

Ararat - Eskijian Museum : Feminism in Mari Beylerian's writings

Historiography on Armenian revolutionary movement remembers Hunchak activist Mari Beylerian (1877-1915) only by her memorable speech during the Bab-ı Ali Demonstration, one of the most important rallies demanding justice for Armenians in the Ottoman lands. Years later, Beylerian would regretfully reflect on the violent suppression of the protest and the subsequent pogrom against Armenians in the city. That day had also marked the beginning of her life as a persona non-grata in the eyes of the Ottoman state. In this lecture, Dr. Bilal will talk about Beylerian's legacy as a staunch feminist writer, an activist committed to social justice, and a devoted pedagogue who disappeared amidst the horrors of the genocide. Beylerian was the founder and editor-in-chief of *Ardemis* monthly, one of the earliest women's independent publications in Egypt and an original attempt to define a feminism in critical relation to its contemporary manifestations in the "West." She was an unapologetic defender of social change for the betterment of women's condition of oppression. Her perspective was firmly anchored in her anti-capitalist consciousness and in moralist philosophy. She wrote about justice, freedom, and equality as prerequisites to responsibility and integrity. She used her pen to denounce wars, to advocate for peace, and to conceptualize

Armenian people's right to self-defense and self-determination. She raised a unique feminist critique from within the Christian theology and used it as the basis of her condemnation of domestic violence and honor killings.

Throughout her life, Beylerian not only served as a teacher and administrator, but also actively wrote on philosophy of education and on how to create equal opportunities for female and economically deprived students. Her feminism's prophetic element was to attribute women the right and duty of serving their people's persistence to exist, a heavy responsibility successfully fulfilled by those women public intellectuals who, unlike her, were lucky enough to survive the collective and state violence against Armenians.

Ardemis

Photo: Mari Beylerian (front, center) with the Graduating Class of Izmir's Hripsimyants Armenian