"The Dance of the Dead": A Reading of Genocide Poetry

Sukriti Ghosal

Introduction

> "don't let a speck of gladness or a tear
> stain grief's majesty.
> Because for the vanquished tears are cowardly
> and for the victors, the smile is frivolous, a wrinkle".
>
> – From "Grief" by Siamonto

"Genocide" signifies targeted mass-massacre intended to annihilate a tribe, a race or the people of a particular nation. Although it may be traced back to centuries before the birth of Christ, there has been a surge of this heinous crime since World War I[1]. Despite the fact that it is a now punishable crime under the International Law, the repeated violation of the legal provisions by the Superpowers or their satellites warrants the conclusion that man is unwilling to take a lesson from history. The failure of international bodies in reining in genocide is

partly due to the lack of their enforcing power and largely due to the culture of legitimization, which normalizes 'othering' by projecting the members of the target group as subhumans having no entitlement to human dignity. Cheran Rudhramoorthy rightly observes that "Commemorating and celebrating our 'own' while destroying and eliminating the 'other' is a pervasive logic of genocide that was frequently deployed by the state." (Rudhramoorthy 2016, 213) Incidentally, genocide is not just killing a large number of people like the civilian casualties due to the dropping of the 'Little Boy' on Hiroshima on 6 August, 1945. It is actually a planned assault on the members of a rival ethnic/ religious/ national group so as to obliterate them altogether from the world. Human rights violation, deportation and displacement of multitudes of a particular clan – for example, the Rohingyas from Myanmar – usually accompany major confrontational conflicts. But such prohibited acts collectively become genocide when these are prompted by a rabid urge for ethnic cleansing, a fanatical zeal to turn a poly-ethnic state into a mono-ethnic state through violent means as illustrated by the Nazi holocaust during World War II.

Genocide, a barbaric crime against humanity, has rightly been criminalized by International Law since the Nuremberg trials in which genocide figured as one of the four counts of indictment. The United Nations "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide" (CPPCG), proposed for ratification by the General Assembly in 1948 and brought into force in 1951, mentions that "at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity." Article II of the document defines genocide as an act intended to destroy a "national, ethnical, racial or religious group" by "killing, 'causing" physical/ mental harm, "deliberately inflicting" conditions that lead to the extirpation of the group, "imposing" birth-prevention measures and "transferring" the group's very young members to some other group (CPPCG 1). Not only the act but also attempts to commit genocide, its abetment and complicity in genocide have been criminalized (CPPCG 2).

Raphael Lemkin who defines genocide as a "criminal intent to destroy or to cripple permanently a human group" maintains that in genocide destructive violence is "directed against groups" and "individuals are selected for destruction only because they belong to these groups" (Lemkin 1947, 147). Barbara Harff who differentiates between "sporadic violence used against opposition groups …and systematic, Draconian attempts to eliminate or annihilate them" also thinks that violence, however large in scale, is unfit to be described as genocide if "the victims have no specific group identity" (Harff 44). Commenting on the modus operandi of genocide Lemkin observes that "Genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor" (Lemkin 1944, 79). Culture is "central to Lemkin's conception of genocide" (Moses 24) and he looks upon genocide as an erasure of culture with a view to re-inscribing it. One recalls the 1981 Sinhalese biblioclasm – the burning of a Jaffna public library with a collection of 97,000-odd books and rare Tamil manuscripts. The vandalism was carried out in order to blot out all traces of Tamil culture from Srilanka. Appalling bloodbath spreading over months, even years, is the trade-mark of genocide which often operates through subtle strategies – political (cessation of self-governance), social (attacking the resisting intelligentsia), cultural (robbing a community of its native language), economic (confiscating the economic resources of the victim community), biological (inhibiting reproduction), physical (cutting off food-supply in order to cause mass starvation), religious (demolishing religious institutions which shape and strengthen community identity), moral (encouraging people to prefer cheap individual pleasure to "collective feelings and ideals based upon a higher morality") (Moses 34-35).

