

It is not difficult to imagine the effects of these acts of violence on the psyche and thus the identity of the survivors of such a horribly traumatic experience, with a life-long memory of the event. A psychoanalyst would certainly carry out a detailed investigation to delve into the reasons why the perpetrators resorted to this utterly inhumane practice of “torturing” their victims. And he/she would perhaps list the motives beginning with the simplest one, something that is closer to the attributes of a normal human being. That is the enforcement of power and domination over the victim. With such a motive, the perpetrator who rapes a woman not only proves his superiority over his victim, but also proves the men, helplessly watching the rape, to be inferior creatures incapable of defending their women. Consequently, dehumanization works both on the sexually violated women and on the helpless male bystanders. Christoph Scheissl defines this act as “symbolically castrat[ing] the defeated men.”²³ Castration, not only symbolic but also physical, was not a rare occurrence during the Armenian Genocide. The Turkish assailant, in his rage on discovering that the girl he had snatched up to rape was in fact a boy dressed in female attire (to avoid being killed outright, as happened to men and older boys), would cut off the boy’s genitals. In *The Knock at the Door*, Ester/Gezeer Kateejeh relates overhearing a Turkish officer, a guest at the home of her Turkish adopted parents, boasting about kidnapping two sisters:

²³ Scheissl, “An Element of Genocide” (2002), p. 199, cited by Goldenberg in “Sexual Violence and the Holocaust” (2007). I thank Myrna Goldenberg for her paper which drew my attention to Scheissl’s article.