

Review Article



Medieval contexts and modern realities of a Genocide-survivor artwork

A review article of Heghnar Watenpaugh's The Missing Pages

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Abstract

This article is a critical review of Heghnar Watenpaugh's monograph *The Missing Pages*, which traces the history of the thirteenth-century Zeytun Gospels from its creation to the 2010s, when several of the manuscript's illustrated folios became subject to a restitution claim through a lawsuit filed by the Armenian Church against the Getty Museum. It highlights the importance of Watenpaugh's publication on assembling and clarifying the impressive itinerary of the Zeytun Gospels, the manuscript's socio-cultural functions, as well as the historiographic research on Cilician miniature painting conducted by the author in the framework of this book. In the present article, several issues raised in the book are critically explored from different angles, expressing a partial or significant difference of opinion when it comes to some of the interpretations and contextualizations proposed by Watenpaugh. These include: Watenpaugh's non-exhaustive consideration of the Zeytun Gospels' colophons, which stand as the most authentic documentations on the manuscript's history prior to the twentieth century; her tracing of parallel examples of artifacts that survived the Genocide based not on scholarly research but on popular narratives (and on contemporary literary writings); the discussion of bilingual coins minted by the Armenian king Hetum I and the Seljuk sultan Kaykhusraw II as cases of "complex identities of the period", without delving into these complexities, and, thus, not doing justice to the nuances of the medieval context of their rule; some aspects of the history of scholarship on Cilician miniature

painting; and the way Watenpaugh presents two of the most prominent historians of Armenian art, Sirarpie Der Nersessian and Karekin Hovsepian, and their attitudes toward the ownership and acquisition of Armenian cultural heritage by western art institutions, which appear to be less than balanced in *The Missing Pages*. Finally, some reflections on contemporary exhibition practices of survivor artifacts, whose current locations of preservation are often a consequence of (cultural) genocide and dubious acquisition practices, require clearer and more in-depth presentation, at least as far as the exhibition history of the Zeytun Gospels and its separated folios is concerned.

Keywords

the Zeytun Gospels – Toros Roslin – Cilician Armenia – Armenian Genocide – cultural heritage – restitution of cultural property – exhibition practices

Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh, *The Missing Pages. The Modern Life of a Medieval Manuscript from Genocide to Justice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019. Pp. 436.

This book explores the history of a thirteenth-century Cilician manuscript, known as the *Zeytun Gospels*, copied and illustrated by Toros Roslin. Having survived the atrocities of the Armenian Genocide, the Zeytun Gospels came to the center of public attention in 2010, when a lawsuit was filed by the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church against the J. Paul Getty Museum with the restitution claim for the manuscript's folios containing the eight canon tables that were kept at the museum since 1994. The five years of litigation raised the curiosity of many, but then it suddenly ended in September 2015 before the scheduled trial would take place two months later, on November 3. The behind-the-scene settlement between the two parties resulted in the recognition of the Armenian Church's ownership of the canon tables by the Getty Museum, which nevertheless would keep the parchment folios—now as a donation from the Armenian Church, the former plaintiff.¹ The donation was officially fulfilled in early January 2016.

The lawsuit for Roslin's canon tables was the first and so far the only restitution claim for a cultural property considered stolen during the Armenian Genocide. During the litigation, the manuscript's history and hence its

¹ "J. Paul Getty Museum and the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America announce agreement in Armenian Art restitution case" (21.09.2015) <http://news.getty.edu/canon-table-2015.htm>.

provenance were central in deciding the rightful ownership of the folios, and both parties studied the necessary information and available testimonies. It is this very history that is narrated by Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh in *The Missing Pages*, which brings together the hitherto well-documented but never so carefully assembled, clarified and systematized history of the Zeytun Gospels. It covers the entire history of the manuscript since the medieval period until modern days, including also the legal contest of the 2010s (chapter 8), which, as explained by the author, sparked the idea for this book (p. 46, 307).