The news value of genocide is immense, yet, paradoxically enough, its coverage is often suppressed or distorted possibly because of the nexus between media-houses and the statesmen responsible for genocide. No wonder that literature expressing the tragedy or condemning the savagery of genocide is not proportional to its cultural

significance. This is not because "to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric" (Adorno 1981, 34). True, there is something in the barbarism of genocide that benumbs the power of expression. But writing is also a mode of articulating one's protest against the insane fury of mass-massacre. Softening his previous stand, Adorno himself acknowledges this in his essay entitled "Commitment": "it is now virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it" (Adorno 1962, 8). Anyway, the dearth of literary output here is possibly due to the fact that while the affected lack agency, the bullying race leaves no stone unturned to gag their voice or curtain their visibility. Nevertheless, diaries picturing the nightmare of genocide have survived and poems and other forms of literature expressing the wounded sensibility of the victim race/ community also exist. Genocide-films such as Genocide (1981), 100 Days (2001) Sometimes in April (2005) are afterthoughts, not real-time reflections. Unlike films of the genre, genocide literature is not a belated remembrance but sort of a running commentary capturing the trauma before even the healing of the sore. A handful of works like Peter Balakian's Black Dog of Fate falls into the category of what Hirsch would call "postmemory" (Hirsch 106) – a trauma that one has not lived but inherited from one's ancestors who actually had to face the ordeal[2].

Literature, a form of culture, always gives us a reliable key to the understanding of issues that might escape factual narration of historical events. Literary representation is enriched by emotion and as such captures human sensibilities more effectively than dry reportage. Noor Hindi, a contemporary Palestinian American poet, rightly claims, "Reporting is an act of violence—poetry one of warmth" (Hindi 31). Of genocide prose narratives, Franz Werfel's historical novel The Forty Days of Musa Dagh (1933), Anne Frank's The Diary of a Young Girl (1952), Charlotte Delbo's Auschwitz and After (1985), Balakian's Black Dog of Fate (1997), and John Boyne's Holocaust memorial novel The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas (written in 2006, filmed in 2008) are very

famous works. One problem with non-fictional narratives is the charge of factual inaccuracy which does not count so much in fictive re-creation of historical incidents in prose or verse. This is because the strength of a work of art does not consist in its factual infallibility but in its power to move the readers transcending factuality. Poetry here has an advantage over prose narratives not only because it is linguistically more condensed but also because the moving power of poetry is, admittedly, stronger than that of prose.

The genocide poems taken up for analysis in this article are literally diverse – in time-range, language, culture and nationality of the poets articulating an idea or a thought. Nevertheless these are genocide poems because these express a feeling of victimhood, a mood of uncertainty of existence, a fear of being imposed upon, a threat of extinction. True, many of these characteristics are common to some other types of poetry, say war poetry. War poetry – realistic in content, condemnatory in note and pacific in intent – captures the "pity of war": the unbearable suffering of soldiers and the wanton waste of life. But whereas war-poetry evokes one's feelings by dwelling upon the tragedy of individuals or sometimes the suffering of warriors in an army fighting in the front, genocide poetry exposes the horror of racial/ communal extermination, the erasure of group identity. Genocide poetry bewails human waste by focusing on humans as members of a particular ethnic group or religious community. In authentic genocide poetry, therefore, there is always an anxiety of loss of ethnic/ communal identity and individual suffering is representative of the woes of the community. This can be gathered from the fact that the persona, the voice that the author assumes in writing a genocide poem, frequently speaks not as I but as we and even when as I thinks of we. The following lines from Cheran Rudhramoorthy's poem "The Second Sunrise" (trans. Chelva Kanaganayakam) where the speaker grumbles that their distinct Tamil identity has been overridden, exemplify the point:

My town was burned;
My people became faceless;

> In my land, my air
> In everything,
> The stamp of outsiders. (Rudhramoorthy 221-22)

