In the 1890s, Sultan Abdul Hamid, with the help of Turkey's German allies, extended the tradition of understanding Armenians as second-class citizens to its 'logical' extreme: he began a policy of small-scale, local exterminations. Estimates indicate the death toll to have been over 100,000 within the space of a few years. By early 1915, the Committee of Union and Progress (the Young Turks, who had come to power in the 1908 revolution) had enacted a sweeping extermination policy of their own. Young men and community leaders were taken from towns and cities and executed; women, children, and older men were marched into the desert until they died of starvation, dehydration, or exhaustion; in all, 1.5 million Armenians were killed.

This is history as we know it, or rather, part of the Armenian history we know. The other significant part is our families' stories. Each of us has in our own families sole survivors of their families. For one of us, that sole survivor's stories and a name are the only connection to Armenian identity. For the other, Armenian identity is a complex field of music, food, dance, politics, a rusted first language, and family identity, including having been the first in the family to marry a non-Armenian. For both of us, the intersection of these histories and our Anglo-American educations requested (and continues to request) examination.

The last substantial revisions were made to this article in August 1988; that is, before the earthquake and the imprisoning of members of the Karabagh Committee.

We shall begin our discussion with an analysis of two documentaries: The Forgotten Genocide (1975) and An Armenian Journey (1988). Both of these documentaries are quests; they set out to establish, to make convincing (for whom?), to narrativize, a history which holds, on some level, a shaky position. The quest, then - and the shaky position is related to this - is for truth, truth in historical discourse. The recognition these quests seek to gain involves a certain narrative position of historical truth, which corresponds to specific political issues that recognition will allow - for example, reparations (perhaps material - a "homeland" - yet certainly emotional, a space to feel, and feel justified). This quest, however, the discourse these documentaries engage in, involves a specific approach that reveals certain interests; the 'specific' approach becomes implicated with these interests - it narrativizes them What this approach looks like and what these interests might be are our concerns in this article.
We think and speak about these documentaries differently. Our interests are the same in many ways; we would like to resituate the issues addressed in these documentaries, critique (in vulgar terms) most of the means and a few of the ends, while salvaging others. Our approaches are much the same as well; it is our relationship to the issues which is different.

Throughout the article, we are engaging in a dialogue with each other, not because we want to lay some authorial claim on specific statements (each of us has, in fact, ‘put words in the other’s mouth’), but because we want to insist that subject positions organize the way we think about these issues. Moreover, the dialogue format allows us to consider the complex interconnections among the issues involved in ways that traditional linear essay form prevents. These issues, while rarely discussed in the specificity of the Armenian context presented here, connect with more general debates. Questions of ‘name’, ‘gender’, ‘history’, and ‘identity’ create the highly charged atmosphere within which questions of representation are raised. While these terms may appear separately (along with the term ‘genocide’, here equally charged) part of our commitment to the dialogue format involves resisting their separation. We are using this format and the specific issue of ‘the Armenian question’ which (is one among many that) concerns us personally to explore the topoi on which these terms vibrate.

I ANALYSIS

DK Since throughout this discussion we will situate ourselves in relation to names, to namings, and take up some questions of history, or truth, as I begin a double bind emerges for me by virtue of this name I hold. Named Kazanjian, partially, I am far from culturally constituted as, and far from the trade of, coppersmith, which it means in a foreign language. But (not only) legally, it is my name. I am concerned with the same truth these films are beginning with, the truth of a genocide, which I hold because of stories (though stories that certainly exist in a somewhat ‘exotic’ place in my childhood memories) related to my name. Thus by constructing some distance between this truth, the interest I will work within, and the ‘specific’ approach of the films, I am allowing myself a stance from which to begin to read, critically and interestingly.

AK The double bind of my name is a slightly different one. It is in my first name, the one I call myself and by which I am known to friends and family. It is ‘Anahid’, a name which to me is both common and unusual: common among the Armenians I know, and yet unmanageable by virtue of its strangeness to most non-Armenians. I live with mispronunciations and stumblings over my name. And so do I stumble over it, but for different reasons. ‘Anahid, the protectress of the land, was the most closely bound up with Armenian religious consciousness. . . . Miraculous healing powers were ascribed to her, the embodiment of fertility in man and beast, and she was worshipped as the provider of life-giving water.” The responsibility that comes with the name my parents gave me is no small one: how can I protect the land when I’ve never seen it? How can I bear more than twenty-five hundred years of history - my name is that old - that I don’t know? How can I say what I must
say here about these stories when the stories are told in my name (in the name of protecting the land)?

Perhaps I can begin by noticing what has replaced the 'land' my name protects. In both documentaries, as in most discussions and representations of the Armenian genocide, the western model of 'nation' has been taken on as the means to the end of 'identity'. While it's clear from the most cursory reading of even a picture-book history of Armenia that there has been an Armenian 'nation' for at most two years (1918-1920), there is no indication in these texts of consciousness towards this strategic catachresis (term with no adequate literal meaning!reference). In other words, while 'nation' has no meaning as a description in an Armenian history, it is used unselfconsciously as the privileged concept in representations of Armenian history. The use of the name 'nation' may be the necessary 'mistake' which makes narratives about genocide possible; the grounds for claiming identity must be found, and nationality and religion are the likely candidates. If no identity can be claimed, genocide cannot be claimed.

The unwillingness to acknowledge the use of the name 'nation' as a strategic manoeuvre rather than an historical truth, however, makes many problematic representations possible. One can suggest, as Forgotten Genocide does, that nationalism rather than religion or economics was the reason for the murders, the latter having been simply pretences, erasing the connection between nationalism and economics. One can claim an 'Armenian national spirit' which is kept alive by the church (An Armenian Journey).