The Missing Pages is one of the few studies dedicated to the history of one manuscript in regards to its afterlives, functions and reception. The book consists of eight chapters, accompanied with a Prologue and an Epilogue, both of which narrate the author's personal experiences in dealing with the Zeytun Gospels. A large part of the Prologue represents the travels that the author undertook with the aim of seeing and experiencing the places where the manuscript was kept in the past. Chapters 2–8 are dedicated to every new location where the Zeytun Gospels appeared after its creation: medieval Hromkla (p. 48–78), Zeytun until 1915 (p. 79–115), Marash between 1915 and 1923 (p. 116–156), post-Genocide Aleppo (p. 157–189), twentieth-century New York (p. 190–224), Soviet and post-Soviet Yerevan (p. 225–260), and present-day Los Angeles (p. 261–299). A similar itinerary is not uncommon for many survivors of the Armenian Genocide, yet its immediate relevance to survived art objects is a less evident matter, which is traced in *The Missing Pages*. Apart from narrating the specific circumstances in which the Zeytun Gospels appeared after the thirteenth century, the chapters include large overviews on historical, socio-political and cultural, as well as geographical and urban aspects that have or might have touched the life of this manuscript. These long overviews, though not always clearly brought into connection with the Zeytun Gospels, are nevertheless helpful in understanding the ever-changing realities that impacted the multiple movements of many sacred objects, including especially the Gospels in question, whose fragmentation was an immediate consequence of the Genocide deportations.

The book is written in an easily comprehensible language, and a non-expert reader would feel no discomfort in understanding art historical terms or the sequence of events linked to the Zeytun Gospels. Although it is the history of this sole manuscript that is central, the book also sheds light on contemporary issues related to cultural heritage in general, its ownership, management, but also its intentional destruction and unethical acquisition practices, which are discussed in the opening chapter entitled *Survivor Objects. Artifacts of Genocide*. The public interest in these quickly-developing matters might be the reason for choosing a writing style that would bridge both “academic and general audiences.” The storytelling approach applied by the author is explained in the Back Matter (p. 307): “Genocide, that greatest of crimes, reaches into all

human activity, including art. It challenges the very act of representation. In this book the chapters open with short vignettes that paint a picture or narrate a scene based on the same evidence that the body of the text treats analytically.” Although this courageous initiative of bridging two different audiences is undertaken with literary creativity and painstaking attention to available information, several points appear slightly incongruent, at least from the point of view of a scholarly readership. For example, in the first chapter, Watenpaugh speculates about the possible reasons for how the canon tables were separated from the mother manuscript: “Perhaps canon tables came loose from the binding over time. Or perhaps someone cut the thread” (p. 21), and shortly after she writes: “This crease [visible on the canon tables—G.G.S.] enables you to imagine how, at some point, unknown hands removed the Canon Tables from the mother manuscript, how they folded it, perhaps tucked it in a pocket or in the folds of a fabric belt like the ones men wore in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, and took it away” (p. 22–23). A more critical formulation of the problem would probably save the reader from additional mystery and obscurity that already accompany the multilevel history of the Zeytun Gospels. Such complications seem a little unnecessary especially in this particular case, because a first-hand testimony by Hagop Atamian, which is discussed by the author elsewhere (p. 149), clarifies some of the aspects of when and how the canon tables could have been cut off from the mother manuscript.

Despite some incongruities that the mixture of different writing styles inevitably arouses, *The Missing Pages* represents a wide-scope book, treating the Zeytun Gospels not only from historical and art historical perspectives but also exploring the manuscript’s social context. This context becomes especially clear in chapters 3–5, which narrate the manuscript’s frequent movements from one place to another. Chapter 6 (*New York. The Zeytun Gospels Enters Art History*) and chapter 7 (*Yerevan. Toros Roslin, Artist of the Armenian Nation*), apart from representing the Zeytun Gospels’ appearance in these cities, also discuss the scholarship on Toros Roslin whose twentieth-century revival is traced by Watenpaugh. The author pays particular attention to the question of why some scholars included the manuscript’s history in their studies, while some others chose to remain silent about the circumstances in which they examined it. In an attempt to understand some scholars and all those who intentionally or unintentionally came into contact with the Zeytun Gospels, Watenpaugh dedicates many pages to the biographies of these individuals, focusing on their particular roles played in the life of the manuscript.

An important dimension of the book is revealed in chapter 7, which analyzes the modern perceptions of Toros Roslin as expressed in the works of several Armenian artists and writers. Roslin’s “towering presence” in some artistic and

