to the many ways in which Armenians and Kurds have common geographies, intertwined histories, and shared kinship networks. The geographies of "Kurdistan" and "Western Armenia" in some cases overlap; Kurds both participated in the Armenian genocide and helped Armenians survive,³⁹ and many Armenians (mostly women) who remained in Anatolia by converting to Islam became wives, and later mothers, to a new generation of Kurds in southeastern Anatolia.⁴⁰

³⁷ Zerrin Özlem Biner "Acts of Defacement, Memory of Loss: Ghostly Effects of the 'Armenian Crisis' in Mardin, Southeastern Turkey," *History and Memory* 22, no. 2 (2010): 75.

³⁸ Since Biner frames her ethnography in terms of Michael Taussig's concept of "public secrecy," which he develops in *Defacement*, then it is also likely that the "hidden" Armenian is known but not spoken about; silence here does not mean lack of knowledge.

³⁹ Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

⁴⁰ See Ayşe Gül Altınay and Fethiye Cetin, *Torunlar* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2009), translated into English by Maureen Freely as *The Grandchildren: The Hidden Legacy of 'Lost' Armenians in Turkey* (New Jersey: Transaction, 2014).

CONCLUSION

By situating Anatolian Armenians as an ethnographic perspective, this chapter hopes to open new venues for studying and analyzing geopolitical regions and populations with intertwined histories and overlapping territories. By juxtaposing the multiple victimhood of different groups, we contextualize the demographic ramifications of post-imperial nationalist states that have been obscured by academic and political discourses. In this sense, such a perspective not only tells us about these marginal populations, but also sheds new light on the formation of a “center” that engendered multiple-layered systems of exclusion.⁴¹

Turkish nation-state building, therefore, should be situated within the overall formation of ethno-sectarian states in the Balkans that resulted in the ethnic-cleansing, exclusion, and (forced) migration of Balkan Muslims, including many of the Turkish nationalist leaders, to Turkey. Regarding the aims of the Turkish nationalist movement expressed in Mustafa Kemal’s speech cited earlier, Muslims of various ethnicities and languages were made into “Turks,” allowing Turkish identity to exist both legally and practically according to the common denominator of adherence to Sunni Islam. Likewise, Greece adopted a Hellenized form of Orthodox Christianity to create a homogenous citizenry within its borders. The remaining populations in both Turkey and Greece were rendered “minorities.”

The Republic of Turkey was fashioned in the image of Greece and other Balkan Christianized states and based its understanding of citizenship on sectarian affiliation to Sunni Islam—not in terms of political allegiance and governance, but as an ethnic marker. As a result, on the eve of World War I, 20% of the area’s population that later became Turkey was Christian. After the massacre of close to a million⁴² Ottoman Armenians, the deportation of other Armenians to France after the Ankara Treaty of 1921, and,

⁴¹ Green, *Notes from the Balkans*.

⁴² The number of Armenian deaths varies depending on the source: Eric Hobsbawm *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1990* (London: Abacus 1994), 50, explains that the killings were an “uncounted number of Armenians by Turkey—the most usual figure is 1.5 millions.” Mark Mazower *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage, 1998), 61, estimates the deaths between 800,000 and 1.3 million. Zürcher’s, *Turkey*, 120, estimate is between 600,000 and 800,000 noting that the Turkish official historians’ estimate is as low as 200,000. The mainstream estimate among Armenian historians is 1.5 million, see for example Vahakn N. Dadrian *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence, RI & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995).

finally, exchanging 1.2 million Eastern-Roman Orthodox Christians for the Muslims in Greece, the Christian population dropped to one in forty (2.5%).⁴³ On the other side of the Europe–Middle East border, the Muslim populations of the Balkans shared a similar predicament. However, these populations continue to be understudied, underrepresented, and subverted between the discourses of Islamophobia in Europe and the discrimination faced by Christians in the Middle East. Furthermore, the fact that the Turkish state and its apologist historians continue to deny the Armenian genocide by emphasizing the suffering experienced by Muslims in the Balkans has hindered the recognition of suffering among the various populations in this post-imperial nationalist setting.

Said's oppositional criticism invites us to write against the nationalist rendering of borders and boundaries, and to bring to the foreground the “overlapping territories, and intertwined histories” between peoples that became enemies in post-imperial nationalist politics. In this line of thought, it is imperative to juxtapose the ethnic cleansing of Balkan Muslims with the Armenian genocide as intertwined histories of two victim populations; the occurrence of one should not be taken as denying or undermining the other. Furthermore, Armenian and Kurdish overlapping territories testify to the ways in which they were excluded from the body of the Turkish state with the formation of a Turkish ethnic majority by Turkish nationalists. The exclusion of both populations in Turkey was for different reasons, as was also instituted in the Lausanne Treaty: Armenians could not become “Turks” because they were non-Muslims, while Kurds could not be anything but “Turks” because they were Muslims. Such a juxtaposition raises important analytical questions about the process of racialization of sectarian identities and the multi-layered violence exercised by exclusionary polities. It also contributes to the never-ending process of decolonization and denationalization of knowledge, where one cannot possibly write the history and ethnography of one region or population without the other. Texts should continue to challenge, and not reproduce, the nomenclature imposed by colonial and nationalist regimes.

Recent works on empires have tended to focus on the “non-dominant confessional and ethnic groups” (which were labeled “minorities” in the vocabulary of post-imperial governance and in academic studies). In the Ottoman case, the violence against these groups experienced in the late-

⁴³ Çağlar Keyder quotes these statistics from his earlier work *State and Class in Turkey: A Study in Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1987).

nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries overshadows a long and complex history of co-existence.⁴⁴ Consequently, discrimination against Muslim groups, who do not affiliate with the Sunni sect, is rendered unworthy of examination because religious minorities continue to be defined by the Ottoman millet structure, where the designation of minorities is applied only to non-Muslim populations while the diversity of sects within Islam are not permitted to be classified as such. Therefore, anthropologists and historians should move beyond this state of affairs in their analysis to include communities such as Shi'i Muslims in the Gulf monarchical states and Egypt, and the Alevis in Turkey and Syria among other heterodox Muslim communities. Ottoman Armenians as an ethnographic perspective allow for a situated and contextual examination of other marginal communities in the post-Ottoman space to recognize that majoritarian polities have complex power dynamics with multiple, and often ambiguous, layers of victimhood and oppression. One is due to their recognition as minorities (such as the Armenians), and a second because they are denied such recognition (such as the Alevis and the Kurds). Probing into the ways in which populations are effaced during the process of majoritarian polity-formation is as important as looking at the exclusion of minorities and their rights.

It is thus crucial that ethnographers continue to avoid blind spots, such as those that arise when, favoring some victim populations, they ignore other victims that lurk underneath the seemingly homogeneous majoritarianism. To challenge the state-centered categories of minorities and majorities, one must move in oppositional tracks between sites, categories, and borders, and thereby renegotiate identities imposed by colonial and nationalist regimes.⁴⁵ The production of such knowledge aims to open up new horizons for “solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology,”⁴⁶ because the inclusion of the subjugated groups leads to “more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world,”⁴⁷ and not merely of the regions and populations discussed herein. Furthermore, the study of marginal groups reveals new venues to understand the center from the van-

⁴⁴ Alan Mikhail and Christine Philiou, “The Ottoman Empire and the Imperial Turn,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (2012): 738.

⁴⁵ George E. Marcus, “Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 113–114.

⁴⁶ Haraway, *Situated Knowledges*, 584.

⁴⁷ Haraway, *Situated Knowledges*, 584.

tage point of the marginal, in turn presenting subtle ethnographic nuances about the population under study.⁴⁸

Such a commitment is essential for composing ethnographic and historical texts. It is also politically significant in that it uncovers ideologies behind the representation of the past in the service of current political agendas. After all, any act of representation has political ramifications. The stories of Mihran, Bahri, and Ara therefore provide us with a counter-weight by which we can situate the annihilation and ethnic cleansing of Armenians from Anatolia in the context of other victims of nationalism from Muslims in the Balkans to Kurds in Anatolia. In this spirit I invoke Franz Fanon's commitment to decolonizing our engagement by liberating both the colonizer and colonized from their violent history.⁴⁹ Unearthing the many strata of victimhood and exclusion means imagining a more inclusive and humane future that transcends the binaries of "majorities" versus "minorities" and "victims" versus "victimizers." Anthropologists and historians, through the very act of oppositional modes of representation, are in a position to contribute to such an endeavor.

⁴⁸ Green, *Notes from the Balkans*.

⁴⁹ Franz Fanon is quoted in Fernando Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 2 (1996): 51.



CHAPTER 8

Armeno-Turkish Writing and the Question of Hybridity

Murat Cankara

In this chapter I aim to explore what Turkish written in the Armenian script, commonly known as Armeno-Turkish, might mean from a perspective of hybridity. I am not asking whether Armeno-Turkish is part of a hybrid culture or not, but rather, in what ways do Armeno-Turkish texts both shape and participate in a notion of hybridity, characteristic of Ottoman literary culture, not to mention a greater Mediterranean literary culture. Is not the hyphen of Armeno-Turkish a clear sign of hybridity to begin with?¹ Or, from a linguistic perspective, is a non-hybrid language possible? Who could say that modern Armenian or Turkish languages are “pure” and “uncontaminated”? It is easy to argue that Armeno-Turkish, bringing together the powerful symbols of two nations, the Turks’

¹ Maykel Verkuyten, *The Social Psychology of Ethnic Identity* (Hove and New York: Psychology Press, 2005), 150.

I would like to thank my colleague Dzovinar Derderian for her insightful suggestions on this chapter.

M. Cankara (✉)
Social Sciences University of Ankara, Ankara, Turkey

language and the Armenians' script, is a hybrid language.² Here I aim, however, to problematize the concept of hybridity in the practice of writing Turkish in the Armenian script and explore it beyond its obvious meaning.³ A more detailed description of the concept of hybridity might help not only to shed light on the interaction among different Ottoman *millets* but also to enrich our conceptual inventory for analyzing these texts.

I explain the phenomenon of Armeno-Turkish scholars more or less adhering to the framework of Friedrich von Kraelitz-Greifenhurst (1876–1932), the Austrian orientalist and Turkologist who was the first to direct critical attention to Turkish written in the Armenian script. He interpreted Armeno-Turkish as a dialect of Turcophone Armenians who used the Armenian script to write Turkish simply because it was easier to do so. In his eyes, the Armenian script was more suitable for writing Turkish than the Arabic one, in part because it was important as a marker of national identity.⁴ Furthermore, there has been a strong consensus among scholars, as well as nineteenth-century European travelers and orientalists who came across Turcophone and Turcograph Armenians, that a

²The invention of the Armenian alphabet is generally thought to have been one of the two or three most important events in the history of the nation, along with the adoption of Christianity. It is even argued that the nation has survived thanks to the invention of Armenian letters. See Anne M. Avakian, *Armenian Folklore Bibliography*, University of California Publications: Catalogs and Bibliographies (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1994), xvi; Boghos Levon Zekian, “Christianity to Modernity,” in *The Armenians: Past and Present in the Making of National Identity*, ed. Edmund Herzig and Marina Kurkchiyan, Caucasus World: Peoples of the Caucasus (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 51. The asymmetry between Armenians' and Turks' relationship to language and script, however, is striking. Armenians wrote more than ten languages in their script whereas Turks used more than ten alphabets to write their language. This might also bring into question especially the ownership of the Turkish language. For such a perspective, see Jennifer Manoukian, “The Legacy of Turkish in the Armenian Diaspora,” *Jadaliyya*, accessed September 8, 2017, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/19480/the-legacy-of-turkish-in-the-armenian-diaspora>.

³For instance, Sebouh Aslanian has rightly used the terms “hyphenated,” “macaronic,” “hybrid,” and “heterographic” to describe Armeno-Turkish writings, language, and specific works. Sebouh D. Aslanian, “Prepared in the Language of the Hagarites: Abbot Mkhitar's 1727 Armeno-Turkish Grammar of Modern Western Armenian,” *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 25 (2016): 54–86.

⁴Friedrich von Kraelitz-Greifenhurst, “Ermeni Harfleriyle Türkçe Hakkında Çalışmalar,” trans. Hakan T. Karateke, *Kebikeç*, no. 4 (1996): 6. This paper was first read at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in 1911 and was published as a booklet under the title *Studien zum Armenisch-Türkischen* a year later.

considerable portion of the Armenian population spoke only in Turkish in urban areas. Despite these assumptions, elsewhere I have sought to complicate this picture by examining the large variety of Armeno-Turkish texts, thereby providing a more nuanced definition of Armeno-Turkish that would be fruitful to foreground here:⁵ Armeno-Turkish denotes a corpus of texts, mostly printed but also handwritten,⁶ *almost* always by and for Ottoman Armenians,⁷ in the Turkish language, written in the Armenian script. What kind of a corpus, then, are we talking about? According to Hasmik A. Stepanyan, the author of the most up-to-date and comprehensive bibliography of Armeno-Turkish publications, between 1727 and 1968 around 1900 books were published in nearly 50 cities and 200 printing houses. Stepanyan's bibliography includes more than 100 periodicals, 20 of which were in manuscript form, as well as more than 350 largely unpublished plays. The earliest printed book dates to 1727 and the most recent was published in 1968; a rich manuscript tradition also dates back to the fourteenth century.⁸ Although one third of Armeno-Turkish publications in Stepanyan's bibliography seem to have been religious tracts,⁹ the diversity of Armeno-Turkish texts that have surfaced over the past decade alone is astonishing. These texts include novels, folk stories and poetry, dictionaries, histories, textbooks, translations of bestsellers from French literature, children's magazines, newspapers and periodicals of all sorts, as well as handwritten notebooks that include testimonies, scores, lyrics and recipes. Despite the tremendous amount and diversity of

⁵ See, Murat Cankara, "Rethinking Ottoman Cross-Cultural Encounters: Turks and the Armenian Alphabet," *Middle Eastern Studies* 51, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 1–16, doi: [10.1080/00263206.2014.951038](https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2014.951038)

⁶ Here I must note that, with the growing popularity of Armeno-Turkish as a subject matter, manuscripts and handwritten material have begun to surface that will probably outnumber printed material in the near future.

⁷ For Muslim/Turkish intellectuals' relationship to Armenian script and Armeno-Turkish, see, Cankara, "Rethinking Ottoman Cross-Cultural Encounters."

⁸ Hasmik Stepanyan, *Erməni Harflı Türkçe Kitaplar ve Süreli Yayınlar Bibliyografyası, 1727–1968* [Bibliographie des livres et de la presse Armeno-Turque] (Istanbul: Turkuaç Yayınları, 2005). See also, Haig Berberian, "La Littérature Arméno-Turque," in *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, ed. Louis Bazin, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1964), 809–819.

⁹ GÜNLÜK Özlem Ayaydin Cebe, "19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Toplumu ve Basılı Türkçe Edebiyat: Etkileşimler, Değişimler, Çeşitlilik [19th Century Ottoman Society and Printed Turkish Literature: Interactions, Exchanges, and Diversity]" (Ph.D. diss., Bilkent University, 2009), 315.

Armeno-Turkish texts, however, both Armenian and Turkish historiographies have been reluctant to embrace their heterogeneity.¹⁰ In what follows, I will counterbalance this reluctance with a comparative analysis that seeks to uncover different registers of hybridity, expressed linguistically and thematically, characteristic of Armeno-Turkish literature.

PURITY, LANGUAGE, SCRIPT

According to British anthropologist Mary Douglas (1921–2007), human societies have a tendency to see things they cannot place in the order of things as dirty—as contaminants to an otherwise “authentic” or “pure” cultural system.¹¹ Since the dawn of Romanticism, many prominent intellectuals have conceptualized the “purity” of language in similar terms as well. For instance, Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that “Language distinguishes nations from each other; one does not know where a man is from until after he has spoken,” implying a rigid demarcation that essentially separates languages (and their speakers) from one another.¹² Similarly, Johann Gottfried von Herder, who conceived of the nation as a cultural and linguistic entity rather than a political or racial one, advocated the notion of pure and national languages.¹³ In this mindset each language

¹⁰ Apart from the pioneers in the field, whom I mention throughout this chapter, there has been an obvious increase in the scholarship on Armeno-Turkish publications in the past two decades. For example, Garo Aprahamyan, Laurent Mignon, and Börte Sagaster have contributed to scholarship on Armeno-Turkish in the following volume: Evangelia Balta and Mehmet Ölmez, eds., *Between Religion and Language: Turkish-Speaking Christians, Jews and Greek-Speaking Muslims and Catholics in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul: Eren Yayınları, 2011). Among the latest studies see especially Laurent Mignon, “A Pilgrim’s Progress: Armenian and Kurdish Literatures in Turkish and the Rewriting of Literary History,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 48, no. 2 (2014): 182–200; Murat Cankara, “Reading Akabi, (Re-)Writing History: On the Questions of Currency and Interpretation of Armeno-Turkish Fiction,” in *Cultural Encounters in the Turkish-Speaking Communities of the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. Evangelia Balta (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 2014), 53–75; Masayuki Ueno, “One Script, Two Languages: Garabed Panosian and His Armeno-Turkish Newspapers in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 52, no. 4 (2016): 605–22; Aslanian, “Prepared in the Language of the Hagarites.”

¹¹ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 36–37.

¹² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music*, ed. and trans. John T. Scott (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), 289.

¹³ Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1976), 181–183.

corresponds to only one nation. This might be one reason why, for example, German Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke (1800–1891), while visiting the Ottoman capital, observed a turcophone Armenian family and concluded that Armenians were merely Christian Turks.¹⁴ The idea of two “nations” speaking the same language, let alone writing one language in different scripts, cannot be accommodated within such a romanticist or nationalist worldview.

The romanticist urge to correlate “nation” with “language” would later provide nation-states with a strong motivation to purify their languages of supposedly foreign elements.¹⁵ This quest for linguistic purity is closely linked to programs of linguistic standardization, which necessitated deciding “not only what linguistic features are to be *included* in, but also what features are to be *excluded* from, the new standard language.”¹⁶ Modern standardized languages become not only a “vehicle for supraregional communication,” but also a means for national cohesion based on the use of language “as a community symbol.”¹⁷ It is no wonder, then, that building a nation is often occasioned by a rigid policing of a language’s lexicon and script. Anything “hybrid,” a term that “developed from biological and botanical origins” in the nineteenth century and was “used to refer to a physiological phenomenon” such as “the mixture of two species,” was therefore often unacceptable to the project of nationalizing a language.¹⁸

¹⁴ “Diese Armenier kann man in der Tat christliche Türken nennen, so ganz haben sie die Sitten und selbst die Sprache jener herrschenden Nation angenommen” [These Armenians, as a matter of fact, could be called “Christian Turks” as they adopted all the manners, and even the language, of the ruling nation]. Helmuth Moltke, *Briefe über Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei aus den Jahren 1835 bis 1839* (Berlin: Posen und Brombert, E. S. Mittler, 1841), 32, <http://archive.org/details/briefeberzust00molt>.

¹⁵ For two different accounts on the Turkish case, see Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Nergis Ertürk, *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey* (Oxford, UK ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁶ Nils Langer and Agneta Nesse, “Linguistic Purism,” in *The Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics*, ed. Juan M. Hernández-Campoy and J. Camilo Conde-Silvestre (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 610.

¹⁷ Langer and Nesse, “Linguistic Purism,” 611.

¹⁸ The term was “reactivated to describe a cultural [phenomenon]” in the twentieth century. Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 2005 [1995]), 5.

The rise of Ottoman/Turkish nationalism, which had a strong emphasis on language, was no exception. Early twentieth-century literature and historiography are marked by attempts to purify the Turkish language of any supposedly non-Turkic elements. In such attempts, we find a palpable contempt for cosmopolitanism or cultural hybridity, which, from this point of view, imply “contamination.”¹⁹ The metaphor of the Tower of Babel, which was used by travelers and missionaries who visited or lived in the Empire to depict especially the Ottoman capital, became the ultimate symbol of despicable hybridity in the writings of early twentieth-century Turkish authors.²⁰

Within this context, Armeno-Turkish texts were seen as nationally uncategorizable artifacts of culture and excluded from the histories of both Armenians and Turks. Both Armenian and Turkish historiographies have associated these texts with what is “non-national” as they bear the traces of “others,” either in the script (Armenian) or the language (Turkish).²¹ Being in-between, Armeno-Turkish novels have never found a place in Armenian or Turkish literary canons, either. For instance, *Agapi Hik'eyəsi*²² [The Story of Akabi] (1851), the first example of this genre in the Turkish language,²³ waited for 102 years to be translated into Eastern

¹⁹ For a critique of “cultural preservationism” and “praise of contamination,” see Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Cosmopolitan Contamination,” in *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 101–13. I would like to express my gratitude for Michael Pifer who brought Appiah’s work to my attention.

²⁰ Ömer Seyfettin (1884–1920) and Müfide Ferit [Tek] (1892–1971) are just two examples.

²¹ The matter is even more complicated in the Armenian case. The practice of writing Turkish in Armenian letters is attributed to Protestant Armenians, Catholic Armenians or missionaries in different sources. Especially for Catholics, “non-nationalness” is emphasized. See Hrach'ya Achaçyan, *Hayots' lezvi patmut'yun*, vol. 2 (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1951), 265; Agop J. Hacikyan, *The Heritage of Armenian Literature: Volume III: From the Eighteenth Century to Modern Times*, vol. 3 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 59; and Krikor Beledian, “Ötekilerin Dilinde Yazılmış Bir Tanıklığı Tercüme Etmek” [Traduire un témoignage écrit dans la langue des autres] in *Geri Dönüşü Yok: Bir Babanın Güncesinde ve Kızının Belleğinde Ermeni Soykırımı*, by Vahram Altounian and Janine Altounian, trans. Renan Akman (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2014), 98.

²² For transliteration I have used the system used by the Library of Congress. I have left names familiar to the English-speaking world, or those already used in publications in Latinized forms, as they are.

²³ Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkish-Armenian Relations in the Process of De-Ottomanization or ‘Dehistoricization’: Is a ‘Just Memory’ Possible?,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 27.

Armenian and 140 to be transliterated into Latin script and published in the city where it was originally composed.²⁴ G. Kh. Step'anyan, the translator of the text into Armenian, simply states in his preface that *Agapi Hik'eayesi* could not be seen as part of Armenian literature because it was written in the Turkish language.²⁵ The preface makes no serious attempt to explain why this novel was written in Armeno-Turkish, save for offering an argument that Armenians were brutally assimilated by Turks. Turkish cultural and literary historiographies, on the other hand, have also ignored the existence of this large corpus of Armeno-Turkish texts until the twenty-first century. Scholarship on Turkish language and literature, save for the discipline of linguistics, has similarly neglected these texts; the first calls for their incorporation into literary historiography as well as comparative studies only occurred at the end of the 1990s.²⁶

In the past decade, however, the multicultural Ottoman past has attracted considerable attention in Turkey, where a revitalization of Ottoman culture and politics has gained momentum. This has not always led to a deeper understanding of the social phenomenon of Armeno-Turkish, however. It is not mere coincidence that Ahmet Davutoğlu, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, evoked *Agapi Hik'eayesi* to promote—in a politicized manner—a shared history of Armenians and Turks. Davutoğlu argued that “The greatest injustice that has been visited on both history and to any two nations is to set aside their previous rich centuries of shared history and to begin instead with traumatic events like war and conflict, or to reconstruct the previous

²⁴ For another Armeno-Turkish text which, in this case, waited for around three centuries to be translated, see Eremia K'ēōmiwrchean, *Eremya Chelebi Kömürjian's Armeno-Turkish Poem "The Jewish Bride,"* ed. Avedis Krikor Sanjian and Andreas Tietze (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981).

²⁵ G. Kh. Step'anyan, “Arajaban,” in *Agapii patmut'yuně* (Yerevan: Gitut'yunneri Akademiyai Hrataragch'ut'yun, 1953), 23–25.

²⁶ Johann Strauss, in a number of articles, emphasizes the plurality of Ottoman print culture and promotes a generally comparative outlook on the cultural production of different Ottoman *millets*. See Johann Strauss, “Romanlar, Ah! O Romanlar! Les Débuts de La Lecture Moderne Dans l'Empire Ottoman (1850–1900),” *TURCICA* XXVI (1994): 125–63 and Johann Strauss, “Who Read What In the Ottoman Empire (19th–20th Centuries)?,” *Arabic Middle Eastern Literatures* 6 (2003): 39–76. See also Evangelia Balta's analysis of Turkish texts written in the Greek script, known as Karamanlidika. Evangelia Balta, “Périodisation et Typologie de La Production Des Livres Karamanlis,” *Bulletin of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies* 12 (1997): 129–153.

centuries by making traumatic events the center of everything.”²⁷ *Agapi Hik‘eayēsi*, a relic saved from the shared history of Armenians and Turks, is utilized for building a “just memory” that diverts the attention from “trauma” to “co-existence,” thus instrumentalizing the phenomenon of Armeno-Turkish to serve the interests of the state.

MULTIPLE HYBRIDITIES IN AND OF ARMENO-TURKISH TEXTS

To theorize Armeno-Turkish from the perspective of hybridity, we ought to begin by examining the existing literature on Armeno-Turkish’s relationship to the Turkish language. Much of this scholarship is occupied with the question of whether Ottoman Armenians spoke a unique dialect of Turkish preserved in Armeno-Turkish texts. For example, Kraelitz-Greifenhurst has argued that Armeno-Turkish was simply the dialect of Turkophone Armenians.²⁸ Krikor Beledian also maintains that Armeno-Turkish reflects a dialect in which certain Armenian terms have been incorporated within a Turkish syntax.²⁹ The Armenian linguist Hrach‘ya Achařyan (1876–1953), however, argued along different lines. For him, a Turkophone Armenian would speak or write in exactly the same vernacular that was used where she lived.³⁰ Armin Hetzer, the author of the most up-to-date and comprehensive analysis on the subject, agreed with Achařyan in his preface.³¹

The basic problem with these arguments is that they are based on limited corpora. One must be able to have access to an exhaustive corpus of Armeno-Turkish texts and analyze them in order to determine the linguistic significance of the differences and their dependency on time, class,

²⁷ Davutoğlu, “Turkish-Armenian Relations,” 21.

²⁸ Kraelitz-Greifenhurst, “Ermeni Harfleriyle Türkçe Hakkında Çalışmalar,” 14.

²⁹ Beledian, “Ötekilerin Dilinde Yazılmış Bir Tanıklığı Tercüme Etmek,” 97–98.

³⁰ According to Achařyan, Kraelitz-Greifenhurst had not only mistransliterated words in Armenian script but also had misread some Turkish words as well; therefore, Achařyan posits, he had reached the wrong conclusion that Armeno-Turkish was a distinct dialect with its own vocabulary and grammar. Achařyan, *Hayots‘ lezvi patmut‘yun*, 2: 267–268.

³¹ “One of the aims of the present publication is to lay the proof/evidence that there is no distinct variety of Ottoman Turkish which belongs to a social or national group and is called Armeno-Turkish, as far as the printings that are left behind are concerned. We are rather dealing with a peculiarity of Ottoman Turkish, which, only thanks to the script in which it was written, gained a particular quality.” Armin. Hetzer, *Dačkerēn-Texte: Eine Chrestomathie Aus Armenierdrucken Des 19. Jahrhunderts in Türkischer Sprache* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1987), 12.

genre, and so on.³² This has been a major drawback of scholarship on Armeno-Turkish, resulting in sweeping generalizations (especially about language and authorial identity) based only on a few texts. Here I will use the term “linguistic hybridity” simply to denote the admixture of distinct national lexicons.³³

Acharyan divides the Armenians into three groups with respect to their relationship to the Turkish language: (1) Those who, under Turkish influence, have completely abandoned Armenian and speak only in Turkish; (2) those who have retained Armenian but borrowed a great quantity of words from Turkish; (3) those who have not adopted a significant Turkish lexicon. According to him, many Anatolian Armenians preserved only 150–200 words from their mother tongue, whereas Istanbul Armenians utilized some 4000 Turkish words in their writings and speech.³⁴ But these admixtures of Armenian and Turkish lexicons differed greatly according to context. For example, Istanbul Armenians used three different registers of Turkish: (1) the daily Turkish spoken by Turks living in Istanbul; (2) the literary Turkish of authors, intellectuals and civil servants; (3) Turkish as it was used only when speaking in Armenian. Depending on the addressee and the context, one of these registers was employed.³⁵ Given the diversity and localness of the Turkish used by Turcophone Armenians that Acharyan emphasized, one must admit the difficulty of speaking about the lexical hybridity of Armeno-Turkish texts in a consistent way. This problem is

³² Moreover, the relationship between pronunciation and orthography has not been elucidated as yet. At the same time, the orthographic variation in Armeno-Turkish texts is overwhelming. One can find the same word spelled multiple ways even on the same page. This is because words are *usually* written as they are pronounced, and thus, heard. Yet there are cases in which the Arabic orthography is followed, that is, transliterated, and Armenian letters are slightly modified in order to render a sound that does not exist in Armenian pronunciation. Therefore it is not always that easy to comment on the accents of Turcophone Armenians. This, being a political issue at the same time (late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries' Turkish popular performances abound in Armenian stereotypes harassed and mocked for not speaking Turkish [properly]), is a serious hindrance to the efforts to define the phenomenon.

³³ Hybridity in syntax is a much harder issue to deal with. For a salient example, see Hovsēp' Marush's *Pir Sēfil Zevchē* [A miserable wife] (Istanbul, 1868), in which he writes in Turkish using a modern Armenian sentence structure. This, however, is a matter that deserves an independent analysis.

³⁴ Acharyan, *Hayots' lezvi patmut'yun*, 2: 260–261.

³⁵ Acharyan, *Hayots' lezvi patmut'yun*, 2: 271.

compounded by the convergences of what we might think of as multiple ‘hybridities’ in the form of the Armeno-Turkish novel.

One might assume that Armenians chose to write in their own native script because of its symbolic or even sacred value as a marker of cultural identity.³⁶ However, a closer reading of the actual texts composed in Armeno-Turkish texts can help to dispel this notion. Let us take the early Armeno-Turkish novels printed in Istanbul between 1851 and 1868 as an example.³⁷ In these novels, in addition to the juxtaposition of Armenian and Turkish words (in fact, one rarely encounters an Armenian word in them) lexical hybridity also happens because of the simultaneous use of archaisms, Arabic and Persian words, as well as words borrowed from western languages such as French and Italian. For example, Hovhannēs H. Balēkjean (1833–1898), who wrote poetry in Turkish in the classical style under the pen name Lutfi,³⁸ used the word “*Allah*” (meaning “God” in Arabic, and hence in Turkish) almost a hundred times throughout his Armeno-Turkish novel, whereas “*Astuats*” (the same word in Armenian) is absent in the text. The language he employed is replete with Persian words and he further supplemented his prose with poems replete with Sufi imagery. Besides the novel, other genres also suggest that Armenian words were not employed as boundary markers. Simōn Aṛak’ēlean, the Catholic author of an Armeno-Turkish testimony on 1915, generally uses the Arabic word for “God,” in its numerous variants and with its many epithets, on almost every page.³⁹

³⁶ Sebouh D. Aslanian, in a recent article on Abbot Mekhitar’s 1727 dated Armeno-Turkish grammar of western Armenian, has argued that an uncritical account of the language “would focus on the intrinsic attributes of the Armenian script and see it not only as a utilitarian medium of communication but also as a sacral boundary marker of collective identity.” Aslanian in particular has critiqued an overly general assumption that the Armenian script had for Armeno-Turkish writers “sacrosanct qualities” and therefore could have played role as a “boundary maintenance mechanism,” noting that this viewpoint “lacks any empirical basis in history.” Aslanian, “Prepared in the Language of the Hagarites,” 68–69.

³⁷ Hovsēp’ Vardanean’s [Hovsep Vartanyan, later Vartan Pasha] *Agapi Hik’eyəysi* [The story of Akabi] (1851) and *Pōshpōghaz Pir Atēm* [A garrulous person] (1852), Hovhannēs H. Balēgchean’s *Garnik, Kiwlīwnea vē Tigranēn Tehshēt’lu Vefat’teri Hik’eyəysi* [The story of Karnig, Gülünya, and Dikran’s horrible death] (Istanbul, 1863), Hovsēp’ Marush’s *Pir Sēfil Zēvchē* [A miserable wife] (Istanbul, 1868), and Vijen T’iilk’ēean’s *Kiwlīnea yakhōt k’ēnti kēoriwnmēyērēk’ hēr k’ēsi kēōrēn pir gēz* [Gülünya or the invisible girl who would see everybody] (Istanbul, 1868).

³⁸ Kevork Pamukciyan, *Biyograflarıyle Ermeniler* (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2003), 294.

³⁹ Simōn Aṛak’ēlean, *1915 Engare Vuguat’č vē Mēnfilik’ Khat’erat’čm* (Istanbul: S. Ohanean Mat’paasč, 1921). The book has been recently transliterated into Latin alphabet and pub-

Were words not as powerful markers of identity as the script itself? Or does this attitude depend solely on the confessional orientation of the author? Did only Catholic Armenians, who disliked being called Armenian and spoke only in Turkish, as Acharyan argued, avoid using an Armenian lexicon in their Armeno-Turkish writings to mark their Armenianness? How did Apostolic, Catholic and Protestant Armenians use Armeno-Turkish differently? Satisfactory answers to these questions necessitate the analysis of a larger corpus of Armeno-Turkish texts. The following examples are therefore meant to show how multiple hybridities are reflected in this corpus made up of diverse texts.

Hovsēp' Vardanean (1816–1879) was the author of the above-mentioned *Agapi Hik'eayēsi* [The Story of Akabi], the first novel in the Turkish language.⁴⁰ In this Armeno-Turkish text printed in Istanbul in 1851, however, he employed vernacular Turkish (*kaba* or *gündelik Türkçē*) mixed, in various degrees, with Armenian, French, and Italian. The diverse lexicons featured in this text required Andreas Tietze, the editor and transliterator of the book into the Latin alphabet, to furnish five short glossaries for his readers. The scarcity of Armenian words in the text is striking, which makes a symbolic account of the use of Armenian script for writing Turkish questionable. Indeed, the shortest glossary is the Armenian one. We can moreover observe a lexical shift at certain pivotal scenes in the novel. For instance, the author uses an inflected Armenian word ("*nstē!*", the imperative of "to sit down") only once to mark the zealous Apostolic Baghdasar, who is depicted as a monster for trying to thwart Akabi's marriage to a Catholic. Likewise, the author employs a corrupted Italian version of a Latin phrase (*la maladetta unione*, the accursed union, used to refer to Akabi's intended marriage) in order to mark, this time, Catholic fanaticism against the union of churches. What makes these multiple lexicons even more significant is the fact that *Agapi Hik'eayēsi* is, in fact, a story about the desperate struggle for a hybrid marriage between an Apostolic and a Catholic Armenian. The irony is that Vardanean eschews one kind of hybridity (an admixture of Classical and vernacular Armenian) while promoting another (a Turkish, Arabic, Persian, French, and Italian lexicon), while, at the same time, melodramatizing an

lished. Simon Arakelyan, *Ankara Vukuati: Menfilik Hatıralarım*, ed. and trans. Murat Cankara (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2017).

⁴⁰ For a detailed account of the novel, see Murat Cankara, "Reading Akabi, (Re-)Writing History: On the Questions of Currency and Interpretation of Armeno-Turkish Fiction," in *Cultural Encounters in the Turkish-Speaking Communities of the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. Evangelia Balta (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 2014), 53–75.

unsuccessful hybrid marriage across confessional (albeit Christian) lines. The novel also mocks hybrid manners and customs (Armenians mimicking the French) represented in part through their use of another hybrid language (Turkish inflected with French and Italian), dress (a hybrid eastern and western aesthetic) and other details of daily life. The language Vardanean employed in *Pōshpōghaz Pir Atēm* [A Garrulous Person], printed in 1852, similarly reflects his preference for a particular kind of linguistic hybridity over others.⁴¹

Another point that has eluded scholars is that not all Armenian authors composed Armeno-Turkish text in the same register of literary Turkish. For instance, Vardanean was a graduate of Mekhitarist Monastery of Vienna and held prominent posts in Ottoman bureaucracy, such as the chief translatorship of the Navy, and therefore was far better versed in Turkish than his fellow authors.⁴² In his history of Napoléon Bonaparte in Armeno-Turkish, he justified his preference for literary Turkish in strictly pragmatic terms. Turkish, he argued, would be the most comprehensible to an Armenian audience:

Before we conclude, a reservation comes to mind: there will also be people who ask ‘in any event, wouldn’t our mother tongue, the Armenian language, be preferable for writing such a history?’ Our humble answer to them [is this]: In order to be able to benefit from reading such a history, be it in Turkish or Armenian, one should be well-versed in either of these languages. As a matter of fact, the number of those who are familiar with *grabar* [Classical Armenian] is quite limited and the rules of *askharhabar* [vernacular Armenian] have not been established as yet, so writing a book in this language necessitates using words from *grabar* in every line and in order to understand a book written in *askharhabar* one needs to take on the burden of learning *grabar*.⁴³

⁴¹ This booklet has been recently transliterated into Latin alphabet and published. Hovsep Vartanyan, *Boşbögaz Bir Âdem*, ed. and trans. Murat Cankara (Istanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2017).