The name 'nation', then, is in the place of the stall at the beginning: it makes 'beginning' possible by positing itself unproblematically as a truth, and by ignoring the problems of beginning a history-as-narrative. In other words, 'nation' covers over inconvenient history, it makes identity, it makes possible the claim to genocide. Naming then becomes an interesting thematic in these documentaries. In The Forgotten Genocide, the experts are named with their individual names - Senator Tip O'Neill, Professor Richard Hovanissian, etc. - as are the eyewitnesses with professional credentials - a German doctor/missionary, Ambassador Henry Morgenthau (speaking through his grandson). The non-professional eyewitnesses, those who were in danger, the Armenians, are called simply 'Survivor from Ourfa', 'Survivor of Musa Dagh', etc.; they are representatives of the people of a 'nation, unnamed or named as survivors to signal both their typicality as Armenian victims and their difference from those who did not survive. Similarly, Alarion Davis is chosen for An Armenian Journey for two reasons: she has photos and documents, and hers is a 'typical tragic tale'. (No mention is made, of course, of her non-Armenian name, or her unusually fluent, relatively unaccented English in comparison to other Armenians of her generation.)

The first name I want to discuss is just emerging, the name of 'genocide'. In the middle of An Armenian Journey a Turkish historian (Professor Justin McCarthy), the only voice of 'opposition' allowed in either film, began his objection to the historical claim for the Armenian genocide by casting doubt on this name; it is an emotional name, McCarthy said, one he prefers not to use; it brings up emotions that are usually felt in relation to difficult times, but that cloud the historicity. Emotion clearly fits into a neat place in western discourse. It is usually in devalued opposition to logical,
rational truth, and yet this particular Armenian truth, this genocide, as the historian pointed out, cannot be separated from its highly charged emotion. It is precisely the history with this emotional charge contained in the name genocide which is in some way the strategic mistake to hold on to. It violates traditions of historical objectivity enough to enable the possibility of a self-consciously interested historiography. On one level there needs to be a shift here away from standards of consistent truth in history and towards an interested truth that could free up this quest to follow other agents of this history, other 'subjects'. We will undoubtedly come back to some of these other subjects later, but for now I want to stay with the name 'genocide'.

The Forgotten Genocide begins by stating the facts of genocide: 1.5 million Armenians killed in less than three years (1915-18), wiped off their lands, lands which we are shown visually. The voiceover, that of Mike Connors as we are told in the opening credits, adds at the end of this introduction, 'My grandparents were among them.' The importance of stories, and of personal connection to this genocide, is presented immediately here. This is an example of violating traditions of historical objectivity, quite overtly, in the interest of preserving the important charge of genocide.

AK Let me interrupt you for a second. I don't know if you remember him, but Mike Connors was the star of Mannix, the TV detective show. The Forgotten Genocide was made in the mid-7Os, at the height of his popularity; he was used as a legitimating tool by virtue of his television stardom. And, as Bill Todd pointed out to us, Mannix's secretary was a black woman, and some Mannix episodes raised racial issues, as well as one or two episodes based on Connors's Armenian heritage.

DK I wasn't aware of that - at that age, I think I was still watching Sesame Street.

Anyway, after the introduction, The Forgotten Genocide breaks into a series of interviews with interested parties; the first an Armenian male priest, the second and third Armenian male lawyers. All these men clearly occupy seats of authority and interest - the lawyers are wearing suits, sitting in their offices, framed by shelves of books, the priest, wearing his collar, is also framed by an office of books. They each speak of a different connection to the genocide, and yet all relate personal connections and an interest in the telling of this story. The next interview is with an Armenian man speaking Armenian. He is, as you said, identified just as a survivor from Ourfa and is not given a name as the other interviewees were. A bit of what he says is translated, again concerning his personal connection to the genocide. He is then followed by another named man in an office of books, Professor Gidney from Kent State. Professor Gidney is presumably not Armenian (he refers to 'their moral claim to the land'), and he confirms the historicity of the genocide as a moral claim to the Armenian homelands.

The methodology in this series of interviews is quite important. The personal and emotional claims set up by 'genocide' as an act, by Mike Connors's grandparents, and by the unnamed survivor work as an undercurrent of personal, 'genocidal' reality, while the named and 'authorized' men become a privileged foreground. They represent the discourse of truth - of religion, law, history, (as well as 'success in America' - all are identified by location as well
as by profession and name), although they too speak of being tied personally to this genocide; except, that is, for the 'neutral' historian from Kent State. Clearly they also represent the voice of man (we must wait a while for the first woman to appear in the film), as connected to this discourse of truth.7 The unnamed survivor, however, seems to share a certain peripheral or background position with the women interviewees we encounter later; in this opening segment he and his stories act as a highlight, a connection to one part of 'genocide,' but not the part that is really threatened, the historical, which is the subject of this film's quest.

Let's stay just for a moment with the gender representations in the films. The women in both documentaries are relegated to the position of representing women, children, family life, affective values, while the men represent 'Armenians'. In The Forgotten Genocide, two female 'survivors' speak: one describes the constant threat of rape by the soldiers, and the other explains that the women fought alongside the men. The survivors who discuss hiding their language, fighting battles, any general non-gendered issue are all male. In An Armenian Journey, there is again a clear division of labour: the male narrator/journalist represents the objective quest for knowledge and truth (along with Dr Bardakjian), while Mariam represents the affective quest for family and a past. Of course, this division of labour is not only an Armenian formation, but one we know all too well from other places.

