



EDITED BY KATHRYN BABAYAN AND MICHAEL PIFER

# AN ARMENIAN MEDITERRANEAN

*Words and Worlds in Motion*

MEDITERRANEAN  
PERSPECTIVES





## 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

---

This chapter was mostly written in the summer of 2009 and 2010 and episodically revised over the past few years. Earlier iterations were presented at Armenian Studies workshops at the University of California, Los Angeles in 2009, and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 2012 and 2015. I am grateful to the conveners of the workshops for the invitation and feedback. I would also like to thank especially Houri Berberian, Jirair Libaridian, David Myers, Stephen H. Rapp, Khachig Tölölyan, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Sarah Abrevaya Stein, Kathryn Babayan, Richard Antaramian, Giusto Traina, and Marc Mamigonian for their generous comments. As usual, I alone am responsible for any shortcomings.

S. D. Aslanian (✉)  
University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA

cultures and regions.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.”<sup>3</sup> 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.”<sup>4</sup> In his study on early modern Eurasia, Subrahmanyam demonstrates that what

<sup>1</sup>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.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>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.

<sup>4</sup>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.<sup>5</sup>

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

<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.”<sup>7</sup>

### 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.”<sup>8</sup> 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,

<sup>6</sup> See 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.

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

<sup>8</sup> Bentley, “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."<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup> 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;<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> Although these scholars are often

<sup>9</sup> Bentley, "The New World History," 393.

<sup>10</sup> Christian discusses "networks of exchange" in his *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

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

<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> The second birthmark, perhaps more relevant for our purposes in this study and one to which I will periodically return

<sup>13</sup> On the WHA, see Allardyce, “Toward World History,” 62ff.

<sup>14</sup> 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.”

<sup>15</sup> 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."<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup>

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."<sup>18</sup> This expansion of

<sup>16</sup>On 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.

<sup>17</sup>Bentley, "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.

<sup>18</sup>On 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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”<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup>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' Yarevmuts (XIV-XIX Dar)* (Studies of the Armenian Language and Literature in the West (XIV to XIX centuries)) (Venice: The Mekhitarist Press, 1895).

<sup>20</sup>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.

<sup>21</sup>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"<sup>22</sup>?

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 Garsoïan, 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 "nationalism," before we return to examine other pitfalls characterizing Armenian Studies as a field.<sup>23</sup> 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

<sup>22</sup> "Bad Romance" is the title of a chart-topping song from 2009 by American singer Lady Gaga.

<sup>23</sup> "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”).<sup>24</sup> 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

<sup>24</sup>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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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,

<sup>25</sup> 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).

<sup>26</sup> 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.”<sup>27</sup> 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.”<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> Thus, nationalist historians must negotiate between

<sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, 83.

<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup>

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.<sup>31</sup> 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,

<sup>30</sup> Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, 83.

<sup>31</sup> The principal work here is Armen Aivazian, *Hayastani Patmut'yan Lusabanumē Amerikian Patmagrut'yan 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”?<sup>32</sup>

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

<sup>32</sup> 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 “nationalism” 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.<sup>33</sup> 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”<sup>34</sup> that ensured the unfolding, in linear history, of what we have called above the national subject.<sup>35</sup> 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.”<sup>36</sup> 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.”<sup>37</sup> 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

<sup>33</sup> Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 2.

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

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

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

<sup>37</sup> 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."<sup>38</sup>

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."<sup>39</sup>

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.<sup>40</sup>

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"

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

<sup>39</sup> Bournoutian, *A History of the Armenian People*, 1: 145. The expression "national spirit" in the above passage is Bournoutian's.

<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> 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,”<sup>42</sup> 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 is 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

<sup>41</sup> 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.

<sup>42</sup> 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."<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> 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 Islamic 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

<sup>43</sup> See Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*.

<sup>44</sup> 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 Hovannisian's two-volume *History of the Armenian People* are Nina Garsoïan, 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.<sup>45</sup>

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.<sup>46</sup>

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

<sup>46</sup> "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."<sup>47</sup> 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.

<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> 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'wn 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"<sup>49</sup> conception of history along with its

<sup>49</sup>The 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, Neobarionism, 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'wn*]. 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.*<sup>50</sup>

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 Beinín’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.

<sup>50</sup>A. G. Abrahamyan, *Hamarot 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."<sup>51</sup> 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

<sup>51</sup>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.*<sup>52</sup> 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,<sup>53</sup> 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.”<sup>54</sup> 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.<sup>55</sup>

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)<sup>56</sup>, 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

<sup>52</sup> Leo (Arakel Babakhanian), “Haykakan Tpagrut’yun” (Armenian Printing), vol. 2 in *Erkeri Zhoghovatsu* (Collected Works), vol. 5 (Yerevan: Hayastan Hratarakhut’yun, 1986), 383. Emphasis added.