⁴² Abbot Mekhitar (1675–1749) was the founder of a Catholic Armenian monastic congregation which was established on the island of San Lazzaro. Another branch was later founded in Vienna. The Mekhitarists, with their printing press and erudite scholarship, played an eminent role in facilitating a national awakening in Armenian culture. They are also known for a rich variety of Armeno-Turkish publications.

⁴³ Hovsēp‘ Vardanean, *T‘arikhi Nabōlēon Pōnabart‘ē, imbērat‘oru abalii Fransa* (Gōst‘antaniyē: Miwhēntisean Hövannēsin T‘apkhanēsintē, 1855), 3–4.

In fact, many authors of Armeno-Turkish texts justified their use of language to reach a large audience. Apology and justification often go hand in hand in these prefaces. Vardanean, on the other hand, had a different perspective. In the beginning of this voluminous work, he informs readers that an Arabic and Persian lexicon—among other languages—would be employed throughout his text, but that a concise dictionary was available at the end. Whoever the intended readers may be, it is clear that he valorized one form of hybridity (Turkish composed in the Armenian script) over another kind (the combination of classical and vernacular Armenian).⁴⁴ At the same time, there seems to be a contradiction between Vardanean’s justification of writing in Turkish and the Turkish he adopted. Unlike most of his contemporaries writing especially novels in Armeno-Turkish, his book was in a quintessentially “Ottoman” style, common to Ottoman literati, that featured florid and convoluted sentences as well as a substantial number of Arabic and Persian *izafets*. One reason for Vardanean’s preference for this literary register of Armeno-Turkish is reflected by his membership of the *Encümen-i Daniş* [Society of Knowledge], founded in 1851. This society aimed, among other things, to cultivate and champion the use of literary Turkish.⁴⁵ Indeed, Vardanean’s official title as a member in this society is inscribed on the

⁴⁴ Yet the promotion of vernacular use in Armenian had begun a century earlier. Abbot Mekhitar published a grammar of the vernacular in Armeno-Turkish in 1727 as “Some pious individuals have pleaded with me on numerous occasions to compose the declension of nouns, the conjugation of verbs, and the state of other parts of the grammar of the vernacular language which is spoken by Armenians who live in Asia Minor.” Quoted in Aslanian, “Prepared in the Language of the Hagarites,” 85. Khach’atur Abovean (1809–1848), a Russian-Armenian, had already written *Verk’ Hayastani* (wounds of Armenia) in his local dialect. The book, usually regarded as “the first Armenian novel,” was written in 1841 but published in 1858. For an English translation of the preface, see Hacikyan, *The Heritage of Armenian Literature Volume III*, 214–218. Moreover, vernacular Armenian and local dialects had been used in the press, as well as in translations from western literature such as *Robinson Crusoe*. Marc Nichanian, *Ages et usages de la langue arménienne* (Paris: Editions Entente, 1989), 290–304. For a general account on the vernacularization processes of languages in the Ottoman Empire and a critique of western influence on these processes, see Michiel Leezenberg, “The Vernacular Revolution: Reclaiming Early Modern Grammatical Traditions in the Ottoman Empire,” *History of Humanities* 1, no. 2 (2016): 251–75. Leezenberg did not touch upon Armeno-Turkish texts, such as Abbot Mekhitar’s 1727 grammar of vernacular Armenian, which is a serious shortcoming.

⁴⁵ Johann Strauss, “The Millets and the Ottoman Language: The Contribution of Ottoman Greeks to Ottoman Letters (19th–20th Centuries),” *Die Welt Des Islams* 35 (1995): 212–215.

title page of his history. Moreover, his text was partially serialized in a newspaper printed in Turkish with Arabic script.⁴⁶ It is possible that the society even asked Vardanean to compose this history in Armeno-Turkish, so that could easily be transliterated into Arabic letters. The implication, then, is that Vardanean's intended audience potentially included learned Armenians *and* Turks.⁴⁷ This also explains why Vardanean used a highly literary register of Turkish only in this history—but not in his other Armeno-Turkish texts.

As Vardanean's history suggests, different genres of Armeno-Turkish texts also feature different linguistic registers, or different modes of linguistic and literary hybridity. The identity politics of translators, who translated texts into Armeno-Turkish, could also shape what manner of Armeno-Turkish they employed. Take, for instance, Hohannēs Erēmean's refusal to translate into Armeno-Turkish certain terms in Giuseppe Antonio Costantini's (1692?–1772) *Lettere critiche giocose, morali, scientifiche, ed erudite alla moda, ed al gusto del secolo presente* (1749),⁴⁸ printed in San Lazzaro in two volumes in 1837. As Erēmean explains in his introduction:

Indeed, apart from writing in vulgar Turkish, I even used Armenian words when necessary. Since Turkish is not a Christian language, it lacks certain religious terms and if, in order to produce an exact translation, I had bent the words, not only the meaning would not be understood but also, as we see in some translations, ambiguous meanings would possibly emerge. Therefore I both used Armenian words and refrained from bending words so as to make the expression beautiful.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ M. Kayahan Özgül, *XIX. Asrin Benzersiz Bir Politekniji: Münif Paşa* (Istanbul: Elips Kitap, 2005), 110–111.

⁴⁷ Step'anyan notes that the book was intended for well-read Turks. G. Kh. Step'anyan, "Arabajan," in *Agapi: Vep* (Yerevan: Sovetakan Grogh Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1979), 11.

⁴⁸ These "philosophical letters" were collected in ten volumes, the first of which was published around the mid-eighteenth century under the pen name Conte Agostino Santi Pupieni. The letters, more than 200 in number, were on various topics such as science, education, philosophy, nature, morality, etc. The translator, H. Erēmean, was the translator-in-chief of the Danish Embassy in Istanbul. In the preface he stresses that his translation was a selective one and he preferred pieces, mostly on education, that were "necessary for the reader" and appropriate for the "nation's customs."

⁴⁹ Giuseppe Antonio Costantini, *Fasēlk'eari mēk't'uplēr*, trans. H. Erēmean, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Venice: S. Ghazar Manast'érč, 1837), 10.

Erēmean's complaint about the difficulty of translating a Christian text into a "non-Christian" language is a good example of the lexical negotiations that might have played a role in Armeno-Turkish writing. We find an abundance of Armenian words especially in religious texts, but this choice was not necessarily to mark an Armenian or Christian identity. It was, rather, to deny the translatability of certain terms into other languages—it is a manner, in other words, of signaling to the reader that even hybrid language forms are not hybrid uniformly, but rather in specific and often strategic ways.

The question of hybridity in and of Armeno-Turkish texts, on the other hand, is not only about the admixture of lexicons, but also a question of audience and context. Thus, we can observe a different form of hybridity in religious texts than we find in nineteenth-century Armeno-Turkish comedies. From a linguistic point of view, comedy has drawn upon a medley of different registers of language from the very dawn of the genre.⁵⁰ Although the H(igh) variety of a language can be used for comic purposes (indeed, the use of elevated or technical varieties of a language in comedies reflects a commonplace technique), such registers are often blended with vulgarisms and vernaculars.⁵¹ The pairing of different dialects and accents, which gives rise to humorous linguistic misunderstandings, served as indispensable tools in the comedian's belt. In contrast to tragedy's language "embellished with each kind of artistic ornament,"⁵² comedy, "an imitation of characters of a lower type,"⁵³ opens a space for a carnivalesque mingling of literary styles and linguistic registers, to use Mikhail Bakhtin's sense of the term.⁵⁴

A quick survey of the early examples of dramatic writings by Mekhitarist priests,⁵⁵ those pioneers of theater in both the broader Armenian and the

⁵⁰ Albio C. Cassio, "The Language of Doric Comedy," in *The Language of Greek Comedy*, ed. Andres Willi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 55. For a theoretical account, see Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (London: Arkana, 1989), 27–50.

⁵¹ In a diglossic situation, the H(igh) variety is usually associated with the "written," "literary," "formal" and "classical," whereas the L(ow) variety with the "spoken," "informal" and "vulgar." For more, see Ronald Wardhaugh and Janet M. Fuller, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 7th ed. (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 90–92.

⁵² Aristotle, *The Poetics of Aristotle*, ed. and trans. S. H. Butcher (London: Macmillan, 1898), 23.

⁵³ Aristotle, *The Poetics of Aristotle*, 21.

⁵⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 72.

⁵⁵ In the Mekhitarist archives in Venice there are 25 manuscripts of plays written in Turkish (in the Armenian script) and in Turkish mixed with Modern Armenian. Yervant Baret Manok, *Doğu ile Batı Arasında San Lazarro Sahnesi: Ermeni Mekhitarist Manastırı ve İlk Türkçe Tiyatro Oyunları* (Istanbul: bgst Yayınları, 2013), 53. This translation is based on an

Ottoman world,⁵⁶ shows that tragedies were written in Classical Armenian whereas modern and dialectical Armenian or Turkish (mixed with Greek, Italian and French) were used for comedies.⁵⁷ In fact, in this context, terms like “Modern Armenian” and “dialectical Armenian” belie the fact that such works still exhibit a sizeable Turkish lexicon. To paraphrase Stendhal, a single Turkish word uttered by the hero of a dramatic play about the glorious past of the Armenian nation would have been highly jarring; something like “a gun shot in the middle of a concert, something vulgar.” Armeno-Turkish texts, however, transgress generic borders by partaking in the complex, combined lexicons of their audiences, who themselves were the hybrid products of multiple cultures and worlds.

Such generic and linguistic hybridity, characteristic but by no means monolithic in Armeno-Turkish works, perhaps offered authors and audiences a degree of freedom to explore ideas, and ways of expressing those ideas, that could have been anathema in other literary cultures. The Armeno-Turkish author of the mid-nineteenth century had poignant but often moralizing stories to tell—often about the bitter conflict between Apostolic and Catholic Armenians, the redistribution of power that culminated in the Armenian Constitution of 1863, and the opposition between “nationalist” and Latinizing Armenian Catholics. Armeno-Turkish novels, including two early works published in 1863 and 1868, similarly explored the bitter clashes between Ottoman Armenians in the capital of the Empire.⁵⁸ In the case of Vardanean, writing melodramatic Armeno-Turkish

MA thesis titled “Gli inizi del teatro armeno a San Lazzaro in Venezia e le rappresentazioni in Turco.”

⁵⁶ For a historical account of Armenian theater on the island of San Lazzaro, see Boğos Levon Zekian, *Venedik'ten İstanbul'a Modern Ermeni Tiyatrosunun İlk Adımları: Ermeni Rönesansı ve Mekhitaristlerin Tiyatro Faaliyetleri* [The first steps of modern Armenian theater and the movement of Armenian rebirth in the eighteenth century], trans. Boğos Çalgıcıoğlu (İstanbul: bgst Yayıncılık, 2013).

⁵⁷ Manok, *Doğu ile Batı Arasında San Lazarro Sahnesi*, 40–41, 43, 51; Zekian, *Venedik'ten İstanbul'a Modern Ermeni Tiyatrosunun İlk Adımları*, 25–27. Manok argues that one important reason why Mekhitarist priests preferred Turkish for writing their plays was the fact that they wanted “to employ a realistic language in their comedies.” Since the plays’ *dramatis personae* included Jews, Turks and Greeks, as well as Armenians, it would not have been natural if they all talked in Armenian; hence the playwright chose to make them speak in their respective Turkish dialect. Manok, *Doğu ile Batı Arasında San Lazarro Sahnesi*, 53.

⁵⁸ Murat Cankara, “İmparatorluk ve Roman: Ermeni Harfli Türkçe Romanları Osmanlı/Türk Edebiyat Tarihyazımında Konumlandırmak” [Empire and Novel: Placing Armeno-Turkish Novels in Ottoman/Turkish Literary Historiography] (Ph.D. diss., Bilkent University, 2011), 303–355.

texts—nevertheless punctuated with comedic moments—allowed him to promote the unification of the Catholic and Apostolic Armenian churches in an unassuming manner. Vardanean's generic blending was widely popular; his novel quickly became a bestseller and was immediately banned afterwards.⁵⁹ To do the same thing in Classical Armenian or a standardized modern dialect, with more established literary conventions, could have proven more difficult, and would have perhaps reached a different kind of audience. His use of Armeno-Turkish, which was not yet considered a “serious” literary medium but was nevertheless widely popular, perhaps endowed him with greater freedom to champion a particular form of hybrid Armenian Christianity.

CONCLUSION

Armeno-Turkish texts offer a microcosmic glimpse into the macrocosm of competing linguistic “hybridities” around the Mediterranean world. For instance, Turkish historiography recognizes a Jewish-Turkish intellectual Abraham Galante (also Avram Galanti, 1873–1961) as both a “Turkish nationalist” and as someone who defended the use of the Arabic alphabet against the adoption of Latin letters. In his *Vatandaş: Türkçe Konuş!* [Citizen, Speak Turkish!], published in 1928, the year the young Turkish Republic adopted the Latin alphabet, Galante provides us with a clear example of how a multiplicity of linguistic intersections shaped his thought and his work. In one story from this work, a mother writes a letter to her son, in the Greek language, but using the Arabic script. Galante likewise composed this story in Turkish, with the Arabic script; moreover he intended to persuade the Jewish community in Turkey to abandon Ladino (medieval Spanish mixed with Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, etc.) and French, and to adopt the Turkish language instead.⁶⁰ Even using the example of Armeno-Turkish to bolster his case, Galante ultimately championed one form of linguistic hybridity over many others.

In a broader context, the early modern Mediterranean world provides an abundance of similar cases, such as *aljamiado* (Spanish texts written in the Arabic script) or other applications of the Arabic letters to different

⁵⁹ For details, see Cankara, “Reading Akabi, (Re-)Writing History: On the Questions of Currency and Interpretation of Armeno-Turkish Fiction.”

⁶⁰ Avram Galanti, *Vatandaş: Türkçe Konuş! Yahut Türkçenin Tamimi Meselesi (Tarihi, İçtimai, Siyasi Tedkik)* (Istanbul: Hüsn-i Tabiat Matbaası, 1928), 14.

languages such as Albanian, Greek, Portuguese and Serbo-Croatian.⁶¹ This heterogeneity makes more sense once we perceive the Mediterranean world as a site where Arabic, Greek, Latin and other “scriptworlds” clash, wherein “the interplay of language and script” produced multiple hybridities.⁶² These competing hybridities, in other words, illustrate how the identification of a nation with a language, and of a language with a script, is something one should not take for granted. Moreover, Galante’s case provides a salient example of the role hyphenated identities played in creating and mediating cultures. Together with many Armenian- and Greek-Turkish intellectuals, he was among the fashioners of modern Turkish culture and identity.⁶³

The authors of Armeno-Turkish texts likewise had plural identities. They were often Ottoman and Armenian at the same time, which, for them, were not necessarily mutually exclusive. The above-mentioned Vardanean was an Ottoman bureaucrat, an Armenian, a Catholic, and a Mekhitarist, and he played important roles in these overlapping realms. Yet these hybrid identities could find their way into national cultures (if, of course, they could be admitted at all) only by leaving behind their more intersectional history of cultural and literary production. Whether Armeno-Turkish is Armenian or Turkish is a vestigial question of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries that we should have abandoned long ago. Once belittled and marginalized, these interstitially non-Turkish and non-Armenian texts today give us the opportunity to question established paradigms instead of reproducing them. Their in-betweenness gives them considerable power.

Indeed, taking into account the growing interest in concepts related to Armeno-Turkish texts and in the texts themselves, one could be optimistic in saying that a process of re-evaluating the role Armeno-Turkish hybridity

⁶¹ For more, see O. Hegyi, “Minority and Restricted Uses of the Arabic Alphabet: The Aljamiado Phenomenon,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99, no. 2 (June 1979): 262–269.

⁶² David Damrosch, who coined the term, describes how writing systems could constitute and penetrate boundaries in the Ancient Near East. He argues that “literary production was shaped as much by the spread of scripts as by the spread of particular languages.” David Damrosch, “Scriptworlds: Writing Systems and the Formation of World Literature,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 68 (2007): 218.

⁶³ A striking example of a hyphenated identity as creator of culture in the Mediterranean context was Terence. Born a slave in North Africa, he was taken to Rome where he adapted Greek comedies, as well as composed Latin ones, which had a significant impact on literary production across the continent in the centuries to follow. Appiah, “Cosmopolitan Contamination,” 111.

played before, during, and after the formation of national literary canons is already taking place. For example, Sdep'anyan, in the preface to the first edition (1953) of his translation of *Agapi Hik'eyəsi*, explained Armeno-Turkish to his readers as a consequence of brutal Turkish oppression and assimilation. However, in the preface to the second edition (1979), he argued that there were good reasons for Armenians, and even for non-Armenian Ottoman subjects, to write in Armeno-Turkish and that it even played a role in the mid-nineteenth century Armenian awakening. Similarly, rather than conceptualize Armeno-Turkish as “lesser than” Armenian or Turkish, we ought to consider it in more productive terms, as a site where the hybrid identities of Ottoman Armenians and Turks could be negotiated and articulated in different ways.



CHAPTER 9

Wandering Minstrels, Moving Novels: The Case of Khach'atur Abovean's *Wounds of Armenia*

Vahram Danielyan

“Skillful friend, don’t be jealous. My existence won’t harm your ideas.”¹

Ashugh Jivani, nineteenth century

In discourse on world literature, scholars have often viewed the development of the novel beyond Europe as a “compromise” between foreign form and local content, with a premium placed on the ascendancy of the European literary form. Literary scholar Franco Moretti replaces this binary relationship with a triangular one, suggesting we view the development of the non-European novel in terms of a foreign plot, local characters, and finally an unstable local narrative voice.² Still, he maintains this binary relationship between what is “local” and “foreign.” In contradistinction, by analyzing the figure of the narrator in the Armenian writer Khach'atur Abovean's

¹ A. Sahakyan ed., *Jivanu k'narč* (*Lyre of Jivani*) (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1959), 721.

² Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (London: Verso, 2015), 43–63.

V. Danielyan (✉)

American University of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia

seminal novel *Verk' Hayastani* (*Wounds of Armenia*), I will question the usefulness of the foreign/local binary in world-literary discourse.

The novel *Verk' Hayastani* occupies a monumental place in the Armenian literary canon for many reasons. The plot depicts life in Armenia during the first half of the nineteenth century, offering a unique panoramic look at its diverse customs and traditions. It was written in a vernacular and dialectic register, reflecting in part the spoken language of villagers, rather than the literary language of Classical Armenian. The novel also captures the turmoil when the eastern part of historic Armenia, formerly ruled by Qajar Iran, came under the rule of the Russian Empire at the end of the 1820s. But most importantly of all, *Verk' Hayastani* is widely considered the first modern Armenian novel. It is celebrated as not only the cornerstone of the modern Armenian literary tradition, but also as an extension of an early modern literary past.

But despite the national centrality of the novel, its protagonist shares many similarities with the liminal figure of the “*ashugh*,” which was a common designation for minstrels in a variety of Mediterranean cultures, and not only Armenian ones. In this chapter, I will argue that Abovean recasts the culturally ambiguous *ashugh* in a national context, and thus translates the minstrel’s love of a “beloved” into a new love for the *nation*. In other words, Abovean chose the *ashugh* to translate the European novel into a recognizable idiom for an Armenian audience. At the same time, I will show how Abovean adapted the medieval and early modern *ashugh* into a narrator of nation-building precisely by drawing upon a form of storytelling that was anything but local in character, as it spanned large swaths of the Mediterranean world, the Caucasus, and even Iran. Hence, this brief chapter intends to challenge certain assumptions about the rise of the novel in world-literary discourse while, at the same time, to recast early modern Armenian literature within the broader context of cultural production in the Caucasus and the Mediterranean.

IN SEARCH OF A NARRATOR

Like the novel he wrote, Abovean (d. 1848) is one of the most prominent figures of modern Armenian literature. He wrote *Verk' Hayastani* in 1841, but it was not published until 1858, ten years after the death of the author. Abovean was born in the village K'anak'er in 1809,³ but moved to the

³Today K'anak'er is a suburb of the capital Yerevan.

more culturally prestigious cities of Ejmiatsin,⁴ Tbilisi,⁵ and Dorpat⁶ as a young man. In these centers of cultural production, he broadened his knowledge of foreign languages and read numerous works of foreign literature. However, it was neither Ejmiatsin nor Tbilisi nor Dorpat that served as the backdrop of his novel, but rather his native K'anak'er.⁷ Although Dorpat, Ejmiatsin, and Tbilisi were prominent centers of literary production, K'anak'er was a small village with no significant educational institution.

Despite the undisputed cultural prominence in Armenia of *Verk' Hayastani* today, the novel seems to have occupied an ambiguous position when it was first published. This is partly because many of Abovean's contemporaries perceived him as a classic example of a Europeanized intellectual of his time. Ironically, the first critical disputes about his novel in Armenian coalesced around a European and non-European binary through which nineteenth-century Armenian intellectuals understood the world.⁸ The main debate over Abovean's novel after its publication in 1858 was therefore fundamentally one of typology. For instance, two major Armenian nineteenth-century intellectuals—Step'an Oskanean (1825–1901) and Mik'ayel Nalbandean (1829–1866)—disagreed on whether or not the novel belonged to a “European canon” or to a “Non-European canon.” Oskanean writes: “It is impossible to judge this book according the European canon, because as we mentioned, it was written for the rural people and in the rural style.”⁹ Nalbandean, on the other hand, came to the opposite conclusion: “If Abovean's *Verk' Hayastani* has value and if we can appreciate it, then this is only possible in accordance with the European canon, which always focuses on the message of the work and on how well the author manages to illuminate and to solve the problem he

⁴The seat of the catholicosate of all Armenians, considered the highest office of the Armenian church.

⁵The nineteenth-century city of Tbilisi was a major cultural center of the Caucasus.

⁶Dorpat (Tartu) is located in Estonia.

⁷On the relationship between “diaspora” and the development of the novel, see especially Artemis Leontis, “Diaspora of the Novel,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 2, no. 1 (1992): 131–146.

⁸Especially during this period, it was common for Armenian intellectuals to debate whether Armenia was part of the “Eastern” or “Western” world. The reception of Abovean's novel reflects these debates.

⁹Zhenya K'alant'aryan, ed., *Hay grakan k'nnadatut'yan k'restomatio* (Chrestomathy of the Criticism of Armenian Literature), vol. 1, (Yerevan: Yerevani Hamalsarani Hratarakut'yun, 1981), 356.

has targeted. If we move beyond the European canon and analyze the work from an ‘Asian’ perspective then the novel will become a legend (fairy tale),” that is, it will seem more medieval than modern in content.¹⁰ Thus both authors considered it to be a shortcoming if the novel was not easily identifiable as eastern or western. For example, Oskanean did not even use the term “novel” for *Verk’ Hayastani*, since he did not view it to be part of the western tradition. Nalbandean on the other hand considered *Verk’ Hayastani* only as a novel in the European sense; at the same time, however, he tried to justify its deviation from the European novel, particularly in its choice of “rustic” literary language, by noting that “Abovean’s idea was to write in such a way that the illiterate people wouldn’t think that they had read a book; instead, they were supposed to imagine that someone was speaking with them.”¹¹

Abovean was perfectly aware of the challenges of writing a novel in Armenian given that his reading public—speakers of Armenian—had no familiarity with the genre at all. This awareness was coupled with an anxiety, expressed in the preface of *Verk’ Hayastani*, that foreigners would consider his people uneducated and uncultured without a prominent modern literary culture. He gave multiple reasons for these concerns. First, he argued that people did not read Armenian literature generally because of its overwhelmingly religious character. In Abovean’s words, Armenian literature was too occupied with the church, and therefore exhibited a total absence of secular content he viewed as characteristic of modern literature. Similarly, he lamented that Armenian literature was written in Classical Armenian (Grabar), which had become incomprehensible to common people, despite serving as a liturgical language.¹² Instead, due to a lack of accessible Armenian literature, he was forced to

¹⁰ Mik’ayel Nalbandean, *Erkeri liakatar zhoghovatsu*, vol. 1 (Yerevan: HSSH GAA, 1979), 312.

¹¹ Nalbandean, *Erkeri liakatar zhoghovatsu*, 313.

¹² Of course, though Abovean places an absolute distinction between secular and religious literature, we should take care not to repeat this distinction uncritically ourselves. Similarly, although Abovean does not mention it here, widespread illiteracy was as much, if not more, of a problem than the inaccessible nature of Classical Armenian texts to modern Armenian audiences at this time.

instruct his students to read “Robinson’s Story,”¹³ his personal title for Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, to get a sense of what the novel might do. Abovean wrote that “Robinson’s Story” was so popular among his students in part because it appealed to their emotional sensibilities. As he observed, his students preferred to “read about things that captivate the heart because they are things of the heart. Who hasn’t delighted in reading such things?”¹⁴ He would therefore also have to “write things of the heart” if he would reach an Armenian reading public. To accomplish this, Abovean sought a narrative mode lacking in the pre-existing models of Classical Armenian literature, which seemed unsuitable for his purposes. He would have to seek a narrator for his novel in other places:

Even a madman, I thought to myself, would not do things this way. Mulling matters over, as usual, I would often, on my way through the city or going to visit friends, attentively observe the people. When they were chatting or having a good time, what did they like best? I often noticed that, at the market or in the streets, they would stand watching and listening to a blind minstrel (*ashugh*), fascinated, and give the man money, the water running out of their mouths. At feasts or weddings, whoever swallowed a single morsel without a musician? The lyrics were in Turkish, and many did not understand a word, but the souls of those listening and watching went soaring to heaven and back.¹⁵

Abovean’s audience was fascinated by the heart-breaking songs of *ashughs*, even when those songs were composed in other languages. Thus, what should Abovean do himself, if not attempt to compose a novel in a way that mimicked the songs of the transnational *ashugh*? Or, as Abovean put it, “I said to myself: go on, close your manuals of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, pack them away, and become a minstrel (*ashugh*) yourself. Whatever happens, happens.”¹⁶

¹³ Defoe’s novel was one of the first fictional works translated from a foreign language into a vernacular Armenian idiom by Father Minas Bzhshkean, published in Venice in 1817. It is likely Abovean knew about this translation.

¹⁴ *Verk Hayastani* has never been fully translated into English; only its preface has been translated by G.M. Goshgarian. It is available in the volume of Marc Nichanian, *Mourning Philology: Art and Religion at the Margins of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 244–250. In my article I use Goshgarian’s translation.

¹⁵ Nichanian, *Mourning Philology*, trans. Goshgarian, 248.

¹⁶ Nichanian, *Mourning Philology*, trans. Goshgarian, 248.

THE NOVELIZATION OF THE *ASHUGH*

In one of his letters, Abovean further makes clear his choice of protagonist was meant to speak to the people in an idiom they could recognize:

Upon a long reflection, the sad story of Aghasi came to my mind. But how could I reproduce it? One has to be extremely naïve to do this in a form of a novel aligned with the European taste and style. I think that both the poem and the novel should correspond to the people's ideas and feelings; they should be constructed in a way that preserves their harmony, liveliness, types, and interest.¹⁷

In other words, in order to create a novel that would speak “for the heart,” Abovean would have to tap into the “liveliness, types, and interest” of his reading public. He therefore seems to have decided to model his novel upon pre-existing *ashugh* narratives.

Here it would be fruitful to examine a well-known *ashugh* tale before we turn to the plot of *Verk’ Hayastani*. Beginning around the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the popular story of *Ashugh-Gharib* (*The Wandering Ashugh*) circulated throughout Transcaucasia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. The tale concerns a minstrel, Ashugh Gharib, who sings at weddings and feasts. The minstrel falls in love with a rich man’s daughter, but the father refuses to let his daughter marry. Dejected, Ashugh Gharib leaves his native town to earn money abroad. He overcomes various obstacles and hardships, finds patronage in a foreign land, and even seems to forget his beloved, his family, hearth, and home. People in his hometown think he is dead; his mother goes blind from too much weeping, and the bride’s father conspires to marry his daughter to another man. But one day, when longing becomes too unbearable, Ashugh Gharib finally returns to his birthplace, heals his mother’s eyes, and marries his sweetheart.¹⁸ His love for her never dies, and indeed it never could have—the word *ashugh* in Armenian is a cognate of the Persian ‘*āshiq*, which literally means “lover,” who likewise composes poetry for the beloved.¹⁹

¹⁷ Sergey Sarinyan, ed., *Hay yepi patmut’yun* (A History of the Armenian Novel) (Yerevan: Gitut’yun, 2005), 54.

¹⁸ For a critical overview of the *gharib*’s movements across multiple cultures and languages, see Michael Pifer, “The Age of the *Gharib*: Strangers in the Medieval Mediterranean,” in this volume (Chap. 2).

¹⁹ This tale exists in many variants. Abovean was surely familiar with some of these versions. The adaptation of the popular tale entitled “Ashugh-Gharib” by the Russian writer Mikhail

The plot of Abovean's novel draws on many of the same motifs of this tale, although it also introduces some notable differences. Abovean's protagonist is a brave young man named Aghasi who is betrothed to his beloved. During a feast, Persian soldiers attack the village in an attempt to kidnap its women. Aghasi kills these soldiers, but at a cost: To avoid punishment he must flee from his native home. He wanders through the regions of Armenia for a long time, seemingly forgetting his kin and lover. One day Aghasi receives a letter from his mother and his fiancée, blaming him for bringing misfortune upon the family. Aghasi quickly joins the Russian army and returns home. He releases his father, who was imprisoned on account of Aghasi's deeds, from a dark dungeon. However, unlike Ashugh Gharib, Aghasi fails to regain his lost fortune and happiness. In the final moments of the novel, a Persian soldier kills him as he embraces his father. The novel ends on the pitiful scene of Aghasi's bride mourning over his grave.

Verk' Hayastani clearly reflects many of the motifs found in *Ashugh-Gharib*. Stylistically, even the narrative structure of these stories is the same: both are prose pieces interwoven with verse at particularly heightened dramatic moments.²⁰ The salient difference between these stories—a pre-modern folk tale and a modern novel—lies in how Abovean explains the hardships of his ashugh Aghasi. He does not characterize the calamities that befall Aghasi as caused by the personal motives of a rival, nor by social inequality (as in the case of *Ashugh-Gharib*), but rather as the result of broader political circumstances beyond the hero's control. In Abovean's eyes, Armenia was under Persian yoke; its people were exploited and persecuted. Although the temporal setting of *Ashugh Gharib* is ambiguous, *Verk' Hayastani* takes place against the backdrop of the Russo-Persian war of 1826–1828. Thus, the “rival” figure in *Verk' Hayastani*, so common to *ashugh* romances, finds expression in geopolitical, and not personal, terms.²¹

The impact this change would have on Armenian letters should not be understated. In Abovean's novel, the amorous *ashugh* is transformed into a patriotic warrior-minstrel, establishing a model that Armenian novelists would follow when fashioning their own patriotic protagonists in the

Lermontov was also quite well-known (1837). Sergei Paradjanov later made his famous film according to the tale “*Ashugh-Gharib*” (1988).

²⁰ On shifts between prose and verse in *Ashugh-Gharib*, see M. Zhirmunsky, *Tyurskii Geroicheskii Epos (Turkic Heroic Epic)* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1974).

²¹ Khach'atur Abovean describes *Verk' Hayastani* as a historical novel.

nineteenth century. These nineteenth century Armenian novelists, such as prominent figures like Raffi and Murats'an,²² often revived an analogous love motif in their own novels and wove it into the nationalized narrative of their plots. In many of these novels, the choice of “either love or motherland” arises before the protagonist, who, as a rule, will more than often choose to serve his country. This pattern is firmly established by *Verk Hayastani*, and not only in the case of Aghasi. For example, in the novel, a friend of Aghasi named Mosi sees a young woman in a dream and hopelessly falls in love with her. The boy weeps and exhausts himself by recalling the dreamy image of his love, but when Aghasi urges Mosi to join him to liberate the country of the tyrant forces, Mosi is immediately transformed from miserable lover into a brave warrior. The love motif of Mosi remains suspended in the novel. Thus, the novel translates Mosi’s obsessive love for his beloved into a patriotic, but no less obsessive, love for his country. The *ashugh* provides the paradigmatic example of this account—and in fact helps Mosi to undergo a similar transformation of his own.

STORYTELLING AND COMMUNITY

Who, then, is the *ashugh*? Why does the minstrel play the key role of translating desire in Abovean’s novel? We might begin by noting that *ashughs* have a long and storied history; they performed throughout the Caucasus and eastern Mediterranean in the early modern period. Minstrels, in different ways, have part of Armenian culture at least since the invention of the alphabet, and the creation of a written record, in the fifth century. Long before the rise of *ashughs*, minstrels known as *gusans*, who also existed in Persianate cultures, are attested by the earliest Armenian chroniclers, such as Movsēs Khorenats'i and P‘avstos Buzand.²³

Even in the world of Mediterranean and Anatolian minstrels, there was a broad degree of diversity amongst *ashugh* cultures; for instance, Haig Berberian notes the existence of three distinct minstrel “schools”: Persian, Turkish, and Georgian,²⁴ the last of which Abovean was probably familiar

²² Raffi is famous for his historical novels and depictions of nascent Armenian nationalist movements (*The Fool*, *Sparks*, etc.); Murats'an is known for his historical novel *Gevorg Marzpetuni*.

²³ Mary Boyce, “The Parthian Gusan and Iranian Minstrel Tradition,” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 89, no. 1–2 (1957): 10–45.

²⁴ Haig Berberian, “La littérature armeno-turque,” in *Philologiae turcicae fundamenta* 2 (Weisbaden, 1964), 811–812. See also the groundbreaking article by Theo Maarten van Lint

with due to his activity in Tbilisi. Ilyas Üstunyer similarly observes that multiple ethnic groups were active within the Georgian *ashugh* school, including Georgians, Azeris, and Armenians.²⁵

What seems to be relatively consistent across these different ethnic and stylistic groups, however, was a mode of storytelling common to minstrels across a broad region, and over many centuries. C. F. Albright, for instance, notes that *ashughs*/“*āšiqs* generally preferred the genre of *dāstān*, which fall into two broad categories: “the heroic epic, such as *Kuroğlū*, and the romantic tale, such as *Aşlı o Karam*.²⁶ Typologically the plots of romantic *dāstāns* were subdivided into two groups:

- 1) Heroic stories about a protagonist who struggles against oppressors of his people; in such tales, the protagonist remains faithful to and yearns for his beloved.
- 2) Love stories about a protagonist who must overcome various challenges to be reunited with his beloved. The hero of these tales is predominantly the *ashugh*, who sings of his beloved, and his hardships, throughout the narrative.²⁷

As widely recognizable as storytellers from the Mediterranean world to the Caucasus, *ashughs* existed in Armenian and neighboring cultures for many centuries. Like *ashughs* in the Persian, Turkish, or Georgian tradition, Armenian *ashughs* also composed musical works in many languages. In this sense, the *ashugh* was a forbearer of polyphony, which, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, would later become an important characteristic of the novel.²⁸ In general terms, the very origins of the word

on the relationship between Armenian and Turkish *ashughs*, “The Gift of Poetry: Khidr and John the Baptist as Patron Saints of Muslim and Armenian ‘Āšiqs – Aşuls,’” in *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, edited by J.J. van Ginkel, H.L. Murre-van den Berg and Theo Maarten van Lint (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Dep. Oosterse Studies, 2005), 339.

²⁵ İlyas Üstunyer, “Tradition of the Ashugh Poetry and Ashughs in Georgia,” *IBSU Scientific Journal*, 3 no. 1, (2009): 137–149.

²⁶ C.F. Albright, “ĀSEQ,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, II/7, 741–742, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/aseq> (accessed on 1 September 2017).

²⁷ Lilit Yernjakyan, “Irakann u aşaspelakanč ashughakan siravepi kataroghakan avanduyt‘um,” (The Reality and the Myth in the Art of Ashugh Romance), *Lraber* 2 (2003): 42–51.

²⁸ M.M. Bakhtin, *Problemi poetiki Dostoevskogo* (*Problems of Dostoyevski's Work*) (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel, 1963).

ashugh/lover suggests the possibility of a romantic plot, which is a central motif in many early novels as well. The romantic tales of *ashughs* therefore loosely complement analogous narratives found in early European novels,²⁹ as well as provide a language by which Armenian audiences might become acquainted with the form of the novel.

However, I would suggest there was something about the *ashugh* in particular, and the manner in which stories *about* these minstrels circulated, that made the figure particularly appealing to Abovean as well as ripe to be recast in a national context. In general, the rise of the novel since the eighteenth century was historically accompanied by the formation of modern nation-states. The novel provided an opportunity to create a sense of geographical unity and common cultural and historical past, which were important for the creation of the nation-state. In a now well-known argument, Benedict Anderson has noted that the main peculiarity of a newly formed “national” community is that the ties between its separate representatives are not conditioned by their personal acquaintance.³⁰ The community is formed on the basis of certain so-called “national” commonalities, such as common spaces, a shared cultural and historical past, and so on. In the case of Abovean’s novel, it is ironically because of the *ashugh*’s non-national cultural background that he is able to emerge so swiftly as the narrator, and first patriot, of the Armenian “nation,” since his manner of narrating an experience of “love,” as well as his very person, would already have been known to diverse Armenian and even “Mediterranean” audiences.