David, I think this masculist code cuts deeply into the narrative of both films as they develop. In The Forgotten Genocide, a traditional story-line history of Armenia leading up to the genocide works to establish an Armenian 'claim' to 'historical territories' by documenting 'the high level of Armenian civilization in literature, art and architecture'. We are told that Armenia was a deeply faithful Christian nation, and we see shots of black-robed and bearded Armenian male priests spreading incense and blessings. These privileged images of authority, here connected to 'culture' and 'the nation', resonate with the authority images of the opening interviews. Furthermore, Armenia is brought in line with a Western concept of nationhood - patriarchial nationhood - thereby grounding the claim, which Mike Connors makes a number of times, for 'their historic territories' in a familiar western discourse. The storyline quite clearly presents a consistent and wondrous state, using western historical terms such as 'golden age', leading up to what is referred to as the eve of that day of genocide. Civilization is privileged in terms of 'splendour' (with images of gilded documents, crowned kings on thrones, cities, fortresses), 'advancement', and 'education' (images of the 'advanced Armenian Alphabet', and of mathematical drawings of complex geometric figures). The historic Muslim-Christian conflict also is played out in the privileging of Christianity against Islamic others. In these ways (all) Armenians become in the film the (sole) cultivated and educated intelligentsia of Turkey by the time of the genocide.

David, I'm sorry, let me just take us away from the documentaries for a moment. The privileging of Christianity against Islamic others is an important part of western news coverage of the current situation in the Soviet republics of the Caucasus, which makes it clear that this conflict is overdetermined. On the one hand, a tradition of western discursive formations means that we understand
Christianity to be more ‘secular’ (more industrialized, more modern) than Islam, and all Islamic nationalism to be religious fundamentalism (and thus less progressive), making most of us complicit with the Armenian story. On the other hand, it is impossible to determine whether the ‘ancient hostilities’ between Armenians and Azeris are ethnic or religious in origin, or even whether the Armenians began their recent efforts in Nagorno-Karabagh as a target of opportunity to raise nationalist issues. And a demonstration in Tbilisi, Georgia which protested the potential destruction of a monastery, the oppression of ‘the Meskhi, a small Georgian Muslim minority’, and the building of a railroad7 is even more inaccessible to ‘originary fictionalization’.

DK Yes, but I have to point out the obvious, which is that narratives as we know them require an origin, one which serves the narrative’s interests. We can see this in the second video. An Armenian Journey is structured around the quest of its narrator, an Armenian-American journalist, to settle the ‘intolerable discrepancy between Armenian and Turkish accounts’ of what Armenians call a genocide. He begins with a brief historical account of Armenia which follows the unified-civilized-Christian nation story-line of The Forgotten Genocide. He too calls upon Christian/Muslim antagonisms and refers to the Armenians’ ‘Christian faith’ and ‘Muslim aggressors’. This faith is underscored, as in The Forgotten Genocide, by prolonged shots of the patriarchal image of Armenian priests. The historical summary of Armenia is shorter and less extensive in An Armenian Journey, but there is a similar use of traditional historical discourse to establish an Armenian nation which will then be violated and thus have an historical claim. This historical validity, this nation-being, seems to be a point without which the history of Armenia would be unimaginable, or would not be justified.

AK The question of strategic exclusions (exclusions made, whether intentionally or otherwise, in the service of making linear representation possible) is extremely interesting here. At the beginning of The Forgotten Genocide, a German doctor/missionary describes the Armenians as cultured and educated in comparison to the Turks, who he says had no interest in education. If we take Kumari Jayawardena’s Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World as one text with other interests, we find a different set of exclusions and inclusions. (This is not to suggest that Jayawardena is representative of all, or even a certain ‘type’ of scholarship on Turkey, but rather to take one textual example that has different interests - interests with which we are also concerned - from the Armenian ones under consideration here.) She says:

This period [1908-19] also witnesses renewed intellectual and cultural activity among the Turkish intelligentsia. The journal Türk Yurdu (Turkish Homeland), edited in 1912 by Ziya Gokalp, became the rallying point for Turkish nationalists. Associated with this, the Türk Ocagi (Turkish Hearth) movement was formed in 1912 to ‘advance national education and raise the scientific, social and economic level of the Turks, who are the foremost people of Islam, and to strive for the betterment of the Turkish race and language’.8

You see, then, what comes of putting these texts - the documentaries and
Jayawardena - next to each other: the Turks themselves made the German doctor's representation of them as vulgar possible, by calling for European forms of education in the name of Turkish nationalism. I am, of course, by no means suggesting that educational reform in Turkey was not necessary, nor that the Turks as a group were or were not educated: I have no idea what the state of education in Turkey was before the Committee of Union and Progress (the Young Turks) came to power. I am simply suggesting that this early form of Turkish nationalism had a hand in making representations of itself as vulgar and backward possible.

Actually, cross-reading Jayawardena and the documentaries yields other interesting points as well. But here I must also include historical accounts from other sources. The Armenian history I learned from an international Armenian nationalist organization contains many pieces which are absent from both the documentaries and Jayawardena's account of Turkey in the period of modernization. She states: 'The great powers of Europe, which had contemptuously referred to Turkey as 'the sick man of Europe', took this opportunity to dismember the Ottoman Empire. They not only attacked Turkey but also fomented revolts among its non-Turkish elements.'

