

BOOK REVIEW / KİTAP İNCELEMESİ

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Tutku DİLAVER*

A FRONTRUNNER STUDY ON EMINENT POET AND AUTHOR HOVHANNES TUMANYAN

MÜMTAZ ŞAİR VE YAZAR HOVHANNES TUMANYAN HAKKINDA ÖNCÜ BİR ÇALIŞMA

Author: Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş

Title: Ermeni Edebiyatının Mümtaz Şair Ve Yazarı Hovhannes Tumanyan'ın Hayatı Eserleri Ve Edebi Kişiliği

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Literature is an effective tool to understand the identity of a people or a nation. Sometimes the backstory provided by a novel or a poem gives us a clue about the atmosphere of a certain era and the conceptions of a people during that era. It was with such a perspective that Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş wrote the book titled *Ermeni Edebiyatının Mümtaz Şair Ve Yazarı Hovhannes Tumanyan'ın Hayatı Eserleri Ve Edebi Kişiliği* (*The Life, Works, and Literary Identity of Eminent Poet and Author of Armenian Literature Hovhannes Tumanyan*).

Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş is an Associate Professor at the Department of Eastern Languages at Yıldırım Beyazıt University. She also lectures in

* ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3379-4313>
Scholar in Residence, Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM), tdilaver@avim.org.tr

Caucasus Studies Program at the Institute of Social Sciences at the same university. As such, Professor Deveci Bozkuş is competent in Eastern Armenian and on the politics, history, and literature of Armenia.

The book titled *Ermeni Edebiyatının Mümtaz Şair Ve Yazarı Hovhannes Tumanyan'ın Hayatı Eserleri Ve Edebi Kişiliği* is the result of her previous studies on Hovhannes Tumanyan. These studies also laid the foundation for the presentation Deveci Bozkuş delivered on Tumanyan with the same title in an international conference in Czechia last year.¹

Most of the academic researchers in Turkey have not focused very much on Armenian literature. In this regard, M. Fuat Köprülü was the first due to his 1922 study on Armenian minstrel literature.² However, his study comparing Armenian and Turkish minstrel literatures was subject to many criticisms because he did not know the Armenian language. From that time onwards, there have been no works other than a few generally focusing on Armenian literature.

Deveci Bozkuş mentions in the foreword of her book that some valuable works have started to be carried out in the field of Armenian literature (p. 9). According to her, the interest in Armenian literature had been limited until recently due to studies in Turkey mostly focusing on the 1915 events at the expense of other Armenian-related subjects. Deveci Bozkuş's book tries to break this approach by revealing the common culture and history between the two peoples -Turks and Armenians- through the works of Hovhannes Tumanyan. In this respect, her book is a significant contribution to the limited list of Turkish-language literature focusing on Armenian-related subjects.

The book consists of four chapters. The first chapter gives biographical information about Tumanyan. Tumanyan's personal life, the schools he went to, and teachers who shaped his literary identity are told in the first chapter. As it is understood from the book, Tumanyan was an activist who defended the brotherhood of peoples. According to Tumanyan, Tsarist Russia had provoked the Anatolian people against each other to prevent spreading of revolutionary ideas that could threaten the basis Tsarist rule. Because of this idea, he was imprisoned twice by Russian authorities (p. 18). In the light of that information,

1 Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş, "The Life, Works and Literary Identity of Eminent Poet and Author of Armenian Literature Hovhannes Tumanyan," International Conference: The West of The East, The East of The West, July 4-7, 2017, Prague/Czechia.

2 Famil Medetov, "Fuad Köprülü'nün Bilimsel Araştırmalarında Türk-Ermeni Folklor İlişkileri Sorunu," *Motif Akademi Halkbilimi Dergisi*, Cilt: 9, Sayı:18 (Temmuz – Aralık 2016), p. 283-290. This article can be accessed at: <http://dergipark.gov.tr/download/article-file/288281>

the readers get the chance to consider the events that unfolded in Anatolia from Tumanyan's perspective.

The second chapter is given to the assessments made by other writers about Tumanyan's works. It also contains an informative list of the thesis studies, articles, and the books written about Tumanyan. Through this chapter, the reader is given an understating of what Tumanyan has come to denote for the world of literature.

The third chapter includes the short assessments of Tumanyan's selected works such as "Gikor" (his famous short story) and "Anuş" (his popular lyric poem). Deveci Bozkuş not only makes an assessment, but also informs the readers about the place this work of Tumanyan's occupies in modern literature. The works reviewed in this chapter reveal Tumanyan's view on life in the Caucasus during a past era.

The fourth and final chapter of the book consists of the translations of Tumanyan's selected fables and fairytales. The translations of the stories are not verbatim, but the meanings of the stories have been attempted to be preserved as much as possible. When these tales and fables are read, the reader will immediately notice similarities with the Turkish stories. As Deveci Bozkuş mentioned at the beginning of the story titled "Altın Dolu K p" ("the Gold-Filled Pot"), some of these stories have been passed through from generation to generation in Turkey. This shows us that some stories in this geography are a common cultural heritage.

At the end of the book, there are two additional chapters. One of them is the bibliography of Tumanyan's works, the other is the bibliography of some of Tumanyan's works compiled by different editors. By this way, Deveci Bozkuş informs readers who wish to carry out additional research on Tumanyan's works.

In conclusion, the lack of qualified studies on Armenian literature places *Ermeni Edebiyatının M mtaz Őair Ve Yazarı Hovhannes Tumanyan'ın Hayatı Eserleri Ve Edebi KiŐiliŐi* in a special position. It stands to serve as a frontrunner for other Turkish-language works that will be written on this subject. Beyond its status as a frontrunner, this informative book -written with an accessible language- offers Turkish-speaking audiences a chance to get familiar with Armenian culture and lifestyle through the perspective of a pivotal author that was Hovhannes Tumanyan.