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

<sup>54</sup> Leo, “Haykakan Tpagrut’yun,” 390. “Asiakan khavari u ansharzhut’yan mej nstats mi zhoghovrdi.”

<sup>55</sup> Leo, “Haykakan Tpagrut’yun,” 383.

<sup>56</sup> 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 Garsoïan was path-breaking in exploring horizontal connections and interactions between Armenian history and Greco-Roman (Adontz<sup>57</sup> and Manandyan<sup>58</sup>),

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

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

Arsacid/Sassanian-Persian (Garsoïan<sup>59</sup> and Russell<sup>60</sup>) 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 Garsoïan 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.<sup>61</sup> 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.<sup>62</sup> For

<sup>59</sup> 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).

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

<sup>61</sup> 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).

<sup>62</sup> 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.<sup>63</sup> 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.

<sup>63</sup>The 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 Garsoïan.

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

Looking back at the development of Armenian Studies in North America in the course of the twentieth century, Nina Garsoïan’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 “Garsoïan’s Law” (a label probably coined by Ronald Suny), this observation appears to have never been elaborated in any systematic fashion in Garsoïan’s published work.<sup>64</sup> The closest Garsoïan 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.<sup>65</sup>

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

<sup>64</sup> For an insightful account of Garsoïan’s intellectual legacy and a brief discussion of “Garsoïan’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.

<sup>65</sup> Nina Garsoïan, “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.<sup>66</sup> The centrality of this "law" to Garsoïan'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 Garsoïan, 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 Garsoïan 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."<sup>67</sup> To counteract this scholarship and "reestablish the balance between the influence of both Armenia's neighbors," Garsoïan 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."<sup>68</sup> 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, Garsoïan 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."<sup>69</sup> Enumerating the many intellectual contributions that made

<sup>66</sup>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.

<sup>67</sup>Garsoïan, *De Vita Sua* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2011), 203.

<sup>68</sup>Garsoïan, *De Vita Sua*, 203.

<sup>69</sup>Nina Garsoïan, "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).

Garsoïan 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.<sup>70</sup> However, what is perhaps not adequately understood or conveyed is how Garsoïan'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.”<sup>71</sup> 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 “Garsoïan'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 power<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> See Avdoyan, “Magistra Studentorum.”

<sup>71</sup> 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.

<sup>72</sup> 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,<sup>73</sup> 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 Garsoïan 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 Garsoïan, "Prolegomena," where Garsoïan 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 Garsoïan's focus on Parthian Iran prevents her from seeing the Eurasia-wide striking parallels and horizontal connections behind the ceremonial of the royal hunt.

<sup>73</sup>Meyer Reinhold, *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity* (Brussels: Latomus Revue d'études Latines, 1970).

art.<sup>74</sup> 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*)<sup>75</sup> 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”<sup>76</sup> 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.”<sup>77</sup> 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

<sup>74</sup>To the best of my knowledge, Garsoïan 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.

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

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

<sup>77</sup>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."<sup>78</sup> He even suggests the real possibility of the influence of Chinese landscape painting on Armenian art during the same period.<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup> 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, phoenixes, 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.<sup>81</sup>

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,<sup>82</sup> 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.<sup>83</sup> In a similar vein, S. Peter Cowe has also recently explored the interactive environment dur-

<sup>78</sup> Dickran Kouymjian, "Chinese Elements in Armenian Miniature Painting in the Mongol Period," in *Armenian Studies in Memoriam Haig Berberian*, ed. Dickran Kouymjian (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1986), 429.

<sup>79</sup> Kouymjian, "Chinese Elements in Armenian Miniature Painting," 429.

<sup>80</sup> Matthew 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).

<sup>81</sup> Canepa, "Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction," 16.

<sup>82</sup> Levon Khachikian, "1280 T'vakanin Erznkayum Kazmakerpvats 'eghbayrut' iwn' [The 'Brotherhood' Organized in Erznka in the year 1280].," *Teghegagir*, no. 12. Erevan, 1951 (reproduced in Levon Khachikian, *Ashkhatut' iwnner*, ed. Shushanik L. Khachikian, vol. 1, 200–215).

<sup>83</sup> 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.<sup>84</sup>

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.”<sup>85</sup> 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.”<sup>86</sup> 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.<sup>87</sup> It has in particular

<sup>84</sup> 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.

<sup>85</sup> 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.

<sup>86</sup> Herzig, “The Armenian Merchants from New Julfa,” 8.

<sup>87</sup> 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.<sup>88</sup> My book on Julfan trade, building on the groundbreaking work of Edmund Herzig, 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.<sup>89</sup> 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.

<sup>88</sup> Shushanik L. Khachikian, *Nor Jughayi hay vacharakanut'yunē ev nra arevratnatesakan kaperē Rusastani bet XVII–XVIII dārerum* [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.

