

# GENDERING RESISTANCE AND REVOLUTION

## THE SECOND FEMINIST ARMENIAN STUDIES WORKSHOP

MAY 4-5, 2019 | HIB 110 AT UC IRVINE

ORGANIZED BY HOURI BERBERIAN (UCI), MELISSA BILAL (AUA), AND LERNA EKMEKÇIOĞLU (MIT)

The two-day interdisciplinary workshop/conference – free and open to the public – will feature fifteen participants, four panels, a roundtable, and a public discussion organized by FemARC (Feminist Armenian Research Collective). Speakers and roundtable participants will focus on resistance and revolution from gender-centered perspectives. What constitutes activism, resistance, and/or revolution through various modalities? How is resistance gendered? How does resistance by gender-conforming and gender-non-conforming individuals or collectives challenge hegemonic and dominant analytical paradigms? Through an engagement with varied methodologies and approaches, participants will rethink and reframe women's activism, (in)visibility, (re)presentation, resistance and revolution in the multilocal Armenian experience from the nineteenth century through the Velvet revolution to today.

## SATURDAY, MAY 4TH

(9:30-9:55) - MORNING RECEPTION

(9:55-10:00) - OPENING REMARKS BY HOURI BERBERIAN



### PANEL 1 | 10:00-11:30 PM REDEFINING RESISTANCE AND REVOLUTION FROM AN ARMENIAN FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

CHAIR: ARNOLD ALAHVERDIAN (UCI)

*“Hysterical...vague look, pronounced and hooked nose, thin bloodless lips”*: Revolution, Resistance, and Recovering Rubina

— Houri Berberian, UC Irvine

*What was Radical about Zabel Asadur?*

— Melissa Bilal, American University of Armenia

*Post-Genocide Mobilization of Armenian Women for their Rights*

— Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, MIT



### PANEL 2 | 11:30-1:00 PM RESISTING INVISIBILITY

CHAIR: PAULINE PECHAKJIAN (UCI)

*From Oblivion to Visibility: In Search of Women's Role During the Armenian Revolutionary Movement and Beyond*

— Sona Zeitlian, author, educator, activist

*Armen Ohanian: Art and Revolution from the Caucasus to Mexico*

— Vartan Matiossian, Armenian National Education Committee

(NY)

and Artsvi Bakhchinyan, Institute of History, National Academy of Sciences (Yerevan)

*Diana Apcar and Her Network: Efforts to Change the Armenian Situation in Turkey*

— Meline Mesropyan, Tohoku University

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**(1:00-2:00) LUNCH**



### **PANEL 3 | 2:00-3:30 PM** **RESISTANT (RE)PRESENTATIONS**

**CHAIR: SONA TAJIRYAN (UCLA)**

*White Bodies, Savage Marks: Medical and Racial Discourses of Armenian Women's Tattoos*

— Elyse Semerdjian, Whitman College

*Comfortable Ways of Encountering the Other on a Genocidal Land*

— Nora Tataryan, University of Toronto

*Iran's Armenian Women and the Revolutionary Intentions of Avant-garde Architecture*

— Talinn Grigor, UC Davis

**(3:30-4:00) BREAK**



### **PANEL 4 | 4:00-5:30 PM** **WHEN IS ACTIVISM REVOLUTIONARY?**

**CHAIR: KAREN JALLATYAN (UCI)**

*Decentralization: Feminist Methodologies and Marginalizations in the 2018 "Velvet Revolution"*

— Tamar Shirinian, Duke University

*Personal and Organized Approaches to Queer Activism in the Los Angeles Armenian Community*

— Rosie Vartyter Aroush, UCLA

# **SUNDAY, MAY 5TH**

**(10:00-10:30) - MORNING RECEPTION**



### **PANEL 5 | 10:30-12:30 PM | ROUNDTABLE/DISCUSSION** **FROM VELVET TO ?: WHAT WAS REVOLUTIONARY?**

**CHAIR: HOURI BERBERIAN (UCI)**

*Armenia's Velvet Revolution: From Women's Silent Presence to Public Speaking and Political Activism*

— Irina Ghaplanyan, First Deputy Minister of Nature

*Women Intellectuals and the Revolution: Where Are They Now?*

— Anna Harutyunyan, Berlin Free University Dept of Social and Cultural Anthropology

*Resistance Comes in Many Forms*

— Shakeh Kaftarian, Consultant for Women's Empowerment Initiatives for American University of Armenia

*Wearing the Velvet: Women, People Power, and the Parliament*

— Anna Ohanyan, Stonehill College

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(12:30-1:30) LUNCH



**PANEL 6 | 1:30-3:30 PM**  
**PUBLIC DISCUSSION BY FEMARC**  
**(FEMINIST ARMENIAN RESEARCH COLLECTIVE)**

**LED BY LERNA EKMEKÇIOĞLU (MIT)**  
**AND MELISSA BILAL (AUA)**

(4:00-6:00) RECEPTION

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

**ROSIE VARTYTER AROUSH** has a PhD in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures from UCLA, with a specialization in Armenian Studies and a concentration in Gender Studies. Her dissertation, “A Life of Otherness: Identity Negotiation, Family Relations, and Community Experiences among LGBTQ Armenians in Los Angeles,” investigates the impact of the Los Angeles diasporic community on the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer Armenians, depicts the struggles endured and strategies employed in the negotiation of their contested identities, examines family of origin relations in the multi-layers of coming out, explores the re-definition of the Armenian family and challenge to traditional notions of parenthood by queer Armenian families, and reveals other such discoveries. As a pioneer in bridging the two fields of LGBTQ Studies and Armenian Studies, her research narrows the current gap and promotes the growing body of knowledge in Gender & Sexuality Studies by adding Armenian to the representation.

