

RUBINA PEROOMIAN

**A STRUGGLE TO COMPREHEND
THE CATASTROPHE AND SURVIVE:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF THE ARMENIAN
AND THE JEWISH LITERARY
RESPONSES TO CATASTROPHE**

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THE HISTORY of the Armenian and the Jewish peoples is marked by a constant struggle to preserve religious and national identity in all circumstances. The struggle to not succumb to foreign encroachment has more often than not resulted in national disaster. The shocks of the catastrophe have affected the frame of mind and worldviews of both peoples, producing a reverberation in their cultures, specifically, in the literatures of the time. In both cases, literature has become the repository of response to disaster and the attempt to explain and interpret history.

The similarities in the historical and geopolitical conditions and fate of these two nations are vivid. The culmination of national catastrophes in the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923) and the Jewish Holocaust (1939-1944) provides the most flagrant example of parallels in socioeconomic, political and ideological motives and modes of execution, and recent comparative studies spotlight these resemblances. However, this paper will concentrate not on historical aspects and documents but on literature, the Armenian and Jewish literature

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of atrocity (to use Lawrence Langer's terminology for genocide literature). It will attempt to draw parallels and contrasts in the literary responses to catastrophe, that is, the collective reaction of the two peoples to extreme moments of history.¹

This paper will begin with a brief overview of traditional responses to historical catastrophes to shed light on the origin and evolution of certain essential concepts used to explain the catastrophe. This is important because these concepts, and the ancient archetypes they produced, continued to live in the subconscious of Armenian and Jewish writers and weighed upon their conscious efforts to respond to the atrocities and sufferings of modern times. The concepts are shaped by determinants dictated by the tradition, religion, and culture as well as the geopolitical conditions of a people. The Genocide and the Holocaust were not transtemporal events but the culmination of national catastrophes in Armenian and Jewish history. With this premise, the literary responses to Genocide and Holocaust will be analyzed as cultural expressions against a historical background and not in a temporal vacuum.

RESPONDING TO A TUMULTUOUS HISTORY OF MASSACRES AND DEVASTATION

Beginning with the legendary battles of ancient Armenian epic heroes against foreign warlords, pagan Armenians manifested their loyalty to their roots and their homeland, at the cost of their lives if necessary. The soldier fallen in battle showed his ultimate devotion to king and homeland and was praised for it. That was the custom. That was the explanation of history. But the Judeo-Christian tenets reaching Armenians through the Old Testament changed their perception of history.

Christianity was adopted as the official religion of Armenia in AD 301, but it was only after the invention of the Armenian

alphabet (406-412 AD) that Christian teachings were disseminated and the Bible became the single most important source of knowledge and inspiration. The impact of the Old Testament was tremendous. The Judeo-Christian worldview it embodied actually shaped the outlook, the perception of history, and, what is important for the present context, the explanation of and responses to national catastrophe. The pagan Armenian discovered God and adopted the same relationship between man and God that had existed for centuries for the people of Israel.

The first prophetic tenet, which endured until the Great Destruction (the Destruction of the First Temple, 587 BC), was based on the concept of sin and punishment. God admonished the people of Israel as his chosen ones to remain faithful and to obey his commandments. But if they defied Him, sinned, and vilified His Name, God would inflict the worst of punishments upon them, and His punishment would be a sign of love, not abandonment. In this relationship of man and God, the enemy—through whom God's punishment was carried out—was not an addressable other.

The concept of sin and punishment was disrupted by the Great Destruction. The prophets were not there to appease the sufferers, and the *hakhamim* (sages) interpreted the cataclysm not as a sign of love but as a sign of God abandoning His people. A more viable explanation was needed to make survival possible, and the Book of Lamentations was a response to that need.² It clearly showed the rupture of the paradigm and the authors' efforts, through literary and conceptual innovations, to overcome the shock, the crisis of speech. The genre of lamentation with its cathartic attributes was one device. Protest against God for the magnitude of the punishment compared to the sins committed was another. In

the Book of Lamentations the enemy was no longer ignored; it was an entity and a target for Jewish frustration. Another powerful device was the personification of the loss or the resort to personhood, which brought the enormous loss down to the limits of human imagination.³ The Temple of Jerusalem was personified in the victimized widow, Fair Zion or *bat tsion*, a female analogical dramatic figure, to make the collective horror more conceivable and affecting.

The Second Destruction (that of Harod's Temple, AD 70) came as another fatal blow to the concept of sin and punishment which had survived with devices provided by the Book of Lamentations. This time it was the rabbis who had to find an explanation. Through a rereading and reinterpretation of Scriptures, they explained national catastrophes as God-given opportunities for the people to prove their righteousness by sacrificing their lives and becoming martyrs to the glory of God. Martyrdom was also the core of the responses to the Hadrianic persecutions (AD 132-138). As a result, *Avinu Malkinu*, an ancient penitential prayer ascribed to Rabbi Akiva, which read, 'Our Father, Our King, we have sinned before You,' was transformed in the early Middle Ages to read, 'Our Father, Our King, act for those who were slain for Your holy name.'⁴ Thus, the concept of *Kidush Hashem*, the sanctification of God's name, was redefined as the sacrifice of life in the name of piety. It should be noted, however, that the concept of sin and punishment so deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition could not have been totally renounced. The theme recurred in Jewish responses but mostly as a passing remark or a habitual expression.

The themes, concepts, and stories of the Old Testament, representative of the centuries-long evolution and complex metamorphosis of Jewish monotheistic thought, along with

interpretive means devised by the *hakhamim* and the rabbis, were transmitted to Armenians all at once. The Armenian clergy, who were the disseminators of religion, knowledge, and education, as well as the historians, poets, and writers of their time, embraced Christianity and with it the Judeo-Christian ideology. Extreme devotion to the Bible and the striking parallels they found between the recurrent suffering in their own history and that of the Jewish people paved the way for adopting the Jewish perception and interpretation of history. Eghishe's account of the war waged by Vardan Mamikonian against the Persian king (AD 451) sets an example of Armenian historiography in which religious concepts were the core of explanation and the driving force of history. Eghishe interprets the Persian brutalities as God's punishment for the sins the Armenians committed, and, at the same time, he shows Christian martyrdom to be the inspiration of Armenian soldiers in the battlefield. Nevertheless, his work is not devoid of political analysis. Eghishe's interpretation of Vardan's war has echoes in Movses Khorenatsi's (late 5th century) universal history of Armenia, and, with varied conceptualizations, in the writings of Ghevond (8th century), Lastiverdtsi (11th century), Shnorhali (12th century), Arakel Baghishetsi (15th century), and others.