The expression "My people became faceless" suggests that the loss may be bemoaned by an individual but the theme is collective damage. Genocide time, to quote from Tadeusz Rozewicz's "The Survivor", translated by Adam Czerniawski, is a time when man and beast are 'empty synonyms':

> The way of killing men and beasts is the same
> I've seen it:
> truckfuls (sic) of chopped-up men
> who will not be saved. ("The Survivor", Rozewicz)

Yahia Lababidi, a contemporary Egyptian American poet famous for his collection *Palestine Wail* (2024), throws light on the unique character of genocide when,

> most words lose their meaning
> Some sound empty & others strange ("During a Genocide", Lababidi)

when,

> you had to be exterminated
> to be seen & remembered. ("You Win, by Losing", Lababidi)

It is indeed a sorry state when one attracts attention because one has ceased to exist. No wonder that disappearance often serves as a motif in genocide poems, with the speaker lamenting the sudden vanishing of the members of their family or national/ religious/ ethnic group. In a heart-wrenching poem by Abraham Sutzkever, the speaker is shocked to notice a wagon clattered with shoes, 'still warm from recent feet', only

the wearers of shoes are missing:

> All children's shoes — but where
> Are all the children's feet?
> Why does the bride not wear
> Her shoes so bright and neat? ("A Wagon of Shoes", Sutzkever)

Although the poet admits that his heart "skips a beat" to ask who all these shoes belong to, he hastens to tell the truth that this wagon loaded with shoes of the vanished is a "terrifying/ Gift from the exterminators" who crushed the lives of thousands – thousands who rot in their pit, who once were called "Papa/ Mama/ Child". In "Street for Arrivals, Street for Departures" Charlotte Delbo uses the metaphor of station to present this theme of vanishing:

> But there is a station where those arriving are the same as
> those leaving
> A station at which those arriving have never arrived,
> to which those leaving have never returned
> it is the biggest station in the world. (Delbo 5)

The station in question is Auschwitz, the notorious extermination camp in Poland under the control of Nazi Germany.

One dominant note of genocide poetry is the uncertainty of existence beleaguered by a hostile, domineering force. The poems of Mosab Abu Toha poignantly express the horror of living a precarious life haunted by the menace of air-raid and assault:

> The drone's buzzing sound,
> the roar of an F-16,
> the screams of bombs falling on houses,
> on fields, and on bodies,
> of rockets flying away. ("Things You May Find Hidden in My
> Ear", Toha)

The speaker complains that this martial cacophony rids his "small ear canal" of all the sweet sounds – his "mother's voice", "songs in Arabic/ poems in English I recite to myself." Self-preservation may be the first law of nature, genocide poetry, however, places community-safety over the safety of an individual. Hind Joudeh, a strong feminine voice protesting against Gaza genocide, touches upon this aspect in her poem "What Does It Mean to be a Poet in War Time?" Her answer to the question in the title is singularly perplexing – it means both being apologetic and ashamed: 'apologetic' for the large-scale devastation of land and life; "ashamed" for being "alive" and "safe":

> ashamed of your smile of your
> warmth of your clean clothes of
> your yawning of your cup of
> coffee of your undisturbed sleep
> of your beloveds alive of your
> satiety of accessible water of
> clean water of your ability to
> bathe and of the coincidence that
> you are still alive! ("What Does It Mean to be a Poet in War Time?", Joudeh)

Indeed, in times of mass-slaughter, to be alive to taste food and water, to enjoy the ordinary comforts of clothes and sleep mean to be alienated from one's kinsmen who have no access to the bare necessities of life.

