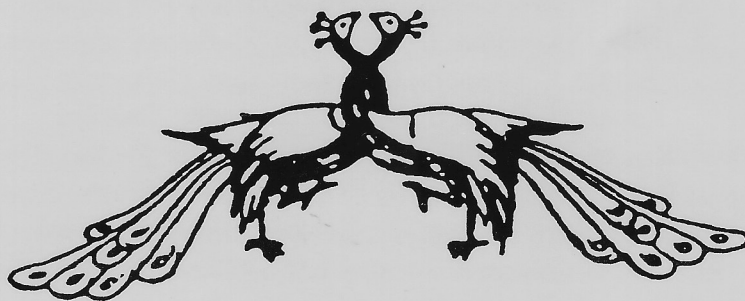


**VOLUME 21**

**(2012)**

**JOURNAL  
OF THE  
SOCIETY FOR  
ARMENIAN STUDIES**



RUBINA PEROOMIAN, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature: Perceptions of Those Who Lived Through the Years of Calamity*. Yerevan, Armenia: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2012. Pp. 464. In English with an Armenian summary.

Rubina Perroomian opens her book with a deeply self-reflective note about how her decades long research in the field of Armenian literature, and especially in the area of Armenian Genocide literature, has left a personal mark on her own life and work. Her dissertation, based on a comparison of the Armenian and Jewish response to genocide, was to be only the beginning of what for her has become a life-long journey to also free herself from the weight of the Genocide.

An introduction to the scope of the book provides the reader with the means to negotiate the almost incomprehensible nature of the Genocide, in its impact and in the responses to the devastation. Perroomian places the current work in the context of her desire to complete a series of five volumes devoted to the literary responses of Armenians to the Genocide. Her earlier works, *Literary Responses to Catastrophe* (1993), *And Those Who Continued Living after 1915* (2008), and this new volume, are to be followed with monographs

on literary responses of the second and third generations and then a final work on the memory of the Genocide in Soviet Armenian literature.

This book is organized into three broad areas: 1) the legacy of the first generation; 2) the orphan generation; and 3) the renewed outpouring of memories.

In the section on "The Legacy of the First Generation," Perroomian gives an overview of the writers who wrote both immediately before the Genocide and immediately after the Genocide. She proposes that there was a continuous literary response to Armenian massacres, from as early as 1895-1896, through the Adana massacres of 1909, to the Genocide. These writers produced works in Armenian, and often reflected the polarity between optimism and despair at the events that swept through the Armenians.

In her second major section, Perroomian focuses on "The Orphan Generation," so named for its forced departure from the homeland, to establish themselves in far away Diasporan communities. These authors such as Levon Zaven Surmelian, Aram Haykaz, Moushegh Ishkhan, share in their writing the pain and suffering that was a direct result of the Armenian Genocide, but it was expressed not as a direct retelling of the Genocide, but rather in terms of the impact of the event. There is also the battle against assimilation, which is another common theme for these writers, observing the struggle in their adopted lands.

The final section of the book on "A Renewed Outpourings of Memories," focuses on the genre of the memoir, written by those who experienced the Genocide first-hand. They are written mostly in English, with examples from writers such as Kerop Bedoukian, Alice Muggerditchian Shipley, John Minassian, Dirouhi Kouymjian Highgas, and many others. The impetus for these authors to write their memoirs derived not only from an inner impulse to write, but also from larger social and cultural issues, such as the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, as well as the changing social structure of the United States beginning in the 1960s, which gave greater freedom to ethnic writers to express their feelings.

Perroomian concludes her work by exploring the commonality in the literary expression of the Genocide, not only in how the authors recount the horror of their experiences, but also in how on occasion they recount the acts of "righteous" Turks or Kurds, through whose efforts they or they families were saved.

Perroomian has provided valuable examples from early 20th century Armenian literature, which will provide ample opportunity for the study of their foundational nature, and in the analysis of third and fourth generation authors. These works, taken as a whole, also illustrate the importance of trans-

generational transmission of memory, and the question of how the Genocide will be transmitted to new generations.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

BARLOW DER MUGRDECHIAN