This is the only sentence in the chapter on Turkey which might be a reference to the 'Armenian problem', and it not only erases the killings, but also the history of Armenian revolutionary groups. It is that second piece of history that is also absent from the documentaries, and which I learned: the training Armenian intellectuals got in St Petersburg and other academic centres of Russia in the mid- to late 1880s with anarchist groups such as Narodnaya Volya, and the establishment of at least two Armenian revolutionary groups in the late 1880s (the Tashnags and the Hnchags).10

(It would, of course, be interesting to examine the exclusions in the history I learned as well; for example, what was the role the 'great powers of Europe' played in 'fomenting] revolts among . . . non-Turkish elements'.) Jayawardena's exclusions are in service of presenting Turkey as the victim of imperialism; the exclusions in the documentaries are in service of constructing the Armenians as victims of the Turks. Two very different representations, in other words, require the same exclusions.11

This is the question of what 'history' is left out in the use of this account of history as 'culture' and 'civilization'; what is smoothed over. Do 'we' want to stake the claim of genocide on this nation-history discourse? The point, however, is not to deconstruct this account in order to 'de-struct' it, for the ways in which this narrative is complicitous are not necessary, I think, to its documentation of genocide.12 In other words, the continuation of the story of unified nation, civilized culture, and consistent history is reactionary because it is part of and in support of the discursive formation of history-as-objective, and because that history has been implemented in the interests of neo-colonialism. We ought to look for ways out of this historiography in making this historical claim of Armenian genocide.

As I said earlier, I think this 'way out' is actually a 'way in' (recognizing full well that the amusement of the pun might gloss its phallic imagery) to other subjects. Jayawardena's work on women in Turkey is an example of this. As she says of her book,

One has to remember that [revolutionary] women often belonged to left-wing movements which, in many of these countries, were crushed by
repressive governments. The history of such movements has often been suppressed, and thus the history dealing with women in such movements also disappeared.13

The histories in these films can participate in this suppression/disappearance move within their truth-quest narratives because women's histories have never been important to such a quest. But Jayawardena constructs some of this women's history and thereby shifts historical narrative just a bit. She presents lists of women, tells of women’s roles of leadership in and exclusion from the Young Turks period and the Kemalist Revolution. But what is really interesting to note about her lists of activist women is the inclusion of two Armenian women, Varsenika Kasparova, 'a Bolshevik militant', and G. Nasarbekowa. As you pointed out, this is the only specific mention of Armenians in the whole book. Thus in her historiography and her move towards inclusion she implicates herself in a huge exclusion, of Armenians from the history of women's emancipation in Turkey. We might wonder when she says things like 'Rental's ideas about the position of women in society were quite advanced',14 and '[under the Young Turks] women participated in the gatherings on terms of equality with men and for the first time were able to speak on a public platform and in amateur dramatics',15 what Armenian women's rights changed and what access to speech they had in various contexts.

This is not meant to nullify Jayawardena, because first I am treating her history for my purposes, and second we never can escape implicating ourselves in this way: even if it were possible to avoid making strategic exclusions within a (hi)story, making the necessary mistake which replaces the stall at the beginning necessarily involves strategic exclusions. In addition, I want to note that Jayawardena's historiography imparts a 'subject-effect'17 to Turkish women, even while excluding Armenian women, whereas the videos do not treat their (predominantly male) subjects with this 'subject-effect'.

The other important move Jayawardena makes is to consider the case of Turkish women's education, recognizing simultaneously its problems and merits. She presents the history of education as tied to western and bourgeois values, and yet sees its involvement in helping free women from patriarchy. While 'the education provided was a very basic one, mainly religious in orientation, with the aim of creating good Muslim wives and mothers',18 she also speaks of the first women writers, who went through this educational system, as being revolutionary voices. Again we might wonder about Armenian women's literature, absent from both the films and Jayawardena. Finally, to add to this matrix of exclusions, Jayawardena's depiction of 'the Turkish intelligentsia'19 displaces The Forgotten Genocide's claim that Armenians were the intelligentsia of Turkey. Ultimately all this problematizes the organic notions of 'identity' and 'nation' by stressing the heterogeneity of 'nation' subjects, or rather suggests all the unspoken heterogeneity of subjects in historical discourse.

AK You know, those mentions of Armenian feminists in Jayawardena's introduction really threw me. Not only had I never learned about them, but it occurred to me that I had never even thought to ask if there had been any that no one
was telling me about. This makes the whole question of strategic exclusions even more loaded. The information in the documentaries — the genocide — is absent from her story. The history I learned, however, is directly contradictory with Jayawardena's account - she says revolts among Turkey's non-Turkish elements were 'fomented' by the 'great powers of Europe' around the First World War, while I learned that the Armenians had been organizing for fifty or more years. Yet they both make the same exclusion. But now the question of 'nation' and recognizing it as a catachresis returns as well. Jayawardena's account of feminism in Turkey depends on the western model of 'nationhood', as do the documentaries and my 'revolutionary' history. By not recognizing 'nation' as a catachretical naming, accounts of Armenian nationalism and accounts of Turkish nationalism are complicitous with each other: they form an 'unholy alliance' through their acceptance of the western model of history which does not apply to them.

DK Picking up on this name 'nation' again, there is a line in The Forgotten Genocide in which Mike Connors calls the Armenians a 'subject people'. Now this immediately constructs, in the interest of the name of an Armenian nation, a clear Turkish-Armenian power dynamic. My question is, weren't the Armenians 'subject' only to the Turkish power elite, to the sultanate and not to the Turkish people?

AK Right, no Armenian 'propaganda' says that there were areas where Armenians and Turks lived together for a long time, and that only with the rise of the Ottoman Empire did the Armenians become ruled in some organized way by Turks. They write instead a catachretical linear history: what they say is 'Armenian nation - Armenian nation - Armenian nation - subject people'. Not only is the name 'nation' unexamined, but they make no real account of how such a radical break could happen, and what made them all of a sudden a 'subject people'. This is not to say that Armenians were not oppressed: they paid huge extra taxes, they could not bear arms, and their testimony in courts was not officially recognized.