Genocide is justified and legitimized through a false narrative of othering that tries to establish that the people picked out for extermination are not only different but inferior and hence do not deserve human rights. Noor Hindi, the author of *Dear God. Dear Bones. Dear Yellow*, questions the very logic of treating fellow humans as other. In "A Question", she ridicules the wicked game of exclusion because everybody may be treated as "alien" on this pretext or that:

A child asks:
"If aliens invaded Earth, wouldn't we seem alien to them?"
According to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), in the
US, you are an alien if you are not a US citizen. If you hold a green card
(permanent resident card), you are considered a resident alien.
…
My grandmother is ALIEN. My father is ALIEN. My mother is ALIEN. I
am ALIEN. My siblings are ALIEN. The whole goddamn world is ALIEN. (Hindi 47)

The diabolic plan of decimating a community cannot be flawlessly executed by murdering its adult members alone. This can be done only through sweeping infanticide – by scotching all possibilities of revival[3]. That is why child-mortality is one recurrent theme of genocide literature. In his Diary-note dated 2 November, 2023, Noor Aldeen Hajjaj recounts the horrible experience of walking along a strip of land where countless number of children has been buried: "I walked across vast amounts of rubble, trying to tread carefully, as if in a minefield, so as to avoid every spot where children had sketched out dreams upon memories" (Hijjaj). Hiba Abu Nada, a Palestinian poet who became a victim of Israelite bombardment, brings out the ruthlessness of the perpetrators of genocide who do not spare even children. In her poem "I Grant You Refuge" (translated by Huda Fakhreddine) she expresses her deep concern for the innocent children awaiting death even before they have lived their life:

They don't walk in their sleep toward dreams.
They know death lurks outside the house.
Their mothers' tears are now doves

following them, trailing behind
every coffin. ("I Grant You Refuge", Nada)

In genocide poetry, survivors seldom celebrate that they have come back from the jaws of death. Since a very strong community bond underlies all utterance in genocide poetry, survivors here are visited by a gnawing sense of guilt that they have escaped the grave that engulfed their brethren. It is this feeling that inspires a poem by Omar Sakr, the author of the much acclaimed book *The Lost Arabs* (2020):

I've seen too many murdered children
I failed to save. …
I live in the not, now.
The not-me. The not-world. The not-heart
And not-society. ("Elegy in the genocide", Sakr)

Life seldom tastes sweet in genocide poetry, for the hunch of catastrophe is always there to drown the sigh of relief.

War poems which condemn the brutality of bloodshed acquaint us with the cheapness of life in the front. Genocide poetry sensitizes us to the inhumanity of torture and persecution that often precede mass-slaughter. So it is not just extinction, but forfeiture of all human dignity before the extermination that figures in many genocide poems. Leo Strauss contrasts the free space outside with the virtual absence of room inside the concentration camp in order to bring out the suffering of camp-inmates forced to lie straitened and cramped:

30,000 people are squashed together in a narrow carousel,
They have to squeeze together obediently between 9Q and 6L.
If the sun lures you outside, if the world seems wide and bright,
There is still no path beyond 9Q and 6L.

> World that we have left behind, wide free world good-bye,
> We are alive and yet entombed within 9Q and 6L. ("Our World has Shrunk", Strauss)

In Anneliese Benning's poem this has been expressed in the moving lines where prisoners accept the infernal condition as their irreversible destiny till the end of this cruel abuse:

> Bare walls, plain white, pock-marked with dirt,
> Men, women, children, pressed together tightly,
> Human beings who are not allowed to live as humans anymore,
> Poor human beings who are tortured and oppressed
> Until the dawn.
> Until, one day, dawn comes. ("K.Z. (Concentration Camp)", Benning)

One form of persecution is sexual assault which often takes the form of gang rape induced by racial hatred rather than the libido, since the target women are not spared even after the ravishment. This has been captured in the lines of the Armenian poet Adom Yarjanian, known to the world by his pen name Siamanto. In "Dance" (trans. Peter Balakian and Nevart Yaghlian), the poet records a macabre incident of de-chastisement – a dark crowd "lashing twenty brides" in a vineyard. The persona, an eye-witness to "crimes men do to men", is shocked to recount how the rapists cracked their whips 'on the flesh' of the helpless women forcing them to dance naked:

> 'Dance', they raved,
> 'dance till you die, infidel beauties
> With your flapping tits, dance!
> Smile for us. You're abandoned now,
>
> you're naked slaves,
> so dance like a bunch of fuckin' sluts'. ("Dance", Yarjanian)

Even when it dwells on the passive suffering of the victims, the poetry of genocide is, in essence, poetry of protest. Often it becomes impossible to stage a strong resistance against the crushing State machinery hell bent to extirpate the existence of a group of people. Nevertheless protest is inherent in the very exposure of the brute face of torture. In her daybook Asil Yaghi, for instance, protests against the inhumanity of using hunger as a tool of war, "a weapon stronger than all the missiles and explosives" (Yaghi) to displace people from their native land. In his famous German poem "Todesfuge" (trans. as 'Death Fugue' by Dean Rader), Paul Celan rages against the criminal indifference of the tormentors who can remain unperturbed in the presence of mass-murder:

> He shouts make death sound sweeter death is a Master from Deutschland
> he shouts strike the violin darker then rise as smoke in the air
> then a grave in the clouds there is so much more room
> …
> death is a Master from Deutschland his eye is blue
> his lead bullets strike you his aim is true ("Todesfuge", Celan)

Genocide poets are unsparing in exposing the hypocrisy of the civilized who preach love and peace but practise violence. Sam Friedman unmasks this double-standard of the aggressors who once used the social institutions like synagogues and yeshivas to teach the "abhorrence of genocide",

> Today, most of these selfsame synagogues and yeshivas
> "stand with Israel,"
> cheer as bombs and starvation
> clear Gaza of life. ("Negations", Friedman)

Worse still, pricked by conscience when the conscientious youth "set up encampments against genocide", many Jewish "leaders", ironically, "curse them as/ antisemitic".

Not that all genocide poems invariably harp on a negative chord. Although the gloomy thoughts of mass-extinction always loom large, a few poems strike a positive note that carnage, however horrific, can never be the last word in human history. Celina Biniaz, a survivor of Auschwitz holocaust, refuses to generalize that all members of the aggressor-race are evil. She fondly recalls her German tutor Mater Leontine who nursed her bruised mind when she was just a 14-year girl, "traumatized by years of ghettoes". She emphatically concludes, "not all Germans are ogres" (Biniaz). Edith Umugiraneza, who survived the 1994 Rwandan Tutsi Genocide, lost her mother in the pogrom by Hutu extremists. She is emotionally deeply attached to her deceased mother who shifted her to an unknown place to save her life. Unlike many genocide poems which dwell on brutality and violence, some of Umugiraneza's poems strike a rather positive note. She pledges to fight the 'Genocide ideology' with all her might, and pronounces her firm conviction that the assailants failed to finish off everything:

> They killed a flower, but they forgot that a flower had seeds.
> I SURVIVED! ("God Made a Beautiful Mother", Umugiraneza)

In such poems a valiant spirit prevails over existential uncertainty to assure the readers that the will to survive will ultimately triumph over the will to destroy.

Genocide poetry, pace Adorno, is an act of defiance, an assertion of resilient community mettle which can be temporarily suppressed but cannot be permanently deleted. The sensibilities expressed in genocide poetry are no entertainment stuff meant to engross the readers. They rather disturb us and appeal to us to shake off our indifference to the question of pre-meditated annihilation, *Vernichtung*[4]. A genocide novel has the scope to elaborately etch on its extensive canvas the suffering of a race or a tribe in the bleeding times of genocide. In non-epic poetry there is hardly any room for elaboration or bringing in diverse

viewpoints through complex episodes. Yet these short poetic sparks embalm a mood or a feeling before it is lost or filtered out by the reflecting mind. This is the singular strength of genocide poetry. Since the form here is condensed, the poetized feelings, purged of all inessentials, move one with such vehemence as unachievable in prose. It often jerks us into recognition of the truth embodied in Pascal's cautionary phrase On ne doit plus dormer – "we mustn't sleep anymore".