literary productions by twentieth-century Armenian artists and writers (who felt themselves to be heirs of Roslin's legacy) is viewed by Watenpaugh from the perspective of a renewed interest in national traditions, as much as it was possible to do in a post-Khrushchev Soviet state. In these modern interpretations of Roslin, including especially Razmik Davoyan's novella *Toros Roslin*, Armenian art of the past was seen as a means through which Armenian identity and collective memory were able to survive. Watenpaugh formulates it in a short but apt sentence: "This is an enormous claim for art" (p. 250). She shows that the immense interest in one particular artist from Armenia's past and the "new career" of Toros Roslin as "a medieval Armenian genius-artist" had departed from a confinement as a subject of solely academic studies. Many scholars and intellectuals, especially those working in Soviet and post-Soviet Armenia, saw in Roslin the combination of both national and cosmopolitan features of the Armenian culture. In this regard, Watenpaugh's study covers a traditionally ignored but probably one of the most significant aspects of art historical scholarship by dealing with such matters as how scholars choose subjects of their research or how it came to happen that one medieval artist (or one artistic or architectural monument) could acquire overwhelmingly more scholarly attention than many others who—probably undeservedly—remain in the shadows. Watenpaugh's discussion therefore sheds light on the role that art historians play in emphasizing (or ignoring) the importance of an artwork, hence becoming active participants in shaping the life, the future and even the material value of that artwork, yet often remaining unaware of their own involvement or future impact.

The multidimensional nature of this book makes it a highly insightful and important contribution to the study of Armenian art and its socio-historical dimensions. Yet, some issues discussed below seem to be treated with less thoroughness than others.

In the second chapter the author explains the role and value of Armenian manuscript colophons (p. 68–70). The Zeytun Gospels' colophons, which are indeed the most authentic documentations on the manuscript's history prior to the twentieth century, are however reproduced and considered only in a fragmentary form. From the main colophon dated to 1256 only two short citations are made (p. 57, 69), though given its length (6 manuscript folios) and historical importance as a primary source, it would perhaps be expedient to treat it in more detail. No mention is made about several short colophons Roslin wrote inside the manuscript, or the colophon dating from the year 1806 which records the sacred objects salvaged during a "pillage of this village" (fols. 407v–408r, according to current pagination). Two other 19th-century colophons dating from 1852 and 1859 are assembled in one short passage in chapter 3, which narrates their contents but does not reproduce the specific information found

in them (p. 104–105). More attention is accorded to two colophons dating from the 16th–17th centuries (p. 70, 84–85), which occupy folios 405v–406r and 406v–407v.² The latter colophon records the manuscript's transfer from Furnus to a church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God, which is plausibly attributed by Watenpaugh to the church located on the citadel of Zeytun. The full reproduction of this colophon could have revealed a few more details from the early modern period of this manuscript's history, such as the names of the Furnus clerics who sold the manuscript, the transaction price of 460 florins that *mah-tesi* Hagop paid to become the manuscript's new owner, or Hagop's and his family's "long-cherished wish to have a precious Gospel book," for they were "striving for divine love" (fol. 406v). Such details would provide further depth to Watenpaugh's novel exploration into the social function of the Zeytun Gospels as a holy object. Moreover, the 460 florins paid for the Zeytun Gospels appears to be very high, if one compares it, for example, with an average ransom of 120 florins paid for one person's liberty in the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire.³ Consequently, such information would allow the readers to appreciate the high spiritual and material value that the Zeytun Gospels enjoyed even before their eight folios' sale in the 20th century put the spotlight on their contemporary market value.

When narrating the Zeytun Gospels' salvation story in 1915, Watenpaugh brings a parallel example of how the famous *Homiliary of Mush* (Մշն Հաղորդսիր) was rescued. She bases her narrative on the popular and somewhat mythicized story according to which that manuscript was divided into two by two women who carried them while fleeing from Mush in 1915 (p. 172, also 43–44). In reality, this large-size manuscript was divided in 1828 or probably before, and there are a few explicit colophons that recount this. One of them was written in 1828 by the local priests who bound the divided portions of the manuscript (Matenadaran ms 7729, fol. 602v): "With the grace of the Holy Spirit, in the Armenian year 1277 [1828], the two (volumes of the) holy homilies were bound again ... by the hand of sinful Kirakos *vardapet* Aghbets'i and *tirats'u* Sahak ... With great effort and difficulty we were able to rebind it." Another piece of information about the physical state of the Homiliary of Mush

2 This is the approximate but very plausible date suggested by Sirapie Der Nersessian, on whose suggestions Watenpaugh's narrative is based (p. 83). According to a more recent reading, the hardly legible date for the colophon written on folios 405v–406r is read as follows: "1558?". See *Catalogue of Manuscripts of the Mashtots' Matenadaran*, vol. III, compiled by A. Malkhasyan (Yerevan: Yerevan State University Press, 2007), 77 (in Armenian).