It should be noted that although the concepts were adopted, in their application they were modified with Armenian characteristics and were gradually secularized in the Middle Ages. These concepts recurred in Armenian literature, but the nuances were different: lamentation, but in the tradition of Armenian women mourners over the dead; martyrdom, but following the example of Jesus Christ himself and with the expectation of eternal life (resurrection, immortality); protest against God, but without involving him in the lamentation over

the destruction. History was interpreted based on Judeo-Christian concepts but without abandoning the importance of political, temporal, and geographical determinants and without replacing history with martyrological literature as in the rabbinic practice of historiography.⁵ These varied manifestations produced—as Roland Barthes suggests—a network of meanings with different degrees of plurality and different degrees of power to mobilize the moral, aesthetic, political, alethiological, in short, the ideological codes in the text.

From Eghishe to Sebeos, from Tovma Artsruni to Davrizhetsi, the Armenian historians of Persian, Arab, Seljuk, Tatar, and Ottoman devastations explain and justify the disasters by attributing them to the sins of the people. They soothe the pain of the defeated and ravaged Armenians by glorifying martyrdom with elaborate visions of eternal life in heaven as a reward. Aside from the soothing concept of martyrdom for the glory of the Name, catharsis in Jewish experience was achieved by a collective call for vengeance, outbursts of rage and anathema. Except for one or two instances, this theme is non-existent in the Armenian responses to catastrophe.

These responses in Armenian literature followed an uninterrupted paradigm until the Middle Ages when Christian scholasticism was relaxed and even the cleric-poet accepted the needs of flesh. The substitutive gratification of this need, previously fulfilled by the strong urge to serve God and follow in Christ's footsteps, was substantially toned down, and secular poetry, while still upholding Judeo-Christian concepts, echoed the secularization or distortion of these concepts to match the atmosphere. Such secularization is totally absent even in the most secular themes of Medieval Jewish poetry. However, the

continuum of the paradigm begins to show signs of a breach in the literary responses to the 1648-1649 massacres of Chmielniki. Alan Mintz attests that Natan Hanover tends to show in his chronicle, *The Deep Mire*, that Jews were not martyrs voluntarily accepting death for the glorification of the Name, but were slaughtered by the enemy.⁶

THE RENAISSANCE – REJECTION OF TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION OF CATASTROPHE

The Jewish progressive movement, the *Haskalah*, occurred almost concurrently with the Armenian sociopolitical and literary revival in the late 18th century, sharing a common objective to enlighten the populace and impose change, through criticism, in the unjust socioeconomic structures. As Roskies attests, the *maskilim* (the westernized Jewish intellectuals) strove to achieve a balance and a peaceful coexistence between Jewish communities and their gentile neighbors. The secularization of their responses followed a different path, though not necessarily politicized and irredentist. In any case, because of the tight grip of traditional scholarship, the Jewish progressive movement did not find popularity until at least the last quarter of the 19th century.

The Armenian Renaissance was more politically oriented. Various aspects of patriotism and nationalism were manifested as major themes in literature. The concept of sin and punishment was scorned and ridiculed in the works of Hovsep Emin, Movses Baghrarian, and Stepanos Nazarian. Martyrdom acquired a secular meaning and was viewed as the supreme act of patriotism. Blind obedience, compliance, and servitude were criticized in the works of Abovian and Raffi, and armed struggle was openly advocated. Through imaginary protagonists, these writers actually forged the character of the

future freedom fighter. Sporadic insurrections and protests against the oppressive Ottoman rule inspired more responses. The *maskilim*, on the other hand, believed in the good will of the tsarist government, and pursued their objective of enlightenment and internal reform. The progressive movement in both instances triggered the antagonism of reactionary elements. The Hasidim tried to maintain the absolute adherence of Jewish communities to religion and tradition as well as their isolation from the gentiles. Similarly, the Armenian traditionalists criticized and shunned the clandestine groups engaged in the liberation movement and the progressive writers who encouraged them.

Just as the Berlin Conference of 1878 was a turning point in the Armenian progressive movement, so were the pogroms of 1881 for the *maskilim*.⁷ There was shock, frustration, and disappointment. In the realm of politics, the outcome was the birth of political parties and the organization of the masses. In the realm of literature, the directions diverged. Many Jewish writers turned to past prophetic and rabbinic explanations in search of meaning and consolation. Judah Leib Gordon's elegy, among other pogrom responses, best demonstrates the phenomenon, that Alan Mintz calls the Medievalization of responses to catastrophe.⁸ But the trend was challenged by Abramowitsch and later by Bialik and Chernichovsky, whose response entailed sociopolitical analyses of the situation. They appealed to change the internal social relations and criticized the overdramatization and sanctification of the martyrs' memory. In parallel, Armenian writers scolded the fetishization of the heroes of the past and the overblown glorification of past achievements. They challenged people to take their destiny in their hands. As Armenian imaginative literature prompted action, actual deeds of armed resistance influenced the

literature; thus, political groups engaged in armed resistance were the central actors, and the role of literature was indispensable.

The pogroms of Kishinev (1903) brought about the turning point in Jewish responses to catastrophe. Chaim Nachman Bialik's *Bair haharegah* (In the City of Slaughter) was a pacesetter, a straightforward and undisguised call for armed struggle. Bialik revealed the Jews' inability to defend themselves and the hiding of their cowardice behind outdated explanations of catastrophe. The pogroms spurred politically motivated literature openly calling for self-defence. As Roskies puts it, 'the Bund threw in its lot with "the workers of the world," whereas the Union of Hebrew Writers saw national self-determination as the only way to secure Jewish life.'⁹

Armenian and Jewish responses to catastrophe in different circumstances and different times radically altered the paradigm of responses with calls for armed resistance. Writers such as Mkrtich Peshiktashlian, Dzerents, Khachatur Abovian, and Raffi in Armenian literature and Tchernichowsky, Lamed Shapiro, and Sholem Aleichom in Jewish literature all strove to create the Nietzschean man, an idealized hero who lives only to die in battle with the enemy. In both cases, however, the fine line between the idealized hero and the wretched victim was recrossed again and again.

These fictional and real heroes were the prototypes of those who took up arms in response to the culminating persecutions.

REHEARSAL FOR GENOCIDE

The realistic interpretation of historical catastrophes was interrupted by the Armenian massacres of 1894-96. This new shock wave left the writers bewildered and incapacitated. The literary response was silence. Language was paralyzed, literary

imagination overpowered by emotion. The first response was lamentation, one of the oldest responses to tragedy when no other means works. Indeed, as Jacques Lacane puts it, lamentation symbolizes loss, and language is the domain of this symbolization. Lamentation relieves tension, eliminates the complexity of the assailing imagery, and makes expression possible. Lamentation was the core of the responses of Avetis Aharonian, Hovhannes Hovhannisian, and Siamanto. Years had to pass for the shock to dissipate and the helpless cries turn into resolute calls for action. In an era of uncertainty and confusion, psychological fiction was the arena where the old and the new collided and the hero arose. Yekl, the protagonist in I. M. Weissenberg's *A Shtetl*, shouts at the rabbi, 'No psalms! . . . Only arms, real arms!'¹⁰ In the stories *El mi aghotir* (Don't Pray Anymore, 1899) by Avetis Aharonian and *The Rabbi's Son* (1925) by Isaac Babel, Tatul and Elijah are traditionally obedient sons of pious men, a priest and a rabbi, and they both leave the house of God to join the resistance forces. The conflict is between religious piety—which forbids taking up arms and fighting back—and political emancipation.