In her interesting work dealing with the representation of genocide in graphic novels, Laurike in't Veld notes that the work "mobilises the concept of kitsch to investigate … tensions around representations of genocide" because the "cultural texts engage with historical instances of mass violence" (Veld 1). True, "destructive transgressions" are sometimes so monstrous that literature seems "an imperfect mirror of life" (Auron 271). But one values genocide poetry not for its photographic representation of chronicled events, but for the assertion of clan identity under threat of extinction as understood or interpreted by the expressive self. Besides, genocide poetry helps us be witness to those insane historical moments when all checks and balances of the civilized culture are thrown overboard, resulting in a shameful capitulation to visceral violence – the savage impulse to destroy. So the study of genocide poetry never loses relevance when group identity is in grave peril. Literature has the power if not to prevent any catastrophe at least to interrogate the dominant discourse and foreground the suppressed voice. Judit Salas Adell has rightly maintained: "Poetry challenges dominant narratives, confronts injustice, and puts marginalized voices on the spotlight…" (Adell 6). Genocide poetry provides us with an alternative perspective that ruptures the hegemonic discourse justifying ventilation of animosity against a community. Genocide poetry helps us see through the culture of legitimization – a culture that supports inter-communal violence without a blush[5]. From one's reading of genocide poetry one may retrieve the dissenting voice that no propaganda can drown – a voice that, albeit feeble, has vigour

enough to convince us why the ideology of genocide must be rejected and perpetration of genocide resisted with all one's might. Genocide poetry, thus may act as act as an inspiring force in building what Jones phrases "a healthy nongenocidal society" (Jones 390).

NOTES

1.A glance at the major genocides since WWI:
a)The Armenian genocide (1915-16): Turkish endeavour to obliterate the Armeninas by killing, leaving them in the lurch (in the desert), forcing them to change their faith. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the number of victims of this Turkification effort, at conservative estimate, stands between 6 lakh and 1 million.

b)Holocaust (1938-45): 'The Holocaust is undisputably the most abominable instance of modem genocide' (Harff 49). The calculated extermination of the Jews in Nazi Germany, intensified after the Wannsee Conference (20 January, 1942). The 'final solution' of the Jewish problem was holocaust (etymologically 'whole burning') which signifies catastrophe (Hebrew shoah). It precisely refers to the Hitler's ruthless programme to exterminate all the Jews. The strong anti-Semitism was more racist than religious or cultural. Encyclopedia Britannica has appropriately written: 'Religious antisemitism could be solved by conversion, political antisemitism by expulsion. Ultimately, the logic of Nazi racial antisemitism led to annihilation' (Berenbaum). This diabolic fury took a toll of more than 6 million Jews, maiming for life another 2,00,000 as claimed by holocaust historians. True, for various reasons many other social groups were targeted but it was the Jews who were picked up for ethnic cleansing.

c)The Cambodian genocide (1975-1979): It lasted for about five years and saw a butchering of over half million people of the Cham Muslim community. Even the Christians and Buddhists were targeted by the Khmer Rouge brigade.

d)The Rwandan genocide (1994): It lasted for 100 days and saw a pogrom of Tutsi community by the fellow civilians from the Hutu community. This organized mass murder inspired by community hatred took a toll of over 8,00,000 lives and forced another 2,00,000 Rwandans to flee their native country. Hutu males diagnosed HIV+ were encouraged to rape Tutsi women so as to spread the infection.

e)Gaza genocide (2023-2025): Commonly admitted to be the goriest genocide of the 21st century till date. Cheran Rudhramoorthy opines that the carnage in the areas of Nandhikkadal and Mullivaikaal of Srilanka in 2009 'constituted the first genocide of the twenty-first century'(218). But the Israelite military onslaught against the Palestinians in the name of disarming Hamas and demilitarization of Gaza is far more devastating. Targeting of civilians, razing to ground schools and hospitals, restricting external aid and medical care, launching airstrike even during ceasefire – all these have led to the death of over 70,000 Palestinians and multitudes have so far been crippled for life. Despite Israel's denial, Amnesty International investigation report establishes that Israel's army operation entails 'specific intent to destroy' the Palestinians.