3 For a statistic of ransoms, see, for example Mária Ivanics, "Enslavement, Slave Labour and Treatment of Captives in the Crimean Khanate," in Dávid Géza & Pál Fodor (eds.), *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Borders (Early Fifteenth–Early Eighteenth Centuries)* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007), 216–217.

and more specifically its (re)binding in 1828 is found in a colophon written by Yohannes *vardapet* Muradean, the chief priest of the Holy Apostles' Monastery of Mush: "In 1828, Kirakos *vardapet* Aghbets'i divided the manuscript into two volumes and bound them because the manuscript was too heavy and difficult to move.... On May 4, 1892, I started to paginate the two bound volumes of the Homiliary in sequential order: the first volume has 648 folios, and the second (volume) 564."⁴ Nevertheless, it is true that the two main parts of the Homiliary of Mush were able to escape the Armenian Genocide separately and were later united in the Matenadaran. Based on this, Artashes Matevossian suggested that the wrong assumption that the manuscript was divided in 1915—on which the popular narrative is based—might be a legendary accretion based on the 19th-century rebinding of the manuscript.⁵ Be that as it may, these supposed bindings can be considered lost, since all the preserved parts of the Homiliary of Mush arrived in their current places of preservation without any binding.

Chapter 2 discusses cultural and socio-political realities of Cilician Armenia during the thirteenth century, when the Zeytun Gospels was created in Hromkla. While analyzing a bilingual coin bearing the names of the Armenian king Hetum I and the Seljuk sultan Kaykhusraw II, the author interprets it as an expression of "the complex identities of the period," referring especially to the sultan's Christian mother and to the two rulers' "entangled fates" (p. 55–56). This somewhat romanticized image of the Armenian and Seljuk rulers does not do justice to the nuances of the medieval context of their rule. A large number of bilingual coins, with Armenian and Arabic legends and with an equestrian image of Hetum I,⁶ were already minted during the reign of Kaykhusraw's father, sultan Kayqubad I, most likely soon after young Hetum's official reign started (1226), which coincided with the ceasing of Kayqubad's continuous attacks on Cilician frontiers.⁷ These invasions were

4 Translations are mine. For the original texts in Armenian and further comments on the manuscript's fragmentation, see A. Matevossian, "When and where was created the festive Homiliary of Mush?" *Banber Matenadarani* 9 (1969): 137–162, esp. 139 (in Armenian).

5 A. Matevossian, "When and where was created the festive Homiliary of Mush?" 139, n. 6.

6 These were silver *drams* or *trams*, equivalent to *dirham* in Persian and Arabic and to *drachma* in Greek and Latin.

7 Various, mostly non-Armenian, sources mention that during the years between 1220 and 1226, when the Armenian court was occupied with finding a suitable candidate for the royal throne, the Cilician frontiers were often attacked by the new Seljuk sultan, who managed to gain control over several important fortresses in Cilicia, among which the sea fortress of Kalonoros (Alanya) is particularly mentioned. See, for example: *La Chronographie de Bar Hebraeus: Ktābā dMaktbānūt Zabnē, L'histoire du monde d'Adam à Kubilai Khan*, traduit du syriaque par Ph. Talon, volume 2 (Fernelmont: Éditions Modulaires Européennes, 2011), 233 (for the siege of Kalonoros/Alanya in 1223) and 241 (for the siege of "the majority of Cilician fortresses" in 1226); *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil*

apparently in line with the Crimean campaign (the Sudak campaign) undertaken by Kayqubad I in the 1220s with the aim of securing for his sultanate the important commercial routes from the Mediterranean (including notably Cilician Armenia and the neighboring costs) to the Black Sea.⁸ The regular incursions into Cilicia and Crimea in the early 1220s and their sudden cessation around 1227 apparently resulted in certain commercial regulations and obligation. The issue of this type of bilingual coins bearing the names of the “king of Armenians” and the “exalted sultan” is most likely a reflection of a new geopolitical balance that had been reached. Their issue continued also during the next sultan Kaykhusraw II, who inherited these privileges from his late father prior to the defeat of the Seljuks in the mid-13th century by Mongols. In the light of these considerations, Hetum’s “openness to the world” (p. 55) or Kawkhosraw’s “complex identity” seem to be of secondary importance, at least in explaining the occurrence of bilingual coins.

