

For David,  
whose work I hope  
to honor with my  
own. Yours with warm  
regards, Jonny

Though his parents had left Vilna in 1930, almost two decades before he was born, David Roskies writes in *Against the Apocalypse* that "its people and places were more real to [him] than those of Montreal," where he grew up. The avenues and alleyways of Vilna, the stories and songs of the workers, marketwomen, merchants, and intellectuals — all passed down to him via his mother's memory — had become his memory (12). So when, at the age of fourteen, Roskies discovered in his parents' library the chronicles of Vilna's destruction, the "city of his mind" disintegrated into the "ruined city of his mind." In scholarly retrospect, Roskies recognizes that in their textualization, these "ruined cities of the mind" also began to assume archetypal proportions, and that, by extension, these chronicles of destruction had become his own sacred texts.

Beautifully written and passionately argued, *Against the Apocalypse* is literary history of the highest order. Though his critical approach is somewhat programmatic, which accounts for a few of this work's omissions, Roskies has in the end assembled in English a vast body of Yiddish and Hebrew literary responses to catastrophe, paintings and drawings, and even monuments that have been almost completely neglected in English-language studies of Jewish letters. In fact, at times it seems that whether or not a given response had ever been addressed at length before in English determined its inclusion here. Given Roskies's own specialization in Yiddish writing, this means that the author bypasses the Anglo-Jewish World War I poet Isaac

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\*David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1984. 392 pp. \$9.95 paper.

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