Holodomor, literally death by hunger, refers to the Ukranian starvation (1932-33) which took a toll of several millions during the Stalinist regime in the USSR. Although some rightist historians describe it as genocide, strictly speaking, this does not deserve inclusion in the list of genocides. This is because 1) the Ukranians were not looked upon by the Russians as a despicable race, 2) there was no plan to wipe out the Ukranians, 3) the famine was not confined to Ukraine but spread to Kazakhstan and other Volga regions, and 4) the state was earnest in solving the crisis affecting its citizens. The tragedy was possibly due to mismanagement at the time of transition of the USSR from an agrarian to an industrial state, what Adams Jones calls 'the price of progress' (Jones 128).

2.Although it is often held that genocide literature by second/ third generation survivors springs from 'collective memory', dismissing the notion

of collective memory S. Sontag claims, "All memory is individual, unreproducible – it dies with each person.' (Qtd Madoyan 190). The memories of 'racial mass-murder' (Madoyan 198) are vivid in the suffering first generation, nostalgic in the second generation survivors haunted by a sense of loss of the culture they were born into, and rather vague in the third generation which holds the lost culture precious because it defines their group identity.

3.Barbara Harff draws a line of demarcation between political violence and genocide saying that in the former 'often the slaughter stops short of family members', whereas genocide is not content with 'partial destruction': 'The child of a Communist may not necessarily become one himself, but the child of a Jew cannot escape his/ her Jewishness, as a result often becoming the victim of a holocaust' (Harff 57).

4.Holocaust Timeline on 'Museum of Tolerance' Website quotes a line from Hitler's Reichstag speech dated 30 January, 1939 which reads, 'if war erupts it will mean the vernichtung of the European Jews' and translates vernichtung as extermination.

5.Like Hitler's Germany, Israel has justified its military operation in the Gaza Strip as 'self-defence' and legitimized it by projecting Palestinians in Gaza, to quote the words of the Secretary General of Amnesty International, as a 'subhuman group unworthy of human rights and dignity' (Callamard). The term used for alienating all sympathy from the distressed Palestinians is Amalek or "human animals". Incidentally, in the Bible Amalek refers to a rival tribe which the Jews are encouraged to attack: 'You are to wipe the name of Amalek from off the Earth' (Deuteronomy 25: 19). It is actually a counterpart of German untermensch, subhuman, and is more damaging because it carries a cultural baggage.

Works Cited

Adell, Judit Salas. 2024. "Genocide and Resistance: An Analysis of Palestinian Poetry." *Blue Gum*, no. 11: 1–44.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1962. "Commitment." Translated by Francis McDonagh. https://unhistoricacts.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/adorno-commitment.pdf

Adorno, Theodor W. 1981. *Prisms*. Translated by Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Samuel Weber. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Auron, Yair. 2017. *Zionism and the Armenian Genocide: The Banality of Indifference*. London and New York: Routledge.

Benning, Anneliese. n.d. "K.Z. (Concentration Camp)." In Testifying to the Truth: Eyewitnesses to the Holocaust. https://www.testifyingtothetruth.co.uk/viewer/fulltext/105981/en/

.

Berenbaum, Michael. 2025. "Nazi Antisemitism and the Origin of the Holocaust." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/event/Holocaust

Biniaz, Celina. 2016. "Survivors Share Poetry at Student-Led Event 'Genocide Through Poetry.'" USC Shoah Foundation, April. https://sfi.usc.edu/news/2016/04/11320-survivors-share-poetry-student-led-event-genocide-through-poetry

.

Callamard, Agnès. 2024. Quoted in "Amnesty International Investigation Concludes Israel Is Committing Genocide

against Palestinians in Gaza." Amnesty International. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/amnesty-international-concludes-israel-is-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/

.