Similarly, it is worth noting that Aghasi’s fame circulates in a particular manner within *Verk’ Hayastani*. As previously mentioned, Abovean weaves together prose and versified songs in the style of *ashugh* literature within his text. These song-tales usually appear prior to and actually contextualize important events in the novel. Often, these song-tales also travel wide and large before the novel’s hero. They spread, independently of Aghasi, among people living in different corners of the country, who consume and learn these songs even before they appear as characters in the novel itself,

²⁹ For instance, Mikhail Bakhtin has loosely sketched the plots of the earliest novels according to the following paradigm: a man and a woman meet, fall in love, and are subject to various challenges. At the end of this general narrative, the lovers overcome all problems and are reunited with each other. For more details, see M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (University of Texas Press, 1981), 84–259.

³⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (London: Verso, 2006).

suggesting the existence of a wider public that was united not by European literary forms, but more local ones. In other words, it is the *ashugh*'s unique mode of narration that connects and unites the fledgling nation, which in turn adopts his story and begins to transmit it as its own.

How, then, is a national “imagined community” formed in the novel? An answer to this question can be found in an important thought-experiment in Jorge Luis Borges’ essay “Partial Magic in the Quixote”: “I believe I have found the reason: these inversions suggest that if the imagined characters of a fictional work can be readers or spectators, we, its readers or spectators, can be fictitious.”³¹ If the *ashugh* allows the imagined (fictional) characters to be readers and spectators, then the actual readers and spectators can be allowed to be imagined as part of the community: unified, and taught to narrate a new form of national romance, by the *ashugh*.

CONCLUSION

Abovean not only novelizes the *ashugh* tradition, but also stimulates a new phase in the development of that tradition. In her research on the *ashugh* tradition of the Shirak region (Armenia), Hrip'sime Pikich'yan writes about a blind *ashugh* named Farhat who used to ask people to read Abovean's novel to him. In this way he memorized the novel and, seasoning it with his own lyrical songs, wandered around in towns and countryside spreading it among the people.³² This suggests that *ashugh* Farhat saw the evolution of his craft in the novel and positioned himself as the successor of that evolution. This example shows that the practice of the *ashugh* did not end with the rise of the novel, but continued in dialogue with it, too. The translocal form of the novel, or its common narrative structures, were not irreconcilable with the *ashugh*'s craft, since *ashughs* likewise circulated beyond any single people and region, employing multiple languages as they moved. This is the reason why Abovean's text does not discard the *ashugh* but in fact commissions him to serve a new purpose.

³¹ Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, trans. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2007), 193–199.

³² Hrip'sime Pikich'yan, “Ashughē erazhish̄t, banasteghts ev tsisaaraspelabanakan heros,” (The Ashugh as a Musician, Poet and Mythical-Ritual Hero), *Arterea*, accessed on September 4, 2017, <http://www.arterea.am/hy/1336924498>.

Abovean therefore laid the foundations of the Armenian novel through a unique combination of two translocal components of “world literature”: the form of the novel and the romance of *ashugh* narratives. Hence, it becomes clear that the foreign form (the novel) described by literary scholars was not altogether foreign to an Armenian audience, as it found its typological equivalent in early modern tales about the *ashugh*. Similarly, in contradistinction to Moretti’s claim that novelists fill novels with “local” characters and narratives, the local material in this case is not entirely local, as it placed the transnational craft of the *ashugh*, a migratory mode of storytelling that traveled from the Mediterranean to the Iranian world, at its foundation. The narrator of this story – the *ashugh* himself – is not at all locally bound or provincially minded, but was formed in the nexus of many cultures, assisting in the formation of an imagined community (the modern Armenians) through a non-European mode of storytelling.

Abovean’s novel is an undeniable part of world literature because its creation is made possible only out of a global and not merely local dialogue. *Verk’ Hayastani* therefore sits at a crossroads where two travelers—the East and the West; the *ashugh* and the novel—meet each other, since they walk and wander the roads and meridians of the same world. To read Abovean’s work only as part of the history of the novel, or only as part of the *ashugh* tradition, inhibits us from recognizing and translating the encounter between the two.

PART IV

Texturizing Diaspora



CHAPTER 10

Weaving Images: Textile, Displacement, and Reframing the Borders of Visual Culture

Marie-Aude Baronian

It is almost unthinkable to conceive of Armenian culture without its most visible and tangible fingerprints, such as its iconic churches, its famous illuminated manuscripts, and its intricate carpets. Of course, there is more to think of than what is apparent and identifiable, more to see and more to disclose from the historical and graphic significance of those cultural indexes and anchors. If churches and carpets are emblems of Armenian culture that consolidate its persistence and circulate among Armenian communities, they are also continuously recalled and revisited in various visual forms by several artists in diaspora.

In this chapter I will touch upon some facets of Armenian visual culture by first acknowledging how Armenian visual culture involves a wide range of forms and media beyond architecture, folk arts, and crafts. And, second, I will consider how Armenian visual culture within and through a larger spectrum enables us to *see* and to penetrate many salient aspects of that culture and its legacy that would otherwise remain unseen. In that regard, I will also argue that the challenge is to move beyond the iconic celebration of Armenia's rich cultural heritage in order to disclose

M.-A. Baronian (✉)

University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

its plural signification beyond the Armenian territory, be it physical, affective, or imaginary. In order to tie the various issues I am discussing together, I will also introduce the idea of *textile*, both in a literal and figurative fashion. Textile, as an encompassing and versatile motif, offers a multifaceted and dynamic entryway into considering the portrayal of Armenian (diasporic) visual practices. Moreover, textile, as I will further argue, constitutes and animates diasporic remembering practices.

Armenian diasporic visual culture implies taking a close look at the role of (audio)visual objects produced among diasporic communities, that is to say, from Armenians living outside the geographical borders of Armenia. Specifically, my interest is drawn from the fact that the artworks and visual objects, which are “logically” authored by Armenians living in diaspora, investigate, question and reflect upon what defines and moves the Armenian diaspora in the first place. What is more, within these works there is a genuine meditation on the visual medium itself, which activates a more sophisticated understanding of the notions of diaspora and displacement. In the same way that Armenian culture is profoundly diasporic and has gone through various types of changes (historically and politically)¹, recognizing the diversity of Armenian visual culture today necessitates looking beyond fixed patterns and involving a wide range of visual media and means. In other words, if Armenian culture is profoundly defined through the suffixes of “trans” and “inter” (because of the history of displacement), then Armenian culture in turn can only be approached through a trans- and interdisciplinary lens. This thereby underlines the necessity to conceive of Armenian culture through multiple disciplinary paradigms. In following, I would venture to state that the integration of the field of visual culture within Armenian studies enables us to effectively stress its singularity and its multiple ramifications beyond the locus of Armenia *and* beyond the field of Armenian studies.

DISPLACING ARMENIАНESS, DISPLACING IMAGES

While diasporic Armenian visual culture inevitably involves a great variety of visual objects of study and a plurality of approaches and methodologies, my aim is to begin with a deterritorialization of our knowledge

¹ See for instance the anthropological and sociological studies conducted by, among others, Laurence Ritter, Kim Butler or Khachig Tölöyan.

and understanding of Armenian culture and its established disciplinary terrains (e.g., literature, history). The goal could be to disclose the qualities and characteristics of those terrains beyond the boundaries and limits of the Armenian territories (the homeland or the diasporic communities) in order to avoid an unproductive identity politics for both the field of Armenian studies and other related fields (e.g., cultural studies, genocide studies, art history).

It is precisely for these reasons that I became interested in the work of contemporary Armenian-Canadian filmmaker and artist Atom Egoyan (Cairo, 1959) who has served as a compelling entry point for combining Armenian studies with visual culture. That is, not only does Egoyan represent one of the most renowned and acclaimed filmmakers of Armenian origin but, as I have often argued, he constantly questions the meaning of Armenianness, the legacy of Armenian emblems within a westernized context, and the intersection between memory, diaspora, and visual media.² His work does not merely represent or depict what we traditionally identify as Armenian, such as the churches or other typical Armenian signs, but it questions what being Armenian *is* and how it manifests itself.

The broad scope of Egoyan's work, which includes various media forms and a number of different thematic concerns, has opened his subject matter up beyond the borders of Armenian (diasporic) cinema, and beyond Armenia's identifiable signs. By being multimedial and by moving across the genres and audiovisual strategies, Egoyan is capable of stressing the dynamicity of both the legacy and perception of Armenian culture, all the while invoking other Armenian artistic and audiovisual practices. For example, we find in his films, including his shorts and video installations, many references to the Armenian-American painter Arshile Gorky (1904–1948), experimental Armenian filmmaker Artavazd Pelechian (Armenia, 1938), the early American film *Ravished Armenia* (1919), and Greek-American director Elia Kazan's 1963 feature film *America, America*, which depicts the exilic adventures of a young Anatolian Greek immigrant pursuing his dream of going to America.

In the experimental film *Diaspora* (2000), a short that consists exclusively of repeating images and music (composed by the famous minimalist Philip Glass), Egoyan uses and recycles three “sources” of images. First, he

² For a detailed analysis of his multifaceted oeuvre through the lens of memory, audiovisual media, and the Armenian Catastrophe see my *Screening Memory: The Prosthetic Images of Atom Egoyan* (Brussels: Belgian Royal Academy Publishing, 2017).

uses the image of a massive flock of sheep; this image, the most prominent and repetitive in the short, actually originates from his feature film *Calendar* (1993). The image of the flock recalls Pelechian's masterpiece *Seasons* (1975), where scenes with sheep and other agricultural elements make up the whole film. Egoyan's depiction of sheep is more than just a graphic reference, however, as Pelechian's entire oeuvre—characterized as experimental—represents a singular treatment of images and montage wherein the motif of repetition is quite central. The images of sheep in *Diaspora* not only stand as an echo of the mountainous landscape of Armenia, but also evoke the memory of the thousands of Armenians who were forced to march in the Syrian desert or drowned in the Black Sea during the 1915 genocide. As is characteristic of Egoyan's work, little of that violent history and its legacy is put on screen directly (except for in his 2002 feature film *Ararat*). In that way, and without any narrative information, Egoyan is capable, through a highly repetitive and obsessive permutation of images and sound, to refract the experience of traumatic displacement.

Other images emerge in *Diaspora* as well. At one point, the film uses black and white footage from Elia Kazan's 1963 film. Specifically, Egoyan has selected a scene where an Armenian church is burning and people are trying desperately to save themselves. For the third image source, Egoyan has inserted a filmic image from his own feature film *The Adjuster* (1991). The scene in question is when the character of the adjuster holds his hand up while witnessing his house burning down, as though trying to touch it for the last time. *Diaspora*'s highly constructed nature, which plays with the multiplication and superimposition of images (some are moving forwards, others backwards, the images of the sheep have been decomposed and recomposed in various symmetrical assemblages), draws attention to the idea that identities themselves are unavoidably a matter of construction. We inherit them through constructed images that constantly repeat themselves. Additionally, by appropriating the canonic filmic repertoire (Kazan, Pelechian) as well as his own,³ Egoyan epitomizes the persistence

³ In another essay I have called this “auto-repetition.” For instance, Egoyan’s tendency to refer again and again to images of his own corpus expresses the filmmaker’s ongoing and overwhelming obsession with representing the history and memory of Armenian people in diaspora. Auto-citation, as I put it, relates to the denial of Armenian history, because by constantly reappearing in his various artistic creations, the citations manifest how deeply this history affects and concerns Egoyan. The citations appear as a transgenerational trauma, in which the denied violent past keeps returning. Auto-citation deftly discloses how repetition (thematically but also stylistically) has everything to do with the filmmaker’s historical and

of heritage and the visual terrains that animate, in a recalcitrant way, the diasporic imaginary. As if the filmmaker creates a visual mosaic or pastiche as textured as diasporic “identities” themselves.

Egoyan has also dealt significantly with another iconic and pivotal figure from Armenian culture and cinema: Aurora Mardiganian (1901–1994). Aurora, a survivor of the 1915 genocide and a star of early Hollywood, has fascinated and influenced Egoyan, as seen in his recurrent video installation *Auroras* (2007) renamed *Chorus* (2015). Inspired by her memoirs (1918) and by the silent feature film (1919) based on them,⁴ Egoyan deals with the vicissitudes of witnessing as well as the consequential remnants of such a legacy. Despite the success the film had at its release, and despite Aurora’s own rise to celebrity, the film was, until no so long ago, largely forgotten, and Aurora had fallen into obscurity. In this way, there is a significant analogy between the fate of History and the fate of Aurora. The film has partially survived,⁵ however, and Egoyan tries to recall Aurora’s spectral presence in an installation with multiple screens. Again, Egoyan shows that the only access to her history (including the history of genocide) and to understanding her iconic function in the Armenian imaginary is to literally reconstruct her story by using various actresses to embody Aurora.⁶ All in all, what seems to converge through these various

familial legacy. See my chapter “History and Memory, Repetition and Epistolarity,” in *Image and Territory : Essays on Atom Egoyan*, ed. M. Tschofen and J. Burwell (Waterloo: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 2007), 157–176.

⁴ It should be specified that Aurora was almost forced to star in the filmic adaptation of her memoir, literally making her relive the original trauma. She has to repeat, mimic and thus re-enact her traumatic experience. Aurora’s story, of slavery and enduring violence, constituted a “perfect” scenario for the big screen and she became a popular figure who had to oscillate, as it were, between reality and fiction and thereby displacing constantly her experience from various psychic states and locations.

⁵ For the genealogy of the different versions and states of the film *Ravished Armenia* (also known as *Auction of Souls*) that were found since 1994, see Donna-Lee Frieze’s essay “Three Films, One Genocide: Remembering the Armenian Genocide through *Ravished Armenia(s)*,” in *Remembering Genocide*, ed. N. Eltringham and P. Maclean (New York : Routledge, 2014), 38–51. I should note that within the context of the 2015 centennial of the Armenian genocide, Aurora Mardiganian was widely presented as an important figure of survival. For instance, the Aurora Prize for humanitarian initiatives was launched, which, interestingly, resonates with the fact that *Ravished Armenia* was originally co-produced by the Near Eastern Relief and was utilized for charity and activist purposes.

⁶ Even if Egoyan clearly gives his own version of Aurora, the entire installation is based on a true moment of her life. Seven actresses are presented on seven different screens. Egoyan did so because during the promotional tour of the film in 1919, Aurora, who was supposed

artworks is the idea that a cultural legacy can somehow only be generated and animated through the (artistic) recycling of what has been left and keeps returning *in* images, *through* images.

Another example of that sort of visual and cultural citation is the figure of Gorky himself who has been at the center of significant contemporary artworks such as Egoyan's short film *A Portrait of Arshile* (1995) and feature film *Ararat* (2002), Armenian-Canadian (born in Lebanon, 1970) Torossian's experimental short *Garden in Khorkhom* (2004), and Armenian-Belgian Garabedian's painting *The Artist and His Mother/Replica, Gorky* (2011).⁷ Indeed the three artists, in very different aesthetic treatments, evoke the legacy of genocide survivor and painter Gorky. Relevantly, what fascinates Egoyan, Torossian, and Garabedian is not only the fact that Gorky is probably the most famous artist of Armenian origin from the twentieth century, but that he has experimented extensively with his artistic materials and has raised many questions regarding his Armenianness through his abstract paintings.⁸ The three contemporary artists have each included the figure of Gorky in their work while imposing their own aesthetic grammar. In a way, and thanks to Gorky, they have been able to simultaneously reveal the singularity of their artistic practices as well as why Gorky is such an emblematic and ghostlike figure that travels and gets translated in the contemporary imaginary and the legacy of Armenian (traumatic) culture.

All of the aforementioned works could easily be qualified in terms of post-memory, that is to say, as Marianne Hirsch defines it, a type of memory that is described by "generational distance and from history to deep connection. Postmemory is a very powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connections to its objects or source are mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment

to be present at most screenings, suffered from a nervous breakdown and was then replaced by seven look-alikes. For a more detailed reading of that artwork see my book *Screening Memory: The Prosthetic Images of Atom Egoyan* (Brussels: Belgian Royal Academy Publishing, 2017).

⁷ For an overview of works produced by Garabedian (Syria, 1977) before 2011 see the catalogue that was published for a retrospective of his œuvre at the S.M.A.K (Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art in Ghent). I have authored an essay for this catalogue entitled *Something about Today* (Ghent: S.M.A.K, 2011) and the last chapter of my book *Mémoire et Image: Regards sur la Catastrophe arménienne* (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 2013) is fully dedicated to Garabedian's multimedial art practices.

⁸ For a thorough analysis of Gorky's œuvre see Kim Theriault's book *Rethinking Arshile Gorky* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2009).

and creation. [...] Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grew up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by the traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated.”⁹ Notably, the works that depict Gorky not only pay homage and tribute to the painter but they substantiate the way in which Armenians are constantly relying on canonic figures to support their legacy both through a long-standing tradition of art and because of the heritage of genocide and its denial.¹⁰ Accordingly, the diasporic condition is defined by a need to anchor and to root the existence of the origin in a certain memorial representation.

If those filmic references create a sense of echo and homage they also demonstrate the necessity and the value of bridging images and filmic experiences since they enrich, extend, and complicate the audiovisual field and the perception of Armenian culture in a wider sense.

In most of the post-genocidal works, the typical Armenian emblems—atemporal and connective—are often the starting points as if those emblems were constituted by transmissive forces and thus surpass their contemplative, museal, or patriotic functions. Indeed what Egoyan, Torossian, and Garabedian do by invoking figures such as Mount Ararat¹¹ or Gorky is, in a way, a deconstruction of the iconic “sacred” status of the mountain or of the painter in order to question the reason why they are transmitted from one generation to the other. Additionally, their depictions allow us to interrogate the value of the figures in a cultural, political, and pictorial sense. This is also the reason why these creative enterprises are a refraction of what I have called “an aesthetics of displacement”¹² since most of those (audio)visual works reveal the chronotropic effects of objects as they travel

⁹ M. Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 22.

¹⁰ For a more extended discussion on the link between visual practices and denial, see my book *Mémoire et Image: Regards sur la Catastrophe arménienne* (Lausanne: L’Âge d’Homme, 2013). An English translation is in preparation.

¹¹ Not only is it located in Armenia (and present-day Turkey) but it also condenses various religious (e.g., Noah’s Ark) and cultural connotations since it is through Mount Ararat that the legend of Armenia has been built. It is definitely the most recurrent, if not clichéd, figure of Armenian (diasporic) culture.

¹² I have elaborated on that concept in several publications, such as in *Mémoire et Image: Regards sur la Catastrophe arménienne* (2013), in the article “Image, Displacement, Prosthesis: Reflections on Making Visual Archives of the Armenian Genocide,” in *Photographies* 3, no. 2 (September 2010), 205–223. Or more recently in the book chapter

from different times and spaces through generations. Images thus refract the experience of displacement—the displacement of a people, of a history, and of a territory, be it empirical or imagined.¹³ The experience of scattering is somehow replaced in new imaginary sites that translate a paradoxical desire of return without actually wishing to go back to the Origin. Iconic archival objects or visual anchors are pivotal for the “inscription” of both the legacy of traumatic history and cultural mythology that is somehow promoted and intensified when experienced and approached from a diasporic perspective.¹⁴

TEXTILE AS/IN IMAGES

Yet there is more to be said if one wishes to get a sense of the at once homogeneous and heterogeneous character of Armenian (diasporic) culture, especially without enclosing that culture either within the exclusive frame of genocide (even if it certainly grounds it) or in a fixed and rigid formal paradigm.

One of the challenges I was confronted with in analyzing the work of Egoyan and other visual artists was to find a “proper” definition of Armenian diasporic visual culture, and in particular to answer the question of whether “something” like Armenian filmic culture could exist and how it could make sense outside and beyond Armenian communities. What could artists and filmmakers such as Atom Egoyan, Gariné Torossian, Mekhitar Garabedian, and Sergei Paradjanov (Tbilisi, 1924–1990) have in common and how do they collectively and distinctively deal with Armenianness? Instead of following a traditional schema of classification—such as dates, provenances, and pictorial characteristics—I thought that I would need a motif that could coherently engage with the diversity of the various practices and produce a dynamic frame for interpretation. In sum,

“Missing Images: Textures of Memory in Diaspora,” in *The Armenian Genocide Legacy*, ed. A. Demerdjian (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 303–313.

¹³ Or to put it differently, unlike the Benjaminian concept of aura in the canonic “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936), here these images become affective, sensible and meaningful in part because of their repetitive, massively reproduced, and ubiquitous nature.

¹⁴ For a more specific use of the concept of “archive” in relation to Egoyan, see my essay “Archive, Memory, and Loss” in *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*, ed. A. Rigney and Ch. de Cesari (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter /Media and Cultural Memory, 2014), 79–97.

I was looking for a motif that could do justice both to the filmic matter and to the possibilities of traversing other disciplinary routes and significations. The motif of textile, as both material and immaterial or literal and metaphoric, has therefore come to stand as the meeting point between the various visual practices and the various ways of inheriting and decoding Armenian culture at large. In particular, I suggest we consider textile as a sort of connective thread; as the element that could condense the multi-layered issue of displacement—from one generation to the other, from one cultural terrain to the other, or from one visual territory to the other. Armenian textile undoubtedly refers to a long tradition of craft¹⁵ but the word “textile” itself also, etymologically, recalls its root of *textere*—to tell stories. In other words, the idea of textile combines the material and immaterial aspect of *original* culture and explains, in a quite tangible and traceable way, that objects are always vectors of narratives, whether they are physical or symbolic. The motif of textile is simultaneously what binds together and what differentiates the various artists, but also opens the possibility to multiple interpretations and entry points. What is more, textile implies the combination of traditional and more cutting-edge readings of cultural objects and thus involves a large range of visual forms and expressions beyond film only.

As I have elsewhere demonstrated with the work of Georgian-Armenian filmmaker and artist Sergei Paradjanov¹⁶ and of Gariné Torossian,¹⁷ there is a close and significant relationship between Armenian textiles and the construction of images. In the case of the former, textile-objects are at the fore of his films (and also in his collage artworks) and play a much bigger role than simply being character attributes. For the latter, whose work is usually characterized as collage, the images are assembled as if they themselves were woven together. In the work of Paradjanov the sartorial and textile elements are not only cinematographically animated, but they themselves animate and even ground the ways in which we look at them, creating a large (often allegoric or enigmatic) web of impressions and expressions. Meanwhile, in the work of Torossian the images are stitched together, which enables us to compose the filmic image out of various colorful and graphic textures that recall the *couture* process of tailoring and sewing.

¹⁵ See for example *Tapis et textiles arméniens* by R.H. Kevorkian and Berdj Achdjian (Marseille: La Maison Arménienne, 1991).

¹⁶ “Images-textiles et tissage d’objets,” *L’Art Même*, no. 67 (October 2015), 30–31.

¹⁷ In *Mémoire et Image: Regards sur la Catastrophe arménienne* (2013).

Notably, their aesthetics offer more than a decorative depiction of Armenian artifacts as they effectively imbue them with a series of meanings and references through the materiality of textile, which condenses affective stories to be told and to be transmitted,¹⁸ and the through texture of film itself which resembles the texture of Armenian fabrics, literally and figuratively. Paradjanov has indeed always paid great attention to the fabrics, accessories, and costumes in his films, as if they were the very essence of cinema itself, and Torossian's experimental work imitates, as it were, the handwork and patchwork of fabrics. Relevantly, in her short film, *Girl from Moush* (1993), Torossian uses found footage portrait images of Paradjanov himself, another clear sign of translation, displacement, recycling, homage, and generational citation.

Marks of textile in the work of Egoyan are traceable as well. Not only is the filmmaker interested in the various textures of film and video, and likes to experiment with them, but some other significant insights can emerge from there, such as the narrative connective thread or the pictorial/cinematographic anchor that emanate from textile-objects and sartorial elements. In *Ararat*, for instance, many scenes engage the spectator (in and outside the filmic narrative) to reflect on the texture of Gorky's canvas as though we were painting it, *touching* it. In the same film, the jacket button of the young Gorky holds a central function. We see Gorky's mother sewing the button onto his jacket; that moment of "reparation" (which reappears at the very end of the film) is not only one of the last and happy memories of his mother before the massacres but it conveys a whole web of mnemonic and memorial significations. The button serves as a connective narrative thread in the film as well as being depicted as a sort of memory-aid and as a traumatic memory-trigger. In other words, the filmic textile-objects, in a materially mediated way, epitomize a large and "mobile" understanding of Armenianness and its (tragic) legacy.

If textile-objects remain symptomatic of a communitarian and identity role, their inclusion in films and their analogical relationship with the filmic medium allows for a wider comprehension of them; for instance, their role in the construction of images, of cultural identity and of memory. I suggest we read those visual practices as the results of a "textural"

¹⁸ As textile historian Girogio Riello has put it, textile should be conceived of primarily as material culture wherein the objects (such as in fashion and clothes) bring with them personal and affective meanings. See "The Object of Fashion: Methodological Approaches to the History of Fashion," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, no. 3, 2011. Doi : 10.2402/jac.v3i0.8865.

form of memory, which I define as a diasporic remembering practice close to the practices of collage and textile. From there, I borrow at once a distinctive ancestral Armenian form of weaving (tapestries and carpets) but also (in a more metaphorical way) a cultural, if not existential, form of assembling and disassembling codes, signs, lexicons, and other sorts of visual textures.¹⁹ “Weaving images” refers to the fact that textile-objects weave, consciously and unconsciously, directly or obliquely, into our lives, and that (filmic) images are capable of making them visible and palpable. To put it differently, making images or responding to them could be seen as an ongoing practice of weaving and bringing texture to the fragile process of displacement, and in particular of remembering a sensitive and haunting past.

What is more, the possibility of implications that the motif of textile offers, including its rich Armenian tradition, enables a play of correspondences and dissonances thanks to which Armenian culture is not confined within folkloric and essentialist connotations. It even produces different kinds of readings to different sorts of audiences (in terms of generation, disciplinary background, or simply for Armenians or non-Armenians) and also invites multifaceted kinds of engagement. Thereby the plural, if not ambivalent, function of textile objects in memory-making is highlighted: they are adorning and comforting, but also evoking and triggering difficult memories. Think for instance of how textiles have kept people warm and “safe” or have given them work and employment,²⁰ all the while manifesting the traces of *unforgettable* journeys. In many Armenian family narratives, those textile-objects recall how they were sewn up and used as luggage when escaping the genocide. Rugs, for example, which have been passed on within families, bear stitch marks on their fringes from the exilic journeys, which turn them into “religious” relics oversaturated with (emotional) meaning. This reinforces how the motif of textile thus comprises,

¹⁹ As Michael Pifer has pointed out to me, the codes and signs that are woven into old Armenian rugs are, ironically, largely “unreadable” to many people who own them today, including Armenians themselves. This is thus a significant example of the “textural” post-memory which has come to obscure the actual particularities and original facts of the object itself.

²⁰ On this matter see the book *Karine Arabian and Armenians in Fashion 17th–21st centuries*, ed. S. Richoux, F. Müller, R. Kertarian, and J. Kehayan (Marseille: Marseille Fashion Museum and Somogy Art Publishers, 2007) that discloses, for example, how the professional field of textile, clothing, and fashion has provided (since the beginning of the twentieth century) work to many Armenian immigrants in France.

combines, and leads to other motifs and thoughts. Consequently, it stresses that if audiovisual culture involves a very wide range of practices and perspectives, so do textiles, though this would certainly require some more in-depth analysis and reading.

Though Egoyan questions the heritage of Armenian culture in most of his films, most directly in *Next of Kin* (1982), *Calendar* (1993), and *Ararat* (2002), and Gariné Torossian evokes the same preoccupations in one of her earliest films *Girl from Moush* (1993) and later in *Stone Time Touch* (2007), and Paradjanov is deeply interested by the heritage and mythology of Caucasian cultures,²¹ and Garabedian explores Armenian codes and lexicons by invoking a wide range of media and artistic expressions, none of them seeks to be labeled as Armenian only. They are as much Armenian as they are not, and this, I believe, is what enables them to constantly construct and deconstruct the visual foundations with which they work, experiment and play. Thus, they invent and reinvent a visual grammar that, thanks to its plastic singularity and its interpretative flexibility, leaves out a rigid understanding of cultural identity while all the while questioning it. It is as though they *design* textiles to tell and retell different stories, different images.

Put differently, textiles evoke a way of engaging with and reimagining culture, not merely replicating culture in a static way. Textiles are emblematic of a specifically diasporic kind of post-memory, one not only removed from the site of its local origin, but also one that problematizes the absoluteness or imposing state of origins that seeks to determine “where” and “how” objects mean.

Stuart Hall has explained that cultural identities are to be understood in terms of *positioning*; they are neither essentialist nor phantasmatic, cultural identities have their “histories—and histories have their real, material and symbolic effects.”²² Drawing from the assumption and experience that being Armenian is at once rooted/inherited and fluid, the artists look for a language that could welcome the specificities of that culture and the multiple bridges that could be made from there. As the character of the westernized photographer says in *Calendar*, when visiting Armenia for the first time: “We’re both from here, yet being here has made me from somewhere

²¹ As in the films *Sayat Nova* (1969, renamed *The Color of Pomegranates* in 1971), *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1965), and *Ashik Kerib* (1988).

²² S. Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity and Difference*, ed. K. Woodward (New York: Routledge, 1997), 53.

else.” That “being from somewhere else” is maybe what makes the images possible in the first place and what summarizes the historical, geographical, political, and existential fate of most Armenians—constantly in displacement. Moreover, it is in their capacity of weaving images that the filmmakers and artists are able to reflect upon the heritage of Armenia, a legacy that is recalled thanks to its multiple visual and filmic assemblages. To put it differently, the reason why it is fertile to think of Armenian culture *vis-à-vis* screen arts and audiovisual media is because they not only depict and represent that very culture but by disclosing aspects of that culture they, in turn, enrich or question the visual field itself; the combination produces a dynamic interplay through which neither the identity at stake nor its media form prevail.

While I only touched upon one specific aspect of visual culture—filmic and artistic practices—it seems crucial to mention and take into consideration what is at play within our contemporary digital culture as it also brings forth other ways of conceiving of and experiencing Armenian culture.

Finally, I wish to underline that, by focusing on the field of visual culture, many relevant motifs and aspects of what Armenianness is and what it could *become* can be enlightened, and that “beyond the borders of Armenian culture and studies” simply means beyond the borders of its own identity (and disciplinary) discourse. In the face of contemporary phenomena such as globalization, the digital age, and the questions around heritage, religion, and ethnic roots, it seems more than necessary to detotalize Armenian culture and Armenian studies in order to open and dynamize its specificity and its potential resonances. It is my belief that Armenian visual culture, be it artistic, filmic, or digital, can ultimately reveal the various challenges of what “Armenian” can signify beyond its own borders.



CHAPTER 11

Diasporic *Flânerie*: From Armenian *Ruinenlust* to Armenia's Walkscapes

David Kazanjian

In a famous review of Franz Hessel's *On Foot in Berlin*, entitled "The Return of the *Flâneur*" (1929), Walter Benjamin celebrates *flânerie* as a challenge to nationalistic views of history:

And isn't [Rome] too full of temples, enclosed squares, and national shrines to be able to enter undivided into the dreams of the passer-by, along with every paving stone, every shop sign, every flight of steps, and every gateway? The great reminiscences, the historical *frissons*—these are all so much junk to the *flâneur*, who is happy to leave them to the tourist. And he would be happy to trade all his knowledge of artists' quarters, birthplaces, and princely palaces for the scent of a single weathered threshold or the touch of a single tile—that which any old dog carries away.¹

¹ Walter Benjamin, "The Return of the *Flâneur*, 1929," in *Selected Writings II 1927–1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press Benjamin 1999), 263–265.

D. Kazanjian (✉)
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA

Here the *flâneur* is unmoved by restored ruins and the nationalist narratives they embody: the “temples, enclosed squares, and national shrines” as well as “the great reminiscences, the historical *frissons*,” and all “knowledge of artists’ quarters, birthplaces, and princely palaces.” Indeed by leaving this “junk” to the “tourist,” the *flâneur* reveals the fetish character of commodified, nationalist memory. Rejecting routes he has been told to take—in which “even dreaming is forced to move along streets that are too well paved”—the *flâneur* takes the risk of getting lost. As a result, he learns a love for the everyday and the apparently incidental: “every paving stone, every shop sign, every flight of steps, and every gateway,” “the scent of a single weathered threshold or the touch of a single tile—that which any old dog carries away.” *Flânerie* thus shifts one’s perspective: from heroic history and architectural masterpieces to unplanned, quotidian encounters with all that has been ignored and forgotten. What is more, the *flâneur*’s scavenging is neither a solipsistic retreat from the world nor a light amusement for the well-heeled. On the contrary, as Benjamin goes on to say, *flânerie* monstrously unsettles prevailing social and cultural norms: “we can gauge the extent of the prevailing resistance to *flânerie* in Berlin, and see with what bitter and threatening expressions both things and people pursue the dreamer. It is here, not in Paris, where it becomes clear to us how easy it is for the *flâneur* to depart from the ideal of the philosopher out for a stroll, and to assume the features of the werewolf at large in the social jungle.”² By wandering awry, the *flâneur* wakes from the collective dream of nationalist greatness and finds other dreams that are at once more conflictual and more open to alterity. *Flânerie* emerges here as a radical historicism. It leaves aside nostalgia for putatively perfect pasts, evades the normative desire for a nationalist future, and inspires other routes toward as yet unknown modes of political belonging.³

² Benjamin, “Return of the *Flâneur*,” 265.

³ I would distinguish the *flâneur* of “The Return of the *Flâneur*” from that of Benjamin’s other famous account of *flânerie*, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” although I will not be able elaborate this distinction here. One would need, at the very least, to consider the pride of place Benjamin assigns to Baudelaire’s poem “*À Une Passante*”: “Amid the deafening traffic of the town,/ Tall, slender, in deep mourning, with majesty,/ A woman passed, raising, with dignity/ In her poised hand, the flounces of her gown;/ Graceful, noble, with a statue’s form./ And I drank, trembling as a madman thrills,/ From her eyes, ashen sky where brooded storm,/ The softness that fascinates, the pleasure that kills./ A flash ... then

In this chapter, I show how the Benjaminian *flâneur*'s critique of restored ruins, the historical narratives they buttress, and the ways of being in the world they presume can unsettle an especially powerful element of the Armenian diaspora's discourse on Genocide: what in German is called *Ruinenlust*, or the melancholic love of ruins and the manic efforts to recognize, restore, and repair them. In the Armenian diasporic context, however, *Ruinenlust* is more than just a passion for literal ruins from Armenia's presumptive golden age of church building; it is a persistent political ontology. The diaspora's frequent fascination with the ruins of Armenian culture's distant past scattered throughout Turkey, Armenia, and the wider Mediterranean world carries a capacious presumption about Being in the wake of a catastrophic history: that one can only be fully human once what was shattered by genocide is made whole. While this fascination does not characterize every diasporan's view of ruins, and while the nationalism *Ruinenlust* at once enables and justifies is not everywhere uncritically embraced, I want to suggest that it is all too pervasive.⁴ One can see this fascination in Armenian cultural representations from the elite to the kitsch as well as in well-funded international efforts aimed at generating the very cultural tourism Benjamin's *flâneur* disdains.

This political ontology is perhaps most succinctly captured by the refrain of Los Angeles Armenian alt metal band System of a Down's late 1990s hit genocide song "P.L.U.C.K": "A whole race Genocide... Recognition, Restoration, Reparation."⁵ No doubt there is justice in

night!—O lovely fugitive,/ I am suddenly reborn from your swift glance;/ Shall I never see you till eternity?/ Somewhere, far off! Too late! never, perchance! / Neither knows where the other goes or lives;/ We might have loved, and you knew this might be!" To the extent that the *Arcades Project* was envisioned as itself a kind of *flânerie*, it is perhaps closer to the "The Return of the *Flâneur*," though an elaboration of that connection is also beyond the scope of the present chapter.

⁴I want to acknowledge important, critical work being done by scholars of pre-modern Armenian architecture. See for instance Andrzej Piotrowski, "Heresy, Hybrid Buildings, and a Geography of Architectural Traditions," *TDSR* 27, no. 1 (2015): 7–19. See also Christina Maranci's insightful study, *Vigilant Powers: Three Churches of Early Medieval Armenia* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015). Important groundwork for this recent critical scholarship was also set by Nina Garsoian and Sirarpie Der Nersessian. For a brief assessment of the comparative and cross-cultural dimension of scholarship on Armenian art and architecture, see also Sebouh Aslanian's chapter in this volume (Chap. 5).