The Armenian literati tend to show that religious piety is misinterpreted and paralleled with absolute obedience to fate. The rebellious soul *Khaye* (The Armenian, 1898), by Avetis Aharonian, defies destiny and fights to regain his freedom from his Kurdish captor, who is armed to the teeth. This departure from attributing calamity to fate and God's will is an urging call for change. Aharonian's *El mi aghotir* treats the same theme with more emphasis on the over-exaggerated and misinterpreted obedience to the Christian tenet of forgiveness: turn the other cheek; do not fight back. To contrast this attitude, Arpiar Arpiarian, too, constructs the image of a modern clergyman in the character of Ter Husik, who

challenges traditional conformism and the blunting of the nation's dignity and spirit of self-defense. In *Karmir zhamuts* (Red Offering), Ter Husik advocates armed struggle and, arms in hand, actually participates in the defence of Armenian villages.

Responses to Jewish pogroms during W.W.I marked another departure from the past. The pogroms did not generate tragic calls and the fetishization of the loss. Instead, the novels of Agnon and Warshawsky laid bare the decline of morality among the Jewish people, their cowardice and their readiness to save their skin at any price. Roskies calls these utterly secularized responses the pornography of the war. Indeed, 'delivering a *bitoy*'—sending one's wife or daughter to the Russian or German officer—in return for a favor, a permit for flour, salt or lumber—is a recurring theme in World War I literature. Literary responses to these pogroms play up the irony of this extreme secularization that resulted in the breach of the Covenant and the abandonment of the Torah. From this crisis a new ideology emerged, one long-cherished by the Zionists: The Jews should return to the land of Israel and cultivate its soil. They should abandon the European communities and the hope for a better future with the gentiles and build their dreams upon the ruins of their homeland.

* * *

The pre-Genocide and pre-Holocaust literary responses to catastrophe were secularized in different directions. New concepts and ideologies had emerged to weaken the hegemony of the religious interpretation of catastrophe when the genocidal attempts against these two peoples came to undermine their physical, mental, and spiritual balance. What direction would the post-Genocide and post-Holocaust

literatures take? Would the new paradigm of responses resist these stupendous blows? Or would the poet of Destruction resort to ancient archetypes and explanations of catastrophe to maintain sanity and survive?

THE CULMINATION

In the Armenian and the Jewish histories studded with persecutions, forced deportations and massacres, the Genocide and the Holocaust were the culmination of all sufferings. These catastrophes were not only events in history and salient evidence of man's inhumanity to man, but they became sources of unslakable pain affecting the state of mind and creative imagination of the generation of survivors. They were a challenge to the ethical and moral standards, a challenge to the paradigm that hitherto explained collective trauma and provided catharsis. The Catastrophe was echoed in the literature the author-survivor produced and embodied his/her effort to comprehend what was beyond comprehension, to come to terms with what was irreconcilable, so that life could continue.

Genocide literature is not limited to literary works with the Catastrophe as their theme. It also includes those works in which the Catastrophe is a hidden motivating force, a source of unknown pain, and the cause of a gloomy and depressive state of mind that engulfs the creative powers of the author trying to cope with the aftereffects of the Catastrophe. In the case of the Armenian survivor generations, the aftereffects have evolved into a covert psychological affliction. The symptoms are manifested in literary themes, such as the dilemma of adjusting to the new environment; the fear of assimilation and loss of national identity; nostalgia and homesickness; escape from painful reality into the world of dreams and memories of the

past; ruthless and more often than not unfounded criticism of traditional, cultural, and religious values transmitted as sacred fetishes from generation to generation.

For the sake of brevity, this paper will undertake only the texts in which the atrocities are explicitly present and are rendered by survivor-writers who set out to assimilate imaginatively in literature their unique experience during the catastrophic years.¹¹ The narratives occur in different genres. Poems evolving around the theme of the catastrophe are also discussed. The treated texts have different levels of aesthetic and literary quality. The want of artistic literary quality of some is itself a characteristic of the literature of atrocity, given the difficulty of describing the horror, or putting the unimaginable traumatic experience into words. It reveals the paralysis of diction experienced by the authors of ancient times and still experienced today. 'What I saw is beyond all imagination ... It is difficult for me to present the entire picture. Words are incapable of expressing the dreadful and unspeakable sights that my eyes witnessed' (Zapel Esayan). 'This is the first time that I discover so brutally the impotence of the painful struggle of my pen, the inadequacy of all the meanings of the word to capture the scenes around me, the misery that fills my eyes, the horrifying reality that crushes my soul' (Suren Partevian). 'After such horrors, what language?' (Wolfgang Borchert). 'I cannot find words accurate enough, dramatic and tragic enough to describe...' (Suren Partevian). 'It is beyond my pen to describe what befell us last night. Dante's description of inferno is mild compared to the inferno raging in the streets of Warsaw... I haven't the strength to hold a pen in my hand, I'm broken, shattered' (Chaim Kaplan). 'This was not the hell that Dante painted, but something infinitely more harrowing. The horrors of this hell only those who lived it will

1504-2004 AA 1437-2015

know, and they will never be able to describe it, because human language is not capable of doing so' (Aram Antonian). 'The concentrationees do know...by an experience impossible to communicate' (David Rousset). 'And from inside there arose the scream, the unheard of, the inexplicable cry, for which human language has no word... The vessel of sound and syllable laid injured and humiliated at the foot of the steeple, like a dethroned crown' (Hagop Oshagan).