As mentioned above, in the sixth and seventh chapters Watenpaugh offers an illuminating discussion of many scholars and studies that have dealt with Toros Roslin and the Cilician miniature painting. Regrettably, a discussion of a study by Levon Azaryan published in 1964—*Cilician Miniature Painting in the Twelfth–Thirteenth Centuries* (in Armenian)—is missing. This was one of the first extensive monographs on Cilician illustrated manuscripts and on Toros Roslin, whose importance was and remains crucial for those interested in the subject due to its innovative methodology.⁹ Indeed, Azaryan was the scholar who practically single-handedly launched the methodology of studying the Cilician miniature painting as represented by distinct schools (the schools of Drazark, Skewra, Hromkla, etc.), as apposed to the hitherto-prevailing opinions and chronological classifications that often represented the Cilician book illumination as a homogenous artistic production. This new systematized approach later served as a foundation stone for structuring several important publications on the subject, including those discussed in *The Missing Pages*.

Watenpaugh’s impression about Sirarpie Der Nersessian as a modern Western scholar, who would prefer to see Armenian artworks in “a well-run Western museum or private collection” or for whom the artworks’ current ownership and whereabouts were of little importance to focus on is arguable

fīl-ta’rīkh, Part 3—*The Years 589–629/1193–1231, The Ayyūbids after Saladin and the Mongol Menace*, translated by D.S. Richards, Crusade Texts in Translation 17 (Aldershot—Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), p. 280 (mentions the conquest of four Armenian fortresses in 1225).

8 For the Sudak campaign and its commercial-economical context, see A.C.S. Peacock, “The Saljūq Campaign against Crimea and the Expansionist Policy of the Early Reign of ‘Alā al-Dīn Kayqubād,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 16/No. 2 (Jul. 2006): 133–149, esp. 143–145.

9 See also Sirarpie Der Nersessian’s review of Azaryan’s book, published in *Revue des Études arméniennes* 2 (1965): 394–398.

(see chapter 6, esp. 222–223). Der Nersessian—as everyone else concerned with the fate of survived Armenian artifacts—was reasonably thankful that at least a part of them was saved and gathered in various collections.¹⁰ However, before we make any conjunctions on whether she had a particular preference for “the best place” for an Armenian artwork to be kept, we need more information. Indeed, the author herself warns the reader that “we do not know Der Nersessian’s personal view on these issues” (p. 223). Yet, the prominent scholar’s activities outside of academia shed some light “on these issues,” and leave a somewhat different impression than is assumed. Between 1969 and 1982, she donated five manuscripts in her possession to the Matenadaran—a telling fact which surprisingly went unnoticed by Watenpaugh, though in other contexts the author has used the same list of Matenadaran’s acquisitions between 1969–1998 (see for example p. 358, n. 27) in which Der Nersessian’s donations are also documented.¹¹ Furthermore, Der Nersessian’s role and participation cannot be overestimated in the fate of 23 illustrated Armenian manuscripts—including also two manuscripts illustrated by Toros Roslin (now Jerusalem ms 2660 and Matenadaran ms 10675)—stolen from the treasury of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, all of which were planned for sale by the London-based Sotheby’s in an auction scheduled for March 14, 1967. In February 1967, when Der Nersessian saw the newly-published auction catalogue prepared by Charles Dowsett,¹² she recognized the manuscripts and contacted both the Armenian Patriarchate and the Gulbenkian Foundation to

10 See for example Der Nersessian’s short overview of the Armenian manuscripts in American collections which she believes appeared there in the aftermath of the WWI and the Armenian massacres: S. Der Nersessian, “Armenian Gospel Illustration as Seen in Manuscripts in American Collections,” in M.M. Parvis and A.P. Wikgren (eds.), *New Testament Manuscript Studies* (The University of Chicago Press, 1950), 137–138.

11 “A list of the collection acquired between 1969 and 1998,” in *Catalogue of Manuscripts of the Mashtots Matenadaran*, vol. 111, compiled by A. Malkhasyan (Yerevan: Yerevan State University Press, 2007), 45 (in Armenian). See also B. Tchoukaszian, “Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts in Private Collections,” *Banber Matenadaran* 15 (1986): 339 (in Armenian).