DK No, of course, but the point of this is that such a clear binary power dynamic does construct a sense of an Armenian nation, but only against Turkish dominance. More importantly, it 'clarifies' the history such that other class, race, and gender hierarchies and cross-class, race, and gender solidarities are erased. This is a problem with hegemonic, 'clear' names that pretend to operate uncatachretically.

AK And the exclusion of power hierarchies which cross ethnicity (or whatever you want to call it) makes for some interesting exclusions in the representations as well. In The Forgotten Genocide, one of the 'survivors' explains that they were forced to stop speaking Armenian and speak Turkish instead. As he is telling the story, he tells the Turkish parts in Turkish and the Armenian parts in Armenian, never hesitating as he switches back and forth. And yet, no mention is made of this: the translation moves along as if the whole story were in Armenian, and there would be no way for someone who speaks neither language to tell.

DK I feel like I have strayed away from An Armenian Journey for a while now. I would like to consider Mariam specifically because in some ways her role in that film works into what we have been saying and in some ways it does not.
Mariam came across to me at first as the emotional tie to the name 'genocide'; now I think this can be both problematic and useful. Considered in opposition to the rational, historically minded journalist (his voice borders on monotone, and in his recounting of facts and of aspects of his quest he reminded me of Spock on Star Trek), she becomes dominated by images of her crying, and thus works as a 'feminine' symbol of the victimized and the emotional.

She is, however, much more than this. Mariam is the being of 'genocide' in some way. Her proof, her 'genocide', exists in her reactions, in her emotion, in her memories of stories and in pictures (which we are told she has); as she says herself at one point, 'I saw it.' These histories are exactly what McCarthy, the Turkish historian in the video, rejects as suspect, as ahistorical. Her opposition to this historian is useful here when her 'genocide' is valued against the historian's, or against the one the journalist is seeking to 'establish'. Mariam's 'genocide' is multiple. It is one of closure in Turkey, as she puts the flowers on the river where her mother died, and one of re-membering (remembering and reconstructing) as she walks back through the town she lived in as a street orphan. It is one of re-establishing connections as she recalls the family members who helped her, and the Turkish priest and Turkish shopkeepers who took care of her - again, here, an 'unclear' solidarity. But it is also one of eternal pain and fracture, as she recalls the image of putting her brother's arms and legs back into his grave after it was dug up by dogs, and as she said, 'I don't know how to express it, say it, feel it. I feel just dead.' This 'genocide' seems in every way a name of heterogeneity, of inconsistencies, of history. Mariam, an Armenian woman with a partially Armenian name living in Mexico, is subject of this history. And yet, familiarly, it is objectified and subjected to the master-narrative of the journalist's quest, as his last statement establishes; upon considering the unfulfilled part of his quest, the historical proof of the Armenian genocide, he says:

[However] I did find the strength, the immortality of an Armenian Spirit that has endured despite all challenge and denial. In my search I found another truth that could not be denied. In a living people scattered across the globe, I found a nation.

AK You know, the question you began to get at of Mariam's function in An Armenian Journey in terms of narrative and subject positioning is a very interesting one. This is a big question in feminist film theory, and many theorists have argued that subject positions are not available to women in narrative. (Others, such as Tania Modleski, argue that subject positions are less binary and more complex, but these theories are also not without problems.22) In general, I find these analyses need further development; for now, these important insights have become somewhat like painting yourself into a corner: you work so well that you have no way out, and that's just politically unacceptable. In other words, the arguments mainly suggest that woman in film and women as spectators cannot be granted subjectivity (by whom - who grants subjectivity?), and the most common solution proposed is a

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Brechtian one, with the ante upped a bit, as it were: we should give up traditional narrative structures since they make no positions available to women, and break them (up) instead. Of course, I have some sympathy with that argument, but since I work with dominant American film, this is not a viable answer. It's unlikely that you will get people to go see movies that look like 'art films'. But if this kind of rupture is not the answer, what is?

So, then we look at Mariam, who is granted a certain degree of subjectivity, or perhaps a partial one. She can tell her story, she has (in Jurij Lotman's terms) freedom with regard to plot-space, she may or may not be the agent of the trip to Turkey (it's never clear who suggests the trip, but certainly she could have said no). And yet, in the bigger narrative, the framing one, the narrative of historical truth (which is partially abandoned), she is absent. She fills the space of waiting, of non-action for the narrator, with her actions (they go to visit the scenes of her story while he is waiting for documents to be translated). But still, within her piece of narrative, she asks the questions and moves the story-line forward, and she provides herself with a kind of narrative closure she needs: she puts the flowers on the water where, as a child, she found her mother's body.

She is the subject of her narrative, and (one of) the object(s) of his. No matter how I look at this, though, I think the fact that she has a partial subjectivity is important. It is without question a problem that women are erased from or forbidden access to the big narratives, but they are ugly narratives anyway. For me, Mariam's piece of narrative is the only one I want to identify with.

Finally, now, I can make sense of my responses to these two documentaries. When I first saw them, An Armenian Journey made me cry, while The Forgotten Genocide made me feel like a National Geographic aborigine of some sort. I cried during An Armenian Journey, I think, because it was the first time I could connect all of this historical truth stuff with the suffering my family must have felt. Because Mariam's narrative is personal, in the present, and encourages identification with a woman subject, I could feel things I haven't felt before. Then, watching The Forgotten Genocide two days later, I was drastically distanced from this historical narrative which discourages identification in the name of truth and objectivity, so I was the American student me watching something about the second generation Armenian me as an object of study.