The personal identity of the executioner: In the traditional responses to catastrophe, with the relationship of man and God at their core, the role and the identity of the victimizer were overlooked. The enemy was only a tool to carry out the punishment God had destined for his people. It is in the responses to the catastrophes of the late Middle Ages that the image of the enemy begins to emerge. The trend is accentuated in the responses to the Genocide and Holocaust. Oshagan, for example, makes a conscious effort to give the Turkish perpetrators a face, to delve into their inner world and find out how they were able to plan such a crime; moreover, how the Turkish mob was able to participate in the carnage with such zeal. In *Vrdovvats Khghchmtanke* (The Agitated Conscience), Oshagan depicts the massacre of an entire Armenian village by the Turks of the neighbouring village. He tries to see the carnage through the eyes of the executioners. The old Muslim leader, a holy man, white-bearded and dressed in white, sets the example. With a religious awe in his eyes, he ceremoniously raises the holy sword and brings it down on the neck of the first victim, the Armenian priest kneeling in shackles. The ritual of shedding the blood of the infidel begins. The entire village, men, women, and boys, are performing their sacred duty toward the God of Islam. Two Turkish boys have set fire to a barn with Armenians locked inside and are

watching with a mystic ecstasy the flames rising in 'playful motion.' The golden smoke covers the blue of the 'peaceful sky' like 'a beautiful golden veil.' Another boy, a fifteen-year-old, has nailed the head of his victim to a long stick. With the stick on his shoulder and a rifle on his back, he strolls the streets of the Armenian village, enjoying the terror he spreads around him. The massacres, a catastrophic experience for the Armenians, are perceived by these Turks as a source of mystical gratification and the fulfillment of a sacred duty. The motives, Oshagan points out, are hatred, religious intolerance, and fanaticism.

Zapel Esayan provides a similar analysis in her depiction of the Cilician massacres.¹² 'Hatred had contaminated even the young generation,' or in another instance, 'A young Turkish boy, with a hateful expression on his face, cursed us as our carriage passed through the Turkish quarters of the town; others began to laugh.'¹³ Esayan's portrayal of the Turkish character demonstrates her psychoanalytical skill. Subtly interwoven into the narrative, the Turk comes across as the ruthless murderer whose eyes burn with evil passion to destroy and kill. This is how the wretched orphans perceive the murderers of their parents. The horrible scenes of slaughter they witnessed, they will carry for the rest of their lives. For the woman-survivor whose husband and son are murdered in front of her eyes, her Turkish counterparts have no human heart. They are as cynical as can be: 'The Turkish women neighbours were laughing at me, making fun of my sorrow ... the more I cried, the louder they laughed,' Esayan concludes: 'This race has something incorrigible... We have daily evidence of this.'¹⁴

Both Esayan and Oshagan speak of the eager participation of the Turkish masses in the looting and killing. They both point to a deep-rooted hatred, which existed even after long



years of sharing bread with Armenians. The hatred was there even if Armenians in some regions had lost their language, and their lifestyle and traditions had gradually grown similar to that of their Turkish neighbours. Just as the Turks did not spare their Armenian neighbours, so also neither did the Russians nor the German Gestapo differentiate between the westernized and the traditionalist Jews.

Oshagan further elaborates the Turkish character in his novel *Mnatsordats* (Remnants). He tries to find the answer to the enfolding enigma: 'The Turks, from the vizier to the peasant shepherd, received the orders of annihilation with such peace and calm, as if it was a pleasant invitation to their atavistic instincts.' For the Turkish army captain Suleiman Bey, torturing a fifteen-year-old Armenian girl and cutting her body in pieces was not only a military duty to suppress the 'unrest' in the village (the girl would not reveal her brother's hiding place) but also a divine pleasure. Osman Beyzade Osman Bey, carried out in all orthodoxy the national motto: 'Whoever persecutes the Christian is a true son of the Turkish land.' And Oshagan concludes:

It was not the war that made the Turks so much Turk. Before or after the war, it has been the same. The soldier, the volunteer, the clergyman, the layman, with an inexplicable smile on their faces, would twist the head of the tortured, half-dead Armenian prisoner and shamelessly ask him 'Is your wife pretty?'... The deep, inexplicable ugliness of it all.

In Oshagan's narrative, the words Turk or Turkish are often used as qualifying adjectives: 'His words were Turk, that is, with the Turkishness of the five-century empire, mixed with the breath of the 300,000 slaughtered Armenian victims' (the

reference is to massacres of 1894-96), or, in another instance: 'In each swearing, colourful, unique, and strong, he puts a large element of Turkishness and corruption.'¹⁵

In his characterization of the victimizer, the renowned Holocaust writer Uri Zvi Greenberg has developed parallel themes. 'The besotted gentile', 'the murderous nature', 'the history of blood' are repeated references to Germans in his poetry. With Greenberg, the word gentile encompasses every imaginable negative attribute for an inhuman executioner, the equivalent of the word Turk for Oshagan.

In spite of many examples of the effort to portray the victimizer, more often than not the concentration is on the victim. As suggested earlier, this may be the distant echo of the traditional responses. However, in his analysis of Nelly Sach's poetry, Edward Alexander offers an interesting explanation as to why the German executioner is absent. If in her poetry, he writes, 'the German murderers are disembodied and without personal identity, it is because that is the metaphysical (but not legal) justification due for turning millions of Jewish victims into smoke.'¹⁶ This explanation can hardly apply to Suren Partevian's responses in which the Turk is denied a defined face and character. Partevian was simply overwhelmed by the sufferings and horrendous ordeal the victims went through. With the exception of the character of Mazhar Shakir, the victimizers populating his literature remain nameless shadows of death and destruction. Partevian strives to bring out the image of Shakir, the Young Turk party member, who caused the destruction of the family of his Armenian friend to abduct his wife whom he had coveted so long.¹⁷

Like Suren Partevian, Aram Antonian too neglects the physical presence of the victimizer in the treatment of the enemy as actor in the tragedy. In Antonian's eyewitness

accounts of the death camp, the Turk may be absent but the evidence of his crime is felt in every line. It is present even when Antonian castigates the degradation of the Armenian character and the surfacing of bestial instincts in the dehumanizing game of survival. Emphasis on the victims' ordeal directs the responses to an inward analysis, the internalization of the tragedy.

Internalization of the catastrophe. Self-criticism, or regarding the catastrophe as an internal tragedy, occurs more frequently in the Armenian responses. This may be considered a modernized variation of the concept of sin and punishment, in which the victimizer is little to blame or not important at all. The victim brought the calamity upon himself or the victims failed to maintain their integrity. In their struggle to survive they debased themselves, and revealed the ugliest facets of their psyche. In a story by Zapel Esayan, a man sees his brother running toward the well where he himself is hiding, a hiding place that only the two brothers know. The angry Turkish mob is in pursuit. If he lets his brother in, the Turks will find him too and both will be killed. So he covers the opening with a rock and locks his brother out, only to witness, from his safe refuge, his brother being slaughtered by the mob.¹⁸ In the ruins of a church where a group of Armenians were burned alive, the pile of corpses and the bloody scratch marks on the wall with high windows speak of the last-minute agitation. 'How awful,' Esayan writes, 'people must have trampled over each other, crushed the dying and the dead underfoot to reach the windows and escape.'¹⁹