⁵From <http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/P-L-U-C-K-lyrics-System-of-a-Down/080717695055ECE8482568B000295763>. Accessed July 18, 2017. System of a Down

the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide that claimed so many of our ancestors' lives, mine included. However, the call for recognition, restoration, and reparation too often ends up chasing much more normative and fantasmatic aims. The risk of this refrain is the narrow vision of political belonging in which the song sets it: a nationalist vision ("an entire nation") said to be shattered among ruins that figure genocidal loss ("watch them all fall down"), ruins whose restoration in turn figures a recognition that will make the nation whole again ("now it's time for restitution"). We must ask fundamental questions about this vision. Recognition: from whom are we seeking recognition, and what are we asking them to recognize? Restoration: what exactly do we think such recognition will restore? Reparation: who will be excluded from that repaired whole? As it turns out, Armenian nationalist visions that circulate in the diaspora often invent the tradition they seek to have recognized and restored, projecting a normative, contemporary ideal of what was lost into the past and then chasing its return in an impossible and endless game of repairing that which never existed in the first place. Inevitably, that normative ideal is held together by Islamophobia, racism, heteronormativity, and gender conformism. The figures of the invariably murderous Turk, the inevitably righteous Armenian Church, the passively victimized Armenian woman, the tragically heroic Armenian man, and the broken heterosexual family populate diasporan narratives that purport to show how an ancient nation was nearly destroyed and must be restored, just like the famously ruined churches in Ani.

How might diasporans undo these constraints and imagine alternative belongings that address the diversity of our varied contemporary worlds, which have little to do with the misty and mystified pasts we project into the ruins?⁶ We might begin by taking inspiration from the perspectival

played a famous concert in Yerevan in 2015, where many of these themes of loss, mourning, and nationalism converged.

⁶ For kindred efforts to pose this question, and accounts of cultural and historical texts that offer their own, heterodox answers, see: David Kazanjian, "Kinships Past, Kinship's Futures," *Getuigen: Tussen Geschiedenis en Herinnering/Testimony: Between History and Memory* 120, no. 1 (April 2015): 103–111; Kazanjian, "re storation: Aikaterini Gegesian's *A Small Guide to the Invisible Seas*," *Armenity*, Catalogue of the Armenian Pavilion for the Venice Biennale (Milan: Skira Editore, 2015), 60–63; Kazanjian, "re cognition: Nina Katchadourian's *Accent Elimination*," *Armenity*, 72–75; Kazanjian, "re paration: Sarkis's 'Respiro,'" *Sarkis: Respiro*, Catalogue of the Turkish Pavilion for the Venice Biennale (Istanbul: Istanbul Foundation for

shift Benjamin's *flâneur* offers. By leaving the familiar comforts of "the great reminiscences," wandering away from our "national shrines," and getting lost in the unfamiliarity of what has been left aside for "any old dog [to carry] away," we might displace our *Ruinenlust*. In turn, we might begin to notice heterodox efforts to represent the remains of genocide, efforts that wander beyond the "enclosed squares" of recognition, restoration, and reparation, efforts that attend to lives already thriving amongst unrestored ruins.

One such effort interests me in particular in this chapter: an experimental web and video project by Yerevan-based artist and activist Karen Andreassian, entitled "Ontological Walkscapes." This project takes the viewer into the ruins not of glorious and timeless classical Armenia, but rather into the ruins of Soviet Armenia's brutalist public spaces, where the romantic ideal of *Ruinenlust* is replaced by a cinematic stroll through neglected concrete spaces that have been repurposed by activists opposing the Armenian state's authoritarian rule. If the diaspora can learn to see and hear this vision coming from a space it has long deemed peripheral, and over which it too often lords its own opinions and resources, it might wander away from what it too confidently knows about itself. For the *flânerie* of "Ontological Walkscapes" unsettles who Armenians are and can be. And we in the North American diaspora, especially, need to

Culture and Arts and Yapı Kredi Publishing, 2015), 50–66; Kazanjian, "Re-flexion: Genocide in Ruins," *Discourse* 33, no. 3 (2011): 367–389; Kazanjian, "On Sound and Silence, 'in a place I'd never been before,'" *Agos* (Istanbul), May 2011. See also: Marc Nichanian, *The Historiographic Perversion*, trans. Gil Anidjar (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) [originally *La Perversion Historiographique: une réflexion arménienne* (Paris: Editions Lignes et Manifestes)]; Nichanian, "Catastrophic Mourning," trans. Jeff Fort, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 99–124; Nichanian, *Writers of Disaster, Armenian Literature in the Twentieth Century, vol. 1, the National Revolution* (Princeton: Gomidas Institute, 2002); David Kazanjian and Marc Nichanian, "Between Genocide and Catastrophe," in *Loss*, 125–147. Additionally, see Anahid Kassabian and David Kazanjian, "From Somewhere Else: Egoyan's *Calendar*, Freud's *Rat Man*, and Armenian Diasporic Nationalism," *Third Text* 19, no. 2 (March 2005): 125–144; Kassabian and Kazanjian, "Melancholic Memories and Manic Politics: Feminism, Documentary, and the Armenian Diaspora," in *Feminism and Documentary*, ed. Diane Waldman and Janet Walker (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 202–223; Kassabian and Kazanjian, "'You Have to Want to Be Armenian Here:' Nationalisms, Sexualities, and the Problem of Armenian Diasporic Identity," *Armenian Forum* 1, no. 1 (1998): 19–36; Kassabian and Kazanjian, "Naming the Armenian Genocide: The Quest for Truth and a Search for Possibilities," in *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*, ed. Erica Carter, James Donald, and Judith Squires (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), 33–55.

be unsettled. We who at times speak too much, too loudly, too confidently, and with too much money to Armenia, to Turkey, to international artistic and juridical institutions: of the past, of what it means, of what must be done with it. Instead of asserting the centrality of our North American diasporic voice and consequently casting other Armenian worlds into peripheries of our own making, what if we listened to and learned from artists like Andreassian, whose ex-Soviet milieu and intellectual roots in traditions like factography—which also influenced heterodox western Marxists like Benjamin—necessarily estrange us from selves forged in and through Western capitalism and the US imperial side of the Cold War?

I hope to show here how the *flânerie* of Andreassian’s “Ontological Walkscapes” can guide us from Armenian diasporic *Ruinenlust* to virtual *spazierend* amongst the ruins of post-Soviet Armenia, offering a kind of *poiesis* for the Armenian diaspora: an imaginative remaking of being-in-the-world in the wake of catastrophic loss.

ARMENIAN DIASPORIC *RUINENLUST* AS AN INVENTED TRADITION

Ruins. How are they known? What can we know of them? What do they know of us?

These questions have been posed incessantly since the Renaissance, when a pervasive European concern with the modern spurred a fascination about the crumbling past as that from which the modern differentiates itself as well as that which haunts the modern with its own, potentially ruined future. By the eighteenth century, Europe was in the grip of *Ruinenlust*. As Diderot wrote in 1767, at once describing and exemplifying this love of ruins:

Our glance lingers over the debris of a triumphal arch, a portico, a pyramid, a temple, a palace, and we retreat into ourselves; we contemplate the ravages of time, and in our imagination we scatter the rubble of the very buildings in which we live over the ground; in that moment solitude and silence prevail around us, we are the sole survivors of an entire nation that is no more. Such is the first tenant of the poetics of ruins.⁷

⁷ Denis Diderot, *Diderot on Art, II: The Salon of 1767*, trans. John Goodman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 196.

Here, ruins are occasions for melancholic reflection. They tell “us” of our “solitude” as “survivors” of a “nation” long gone. They prompt solipsistic retreat. Their *poiesis* is desultory.⁸

With the national bourgeoisie’s rise to hegemony in the capitalist world-system, Diderot’s melancholic *Ruinenlust* took a manic turn: ruins became aesthetic sites seized by nationalist ideologies. Examples of this turn abound: from late eighteenth-century debates in the United States about the historical value of Indian burial grounds; to Gustave Doré’s 1872 engravings of London’s St. Paul Cathedral in ruins, as imagined by a future traveler from New Zealand; to the Gothic aesthetics of the nineteenth-century British parliament building; to Mexico’s phantasmatic nineteenth- and twentieth-century restorations of Aztec and Maya pyramids in the name of national independence, *indigenismo*, and the tourist industry; to Spain’s late twentieth-century sleight-of-hand by which medieval castles and forts became expensive hotels, or *paradores*, honoring the nation. This nationalist *Ruinenlust* is a prime example of what Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger famously dubbed an “invented tradition”: “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”⁹ Such invented traditions perform a retroactive sleight-of-hand: they craft a fictive, prior greatness and project it onto ruins so as to materialize their loss.

Armenians in the North American diaspora often burn with a particular mode of *Ruinenlust*: the repetition of images of ruined churches and fortresses designed to invoke a great past, its genocidal destruction, and the desire for its restoration. This is perhaps most familiar in the form of what might be called *Ruinenlust* kitsch: the ubiquitous wall calendar and website images that crowd restaurants, rug shops, and the virtual faces of our philanthropic institutions.¹⁰ The ruins over which this genre obsesses are

⁸ For a recent argument in praise of the aesthetic experience of the ruin, which differs significantly from my approach here, see Robert Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2004).

⁹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012 [1983]), 1.

¹⁰ This kitsch is elaborately challenged by Atom Egoyan’s brilliant film *Calendar*, which I have discussed at length elsewhere. See Kazanjian, “Re-flexion: Genocide in Ruins;” Kazanjian and Kassabian “From Somewhere Else.”

extremely delimited. They are almost always medieval and pastoral: restored stone structures set in natural landscapes emptied of people.

These popular cultural artefacts do not invoke the urban detritus that so interests Benjamin's *flâneur*.¹¹ Rather, as mass-produced commodities they function metonymically by insisting over and over that one, rarefied aspect of Armenian culture—churches built during the post-classical and medieval periods in present-day Turkey and Armenia—ought to organize normative diasporan identity. That these churches are typically in ruins, particularly when they are located in Turkey, saturates that identity in loss. Visually, then, they conform to the logic of System of a Down's famous refrain, which I mentioned above: “recognition, restoration, reparation.” That is, they hail Armenians to identify with a historically and culturally limited field recoded as timeless, essential, and wounded, and they rally Armenians to heal that wound.

Yet *Ruinenlust*'s material reach extends well beyond the diaspora's walls and websites. Take our culture industry. The diaspora invests a significant amount of its considerable resources on projects that, as Hobsbawm and Ranger put it, “seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past”: the restoration of those very ancient, religious ruins as well as the exhibition of classical art. For instance, the Noravank¹² monastery near Yeghegnadzor, Armenia, which dates to the thirteenth century, was restored with funds from USAID/Armenia and the VIVACell/MTS corporation (Armenia's leading telecommunications company), in collaboration with a non-governmental organization called the Armenian Monuments Awareness Project (AMAP) whose funding sources flow from the diaspora and the Armenian government (see Figs. 11.1 and 11.2).

In the words of a USAID official who toured the organization's projects in Armenia, the meliorist ideal of development projects like Noravank¹² knows no limits:

¹¹ As Michael Pifer pointed out to me, the totalizing and homogeneous past this narrow selection of ruins constructs leaves little room for the ambiguous complexity of Armenian history, and certainly evades any account of the contemporary ruination of spaces in which Armenians are implicated, either as residents or as citizens of countries whose militaries are making more ruins every day. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/15/world/middleeast/aleppo-destruction-drone-video.html>. Accessed November 11, 2016.

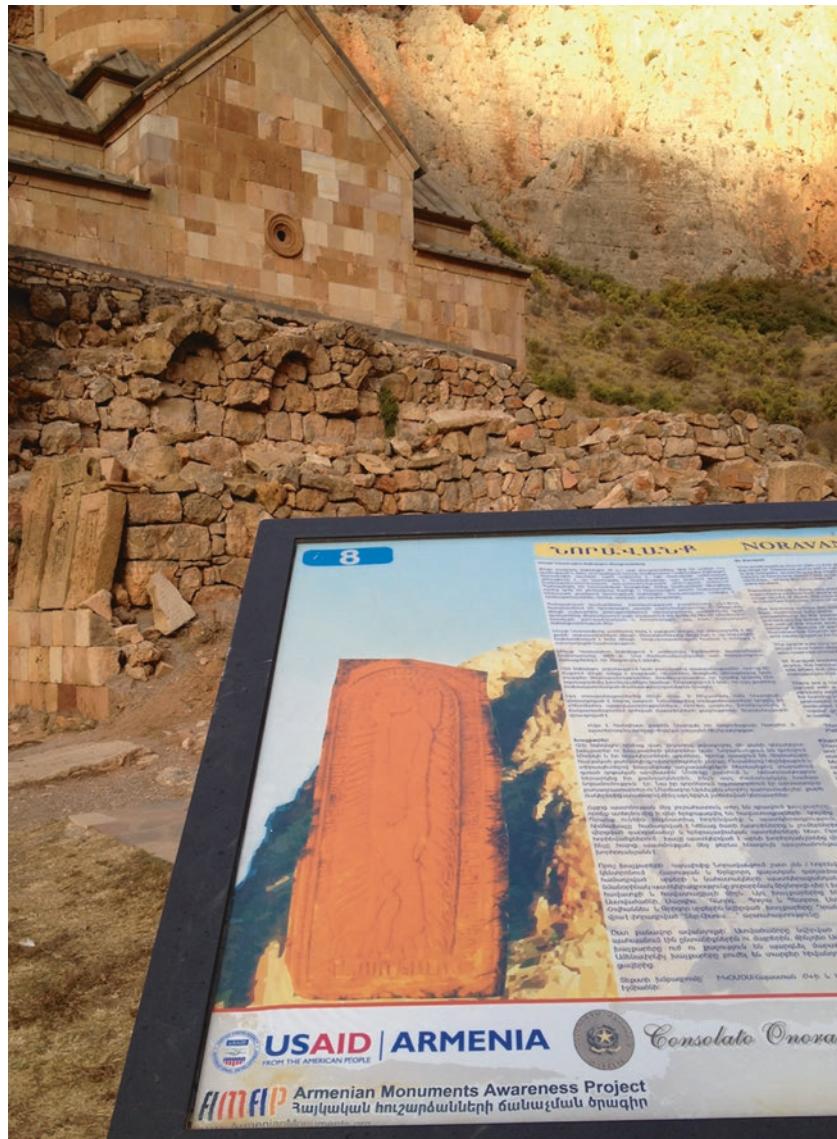


Fig. 11.1 The Thirteenth-Century Noravank^c Monastery, sponsored by USAID, author's photos



Fig. 11.2 The Thirteenth-Century Noravank^c Monastery, sponsored by VivaCell/
MTS, author's photos

Tourism in Armenia has grown strongly overall in the past five years despite the global financial crisis. In 2009, Armenia welcomed 575,281 international tourists. The sector has grown by more than 16% per year for the last five years. The road to the monasteries wound through breathtaking canyons full of birds and rare trees and flowers. I had lunch in a cave where local people prepared a chicken barbecue and the Armenian flat bread “lavash” over a pit. There is much for visitors to explore and experience in Armenia.¹²

International capital appears here in the familiar guise of a host amicably introducing the global to the local, without mention of tourism’s power to undermine local economies, or the ongoing and conflictual political impact of the diaspora on Armenian civil society. As AMAP explains in its 2012 call for new corporate sponsors of projects like the construction of signage at Noravank¹³:

For the new year we will be replacing older boards with newer, more robust materials, and replacing sponsor brands with those of our new donors. Though this is a donation project that focuses on the social benefits of promoting Armenian heritage, it also provides a unique marketing opportunity to promote your services inside cultural monuments to a dedicated audience of customers acquainting your brand with the culture. It is a deep-rooted positive connection that other types of marketing cannot provide.¹³

By “deeply rooting” its marketing in the passion of *Ruinenlust*, international capital deftly articulates surplus-value extraction with the “invented tradition” of a thirteenth-century ruin ahistorically repurposed as the emblem of a nation whose Caucasian state was founded some seven centuries later: first in 1918 and again, after the Soviet period, in 1991. AMAP’s signs thus point the way not simply to Noravank¹⁴ as an example of “Armenian heritage”; they also direct the diaspora’s traveling international bourgeoisie into the sphere of invented traditions.

Here we have a neo-liberal return of the tourist Benjamin distinguishes from Hessel’s *flâneur*. Yet, one should not simply dismiss AMAP’s invocation

¹² See <http://blog.usaid.gov/2010/08/usaid-supports-armenian-governments-tourism-efforts-to-boost-economic-growth/>. Accessed November 11, 2016.

¹³ See <http://www.armenianmonuments.org/en/2012proposal>. Accessed November 11, 2016.

of this “deep-rooted positive connection” as an ideological surface covering a more fundamental economic interest. To the extent that the material practices of *Ruinenlust* reiteratively reconstruct the nation’s invented traditions, they also carry an ontological promise for an Armenian nationalism that took hold in the wake of the Catastrophe that befell Armenians as the Ottoman Empire was violently transformed into the Turkish nation-state: the promise that a ruined people will somehow be repaired and restored once what has widely come to be known as the Armenian genocide is recognized by the international community and Turkey itself.

As such, diasporic *Ruinenlust* becomes a component of a discursive practice Marc Nichanian, drawing on Jacques Derrida, has dubbed “the historiographic perversion.”¹⁴ For Nichanian, positivist, historiographic efforts to prove the Armenian genocide not only fail in their efforts to prove; they rather fail to understand genocide’s most potent force: “genocide is not a fact because it is the very destruction of fact, of the notion of fact, of the factuality of fact.”¹⁵ As an event that involved not just mass killing, but also a concerted historiographic effort to conceal or destroy its own archival traces, genocide is paradoxically “something that may not have occurred as fact. Or worse: that something has occurred as the very negation of the fact as such.”¹⁶ Uniquely resistant to historiographic reparation, genocide is thus a “limit-experience,” “the limit-experience of the Catastrophe within language.”¹⁷ This is sharply so in the case of the Armenians, whose Catastrophe unfolded many decades before even the word “genocide” itself was coined by Raphael Lemkin and institutionalized within international law during the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁸ While this

¹⁴ For the phrase “historiographic perversion,” see Jacques Derrida, “The Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority,’” in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, and David Gray Carlson. 3–67. (New York: Routledge, 1992), 60.

¹⁵ Nichanian, *The Historiographic Perversion*, 1.

¹⁶ Nichanian, *The Historiographic Perversion*, 2.

¹⁷ Nichanian, *The Historiographic Perversion*, 7.

¹⁸ For his 1930s work, before coining the word “genocide,” see Raphael Lemkin, “Acts Constituting a General (Transnational) Danger Considered as Offences against the Law of Nations,” trans. Jim Fussell, www.preventgenocide.org/lemkin/madrid1933-english.html, originally published in French as “Les actes constituant un danger général (interétatique) considérés comme délités des droit des gen,” *Explications additionnelles au Rapport spécial présenté à la V-me Conférence pour l’Unification du Droit Penal à Madrid* (14–2 O.X. 1933), *Librairie de la cour d’appel ed de l’order de advocates* (Paris: A. Pedone, 13 Rue Soufflot, 1933), and in German as “Akte der Barbarei und des Vandalismus als *delicta juris gentium*,”

Catastrophe was unfolding, it was given names that we have learned to forget, names eclipsed by the more historiographically and legally oriented category of genocide. Nichanian writes:

there is also a history of the name in the case of the extermination of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. At the very beginning, around 1919, the proper name of the event was rather *Yeghern*, which, in its common form, more or less means “pogrom” and was already the word one used to designate the planned series of massacres of 1895 in Eastern Anatolia as well as those of 1909 in the Adana region...But terminology was not fixed, and other words were also used as proper names. In the familial context, the most current name was *Ak’sor*, which, as a common name, means “exile” or “deportation.” And then, from 1931 on, another name appeared as a proper name: *Aghed*. It is the common word for “catastrophe”...¹⁹

This forgetting of the names the Catastrophe had before “genocide” reminds us of the elements of this event that defy efforts to prove its eventness, to establish its facticity. I want to suggest that the discursive practice of *Ruinenlust* is part of this system, that it works more *within* what Nichanian calls “the historiographic perversion” than apart from or against it.

American freelance writer and photographer Russ Juskalian exemplifies this problematic in a 2012 *New York Times* travel section article about visiting Nagorno-Karabakh. As he explains, because his grandmother fled the early twentieth-century genocide in eastern Anatolia, he feels a “personal” attachment to this southern Caucasus region—apparently despite the geographic, linguistic, and cultural differences that have long separated the two regions. Linking this aspirational attachment to a heartfelt ambivalence about Armenia’s ongoing war with Azerbaijan, Juskalian writes: “I was hoping not just to understand more about this little-known area, but also to understand more about my own background...To come to Nagorno-Karabakh, a place where Armenians

Anwaltsblatt Internationales 19, no. 6 (Vienna, November 1933): 117–119. For his 1940s work, in which he coins the word “genocide,” see Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944), 69–95; Lemkin, “Genocide—A Modern Crime,” *Free World* 4 (April, 1945): 39–45; Lemkin, “Genocide as a Crime under International Law,” *American Journal of International Law* 41, no. 1 (1947). For a more recent return to Lemkin’s work, see Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007).

¹⁹ Nichanian, *The Historiographic Perversion*, 7.

have asserted their right to live freely—but at the cost of having forcibly removed their Azeri neighbors—generated mixed emotions, to say the least.”²⁰ This profoundly critical perspective on the search for confirmation of national identity comes from a certain *flânerie*. In acknowledging the militarism that drives the ongoing war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Juskalian gets lost, wandering off the “too well paved” route all diasporans are expected to travel from the acknowledgment of loss to the confirmation of a shared national identity with all its normative force. Yet that wander is quickly corrected by an Armenian cab driver, or at least by Juskalian’s interpretation of that cab driver’s words:

Over the next few days we hired a taxi, so we could see more of the region’s Armenian ruins. There was the white-stone Amaras monastery, swathed in knee-high grasses and the occasional wild poppy plant; the 13th-century Gandzasar monastery, whose walls and floor, some believe, contain the head of John the Baptist, the jaw of Gregory the Illuminator and the right hand of St. Zachariah; and Dadivank, where immense Armenian steles known as khachkars, some over 1,000 years old, stood in repose. At one point, while traveling on the Stepanakert-Martakert Highway in a battered taxi, I saw the ruins of stone buildings. “Agdam?” I asked the driver. “Agdam,” he answered, quietly. “No photo.” Agdam had been an Azeri village that the Armenians had razed during the war. Some 40,000 people fled, and many were killed. As hundreds of abandoned homes, many reduced to foundations, came into view, the driver stepped hard on the gas.²¹

There must be no record of these ruins, made by Armenians themselves; the diasporan ought not wander there, for they do not fall along national identity tourist’s route. Ultimately, as with the “tourist” of whom Benjamin writes, as well as the “visitors” imagined by the USAID and AMAP reports I discussed above, for Juskalian “the great reminiscences, the historical frissons,” and a “deep-rooted positive connection” flow from the “temples, enclosed squares, and national shrines” he tours. Nagorno-Karabakh becomes Juskalian’s Rome, then: historically grand and volatile, beautifully broken, the very condition of possibility for personal restoration—*Ruinenlust*.

Just as System of a Down’s manic cry for “recognition, restoration, reparation” transforms *Ruinenlust* into an ontology, so too can Juskalian’s version

²⁰ <http://travel.nytimes.com/2012/09/23/travel/off-the-map-in-nagorno-karabakh-a-region-in-the-southern-caucasus.html?pagewanted=all>. Accessed November 11, 2016.

²¹ <http://travel.nytimes.com/2012/09/23/travel/off-the-map-in-nagorno-karabakh-a-region-in-the-southern-caucasus.html?pagewanted=all>. Accessed November 11, 2016.

of what Benjamin calls “the dreams of the passer-by” become an even more frighteningly consequential mode-of-being. Consider a 2008 article entitled “Bones” published in the *New York Times Magazine* by Peter Balakian, the American author and poet perhaps best known for his popular 1997 genocide memoir *Black Dog of Fate*. Recounting a U.S. State Department sponsored visit he made to Der Zor in Syria to see the region’s ruins and seek out traces of Armenian history, Balakian quite matter-of-factly describes how he found, pocketed, and smuggled out of the country not only rocky remnants of supposedly ancient buildings, but also human bones he supposedly uncovered in an area his guide told him was a desert burial ground for Armenians killed during the genocide. Balakian writes:

I put my hand in the dirt, grazing the ground, and came up with hard white pieces. “Our ancestors are here,” I muttered. Then I began, without thinking, picking up handfuls of dirt, sifting out the bones and stuffing them in my pockets. I felt the porous, chalky, dirt-saturated, hard, intangible stuff in my hands. A piece of hip socket, part of a skull. Nine decades later. I filled my pockets with bones, compelled to have these fragments with me...On the plane back to the United States, I kept waking and sleeping. It wasn’t until we were over Labrador that I realized I was carrying organic matter from another country...As I stood in line at customs at Kennedy Airport, I remembered my State Department hosts telling me that, because of where I’d been, they might want to check my bags. But the customs agent looked at my passport, looked at me, then stamped the passport and said, “Welcome back.”²²

When I asked Balakian about this story after a reading he gave in 2011 at the University of Pennsylvania, he declared that he garnered a certain satisfaction at being able, as he put it, to “return” these remains to the United States.²³ In what sense did he mean “return”? Even if they were what his guide told them they were, these would have been bones of people for whom the United States could not have been farther from “home.” Balakian performs a remarkable alchemy here, fueled by *Ruinenlust*: what many would call grave-robbing by a gullible traveler becomes, in the eyes

²²<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/07/magazine/07lives-t.html>. Accessed November 11, 2016.

²³Personal Communication, November 8, 2011. For a video recording of part of this event, see <https://media.sas.upenn.edu/watch/123181>; for an audio recording, see https://media.sas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Balakian/Balakian-Peter_APoetry-Reading_KWH-Upenn_11-08-2011.mp3. Accessed November 11, 2016.

of the diasporan genocide memoirist, a passion for ruins that fortify a diasporic Armenian-American exceptionalism.²⁴ There is an arrogance to this suffering that diasporans would do well to learn how to unsettle.²⁵

I have drawn these seemingly disparate cases together—the wall calendars, the Noravank⁴ Monastery restoration, and Juskalian’s and Balakian’s articles—to bring into relief a widespread Armenian diasporic discourse on a putatively ruined identity that demands recognition, restoration, and reparation: a *Ruinenlust*. So let us question this discourse, drawing again from Benjamin’s “The Return of the *Flâneur*.” If the *Ruinenlust* of Juskalian’s “knowledge of artists’ quarters, birthplaces, and princely palaces” speeds away from the more risky, potentially monstrous recognition of Armenian militarism, and Balakian’s grave-robbing boldly embraces an exceptionalist, even arrogant ontology of suffering, then how might we, in the diaspora, learn to unsettle such *Ruinenlust*? How, that is, might we wander rather toward what Benjamin calls “the scent of a single weathered threshold or the touch of a single tile,” toward “that which any old dog carries away”?

WALKSCAPES

Yerevan-based artist Karen Andreassian’s remarkable video project, called “Ontological Walkscapes,” offers a profound and provocative answer to these questions, very much in the spirit of Benjamin’s *flânerie*. This web-based documentary archive—which Andreassian calls “a long-term research project on socio-political landscapes and their potential infiltration”—is made up of a potentially endless series of short videos housed on a website that shows a sea of numbers carefully arranged in lines (see Fig. 11.3).²⁶

The length of each video is determined by these numbers, which apparently are generated at random but governed by an algorithm that, we are told cryptically on the website, “reflect[s] the time interval between the two clicks in seconds.” In the videos, which were shot by Andreassian, we view images of Soviet-era urban ruin and public spaces

²⁴ Nanor Kebranian has also spoken eloquently about the horrors of Balakian’s grave-robbing (unpublished paper delivered at the International Conference on the Armenian Diaspora, Boston University, February 2010).

²⁵ Thanks to Dillon Vrana for offering me the phrase “the arrogance of suffering.”

²⁶ <http://www.ontologicalwalkscapes.format.am/text.php?text=t8&image=s11>. Accessed November 11, 2016. The project has also been assembled into a book with an attached CD showing the videos: Karen Andreassian, *Ontological Walkscapes* (Istanbul: 11th International Istanbul Biennial, 2009). For the Biennial’s description of the project, see http://11b.iksv.org/sanatcilar_en.asp?sid=7. Accessed November 11, 2016.

Ontological Walkscapes / Project Description / Team

Fig. 11.3 The “Ontological Walkscapes” Website, courtesy of Karen Andreassian

from across Armenia; traveling shots of an “expert,” Steven Wright, lecturing on his impressions of the scenes; and other shots of people strolling through public spaces. These wanderers may be casual, but as the project description suggests they may also be conducting the kind of mobile political meetings that became popular in Armenia after the fraudulent elections of 2008 were followed by mass protest and the subsequent, violent state suppression of dissent. These mobile meetings are difficult for the police to distinguish from the casual strollers who customarily fill Armenia’s city and town centers and, consequently, they have been more difficult to monitor or repress. We thus encounter what emerged from the convergence of “the slow disappearance of 1970s Soviet-Armenian architecture and the shrinkage of public spaces due to the construction boom; and the peaceful protests, which led to the forceful dispersion of the demonstrators during the last post-presidential

election at Azatutyoun [Freedom] Square.”²⁷ Andreassian’s project displaces the *Ruinenlust* of “temples, enclosed squares, and national shrines” with images of the ruins into which Soviet monumentality fell. In turn, it shows how those Soviet ruins are re-animated by a *flânerie* of quotidian sociality and mobile protest.

Indeed, this resonance with Benjamin and the Soviet past is not coincidental. As Andreassian explains on the website for “Ontological Walkscapes,” he and his collaborators studied factography, a Soviet movement centered on Osip Brik, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and Sergei Tretyakov’s journals *LEF* (*Left Front of the Arts*) and *New LEF*. During the 1920s, factography challenged the presumptive truth claims of documentary realism and set for photography and film the task of generating experimental working class aesthetics that would actively transform rather than passively record the real.²⁸ Benjamin was also influenced by this movement, particularly by its anti-deterministic and anti-positivistic approach to new technologies and the representation of the present.²⁹ Drawing on Devin Fore and Viktor Pertsov, Andreassian particularly emphasizes how the factographers understood their cultural work “not as a static genre, but as a mode of praxis” in which “the fact is quite literally made” and “immediate life activity” is “popped” out of any merely utilitarian frame. Factography appealed to him and his collaborators because it “engaged not just with physical and dimensional bodies, but also with bodies of collective social knowledge and networks of communication,” particularly as those bodies could be recorded by “the masses of worker-correspondents.”³⁰

Andreassian’s walkscapes could thus be said to perform what Benjamin calls “the perfected art of the *flâneur*,” “a knowledge of ‘dwelling.’” For

²⁷ <http://basekamp.com/about/events/ontological-walkscapes>. Accessed November 11, 2016.

²⁸ On factography, see Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “From Faktura to Factography,” *October* 30 (Autumn, 1984): 82–119. Devin Fore, “Soviet Factography: Production Art in an Information Age,” *October* 118 (Fall 2006): 3–10; Natasha Kolchevska, “From Agitation to Factography: The Plays of Sergej Tret’jakov,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 31, no. 3 (Autumn 1987): 388–403; Elizabeth Astrid Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth: The Documentary Moment in Early Soviet Culture* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).

²⁹ See Fore, “Soviet Factography” and <https://chtodelat.org/b8-newspapers/12-48-1-soviet-factography-production-art-in-an-information-age/>.

³⁰ For Andreassian’s account of his relationship to factography, see <http://www.ontologicalwalkscapes.format.am/text.php:text=t2&image=10>. Accessed November 11, 2016. Andreassian references Fore “Soviet Factography.” The Viktor Pertsov reference is unclear to me, but one may turn to his first book, written at the height of New LEF’s influence, *Tomorrow’s Literature* (1929), as well as *The Writer and the New Reality* (1958).

according to Benjamin, Hessel's *On Foot in Berlin* raises not only the question of the quotidian stroll, but also the question of "what 'dwelling' means." The Berlin *flâneur* wanders the crossroads of an older set of dwellings, "with the idea of security at its core," and the new dwellings of Giedion, Mendelsohn, and Le Corbusier, who "are converting human habitations into the transitional spaces of every imaginable force and wave of light and air."³¹ Hessel thus attends carefully to thresholds:

...unassuming household gods on dusty landings, in nameless hall niches, the guardians of rites of passage who once served as presiding spirits every time someone stepped over a wooden or metaphorical threshold...Berlin has few gates, but he [the *flâneur*] is familiar with the lesser transitions, those that separate the city from the surrounding lowland, or one district from another: building sites, bridges, urban railway overpasses, and squares. They are all honored here and recorded, to say nothing of the transitional hours...³²

This "knowledge of dwelling" is not so much an account of how to be *in* as it is an experience of passing *through* and a verging *upon* that refuses simply to leave behind where one has been. Quoting again from "The Return of the *Flâneur*": "If we recollect that not only people and animals but also spirits and above all images can inhabit a place, then we have a tangible idea of what concerns the *flâneur* and of what he looks for. Namely, images, wherever they lodge [*Nämlich die Bilder wo immer sie hausen*]."³³ The English translation here is fortuitous, for "lodge" can be taken both in the sense of "to reside" and in the sense of "to be arrested or intercepted in fall or progress; to 'stick' in a position."³⁴ This Berlin *flânerie* can be said to disrupt progress by lingering in the dust, wedging itself into over-familiar spaces to pry them open, and to wander across thresholds into the "force and wave of light and air." It is thus paradoxically recursive and open-ended, stuck and ongoing. It gets us lost, detaching us from our familiar, grand historicist narratives, and incites the possibility of a different relation between unsung pasts and unpredictable futures.

Andreassian's "Ontological Walkscapes" often proffer just this unsettling aesthetic. Let us consider in particular a set of seven videos, all of which were shot in Hrazdan, a provincial Armenian capital developed

³¹ Benjamin, "The Return of the *Flâneur*," 264–265.

³² Benjamin, "The Return of the *Flâneur*," 264–265.

³³ Benjamin, "The Return of the *Flâneur*," 264.

³⁴ Oxford English Dictionary Online.

during the Soviet years as an industrial center.³⁵ All run for 14 seconds or less and are marked on the “Ontological Walkscapes” website by a number corresponding to their length. They feature fixed-camera shots of urban spaces filled with 1970s-era structures poised on the brink of ruin during which one hears only ambient noise, primarily of wind gusting against the microphone and the occasional car or bird. The seven videos depict: first, a shot of a crumbling, cement overpass with a crumbling, empty cement pool in the foreground (7 seconds) (see Fig. 11.4);



Fig. 11.4 Still from Andreassian’s short videos, “Ontological Walkscapes,” 7 seconds, courtesy of Karen Andreassian

³⁵ Were there space, I should also like to consider another video linked to the “Ontological Walkscapes” project, one shot at a Yerevan bicycle race track. This video runs for 3 minutes and 14 seconds, and shows the banked race track and its grandstands with four shots from four different angles. Toward the end of each of the first two shots, the camera moves just slightly to the left; during the last two shots, people ride bikes along a flat, narrow, asphalt path that loops around the inside of the race track, separated from the track by a narrow strip of grass.



Fig. 11.5 Still from Andreassian's short videos, "Ontological Walkscapes," 12 seconds, courtesy of Karen Andreassian

second, the same overpass framed to the left by a tree (12 seconds) (see Fig. 11.5); third, an exterior wall of an abandoned, Soviet-era bus station along which run scores of cement columns spaced only a few feet apart (8 seconds) (see Fig. 11.6); fourth, a circular café in that station, wrapped in brutalist flying buttresses (5 seconds) (see Fig. 11.7); fifth, a set of cement and metal bollards crowded by weeds, backgrounded by the corner of the bus station building (14 seconds) (see Fig. 11.8); sixth, a shot from across a road busy with traffic showing the café and the bus station together, connected by a cement arch (6 seconds) (see Fig. 11.9); and seventh, the shortest video, showing the overpass, bus station, and café together, as a complex of dwellings (4 seconds) (see Fig. 11.10).



Fig. 11.6 Still from Andreassian's short videos, "Ontological Walkscapes," 8 seconds, courtesy of Karen Andreassian

These fleeting sequences are rife with the paradoxical potential of the *flâneur*'s return. Fixed by the camera's lack of movement, they are also set in motion as video. Weighed down by immense quantities of gray cement, they also weightlessly rush past us in a matter of seconds, seemingly light enough for Benjamin's "old dog" to carry away. They return to iconic remnants of the Soviet era, staging the melancholia of a statist utopianism now abandoned to wind and weed; yet they also carry untold potential, as sites not only for reflection, but also for reclamation by the furtive, post-2008 mobile political meetings. We wonder what werewolves might stroll through these concrete jungles, these "building sites, bridges, urban railway overpasses, and squares" which might at any moment be bulldozed for redevelopment. By offering us the



Fig. 11.7 Still from Andreassian's short videos, "Ontological Walkscapes," 5 seconds, courtesy of Karen Andreassian

potential for popularly repurposing the ruins of a planned society, they interrupt early twentieth-century factography's own participation in Soviet-style modernization. As such, Andreassian's work fits into a vast realm of popular, oppositional culture that has thrived in the former Soviet states since the early 1990s, often in the face of vigorous repression.