12 Sotheby & Co. *Catalogue of Twenty-Three Important Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts* (20 plates, 3 in color), *day of sale: Tuesday, 14th March, 1967, at 11 o'clock precisely* (sale cancelled on March 7, 1967). The Forward of the printed catalogue points at the importance of Toros Roslin and his royal commissioners (p. 3): “The disposal of the present collection of twenty-three Armenian Gospel manuscripts probably represents the most important sale of this nature hitherto. Three of the manuscripts are already well-known; of these, two (lots 1 and 2) were illuminated and signed by Thoros Roslin, the most celebrated of 13th century Cilician Armenian artists, and the third (lot 7) constitutes the chef-d’oeuvre of extant manuscripts illuminated by Martiros, the master of the Khizan school in Eastern Armenia in the 16th century. Of those present here, two (lots 1 and 2) are intimately connected with the Armenian royal family in Cilicia, including King Leo and Queen Keran, who are famous as patrons of Armenian art.”

find a solution for saving the manuscripts from further dispersal and fragmentation, as it often happens with merchandised manuscripts.¹³ A week before the scheduled auction would take place, Sotheby's cancelled the auction of "twenty-three important Armenian illuminated manuscripts," as the auction catalogue characterized them.¹⁴ After this short séjour in London, Roslin's two Gospels, together with 21 other manuscripts, went back to Jerusalem, although one of them, the *Malatya Gospels*, was soon donated by catholicos Vazken I to the Matenadaran, where it still resides under the inventory number 10675. Remarkably, this happened in the same period, when the same catholicos initiated the transfer of the Zeytun Gospels—the canon tables' mother manuscript—from the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul to the Matendaran (now ms 10450). Der Nersessian's role in the story of the manuscripts that appeared in London was not merely limited to drawing the relevant Armenian institutions' attention on the illegal sale of Armenian manuscripts. She, together with Alex Manoogian (who at that time was the president of the AGBU), was in a five-member commission specially initiated on this occasion by catholicos Vazken I on March 8, 1967, which had a mission "to check the restitution conditions, to find necessary means and to organize the secure repatriation of the stolen manuscripts."¹⁵ Within a few days, the commission members gathered in London and, a few days before the scheduled auction would take place, negotiated with the Sotheby's, which cancelled the auction and returned all 23 manuscripts.¹⁶ These episodes indeed draw a different picture of Sirarpie Der Nersessian's attitude toward modern lives and ownership of Armenian

13 The story of the stolen Armenian manuscripts was largely discussed in both Armenian and international media. Among English-speaking journals, see, for example: "Battle joined over Gospel manuscripts," *The Times* (London), March 3, 1967, 12 (article by the News Team), in which Der Nersessian is shortly interviewed. See also the articles cited below, notes 14 and 15.

14 In fact, the number of the stolen manuscripts was 28. It appears that the Sotheby's was presented with only 23 of them. For the cancellation of the auction, see for example: "Manuscripts Sale is Called off: Gospels Go back to Jerusalem," *The Times* (London), March 7, 1967, 1 (article by News Team); "MSS. going back to Jerusalem," *The Times* (London), March 11, 1967, 2.

15 See Vazken catholicos' letter addressed to the patriarch of Jerusalem, Yeghishe Tertrean (8 March, 1967), published in *Etchmiadzin* 3 (1967): 23. Alex Manoogian had paid the largest part of £50,000 requested by the Sotheby's for the cancellation of the auction of 23 manuscripts, which, according to *The Times*, were estimated around £500,000. For Manoogian's communication with *The Times*, see "Manuscripts Man to be 'Punished': Armenians Plan Secret Action," *The Times* (London), March 13, 1967, 2 (article by Staff Reporter).

16 See the commission's letter sent to catholicos Vazken, dated March 11, 1967, in *Etchmiadzin* 3 (1967): 24.

manuscripts. Moreover, her being a cosmopolitan Western art historian with close contacts with many well-run Western museums and institutions apparently did not prevent her from resolute actions in a seemingly controversial situation.

A similar remark refers to the image of Karekin Hovsepien. From a gratitude notice Hovsepien included in his 1942 publication (mentioned “1943” by Watenpaugh¹⁷) to acknowledge the Walters Art Gallery administration’s kindness in providing the photographs of the manuscript W. 539, Watenpaugh concludes that “from a respected priest confidently approaching a religious manuscript, he had become a mere researcher, an independent scholar, petitioning the goodwill of those who now had possession of his sacred texts” (p. 203). Hovsepien’s “becoming an independent scholar” in 1942 overlooks the fact that by that time he had a successful scholarly career for well over half a century. It is curious that the author focuses on Hovsepien’s politeness and respectful attitude toward the gallery administration which provided him with photographs for research purposes while Hovsepien’s cited notice hardly reflects his attitude or preferences for private institutions’ ownership of survived manuscripts, a matter on which he had a very different view, and of which the author is well aware (see p. 205). For instance, when witnessing the