National catastrophes can rob men and women of their humanistic values and national spirit. Partevian paints the situation in the darkest colours: 'Faced with the national tragedy, I wish we could at least have the solace of witnessing

a trace of vitality, moral beauty, and collective self-consciousness. But, alas, national disasters have always unveiled our internal corruption and impotence.'²⁰ He lays bare the treachery of those Armenians who joined the enemy to save their own skin. In this response echoing the traditional internalization of the catastrophe, Armenians are to be blamed. One can always find a reason to blame the victims for the crime committed against them. Abba Covner, the Jewish survivor-poet, treats the parallel situation of the Jews betraying their fellow Jews to German executioners in an opposite way. With bitter irony he writes, 'Perhaps they were more guilty — / there is always someone more guilty: / (the victim) / (the victim)'.²¹

The Armenian and Jewish examples of self-criticism speak of the depths to which people can sink when faced with a collective ordeal, but they are also evidences of the psychological effects of violence. The victimizers' objective was not only the physical destruction of the Armenians and the Jews. The catastrophe destroyed the social order, the moral standards, and the accepted patterns of behavior. The executioners purposefully dehumanized their victims before killing them. Antonian depicts a caravan of women arriving at the concentration camp near Meskeneh, after a long arduous trek on foot, without food or water. The appearance of these moving skeletons, he writes, was painful proof of the transformation of human beings, born with the right to enjoy life, to love and to be loved, into filthy and faceless creatures. Antonian gives a shuddering description of their appalling physical condition and continues: 'It is hard to imagine that these breasts have had their graceful period of virginity. It is hard to imagine that these breasts, round and firm, shining with snow-white brightness, with pink nipples, have been caressed

by desirous hands and have experienced sensuous pleasures.' Now these breasts are 'covered with filth and mud like the livers of slaughtered animals, neither blue nor black nor green, but a mixture of all those, a deadly colour that caused nausea.' These dehumanized creatures are ready to bear any humiliation to get to the water in sight in the camp, but the Armenian nightwatchmen—equivalents of the Jewish Kapos—beat the women. The Turkish officer has ordered not to let them near the water.²² Who is to blame? Antonian points to the victims. Why should these women lose their pride and dignity and turn into such lowly creatures? Why should the nightwatchmen torture their fellow inmates in return for small favours? Why should Armenian men not object and even put out their hand to receive compensation when the nightwatchmen drag away their wives and daughters to stoke the orgies of the Turkish officers? This is, as Lawrence Langer puts it, 'the ultimate degradation of the human image under the conditions of atrocity'.²³

The problem lies with the enemy within, and that is the way the Jewish literati responded to the World War I pogroms viewing them as an internal drama. In responses to the Holocaust, however, this internalization is non-existent. There is no scolding of the victims who resort to lowly acts to survive the death camps. No only are they not to blame but they are mythified. As Roskies puts it, 'All victims assumed an aura of holiness... The stories of betrayal and internecine warfare were suppressed, reinterpreted or forgiven.'²⁴ Ka-Tzetnik's *House of Dolls* is an example. Young and attractive Jewish women are sterilized and sent to the House to entertain German officers. Only in passing does Ka-Tzetnik speak about the internal intrigues and skirmishes among these women in their struggle to remain in the House, that is, to stay alive. He focuses on their sufferings, pain, and humiliation in that hellish

atmosphere. Daniella endures her life as a prostitute, yet dreams of a life beyond the House where moral values still prevail. Her dream helps her maintain her spiritual integrity. Her attempted escape and death cleanse her soul of all the stains of the life of a prostitute. Her character remains in the Holocaust literature as the symbol of the innocent victims of man's inhumanity to man.²⁵

God and the catastrophe. The duality of God, a new variation of the theme of protest against God, is a recurrent theme in Armenian and Jewish genocide literature. In the treatment of this particular theme, God's involvement in the catastrophe is still acknowledged and the context is still the covenant between man and God. The writer, however, casts doubt on God's existence or questions His oneness. 'If my God is also the God of these unbelievers [Turks], these ferocious beasts, I don't believe in God... I don't believe in God,' exclaims Father Hayrapet, the village priest, in one of the episodes of Suren Partevian's *Kilikian arhavirke* (The Cilician Catastrophe).²⁶ In 'The Agitated Conscience,' discussed earlier, Oshagan questions the oneness of God. How can the same God of love and goodness also be the creator of those who kill the innocent and the defenceless? He portrays the powerless Armenian God being sacrificed together with the entire village at the altar of the 'God of Muslims'. Obviously, the attack is not only against the Armenian people but against their God as well. Oshagan's approach here draws close to the rabbinic response generated through the sermons and preachings in the ghetto. As Roskies observes, the ghetto preachers reformulated and redefined ancient Jewish concepts to shape a message of consolation. Rabbi Kalonimus Kalmish Shapiro, for example, explains *Kiddush Hashem*, previously perceived as the consequence of martyrdom, to be the Jewish

people's share of suffering with God, because God was the one that was being attacked. Zelig Kalmanovitch, historian and cultural activist, expounded on that idea in referring to the catastrophe in the ghetto as a war not against the Jews but against the sacred 'triad' of Israel-Torah-God.²⁷

Zapel Esayan gives another twist to the theme of God's involvement. In one of the rare occasions, on which she speaks to God, she exclaims in *Averaknerun mej*, 'For the atonement of what sins [of ours] has God remained deaf and mute, as if He were absent from the holy place.' The catastrophe is explained: if God existed, or if He was not absent from the premises, nothing of this sort would have occurred.

A quarter of century and a thousand miles apart, two victimized nations raised their voices in protest against God. 'O God ...Where is God' to see the injustice, the torture and humiliation the Armenian women had to endure in the liquidation camp near Meskeneh? Where is God to see the bodies of innocent Jews dangling on the gallows at Auschwitz? There was no answer. Elie Wiesel had perhaps reason to retort: 'Where is He? Here He is—He is hanging here on this Gallows.'²⁸

Dan Pagis, a survivor of the Jewish Holocaust, reveals the opposite approach in the poem "Testimony." He first defends the humanity of German executioners:

No, no: they definitely were
human beings: uniforms, boots.
How to explain? They were created
in the image.

Pagis cannot deny the biblical tenet of 'in the image of God,' but neither can he accept the fact that God could create

murderers with human attributes only in their uniform and boots. There must be another god who created him: 'I was a shade / A different creator made me.'²⁹ The relationship between man and God is reestablished; catharsis is reached.