Celan, Paul. 2025. "Todesfuge." Poetry Foundation. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/161127/todesfuge-64f9500d91c45

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. 1948. December 9. 78 U.N.T.S. 277.

Delbo, Charlotte. 1968. "Street for Arrivals, Street for Departures." In *None of Us Will Return*, translated by John Githens. New York: Grove Press.

Friedman, Sam. n.d. "Three Poems against Genocide." *The International Marxist-Humanist*. https://imhojournal.org/articles/three-poems-against-genocide/

.

Hajjaj, Noor Aldeen. n.d. *Passages through Genocide*. https://www.gazapassages.com/noor-aldeen-hajjaj/english

.

Harff, Barbara. 1987. "The Etiology of Genocides." In *Genocide and the Modern Age: Etiology and Case Studies of Mass Death*, edited by Isidor Wallimann and Michael N. Dobkowsky. New York and London: Greenwood Press.

Hindi, Noor. 2022. *Dear God. Dear Bones. Dear Yellow*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Hirsch, Marianne. 2008. "The Generation of Postmemory." *Poetics Today* 29 (1): 103–128.

Jones, Adam. 2006. *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge.

Joudeh, Hind. n.d. "What Does It Mean to Be a Poet in Wartime?" *The Moving Pen with Sharon Singer*. https://www.sharonsinger.ca/poem-of-the-week/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-poet-in-war-time-hind-joudeh

Lababidi, Yahia. 2024. "During a Genocide and Other Poems on Gaza." *Dawn*. https://dawnmena.org/during-a-genocide-and-other-poems-on-gaza/

Lemkin, Raphael. 1944. *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals of Redress*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Lemkin, Raphael. 1947. "Genocide as a Crime under International Law." *American Journal of International Law* 41 (1): 145–151.

Madoyan, Arpine. 2023. "The Memory of the Armenian Genocide in P. Balakian's Black Dog of Fate." *Armenian Folia Anglistika* 19 (2): 187–202.

Moses, A. Dirk. 2010. "Raphael Lemkin, Culture, and the Concept of Genocide." In *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, edited by Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nada, Hiba Abu. 2023. "I Grant You Refuge." *Protean Magazine*. https://proteanmag.com/2023/11/03/i-grant-you-refuge/

.Różewicz, Tadeusz. n.d. "The Survivor." *All Poetry*. https://allpoetry.com/poem/8514639-The-Survivor-by-Tadeusz-Rozewicz

Rudhramoorthy, Cheran. 2016. "Poetry after Libricide and Genocide." *India@logs* 3: 211–228.

Sakr, Omar. n.d. "In the Genocide: A Poetry Portfolio." *Mizna*. https://mizna.org/literary/in-the-genocide-a-poetry-folio/

.

Strauss, Leo. n.d. "Our World Has Shrunk." In Testifying to the Truth: Eyewitnesses to the Holocaust. https://www.testifyingtothetruth.co.uk/viewer/fulltext/105981/en/

Sutzkever, Abraham. n.d. "A Wagon of Shoes." *Poem Hunter*. https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-wagon-of-shoes/

.

Toha, Mosab Abu. n.d. "Things You May Find Hidden in My Ears." *Poetry Foundation*. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/155510/things-you-may-find-hidden-in-my-ear

.

Umugiraneza, Edith. 2016. "God Made a Wonderful Mother." USC Shoah Foundation. https://sfi.usc.edu/news/2015/05/9325-god-made-wonderful-mother

.

Veld, Laurike in't. 2019. *The Representation of Genocide in Graphic Novels: Considering the Role of Kitsch*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Yaghi, Asil. n.d. "Passages through Genocide." *Party in the Dirt*. https://partyinthedirt.substack.com/p/passages-through-genocide-asil-yaghi

.

Yarjanian, Adom. n.d. "Siamanto's Dance." *Keghart*. https://keghart.org/siamantos-dance/

.