

Critique

This is a generally competent and perceptive analysis of the stated topic by a writer who is certainly a feminist and evidently an Armenian American woman herself. The basic theme of the paper, to quote the writer, is that “nowhere in Armenian American writing do we find a detailed and sustained reflection of a three-dimensional Armenian woman,” and that on the whole this is due to “the unleavened state of [Armenian American] literature in general.” She reaches these conclusions through examination of recent Armenian American writing, most of it by men—to whom, not incidentally, she primarily attributes the unbalanced treatment of Armenian women. Certainly it is clear from her citations that Armenian American women have been assigned a traditional, subordinate, and compliant role.

But some questions concerning the analysis do arise:

Is the study extensive enough to be considered comprehensive? The writer cites only a handful of Armenian American works by men or women. Surely a more intensive search would reveal more. Of course whether this would alter the conclusions is debatable.

Is Armenian American literature really in the “unleavened state” the writer believes it is? Most critics feel that it is well-developed and among the more notable examples of an ethnic literature. If, however, by “unleavened” the writer means that male-female elements have not been fully integrated there is more validity to her judgement.

Does the writer perhaps focus too narrowly on the Armenian woman in the traditional family looking back to the “lost Eden” of the pre-1915 period? The usual progression is that by the third generation or so ethnic groups—including their writers—are entering the “mainstream” of American life. Might not a clearer and more complete image of the modern Armenian American woman emerge through examination of how she fares in literature not necessarily related to the classic Armenian themes of adversity and suffering?

Finally, the writer should be encouraged to work toward amelioration of the conditions in Armenian American writing she deplors by depicting in her own writings the Armenian American woman as she believes she truly is, and by encouraging her ethnic sisters to do the same. This may be the key to helping the Armenian American woman to emerge from “between shadow and rock.”

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