Incredulity. Even while the massacres were underway, it was hard to believe what was happening. The incredulity, hardly a result of naivete, stemmed from a deep shock and disappointment. The inner defence mechanism went to work to appease the shock. The Cilician massacres of 1909, only one year after the Young Turk Revolution, produced the first shock waves. Armenians had bound up their hope with the Young Turks who promised freedom (*Hurriyet* – the slogan of the Young Turk Revolution) and brotherhood among the peoples of the empire. 'Do you know why we are here in this palace [the prison]? Long live the *Hurriyet*,' exclaimed the prisoner.³⁰ In the same vein, Sholem Aleichem described in "Dreyfus in Kasrilevke" the Jews' unwillingness to believe Dreyfus's conviction or that the French court could commit such an injustice.³¹ Incredulity in the form of denial of the truth continued to prevail in the Jewish ghettos of World War II (best reflected in Elie Wiesel's *Night*). Times were difficult, but the ordinary Jew remained hopeful. News of mass executions in gas chambers or by firing squad hardly reached them, and rumors were met with classic denial. This behavior sustained a spirit of the community and a drive for collective survival.

Indeed, it was hard for the leaders of Warsaw ghetto to admit that the enemy was capable of such atrocity, as it was hard for the Armenians of Svedia in 1915 to believe that the Young Turk government could perpetrate such heinous crime.³² This was perhaps a natural mechanization of human instinct in extreme moments of trauma, a natural drive that reveals itself in crisis.

Resistance to atrocity. Characteristically, the echoes of Armenian armed resistance in literature occur predominantly in the pre-1915 era and much less as a response to the massacres and deportations of 1915. First, because the carefully planned genocide of Armenians had made resistance almost impossible. In Musa Dagh, Shapin Kara-Hisar, Urfa, Van, and few other places, small-scale resistance were put up against the executioners. That is, if after the compulsory draft and massacre of Armenian soldiers, a few young men remained, if there was time to react, or if, after the disarming of the Armenian population, there were any arms and ammunitions left. Aside from Musa Dagh, everywhere else the resistance ended with the complete extermination of the entire town or village. Second, because almost no record of heroic defences and ordeals were left. Indeed, except for Aram Haykaz's story of Shapin Kara-Hisar and Franz Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, there has been no major work to immortalize these heroic acts of self-defence.

In view of the wholesale massacres and destruction, one is moved to contemplate what was the use of desperate Armenian and Jewish resistance? Deliverance? Hardly. Victory over the enemy? Never. Those few who fought back against a fierce army of Turkish soldiers and those who resisted the German orders of deportation were utterly bereft of hope. They knew that their attempt might even instigate a harsher reaction, a collective punishment from which no soul could escape. As Yisrael Gutman puts it in *Fighters Among the Ruins*, 'The Jews knew that, as a people, as an ethnic group, they could not achieve anything by armed uprising. Their fighting power could not seriously harm the great and powerful Nazi enemy.'³³ This proves true in the Armenian case as well. However, these acts of self-defence left an indelible mark, not on the course of

history but on the collective psyche of the future generations of survivors.

Today, after decades of struggle to comprehend the catastrophe, the questions remain unanswered: Why were they killed? Why did these wretched victims follow their executioners like sheep to the slaughterhouse? Why all these morbid pages of rape, plunder and murder? Why this humiliation of human dignity that extends to the generations of survivors. Juxtaposed with painful memories of destruction, the incidents of heroic resistance are the only antidote to the lingering sense of humiliation.

The shift from incredulity to action in the Jewish case, as Yisrael Gutman attests, came with the recognition of the fact that a 'final solution' for the Jews was underway, that the murders were not sporadic or localized but followed a definite plan of 'cleansing' the German occupied territories of their Jewish population. The first place where a Jewish resistance was organized was in the Vilna ghetto.³⁴

Abba Kovner, a leader of Vilna Jewry, saw the destruction of millions as the manifestation of a well-considered method and concluded: 'For the nation, for millions of Jews under the Nazi yoke—there is no rescue! Is there a way out? There is a way out: *the way of armed resistance*.'³⁵ It was necessary to warn other Jewish communities as well, that what they were facing was not a local pogrom but a general scheme threatening the whole of European Jewry. Warsaw was the most reluctant to heed the warning.³⁶ There was a strong sense of disbelief that in a country with such progressive culture and civilization, such a thing could happen to the Jews, and the mass murders could hit Warsaw. Armed resistance was taken up only when the great deportations began.

In exaltation of armed struggle as opposed to the

misunderstood concept of obedience to fate, Zapel Esayan portrays clergymen 'who smelled more like gunpowder than incense, and from whose mouth flowed words of encouragement to fight back rather than to pray and surrender.'³⁷ Suren Partevian takes the contrast between religious obedience and armed self-defence to the extreme. In various episodes of *Ariuni matiane* (The Book of Blood), he views arms as 'the tools of destruction for building freedom.' He does not deny the value of religious beliefs but tries to transform them into pillars of the new religion, the armed struggle. In the story *Khorann u patneshe* (The Altar and the Bulwark), resistance fighters decide to tear down the altar of an old monastery and use the materials to build a bulwark against the enemy.³⁸ Partevian's treatment of the sacred relics parallels Abraham Sutzkever's endeavour to reverse Jewish consciousness, that is, to build a symbol of Jewish resistance that takes its strength from the most venerable sources of Jewish tradition. Sutzkever's poem 'The Lead Plates at the Rom Press,' portrays Jewish fighters breaking into that revered Jewish institution in the Vilna ghetto and melting the sacred letters down into bullets.³⁹ Both writers tend to connect the past and the present and draw new meanings from old values. Partevian even goes further to suggest that 'the supernatural ideal of the past has to give way to the new faith.' The aged monk, the embodiment of tradition, horrified by the act of sacrilege, collapses and dies. His body, 'the cadaver of religious submissiveness,' is abandoned in the church of old beliefs. The nation today, Partevian suggests, needs a new deity, a new covenant, and the disciples of this new prophecy are the freedom fighters, the followers of the 'religion of rebellion.' Significantly, however, before the fight, the young priest blesses the freedom fighters and offers them communion.

The mystic ceremony is cast in the mould of the blessing of the fifth-century Mamikonian army going toward martyrdom. This recourse to religious spirituality softens Partevian's stance against the ancient values and puts his work, once again, in parallel with Sutzkever's attempt to bring the past into the forefront of Jewish armed resistance by alluding to the struggle of the Maccabees and the destruction of the Temple.

Abba Kovner writes about a similar experience during the Vilna uprising. 'The great volumes of the Talmud in their brown leather bindings,' taken from the Jewish library, were used as sandbags when the Germans had surrounded the Vilna ghetto (1 September 1943) to remove the last Jews and send them to the death camps. Kovner continues, 'I propped up my rifle on the back of the books. Were the books a support for the rifle with its ten bullets? Or, at that hour, were they a support for something else?'⁴⁰

Edward Alexander maintains that,

The event has remained with Kovner as a revelation of complex possibilities of renewal in the interactions between matter and spirit, life and literature. From one point of view, the Talmud was degraded here from a spiritual to a physical role; yet in the process it enabled a preservation of Jewish life through a transformation of the traditional Jewish passivity in the face of violent threat.