17 Making this seemingly small correction of the original date of Hovsepien’s publication seems to me not unimportant, because it helps to better trace the Zeytun Gospels’ vicissitudes in the USA. The approximate time when Watertown-based Nazaret Atamian showed the canon tables to Karekin Hovsepien is carefully calculated by Watenpaugh (p. 192–193) as between 1936, Hovsepien’s arrival in New York, and 1943, when his book *Materials and Studies on History of Armenian Art and Culture* (vol. II, New York, 1943, in Armenian) was published, in which Atamian’s possession of canon tables is documented. Given that this information repeatedly appears in the book (p. 192, 201, 279, 281) and elsewhere, including also in the Getty’s answer at the trial of the *Western Prelacy vs. Getty Museum* (BC438824, Dec. 5, 2011, The Getty’s Answer, §6, http://news.getty.edu/images/9036/getty_answer_dec_5_2011.pdf), it seems noteworthy to mention that Hovsepien’s corresponding article was first published in 1942 in the New York-based Armenian periodical *Hayastaneayts’ ekeghets’i* (October, vol. 4, No. 1 (1942): 85–124) to be reprinted a year later in his collection of studies. This means that by October 1942 Atamian had already showed the canon tables to Karekin Hovsepien. In June 2019, I was lucky to have the opportunity to work in the Archives of Karekin Hovsepien in Lebanon and view the original photographs and microfilms of the Zeytun Gospels’ folios, taken at the time when these were in the possession of Atamian. On the envelope containing the photographs, Hovsepien wrote with a pencil the date when he received them from Atamian’s Watertown address: “May 26, 1942”. In the same archive file, among several research notes, Hovsepien made also short notes on the previous itinerary of the canon tables, calling them “Մարաշի աւետարանի խորանները” (“The Canon Tables of the Marash Gospels”). See *Archives of Garegin Catholicos Yovsēp’ean*, The Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, Antelias, Lebanon, No 24-1-612.

continuous appearance of Armenian manuscripts in the American art market and referring in particular to two manuscripts kept in the Freer Gallery of Art, Hovsepian expressed a preference that these would better be acquired by state institutions rather than by private collectors.¹⁸

Finally, a very small remark refers to the wonderful exhibition *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts* organized in the Pierpont Morgan Library in 1994, which is characterized as “the first-ever exhibition of Armenian book arts in the United States” (p. 254). Lest the work of the previous generation be forgotten, however, I would like to mention the 1955 exhibition *Armenian Manuscripts* organized in the University of Kansas Library, which had displayed a part of one of the then-richest private collections of Armenian manuscripts owned by Harutiun (Harry) Kurdian.¹⁹ This collection, comprising 300 manuscripts, was later donated to the Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice.

Some Reflections on Exhibition Practices of Survivor Artifacts

The Missing Pages raises a series of significant questions regarding cultural genocide and the fate of art objects that somehow escaped final destruction. These survivor artifacts are among the central arguments largely discussed in the book, which often come along with an inevitable question: “Who owns, or should own, an object like the Canon Tables, and how is that determined?” Watenpaugh raises this question in the Prologue (p. 4) and throughout the pages of her book she illustratively demonstrates how a medieval manuscript, after having been kept for centuries in one place as a highly venerated religious object, was passed from hand to hand in the post-Genocide period, and how its two parts ended up being kept in two continents. As shown in the last chapter, the legal contest of the 2010s signaled the new role of these 13th-century parchment folios, now as witnesses and survivors of the Armenian Genocide. Yet, what does a visitor learn when seeing a beautifully exhibited artwork like the canon tables in a museum hall? How to represent, exhibit and explain a heritage, which, for example, has survived a genocide and whose current location of preservation is an eventual consequence of historical wrongs? In *The Missing Pages*, Watenpaugh writes about the telling silences of such artworks’ provenances, underlining especially that “the tragic story of the mutilated

18 See Hovsepian’s Introduction to K. Hovsepian, *Materials and Studies on History of Armenian Art and Culture*, vol. 11 (New York, 1943), 1 (in Armenian).