II POSSIBILITIES

DK Now that we've said all this, we still have not suggested any alternative. In other words, since neither of us wants to let the deaths of a large number of Armenians go ignored, what do we do? Do we work at writing better history, and so stay within the questions of representation? Or are there other possibilities? Maybe a way into this alternative is to interrogate the question of value and how it's produced. Now that we've thought about how these notions of nation and genocide are being presented in the documentaries, and we can identify the catachreses of their arguments, we want to see how to work within the existing mode(s) of production of value (i.e. what produces value, and how, within certain ideological-philosophical systems) more effectively.

AK I think that's a key point here. It seems to me that the claim of right to land in

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terms of modes of production of value is the 'way in'. The claim is made by suggesting that victimization confers moral rectitude, which in turn somehow confers the right to land. This, I think, is the exchange being suggested by the documentaries; the problem is that it doesn't fit into any currently operative mode of production of value.

DK Right, it doesn't work today (if it ever did) to speak of 'land for victimization', where land means 'nation' and victimization means 'genocide'. This should be obvious, not only for Armenians: it hasn't worked, for example, for Native Americans either. This doesn't mean abandoning the concept-metaphors 'identity' or 'land' . . .

AK No, of course not. That's not something I'm willing to do either. It does mean, though, that we have to find exchanges that work within modes of production of value which are legitimated in the current situation. For example, I think that basing the claim to land on the right to self-determination is somewhat more viable, although we're still stuck with the fact that Turkey is strategically important for NATO. It will be interesting to see if that importance lessens as strategic arms reductions talks continue.

DK I think the question of land in Turkey is a real problem. And anyway, I don't see any way around the problematic exchange we just spoke about there, at this point in time. There are other demands to be made in that context. The most significant and problematic one revolves around 'genocide', where I started.

AK OK, how do you say something happened and needs to be recognized as having happened without participating in the whole package of historical truth? Maybe this is simply a moment to make another 'mistake', to go forward as Mariam did, without ever questioning the event.

DK Yes, and as an aside, I do think there is a way to do the historiography differently from the films. To establish genocide, you don't have to value 'nation' even in the western context as 'civilized', the 'people' as 'law-abiding', the 'oppressors' as homogeneously oppressive. Mariam's story showed that especially, that genocide is just as fractured as 'nation' or 'people'. But what about what you were saying about self-determination?

AK Well, self-determination is at least produced in the liberal humanist (co-dependent on the bourgeois capitalist) mode of production of value. It belongs to 'Taxation without representation is tyranny', etc. So at least you make the claim on their terms, recognizing that that's what you're doing, and pointing it out when it won't hurt your cause.

DK But then how is that different from the 'land for victimization' argument?

AK There's only one important difference, and that's in that I suspect 'land for victimization' no longer belongs to any currently operating mode of production of value. In other words, land as 'reparations', while also part of the capitalist mode of production of value - the idea that there is a general equivalent through which violations of rights can be exchanged for land - may well have been 'written out' of that mode of production of value since the establishment of Israel. At least self-determination is still an operative 'principle'. But there has to be some way to make the argument for land, or even for recognition, stand up to the current geopolitical
situation and work within a current mode of production of value.

DK Well, in terms of recognition, I don't have any problem with taking up the 'morally right' line. If you do the history differently from the way the films did, recognition has to come from the powers that be, so you have to speak to them with their own rhetoric.

AK I agree, wholly, but it doesn't seem to get anywhere. That's been going on for twenty plus years now. One way might be to suggest that a Christian nation in the middle of rising Islamic fundamentalism would be useful to the west, but that's too complicitous for me.

DK Yes, for me, too. What if we look at a mode of production of value we're less familiar with - Soviet Armenia?

AK Well, my first response is that the Soviet Armenians are on the right track. For the first time, they're making an attempt to push their issues more within the operative mode of production of value. They're not asking for independence, but for all Soviet lands predominantly populated by Armenians to be in the same Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. The problem is that the Soviet socialist mode of production of value is inconsistent on this topic: on the one hand, there is recognition of national minorities in the existence of the republics, but on the other hand, nationalism is ideologically unacceptable. So, everyone's stuck; the Politburo can't say identity as a national minority is not permissible because it's already institutionalized, because they (the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) had expected these 'tendencies' to die away.

DK But there are pieces of 'identity' that are not hooked up with 'nationalism', don't you think? The Soviet Armenians seem to be pushing the Soviet socialist mode of production of value as far as it will go, especially under glasnost, and that seems to have something to do with what identity means for them. I think it would be really interesting to know who is really involved and what they're doing. The line we seem to be getting from the press is the same as the line Guha critiqued in 'The prose of counter-insurgency': the Armenians are revolting, and Soviet repression is implied, and a whole anti-communist line is activated. For example, the New York Times reported in February 1988 on the Armenian 'nationalist furore'. Typically, the report spoke of the protests first as a threat to Mikhail Gorbachev, and, except for a few mentions of 'the Armenian Party Central Committee', the issue was depicted as 'tens of thousands of Armenians reported marching again through the Soviet Armenian capital' or 'The demonstrations began in Nagorno-Karabagh two weeks ago and spread to Yerevan a week ago'. It seems that in these reports the whole issue is reduced to a very simplistic 'worried leadership/threatening masses' scenario. Clearly it's the 'Armenian Central Committee' that represents Armenian agency, and it's the demonstrations that spread, thereby erasing the Armenian rebel subjects' agencies. Maybe if we knew the agendas of the rebelling 'subjects', now much freedom they have or want, how they view the Soviet mode of production economically, how Soviet Armenian women view their position, their roles in a patriarchal environment- that kind of information would really help us to envision some Armenian concerns in an active situation. While Guha thought it important to consider Indian peasants in the
nineteenth century as heterogeneous, conscious subjects of history, and I agree, I think it's also important and more politically charged to consider present-day rebels as conscious subjects.26