<sup>89</sup> See Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, Chapter 6, and Edmund Herzig, "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.<sup>90</sup> 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.<sup>91</sup> Covering multiple genres, including short stories and the novel,

<sup>90</sup> 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 Berberian, "La Littérature Arméno-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 Turk'eren grk'eri ev Hayatar Turk'eren parberakan mamuli matenagit'ut'iwn* [Bibliography of Armeno-Turkish books and periodicals] (Istanbul: Turkuaz Yayınları, 2005), and idem., *Hayatar Turkeren grakanutyunë (aghbyuragitakan 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.

<sup>91</sup> 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 Turk'eren grk'eri ev Hayatar Turk'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.<sup>92</sup> 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.<sup>93</sup> 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.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Hasmik Stepanyan, *Hayatar T'urk'eren grakanut'yunž* (*aghbyuragitakan betazotut'yun*) (Yerevan: Erevani Hamalsarani Hratarakh'ut'yun, 2001).

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

<sup>94</sup> Stepanyan, *Hayatar Turkeren grakanutyunž*, 5. “Հայաստան թուրքերին գրականությունը հայ մշակույթի անքակտելի մասն է կազմում... Ավելի քան 500 տարի հայերն ապրել են թուրքական տիրապետության տակ: Սա սովորական հայատականություն չի եղել, այլ կրոնական մոլերանդության մոլուցքով տարված ռազմա-ֆեոդալական իշխանության տեսական ու ահալոր ճնշում մշակութային խոր անցյալ ունեցող մի ժողովրդի վրա: Թուրք տիրապետողները ոչ միայն վերցրել են հայ ժողովրդի ստեղծած կուրթական բարիքները, նրա ֆիզիքական աշխատանքի արդյունքը, այլ ամեն կերպ աշխատել են ոչնչացնել կամ յուրացնել նրա մտավոր ստեղծագործության արքայիքները, ձուլել ու մահմետականացնել հայատակ ժողովուրդներին: հայատառ թուրքերին գրականությունը ծնունդ է առել որպես ինքնապաշտպանման 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'."<sup>95</sup> 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,<sup>96</sup> 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.<sup>97</sup>

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

<sup>95</sup> Nancy Reynolds, "Interview with Aron Rodrigue: Difference and Tolerance in the Ottoman Empire," *Stanford Humanities Review*, 1.

<sup>96</sup> 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.

<sup>97</sup> Stepanyan, *Hayatar Turkeren grakanutyunē*, 21.

«15-18րդ դարերում Օսմանյան կայսրությունում արեւմտահայությունը սոցիալական ու ֆիզիկական անասելի հետապնդումների եւ բռնի ուժացման է ենթարկվել:... Թուրքիայի, Պարսկաստանի հպատակության տակ գտնվող քրիստոնյա ժողովուրդների գլխին դամոկլյան սրի նմամ միշտ էլ կախուած է եղել ֆիզիկական ոջնջացման վտանքը:... Ջանալով իրականացնել իր մեկ պետություն, մեկ ժողովուրդ, մեկ կրոն» գաղափարը նա պատրաստվել էր բնաջնջել նաեւ կայսրության 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 Cankara<sup>98</sup> 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."<sup>99</sup>

## 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.<sup>100</sup> 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."<sup>101</sup> 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

<sup>98</sup>See the perceptive thoughts of Cankara, "Rethinking Ottoman Cross-Cultural Encounters." On cross-cultural interactions, see also Aslanian "Prepared in the Language of the Hagarites."

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

<sup>100</sup>David Ludden, "History Outside Civilization and the Mobility of South Asia," *South Asia* 18, 1 (1994): 1–23.

<sup>101</sup>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 Garsoïan'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.<sup>102</sup> 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 1906–1911<sup>103</sup> and Bedross Der Matossian's recent trailblazing book<sup>104</sup> comparing Armenian, Jewish,

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

<sup>103</sup> 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.

<sup>104</sup> 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.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, the recent work of Seta Dadoyan and S. Peter Cowe in exploring the interactive dimension of Armenian and Islamic history also seems to be a symptom of a larger sea change in the field.<sup>106</sup> 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.<sup>107</sup> 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.

<sup>105</sup> 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).

<sup>106</sup> 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.

<sup>107</sup> 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."<sup>108</sup> 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.<sup>109</sup>

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.<sup>110</sup> 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."<sup>111</sup>

Let me conclude by reiterating how despite the near-exclusive hold of the nation-form and of "nationalism" 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: Brepolis, 2015), and Lynn Jones, *Between Islam and Byzantium: Aght'amar and the Visual Construction of Medieval Armenian Rulership* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).

<sup>108</sup> 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).

<sup>109</sup> Rapp, "Recovering the Prenational Caucasian Landscape," 17.

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

<sup>111</sup> 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.<sup>112</sup> 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.<sup>113</sup> 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.<sup>114</sup> 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.

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

<sup>113</sup> 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.

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