Seminar 1
Russian-Soviet Hegemony and Soviet Armenian Nationalism

At the beginning of the 19th century, the expansion of the Russian Empire to the Caucasus, and, on the other hand, the forced Russian orientation of the Eastern Armenians (as the "lesser evil") was the two sides of the historical situation. We can learn a lot about this and further developments (especially when we consider the ideological aspect) by putting side to side, let's say, the texts of A. Pushkin and those of Kh. Abovyan. Meanwhile, one should not forget that Abovyan was indeed not a Russophile, and Pushkin, in turn, combined the role of the critic of the Empire with the role of an imperial poet.

While through Pushkin's texts the whole imperial diversity (nations, territories, cultures, etc.) was consolidated into the Russian imagination, thus forming the literary context of colonization (K. Hokanson), in Abovyan's novel "Wound of Armenia" the very moment when the Russian foot stepped on the Armenian land is literally blessed, connecting (seemingly forever) the rebirth of the Armenians, the beginning of modernity and its further developments with the Russian domination.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, a new approach towards the cultures of the Empire was being formed in Russia. Excavations in the medieval Armenian capital of Ani were initiated during this period, and, in 1916, a book named *Poetry of Armenia* was published under the editorship of Valerii Briusov, who, in the introductory part, praised Armenian medieval poetry. This indicates to the changes taken place in the nature of Russian domination: Armenia is valued as an old country with rich culture, but it is Russia that guarantees its survival, while, at the same time, appreciating and representing its culture. It could also be viewed as a new form of Orientalism.

1930s are seen as a period when Soviet peoples were provided with history and traditions. However, those were not authentic recovered traditions, but were invented by the State, with the enthusiastic participation of the national elites, and inevitably embedded in Socialist modernity. The highly clichéd essentializing rhetoric of national culture and identity and the Orientalist practices exoticizing it originated during those years (T. Martin).

In 1960s, the nationalist ideology that was developed by the Soviet Armenian elite (mainly through fiction literature) and, to a great extent, relied on the "national tradition" formed in 1930s, was supported, and, at the same, time constrained, by Soviet institutional and discursive practices. Russianness was an inalienable part of this nationalism, just like the praising of Kh. Abovyan and H. Tumanyan, who embody the Russian orientation, as "our great ancestors" (one of today's clichés of nationalist populism) has become an everyday ritual of subjection to Russia.

In this regard, the examination of Eastern Armenian and Western Armenia, as well as Soviet Armenian and Diaspora Armenian interrelations is principal for the analysis of the Eastern Armenian identity. The consideration of these issues helps to see the complexity of the historically developed construct of Russian-Soviet domination and the problem of

cultural decolonization in Armenia. In Armenia, the national ideology has never been properly embodied into and discussed in the context of contemporary debates, especially taking into account the new post-Soviet circumstances. Therefore, my claims that Russian orientation has become an inseparable part of the Eastern Armenian identity or that Russian-Soviet domination and Soviet Armenian nationalism are linked to each other in a hidden complicity, and so on, should rather be perceived as an invitation for a debate than as final conclusions.

Seminar 2
2000s: certain (re)modernization tendencies in Armenia

Post-Soviet Armenia is somehow similar to post-colonial countries, which, in 1960s, were described using the newly introduced term "neo-colonialism". However, the reaffirmation of Russian economic domination upon Armenia is accompanied with a growing influence of international forces and transnational capital on the State. We can outline two very typical and interconnected processes of socio-cultural transformations taking place in Armenia, which are the diffusion and appropriation of consumer culture and the widespread use of information and communication technologies. Under the new conditions, this scheme allows to reformulate and productively discuss a number of important topics, such as the question of what happens to the national ideology under the conditions of consumerism domination (the topic of "nationalism and consumerism"). Further on, what is the new status of the so-called "national intellectual", presumably embodying that ideology (the topic of "intellectuals and consumerism")? My opinion on this is that, through the spread and establishment of consumer ("low") culture, the State authority, in fact, was able to extrude the intellectuals, the carriers of the "high" culture. It was able to appropriate and, without any unwanted intermediaries, use the national rhetoric. In this respect, the advocacy of "high" ("spiritual", "genuine", "purely national", etc.) values by the marginalized intellectuals was rather an attempt to rehabilitate the lost privileged status.

Actually, the examination of relation between consumerism and information technologies is quite relevant for understanding certain features of the post-Soviet period. Armenia's enthusiasm at the beginning of 2000s concerning its "high potential" in the information technologies industry and opportunities for penetrating the global market indicate to the inability of the post-Soviet intellectuals to break themselves from the Soviet context (the unresolved problem of Russian-Soviet domination). The examination of Armenia's current potential for creating information and knowledge, the structure of the society's information needs, and the preferred ways of communication makes apparent the absence of ambitious and realistic programmes in the field. The appropriation and use of new technologies take place not within the science, education, or economy, but in the social sphere, mostly serving the entertainment purposes (the problem of re-modernization of the society). Moreover, the existence of complex problems in this field and the absence of proper programmes are disguised under the exaggerated topic of "information security".

This reduction and simplification of the scope of meanings is accompanied with "militarization" of social and cultural issues, often dragging them into the territory of "patriotism" and "national interest" (the issue of ability and forms of establishing social coherence and solidarity).

Third Seminar
Conclusions: How to Become Post-Soviet

If we accept that with the establishment of the Republic of Armenia the Eastern Armenians' Russian orientation, with a history of nearly three hundred years, reached its main purpose, then, more than twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the following question seems relevant: how to deal with that orientation? Should it be abandoned, and, if yes, then is it possible to do, while, as I mentioned above, this orientation, now as a subjection to Russia, has long become an inseparable part of the Eastern Armenian identity? It should also be noted that diverse practices of overcoming the Soviet Russian domination seem, under current conditions, possible only as intellectual undertakings and marginal activities, without any perspective of being institutionalized in the foreseeable future.

In some sense, these practices can be perceived as efforts to critically reinterpret the tradition, stimulated by the urgent issues of today and with the aim of reexamining the discursive framework of the tradition. A work that can be carried out in different directions and using different tools. In places where this domination is resisted or called in question, articulation of that very resistance would be required. While, in other places, the self-evident domination should be problematized.

There are a lot of dominant forms of representation, as well as places and ways of cultural resistance that require critical consideration. I myself have made attempts to implement such analysis (successfully or not is another question) and will present some of those attempts in the report. The necessity of criticism of the national ideology was already mentioned above. Inseparable from this is the Eastern Armenians' tendency towards self-orientalization ("Armenia is a museum under the open sky"). Another important topic is the examination of the Transcaucasus (currently South Caucasus) as an example of Russian-Soviet legacy, a culturally constructed or, according to an accepted term, "invented" region. Here we have to deal with a motley bunch of diverse ideologies, ranging from "Russian civilizing mission" and Russian-Soviet orientalism to "Cold War".

I will again turn to Hrant Matevosyan's writings that provide us with a rich material for considering the issue of cultural resistance. Especially interesting is the issue of avoiding Socialist and nationalist rhetorics and adopting a third viewpoint along with the opportunities this viewpoint provides.

This work is impossible to do without adopting new approaches and theories. This issue and, particularly, the possibility of applying postcolonial studies to the post-Soviet situation will be discussed in the final part of the report.