AK It's important here to note again that there are two versions of the same question being posed. Because the two pieces of land, the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic and the 'Armenian' lands in Turkey, operate within two different modes of production of value, or two different sets of modes of production of value, there are two different pieces of argument going on. The one about Turkey is being done badly, because it's resting on an old mode of production of value that is no longer operative (or perhaps never really was), and on the other piece of land there are signs of the Soviet Armenians learning to function within a different mode of production of value, but not wholly.27

The Soviet Armenian situation is interesting to look at, and look to, but we're still not any further with the question of recognition here and now. And in some ways, the spellchecker we ran earlier on the word processor seems to me to be the perfect metaphor for the problem. It recognized 'Turkey', 'Turkish', and 'Sultanate', but it didn't recognize either 'Armenia' or 'Armenian'. And if the administration doesn't recognize them, why should the spellchecker? And if no one recognizes Armenians (us? them?), then how can anyone recognize them (us?).

DK The problem replicates itself. But we're obviously not satisfied with this.

AK OK, let's go through this again. The question is: how do you get recognition? Maybe it's not tactics that are wrong; it's not wrong to lobby senators to pass resolutions. Maybe what's wrong is what you say when you lobby. While I wholeheartedly believe that one should not be able to kill with impunity, much less kill millions of people, maybe the moral claim is not the one that's going to work at the moment.

DK Especially because it hasn't.

AK Obviously, for the government, the religious moral rhetoric is catachretical; otherwise, how do you invade Grenada, and support the Contras, and sustain the Reagan administration policy in the Persian Gulp So maybe it has to be another way.

DK OK, but we still can only work with what we have. I mean, we're not going to find a new discourse to put it in, and then everybody will say 'Ahh, of course'; we're going to need to wrench some things around.

AK Well, what makes sensational journalism? Maybe what's necessary is that kind of publicity. But that's how you end up doing terrorism -you look to get front page space, or any kind of space, or television time. That's, at least in my experience, what makes people think of doing that; it has almost nothing to do with the people they're proposing to kill. The question is: how do you make something newsworthy and compelling without being violent? Terrorism is not the right answer, at the very least because it gets bad press.

DK Well, it's especially not the right answer for Armenians. I'm thinking that in South Africa, it's one of the right answers, because it doesn't get the same bad press, and it is a real revolution, as in 'We're going to overthrow the government', that they want. It's one thing to kill people who are killing you, and quite another thing to start killing the grandchildren of people who killed your grandparents.
There's another thing here, which is: within the capitalist mode of production of value ('the west'), do we know what the question of recognition is? Whose recognition are we asking for, and why? Is it the US government, or the Turkish government, or the UN?

AK Good, so then the question is 'What should be asked for?' rather than 'What is to be done?' And it's a very interesting question. A long time ago, when I was still doing Armenian organizing, I said to someone that if the Turkish government were smart, it would recognize the genocide. They could say, 'Yes, you're right, what the Young Turks did was a horror, and we're terribly sorry, and you're welcome back anytime you like.' If they said that, the whole question would be over, and then what do you ask for? Recognition has been achieved, and on what grounds do you argue the need for self-determination?

This is, of course, not something Armenian activists are likely to take well. But it is exactly the issue of the anxiety inherent in all political action. If you succeed in what you're asking for, you become irrelevant, or you become something else. Who wins, loses.

DK And that loss is a really anxiety-producing loss of identity, because in so many ways Armenian identity means subject of genocide, and thereby victim. I wonder what happens to identity then?

AK Well, let's take apart the sentence I just said: 'If you succeed in what you're asking for, you become irrelevant, or you become something else.' Now I would say, you not only become irrelevant, but in fact you become something else. You become irrelevant according to the old system of naming, because exchange is no longer possible on those grounds (victimization); exchange is no longer possible because you've lost identity (victim, subject of genocide), because you become something else (not simply victim, and not not victim). Once you lose victimization as a foundational term, you can't make equal or equitable, or equi-valent (having equal value)28 what is different - that is, Armenians. Since many Armenians don't speak Armenian, we live in diaspora, in many different cultures, and many who consider themselves Armenian don't even have Armenian names,29 what would make identity, or equi-valence? Whatever the mode of production of value was which was coded into that identity, there is no obvious candidate for a different mode of production of value to produce similar results.

DK Right, there is no context for, no contact with a new name which would produce value as 'identity', or 'identity' as value. And what excites me about this is, that becoming something else, I wonder what that is? That's really interesting.

AK And bizarre - but yes, exciting; since these questions continue endlessly, so does the challenge before us as analysts and teachers, in and out of institutions.

NOTES

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NAMING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Presumably nationality comes from the transition to capitalism, i.e. the establishment of the nation-state, but it is also intimately related to imperialist discourse. Religion seems older than that to me, a sedimented alibi from an older mode of production of value. For a further enquiry into this question of the grounds for claiming identity, see part II of this article.

'Genocide' was coined to describe the Nazis' mass murder of the Jews; in that case, it strategically excluded the murders of communists and Catholics. Here, its use by Armenians allies us with the Jews, even though the historical facts are dissimilar - the most significant similarity being mass murder. In many ways an analogy between the 'Palestinian question' and the 'Armenian question' makes more sense, given the current agendas of each group.