For the North American Armenian diaspora I have invoked throughout this chapter, whose primary framework for the brutalist forms Andreassian films—the Cold War—no longer provides meaning, these videos *lodge* themselves into the ubiquitous still shots of ancient churches and fortresses populating *Ruinenlust* kitsch; into Juskalian's account of "Dadivank, where immense Armenian steles known as khachkars, some



Fig. 11.8 Still from Andreassian's short videos, "Ontological Walkscapes," 14 seconds, courtesy of Karen Andreassian

over 1,000 years old, stood in repose;" into Balakian's pockets, filled with "a piece of hip socket, part of a skull." They thus *arrest or intercept* the invented traditions of which Hobsbawm and Ranger write, the "overtly or tacitly accepted rules...which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition." The gusts of wind and hum of traffic one hears on these videos *wedge* their way into the incessant iterations of Armenian diasporic nationalism, offering a dissonant dispersal of System of a Down's relentlessly rhythmic refrain: "recognition, restoration, reparation." These sites will not defy "the global financial crisis" like USAID's development projects, for the closed café refuses to serve



Fig. 11.9 Still from Andreassian's short videos, "Ontological Walkscapes," 6 seconds, courtesy of Karen Andreassian

the local charms of "chicken barbecue" or "lavash," and the scrubby trees and everyday chirps of urban birds defiantly fail to take a tourist's breath away. The videos' crumbling concrete provides no "unique marketing opportunity" to AMAP's donors, whose diasporan targets could never root a positive connection in rocky dirt alongside ubiquitous weeds.

Andreassian's fleeting, filmic Armenia unsettles the ontological fortitude of the diaspora's *Ruinenglust*. Which is to say, in "Ontological Walkscapes" what we are and what we want are undone rather than remade as "great reminiscences" or "historical *frissons*." This factographic return



Fig. 11.10 Still from Andreassian's short videos, "Ontological Walkscapes," 4 seconds, courtesy of Karen Andreassian

of *flânerie* thus refers "fact" to its etymological root: the Latin verb *facere* or "to make."³⁶ Posed in a visual idiom of becoming, it proffers an urgent interrogative: what might we make of these walkscapes, and what might they make of us?

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³⁶ <http://www.ontologicalwalkscapes.format.am/text.php?text=t2&image=s10>.



CHAPTER 12

Spaces of Difference, Spaces of Belonging: Negotiating Armenianness in Lebanon and France

Vahe Sahakyan

INTRODUCTION

In August of 2015, *RAG Mamoul*,¹ the Lebanon-based Armenian online periodical of the Armenian Democratic Liberal (Ramkavar) Party published an article by Hovel Chenorhokian, an Armenian businessmen of Lebanese origin, who had been established in Paris for many years. In his lengthy discussion of the problems of education and preservation of Armenian identity in the diaspora, Chenorhokian used the occasion to reflect on his childhood in distant Beirut:

Beirut was different. Facing our house was the Sourp Neshan Church. On Sundays, standing on our kitchen balcony, we used to watch the weddings,

¹ Transliterations follow the Library of Congress's Romanization system except when quoting from other texts. In the case of proper names that frequently appear in the Latin script, such as the titles of Armenian newspapers, the more common spelling is preserved.

V. Sahakyan (✉)

University of Michigan-Dearborn, Dearborn, MI, USA

follow up on who attended and who was absent. On weekdays, at ten past eight in the morning, students attending the school next to the church used to line up with military precision and start their school day singing “Aravod Luso,”² blessing thus our entire building. Our building, the “Dermenjian building” was itself, a “village.” Surprisingly, out of the 22 apartments, only one was inhabited by a non-Armenian family...Our school, the Armenian Evangelical College, was within a ten minute walking distance from our home. In the entire population of about 600 students, here too, there was only one non-Armenian student...We may have needed to talk Arabic only when using the Beirut public transportation...In Beirut, those who spoke, spoke in Armenian; those who read, read in Armenian; those who wrote, wrote in Armenian. Here [in Paris] one would not even consider inquiring about a child’s ability to read or write. If someone’s child merely speaks Armenian, then the parent is considered a hero.³

Chenorhokian’s account was published during a period when the Republic of Armenia had been an independent country for about quarter of a century. It appeared in the journal of the Քամքար party, known for its unconditional support for the Republic of Armenia (whether Soviet or Independent) as the “homeland” of all Armenians since the early 1920s. Throughout his article, the author even makes several references to Armenia, believing that the Armenians are “a nation, consisting of the homeland [Republic of Armenia] and the diaspora.”⁴ However, although this homeland was readily available for his return, he continued living in a diasporic space, preferring the life in a “host-country” over the life in the “homeland.” In fact, Chenorhokian’s nostalgic account broadly mirrors a recent trend in diaspora studies in which physical return to the homeland is no longer conceptualized as one of the inalienable characteristics of a diaspora.⁵ Departing from essentialized notions of ethnicity, many recent

² “Morning of Light,” a liturgical song in Armenian church service.

³ Hovel Chenorhokian, “Rise, Diaspora!” *RAG Mamoul*, August 5, 2015, accessed December 18, 2015, <http://ragmamoul.net/en/news-in-english/2015/08/05/rise-diaspora/>.

⁴ Chenorhokian, “Rise, Diaspora!”

⁵ See for example James Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 302–338; Khachig Tölölyan, “Rethinking *Diaspora(s)*: Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment,” *Diaspora* 5, no. 1 (1994): 3–36; Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008). Prior to this, some scholars tended to emphasize the centrality of homeland and the promise of return as a defining characteristic of diaspora. See, for example, William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return.” *Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 83–99; Gabriel Sheffer, “A New Field of Study: Modern Diasporas in International Politics,” in *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*, ed. Gabriel Sheffer (London & Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), 1–15.

studies have challenged this homeland-centered fixation in diaspora studies, instead choosing to emphasize the heterogeneity, laterality, and multi-centrality of diasporas.⁶

In the Armenian case, the concept of “homeland” not only encompasses a geographic territory from which the ancestors of the diaspora once departed, but also site(s) that have been actively (re)imagined, (re)constructed and promoted as homeland by various diasporic activists and institutions. For instance, since its Sovietization in the early 1920s, various administrations of the Republic of Armenia and their supporters in the diaspora have promoted the Republic as the national homeland of all Armenians. This in turn has given rise to conflicting and often incompatible perceptions of an Armenian homeland. Earlier Armenian immigrants and the dispersed survivors of the Armenian genocide, perpetrated by the Ottoman authorities during World War I, had no personal connection to Soviet Armenia. Although some diasporan Armenians gradually began to perceive the Republic as the only part of the homeland that had survived, others believed that Armenia was the ultimate realization of their long political struggles in the diaspora, and yet a third contingent advocated for an independent, non-Soviet, “United” Armenia, which would include Ottoman Armenian lands as well. Still, in the immediate aftermath of World War II, thousands of Armenians who moved from various countries to Soviet Armenia frequently believed they were returning to the homeland or repatriating.⁷

⁶Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture and Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 222–237; Clifford, “Diasporas”; Paul Gilroy, ‘There Ain’t No Black in Union Jack’: *The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, “Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity,” *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 4 (1993): 693–725; Daniel Boyarin, *A Traveling Homeland: The Babylonian Talmud as Diaspora* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Philadelphia Press, 2015).

⁷I discuss the development of the conflicting perceptions of homeland in much detail elsewhere. See Vahe Sahakyan “Between Host-Countries and Homeland: Institutions, Politics and Identities in the Post-Genocide Armenian Diaspora (1920s to 1980s)” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2015). See also Anny Bakalian, *Armenian-Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993); Benjamin Alexander, “The American Armenians’ Cold War: The Divided Response to Soviet Armenia,” in *Anti-Communist Minorities in the U.S.: Political Activism of Ethnic Refugees*, ed. Ieva Zak (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 67–86; Sarkis Atamian, *The Armenian Community: The Historical Development of a Social and Ideological Conflict* (New York:

Chenorhokian's account, however, offers us a different perspective: it also problematizes the idea of *hostland*, which has received less attention in scholarly literature. In the passage above, although Chenorhokian moves from one diasporic site to another, he nostalgically yearns for Beirut, his birthplace and the place of lived experience. Where then does Beirut fit within the dialectic between homeland and hostland? Should we conceptualize Beirut as a "homeland," implying a sense of its centrality and permanence to Armenian identity, or as merely a diasporic, and hence temporary, node within a constellation of host-countries? Some would argue that Armenians are not indigenous in Beirut and, therefore, Lebanon is a host-country for Armenians. Diasporas, indeed, can hardly claim indigeneity if by definition diasporan peoples are believed to be the descendants of once immigrant or expatriate populations.⁸ But moving beyond the essentialized notions of authenticity and indigeneity, should diasporan peoples be conceptualized as natives or temporary "guests" in places and spaces, which they share for decades and, often, centuries with more "indigenous" populations? To put it more simply, are third and fourth generation Armenians in Lebanon, or *français d'origine Arménienne* in France, natives at home or guests in a host-country? Are diasporic communities necessarily in tension with the norms of the (nation-)state or are they an integral part of the states and societies in which they reside?

By exploring the formation of Armenian institutional and communal spaces in Lebanon and France, this chapter problematizes the notion of "host-country" in diaspora studies. My primary argument is that descendants

Philosophical Library, 1955); Nicola Migliorino, *(Re)Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria: Ethno-Cultural Diversity and the State in the Aftermath of a Refugee Crisis* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008); Nikola Schahgaldian, "The Political Integration of an Immigrant Community into a Composite Society: The Armenians in Lebanon, 1920–1974" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1979); Khachig Tölöyan, "Exile Governments in the Armenian Polity," in *Governments-in-Exile in Contemporary World Politics*, ed. Yossi Shain (New York: Routledge, 1991), 166–185; Khachig, Tölöyan, "Elites and Institutions in the Armenian Transnation," *Diaspora* 9, no. 1 (2000): 107–136.

⁸ Writing about diasporas in the twentieth century, James Clifford more explicitly suggests that diasporas are defined against indigenous claims by "tribal" people and against "hegemonic nationalism" or "the norms of nation-states." In juxtaposing diasporas to nativist claims, Clifford wonders whether "relative newcomers," such as "the fourth generation Indians in Fiji, or Mexicans in southwestern United States since the 16th century," have historical and/or indigenous rights. "How long does it take to become 'indigenous'?" he asks, arguing that attempts to draw strict lines between "original" inhabitants and "subsequent immigrants" "risk ahistoricism" (Clifford, "Diasporas," 307–310).

of displaced Armenian people and the institutions they established in these countries became embedded in the social fabric of local societies, and therefore the second, third, and fourth generations of these peoples obviously cannot be considered as temporary “guests” in “host” countries with an inalienable and essentialized yearning for the homeland. This argument is based on two inter-related points. First, by focusing on the formation of Armenian private and public spaces in these countries, predominantly in the interwar period, I show that even polities that promote and valorize assimilation have yielded spaces for the articulation, expression, and production of ethno-confessional differences. Second, as I contend, it was through the process of negotiating such ethno-confessional spaces of difference that various Armenian ethnic institutions emerged, some of which became (permanently) embedded in the legal, political and social structure of these societies. It is around and beyond the network of these emerging and declining, enduring and short-term, local and translocal institutions that different Armenian spaces have developed in Lebanon and France (and elsewhere), in relation to which subsequent generations of (originally) displaced Armenians articulated their own forms of cultural and ethnic difference, as well as negotiated various expressions of Armenianess.

Lebanon under the French Mandate and metropolitan France became prime destinations for the surviving refugees of the Armenian genocide in the 1920s. By exploring the ways in which the Armenian refugees integrated within these Mediterranean countries, this chapter demonstrates how these polities provided radically different contexts for the proliferation of Armenian spaces. Moving away from the binary diaspora/host-country, it further suggests studying diasporization as a process of the *rooting* of the displaced populations in their new countries of residence through several generations, rather than as a process of alienation from host-countries. Through this process, dispersed populations and their descendants negotiate their identities and belongings within and beyond certain permissible spaces of difference. They directly or indirectly engage in the production, dissemination, and consumption of self-reflexive discourses on past, present, and future, as well as discourses on ancestral homeland and return that circulate through the institutional, organizational, familial, and kinship networks within and beyond the boundaries of their countries of residence.

By *spaces of difference* it is not implied that these polities are generally homogeneous and that such spaces should be necessarily juxtaposed against a culturally monolithic “French” or “Lebanese” cultural background. Rather, I use this phrase to refer to institutional and discursive

spaces created by different immigrant populations and their descendants in order to preserve something perceived as belonging to a given community's past that is also perceived as *not* belonging to the local population as a whole—whether those perceptions are accurate or not. As I will show, these spaces did not develop for the same reasons or even in the same manner, and consequently they offer different sites from which we can rethink the binaries of guest/host, diaspora/host-country.

THE ARMENIAN CONTEXT: ARMENIAN GENOCIDE SURVIVORS IN LEBANON AND FRANCE

The massive dispersion of Armenians who survived both deportations and genocide in the Ottoman Empire during World War I gave birth to Armenian settlements in many countries. Fleeing persecution, scores of Armenian refugees ended up in camps in Beirut, Lebanon, and Marseille, France in the 1920s. Internally diverse and heterogeneous due to various confessional (Apostolic, Catholic, Protestant), linguistic (Armenian, Turkish, and dialects), compatriotic (village, town, or regional) and political affiliations, these groupings, much like Jewish immigrants in France and the United States, tended to regroup in accordance to their kinship networks, occupation, confessional affiliation, and cities and towns of origin.⁹ Armenian clergy, intellectuals, leaders of political parties, and heads of charitable organizations gradually began to worry about the future of these dispersed Armenian masses. The Treaty of Lausanne, which in 1923 recognized the Republic of Turkey without any mention of the Armenian question, made it mostly impossible for Armenians to return to their native towns and villages.¹⁰ To compound matters, the short-lived Republic of Armenia became a Soviet republic in 1920–1921, forcing its former government out of the country.

⁹ For studies on Jewish immigration and settlement in France and United States, see Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Calvin Goldscheider and Alan S. Zuckerman, *The Transformation of the Jews* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984); Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654–2000* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

¹⁰ For the detailed discussion of the Armenian Question see Richard Hovannisian, “The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire 1876 to 1914,” in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 2, *Foreign Dominion to Statehood: the Fifteenth century to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Richard Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 203–238.

Without a place to return, displaced Armenian populations had to reorganize themselves in foreign lands and find ways of integrating within local societies. Wherever they settled in large concentrations, usually at the initiative of local leaders, these Armenian populations swiftly organized different forms of local self-administration, churches, and schools for their children. Between 1922 and 1927, the Armenians at *Camp Oddo* in Marseille, for example, managed to develop their own camp administration, establish a small chapel, and organize an Armenian school. A few other chapels emerged in Marseille, where Armenians from neighboring villages in the Ottoman Empire created relatively large concentrations outside the camp.¹¹ Similarly, during the same period, the Armenians in *Le Grand Camp* in Beirut formed many analogous formal and informal organizations, likewise built a chapel, and finally raised funds to establish an Armenian school of their own.¹² These parallels extend to print culture as well. In both France and Lebanon, Armenian political elites and intellectuals started new periodicals and journals not only to cultivate explicitly *Armenian* reading communities in their new countries, but also to keep those readers informed about changing social and political conditions, as well as to promote different forms of cultural production outside the homeland. A wide variety of Armenian language periodicals, mostly literary and political, emerged in France in the interwar period, as they likewise did in Lebanon under different leadership in the 1920s and 1930s.¹³ After the resettlement of Armenians from camps in Beirut and Marseille, the number of Armenian churches also grew in the Armenian residential areas in both places.

¹¹ Lydie Belmont, *La Petite Arménie. Histoire de la communauté arménienne à Marseille* (Marseille: Éditions Jeanne Laffitte, 2004); Step'an Pôghosean, *Truts'ik aknark Marseyli hay gaghut'i patmut'ean vray* [Brief Remark on the History of Armenian Colony of Marseille] (Yerevan: Zangak-97 hratarakch'ut'iwn, 2005).

¹² Sisak Varzhpetean, *Hayeré Libanani mēj. Hanragitaran libananahay gaghut'i* [Armenians in Lebanon: Encyclopedia of the Lebanese Armenian Colony], vol. 2. 1920–1980. *Patkerazard* [Illustrated] (Péryut: Tp. Sewan, 1981), 200; Sisak Varzhpetean, *Hayeré Libanani mēj. Hanragitaran libananahay gaghut'i* [Armenians in Lebanon: Encyclopedia of the Lebanese Armenian Colony], vol. 3, 1920–1980. *Patkerazard: Kazmakerput'ivnner, mshakut'ayin keank'ew shranner*, [1920–1980. Illustrated: Organizations, Cultural Life and Regions] (Beirut: Tp. Sewan, 1981), 95.

¹³ Some of the most prominent Armenian periodicals in the interwar France were *Haratch* [Forward], *HOK* (The organ of the pro-Soviet Committee for Aid to Armenia), *Banvor* [Worker], and *Mardgotz* [Bastion], and literary journals *Anahit* and *Menk'* [We].

Different political contexts in France and Lebanon strongly influenced the spaces in which Armenians could experience, exercise, and (re)produce particular identities. As the following discussion will demonstrate, political conditions, differing social and historical contexts, and varying polices towards Armenians affected the formation of these Armenian spaces and determined the ways in which descendants of Armenian refugees could (re)construct, (re)produce, and experience Armenianness. Even though these communities were, to some extent, part and parcel of the broader Mediterranean world, they did not form or thrive uniformly, in other words. The incongruous Armenian “spaces” that developed in France and Lebanon therefore not only help us to challenge notions of diasporic homogeneity, but also allow us to envision how they became embedded in the social, cultural, and political structures of these societies.

NATIVES OR ALIENS? NEGOTIATING ARMENIAN COMMUNAL SPACES IN LEBANON

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the former Ottoman domains in Syria and Mesopotamia came under French control.¹⁴ One consequence of this was that on September 1920, the French implemented a policy of restructuring in Syria by separating Greater Lebanon as an administrative unit.¹⁵ However, the diverse ethno-religious composition of the population in Mount Lebanon strongly restricted the possibilities of forging a homogeneous nation. The document granted by the League of Nations to France in 1922, which officially placed Lebanon under the French Mandate, recognized the existence of multiple religious communities in Lebanon and

¹⁴ In 1916, the British and French entered secretly into what became known as the Sykes-Picot agreement. According to this agreement, in case of an Ottoman defeat in World War I, they would respectively seize control of the Ottoman Arab provinces. As a realization of this agreement following the Mudros armistice, the coastal region from Cilicia to Lebanon fell under the control of the French (see Richard Hovannisian, “Armenia’s Road to Independence,” in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. II, *Foreign Dominion to Statehood: the Fifteenth century to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Richard Hovannisian, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 282; Nicola Migliorino, *(Re)Constructing Armenia*, 46.

¹⁵ Rania Maktabi, “The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited. Who Are the Lebanese?” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (1999): 158; Thibaut Jaulin, “Démographie et politique au Liban sous le Mandat: Les émigrés, les ratios confessionnels et la fabrique du Pacte national,” *Histoire & Mesure*, 24, no. 1 (2009): 193.

guaranteed their interests and rights to retain and control their properties.¹⁶ At the same time, the Treaty of Lausanne in the following year stipulated that former Ottoman subjects could acquire Turkish nationality or the nationality of another post-Ottoman state, if they were “habitually resident” in that formerly Ottoman territory.¹⁷ This regulation was put into effect in Lebanon on August 30, 1924 through the decree of the French High Commissioner, which declared that people residing in Lebanon as of August 30, 1924 were eligible for Lebanese nationality.¹⁸ Subsequently, the Lebanese Constitution, adopted in 1926, confirmed the rights of confessional communities in the country and granted them broad privileges, including that of managing their internal affairs, and opening and maintaining schools. The constitution also guaranteed their representation in the governing bodies of the country.

Armenians were thus automatically included in the Lebanese political system. As refugees fleeing persecution in the Ottoman Empire, displaced Armenians had arrived in Lebanon before August 30, 1924 and were granted Lebanese citizenship after the decree went into effect.¹⁹ Subsequently, these Armenians were free to organize communities according to their own confessional affiliations. The Lebanese confessional structure placed the communal life of Armenians under the nearly unrestricted oversight of different Armenian confessional and political institutions. By the end of the 1920s, the Catholicosate of the Armenian Church of Cilicia²⁰

¹⁶ “French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon,” *The American Journal of International Law* 17, no. 3, Supplement: Official Documents (1923): 178–179.

¹⁷ Article 30 of the Treaty of Lausanne.

¹⁸ Rania Maktabi, “State Formation and Citizenship in Lebanon. The Politics of Membership and Exclusion in a Sectarian State,” in *Citizenship and the State in the Middle East: Approaches and Applications*, ed. Nils A. Butenschon, Uri Davis, and Manuel Hassessian (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 157.

¹⁹ The French mandatory authorities were also interested in the political inclusion of the Armenians in Lebanon who could increase the base of their local Christian supporters (see Migliorino, *(Re)Constructing Armenia*, 53–54; Melker El-Khoury and Thibaut Jaulin, *Country Report: Lebanon* (Fiesole, Italy: European University Institute, 2012), 6; Maktabi, “The Lebanese Census of 1932,” 227).

²⁰ The history of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia goes back to the medieval period. According to tradition, the Armenian church had been established in early fourth century in Ējmiasin (ancient Vagharshapat). Following a shift of political fortunes in Armenia, the seat of the catholicos had been relocated many times. The fall of the last Armenian kingdom on the Armenian highland in the eleventh century prompted an exodus of Armenians from their ancestral lands. After the establishment of an Armenian Kingdom in Cilicia in 1198, the catholicosate moved to Cilicia and in 1293 it was finally established in Sis, the capital of the

and the seat of the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate moved to Lebanon.²¹ The “Orthodox” and Catholic Armenians were soon recognized as separate confessional communities and were granted political representation in Lebanese political structures. This essentially guaranteed their involvement and engagement in the public sphere of Lebanese politics.²² The environment that emerged in the 1920s and 1930s was highly conducive for the construction and preservation of ethnic and religious differences, and consequently the numbers of Armenian Apostolic, Catholic, and Evangelical churches, political, charity, youth, and other organizations grew tremendously. Benefiting from these conditions, local chapters of Armenian political parties also began competing for representation in the Armenian Apostolic community and the Lebanese Chambers of Deputies.²³

Ironically, the spaces that emerged in Lebanon to cultivate various forms of Armenian identity not only ensured that these populations would be active in the social and political spheres of Lebanese life, but also gave rise

Kingdom. Despite the fall of the Cilician Armenian kingdom in 1375, the catholicosate remained in Cilicia until 1441. In 1441, a church assembly gathered in Ejmiatsin, which decided to move the catholicosate from Sis back to Ejmiatsin after nearly a millennium. The Assembly elected a new catholicos in Ejmiatsin, but the Catholicosate of Sis continued with limited jurisdiction over churches in Cilicia (for further details see Maghak'ia Örmanean, *Azgapatum. Hay ughghap'ar ekeghets'woy ants'k'erě skizbēn minch'ev mer őrerě harakits' azgayin paraganerov patmuats* [National History. The History of the Armenian Orthodox Church from the Beginning to our Days Narrated with Related National Circumstances], vol. 2 (Kostandnopolis: Hratarakut'iwn V.ew H. Tēr-Nersēsan.1914), col. 2107–21, 2139–41).

²¹ Prior to the influx of Armenian genocide refugees, the Armenian Catholic congregation had long-established roots in Mount Lebanon. The monastery of Bzommar, established in 1749, had served as the seat of the Catholic Patriarch until it moved to Istanbul after the founding of a Catholic *millet* in 1830. The seat of the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate was re-established in Lebanon in 1928, several years after the creation of the Republic of Turkey (Ara Sanjian, “Libanan,” in *Hay sp'yurk': Hanragitaran* [Armenia-Diaspora: Encyclopedia], ed. Hovhannes Ayvazyan and Aram Sargsyan (Yerevan: Haykakan Hanragitaran, 2003), 299; Migliorino, *(Re)Constructing Armenia*, 17–18, 50–52).

²² The Lebanese census of 1932 registered Catholic and “Orthodox” Armenians as separate confessional communities. Protestant Armenians were counted under the general category of Protestants (Maktabi, “The Lebanese Census,” 222, 235; Sanjian, “Libanan,” 291–292).

²³ The Armenian Apostolic church in Lebanon continued following the 1863 Constitution, which regulated the internal matters of the Armenian Patriarchate in the Ottoman Empire. This constitution allowed for laymen to be involved in the administrative matters of the Armenian church and community. The Armenian Catholic church did not allow such participation of laymen in the church administration. The Protestant church was also cautious of Armenian political activists.

to new inter-group conflicts. The Old World tensions and hostilities between Armenian political parties resurfaced in Lebanon in the rivalry and occasional violence between their supporters. These political parties also attempted to popularize their own conflicting ideologies and perceptions of the Armenian homeland.²⁴ In part because the Armenian Apostolic church and broader Armenian community had been so successfully integrated into Lebanese society, Armenian political parties could compete publicly with one another by establishing and operating multiple cultural, youth, women's societies, and charitable organizations. These parties also began to assume control over the administration of different Armenian churches; they additionally established and ran thoroughly partisan schools.²⁵ In the course of a few decades, Armenian communities and institutions had become an integral part of Lebanese society.

Decolonization and the independence of Lebanon during World War II did not alter this situation to a great degree, as the country's "National Pact" between the Christians and Muslims preserved the consociational system as well as the confessional representation in the government.²⁶ However, newly shifting international alliances during World War II and the Cold War had direct effects on the rivalry of Armenian political factions in Lebanon. Amid highly tense political and occasionally violent conflicts, these Armenian political parties, their affiliate associations, and schools under their control forged a unique type of Armenianness. By the late 1960s, Western Armenian, rather than Arabic, was established as the

²⁴The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaks'ut'iwn) and its supporters promoted a fiercely anti-Soviet agenda. Their opponents found Soviet Armenia as the realization of Armenian dreams and the actualization of an Armenian homeland, even if it comprised only a small part of the imagined homeland.

²⁵By 1926, the Apostolic Armenian community in Lebanon had established fifteen kindergartens and primary schools for orphans and the children of refugees, whereas Catholic Armenians established eight and Evangelical Armenians founded six such schools (Varzhapetean, *Hayeré Libanani mēj*, vol. 2, 391).

²⁶Lebanon is a country with a social-political system that is described by many scholars as a "consociational democracy." The essence of consociationalism is in sharing power between various confessional or ethno-religious and sectarian communities (see Camille Habib, *Consociationalism and the Continuous Crisis in the Lebanese System* (Beirut: Majd, 2009), 21–43). The National Pact confirmed the distribution of the three major posts of the Lebanese political system, reserving the seat of the president for the Maronites, the seat of the speaker of parliament for the Shi'ites, and the seat of the prime minister for the Sunnis. This established the 6:5 ratio of Christian:Muslim sectarian representation. This ratio was believed to be roughly proportional to the size of various Christian and Muslim communities in Lebanon (see Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A Modern History of Lebanon* (London, Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2007), 206).

language of communication among Armenians in Lebanon, replacing the diversity of dialects and languages spoken by the first generation refugees. The heterogeneous community of refugees of the 1920s had yielded to a linguistically homogeneous, self-conscious and self-sustained Armenian community largely due to the symbolic boundaries imposed by the Lebanese political system between the confessional communities. The numerous Armenian churches, schools, and political and charitable organizations, which operated in the Lebanese public sphere, benefited from this system of boundary maintenance and participated in the country's public life and politics as specifically Armenian representatives. The issue of whether the Armenians and their communities were native to Lebanon became pressing as the country was embroiled in the prolonged civil war of 1975–1990, during which the Armenian political institutions opted to maintain what they called a “positive neutrality.”²⁷ While formerly rival Armenian factions came together to organize a defense of the Armenian quarters in Lebanon, the non-Armenian Lebanese factions often challenged Armenians to take a side if they considered themselves natives in Lebanon.

After surviving the extended civil war, despite the emigration of great numbers of Armenians from Lebanon, this community still persists today with an abundance of Armenian religious, political, educational, cultural, charitable, and youth organizations that are all embedded in Lebanese social and political structures. As I have argued, the social and political context of Lebanon has afforded this significant Armenian presence and an Armenian space which, as part of the larger Armenian diasporic space, has neither been perceived by Armenians or their opponents as inherently being in tension with Lebanon or the “dominant” norms of the country.

BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC: ARMENIAN SPACES OF DIFFERENCE AND NEGOTIATING ARMENIАНNESS IN FRANCE

Lebanon, with its social and political emphasis on accommodating confessional differences, in many respects represents an exception rather than a norm in the age of modern nation-states. However, even in nations such as France, which have strived to create a more or less homogenous culture

²⁷ For further details on the Armenian participation in the Lebanese civil war, see Migliorino, *(Re)Constructing Armenia*, 152–158.

and population, there emerged different kinds of spaces from which the descendants of Armenian genocide survivors and immigrants would articulate suitably alternative forms of “Armenianness.” Understanding the differences between these so-called “diasporic” Armenian spaces in Lebanon and France therefore will position us to better deconstruct the rigid guest/host and diaspora/host-country binaries that still tend to dominate much scholarly discourse in diaspora studies.

At the time of the Armenian influx, Jacobinian principles of nation-building through the assimilation of differences had strongly established roots in the French Third Republic. The struggle between the Republican authorities and the Catholic church since the 1880s, the educational reforms, and the adoption of the law on the separation of the church and state in 1905, strongly promoted the culture of *laïcité*.²⁸ Churches and other religious institutions, if they wanted to own and maintain buildings, develop networks, and conduct worship, had to be registered with the state as cultural associations (*association culturelles*) according to the 1901 law.²⁹ The visionaries of the Third Republic imposed this French version of secularism not only on the native population, but also on immigrants who intended to become French nationals. The French naturalization law, adopted in 1889, established the principle of *jus soli*,³⁰ providing naturalization to the third-generation descendants of immigrants: Children automatically received

²⁸This process included a variety of actions taken by the French government against religiosity, which included but were not limited to the secularization of cemeteries and hospitals, suppression of public prayers, removal of religious symbols from courts and other public places, and the establishment of free and compulsory *laïc* public schools (see Patrick Weil, “Introduction: La loi de 1905 et son application depuis un siècle,” in *Politics de la laïcité au XXe siècle*, ed. Patrick Weil (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2007), 13). The law of 1905, in particular, embodying the principle of *laïcité*, stipulated that the French Republic did not “recognize, pay or subsidize any religion” (Article 2, “Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Eglises et de l’Etat,” Legifrance, accessed April 10, 2016, <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006070169&dateTexte=20080306>).

²⁹Article 18 of the 1905 law stated: “Associations formed to meet expenses, maintenance and public exercise of worship shall be established in accordance with Article 5 and following of Title I of the Act of July 1, 1901...” (ibid.; see also Rémy Schwartz, “Historical and Constitutional Relations Between Churches and the State in France,” in *Politics and Religion in France and the United States*, ed. Alec G. Hargreaves, John Kelsa, and Sumner B. Twiss (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 15–16).

³⁰Citizenship defined around a territory, rather than descent. For further discussion of naturalization and citizenship in France see Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 75ff.

French citizenship at birth if at least one of the parents was French citizen or was born in France of immigrant parents. There was an implicit expectation that descendants of immigrants would completely shed their ethnic, religious, or other communal particularities, would become immersed in the French language and culture, and would turn into Frenchmen and women within three generations.³¹ The assimilation of immigrants became a pressing issue, especially in the aftermath of World War I, as workforce shortage made France one of the principal countries of immigration.³²

Refugees of the Armenian genocide began arriving in Marseille in tandem with many other immigrants from around the Mediterranean and beyond. These Armenians, however, represented a special case in France and were initially excluded from the country's general assimilatory policies. By 1924, French authorities stopped recognizing *nationalité Armenienne*. After the Sovietization of Armenia and the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, Armenians born in Turkey were consequently seen in France as "Turkish" nationals, and those born in "Russia" were seen as "Russian" nationals. These Armenians were expected to apply to the Soviet or Turkish consulates to obtain proper documentation and identity cards.³³ During the economic crisis in the 1930s, a period during which many immigrants were forced to leave France, Armenians were unable return to their homelands, like the Russian expatriates after the

³¹ See Gerd Baumann, "Nation, Ethnicity and Community," in *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections, Identities*, ed. Kim Knott and Sean McLounglin (London, New York: Zed Books, 2010), 45–49; Patrick Weil, *How to Be French: Nationality in the Making since 1789*, trans. Catherine Porter (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), 30–53; Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationalism*, 85–106; Mary Dewhurst Lewis, "Immigration," in *The French Republic: History, Values, Debates*, ed. Edward Berenson, Vincent Duclert, and Christophe Prochasson (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 233.

³² A 1933 report prepared by Georges Mauco, one of the leading experts on immigration and population in the 1930s, sheds an important light on issues of immigration control and the problems France faced *vis-à-vis* the large influx of immigrants (Georges Mauco, "Immigration in France," *International Labour Review* 27, no. 6 (1933): 765–788). The number of immigrants, as reported by Mauco, doubled from 1921 until 1930, increasing from about 1.5 million to about 3 million (7% of the entire population of France) (767). Given the diversity of the countries of origin, the assimilation of immigrants was difficult due to "their even wider difference in customs, culture and language" (776).

³³ The Paris Police Bureau officer clarified this point in his interview with the correspondent of *Haratch* ("Օրե օրին: Inch' k'յը օստիկ. վարչ'ստ'անք նկ'նու'եան դ'աղթ'երս եւ հայրս մասին" [Day to day: What Does the Police Department Tell about the ID Cards and the Armenians], *Haratch*, August 2, 1925, 1).

Bolshevik revolution. They were *apatriotes*—stateless people, who soon became eligible for special documents, known as Nansen Passports.³⁴

First excluded from assimilationist policies in France, Armenians now found themselves in the opposite predicament, as French republican authorities gradually incorporated holders of Nansen Passports into the public school system and military service. By 1937, most Armenian day schools, which had operated informally first in refugee camps and later in the regions of Marseille and Paris, were shut down on the pretense of not possessing a government issued license. The French government thereby encouraged enrollment in the *école communale*.³⁵ Subsequently, on the eve of World War II, Armenians between the ages of 20 and 48 with Nansen Passports were forced to join the French army.³⁶ The Armenian elites in France therefore found the French political and social context quite unfavorable for the creation and maintenance of ethnically organized residential quarters, educational institutions, and public sites for Armenian socialization. The well-known intellectual Lewon Shant', for instance, was one of such leaders who were forced eventually to leave the country.³⁷ In 1924 he founded the Armenian National College in Marseille, partly as an attempt to foster a sense of a nation among Armenians by promoting close familial and social ties, rooted in an educational system.³⁸ In less than a

³⁴ These documents were named after Fridtjof Nansen, the League of Nations' High Commissioner of the Refugees (1921–1930). These “passports” were initially designed for the Russian expatriates after the Bolshevik revolution who had been subsequently deprived of nationality by the Soviet Union. Nansen Passports served as identity cards for these stateless refugees, and were good for work and travel within the member countries of the League of Nations. During the economic crisis at the beginning of the 1930s, while many immigrant groups were forced out of France, Nansen Passports helped their holders to avoid deportations, as these people had no state to return to (see Martine Hovanessian, *Le Lien Communautaire: Trois générations d'Arméniens* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992), 67–68; Anahide Ter-Minassian, *Histoire croisees: Diaspora, Arménie, Transcaucasie 1890–1990* (Marseille: Editions Parenthèses, 1997), 69).

³⁵ See Poghosean, *Tyuts'ik aknark*, 220; Stephan Boghossian, *La communauté arménienne de Marseille: Quatre siècles de son histoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), 251.

³⁶ According to the provisions of the Treaty of Geneva of 1928, recruits with Nansen Passports could wear the uniforms of host-countries. But the military booklets of Nansen refugees in the French army contained the following line written in red ink: “Soldat n'ayant pas la nationalité française” (Cyril Le Tallec, *La communauté arménienne de France. 1920–1950* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2001), 156).

³⁷ Lewon Shant' was a former official in the Republic of Armenia and a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. He moved to Marseille after Armenia fell under Bolshevik control.

³⁸ Lewon Shant' believed that families, social environment, and schools constituted the basis of all nations (see Lewon Shant', *Azgut'iwnč himk' mardkayin čenkerut'ean* [Nationality as the Basis of Human Society] (Beirut: Hamazgayini Vahē Sēt'ean tp., 1979)). This work was initially published in several installments in *Hayrenik' amsagir* in 1922 in Boston).

year, however, the restrictions placed on his activity forced him to abandon this initiative and leave Marseille for Cairo, Egypt.³⁹

The separation of church and state introduced a significant break between the public and private spheres in interwar France. These Jacobinian policies of assimilation were first of all directed against the expression of difference in the public sphere in order to promote an ideal of one nation, one culture, and one language. Yet the boundaries between public and private were not as strictly drawn, even at the height of the French assimilationist policies in the interwar period. The French government made no deliberate efforts to shut down Armenian language printing presses, periodicals, or cultural organizations. Armenian boarding schools, such as the all-male Mouradian in Sevrés⁴⁰ and the all-female Tebrotzassère in Le Raincy suburb of Paris,⁴¹ also continued but could hardly compete with the *école communale*. Armenian churches, which occupied a certain public space in the cityscapes of France, were equally tolerated. Regardless of

³⁹ *Haratch* published a lengthy interview about the College with Lewon Shant‘ on September 23, 1925 (Shaharuni, “Marsilioy dprot‘, ew P. Lewon Shant‘i Haytararut‘iwnnerē” [School in Marseille, and the Announcements of Mr. Lewon Shant‘], *Haratch*, September 23, 1925, 2). By this time, as the correspondent noted, Lewon Shant‘ had already left Marseille for Egypt. While in Cairo, jointly with some colleagues, he founded the *Hamazgayin Cultural Society* in 1928. The society aimed at promoting Armenian language and culture in the dispersion, providing Armenian education through schools, vocational classes, and various publications, and preparing future public leaders, teachers, and activists. Two years later, the *Hamazgayin* society established the Armenian Lyceum [Chemaran] in Beirut. Lewon Shant‘ became the principal and administered the school for the next twenty years. An impossible project to implement in France became possible in the Lebanese context.