**HOURI BERBERIAN** is Professor of History, Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies, and Director of the Armenian Studies Program at the University of California, Irvine. She is the author of a number of articles, including two on Armenian women, one focusing on women’s activism and education in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Iran and another on the early modern New Julfan women’s lives and laws that governed them as well as two books. The first is titled *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911: “The Love for Freedom Has No Fatherland.”* Her second book, *Roving Revolutionaries: Armenians and Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds*, was recently published with UC Press (2019).

**MELISSA BILAL** is Assistant Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences at the American University of Armenia. After receiving her PhD in Ethnomusicology from the University of Chicago, she taught at Columbia University, Boğaziçi University, and the University of Chicago. Together with Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, she co-edited *A Cry for Justice: Five Armenian Feminist Writers from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic (1862–1933)* (in Turkish, 2006) and is now collaborating on *Feminism in Armenian: An Interpretive Anthology and Digital Archive*, a book and digital humanities project. Her recent publications are “Lullabies and the Memory of Pain: Armenian Women’s Remembrance of the Past in Turkey” in *Dialectical Anthropology and Voice Signatures: Recordings of Russian Armenian POWs in German Camps, 1916-1918* (CD, Forthcoming 2019). With Ekmekçioğlu, Bilal launched the Annual Feminist Armenian Studies Workshop and founded the Feminist Armenian Research Collective (FemArc) in 2017 while she was a visiting scholar of History at MIT.

**LERNA EKMEKÇIOĞLU** is the McMillan-Stewart Professor of History and Women and Gender Studies at MIT. Her books include a monograph titled *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post Genocide Turkey* (Stanford University Press, 2016) and a co-edited volume titled *A Cry for Justice: Five Armenian Feminist Writers from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic* (in Turkish, Aras Yayıncılık, 2006). Currently she is collaborating with Melissa Bilal on a book and documentary website project titled *Feminism in Armenian: An Interpretive Anthology and Digital Archive*. In 2017, together with Bilal, she launched the Annual Feminist Armenian Studies Workshop and founded the Feminist Armenian Research Collective (FemArc) at MIT.

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**IRINA GHAPLANYAN** is the First Deputy Minister of Nature Protection of the Republic of Armenia. Prior to joining the Armenian government, following the Velvet Revolution of the spring of 2018, Ghaplanyan worked in a number of international organizations and think tanks around the world to include UNDP, Georgetown University, Eurasia Foundation and Chatham House. She has also been a catalyst for change in the field of sustainable business and social entrepreneurship in Armenia. Ghaplanyan holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Cambridge, has a number of academic and media publications, as well as a recently published book titled *Post-Soviet Armenia: The New National Elite and the New National Narrative*.

**TALINN GRIGOR** is a professor of art history in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of California, Davis. She approaches 19th-21st-century art and architectural histories through the premise of postcolonial and critical theories, grounded in Iran and Parsi India. Her books include *Building Iran: Modernism, Architecture, and National Heritage under the Pahlavi Monarchs* (2009); *Contemporary Iranian Art: From the Street to the Studio* (2014); and the forthcoming *The Persian Revival: Ancient Iran in Art Historiography & Imperialism*.

**ANNA HARUTYUNYAN** is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the Free University of Berlin (Germany). She holds MA degree from the Central European University (Budapest, Hungary) Department of Gender and Cultural Studies. Before her master's studies, she obtained Diploma with Honors in Intercultural Communications and Linguistics and Diploma with Honors in Practical Psychology, both from the Voronezh State University (Russia). Her research interests include gender and women's studies, Diaspora and transnational communities, identity, language, and cultural diversity studies. In parallel with her academic and research work, Anna Harutyunyan has been professionally engaged at a number of local Armenian and international civil society organizations managing programs in the field of public education, community development, and gender equality.

**SHAKEH KAFTARIAN** is a medical psychologist whose research has included women's health and gender issues. She has served as a Research Scientist at the National Institutes of Health; Senior Advisor at the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy; and Research Professor at the Hebert School of Medicine of the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences. As a Fulbright Scholar at the American University of Armenia (AUA), she recently conducted research on the status of women of Armenia, and chaired an international conference titled "Empowerment of Girls and Women of Armenia." Her efforts have been instrumental in the development of AUA's "Yes, Armenian Women Can!" campaign. Her bigger vision will hopefully be translated into training programs directed at non-matriculated rural women, to help connect them to 21<sup>st</sup>-century global opportunities in high-tech businesses.