Presumably, one could imagine a video made in the interest of denying the Armenian genocide that would feminize these men. Here, they speak with the patriarchal authority of truth because genocide as truth is assumed. In the hypothetical video, however, genocide would be emotional overreaction, which could easily be represented as a feminizing quality, whereas truth (patriarchal objectivity/masculinity) would reside, for example, in Justin McCarthy's narrative.


ibid., 31.
The next sentence in Jayawardena is 'Under the Treaty of Sevres (1920), Turkey lost all its European and Arab possessions, while the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus were internationalized.' What happened between this sentence and the former is also erased: the establishment of an independent Armenian Republic from 1918 to 1920. The Treaty of Sevres 'had promised the Armenians their own state under the protection of the League of Nations' (Bauer, Armenia, 150). For a brief version of the history of Armenian revolutionary groups which I learned, see, for example, C. J. Walker, Armenia: The survival of a nation (New York: St Martin's Press, 1980), 68-9, 177-8, and 351-5.

Obviously, this is the peculiarity of much of contemporary alliance politics: one glaring example is the alliance of some women's groups with some fundamentalist Christian groups to protest the publication and sale of pornography. In other words, overdetermination makes possible an issue-oriented politics which seeks to exploit it, without forcing the analysis of such politics and of overdetermination itself.

This is not to posit a space free of complicity, but rather to look toward other complicities, other ways of adding to this account that bring up some other names. I also want to credit the affirmative deconstruction argument here to Gayatri Spivak, 'A view from outside', The Statesman (Calcutta), Supplement on Forty Years of Independence, 15 August 1987.

Jayawardena, Feminism and Nationalism, 19.

ibid., 36.

ibid., 33.

This 'mistake' is best explained by Spivak in 'A literary representation of the subaltern: a woman's text from the Third World', in In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), an essay on NEW FORMATIONS
Mahasweta Devi’s *Stanadayini*: 'Most rhetorical questions, such as the cook's "What's there to tell?" imply a negative answer: "Nothing." Jashoda's story tells itself by (mis)understanding the question as literal and answering: "This." Such would be the morphology of "affirmative deconstruction", which says "yes" to everything, not as a proper negation which leads to a strategically exclusive synthesis, but by way of an irreducible and originary "mistake" that will not allow it to totalize its practice. This affirmation is not the "yes" of pluralism or repressive tolerance, which is given from a position of power. *Stanadayini* as *enonciation* might thus be an example of an ever-compromised affirmative deconstruction' (308, n. 81).

17 'A subject-effect can be briefly plotted as follows: that which seems to operate as a subject may be part of an immense discontinuous network ("text" in the general sense) of strands that may be termed politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language, and so on. (Each of these strands, if they are isolated, can also be seen as woven of many strands.) Different knottings and configurations of these strands, determined by heterogeneous determinations which are themselves dependent upon myriad circumstances, produce the effect of an operating subject.' (Spivak, ‘A literary representation’, 204)


19 ibid., 32.

20 It is unclear whether or not (or to what extent) Jayawardena is self-conscious about this use of ‘nation’. She states: ‘This resistance, which used the paradoxical strategy of adopting Western models in order to combat Western aggression, reinforce cultural identity and strengthen the nation, took various forms. . . . In this agitation, which took on a bourgeois democratic form, the bourgeoisie had to assert the national cultural identity in the form of patriotic appeals intended to unite and arouse the consciousness of the people’ (ibid., 3—4). Is this a recognition of a model taken on from western political philosophy? I would suggest that this is partly the case, but that ‘nation’ as a concept remains unquestioned here.


24 R. Guha, ‘The prose of counter-insurgency’, in R. Guha and G. C. Spivak (eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 45-86. Along with this discursive analysis of reporting on the Armenian demonstrations in Soviet Armenia, the consistent ellision of the Armenian and Estonian efforts bears noting. In many reports, both in print and broadcast, both in Europe and America, these efforts are mentioned together. They are, however, quite different, in so far as (according to the western press) the Estonians have been seeking 'independence' while the Armenians have been seeking reunited lands. Both efforts rest (to different extents) on the notion of 'self-determination', but operate within different modes of production of value. Consequently, closer examination might unpack the assumptions behind, and the history of, the use of the notion ‘self-determination’.


26 In the context of this discussion, heavily informed by American media cow rage, it is interesting to note a conversation I had, after we originally wrote this article, with a Soviet-Russian journalist. He had recently left his job with *Pravda* to write
for a new, glossy, full-colour Soviet magazine. When I asked him about the great concern Mikhail Gorbachev must be harbouring over the situation in Armenia he responded, quite matter-of-factly, that 'the Armenian situation' did not have to be a serious problem for the Soviet government. In the context of his general feeling that perestroika was not moving fast enough for his or for Gorbachev's taste, he said that were Soviet Armenia and Azerbaijan more solidly under Gorbachev's control, rather than under the control of more conservative factions of the party, Gorbachev would press to have the republics' borders realigned to satisfy the Armenian demands. Given that this is rarely mentioned as a possibility in mainstream American press analyses, and given that this journalist made his comments three weeks before Gorbachev moved to solidify his power during the Communist Party Congress in the fall of 1988, it might be interesting to see future Soviet policy decisions concerning 'ethnic disturbances' in light of this bit of personal, opinionated, and unofficial news.

I would, however, question their timing, since it has become clear that the Armenian demonstrations could bring glasnost to crisis.

'Equi-valent' is not my own; this particular use of 'equivalent' as 'making or being of equal value' was suggested by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in a recent conversation.

It is not only Mariam Davis for whom this is true. The two Armenian women Jayawardena mentions (p. 85 of this text), for example, have 'Russified' names; their names are Kasparova and Nasarbekowa, not the Armenian Kasparyan and Nasarbekian. This is not at all unusual; many Armenians in Turkey changed the 'ian' to 'oghlu', and in the USA many have dropped the 'ian' (which means 'from the family of') altogether.