⁴⁰ This school was founded by the Armenian Catholic Mekhtarist order in 1848 in Paris. The school moved to Venice because of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870 but was re-established in Sévres in 1929. It operated as a boarding school until 1980 (Kevork Bardakjian, *The Mekhtarist Contributions to Armenian Culture and Scholarship: Notes to Accompany an Exhibit of Armenian Printed Books in the Widener Library Displayed on the 300th Anniversary of Mekhitar of Sebastia, 1676–1749* (Cambridge, Mass.: Middle Eastern Dept., Harvard College Library, 1976), 22; Claire Mouradian and Anouche Kunth, *Les Arméniens en France. Du chaos à la reconnaissance* (Toulouse: éditions de l’attribut, 2010), 45).

⁴¹ The school was founded in Constantinople in 1879 by several prominent Armenian women. It was transformed into an orphanage during World War I, and then moved to Salonica, Greece in 1922, then to Marseille in 1923, and finally to the Le Raincy suburb of Paris in 1928. In 1970 the boarding school was reorganized into a co-educational day school, offering *primaire* and *collège* level education (Mouratian and Kunth, *Les Arméniens*, 46; Claire Mouradian and Anahide Ter-Minassian, “Fransia” [France], in *Hay sp‘yurk: Hanragitaran* [Armenia-Diaspora: Encyclopedia], ed. Hovhannes Ayvazyan and Aram Sargsyan (Erevan: Haykakan Hanragitaran, 2003), 638).

whether these institutions, organizations, and initiatives signified public or private expressions of an Armenian presence, they all provided spaces in which Armenianness could be (re)articulated, (re)generated, and (re)constructed in a new social political context.

These *spaces of difference vis-à-vis* the envisioned oneness of the French nation could not provide as many possibilities for organizing strong educational institutions and more demographically homogeneous Armenian communities as was the case in Lebanon, however. Unlike Lebanon, the assimilation of Armenians in France was a matter of great concern for the Armenian elites, as literary works and reports in Armenian language publications, such as *Haratch*, in the 1920s and 1930s indicate. Similar to Jewish immigrant groups earlier in nineteenth-century France, the descendants of Armenian refugees and immigrants also often left the restrictive communal settings of their parents and scattered throughout France, mostly to pursue employment or education.⁴² The use of the Armenian language was confined to private spaces within churches, organizations, and homes. Conversely, in public spaces such as work and school, subsequent generations of Armenians in France were either pressured or simply adopted the French language and culture. The possibilities of learning how to speak, read, and write in Armenian were limited if not altogether absent. Among second and third generations of Armenians in France, few had access to regular Armenian language classes either by attending boarding school, taking private lessons, or frequenting another school abroad. However, instead of conceptualizing this process as one of assimilation only, in which one's authentic culture and language become diluted and eventually dissolved in the dominant culture, the French language and culture served not merely to replace, but also to *supplement*, the heterogeneous Armenian cultures and dialects that found expression among the descendants of the original genocide survivors. It therefore provided these peoples with another linguistic and cultural framework through which other senses of Armenianness—and perhaps even other forms of *Frenchness*—could be expressed in the French public or private spheres.

In other words, the absence of the same kinds of opportunity that were abundant in Lebanon did not prevent first-generation Armenians from claiming and creating different kinds of Armenian spaces within French society. The extent of the permissible in marking ethnic and religious difference was also changing in France. As the Third Republic collapsed in the wake of World War II, more diverse ways of expressing

⁴² On the assimilation of the Jews in France see Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 98.

loyalty to France emerged while preserving certain non-French, or not exclusively French, forms of identity. During World War II, for example, Armenian members of the French Communist party came together to form groups such as Front National Arménien (FNA) and l'Association des Jeunes Patriots Arméniens, both of which actively proselytized other Armenians to join the ranks of the French army under the command of General De Gaulle. Alongside other immigrants, Armenians also set an example by sacrificing their lives for this cause.⁴³ This devotion to the defense of France earned Armenian fighters in the Resistance—and by extension the other stateless Armenians in general—a right to acquire French citizenship in the aftermath of World War II. Front National Arménien (FNA) was dissolved soon after France became involved in the Cold War and l'Association des Jeunes Patriots Arméniens was reorganized into Jeunesse Arménienne de France. In the new context, most of the former FNA members regrouped and founded l'Union culturelle française des Arméniens de France (UCFAF). UCFAF was registered according to the 1901 law on June 18, 1949 as a cultural association. Both JAF and UCFAF have persisted as French-Armenian organizations, with significant diasporic ties with Soviet Armenia, having no counterparts beyond France.⁴⁴ Other similar “French-Armenian” organizations emerged in France in subsequent decades, claiming the permissible private Armenian spaces, without being in tension with the norms of France. Thus, again unlike Lebanon, where Armenians were not compelled to fight in the army to prove their “nativeness,” Armenians in France arguably in part created a space for the expression of a French-Armenian identity *through* their military service and devotion to France.

As many among the generations born in France came of age beyond the influence of Armenian spaces and places of socialization, assimilating into French society, some forms of private expressions of *arménité* also emerged. The decolonization and the immigration of large number of Algerian born French citizens, as well as the protests and the large-scale social movements in the 1960s, created the context for a reluctant adoption by French

⁴³ Missak Manouchian is the most notable among Armenians fighting in the French Resistance. Manouchian was the leader of a small group comprising predominantly Jewish and Polish immigrants. The group was arrested by the Nazis and all twenty-three members were executed in February, 1944 (see Le Tallec, *La communauté arménienne*, 167).

⁴⁴ JAF and UCFAF were especially involved in the projects with Soviet Armenia and later with the independent Republic of Armenia, as the *detente* in the Cold War and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet state made direct relations with Armenia possible.

authorities of *le droit à la différence* as a political principle. The concept of *arménité* (re)emerged in the 1970s among the Francophone second and third generations as a way of expressing their differences from French co-workers and classmates. In search of what it meant to be Armenian, most of these youth returned to their perceived roots, source of origin, the genocide and their ancestors.⁴⁵ During the decade of Armenian terrorism (1975–1985), as various French mass media outlets reported about the acts, and discussions around the Armenian cause entered the public sphere, different modes of embracing *arménité* emerged in French society. Some French-born generations overtly condemned terrorism and preferred to avoid any affiliation with the Armenian community, choosing instead to articulate a sense of Armenianness in the form of personal and highly particular family history and narratives. Others found the expression of *arménité* in becoming more active in politics and more involved in various Armenian organizations. For some others, terrorism became the vehicle—and to an extent provided another “space”—through which they expressed their *arménité*.⁴⁶ Yet even the most violent acts perpetrated on French soil did not provoke any widespread backlash against French-Armenian communities and spaces of difference. Neither did these actions pit the Armenian diaspora in France against French society or the state.⁴⁷ The descendants of

⁴⁵ Several other processes also served as catalysts for rethinking the origins, (re)discovering the roots and (re)claiming *arménité*. These include the genocide recognition campaigns after 1965, the Armenian terrorist attacks in Europe and elsewhere that targeted predominantly Turkish embassies and diplomats between 1975 and 1985, the influx of Middle Eastern Armenians to France, and the earthquake in Soviet Armenia in December 1988 (see Hovanessian, *Le Lien Communautaire*, 250–252).

⁴⁶ Hovanessian, *Le Lien Communautaire*, 255–257.

⁴⁷ The explosion at the Orly airport on July 15, 1983, orchestrated by some radical members of the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), alienated most of the ASALA sympathizers among Armenians in France. On January 7, 1984, President François Mitterrand expressed his support to the Armenian community while at the same time condemning the terrorist acts. He did so on a surprise visit to the Armenian community’s celebration of Christmas in Vienne, Isère: “...France,” the President affirmed, “is strong with its diversities... France should be one of the countries, in which you should feel at home... You ... are part of our people....” And then he added: “Witnessing certain dramatic [events] which occurred when the Armenian Cause had been, in my view, misguided by violence ..., I said to myself: ‘But there is no misunderstanding, there cannot be any misunderstanding between the Armenians and France...France is a country of welcome [host-country], hospitality, and the sons and daughters of those who suffered so much know well that they have all been completely accepted in the French community...Some elements, who generally come from outside, wanted to carry out acts of violence against France, whose

Armenian genocide survivors in France, many of whom would describe their identities as *français d'origine arménienne*, who regularly or only occasionally engaged in Armenian affairs, were perceived and acted first of all as French citizens and natives of France. Armenianess could thus be articulated within a place of “Frenchness,” indeed as part of Frenchness, and therefore did not necessarily need to be conceptualized as separate from it, or exclusively within a dialectic of “diaspora” and “host-country.”⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

The examination of Armenian diasporic settings in Lebanon and France suggests that people, communities, and organizations which shape modern diasporas are part of the societies in which they are established, and are not necessarily in opposition to or alienation from them; that diasporas and diasporic communities often negotiate their public and private spaces of difference *within* the limits of the available and the permissible in any particular social-political context, and not necessarily in opposition to those contexts. As these multifaceted negotiations over belonging unfold, while some immigrant organizations become rooted in the jurisdictional, political, and social structures of the societies in which they operate, the descendants of dispersed populations, born and raised in these societies, also develop strong affinities and lasting connections to these countries as natives and citizens.

In other words, the binary guest/host or diaspora/host-country oversimplifies the complex identities of a segment of natives and citizens of Lebanon or France, who identify as Armenians or of Armenian origin, and who may act on behalf of Armenians but who are clearly also Lebanese or French at the same time. This binary also limits our understanding of the full complexity of diasporas, in which population movements and migratory flows

responsibility had been only friendly; acts, of which we all have suffered. This is not an acceptable method and surely I will never accept it.” (“Allocution de Président de la République (texte intégral),” *Haratch*, November 1, 1984).

⁴⁸The immigration of Armenians from the Middle East, Soviet, and post-Soviet Armenia to France created possibilities for negotiating new Armenian spaces, as France was becoming more tolerant towards difference. Since the 1980s, “Armenian” primary and secondary schools have been appearing in Paris, Marseille, and Lyon that offer classes in Armenian language, history, and culture alongside the regular French curriculum. These schools and other Armenian organizations continue negotiating the possibilities of the permissible within the dynamic French social and political contexts.

create new forms of territorial affinities and attachments. Lebanon is not a mere host-country for Chenorhokian and for other Lebanese-Armenians who left the country for various reasons or who still live in the country. Similarly, France does not disappear from the discourses of *francais d'origine arménienne* when these populations settle somewhere else. These countries of birth—in fact the *native* countries of these Armenians—are often considered to be homelands, even if diasporic people occasionally describe them as “second homelands” or “birthplace homelands” in contrast to an imagined and often abstract ancestral homeland. Moving away from the binaries homeland/diaspora or diaspora/host-country, therefore, provides possibilities for more nuanced conceptualization of “diaspora” not only within Armenian Studies, but also beyond it.

PART V

Placing Statehood



CHAPTER 13

Contemporary Armenian Drama and World Literature

Myrna Douzjian

WORLD LITERATURE WITHOUT THE WORLD

The title of this chapter, “Contemporary Armenian Drama and World Literature,” proposes an unusual coupling, perhaps even an impossible one. After all, Armenian literature has no place that we can speak of in theoretical discussions about world literature. That is to say, literary production in Armenia is quintessentially peripheral: not affecting the discourse on world literature, only affected by it. This indisputable fact inspires a set of disciplinary questions. How does one approach research on Armenian literature without simply taking the received knowledge about Euro-American or Russian trends and applying it to the Armenian canon? How can research on Armenian literature enter into a dialogue with global literary models, which completely ignore the smallest linguistic traditions? In order to propose some answers to these macrocosmic questions, I turn to a contemporary absurdist play, Aghasi Ayvazyan’s *Props (Dekorner)*, as a site that exposes, through a theorization of its own marginal position, the methodological gaps in the discourse on world

M. Douzjian (✉)
University of California, Berkeley, CA, USA

literature.¹ The play, I argue, demonstrates how individual texts and minor literary traditions might be deployed to critique the apolitical terms according to which the world literary order conceives of itself.

Before discussing *Props* at length, it is necessary to consider some of the models of world literature that scholarship has produced over the course of the last decade. While promising objectivity and comprehensiveness in their articulation of a more inclusive critical practice, well-packaged models of world literature, perhaps unwittingly, have necessitated the erasure of linguistic, political, and historical nuance. Two such studies, Franco Moretti's *Distant Reading* and Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*,² draw upon world-systems theory in order to suggest that literary practice operates according to an independent set of rules—rules governed by the literary market and unequal flows of cultural capital. In *Distant Reading*, Moretti hypothesizes about the way in which the genre of the novel, bearing French or English formal influences, travels and emerges across the globe. Relying on what he knows about Western European narratives, he concludes: “Four continents, 200 years, over twenty independent critical studies, and they all agreed: when a culture starts moving towards the modern novel, it's *always* as a compromise between foreign form and local materials.”³ He elaborates on the nature of this compromise by describing it as a triangle between “foreign plot, local characters, and local narrative voice.”⁴ By taking English and French literature as the origin of the novelistic form,⁵ *Distant Reading* establishes this body of literature as the source of the criteria for comparative projects. The assertion that all “consequential” forms originate in English and French literature results in the homogenization not only of all “first” novels written in the periphery, but also all of the studies on them.⁶

¹ Aghasi Ayvazyan, *Dekorner* [*Props*], in *T'atron. Piesner* [*Theater: Plays*] (Yerevan: Nayiri, 1999), 3–26.

² Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (New York: Verso, 2013); Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

³ Moretti, *Distant Reading*, 52.

⁴ Moretti, *Distant Reading*, 57.

⁵ Herein lies the fundamental problem in Moretti's formulation: what is “foreign form” anyway? He takes it for granted that this concept has unambiguous meaning. It would serve us well to ask if there really exists a traceable native form.

⁶ Interestingly, this hypothesis even dispossesses *Don Quixote* of its ability to influence the center.

The framework of Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* relies on the role of literary consecration, which privileges the categories of "universal" and "autonomous" literature in opposition to "national" and "political" literature. "Universality," according to this model, is reserved for the literary centers: Paris, Brussels, and New York. But are these capitals the richest spaces of literariness according to an objective and consistent means of evaluation? Casanova's model evades this type of question, ultimately remapping the world according to denationalized lines that nonetheless reinforce existing geopolitical and socio-economic divides. In response to world literature's impulse to recenter the world, Aamir Mufti has argued in his book *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures* that the genealogy of world literature conceived as a singular, borderless phenomenon has a deep entanglement with Orientalist constructs—constructs invented in order to deal with and appropriate cultural worlds that are different from and not understood by the Occident. As he puts it, "World literature has always been a border regime, an implicit set of regulations governing the mobility of various national and local literatures across the world."⁷ Mufti's reintroduction of the combined influences of place and power in the worlds of literature and criticism reminds us that the circulation of ideas and cultural capital always involves a politically charged process—one that should not be treated as though it operates according to some neutral set of isolatable aesthetic principles.

THE POLITICS OF THE THEATER OF THE ABSURD

A considerable number of absurdist plays were produced during the late Soviet period and throughout the entire first post-Soviet decade in Armenia.⁸ These plays have not received much in-depth critical attention in the field of Armenian studies, let alone beyond it: they have no place that can be spoken of in world literature. Some scholars have noted in passing that absurdist plays of the European tradition were not

⁷ Aamir R. Mufti, *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 9.

⁸ While literary histories typically associate the designation Theater of the Absurd with post-World War II plays from Europe and North America, I use the terms absurdist and theater of the absurd more inclusively, thereby broadening this convention's geographical and historical scope. Among the Armenian repertoire are works by Anahit Aghasaryan, Aghasi Ayvazyan, Perch Zeyt'unts'yan, and Gurgen Khanjyan.

available in Armenia until the late 1970s, and, as a result, Armenian authors only had a real opportunity to experiment with this theatrical convention in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods.⁹ This type of literary history remains problematic in that it simplistically places Armenian cultural production in the position of catching up with the West.¹⁰ Orientalist presumptions, such as the idea that Armenian literature is belated, demonstrate the need for Mufti's intervention, which, in conceptualizing world literature as a regulatory system of in/validation, exposes the unevenness in the critical approaches to literatures. Furthermore, it is not enough to say that freedom in the arts after the collapse of the Soviet Union finally allowed Armenian authors to produce antirealistic works in the form of absurdist antiplays. Certainly, these plays emphatically reject ideologically motivated art and, therefore, were more likely to thrive in the absence of censorship. There must be something about these plays, however, that specifically speaks to the post-Soviet era of independence. The plays do not merely offer an opposition to the formerly imposed Socialist Realist aesthetic; they also comment on contemporary realities. In doing so, they provoke a reconsideration of the existing conversation about the theater of the absurd, and, by extension, what that conversation suggests about the relationship between the local and the global in literary discourse.

⁹For example, see Nishan Parlakian and S. Peter Cowe, eds. *Modern Armenian Drama: An Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 330; S. Peter Cowe, "Introduction," in "Born and Died" and "The Saddest of Sad Men": *Two Plays by Perch Zeytuntyan* (Glendale, California: Abril Publishing Company, 2001), 1–26; Herand Markarian, ed., *Contemporary Armenian Drama: Voices of Change* (Yerevan: Writers Union of Armenia, 2006), 32; and Zhenia Kalantaryan, *Urvagtser ardi hay grakanut'yan* [Survey of Contemporary Armenian Literature] (Yerevan: Zangak-97, 2006), 153–158. These publications offer broad surveys of literary trends; there is no in-depth study or analysis of Armenian absurdist plays to date.

¹⁰Fabian's *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* demonstrates that anthropology as a discipline involves a politics of time. The book discusses the temporal and spatial distancing involved in the anthropologist's discourse and treatment of the Other and concludes that "temporal concepts" have an "ideological nature." Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia UP, 1983), 60, 92. While Fabian engages with the politics of time in order to critique anthropologists' biased and unequal treatment of their subjects, his conclusions should serve as an analogous corrective to literary histories that rely on notions of belatedness in order to describe the cultural production of Others.

Criticism of the absurd, beginning with Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd*,¹¹ exhibits a fair amount of tension in its treatment of the political implications of this convention. The ambivalence probably stems from the lack of what we might call historical *realia* in the plays: often-times, the characters' accidental circumstances of social position, historical context, and time become irrelevant and therefore non-existent.¹² At the same time, however, the absence of a concrete time and place makes various political, religious, and historical readings possible: the plays' metaphorical content is relatable to a host of specific contexts. Paradoxically, the lack of specificity in terms of historical *realia* has made it possible for audiences and scholars to read the plays simultaneously as political *and* apolitical texts. Esslin's description of Ionesco's relationship to politics offers a telling example of this very dynamic:

All of Ionesco's theatre contains two strands side by side—complete freedom in the exercise of his imagination and a strong element of the polemical. [...] Ionesco's plays are a complex mixture of poetry, fantasy, nightmare—and cultural and social criticism. In spite of the fact that Ionesco rejects and detests any openly didactic theater, [...] he is convinced that any genuinely new and experimental writing is bound to contain a polemical element.¹³

In this reading, Ionesco's rejection of a singular, definable meaning and the lack of social content in his plays do not preclude engagement with socio-political issues.

¹¹ Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1969). Esslin's foundational book has, since its first publication in 1961, come out in three editions, with the last one published in 2001. The book focuses on post-World War II Western Europe with Paris at its literary capital; presumably unaware of the Russian absurdist plays of the 1920s and 1930s, Esslin does not mention this conspicuously similar body of drama that predates the European tradition by several decades. The literary-historical gap in his study enables the originary strain—arguably an antecedent of the contemporary discourse on world literature—in his work.

¹² Martin Esslin, "The Theatre of the Absurd," *The Tulane Drama Review* 4, no. 4 (May 1960): 3. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1124873>. For example, Beckett expressed the belief that including actual geographical references in his work would be "unspeakably vulgar." Esslin, *The Theater of the Absurd*, 92. Similarly, Ionesco made it clear that in his theater the "social content" is incidental or secondary. Walter Schamschula, "Václav Havel: Between the Theater of the Absurd and Engaged Theater," in *Fiction and Drama in Eastern and Southeastern Europe*, ed. Henrik Birnbaum and Thomas Eekman, 337–348 (Los Angeles: Slavica Publishers, 1980), 339.

¹³ Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 168–169.

Despite his acknowledgement of the complex interrelation between socio-political critique and abstract or undecipherable references, throughout his book Esslin emphasizes the messages of absurdist plays that relate to “the human condition.” Sometimes he does so at the expense of the specific, however subtle, political content of the plays. For example, while the teacher-student relationship in Ionesco’s *The Lesson* has been read as a metaphor for dictatorship—a reading supported by the maid’s handing the professor a swastika armband at the end of the play—Esslin argues that this relationship represents “any manifestation of power.”¹⁴ Esslin’s emphasis shifts the focus from the more specific phenomenon of “dictatorship” to the broader notion of power dynamics, as it applies to all human relationships. Similarly, in his discussion of Genet, Esslin avoids committing to a political reading:

Genet’s theater is, profoundly, a theater of social protest. Yet, like that of Ionesco, and of Adamov before his conversion to epic realism, it resolutely rejects political commitment, political argument, didacticism, or propaganda. In dealing with the dream world of the outcast of society, it explores the human condition, the alienation of man, his solitude, his futile search for meaning and reality.¹⁵

According to this description of Genet’s work, “man” as an ambiguous individual takes precedence over man as a concretely social or political being. This broad terminology has a strong presence in Esslin’s scholarship on the West European theater of the absurd, so much so that it finds resonances in the thinking of many later critics, who reassert the primarily universal concerns of the theater of the absurd.¹⁶

Over time, Esslin’s assessment has become the basis for related readings that draw an artificial distinction between West and East European renditions of the absurd. According to this type of criticism, the plays of Beckett, Ionesco, and Pinter focus on metaphysical themes that represent the human condition, while those of Václav Havel and Slawomir Mrožek

¹⁴ Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 147–148.

¹⁵ Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 233.

¹⁶ For example, Bert Cardullo articulates a definition attributable to Esslin: “Absurdist drama is ultimately conceptual, for in the end it too seeks to project an intellectualized perception—however oblique or abstruse—about the human condition.” Bert Cardullo, “The Avant-Garde, the Absurd and the Postmodern: Experimental Theater in the Twentieth Century,” *Forum modernes Theater* 17, no. 1 (2002): 13.

present political protests against totalitarian systems: “The Absurd of West European drama is the absurdity of existence. Socialist Absurd is the absurdity of the bureaucratic system, of the problems of daily life.”¹⁷ These claims link the global problems of existence to Western Europe and the local problems of daily life to Eastern Europe, strikingly and troublingly evoking the binary opposition between the autonomous literature of the center and the national literatures of the periphery in Casanova’s work.

Despite the prevalence of these assertions, shades of gray begin to appear in discussions that address audience expectations and cultural contexts. For example, East European audiences have produced political readings of Ionesco and Beckett’s plays: “To the Warsaw audience Ionesco and Beckett are felt to be political writers. Their characters, like Mrożek’s slogan-spouting little men, are seen as victims of a specific way of life forced upon them.”¹⁸ West European audiences have, in turn, produced metaphysical readings of East European plays. These examples suggest an inherent politics of the metaphysical in absurdist plays. In other words, the purportedly universal concerns of literature cannot be devoid of the political. Or universal literature, as Shu-mei Shih puts it, “was always a construct of power in the existential reality of differences.”¹⁹ Recognizing the tensions in interpretations of the plays of the theater of the absurd helps to do away with the already trite and embarrassingly elitist notion that “universality” in art lies in the West, while politically and historically grounded art is for the rest of the world.

¹⁷ Yana Hashamova, “The Socialist Absurd, the Absurd, and the Post-Absurd—A Syndrome of Contemporary Bulgarian Theatre,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes* 36, no. 3–4 (Sept.–Dec. 1994): 444. Even critics who try to refute the opposition between the plays of East and West inadvertently reinforce the notion that the level of political commitment distinguishes the two traditions: “The distinction between a theater of the absurd in the West and in the East, the presence or absence of a satiric or didactic component of any kind is unjustified. The only statement we can make is that the satiric component is more prominent in the East European theater of the absurd than it is in the West European.” Schamschula, “Václav Havel,” 340. Writing about a decade earlier, Marketa Goetz Stankiewicz presents a similar claim: “The recent wave of absurd plays in Eastern Europe is derived from a wholly different conception. Although here too we may talk about a ‘rediscovery of the human condition,’ it is a different, a specific condition—the context is not metaphysical but social” (190–191). Marketa Goetz Stankiewicz, “Slawomir Mrożek: Two Forms of the Absurd,” *Contemporary Literature* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1971): 190–191. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1207736>.

¹⁸ Stankiewicz, “Slawomir Mrożek,” 189.

¹⁹ Shu-mei Shih, “Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition,” *PMLA* 119, no. 1 (January 2004): 29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1261482>.

READING THE NATION, READING WORLD LITERATURE IN AGHASI AYVAZYAN'S *PROPS*

Considering contemporary Armenian drama in the context of the prevailing understanding of the theater of the absurd creates the impetus for a re-evaluation of the political engagement of this convention. In the most general terms, the plots of Armenian absurdist plays develop existential concerns, while focusing primarily on the problem of a power struggle.²⁰ On the one hand, they represent the “powerlessness of humanity,” and, specifically,

²⁰This study cannot deal with the full range of Armenian absurdist plays produced in the post-Soviet era, but the plotlines of three plays not discussed here illustrate the primacy of a power struggle:

Anahit Aghasaryan's *Madmen of the World, Unite!* (*Khelagarnerč bolor erkrneri, miats'čk'*) draws parallels between the world of politics and the psychiatric ward in order to expose the problems in Armenia's fledgling democratic system. The play presents the antics of a self-committed psychiatric patient, Mher Astvatsatryan, as he becomes involved in the corrupt dealings of five political party representatives who are contesting the results of the recent presidential election. Through the depiction of the insanity of politicians and the sanity of the insane patient, the play, like its title, points out the absurdity in political ideologies past and present. Anahit Aghasaryan, *Madmen of the World, Unite!*, trans. S. Peter Cowe and Nishan Parlakian, in *Modern Armenian Drama: An Anthology*, ed. Nishan Parlakian and S. Peter Cowe, 390–444. (New York: Columbia UP, 2001).

In Perch Zeyt'unts'yan's *Born and Died* (*Tsnuel ē u mahats'el*) the characters, the Actor and the Director, rehearse in preparation for the staging of Nikolai Gogol's short story, “The Diary of a Madman.” Throughout the rehearsal, the plots of “The Diary of a Madman” and *Born and Died* intersect as the Actor and Director have conversations about the absurdist aesthetics of Zeyt'unts'yan's play, the position of actors as the author's mouthpiece, Gogol's madman, and Armenia's politics. Among the multiple narratives at play, the central question of the performance becomes one that deals with the Actor's agency: can he ever speak lines that are his own? Perch Zeyt'unts'yan, *Tsnuel ē u mahats'el* [*Born and Died*] (Yerevan: Azg, 1995).

Gurgen Khanjyan's *The Guards of Ruins* (*Averakneri bahaknerč*) is set next to the ruins of an unidentified building, where three homeless characters, Sirak, Mats'ik, and Luso, go about their daily routine: begging for money, smoking cigarettes, and arguing with one another. Suddenly, a self-proclaimed guard appears among them, forcing them to follow his lead in protecting the area of the ruins, to which they are now confined. The guard has Sirak, Mats'ik, and Luso repeatedly take part in “military” exercises and clear the area until they are all exhausted. After he has gone for the night, the homeless trio attempts to escape, but they are unable to; they all willingly return to the guard post, because they have grown to like the guard and the authority that he represents. During the next day's training, in a surprising turn of events, Sirak ousts the guard and takes his place as the leader of the guards of ruins. Gurgen Khanjyan, *Averakneri bahaknerč* [*The Guards of Ruins*], in *Spannel p'rkch'in* [*To Kill the Savior*], 273–316 (Yerevan: Nor Dar, 2001).

allegorically,²¹ they relate this powerlessness to Armenia's position on the global political stage. The anxiety-ridden preoccupations of the individual characters can be read as a reflection of Armenia's status as a nation-state in the post-Soviet era, and, more liberally speaking, as meta-literary commentary on the place of Armenian letters in world literature.

Aghasi Ayvazyan's *Props* (*Dekorner*) is one such play that necessitates inextricably linked existential, political, and meta-literary interpretations. The play is set in "emptiness," where four unnamed men—the First Man, Second Man, Third Man, and Fourth Man—try to make sense of their location. Disconcerted by the impalpability of their surroundings, they call upon the Prop Manager offstage to help them "create a place." After the Prop Manager brings in the furniture and walls that they request, the men find themselves dissatisfied with the result: the place does not turn out to be what they had envisioned; they feel entrapped by it. They ask for the furniture to be removed, and then they feel uncomfortable in emptiness once again. This pattern repeats four times: each time the men ask for different props to fill the emptiness, they dislike the outcome. In the end, the men decide that they need a ceiling in order to have a bona fide place. The Prop Manager has his stagehands lower a ceiling onto the set, but the ceiling never stops coming down and eventually crushes the men underneath it.

The plot of *Props* immediately highlights the play's concern with the problems of being and dramatic performance. For this reason, during a question and answer session that followed the Los Angeles production of *Props*, a professor of comparative literature asked the play's author about the influence of Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco on his work.²² However, Ayvazyan responded by adamantly and somewhat angrily denying the possibility of any relationship between his play and the absurdist plays of these authors. An initial interpretation of Ayvazyan's response might attribute this type of reaction to the author's anxiety of influence. After all, as in the style of the theater of the absurd, *Props* has a cyclical,

²¹ Here, Esslin's point about the connection between the plays of the theater of the absurd and the tradition of allegorical plays starting with those of the Italian Renaissance proves useful. Esslin, "The Theatre of the Absurd," 15. Reading these plays allegorically and paying particular attention to historical details incorporated in their content reveals their connection to post-Soviet political realities.

²² Arena Theatre Company produced my translation of the play, which ran from May through June of 2003 in Los Angeles and Burbank, California. The audience had a discussion with the author on May 30, 2003, after the performance at UCLA's Northwest Campus Auditorium.

self-reflexive plot that repeatedly explores intensified variations of the same situation, and it portrays unnamed, nondescript characters who clownishly utter philosophical incoherencies. *Props* also resembles the plays of the theater of the absurd in that, in terms of both style and content, it conveys a sense of the absurdity of the characters' plight, which represents the inexplicable and hopeless nature of the human condition. With virtually no references to Armenia or Armenians, the play can be read as an abstract meditation on the desire to create meaning in life by populating it with things, to look outside oneself for sources of self-validation. What, then, was the author's basis for resisting the audience member's evidently valid question? Ayvazyan's response was not literally meant to dissociate *Props* from the plays of the theater of the absurd. Instead, the author insisted upon recognition of the play as a text that represents a specific situation—one unaddressed by the definitions of this type of drama as a category. By making a statement that rejects categorization, Ayvazyan prompted the audience to consider the unique qualities of this play: the historical contexts and linguistic details that inform it.

In a preface to the English translation of *Props*, Ayvazyan reveals an entirely singular, historically grounded inspiration for the play: "The earthquake created this play, but this play is not about the earthquake."²³ Ayvazyan refers to the catastrophic earthquake that struck northwest Armenia in December 1988, taking the lives of 25,000 people and leaving 500,000 people homeless. Although the play's plot does not directly deal with the earthquake, in the first few lines, the First Man conjectures that "Maybe this was a city...And then there was an earthquake,"²⁴ thereby suggesting that the action of the play represents the aftermath of this natural disaster.²⁵ In addition to death and destruction, the aftermath of the earthquake encompasses major watersheds in Armenian history: the continuation of Gorbachev's reforms,²⁶ Karabakh's movement for self-determination and unification with the Armenian Soviet Socialist

²³ Qtd. in Markarian, *Contemporary Armenian Drama*, 61.

²⁴ «Գուցէ այսունի բաղադր էր... Ու երկարած եղաւ:» (4).

²⁵ All translations of the play are my own (edited from my published version in Markarian's anthology).

²⁶ For a brief overview of the period of Gorbachev's reforms in the late 1980s, including democratization, *glasnost*, and *perestroika*, see Robert Service, *A History of Modern Russia: From Nicholas II to Vladimir Putin* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003).

Republic (SSR) (already underway in 1988),²⁷ Armenia's eventual war with Azerbaijan, the independence movements in the republics of the USSR, and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. In fact, the relationship between the earthquake and ethnic strife remains salient in historical memory. At the time, during a visit to the towns devastated by the earthquake, Gorbachev expressed surprise at Armenians' focus on Karabakh and national liberation to the extent that they "were agitated more about the politics of Karabagh than about the effects of the earthquake."²⁸ Given this context, the four men's syllabified chants for freedom and change evoke the mass demonstrations that took place in Yerevan and Stepanakert during the independence movement. *Props* draws the complex connections between the earthquake and Armenia's progression toward independence early on in the script, when the Second Man describes the characters' location: "a former place" (*nakhkin tegh*), metaphorically the former Armenian SSR. By refusing to commit to geographical specificity, while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of spatial dynamics—after all, the word "place" (*tegh*) and words with this root ("where, here" [*ortegh, ̄sdegh*]) are repeated twenty-four times in the first twenty-three lines of the play—the play interweaves the characters' struggle over their existence with the problem of nation building. The play's focus on the relationship between individual identity and place allows it to broach the subject of national politics.²⁹

Props frequently connects its own setting to politics in ways as subtle as the play's statement on its historical inspiration. The action of the play allegorically enacts the Great Game, the power play between the Russian and Euro-American powers for the Transcaucasus, and particularly big brother Russia's maneuvers in the game.³⁰ Each scene represents the

²⁷ For a study of the Karabakh Independence Movement starting in 1988, see Mark Malkasian, "Gha-ra-bagh!": *The Emergence of the National Democratic Movement in Armenia* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1996).

²⁸ Service, *A History of Modern Russia*, 469.

²⁹ Michael Urban has gone so far as to conclude: "Politics in post-communist societies is in large measure a politics of identity." Michael Urban, "The Politics of Identity in Russia's Postcommunist Transition: The Nation against Itself," *Slavic Review* 53 (1994): 733.

³⁰ Indeed, Russia's impact on and manipulation of Armenia's post-communist nationhood is well documented. For example, Ian J. McGinnity notes: "The stark condition of the Armenian economy underscores the serious flaws in the Armenian government's logic of making short-term concessions to Russia that curtail Armenia's long term economic freedom. These concessions have occurred for several reasons, including the general lack of a foreign policy process, the consolidation of power at the top of the Armenian government,

promise of a new order, but ultimately all changes bear the same futile results: the characters remain uncomfortable and subservient in their existence and repeatedly look to the figure of authority to help situate them on stage. The characters' spatial positioning with respect to their all-powerful neighbor offstage enables both the continuity and eventual termination of their existence. That is to say, the Prop Manager plays a role that involves what Foucault describes as "structur[ing] the possible field of action" for the characters, giving them hope because of the changes he brings, while ensuring the failure of their attempts to establish themselves in a comfortable place.³¹ The four men strive to establish territorial legitimacy and sovereignty, but with each set change, the Prop Manager facilitates the creation of settings of confinement: a jail, a madhouse, and a couch with a domineering woman on it.³² Moreover, the stage directions

submission to substantial Russian pressure, and dismal domestic economic conditions. Since former president Robert Kocharyan took office in an election marred by fraud in 1998, large concessions have resulted in Russian dominance of the economy, placing Russian interests in control of Armenia's transportation, telecommunication, banking, mining, and energy sectors." Ian J. McGinnity, "Selling Its Future Short: Armenia's Economic and Security Relations with Russia" (senior thesis, Claremont McKenna College, 2010). *CMD Senior Theses*. Paper 58. http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/58. Similarly, Kim Iskyan concludes, "Russia is the gray cardinal of the Armenian political scene, in contrast to the meager influence it exerts on domestic politics in most other CIS countries, with the exception of Georgia, Moldova and Belarus." Kim Iskyan, "Armenia in Russia's Embrace," *StrategyPage*, 24 March 2004, accessed 27 March 2013. For an historical study of Russia's influence on Armenia's affairs, particularly in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, see Kenneth Wayne Pope Jr., "Russian Imperialism: The Past That Haunts the Future" (master's thesis, Webster University, 1995). For an autobiographical account that details Russia's participation in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, see Sergey Ambartsumian, *On the Brink: Three Years of Struggle for Armenian Independence*, ed. Myrna Douzjian, trans. Tatevos Paskevichyan (Yerevan: National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, 2010).

