Cultural Daily

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Ahdenae Khodaverdian: "Poppies (?????????)"

Ahdenae Khodaverdian · Wednesday, January 10th, 2018

Poppies

I never truly understood flower readings.

Not because the concept is particularly a difficult one to grasp,

But because each flower could be assigned a sundry of meanings.

It'd be like reading a sentence in which each word could be switched for 20 others.

Red poppies.

Beauty, success,

Extravagance, and luxury in the East.

A lively imagination.

Consolation for a death within the family and

Remembrance of those fallen in the lines of combat in the West.

Resurrection and eternal life.

A majority of my time visiting the town of Gyumri

Was spent visiting the graves of my relatives.

The graveyards were beautiful.

They were nothing like American graveyards,

Polished green expanses,

Symmetrical stones set into symmetrical hills.

No, these graveyards were wild.

Grasses sprung out in each step,

The graves made out of expertly carved stone,

All with engraved or frosted portraits of the deceased.

It should have been eerie, but to me these graveyards felt alive.

And the poppies,

The same ruby petals that light up Armenia's fields,

Encase entire graves at a time,

Shrouding forgotten souls with no one left to visit them

In their blanket of peace and restful sleep.

The newer graves can be picked out at a glance,

Glossy stones, new and regularly polished by mourning, shaky hands.

All poppies plucked out of all crevices.

The more I watched the somewhat obsessive cleaning of the headstones,

The more I realized that the gravestone was not only for the body buried below.

Life savings were funneled into this beautiful stone

For someone who no longer has the words to be thankful for it.

In the villages' houses, pictures of the deceased litter the walls

Decades after their passing.

Consuming the lives of the people left alive,

So much so that it then becomes a question of if they are truly living at all.

When leaving the graveyards, I looked back to the poppies.

To the shrouded souls beneath them. To their beauty.

Next to the bustle and fuss of the new gravestones,

I couldn't help but think "How wonderful.

These forgotten ones can finally rest."

My mom tells me on our ride back that

"Even when no one comes for them anymore,

The flowers will weep for them."

I personally imagine that once the poppies arrive, there's no longer a need to weep.

After all, one of the poppy's many meanings is recovery.

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 (translated into Armenian by Anait Khodaverdian)

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