

Hidatsa society evolved as a result of changes wrought by contact with the dominating white culture. But the book also demonstrates that these changes did not result in the dissolution of Hidatsa culture; they coped with change by incorporating aspects of white culture according to their needs, and fashioned for themselves their own form of cultural independence.

Buffalo Bird Woman grew up learning the traditional crafts of the Hidatsas, and her brother was brought up in the same cultural tradition. but whereas Buffalo Bird Woman did not always approve of the changes, her brother took advantage of the new ways. Goodbird grew up in both worlds, and eventually he became a Congregational minister. These three life stories illustrate well how the whole Hidatsa society went through a change in the years 1840-1920.

The chronicling of change of Plains Indian cultures through the eyes of one family puts the process on a very personal plane. It is a story of American Indian policy from the grassroots level--how the Indian people experienced it. The words of Buffalo Bird Woman and her family are combined with pictures of artifacts and explanations of their usage as well as excellent maps. The result is a detailed portrayal of how the Hidatsas forged a new cultural identity, combining tradition and innovation and finding a way to exist within the context of the American society.

At the end of the book, the authors have added a section of essays on Hidatsa origins and religion, the tribe's natural environment, and the work of anthropologist Gilbert Wilson and his brother. The essays add depth to the material and should probably be read first. As a whole, *The Way to Independence* is a fascinating pictorial and historical account of one family's way to independence. It captures the imagination, but it also contends that the Indians are not images; they are living and breathing human beings with a role to play in our society.

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Diana Der Hovanessian. *About Time*. (New York: Ashod Press, 1988) 96 pp., \$7.50.

As Armenian American literature matures, the impact of the massacres and dispersion of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 widens in meaning and relevance. A recently published collection of poetry by Diana Der Hovanessian suggests how issues raised by those long-ago events permeate the imagination of contemporary Armenian American writers, giving poignant focus to their work. Diana Der Hovanessian, the foremost translator of Armenian poetry into English,

demonstrated this most memorably in her *Anthology of Armenian Poetry*. Her first volume, *How to Choose Your Past* (1978, Ararat Press) displayed her wit and concern with the transmission of the Armenian language in a land where it is vulnerable to extinction. The second volume of her own work, *About Time* includes many poems which again showcase her strengths: short, epigrammatic pieces which tease the imagination and ironic poems that echo long after the first reading. Though many of these poems deal with non-Armenian subjects, those that weave together the volume once more express the poet's love for the Armenian language and poets killed at the beginnings of the massacres.

Der Hovanesian is especially sensitive to the nuances of Armenian words and idioms. In the first poem of the collection, "Shifting the Sun," she deftly compares the sayings which greet children who have recently lost fathers in different cultures; unlike those sayings which divide and darken the future, the Armenian refrain, "May you inherit his light, may you inherit his sun," circles through the poem, gently supporting the continuity of the generations. The refrain suggests how a culture which has undergone cyclic destruction and re-creation for almost three millennia has managed to pick itself up over and over again, holding to a positive light. "Postcard from Daniel Varoujan" is another variation on the theme of inheritance, this time the poet's lineage as an Armenian writer; the postcard sent so many decades ago by the great Armenian poet Varoujan, martyred on the first day of the massacres, becomes a symbol of a legacy that finds its way to the right hands, despite chance. The final stanza of the poem sums up the situation of the poet receiving the gift:

He is at a museum shop
picking a postcard
to send home. Seventy-five years later
it arrives to another woman
with the name of his marble huntress
who will hold it and weep
for lost mythologies.

The image of the "marble huntress," the Roman goddess Diana, conjures up a world of passion and beauty driven underground, a fate similar to that suffered by the Armenians when holocaust exploded their lives. But for Der Hovanesian, what continues to heal the parts is the power of a shared language that carries history and feeling through time and space. Thus, in a round entitled "Without You I Am," the circularity of the form and the elements used as equivalents to the Armenian language reassert the deep bond between this poet and her ancestral language. It is these poems about the sturdiness of the Armenian language through time which unite the volume: "wanderer and wandering minstrel/finally met along/inside the house Moushekh Ishkhan/called the Armenian's home."

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