³¹ Michel Foucault, *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: The New Press, 2000), 341.

³² The play's references to madness and confinement almost instantly conjure up the Soviet era, a time when state psychiatric oppression was institutionalized and implemented disproportionately in Soviet Armenia. Theresa C. Smith, *No Asylum: State Psychiatric Repression in the Former USSR* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 81. The scene with the woman on the couch is arguably completely unrelated to Soviet rule; however, the characters seriously consider the ways in which the couch and the woman might be "divided up" amongst the four of them, and the conversation reads like a parody on the logic of nationalization and collectivization. The Fourth Man's plea, "We must reach the great future through sacrifice. We must begin with self-sacrifice," cements the subtle connection between this scene and the Soviets' treatment of property (18).

confirm the Prop Manager's complicity in crushing the four men with the ceiling in the play's final scene; after explaining that the men attempt to establish a place in vain, he simply smiles to himself. In this way, the Prop Manager's position embodies the dual nature of power; his role is at once productive and repressive.³³ And it is precisely through the characters' relationship to the Prop Manager that the play depicts a *literary*-political struggle. By exploring the spatial dynamics of power and performance—the four men function like props on the stage, being moved around and manipulated—the play self-reflexively comments on its position on the world literary stage, a stage that relentlessly forges a system of granting or denying mobility and visibility to texts, cultures, and languages.³⁴ The fact of literariness, the play suggests, explains and is explained by global power politics.

At the same time that the action of the play links the problems of political and literary agency, it engages with metaphysical questions. Its introduction resembles the beginning of creation myths, like Genesis and Hesiod's *Theogony*, that begin in nothingness; its conclusion bears a further connection with Genesis and the fall of man. After the ceiling has been installed, the four men begin to wax philosophical in a state of elation. The Fourth Man says, "Human thought consists of the meaning of life...."³⁵ The word he uses here, *banakanut'iwn*, implies thought, mind, thinking and judgment. Significantly, as the Fourth Man expresses the idea that *banakanut'iwn* is at the core of life, the ceiling starts to come down on the men unnoticed. Meanwhile, the men continue to utter their own renditions of lines from the Bible. Their lines include comically awkward portmanteau words with the root of *banakanut'iwn*, *ban* (word or logos), suggesting that logos creates absurdity: *chshmartaban* (true thought), *shitakabanut'iwn* (study of correct thought), and *hamabanut'iwn* (harmony of thought). In his last utterance, the First Man says that if he were to write the Bible, the first line would be, "In the beginning there was righteousness."³⁶ The First Man's assertion, repeated by the other characters, revises the idea from the Book of John that "in the beginning was the word." Taken together, the men's statements suggest that the word (or *ban* and *banakanut'iwn*) has failed the characters in their quest for a place, and perhaps it needs to be replaced

³³ Foucault, *Power*, 120.

³⁴ Mufti, *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures*, 9.

³⁵ «Մարդկային բանականութիւնը իր մեջ բովանդակում է սպրելու իմաստը...» (24).

³⁶ «Ի սկզբանե էր ճշմարտութիւնը:» (26).

by the more spiritual concept of righteousness. The men's exclamations about the greatness of God at the end of the play might be read as an indication of the spiritual sustenance they lack, and Ayvazyan's turn toward religion, especially in his later works, would bolster such a reading. However, the dialogue proceeds in an entirely absurd style: the characters' statements are largely unrelated to each other, and the script flows like an endless train of illogical speech. It would, therefore, be rather difficult to prove that the play makes a clear statement about religiosity.

What, then, are we to make of the text's play on religious language? The scene's placement hints at some answers. Before turning to the rhetoric of religion, the characters cry for political reform. For example, the Fourth Man's chants allude to the spirit of the Gorbachev era: "Freedom, free-speechness, open-speech, open-voice, freedom of thought, polyvocality, dialogic."³⁷ The ideals of *glasnost*—roughly speaking, the late-Soviet equivalent of freedom of speech—are, like the references to God, rendered comical and useless. With the Fourth Man's epiphany that "freedom is the meaning of place and existence,"³⁸ the play reiterates the parallel between the lack of place and the characters' lack of agency, even as it simultaneously explores and rejects the existence of a higher spiritual order. This conclusion, while exposing language as the absurd instrument of religious and political ideologies, restates the idea that being is always defined by power and place. It thereby undermines the possibility of an apolitical or "universal" engagement with the metaphysical concerns of being.

RETHINKING WORLD LITERATURE FROM THE PERIPHERY

Ayvazyan wrote *Props* between the late 1980s and the early 1990s. However, the play was neither published nor performed before 1999. When it came out in a collection of his plays, the author had been living in an independent Armenia for eight years. Despite this fact, his aesthetic vision neither finds hope in the prospect of independence nor offers an alternative. The dynamics of Soviet rule plague the characters as much as the prospect of independence. Because Ayvazyan's play affirms that (Armenia's) independence brings with it new forms or burdens of dependence, it can be a frustrating text for any critic interested in an empowering response to the workings of empire. The characters' experience of

³⁷ «Ազատութիւն, ազատաբերանութիւն, բացախօսութիւն, բացաձայնութիւն, ազատամտութիւն, բազմախօսութիւն, բազմակարծիքութիւն...» (24).

³⁸ «Տեղի և լինելութեան իմաստը ազատութիւնն է» (24).

the push and pull between dependence and independence leaves no room for an emancipatory message. However, such a message would run counter to the play's fundamental premise, according to which "relations of power, not relations of meaning" determine history.³⁹ That is to say, the play conceptualizes the entanglement of freedom with the history of hegemony. Whereas a play like Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* forebodingly warns against conformity and the spread of totalitarianism, *Props* suggests that independence and democratization are not benign processes. Mirroring its political skepticism, the play's meta-literary critique rethinks the contemporary paradigms of world literature. While the dominant discourse on world literature promises a democratization of the literary field, *Props* articulates the impossibility of separating the histories of national literatures—belonging to "central" and "peripheral" nations alike—from the history of geopolitical power.

This brief reading of *Props* has sought to work through the multilayered concerns of the text in order to highlight the ways in which it facilitates a more complex understanding of the subgenre of the theater of the absurd. Arguments that insist on the privileging of universal literature as a depoliticized, denationalized category would undoubtedly label Armenian absurdist plays as national texts delimited by their politico-historical contexts and influenced by earlier European texts. Such readings perpetuate the placelessness of the Armenian canon in the context of world literature. However, the specifics of a play like *Props* can in fact challenge the binary opposition between the universal and the national (or local). The mapping of power onto (theatrical) space in *Props* blurs this opposition by linking the characters' predicament, Armenia's post-Soviet nation-building, and the practices of reading world literature.⁴⁰ The outcome is a text that embraces the liminality that characterizes the absurd—between tragedy and comedy, between existentialism and the spiritual, between hopelessness and potentiality, between aesthetics and politics, between national history and human history. This liminality, expressed by a peripheral text, reasserts the imperative to read world literature as a politically imbued construct, itself circumscribed by the workings of power.

³⁹ Foucault, *Power*, 116.

⁴⁰ Jonathan Boyarin presents a related argument, according to which states construct history through a manipulation of space and time: "States may be said to map history onto territory." Jonathan Boyarin, "Space, Time, and the Politics of Memory," in *Remapping Memory: The Politics of TimeSpace*, ed. Jonathan Boyarin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 15–16.



CHAPTER 14

How to Write the History of the Third Republic or How Not to Write It

G. J. Libaridian

WHAT EVERYONE KNOWS

A few years ago at a dinner following my lecture at an Ivy League University, a highly respected scholar in his field stated “Levon Ter-Petrosyan [the first president of the Third Republic] was the most corrupt man in Armenia in the 1990s.” When I asked if he had reliable evidence for that statement, after all, we were all academics and scholars, he responded, “Yes, of course; everyone knows that.” I suggested that if scholars base their judgment on “what everyone knows,” we are all in trouble.

The writing of history of any era presents challenges. The challenges increase manifold when that era is still unfolding. Paradoxically, that which could have been a facilitating factor—eyewitnesses, actors, and decision makers who are still alive—can also be the source of complications. This statement, as it applies to the writing of the history of the Third Republic of Armenia (1991–present), may also seem strange since the birth of that republic follows immediately the revolution in information technology.

G. J. Libaridian (✉)
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

Unless the historian is aware of the many pitfalls and takes immense precautions, she will face handicaps and problems that may be as difficult to overcome as those we face when we try to write the history of a ninth-century social movement or find the reasons for the collapse of an empire.

Problems in writing the history of contemporary era begin, in fact, with the absence of open archives and do not end with the evident need of living historical figures to justify their policies and actions and cover up their mistakes. There are so many ways for politicians and statesmen to achieve the understandable instinct to control what is said and written about them: Destroying damning documents, not leaving behind archives, editing memories in their memoirs, or even making sure some decisions do not have written records. Eyewitness accounts can and are usually impacted by the loss of memory, willful or unwitting, over even short periods of time. Furthermore, propaganda wars that are waged by individuals, groups and political parties to ensure the victory of their narrative and, indeed, of their political success, over that of opponents; the delay in making archives available; the biases the historian may have had when writing that history while also being a citizen or interested party with pre-formed judgments regarding events he read about or saw on television or YouTube. I am not even getting close to unchallenged preferences, prejudices, and ideological handicaps our historian may have even before starting to write that history. “I was there,” “I saw it,” “I read it myself,” and such forms of logic are likely to give the historian a sense of security about his product that will lack a critical examination of documents and statements and, more significantly, will display an uncritical approach to one’s own choice of documents and facts in developing an argument, a thesis, or a narrative in the history one is creating.

Without those defenses against possible dangers, we simply do not have the distance necessary to determine what event, policy, or statement, is in fact important for the long haul and, ultimately what is fact and what is propaganda or fiction. Certainly it is extremely difficult to explain the “why” of any of these events, policies, and statements. Because what we must first decide as historians is: What is to be explained?

Many historians are still writing modern Armenian history, in general, with the handicap of taboos created by a failed revolutionary movement, a genocide, a first republic that was lost in two and half years, a second republic that lasted much longer than the first but did not stand the test of time and was discarded by its own citizens. Now we are witnessing the life of a third republic that is faltering and a diaspora that has become largely

indifferent or thinks it has cures for what ails the republic and the ills would be cured only if their prescriptions were filled and used by those in positions of power in Armenia.

THE DEBATE ON THE CENTRALITY OF STATEHOOD

The contemporaneity of the Third Republic that started in 1990/1991 but can be traced back to 1988 may have induced some scholars who were personally acquainted with leading figures of the Third Republic to have a sense that what they know is what happened. How could it not? They were living witnesses. In many respects the post-independence period did not measure up to the expectations of its citizens or of diasporan Armenians, although none of the latter were ready for it, most welcomed it with trepidation, and some opposed it actively. Additionally, many scholars in the diaspora also write about the Third Republic as if it is in competition with the diaspora; out of a sense of a meaningless competition they think that the diaspora will outlast the Third Republic. That may be a questionable but valid observation, as long as it remains an observation and not a clever way to elevate the status of the diaspora over statehood and to give short shrift to the history of that republic. For statehood is what distinguishes the history of the Third Republic from the history of many periods of Armenian history or the History or histories of our diasporas over many centuries. Let us not forget that there has not been an Armenian state in most of historic Armenia for almost a millennium, except for the three republics on a small portion of it, and all three combined amount to just a century of statehood.¹

Indeed it often appears to this writer that we are struggling with the paradigm in Armenian politics and history that had evolved in the fifth century. Ashot Sargsyan best defined that paradigm in a paper presented at a conference at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 2004. In that paper, the little known and too modest but very important scholar born and based in Armenia juxtaposed the centrality of statehood in Movsēs Khorenats'i's *History of the Armenians* and Eghishē's definition of Armenians as a community of Christians in his work about the Battle of Avarayr.² The question that emerges is: Are Armenians defined as a state, or

¹ Historic Armenia corresponds roughly to most of the eastern half of Anatolia, in addition to the present Republic of Armenia, the Karabakh region, Javakheti, and Nakhichevan.

² Ashot Sargsyan is a historian and senior researcher at the Matenadaran in Yerevan. His *Movsēs Khorenats'i* (Yerevan: Haykakan KhSH GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1991) is regarded by many as the definitive critical edition of that most significant early chronicler, considered the father of Armenian history.

as a nation or people?³ The first requires certain attributes, such as control over a definite territory and a government; a people could be anywhere.

It is not all that clear to me that what we have here is a real dilemma.⁴ Nation, or people, and state are not incompatible concepts or structures, even if their conjunction has produced the present—however bloody and fragile—system of an international community. In fact one can write the history of the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries anchored in the simple idea that nations should have states and states will try to create nations out of the population they contain within (what they imagine) constitutes their rightful boundaries. And, until recently, many histories were indeed based on that paradigm.

DIASPORAN CHALLENGES

This point is significant for two reasons. First, many historians of the Third Republic, at least a good percentage of them whose works will be read by an international readership, are likely to be diasporan Armenians who can read Armenian documents, although many who do not know the language have written very useful as well as very ridiculous histories of Armenians in the modern and contemporary periods. The second reason this paradigm is relevant is that Armenia is still undergoing diasporization, while the

³ Either term can be used as the opposite of “state.” The Armenian term for people is “zhoghovurd,” the one for nation is “azg.” The latter term was part of the terminology of Armenian chroniclers as early as in the fifth century. At the time the term referred to a clan, a large family, especially one that had landholdings and was part of the nobility. Increasingly the term was applied to Armenians as a collective.

⁴ One should not be surprised, maybe, that no scholar—of Armenian or any other origin—studying the rise and impact of Armenian nationalism has ever referred to significant works by a number of leading intellectuals of the early twentieth century who defined Armenian nationalism or were often actors in its development. For example, one could mention three leading intellectuals of the Dashnaks’ut’iwn party that had a dominant role in the development and consummation of the idea of nation: Karekin Khazhak, *Inch’ē azgut’yunē* [What is nationhood], originally published in Istanbul in 1912 and reproduced in Beirut in 1974; Lewon Shant’, *Azgut’iwnē himk’ martgayin ēngerut’ean* [Nationhood as the foundation of human society], originally published in *Hairenik Monthly*, 1922; H. K’ajaznuni, *Azg ew Hayrenik’* [Nation and Fatherland], published serially beginning in 1923 in *Hairenik Monthly*, Boston, published as a book in Beirut, 1974. Whether one agrees with the concepts and opinions expressed in these and other such works or not, ignoring or being ignorant of the conceptualization of the nation in works published just before and after the genocide, otherwise available for the serious-minded scholar, constitutes so to speak a mortal sin in academic, if not intellectual, terms.

existing diaspora is changing its demographic centers and, accordingly, its definitions of Armenianness and, hence, altering the forms, if not the substance, of “Armenian culture” they produce. That means Armenians will continue to have different generations of diasporans who will try to write history. The history written by diasporans has many advantages. Yet it will also project the underlying problems that accompany being a diasporan. Why do diasporans write the history of the land they were not born in, they left or did not return to? As I have indicated elsewhere, being a diasporan connotes a negative definition: You are not where you were supposed to be. And that matters when you write a history of the “homeland” or of “your people.”⁵ The result is often a “defensive” history, one that makes a contribution to or, at least, does not threaten the foundations of diasporan “preservationist”⁶ ideology, i.e., ethnic identity and pride, making sure all responsibility for failures are traced to external forces—often by choosing the question to be answered—and, ultimately, in the victimization narrative.

We do have a generation of Armenians in the diasporas that is distanced enough from “preservationist” or “defensive” impulses to integrate its sense of an Armenian identity as an initial mechanism of propulsion with its intellectual interests and focus on a historical problem in a manner that is critical as well as significant to a wider audience and wider fields. This approach, in my opinion, is the most promising, because when used properly this process requires the application of critical tools and standards that are often missing from histories that are ultimately meant to highlight communal identity and address its needs.

Yet it is easier to make use of these newer, more integrative approaches when writing about earlier periods; by and large today’s powers that be, whether in Armenia or in the diaspora, do not feel as threatened when the critical approaches are applied toward ruling elites of much earlier periods, when it may be difficult for readers and audiences to transfer the analysis or conclusions from the study of a long gone historical moment to the present. There are not many scholars and intellectuals in the diaspora who

⁵ Here I make a distinction between diasporan Armenians and Armenians who feel at best as part of an ethnic community in a country other than Armenia. The first assumes a definite sense of identity with an “Armenian homeland;” the second refers to those who may have a sense of ethnic identity but no mental, political, or other commitment to an Armenia, real or imagined. Other varieties exist, but this is not the place to expound on them.

⁶The term is “azgapahpanum,” literally “the preservation of the nation,” indicating the desire to maintain a culturally distinct identity.

are willing to endure the opprobrium, even wrath, of the Armenian church, political parties, or the self-appointed guardians of orthodoxy by subjecting the recent history and policies of these institutions to a critical analysis.⁷

This is an important issue, since there are a number of elements that determine who writes history, why, and with what biases and taboos. I am not even speaking of party affiliations and ideological inclinations. There is a great deal of self-censorship when even an independent diasporan historian interprets Armenian history while trying to be acceptable to the dominant community organizations or to authorities in Armenia lest she be ostracized and, possibly, attacked by name and be called names.

When writing history, any history of any period, the historian must ask: What are the assumptions that s/he took for granted, what are the truths that s/he did not question and therefore did not need supporting documentation, or even a footnote or two, because “everyone knows”?

It is intriguing that while we have seen an increase in the number of works published on the complex ways in which the question of Armenian identity is analyzed, I am unaware of any monographs that study, even if not so critically, the transnational institutions and organizations and individual leaders who often govern such institutions and organizations for decades. After all, these categories constitute the leadership of the organized segment of the Armenian diaspora, a leadership that claims to represent Armenians and Armenian interests, and that attempt to define and determine “Armenianness.” In essence, we are lacking a critical perspective of the institutions and elites that determine Armenian orthodoxy: Good or bad, the good and the bad.

Even from a strictly utilitarian point of view, a century into the major modern diasporization process, it is impossible to determine what has and what has not worked as far as the stated goals of these institutions are concerned, assuming one accepts uncritically the stated goals of these institutions and elites. When doing their own accounting, these institutions have determined that the Armenian nation has survived due to the fact that they continue to exist. Has anyone counted the numbers of Armenians who faded away, for any reason? It would not be an exaggeration to state that more belong to this latter category. Does that constitute a failure of our institutions? Should not that invite investigations into the larger policies followed by Armenian elites beginning in the nineteenth

⁷ Interestingly enough, many historians are more than ready to take liberties when describing or analyzing institutions of the Armenian state.

century, at least? Analysis of elites in the earlier periods, especially the fourth and fifth centuries when the dominant paradigm evolved, would certainly be enlightening.

In brief, most diasporan scholars of Armenian origin share with the larger community what one might call the “survival syndrome” to some degree or another. This syndrome tends to treat with kid gloves every institution or organization that existed prior to the genocide, as if these were relics with a sanctity about them. “Preservation of identity,” followed in recent decades by the campaigns for genocide recognition, the two Holy Grails of diasporan existence, invite the withholding of critical analysis and judgment with regard to these institutions. Consciously or otherwise, scholars of Armenian origin often share the assumptions underlying such reflexes. They may not wish to antagonize the major forces leading the larger community that can ostracize an academic in many ways, although most academics are, technically speaking, independent of communities and protected by academic freedom.⁸ Such ostracism can reach the level of intellectual terrorism when scholars are subject to organized and vehement attacks for their unorthodox views.

SOME EXCEPTIONS

There are two broad exceptions to this general comment in the post-genocide period. Soviet Armenian historians did their best to critique the policies of the Dashnakts‘ut‘iwn, the party they had taken power and expelled from Armenia in 1920/1921.⁹ The Dashnakts‘ut‘iwn responded with equal force from the diaspora. Also, the post-Soviet diaspora was engaged in an internal battle between those who, on the one hand, for various reasons supported Soviet Armenia and, on the other, the Dashnakts‘ut‘iwn that opposed it. This conflict reached its heights with the international Cold War and produced much interesting and useful analysis

⁸The use of the term intellectual in the Armenian context varies somewhat from the more general use in Western literature. In the Armenian context, specifically since the nineteenth century, the term “intellectual” refers to anyone involved in public discourse. Writers and poets, principals and teachers of community schools, editors and journalists of community papers, party leaders and orators, medical doctors and lawyers promoting a cause or affiliated with one were more often than not considered intellectual, regardless of the level of discourse or of the education or experience of the individual.

⁹This party has been the best organized and dominant one in the Diaspora since its expulsion from Armenia in 1920–1921.

of Armenian institutions, including of the church. Unfortunately, setting aside the more sober style of the first category, these debates were largely polemical, ideologically motivated, and vitriolic in nature; it is difficult to assign them the label of scholarly and intellectual discourse.¹⁰

Generally speaking non-Armenian scholars do not have that much of an interest in the internal functioning of Armenia or the Armenian community except when it relates to geostrategic considerations, international dimensions of the “Armenian Question” and, more recently and generally, the Genocide recognition issue.¹¹

Obviously I am referring to specific institutions: The Armenian church, including its two catholicoates and two patriarchates; and the Armenian political parties, i.e., the Hnch‘akean Party, the Dashnakts‘ut‘iwn with its affiliate cultural, educational, sports, relief, and youth organizations, and the Րամկար Party. To these we now must add the remnants of the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia, ASALA that claimed the status of a new party in the diaspora and whose ideology and actions had serious consequences; the Armenian General Benevolent Union; and, possibly others. While useful, histories of institutions or organizations commissioned by the subjects themselves or authored by members of the subject institutions cannot be considered as critical accounts of the history and role in history of these institutions.¹²

If diasporan scholars and intellectuals cannot or are not willing to tackle the problems immediately around them, if they have no willingness to be critical of institutions that have defined the Armenian world in which they function, how can they be trusted to weigh in and measure the challenges, processes, and, ultimately, history of the Third Republic? The problem I see here is not different from the problem I noted in the early 1990s: How can the Hnch‘akeans, Dashnakts‘akans, and Րամկարs, who had displayed little knack for democracy—i.e., open accountability to the Armenian

¹⁰The exception in Diasporan historiography may be sociologist Sarkis Atamian’s *The Armenian Community* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955). Although written in support of the Dashnakts‘ut‘iwn position at the height of the Cold War, the study is a serious attempt at analyzing the differences, from a sociological point of view, between the Dashnakts‘ut‘iwn and its main Diasporan adversary, the Րամկարs.

¹¹While we in the West will be more familiar with what is written by non-Armenian western scholars, the bulk of history will be written in Armenian, in Armenia. This is not a comment on the quality of the works produced there, some of which is still quite admirable. Additionally, it is what is produced in Armenia and in Armenian that will determine the impact of history writing on the general population in Armenia.

¹²Maghak‘ia Օրմանեան’s *Azgapatum* (Story of the nation) may be as close as we can come to an exception.

community and transparency of their operations and decision-making processes regarding their major policies and shifts in such policies—go to newly independent Armenia and teach its citizens democracy, citizens who had brought down the Soviet Union and were already democratizing the country, whether successfully or not? How can some Armenian scholars suddenly become specialists in state building? That is the same question I had to ask regarding some international scholars who suddenly became experts in the understanding of international terrorism, including Armenian terrorism, in the 1970s and 1980s.¹³

One is tempted to qualify the liberties often taken by diasporan scholars of events in Armenia as a form of internalized orientalism: The scholar allows herself to study and make judgments about individuals and policies according to standards that would not hold when applied to non-Armenian issues.¹⁴

Much is taken for granted in the histories that are written: Assumptions that are not discussed, biases and prejudices that the authors hold but of which the authors are unaware. And what is taken for granted and not questioned is as significant in a historian's work as what he presents as the facts that underlie his interpretation.

SCHOLARS IN ARMENIA AND THEIR CHALLENGES

This is not to say that historians in Armenia do not have their problems. In fact they do and some of these problems may be as prohibitive as those in the diaspora. Scholars in Armenia had to write and live in an environment created by a one-party, ideologically organized political system. That changed with independence, at least during the first 10–15 years of independence. In fact the change was so radical that a historian who had made a career of writing about the political and ideological bankruptcy of the Dashnakts'ut'iwn and had exposed that party's links to the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) ended up becoming a member of that party¹⁵; and a Communist Party ideologue who had occupied the important position of Second Secretary of the Communist Party of Soviet Armenia ended

¹³ Michael M. Gunther, Gwynne Dyer, Kaumuran Gurun, Justin McCarthy, and others.

¹⁴ Stephan Astourian, "From Ter-Petrosian to Kocharyan. Leadership Change in Armenia," Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, Working Paper Series, 2000. This is an often quoted paper which, in my view, does not support its assertions about the first administration with sufficient evidence. Also see Simon Payaslian's *The Political Economy of Human Rights in Armenia*, a monograph over 400 pages (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), which argues that the Levon Ter-Petrosyan administration was no different than the administration during Soviet Armenia.

¹⁵ Lendrush Khurshudyan, *Spurk'abay kusakts'ut'yunnerč zhamanakakits' ētapum* [Diasporan Armenian parties in contemporary times] (Yerevan: The Institute of History of the Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, 1964).

up writing a history of the Ramkavar Party, requested by and paid for by that party.¹⁶ The window that was opened in 1991 has been closing slowly since the end of the 1990s, although there is still some room for a relatively wide horizon of interpretations of history. Still, historians, especially independent ones and ones who disagree with a regime that is developing a kind of orthodoxy reminiscent of the Soviet period and who may not be welcome in established or state institutions, must find ways to sustain research and then publish their works. Here too more often than not self-censorship becomes important: Economic survival is a major issue. Additionally, scholars in Armenia, especially the older generation, defined professionalism in terms of the Soviet-wide context. Accessing primary or secondary sources outside the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) was not a common practice; and most Armenian historians trained in Armenia and the USSR did not command foreign languages other than Russian, with the exception of some also trained in philology or specialists of the “oriental” languages.

Yet there is a fundamental difference between these two categories of historians. Historians in Armenia usually do not have the underlying burden of concern about their Armenian identity and what they “owe” to the nation. And that is an important distinction that can make the difference between a good or bad historian, all other things being equal. Diaspora Armenian scholarship has yet to produce the equal of Ashot Hovhannisian’s work on the origins of Armenian liberation ideology and its development in pre-modern and even modern times.¹⁷

Non-Armenian scholars may not have the same challenges as those of Armenian origin. Yet most, who do not know Armenian, rely on non-Armenian sources, such as reports from foreign correspondents and embassies in Armenia, and the works of Armenian scholars and the rare, usually poorly translated, texts to weave their narratives.¹⁸ They are then likely to miss the nuances and possibly major issues. In the South Caucasus, as in many other parts of the world, to miss the nuances is to miss everything; it

¹⁶ Karlen Dallak‘yan, *Ramkavar azatakan kusakts‘ut‘yan patmut‘yun* [History of the Ramkavar Liberal party] (Yerevan: The Institute of History of the Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, 1999).

¹⁷ Ashot Hovhannisyan, *Drvagner hay azatagrakan mtk‘i patmut‘yan* [Episodes from the history of Armenian liberation thought], 2 vols. (Yerevan: The Institute of History of the Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, 1957, 1959).

¹⁸ Rarely do non-Armenian scholars read and understand Armenian at a level of proficiency necessary for any serious claim to use documents in Armenian—speeches, press conferences, etc. Such scholars must rely on diasporan representations of such primary and essential sources often selected on the basis of partisan and political-ideological preferences. There is no organization or institution that has taken on the task of translating all that is relevant.

is also likely to lead to policies that produce disastrous consequences, for which external forces are not likely to take responsibility. This is also true in the sense of selecting which documents to read. The problem of translation—and choice of documents to be translated—is predominant in embassies of foreign countries in Yerevan. Who decides what article from which newspaper is relevant to be translated or summarized or even referred to, when the absolute majority of foreign diplomats stationed in Armenia do not know the language or know it enough to make such a determination. Unless, of course, the diplomat has a sense of what questions to ask from other sources and/or with regard to a specific matter on hand and, accordingly, gives instructions to the translators to look for relevant material in the media, in addition to general directives. Additionally, more often than not, non-Armenian scholars focus on any relevance Armenians or Armenia have to the region or the wider international community. Consequently, many of their works address the concerns of the international “security” problem, the initial motivation for the study. The internal developments and domestic forces and their relation to external forces and factors matter only to the extent these are relevant to their concerns, a sure recipe for shortchanging the agency of Armenians in Armenian history.¹⁹

Do We Know or Need to Know the First Two Republics?

It should be evident that no informed and intelligent history of the Third Republic can be written without an adequate review of the histories of the first two. The value of the First Republic in understanding the story of the Third lies in (1) the significance of the adoption of its symbols and, more importantly, (2) the attempt of the leaders of the Third Republic—many of them historians or highly educated personalities who had studied that history for at least a couple of decades—to avoid its mistakes.

The significance of the Second, Soviet, Republic is a different story. First, obviously, chronologically it precedes the Third. More importantly, the Third Republic is more organically related to the Second since the members of the Yerevan-based Karabakh Committee that led Armenia to its independence opted for the legal way to achieve that goal. That means all steps and actions were in compliance with existing Soviet laws—both

¹⁹Thomas de Waal's *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War*, Revised edition (New York: New York University Press, 2013) may be an exception to this general comment although it contains many factual errors. Philip Remler's “Chained to the Caucasus: Peacemaking in Karabakh, 1987–2012,” more limited in scope, presents a factually more solid work (International Peace Institute, 2016).

USSR and ASSR (Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic)—and all changes were introduced by the use of the legal mechanism, i.e., the existing legislative process. Thus, Soviet Armenian laws remained valid until changed by the ASSR Supreme Soviet beginning in the summer of 1990 and later the National Assembly. Furthermore, there is continuity not only in the legislative process but also in personnel at high levels of government from the Second to the Third republics. One can also not ignore the unseen ways in which having been brought up and educated in the Soviet period, even the most democratically inclined and pro-independence leaders bore the stamp of that period, in both the positive and negative senses.²⁰

How Much, Then, Do We Know About the First Two Republics?

For the First Republic, we have the pioneering works of two of its four prime ministers, Simon Vratsian²¹ and Alexander Khatessian,²² and the assessment, memoirs, and analyses of many major actors, including the critical appraisal of its first Prime Minister, Hovannes Kachaznuni.²³ Unfortunately, while the archives of the republic are open at the National Archives of Armenia, the republic archives collected by the Armenian

²⁰ In 2006 while at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, I invited the fourth—the first three had not lasted long—Prime Minister of independent Armenia, Hrant Bagratyan, to visit our campus and deliver a public lecture. Bagratyan was Prime Minister for three years; he was 33 when he assumed that position, and undertook the fundamental transformation of Armenia's economy from the centrally planned Soviet style economy to the free market model. In addition, I invited him to attend one of my lectures in a course I was teaching for the first time, "The Third Republic of Armenia Through Primary Sources." The lecture and discussion that day were, by coincidence, on the economic changes. At the end of the lecture and class discussion I introduced the guest who had been sitting with the students who did not know his identity and invited them to pose questions to the former Prime Minister. Bagratyan was totally honest and provided full answers. The last question a student asked was, "What was the most difficult legislative initiative to pass through the parliament?" Bagratyan did not hesitate. "We had some but not much difficulty in getting laws passed," he said. "The most difficulty we had was with people who were supposed to implement the new laws."

²¹ Simon Vrats'ean, *Hayastani Hanrapetut'iwn* [Republic of Armenia] (Paris: The ARF Central Committee of America, 1928).

²² Alek'sandr Khatisean, *Hayastani hanrapetut'ean dzagumn u zargats'umē* [The rise and development of the Republic of Armenia], 2nd edition (Beirut, 1968).

²³ Hovhannes K'ajaznuni, *Dashnaks'ut'yunē anelik' ch'uni aylews* [The Dashnaks'ut'iwn Has Nothing to Do Any More] (Vienna: Mkhit'arean Tparan, 1923); a thoughtful and rare critique on ARF policies and events of the party he belonged to. This critique elicited responses from pre-eminent leaders of the party such as Simon Vrats'ean, Ruben Darbinean, and others.

Revolutionary Federation (ARF) and currently housed in Watertown, Massachusetts, remain at best under restricted access.²⁴ Subsequently, we have the monumentally detailed four-volume work of Richard G. Hovannisian who at the time was able to benefit from these rich sources.²⁵ Other historians too have written about the period and added their own assessments. All interested have had access to the archives of non-Armenian governments that had relations with or interest in the Republic of Armenia.

In contrast to the First Republic that last two and a half years, the Second Republic that lasted 70 years does not have its historian or historians yet. No doubt the Second Republic produced much more raw data than the first, its institutions published a large number of official histories on anniversaries of Sovietization, extolling the industrialization of the country, the mechanization of the agricultural sector, and the progress made in education, health care, housing and social services, all made possible by the Soviet status of the republic and the leadership of the Communist Party of Armenia. The numbers and assessments offered in these volumes and statistical figures are valuable, as long as they are looked at with a critical eye, given the nature of the centrally planned economy and the need of authorities to constantly prove the success of five-year plans. One need only look at the state of the infrastructure in towns and villages outside Yerevan, when the Third Republic inherited the economy, to question whether it is possible to accept these numbers as representing the country's actual state.

Other than official sources and histories, the Second Republic has had little attention. There are some exceptions: Mary Kilbourne Matossian's pioneering work,²⁶ Ronald Suny's interpretive volume,²⁷ Claire Mouradian's work,²⁸ and a few other specialized studies. There also exist a number of

²⁴ Initially the files of the delegation of the Republic of Armenia to the Paris Peace conference, these archives were enriched with a massive effort by the ARF to collect all possible material on the revolutionary movement and the First Republic. With the advance of German armies into France during World War II, these archives were moved to Boston. They are currently housed in the Hairenik building of the ARF in Watertown, Mass.

²⁵ Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, 4 vols (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1971–1996).

²⁶ Mary Kilbourne Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies on Armenia* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962).

²⁷ Ronald G. Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

²⁸ Claire Mouradian, *De Staline à Gorbatchev: Histoire d'une république soviétique, l'Arménie* (Paris: Ramsay, 1990).

surveys on Armenian history written or edited by scholars, and all, to one extent or another, cover the Soviet Armenian Republic.²⁹ Yet none of these chapters are based on the kind of primary source research and secondary literature that would make it possible to draw what would be accepted as the history of those seventy years. Only recently have articles and even volumes been published that study specific aspects of Soviet Armenian history based on archival documentation or oral histories—the kind of work that will make it possible to imagine a history of the Second Republic as a whole.

It is possible to argue that 25 years after independence, historians in Armenia have not produced a history of the Second Republic.³⁰ In general the Soviet regime has not been scrutinized in independent Armenia. Suffice it to state that this is largely due to the delicate relations independent Armenia has had with post-USSR Russia.³¹ Except for two publications, even the Stalinist regime that destroyed the intellectual and cultural elite that Soviet Armenia had managed to produce has not had its due assessment.³²

Since independence a number of players have produced memoirs that should make significant contributions to writing the history of that republic. The last Communist Party Prime Minister of Armenia, Fadey Sargsyan,

²⁹ See survey volumes by Richard G. Hovannisian, George Bournoutian, and Simon Payaslian, among others.

³⁰ The state has produced official textbooks for school and university classrooms. But it is not possible to consider these as part of the writing of history. These are best regarded as political statements from the government in power.

³¹ Unlike Georgia and Azerbaijan, Armenia did not get to independence through anti-Russian rhetoric.

³² It was in 1992, I believe, that the “intelligentsya” of Yerevan organized a roundtable discussion at the National Academy of Sciences to present their issues. President Ter-Petrosyan was invited to participate. Ter-Petrosyan was unable to accept the invitation and asked me to attend in his place, however. The mostly privileged intelligentsia, led by the poetess Silva Kaputikyan presented its core case for almost two hours. Their problem was simple: Why wasn’t the government continuing to subsidize them as the Soviet government did? They had done very well under the Soviet regime and now they had fallen in hard times. Although most of the population was in the same situation, most likely worse, the elite felt entitled to favors. It was clear that they were trying to bargain. Unless the government restored their privileges and subsidies, they would become a new opposition to the Ter-Petrosyan government. When it came my turn to speak, I asked two questions: (1) What is the role of the intellectual in society, if not to ask fundamental questions that could explain the past and the present, and the impact of those on the issues that society faces? (2) Would it not be part of such a critical analysis to assess the impact of Sovietism on Armenia and on Armenian society independent of any government subsidies? For the most part the members of the audience accepted my comments as if I was trying to sell cows in the Opera house.

as well as the leading academic Sergey Hambartzumian and others have published memoirs chronicling their participation in public affairs. So have players in Moscow such as Anastas Mikoyan and former KGB agents. However, very few of these memoirs contribute to a historical understanding of the Second Republic, the way decisions were made during different decades, the shifts in the distribution of power between the center and periphery, the real ways in which the formula “national in form, Marxist-Leninist in substance” was applied and worked or did not work. We certainly have not come to terms with the Great Purges and smaller versions that cost Soviet Armenia most of its elite intelligentsia. Equally important, the Second Republic lacks a serious study of the economic changes that were introduced and the industrialization that characterizes it, just as is the case with other periods of Armenian history. Occasional articles by and interviews with Soviet Armenian officials published after 1991 offer more insights and leads but are hardly sufficient. Most revealing regarding the history of the period in question are the memoirs of high-ranking Soviet KGB officials that concern the USSR’s relationships with diasporan Armenian parties published in the West.³³

During my tenure as Director of the Armenian Studies Program at the University of Michigan in the early 2000s we undertook an oral history program aimed at recording the memoirs of political decision makers of the end of the Soviet period, the period of transition, 1988–1991, and the first phase of the independence period that followed, 1991–1998. Our interviewers were able to get to a few of the Soviet era leaders who were still alive, but most were dead or died while we were planning the interviews.³⁴ We were too late.

