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General

Journey To Virginland: Epistle I
Armen Melikian
Two Harbors
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In his ambitious novel *Journey to Virginland: Epistle 1* author Armen Melikian serves up a searing commentary on the earth and its inhabitants through the canine eyes of "Dog," a self-proclaimed canine, and an ethnic Armenian. Dog offers a controversial, Kafkaesque, and somehow matter-of-fact narrative of life as he knows it within the various cultures that he lives during his life. Those who like mind-bending literature and farce, coupled with social commentary and a frankness about the role of sexuality in human relationships, will find this an engrossing, brilliantly crafted read.

It's immediately evident that Dog's world is slightly askew in relation to the reader's: Dog's world calls the countries we know as Italy, Russia and Afghanistan Alpacinoland, Natashaland, and Binladenland. The US is referred to as Satanland, Pornistan, or Gehenna. Most notably, Dog refers to the region known today as Turkey as Pashaland, Caliphland, and Paradise, which reside within a larger entity, Virginland. The region with which Dog concerns himself most is this very area of Paradise–which the reader will recognize as the Fertile Crescent.

It seems that throughout his travels Dog has been unable to find a place where he (or anyone else) feels he belongs. And perhaps it's not surprising: After all, he is not human. He is part of a dispossessed, maligned people. He identifies the vicissitudes of society with candor unwelcome to those around him. He questions god, and leadership, and religion.

Indeed, of particular interest in Dog's story is the welfare and ultimate fate of ethnic Armenians prior to and since the Armenian Genocide (referred to by Dog here as The Holocaust.) During Dog's examination, he treats the reader to his perception of the incredibly complicated and inexpertly told history of events that have forged today's political, religious, and geographic reality. Indeed, Melikian's prodigious writing talent and ability to show the world's history in a different, sometimes humorous, sometimes tragic air, creates an entertaining ride into warring religions, warring cultures, warring sexes, and the histories and *raison d'etre*

behind each.

One not familiar with the geography and history of the world, its many wars, the creation and evolution of its major religions, and the current state of affairs will need to keep Wikipedia on-hand for reference when attempting *Journey to Virginland*. Melikian is an astonishing writer who teaches his reader about the world and the human condition through tragedy and humor.

Leia Menlove