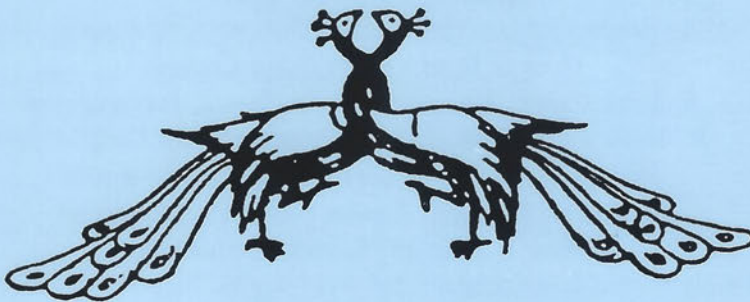


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RUBINA PEROOMIAN. *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915: The Metamorphosis of the Post-Genocide Armenian Identity as Reflected in Artistic Literature*. Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2008. Pp. vi + 277.

This book surveys several literary works by Armenian and Turkish authors who explore the experience of discovering the memory of the Armenian Genocide. The volume consists of seven chapters, in addition to the introduction, a chapter titled "Preamble and Focus," the conclusion, and a summary in the Armenian language. This study, Peroomian notes in the introduction, is the

second volume in her "projected trilogy" (p. 1), the first being her *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience* (1993) and the third, currently in preparation, on the historical memory of the Genocide in Soviet Armenian literature (p. 2). The author stresses the significance of "common history" (p. 17) as representing an essential element not only in the development of ethnic identity but also as the conceptual framework for the (re)construction of cultural commensurability between post-Genocide Diasporan Armenians and their compatriots in Turkey, on the one hand, and between Armenians and Turks, on the other hand. The literary works examined in this volume depict the tortuous and torturous processes of the discovery of that common history, largely centered on the traumatic experience of the Genocide.

Peroomian notes that with the exception of a handful of Turkish authors (for example, Yashar Kemal and Nazim Himet), Turkish literature lacked any references to the Armenian Genocide until very recently. Indeed, the trajectory of a search for the roots of one's identity among Turkish authors is revelatory. It extends from the initial disbelief concerning the crime hidden deep within decades of official denial in what must be the dark history of Turkish atrocities committed against Armenian citizens of the Ottoman Empire, to the discovery of the reality of the Genocide, to the emotional struggle with, and finally to the acceptance of, that reality. Peroomian pays particular attention to Kemal Yalçın's *Seninle güler yüreğim* (My Heart Rejoices with You), Fethiye Çetin's *Anneannem*, and Elif Şafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul*. "For many the secret is out," Peroomian writes (p. 144). "That obscure sense of belonging to another, that memory of a common history, silenced and suppressed for almost a century, is now being unearthed" (pp. 144-145). These works exemplify the clash between forgetfulness and memory, denial and discovery. In addition to these themes, Peroomian also discusses various types of traumatic experiences—for example, sexual violence against females (pp. 86-92) and males (pp. 97-103), the latter until recently ignored in scholarly works on genocide (p. 97).

That the younger generation is able to "unearth" the past is itself a manifestation of a generational transmission of the memory of the Genocide (p. 147). For Armenian writers in Turkey, the struggle since the Genocide was not so much discovering the past but rather expressing the trauma of survival, often in silence. Their silence, Peroomian observes, served as a means of survival, "a defensive tool . . . to avoid dire consequences" (p. 131), as dictated by the political and cultural restrictions imposed by the Kemalist state. Armenian life in Turkey after the traumatic experience of the Genocide, in Arpiar Der Markaryan's words, is "a posthumous life, without a smile, without dreams, a life suppressed by the shadow of death" (p. 121). Peroomian examines the works of the leading literary figures in the Armenian community of Istanbul—for example, Khrakhuni's poem "History"; Varteres Karagözlü's "Mets mayrigë" (The Grandmother); and Haygazun Galustian's "Irigunë" (The Evening) and "Khaghaghut' iwn" (Peace). Hagop Mintzuri, she maintains, "was one of the very few who defied the silence prevailing in Turkish-Armenian literature about the suffering of the nation and the trauma of the recent past" (p. 115).



A common characteristic in these works is the imperative of silence—or at most, of whisperings. The challenge is to express the trauma of murder and humiliation through various subtle symbols, without explicit references to the Genocide. Thus, for instance, Migirdic Margosyan relies on his mother's voice to exclaim surprise in learning that Armenian inscriptions and the cross are permitted to appear on the tombstones at the Shishli cemetery in Istanbul (p. 124). Through her analysis of these works, Perroomian reveals the silent universe of the *takun* (hidden) identities of *bizimkiler* (in Turkish) or *merinner* (in Armenian), meaning "our kin," that is, hidden Armenians, the hidden world of the *dartsats* (turned) or converted Armenians (pp. 78, 154).

The author's survey is more ambitious than the title of this volume suggests. Her analysis is not limited to "those who continued living in Turkey after 1915," but encompasses authors in different diasporan communities—for example, Virginia Haroutunian, David Kherdian, Hakob Karapents, Margaret Ajemian Ahnert, Gérard Chaliand, Diana Der Hovanessian, and Vahé Oshagan. While the Kemalist state imposed forgetfulness in Turkey, the memory of the Genocide was sustained for decades by the Armenian Diaspora.

Perroomian's study makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Armenian and Turkish memory of the Genocide. The volume throughout could have benefitted from closer editing. For example, Elif Şafak's birthplace is given as "Salzburg, France" (p. 55, note 34) but should be Strasbourg; the author of *Orphan in the Sands* (p. 163) spells her name Haroutunian and not Haroutounian. Throughout, the volume needs better organization with a chronologically unfolding narrative and better transitions from one section to the next. Perhaps adding section headings would have addressed this problem. These shortcomings notwithstanding, the general public will benefit from Perroomian's survey of the literary works presented in this book.