19 For the catalogue of this exhibition, see *Armenian Manuscripts. An Exhibition at the University of Kansas Library*, December 1955 (University of Kansas Press, 1955).

manuscript should not be silenced but rather incorporated into exhibition” (p. 5, also 26–27, 46)—a concept which is not only educative, but might also be some sort of ‘compensation’ in some restitution conflicts of this kind. Although at the end of the first chapter the reader is informed that “this book [explores] how institutions like museums curate and display works of art with little reference to their painful histories” (p. 46), no matter-of-fact discussion is found in the pages of the book that would deal with the question of how the story of the Zeytun Gospels and its separated canon tables was ignored or represented at the hitherto-organized exhibitions. To my knowledge, the only public exhibition that represented the survival story of the Zeytun Gospels was the *Survived Manuscripts* exhibition opened in the Matenadaran Museum in April 2015 on the occasion of the Centennial commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. Being included as part of the Matenadaran’s permanent exhibition, the Zeytun Gospels continues to tell its story to more than 100,000 visitors annually. This number of visitors might seem less impressive in comparison to the large audiences of the Pierpont Morgan Library, the Getty Museum and the Metropolitan Museum, where the Zeytun Gospels’ canon tables were occasionally exhibited since the 1990s.²⁰ Yet given that in these cases no effort was made to incorporate this and many other objects’ “tragic stories” into the public exhibition practices, the educational and humanistic missions of these important art institutions can be considered fulfilled only partly, at least as far as their informative notices on the survivor artworks is concerned. Furthermore, it is perhaps not unimportant to underline that for the sake of political loyalty or probably even under political pressure, the so-called encyclopedic museums would rather avoid making a special emphasis on a survivor artwork that

20 Below is a list of the exhibitions in which the canon tables of the Zeytun Gospels participated.

Pierpont Morgan Library (1994): *Treasures in Heaven. Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts*, edited by Thomas F. Mathews and Roger S. Wieck, exhibition: The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, 04.05–07.08.1994, and Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 28.08–24.10.1994 (Princeton University Press, 1994), cat. 82, Pl. 10–11, 206.

The Getty Museum (1997–1998, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2016): *Masterpieces of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscript Illumination* (16.12.1997–22.03.1998), *Illuminating Color* (22.05–16.08.2001), *Five Hundred Years of Manuscript Illumination* (11.02–01.06.2003), *Byzantium and the West* (14.09–05.12.2004), *Traversing the Globe through Illuminated Manuscripts* (22.01–26.06.2016).

The Metropolitan Museum of Art (1997, 2018–2019): *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261*, edited by Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, exhibition: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 11.03–06.07.1997 (published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), No. 243, 362–363; *Armenia. Art, Religion, and Trade in the Middle Ages*, edited by Helen C. Evans, exhibition: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 22.09.2018–13.01.2019 (Yale University Press, 2018), cat. 57, 46.

manifests the mutilated history of a national group which seeks justice and restitution internationally. This neutral approach adopted by many art institutions meets perfectly with the modern concepts of ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘shared cultural heritage.’

If in the previous two centuries and especially after the formation of nation-states the key role of many ancient and medieval artifacts was to be an identity marker for specific national or religious communities, in our era of multiculturalism a newer and greater role comes to challenge these perceptions by interpreting artworks as belonging to humanity in general, rather than to a specific community, a nation, or a state. This new vision of cultural heritage was formed especially in the aftermath of and in response to the tragedy of 11 September 2001, when a year later, during its 31st session, the UNESCO adopted the Declaration on Cultural Diversity.²¹ Sharing cultural heritage with others, which became also the ruling concept of 21st-century scholarship and academia, was warmly welcomed by many big museums and art institutions, including especially the encyclopedic museums, whose collections are comprised of various kinds of art objects originating from different parts of the world. Ironically, the humanistic mission of making cultural heritage available or accessible to everyone appears to stand in contradiction with the same idea of humanism. One wonders if buying looted artifacts, enriching the black art market and even indirectly contributing to terroristic organizations (and thus encouraging the destruction and fragmentation of cultural heritage) can be compensated by the beautifully exhibited remnants of that heritage. Propagating cosmopolitan values and diversity by promoting the destruction of cultural property which is supposed to be a part of that diversity strongly questions the principles and methods of assembling, owing, representing and sharing cultural heritage, and I cannot agree more with Watenpaugh's short observation that “associating with such criminal networks and enriching them hardly seems the ‘cosmopolitan’ thing to do” (p. 39).

The observations and remarks I have allowed myself cannot reduce the importance of *The Missing Pages* and the novel approach this book brings. Considering the biography of a survivor manuscript and highlighting the importance of exhibition practices are relatively new subjects of discussion in their Armenian context, and *The Missing Pages* opens that new platform for rethinking cultural heritage and relevant issues of its preservation, ownership, guidance, display, research, and interpretation.

21 For the declaration document see *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity: A vision, a conceptual platform, a pool of ideas for implementation, a new paradigm* (2002) <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000127162>.