Contrasting armed struggle with the passivity of sheep to the slaughterhouse, Esayan lauds the survivors who view the catastrophe not as the Turkish slaughter of Armenians, not as the days of misery, but rather as a battle against the enemy.⁴¹ These men fought back instead of 'meekly succumbing to the enemy's sword or acting prudently.' Passivity here is

interpreted as cowardice. 'I was base and cowardly; this is why I am being punished,' utters a man on the gallows, and another one exclaims, 'Listen to me. I am telling you the truth. From now on the only possession of an Armenian should be a gun.'⁴² Esayan's response to the Cilician massacres resounds with her rebellious spirit and quest for justice, and the only means to achieve that justice is through armed struggle. A similar response comes from Alexander Donat's description of the liberation of the Jews of Dachau in *The Holocaust Kingdom*. The newly liberated Jews are unable to take up arms and punish their executioners. Donat writes,

We had the souls of slaves, of cowards; we were crippled by two thousand years of pogroms and ghettos; two thousand years of the Six Commandments had tamed and blunted in us that natural virile impulse of revenge. The sublime words, 'Thou shalt not kill,' which had been our shield against murder and persecution became the shield and protector of a nation of murderers and our alibi for our own cowardice and weakness.⁴³

The praise of armed self-defence occurs especially in poetry and stands alone as a leitmotiv. Siamanto's *Diutsaznoren* (Heroically, 1902), in response to the massacres of 1894-1896, is an example. He brings all the past Armenian archetypes of heroic martyrs onto the battlefield and builds a pantheon of mythic gods and heroes of the centuries old Armenian national struggle for freedom. He transmutes them to the present and makes them speak to today's warriors, the dedicated, selfless Armenian youth who fall rifle in hand in an unjust, unequal battle. In the voice of the dying freedom fighter 'To Victory! To Victory! To Victory!' he exclaims, and he truly hopes and believes that victory is near. Siamanto's poetry

reads like a powerful hymn that is meant to inspire determination and the courage to fight to achieve the deliverance of the nation.

The epigraph of Siamanto's second volume of poems, *Hayordiner* (Sons of Armenians, 1902), is a quote from Nietzsche, 'The most beautiful life for a hero is to mature for death in struggle.' It characterizes the author's intention to create that hero, that modern Armenian freedom fighter, who knows that 'Justice must be created and freedom fiercely seized.' Equally powerful are Daniel Varuzhan's poems in response to the massacres of 1894-1896.

'Poetry was a primary means of public communication in the Nazi ghettos,' Roskies states, and many of these poets were supporters of or participants in armed resistance.⁴⁴ Hirsh Glik's 'Silence, and the Starry Night' commemorates a girl member of the United Partisans Organization who ambushes a German cavalcade:

Aim, fire, shoot—and hit!
She, with her pistol small,
Halts an autiful,
Arms and all!

Morning, emerging from the wood,
In her hair a snow carnation.
Proud of her small victory
For the new, free generation!

"Never Say" (Vilna, 1943), another poem from the same poet of the ghetto, was sung as the unofficial hymn of the Jewish partisans. The final stanza of this poem goes:

This song was written with our blood and not with lead,
This is no song of free birds flying overhead,
But a people amid crumbling walls did stand,
They stood and sang this song with rifles held in hand.⁴⁵

Popular songs eulogizing courageous acts of self-defence or dedicated to a popular hero and a freedom fighter are important components of the legacy of Armenian armed resistance against Turkish atrocities. These songs embody the dreams and ideals of the Armenian nation as well as their response to repression. In parallel to the ghetto hymn above is the following song dedicated to the first armed uprising against the Turkish government (June 1890, Erzerum):

A call sounded from the Armenian mountains of Erzerum,
The hearts were roused by the clanking of the arms.

The Armenian peasant for centuries has seen neither sword nor gun,
He left the fields, the spade and took up sword and rifle instead.

Education and the light of freedom are your friends now,
Sword and rifle and zeal in battle your fearless defenders.

Revival. The theme of revival was a frequent occurrence in responses to the pre-1915 Armenian massacres. Even after the Cilician massacres of 1909 Armenians still had the chance to rebuild their lives upon the ruins of devastation. Zapel Esayan's account of morbid scenes she witnessed ends in the vision of a revived and revitalized community.⁴⁶ The rebirth of the Armenian nation, 'upon the same blood-soaked land,' was

attributed to Armenian endurance, perseverance, optimism, and hard work. The theme of revival, however, is completely absent in Armenian responses to the Genocide. There could not be any. With the Armenian homeland purged of its indigenous people, and the survivors scattered abroad without the chance to return, the vision of a revival and a reborn homeland was out of step. The Republic of Independent Armenia (established in May 1918-Soviartized in December 1920) did not endure to become the haven for the survivors and the hope of the future reunification with the Turkish occupied Armenian lands. Rebirth, on the other hand, is a major theme in Holocaust literature.

Jewish writers visualized the rebirth from the ashes of the Holocaust in the creation of the State of Israel and considered it the divine plan for redemption. Moshe Flinker, killed in Auschwitz in 1944, writes in his diary: 'I find it hard to believe that what we are going through today is only a link in the long chain of suffering.' He considered these sufferings the birth pangs of the coming of the Messiah and the end of Jewish exile. 'The prophet foretold that we would not return [to Eretz Izrael] because of our righteousness but as a result of the evildoing of our enemies and our agony at their hands.'⁴⁷ The Holocaust was a necessary cataclysm before redemption. Abraham Sutzkever, writing under the most appalling conditions of his hiding place in the Vilna ghetto, saw the coming of the dawn. Nelly Sachs believed that 'the sinking occurs for the sake of the rise' and how 'in death / Life begins.'⁴⁸

* * *

In this discussion of literary responses, I have dwelled particularly on writers and poets who experienced a close

encounter with the Catastrophe. Is this a condition for a masterful artistic realization of the catastrophe? Should the writer-poet indeed live the horrors to be able to immortalize the sufferings of his people? Elie Wiesel, the renowned writer-survivor of the Holocaust, maintains that only one who has been there has the right to speak. Alvin Rosenfeld, the Holocaust literary critic, believes that the best literary portrayals in Jewish Holocaust literature of life in the Nazi concentration camps are produced by those who themselves experienced the meaninglessness of the two categories of life and death.⁴⁹ Unquestionably, Ka-Tzetnik, Dan Pagis, Abba Covner, to name only a few survivor-poets, could not have created their masterpieces with such magical fusion of documentary and literary qualities had they not shared with their fellow inmates the intimacy of horror and death. Nonetheless, the masterpiece in the genre of genocide literature requires mastery of the poetics of catastrophe. The majority of renowned Armenian literati fell victim to the atrocities without having had the chance to create that masterpiece.⁵⁰ The few who survived give only fragmented portrayals of the tragedy. But even with the abundance of Holocaust literature, the picture of the horrors will never be complete. Humanity will never be able to fathom the depths of suffering, the horrors of the hell Armenians and Jews experienced.