In the case of Western and even of many non-Western countries, scholars and serious journalists produce book-length studies and biographies of important personalities who shaped an era within a few years after a leader’s

³³ For example, see works by Oleg Kalugin, former head of the First Directorate of the Soviet KGB. These memoirs are significant and they explain, with circumstantial evidence in support, the shift in the ARF’s policy with regard to the USSR and Soviet Armenia. All relevant to the history of the Third Republic, especially in its relations with the Diaspora, the position taken by the Dashnaks’tut’iwn, mostly dictated by its leader Hrair Marukhian, with regard to the Karabakh committee and independence.

³⁴ The tapes of these interviews, more fruitful as far as the transitional and post-independence are concerned, are preserved in the offices of the Armenian Studies Program at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Copies are deposited at the Levon Ter-Petrosyan archives in Yerevan, Armenia.

tenure or even during that tenure. We have some article-length profiles of a few of the leading figures of the First Republic and, as far as I know, none of those were the dominant leaders in Soviet Armenia over seven decades.³⁵

In other words, *we do not have a critical and comprehensive accounting of the period in Armenia's history that gave birth to the Third Republic.*

One way to create a distance between the researcher and the subject is to determine, at the start, the issues that should be looked at. Otherwise it becomes very easy to be overtaken by chatter and gossip. It is always possible to change direction and find new areas to explore new issues once research suggests as much. I will dispense with suggestions for a list of themes that might help a researcher make sense of the 25 years of the history of the Third Republic, as well as possible sources for such.³⁶ But a few concluding remarks are in order.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We need different ways (or even in some cases, simply scholarly ways) of analyzing the history of the Third Republic. A more rigorous assessment of the republic's history would also shed new light on other fields as well, such as a history of the Caucasus, the Mediterranean, or even "world" history. The problem of writing a history of the Third Republic has significance beyond Armenian Studies alone, as it would have potential implications for broader regional studies that want to incorporate an "Armenian" model, but have to rely on non-scholarly material to do so.

There is a general relaxation of standards of scholarship when it comes to the politics and policies of small nations that would be unacceptable otherwise. The writing of Armenian history, especially of the modern and contemporary periods, has been afflicted by biases and a partisanship that is more fundamental than would be the case if a scholar simply belonged to or sympathized with an Armenian political party or faction (which is sometimes the case). That history has been largely uncritical and rarely endowed with a conceptual framework. The exceptions may be the narratives built around the genocide and concomitant "Russian orientation," and these present their own problems.³⁷

³⁵ Incidentally, it is necessary to write that the same can be said of the Third Republic, after 25 years of its founding.

³⁶ Hopefully these materials will manage to find their way elsewhere.

³⁷ The "Russian orientation" narrative was developed by Soviet Armenian historians, although it had its roots in earlier writings. The narrative indicated that Armenian liberation

Additionally, history is being distorted even though most participants in the making of and eyewitnesses to that history are still alive. Many of them are already revising their own recollections and even creating new facts and narratives.³⁸ As is the case of many other post-Soviet and even post-Soviet authoritarian states, the scholar has to be careful not to assess major players by their best-known roles alone. So many major players became secondary or insignificant within only a decade or two; while so many minor ones became major actors. And so many shifted allegiance from one set of principles to another.³⁹ Such migrations and transformations are important to fathom because any of these players may appear in the headlines at some point, but the scholar should not allow the news cycle to dictate the significant moments—moments that “everyone knows,” but rarely examines critically—of a different kind of modern Armenian history.

As indicated earlier, if and when writing the history of the Third Republic, the most likely nexus that will connect it to a broader history of an Armenia is its fundamental character as a state and, therefore, its place in a chronologically more vast narrative about Armenian statehood (and the absence thereof). A history of Armenia does not delegitimize a history of Armenians. These are simply different categories. The relationship between the two varies at different periods. Sometimes diasporas are totally

activists may have tried to get European/Western assistance to create a new Armenian state on Armenian soil, but that they all ended up realizing that Russia is their only hope. That approach was legitimized as a result of the genocide in Western Armenia. That formula has returned to the political agenda of Armenia in the past few years.

³⁸ The aforementioned historian Ashot Sargsyan who best defined the Khorenats'i vs. Eghishē conception of the Armenian nation and Armenian history has recently authored a booklet that presents the framework for and the actual distortions of the history of the republic in texts approved by the Ministry of Education of Armenia for different levels of teaching of Armenian history to the next generation of citizens in the republic. Ashot Sargsyan's work, although brief and with lapses of its own, is a devastating indictment of the work of historians in Armenia who had anything to do with that history.

³⁹ Just to cite two significant examples, from two different arenas. A leading member of the Karabakh Committee, Vazgen Manukyan formed his own party, the National Democratic Party, and became the candidate of the combined opposition against Ter-Petrosyan's bid for a second term as president. He continued in opposition, lost some of his close allies within his party, and eventually joined the staff of the third President, Serzh Sargsyan, an ally of the second president Robert K'och'aryan who forced Ter-Petrosyan to resign in 1998; he is still serving as Chairman of the Citizen's Advisory Council, appointed by the president. Rubik Hakobyan was, first a member of the Armenian National Movement, the continuation of the Karabakh Committee, then a member of the ARF, then a member of Raffi Hovhannissian's Heritage Party, and more recently alienated from that as well.

irrelevant to Armenia, at other times they are significant in the creation of an Armenia or in their role once an Armenian state existed.

More revealing for the history of Armenians than reproducing an uncritical binary between an Armenian state and the Armenian diaspora(s) would be to flesh out the heterogeneous relationships between politically defined factions of Armenian nobility, as well as those between various forces, factions, and parties within an Armenian state. These multifaceted relationships might then be put into a more nuanced framework that accounts for the external forces and powers that tried to influence if not control Armenian state policies differently, through different players, within the territory of Armenia itself.

In other words, that which will explain most in recent and even ancient and pre-modern history, as far as the story of Armenian statehood is concerned, is a more complex relationship between domestic and foreign actors.⁴⁰ On many occasions geopolitical rivals have used raw military power to occupy the region. And yet if we study carefully that history, we will see that often the great rivals for the control of the region have acted through domestic (that is, Armenian) players who internalized the discourse of foreign powers, and presented it as if doing so was in Armenia's interest. And many did, believing fully that they were doing so in the interests of an Armenia and Armenians and that it was them who were using foreign powers to achieve these goals. That there were many opportunities to act on our own, if there was a consensus, and be part of the shaping of our future, is inextricably woven into the future of Armenia's neighborhood.

Statehood and its absence—and the reasons for its absence—could be construed as the nexus of what differentiates the history of Armenians from the history of Armenia. That is not the only valid nexus, of course, as some have argued. But that is what the periodization of the history of Armenia indicates: the term and era of a Third Republic that we are bound to consider compel us to make statehood and its characteristics the

⁴⁰This argument can be construed as an amendment to the geopolitical interpretation of Armenian history. The latter argues that there has been an Armenian state when the two neighboring superpower states have both weakened. Such a formula presumes that an “Armenian” factor, or agency, is relevant only at times pre-determined by others, and only temporarily. In this case, Armenian history should be seen as a footnote to the histories of empires and not as history of a people, unless that history is seen as one of victimization. The rise of the Third Republic, while Turkey to its west was and is a powerful state, is one example where such generalizations do not explain the rise and fall of Armenian statehood. This comment does not apply to the first millennium of Armenian history, during which time, with or without a king, a statehood survived and acted under the regime of powerful landowning families, the nobility or the Nakharars.

core of what we write as history and how we relate it to the rest of Armenian history. Useful and necessary as a nexus for the history of the state, such an approach could hardly produce an adequate history of the Armenian people during the past 30 years, not only because the diaspora has been relevant to that republic on so many levels but also because it has own dynamics and logic.

Ultimately the real and perceived roles of Armenia for the diaspora and the diaspora for Armenia easily challenge the method of writing history taking the state, the nation-state, as the sole nexus of the history of the Armenian people. As fluid and possibly ephemeral as the Armenian diaspora is, it represents a powerful magnet for Armenia, and it is powerful enough to make an impact on the state of Armenia itself. Ideas and programs conceived in the diaspora are easily transposed into Armenia and Armenia's issues readily become the issues of the diaspora, albeit the latter will incorporate Armenia's problems into its own agenda in its own way. Much more than many other diaspora-homeland relations, given the organic relations between the two in the case of a small nation such as the Armenians, and even a smaller state like the Republic of Armenia, it is not possible to write that history as the history of the republic with the diaspora as an addendum. Historians may very well look at the Armenian case in order to develop more adequate models for the writing of history, especially since more and more states are ending up with diasporas, and not all of them as passive as the French or the Italians in the United States.

There are those who have written that history constructed around the church.⁴¹ Others have imagined the history of Armenians as the history of political parties.⁴² Then we have the great works on the Armenian genocide that describe and even try to explain why that catastrophe happened.⁴³ But none of these place what happened to the Armenian people—and why—in the context of a long-term history of this people: The depopulation of the Armenian homeland—for different reasons—of its indigenous Armenian population goes back nearly a thousand years.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Maghak‘ia Ӯrmanean, *Azgapatum*.

⁴² Mik‘ayel Varandean, *H. H. Dashnakts‘ut‘ean patmut‘iwn* [History of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation], 2 vols. (Paris and Cairo: Tparan “Husaber,” 1932, 1950); Arsēn Kitur, *Patmut‘iwn S. D. Hnch‘akean kusakts‘ut‘ean* [History of the S(ocial) D(emocratic) Hnch‘akean Party], 2 vols. (Beirut: Hratarakut‘iwn S.D.Hnch‘akean Kus., 1962–1963).

⁴³ See the large body of works produced by Vahakn Dadrian, Taner Akçam, Raymond Kevorkian, Richard Hovhannisian and Raymond Kevorkian, and interpretive works by Irving Horowitz, Helen Fein, Robert Melson, and others.

⁴⁴ Sporadic massacres and migrations, forced or economically compelling, are better-known processes of diminution of numbers of Armenians in their own homeland.

Such a history need not be antithetical to the push to write “world” history or “Mediterranean” history. Indeed, it would have to be consonant with regional and wider history. Instead, it would shed needed light on lesser-examined processes of modernization, nation-state building, and nationalization. Not only scholars of Armenian history, but scholars of world or Mediterranean history may have yet to explain how it was that a people who were a majority on the Armenian plateau and had enough resources to create a few dynasties of their own and long periods of autonomy were reduced to a numerical minority in most areas of historic Western Armenia, incapable even to defend itself against a genocide.

PART VI

Epilogue



CHAPTER 15

The Mediterranean Is Armenian

Karla Mallette

The landmark scholarly works that formulated “Mediterranean Studies” as a (very loosely constituted) field of study grounded their inquiry in the Mediterranean basin as a region whose unique geography and climate shaped the human ecology and culture of the lands that surround it. While some have resisted this ecological fundamentalism,¹ most accept it as a justification for situating *area studies* in a region that has so little *area*, defined as territory that can be settled by human beings. It is relatively easy to describe the ecology of the Mediterranean basin: A littoral backing up to mountains; port cities linked by shipping lanes that hug the coast; mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers. But the human ecology of

¹ See David Abulafia, “Mediterraneans,” in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, ed. W.V. Harris (Oxford [U.K.]: Oxford University Press, 2005), 64–93.

It is a pleasure to express my gratitude to two people who helped to bring this chapter into focus. Michael Pifer read a very rough first draft and offered thoughtful and imaginative advice. And Kathryn Babayan welcomed me into the fold of Armenian Studies at Michigan and introduced me to fascinating scholars whom I would not otherwise know—including Michael. My warmest thanks go to both of them for community, intellectual stimulation, and support.

K. Mallette (✉)
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

the Mediterranean is bafflingly complex. Scholars have learned to treat the peoples of the Mediterranean as a large and unruly family. Yet it is a truism, though one seldom examined in the scholarship, that the Mediterranean is united by ecological factors but fractured by cultural and social differences. More recently, scholars have bucked this trend, taking on the challenge of describing the fractal cultural complexity of the region. They have increasingly focused on the human networks that bring together cultures, languages, and other markers of what used to be called (the word seems almost quaint today) identity. And the chapters in this volume provide a unique perspective on this intersectional Mediterranean.

In this chapter, I will reflect on what Armenian history has to teach us about the Mediterranean and what the Mediterranean optic on world history can bring to Armenian Studies. I propose that the Armenians provide something like a negative image of the Mediterranean. Whereas the Mediterranean is characterized by geographical unity and human diversity, the “Armenian nation,” in the historically disparate senses of that term, presents quite the opposite: cultural continuity and geographical disparity. In the Mediterranean, culture is fluid—it changes from port to port—and the territorial backdrop provides stability. But in the case of the Armenians, the people themselves supply cultural and linguistic stability, while the territorial backdrop shifts. “Armenia” is something of a moveable feast: A set of cultural markers which shift through time and space, changing as they are overlaid upon distinct geographies and interact with distinct local histories, remaining not self-identical but rather loosely legible as a code of Armenianness—like the “Mediterraneaneity” of the classic scholarship on the sea.

By saying “the Mediterranean is Armenian” I aim to produce a useful thought experiment. To the extent that this statement is true, it is not because of geographical fundamentalism. In territorial terms, the Armenian nation moves: First a swath of territory stretching from the Caspian to the Mediterranean (the Kingdom of Armenia); then the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, in Anatolia and along the Mediterranean shore; and finally the modern nation-state, a perch between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. The Mediterranean is Armenian because of the collective actions of the Armenians themselves—as the chapters in this volume demonstrate, a catalogue of Mediterranean behaviors and cultural habits. Armenian history replaces ecological fundamentalism with a script, a cast of characters, a profile and a playbook. The stage fades in importance. The transient, labile, even fickle behaviors of the actors capture our attention.

THE STAGE

Braudel's and Horden and Purcell's studies of Mediterranean history both began from the same point of departure: An ecological examination of the region to be studied. Braudel describes the minutiae of Mediterranean geography with the patience of a lover: Geography, he writes, "helps us to rediscover the slow unfolding of structural realities, to see things in the perspective of the very long term."² Humans enter the scene only on page 276 (in the English translation), and even then Braudel feels the need to ease the transition. The sea, he writes, "provides unity, transport, the means of exchange and intercourse...but it has also been the great divider, the obstacle that had to be overcome." People crowd the shores of the sea and traverse the sea, but the sea itself remains a great mystery: Vast, capricious, trackless and perilous; the *White Sea*, as the Arabs sometimes call it. "The human Mediterranean," he writes, "only exists in so far as human ingenuity, work, and effort continually re-create it."³

Horden and Purcell too start with geography. But they distinguish themselves from Braudel in not delineating a strong separation between human history and environmental history. The structures and repeated rhythms of life—geological, climatological, vegetal, animal and human—all provide grist for the great soup that is Mediterranean history, with the proviso that Horden and Purcell interest themselves particularly in "history *of* the Mediterranean" rather than "history *in* the Mediterranean." "History *in* the region," they explain, is "contingently Mediterranean or best conceived under some other heading." But the sea itself, as environmental stage, is indispensable to the history *of* the Mediterranean, which describes what "made the region a discriminable whole."⁴ Horden and Purcell bundle human history and the ecological grid in which human history is enmeshed in order to describe those historical cycles that are repeatable and often repeated, whether they involve human actors or not.

The terrain of Armenian occupation is more difficult to define than even as diffuse a region as the Mediterranean basin. It doesn't possess a portfolio of defining characteristics. It encompasses mountains and—at various points in its history—touches the shores of three seas (the Mediterranean,

² Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 23.

³ Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 276.

⁴ Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 2.

the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea). The Kingdom of Armenia incorporated arid and semi-arid terrain, a temperate coastal climate zone, and a continental region with hot summers and cold winters. No historian would turn to the environment to describe the history of a people who occupied so many different geographies and climates. And—as Marie-Aude Baronian’s (Chap. 10) and Vahe Sahakyan’s (Chap. 12) chapters for this volume in particular make clear—the “lands” of the Armenians might, after the diaspora, embrace Europe (and to this list David Kazanjian adds, in a very provisional sense, North America). Ecological fundamentalism falls away, incapable of capturing the diversity of the “Armenia” articulated by the Armenians themselves.

Human geography, too, is scarcely adequate to describe the vast stage on which Armenian history was acted out. The Armenians—wherever they found themselves in the course of a long and eventful history—have always been situated between great producers of culture. Janet Abu-Lughod’s map of the “circuits” of the thirteenth-century “world systems” plots the paths of cultural circulation across the Eurasian continent.⁵ The thirteenth-century Armenian state of Cilicia—which hugged the Mediterranean coast—though it was not large, all the same was enmeshed in three distinct “units of circulation”: one Anatolian-European; a second Middle Eastern; and the third stretching across the Eurasian continent, following the Silk Road. During an earlier period, the territory of the Kingdom of Armenia—centered further to the East and stretching as far West as the Mediterranean coast—straddled that great engine of cultural production, the Silk Road. The modern Armenian nation is situated South of the Caucasus and East of Turkey. Between the Parthians and the Greeks; the Persians and the Arabs; the Turks and the Franks; or the Russians, Iranians and Turks, the “Armenian nation”—wherever it has found itself—has always occupied a cultural fault line. As Alison Vacca’s chapter for this volume (Chap. 3) argues persuasively, the land(s) of the Armenians should be seen in light of scholarship on frontiers. It straddles earthquake zones where cultural tectonic plates meet.

In recent years, geographers have worked to articulate how increasing human mobility changes our concept of geography. Those of us who work on pre-modern history—particularly the history of peoples like the Armenians or places like the Mediterranean, where mobility seems the rule

⁵ Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: the World System A.D. 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 34.

rather than the exceptional state—might take issue with the geographers' notion that mobility is an invention of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, the geographers' insights provide useful tools to understand the stage upon which our subjects acted, whether those subjects were fourth-century Armenians rubbing shoulders with Parthians or Greeks, thirteenth-century Cilician Armenians living on the shores of the Mediterranean, or twentieth-century Armenians in diaspora. Geographer Doreen Massey produced a particularly useful distinction to demonstrate how the mobility of both human and non-human actors changes our sense of well-bounded and clearly defined *places*.

Instead then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent. And this in turn allows a sense of place which is extroverted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and the local.⁶

Does the mobility of people, other living organisms, and the things we carry from place to place have an effect on the physical world? How do the paths we follow transform the nature of “place”? In their chapters for this volume, Myrna Douzjian (Chap. 13) and Vahram Danielyan (Chap. 9) study local literary works—literature of *place*—as a counterweight against that ill-defined category, “world literature,” or literature of *space*. Danielyan traces a lyric origin for the literature of the Armenian nation. And Douzjian reads a twentieth-century play by Aghasi Ayvazyan that projects a vision of the nation as dystopian “place,” claustrophobic and incapable of escaping the oppressive machine of history and power; the fraught efforts of the characters in Ayvazyan’s play to “create a place” only dig them deeper into the ruts of geopolitical consequences. In her work on place, Massey writes in part against conservative emphasis on the “authenticity” of local tradition. And in part, she responds to the plight of people like these characters: Migrants—those who defy geographical destiny because they must; those who cannot or choose not to migrate, and are scripted out of the mobile paths of global capital. Against the force of

⁶Doreen B. Massey, “A Global Sense of Place,” in *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, 146–56), 154–155. ProQuest Ebrary.

capital to anoint some places for development and exclude others, Massey deploys her “extroverted” or “progressive sense of space,” which celebrates *routes* over *roots*.⁷ The pathways of mobility that connect far-flung locales take precedence over the clearly defined and self-identical pushpins that—nostalgically, in our anthems of rooted identity—we use to describe a geographically determined sense of place.

For Mediterraneanists—although traditional notions of geography, environment, and climate are crucial to the formation of our studies—the precedence of routes over roots makes perfect sense. The people we study might feel themselves to be very much part of a place. Their investment in and sense of debt to a local culture is what defines the disparate, even motley cultures of the Mediterranean. At the same time, a number of factors make it difficult to associate the Mediterranean subject with a single location and a single culture: their movement between cities along the shores of the Mediterranean, their contact with other individuals who move between cities, and their contact with non-human actors and objects that move between cities. The Mediterranean as environment is defined by the cycles of movement that link distinct places through that environment—cycles of movement that connect places to each other without annulling their difference from each other. Although human beings are little more than *noises off* in the bigger scheme of things (this is the grand message of Mediterranean scholarship), all that off-stage bustle mounts to a resounding din because it is constant and it is omnipresent—as if the things that move (humans, animals, objects, micro-organisms, books, ideas, cultures) themselves generated *environment*. A network of actors in movement provides a grid within which “geography” is collocated, as if the ephemeral and transitional were more enduring than the backdrop against which their transits are plotted.

Armenian history helps us to see that geography itself—the landscape and the climate against which human history is enacted—is constituted in part by the unceasing movement of actors through it. The Armenians also challenge a presupposition not of Mediterranean history succinctly stated but rather of cultural history in general: The notion that metropolis eclipses periphery in the history of civilizations. In the Armenian *oikoumene*, because discrete locales are connected by the movement of actors between

⁷ Massey, “A Global Sense of Place,” 155. On the political production of “place” and “space,” see David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996). For discussion and bibliography of “routes” and “roots,” see Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction* (2nd edition. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 88–114.

them, the cosmopolitan center commands less importance as an engine of cultural innovation. Center and periphery are linked by trade routes, by a shared language of culture, by shared cultural behaviors (or *adab*), by the texts and customs and people that travel between them. Innovation and cultural change can emerge anywhere on these routes. In Michael Pifer's revolutionary reading, the *gharib* is very much at home in his language and literary tradition, yet chooses to speak from a state of not-belonging, of being an outsider. *Ghurba* is a habitus: an acquired habit, a stance consciously chosen for aesthetic and ethical motives. The *gharib*'s decision to simultaneously belong to place and abjure place puts "place" under erasure (though not perhaps in a Derridean sense), and deconstructs (in a thorough-going Derridean sense) the opposition between center and periphery. For the Armenians, in Vahe Sahakyan's wonderful chapter (Chap. 12), Paris and Beirut are both, and simultaneously, center and periphery. As Tamar Boyadjian's startling reading of Crusades history shows, Jerusalem is at once center and periphery—for multiple populations simultaneously. What happens (for instance) in Baghdad and in Arabic is important. What happens in Constantinople and in Greek is important. But those languages move beyond the metropolis, penetrating the provinces and commingling in provincial towns. Furthermore, they are supplemented (no doubt in the Derridean sense) by other languages—Armenian is among the most important of these—until we must acknowledge that no language is an island. Like places, languages are networked into a symbiotic system, each dependent upon others to bring to the table populations upon whom they have no claims of affection or obligation.

In part because "Armenia" moves, Armenian history compels the historian to rethink the role that geography plays in world history (as Sebouh Aslanian does in his chapter for this volume (Chap. 5)). Armenian history upends the conventions of Mediterranean history in particular by shifting importance away from geographical parameters and geological eras and toward the human drama. Given the transience of the Armenians, it may be difficult in the last analysis to understand the impact of place on their history. How does geography determine or even condition the story of the Armenian people? *Exeunt omnes*: what remains when the Armenians quit the scene? For a population whose modern history plays out in the shadow of genocide and diaspora the question seems cruel. In his chapter for this volume (Chap. 11), David Kazanjian takes on the problem of memorializing the destruction of a population and the deep ruts into which diasporic Armenian commemoration has worn itself: recognizing one past (medi-

eval churches in particular, it seems) and not another (the artifacts of Soviet-era Armenia). Kazanjian redirects diasporic attention away from sacral ruins and toward a less overdetermined, more imaginative, and more future-oriented vision of “Armenia” (the nation or the people). That is, he imagines something like a *psychogeography* of Armenia, a walking-against-the-grain that allows (or even commands) the topography to tell new stories. From Guy Debord to Robert Macfarlane to Will Self, psychogeographers have used aleatory methods to set the course of extended walks in order to de-Hausmannize the urban environment and to forge a fresh relationship with spaces and itineraries which locals and transients alike treat as inconsequential.⁸ The strategy could be used to resist the temptation to force the hand of geography to “tell us another story about catastrophe,” and instead move the walker through a topography capable of surprising her, toward an unknowable future. Indeed, the Mediterranean optic has the virtue of shifting attention away from finite catastrophes and toward repeatable and frequently repeated events: The transits, translations, conversations, negotiations, inventions and reinventions studied in the chapters in this book. When cataclysm occurs, its repercussions are framed and contained by the recurrent events that restore order—like Brueghel’s famous painting of the fall of Icarus, seen as a minute detail embroidered at the edge of a quotidian pastoral scene. Or, as Shakespeare put it in his most memorable stage direction: “Exit, pursued by a bear” (*Winter’s Tale* III, 3, 1551).

THE ACTORS

How do scholars define the character of Mediterranean societies? A short list of key concepts thought to characterize the societies that ring the sea have been mooted, analyzed, and in some cases discredited in the scholarship. The anthropologists were first to the party with their twinned concepts of honor and shame, thought to characterize (and to categorize in gender terms) the peoples of the Mediterranean. Although subsequent scholarship called into question the emphasis on honor and shame, the region has once again become an important analytical optic for anthropologists.⁹ Social and

⁸ Guy Debord’s “Theory of the *dérive*”—which is understood as the foundational manifesto of psychogeography—first appeared in *Les lèvres nues* in 1956 and was reprinted in the *Internationale Situationniste* #2 in 1958. It has been archived by the Situationist International website; see <http://www.ccdc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html> (accessed June 12, 2017).

⁹ For examples of the critique of the Mediterranean as organizing principle for anthropological scholarship, see Michael Herzfeld, “Honour and Shame: Problems in the Comparative

economic historians grew infatuated with a small cast of Mediterranean characters: the merchants and pilgrims, for instance, whose journeys from port to port were seen as the quintessential Mediterranean behavior. More intrepid historians studied those whose lives upon the sea left so little trace, either in material culture or in the historical record: the seafarers themselves—the innovators with their astrolabes and lateen sails, the corsairs and their captives. More recently, cultural negotiators—the dragomans and interpreters who enable trade and diplomacy on the sea of many languages—have become the new darling of the historians.¹⁰ Fernand Braudel imposed one value on the people of his tribe, the historians of the Mediterranean: We shall mind not the *grands récits* of history—the tales of kings and princes, generals and admirals from whose perspective history had been written before the great *Annales* revolution—but instead the repeated, cyclical patterns that governed the life of the overwhelming majority of the human beings who lived around the sea. And so our attention is drawn to the peasants and artisans and sailors whose lives we study—at once monotonous and fitfully eventful, as befits the Mediterranean environment. This is the dramaticus personae of our scholarship.

In his chapter for this volume (Chap. 4), Sergio La Porta argues convincingly that the behaviors associated with the Armenian Cilician elite were, in fact, *Mediterranean* behaviors, adopted in response to physical and cultural geography. And he challenges the historian to look to Mediterranean studies not for descriptive categories but rather for a methodological tool kit. Like the Mediterraneanist, the Armenologist studies the mobile cultures of a transient people, whose actions are negotiated in myriad minuscule negotiations with culturally distinct populations. La Porta, rightly, bristles against the reduction of these cultural actors to a stereotypical, one-dimensional persona—*the merchant*, whose dealings with product and people are at once celebrated and treated with dismissive hauteur, like a Catskills comedian or a Broadway touring company hack. And he points to one of the most important points made by the chapters in this volume. From Iran to Anatolia to the shores of the Mediterranean, Armenian history challenges the opposition of “East” and “West” which, although it has been discredited in the scholarship, still carries authority as cultural shorthand.

Analysis of Moral Systems,” *Man* NS 15 (1980): 339–351; and “The Horns of the Mediterraneanist Dilemma,” *American Ethnologist* 11 (1984): 439–454. For a recent recuperation of Mediterranean ethnography, see Naor Ben-Yehoyada, *The Mediterranean Incarnate: Region Formation between Sicily and Tunisia since World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

¹⁰ See e.g., E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokerizing Empire: Trans-imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

Mediterranean people live in places that are networked to other places—by their own movements, by the movements of others in the community, by the movement of the objects they live with, the foods they consume, the clothing they wear and the cultures they find most familiar. As we have seen, according to the geographers, *place* is networked by the movement of human and non-human actors. A patchwork of geographical crosshairs creates a grid that connects even the most seemingly isolated places. This, it seems, is not a development of the industrial revolution in the Mediterranean. Rather, it is a transhistorical characteristic of the human ecology of the sea—a region of “short distances and definite places,” as Horden and Purcell described it, borrowing a phrase from poet W. H. Auden. The Armenian history described in this volume highlights one characteristic of the Mediterranean actor: his sense of “being from somewhere else,” as Marie-Aude Baronian writes. The Armenian subject—Baronian describes the diasporic Armenian (Chap. 10), but as the chapters in this volume illustrate, the habit has a long history before the Armenian genocide—has access to multiple and layered formulations of cultural identity. Whether the topic is alphabet (in Murat Cankara’s chapter (Chap. 8)) or the bureaucratic apparatus of state and nation (in Girard Libaridian’s chapter (Chap. 14)), the Armenian actor can access a repertoire of possibilities: a portfolio of languages, of political or seigneurial or professional practices, and of those protocols of behavior that we describe as *culture* (most broadly understood). From this perspective, it seems reductive to say that East meets West: all cardinal directions pool and eddy around the shores of the Mediterranean, or in the parlors of the Armenians.

Or—to borrow another, lovely metaphor from Baronian’s chapter—in the Armenian subject, the cultural assets of the peoples of the Eurasian continent are woven together into a textile which does not elide the sources and forms of distinct cultures, but preserves contingent and relational negotiations between them. Textiles bear signs: their makers weave into them tribal symbols that communicate to those who understand their languages. Textiles speak of *home*. They are generated from the homeliest of materials: The wool worked in the village, for instance, and the dyes made from local vegetation. Textiles are traded and move far from home, to become naturalized in a new environment. The mobility of textile as signifier grants it the ability to convey multiple messages to multiple communities. As Baronian argues, “objects are always vectors of narratives”: stories are told about them, or using them as symbol. Textiles and carpets both relate stories (in the signs woven into them) and become stage dressing for new stories. In the most fabulous of these narratives, carpets become vehicles: from the flying carpets

of fantasy and fairy tales to Bedouin tents lined with carpets on walls and floor, hung with carpets as room dividers and kilims as storage units. Textiles in general, carpets in particular, are produced by human actors in collaboration with the environment and move with humans through environments. For this reason, they serve as a powerful metaphor for a history better characterized as vectors of interaction than as monolithic, self-identical, and stationary: Scenes from a story in motion, rather than a grounded narrative-in-place.

Armenian history extracts the central behavior of the human ecology of the Mediterranean—negotiations with people with whom we share an environment but not a culture—and situates that behavior in a series of discrete geochronological settings, across the Eurasian continent (and as far afield as contemporary Los Angeles, Boston, and Detroit). Entangled and enmeshed networks of people interacting against a backdrop of cultural complexity: the Persians and the Greeks, the Silk Road, the Holy Land during and after the era of the Crusades, the Soviet Union and Central Asia—this is the moving *place* of Armenian history. Like the Bedouins who lived in houses made of carpets, into which the women of the house knotted signs that spoke about and to the tribe, the Armenians carry *culture* with them. But more than that, as the chapters in this volume demonstrate, they bring with them a habit of putting culture into play, of using culture to negotiate culture.

THE SCRIPT

The chapters in this volume describe the lively history of a population which is, to state it simply, more diverse than most communities. Armenians share a language, but that language changes over time, from East to West, in the modern nation-state and in diaspora. Armenians share a history; like any narrative of origin and evolution, it is open to interpretation and manipulation. Armenians share a culture: Literature, music, an artistic heritage, culinary traditions, liturgy and lullabies, and jokes. But like any population (arguably, diasporic populations in particular) they debate volubly the details of this patrimony. Perhaps the one thing that remains the same—from one region to another and from one century to another—is the script that Armenians use to write their language. Developed apparently from the Greek alphabet at the beginning of the fifth century CE, the Armenian alphabet is a marvel of orthographic engineering, so fine a fit for the sounds of the language that it has required remarkably little

tinkering since.¹¹ Like most alphabets derived from the Greek (and unlike most alphabets derived from Latin or Arabic), the Armenian alphabet modified the shape of the Greek letters considerably to represent its own sounds.¹² Its relationship to Greek is presumed thanks to the order of the letters in the alphabet and thanks to the way it analyzes and divides sound. The Armenian alphabet has not been used to write other languages (with the rare exception, most notably Armeno-Turkish; see Murat Cankara's (Chap. 8) and Sebouh Aslanian's (Chap. 5) chapters for this volume). And, apart from the occasional episode of alphabet experimentalism, the Armenians have not used other alphabets to write their language. The Armenian language and its alphabet have had a long-term monogamous relationship. And so the alphabet itself deserves recognition as the most recognizable marker of Armenian identity and as one of the most ingenious inventions of the Armenians.

Armenian culture might be best described by borrowing one last time from Horden and Purcell's investigation of the history of the Mediterranean.

Our task is the investigation of unity in space and continuity over time: these are the prerequisites of a distinctively Mediterranean history. But we shall not presuppose either unity or continuity: both remain to be demonstrated (or denied) topic by topic. And if we find them we shall not suppose them to be measurable in other than loose and relative terms. To borrow an evocative term from mathematics, the Mediterranean is a "fuzzy set." A certain vagueness should be of the essence in the way that it is conceived. Unity is obviously unlikely to be hard and fast, exhibiting clear external boundaries and internal homogeneity.¹³

Mount Lebanon is not identical to the Moroccan Rif, but both are recognizably "Mediterranean." In a similar way, the Armenians carry a cultural compound which varies yet remains "Armenian." Armenianness—like the Mediterranean itself—is a "fuzzy set," a portfolio of shared memories, habits, and behaviors that may change from time to time and from place to place, in particular when absorbing stimulus from neighboring cultures: the intimate strangers and *ghurubā'* of Anatolia, the Lebanon, Central Asia, Europe, or North America.

¹¹ For a discussion of the Armenian alphabet, see Peter T. Daniels and William Bright, *The World's Writing Systems* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 356.

¹² For examples of other alphabets derived from the Greek, see Coptic, Georgian, Gothic, Glagolitic, and Cyrillic.

¹³ Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, 45.

In the last analysis, perhaps the most impressive achievement of the chapters in this volume is to give voice to new perspectives: Armenian history from a different shore, Mediterranean history from an unfamiliar angle, historical narratives scripted by a new generation. Watching from the sidelines as I do (I am not a specialist in Armenian studies) feels a bit like watching a script meeting, listening to screenwriters parse characters and backstories, plot the A story and the B story, and place beats with judicious discrimination. From the chapters in this volume, a new vision of Armenian history emerges, one that recognizes the importance of the genocide to the history of the Armenians but is not consumed or overshadowed by it. Like the younger generation of Mediterraneanists (scholars like Naor Ben-Yehoyada, Camillo Gómez-Rivas, Natalie Rothman, Hussein Fancy, and Maurizio Albahari), the historians in this volume focus on human histories—not the blockbuster Mediterranean history that encompasses geological eras, flora and fauna, and people too, like the tent-pole Mediterranean volumes of the past. They especially want to talk about histories that involve humans who travel and who, while they travel, encounter and interact with other humans. They are interested in particular in how the layered and multiple identities of their Armenian or Mediterranean actors take shape in transit and how they continue to shift when their actors settle (or pause) in a new home. Indeed, even Armenians who remained in Anatolia after the genocide were enmeshed in “webs of connection” that linked them to the subjects of the new Turkish state, as Hakem Al-Rustom’s chapter for this volume (Chap. 7) shows. Even Armenian actors who did not move generated entangled relationships with their neighbors—Balkan Muslims and Anatolian Kurds in particular, along with the myriad Muslim populations forced into Anatolia by population exchanges—belying the placid ideological alternate reality suggested by the language of the Lausanne Treaty. The historical *tableaux vivants* described in this volume are granular, networked, and dynamic. Writing history, it is hard not to imagine our future at the same time. I am heartened at the vision of a once and future Armenia that emerges from these scholars’ work. Without losing sight of the gravity of the past, they make it possible to think a new, capacious, and intersectional vision of Armenianness.

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