**VARTAN MATIOSSIAN** is the Executive Director of the Armenian National Education Committee (New York). A historian and literary scholar, he has a PhD in History from the Institute of History, National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, and lives in New Jersey. He has published scores of articles, translations, book reviews, and essays, mostly in Armenian, Spanish, and English. He has authored six books (five in Armenian and one in Spanish), including a biography of Armen Ohanian in collaboration with Artsvi Bakhchinyan (Yerevan, 2007, in Armenian). He has translated nineteenth volumes from Armenian to Spanish and English.

**MELINE MESROPYAN** was born and raised in Yerevan, Armenia and initially earned her B.A. degree in Japanese linguistics. She is a recent graduate (March 2019) of Tohoku University's Graduate School of International Culture in Sendai, Japan. She has spent the last six years as a masters and PhD student researching the life and work of Diana Apar. Her PhD dissertation, written in Japanese and making extensive use of Japanese archival data, dealt with the Japanese government's processing of Armenian refugees during WWI and Diana Apar's role. She lives with her husband, a PhD student himself, and one-year-old son in Sendai, Japan and is currently in the process of developing her PhD dissertation into a book on the life and work of Diana Apar.

**ANNA OHANYAN** is the Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Stonehill College. Her latest two books are *Russia Abroad: Driving Regional Fracture in Post-Communist Eurasia and Beyond*, an edited volume published by Georgetown University Press in 2018, and *Networked Regionalism as Conflict Management* published by Stanford University Press in 2015. She has authored numerous articles in academic journals and also contributed to the *Washington Post*, *Foreign Policy magazine*, and *Al Jazeera*. Ohanyan is a Fulbright Scholar, and her research has been supported by Harvard University, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the German Marshall Fund, and the U.S. State Department, among others. Her work has taken her across the globe, from Northern Ireland to the Balkans, Russia, and the South Caucasus.

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**ELYSE SEMERDJIAN** is Associate Professor of Middle Eastern History at Whitman College where she teaches a broad range of courses on the subject of gender, sexuality, social history, culture, and politics of the Middle East. A specialist in the history of the Ottoman Empire and Syria, she authored “Off the Straight Path”: *Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo* (Syracuse University Press, 2008) as well as several articles on gender, non-Muslims, and law in the Ottoman Empire. She currently serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* and the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Semerdjian was the Dumanian Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies in The Department of Near Eastern Cultures and Languages at the University of Chicago in 2013 and recently awarded a Cornell University Society for the Humanities Fellowship focused on the topic of “Skin.”

**TAMAR SHIRINIAN** is a Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow at Millsaps College in Jackson, MS, where she also co-directs the Program in Women’s and Gender Studies. Her research and publications have been invested in the intersections of political-economy, gender, and sexuality in the postsocialist Republic of Armenia. Her current book manuscript, “Survival of a Perverse Nation: Queer Transformations in Postsocialist Armenia” is a queer ethnography that takes postsocialist transformations as its object of study, showing how a widespread rhetoric of perversion (*aylandakutyun*) conveyed a sense of an Armenia on a queer and perverse path toward no future. These senses of perversion have been mapped onto gender and sexuality, as a rising right-wing nationalist movement projects everyday political and economic tensions onto sexual perversion (*aylaserutyun*). Shirinian’s current research is invested in feminist movements in Armenia, especially as feminism has been an integral, though often marginalized, part of larger social movements since 2012.

**NORA TATARYAN** is a PhD candidate and a Connaught Scholar at the Women & Gender Studies Institute, University of Toronto. She completed her Master’s degree in Cultural Studies at Sabancı University (Istanbul) and her Bachelor’s degree in Philosophy at Galatasaray University (Istanbul) and Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. Interested in aesthetics, feminist philosophy, psychoanalysis and race studies, her doctoral research is focused on the representation of the Armenian Genocide in Turkish Contemporary Art. Besides having presented her research internationally and published her work in academic and non-academic journals, she teaches philosophy of art at Işık University (Istanbul).

**SONA SIMONIAN-ZEITLIAN** Cairo-born, she has taught in Armenian schools in Egypt, Lebanon, and Los Angeles. She won the Kevork Melidinetzi Award of the Catholicosate of Cilicia in 1968 and 2013 for *The Role of Armenian Women During the Revolutionary Movement and On the Trail of Armenian Women from Ancient to Modern Times* (both in Armenian). *Folktales of Musa Dagh*, a compilation of illustrated folktales based on the oral tradition of Musa Dagh, was published by Hamazkayin (Beirut, 1973). In 1980, Hamazkayin also published her narratives about the heroes and heroines of Armenian legendary history in four illustrated volumes (in Armenian). *Armenians in Egypt: Contribution to Medieval and Modern Egypt* appeared in Armenian and English in Los Angeles, 2004 and 2006. In 2015, Zeitlian was recognized for her educational, cultural, and social contributions with the St. Sahag and St. Mesrob medal by the Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin II.



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