NOTES

- ¹ This paper is based on a monographic comparative study of responses to calamities in Genocide and Holocaust literature by this author titled *Literary Responses to Catastrophe, A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1993).
- ² Although the Book of Lamentations was not among the books of the Old Testament officially adopted by the Armenian Church, it was translated and widely read. See Maghakia Ormanian, *Azgapatum* [National History] (Constantinople: V. & H. Ter Nersesian Press, 1912), pp. 883-884.
- ³ See Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 24.
- ⁴ See David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 45.
- ⁵ For a more detailed discussion of Armenian and Jewish traditional responses, see Perroomian, *Literary Responses*, pp. 9-44.
- ⁶ Mintz, *Hurban*, pp. 43-44.
- ⁷ The Berlin Conference was convened to revisit the Treaty of San Stefano, signed after the Russo-Turkish war. While the Treaty of San Stefano included clauses favorable to the Armenian cause, the Treaty of Berlin, to the disappointment of Armenian activists, left out the specific stipulations, thus treating the Armenian Question as an unimportant issue. This period coincided with the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881. The suspicion of a Jewish conspiracy in the plot to kill the tsar gave rise to intolerance toward the Jewish population of the empire. Anti-Semitic sentiments were unleashed and sporadic pogroms ensued.
- ⁸ Mintz, *Hurban*, p. 115.
- ⁹ David Roskies, ed., *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe* (Philadelphia, New York, Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1988), p. 169.
- ¹⁰ See Roskies, *Literature of Destruction*, p. 171.
- ¹¹ For a discussion of literature in which the Catastrophe is not a subject of narration but a covert motif, see two articles by this author: 'Armenian Literary Responses to Genocide', in *The Armenian Genocide, History, Politics, Ethics*, ed., Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 222-249 and 'The Transformation of Armenianness in

the Formation of Armenian American Identity', in *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*. 6 (1995): 119-145.

¹² In the second week of April 1909, the same time as the counterrevolutionaries were acting in the capital, angry mobs of Turks began to attack Armenian houses, churches, schools, and shops in Adana and other towns and villages of Cilicia where considerable numbers of Armenians lived. The looting, killing, and burning continued, and the local government did nothing to stop them. Two weeks of carnage left at least 30,000 Armenians dead and Armenian towns and villages in ruin.

¹³ For this and the following examples of characterization of the Turk, see Peroomian, *Literary Responses*, pp. 105-108.

¹⁴ Zapel Esayan, *Namakner* [Letters], ed., Arpik Avetisian (Erevan: University of Erevan Press, 1977), pp. 76-77.

¹⁵ Oshagan's *Mnatsordats* [Remnants] was published in three parts by Husaber Press, Cairo, 1932-1933. Quotations are from this novel.

¹⁶ Edward Alexander, *The Resonance of Dust: Essays on Holocaust Literature and Jewish Fate* (Columbus OH: Ohio State University Press, 1979), p. 43.

¹⁷ From a play titled *Anmah botse* [The Undying Flame] (Alexandria: Aram Stepanian Press, 1917).

¹⁸ Zapel Esayan, *Averaknerun mej* [Amid the Ruins] (Beirut: Erevan Press, 1957), p. 141.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

²⁰ Suren Partevian, *Kilikian arhvirke* [The Cilician Catastrophe] (Constantinople: Nshan Papikian Bookstore, 1909), p. 84.

²¹ Cited in Alexander, *The Resonance*, p. xvii.

²² Aram Antonian, *Ain sev orerun* [In Those Dark Days] (Boston: Hairenik Press, 1919), pp. 80-81.

²³ Lawrence Langer, *The Age of Atrocity* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1978), p. 205.

²⁴ Roskies, ed., *The Literature of Destruction*, p. 382.

²⁵ For the discussion of *The House of Dolls*, see Alan J. Yuter, *The Holocaust in Hebrew Literature: From Genocide to Rebirth* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Associated Faculty Press, 1983), pp. 5-17.

²⁶ Partevian, *Kilikian arhvirke*, p. 169.

²⁷ Roskies, ed., *The Literature of Destruction*, pp. 504-505.

²⁸ Elie Wiesel, *Night*, trans. from the French by Stella Rodway (New York:

Hill and Wang, 1972), p. 71.

²⁹ Yuter, *The Holocaust in Hebrew Literature*, pp. 45-46

³⁰ Esayan, *Averaknerun mej*, p. 121

³¹ Cited in Alexander, *The Resonance*, p. 7.

³² A large section of the population of Svedia, believing that the deportations were only a temporary measure, took to the road and perished. The rest, some 4200 people, climbed the mountain of Musa Dag and put up armed resistance against the besieging enemy for 40 days. They were miraculously rescued by a French warship passing by.

³³ Yisrael Gutman, *Fighters Among the Ruins* (Washington D.C.: B'nai B'rith Books, 1988), p. 96.

³⁴ For details about the life of the Jewish community in Vilna, the importance of Vilna among the East European Jewish settlements, and how the concept of resistance was adopted by the political party leaders, see Gutman, *Fighters Among the Ruins*, pp. 96-102.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³⁶ For details about the life of the Jewish community in Warsaw, and the Warsaw ghetto, the deportation and resistance, see Gutman, *Fighters Among the Ruins*, pp. 102-140.

³⁷ Esayan, *Averaknerun mej*, p. 204.

³⁸ Suren Partevian, *Ariunin matiane* [The Book of Blood] (Cairo: M. Shirinian Press, 1915), pp. 73-80.

³⁹ See David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, pp. 250-252.

⁴⁰ See Alexander, *The Resonance*, pp. 55-56.

⁴¹ Esayan, *Averaknerun mej*, p. 204.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Alexander, *The Resonance*, p. 43.

⁴⁴ Roskies, *Literature of Destruction*, p. 465.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 485-486.

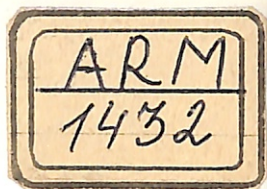
⁴⁶ Esayan, *Averaknerun mej*, pp. 221-226.

⁴⁷ Cited in Alexander, *The Resonance*, pp. 35-36.

⁴⁸ Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 45-47.

⁴⁹ See David G. Roskies, 'The Holocaust According to the Literary Critics', *Prooftexts*, 1 (May 1981), 209-216.

⁵⁰ On 23 and 24 April 1915, all the Armenian political, civic, and religious leaders and literary figures throughout the Ottoman Empire were arrested and either executed on the spot or sent to die in exile.



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