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Christian Gudehus, Fiza Lee Winter, Laura Collins, Daniel Bultmann, Georgina Holmes, Roland Moerland, Diana I. Popescu, JoAnn DiGeorgie-Lutz, Bablu Chakma, and Liam Scott

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© 2020  Genocide Studies and Prevention 14, no. 3
This issue brings about a collection of articles which expand the boundaries of the study of genocide and mass violence. Through the use of an eclectic mix of sources, these authors have stretched the (traditional) periphery, further engaging in and critically re-examining cases within each of their areas of focus. Most notably is the exploration of mass violence through the lens of queer studies and gender, written by Lily Nellans.

In taking on further developments in genocide studies, the GSP Editorial Team has reserved several sections within the journal to feature various unique contributions to the field of extreme collective violence, its prevention, and its consequences. These include Translations, State of the Field, Case Notes, Conference Proceedings, Film Reviews, and other Special Contributions, which appear irregularly and are not externally reviewed. Such contributions are welcomed, in addition to the double-blind reviewed full articles and the book reviews.

In view of embracing this evolution in genocide scholarship trends, we have decided to add two new sections. This is the first time that a literary text will appear in GSP. The author, Sabah Carrim, is both a scholar (also a member of the IAGS Advisory Board) and an author of literary and lyrical texts. From 2021 on, she will be the editor in charge of the Arts & Literature section, which will be regularly featured in GSP. The submissions are formatted in consultation with the authors, so they do not have to follow the journal's style guidelines. The texts, pictures, films, etc., will also not be reviewed externally. Instead, the members of the Editorial Board will discuss the submissions together.

Furthermore, GSP receives submissions that deal with cases of collective violence that have not been scholarly documented and discussed much in the past. Accordingly, there is often a lack of relevant discourses to which such texts can be referred to. As a result, their content is often tied to the sometimes less and sometimes more convincing proof that the event in question is (or was) a genocide. The editorial team wants to bring forth the discussion of such works, which are located on the fringes of established cases and certainly also methodologies. Therefore, such approaches will appear in the Dossier section in the future.

Finally, since December 2020, GSP has launched its own Twitter account. Here, information about content, people, and events related to the journal is posted. Visit us on Twitter @GSPJournal for more updates and to remain connected with GSP.

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Meet the GSP Team: Featured Profiles

Bablu Chakma, *GSP Intern* since April 2020, is a PhD candidate in development studies and social sciences at the Institute of Development Research and Development Policy (IEE) at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum in Germany. At GSP, Bablu supports the editorial and production team. He also assisted with the GSP workflow revitalization efforts. Bablu’s interest areas include human rights advocacy and activism, social movements, peasant and agrarian studies, identity politics and Indigenous Peoples issues in general.

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Liam Scott, *GSP Intern* since March 2020, is a political science student at Georgetown University, School of Foreign Service. At GSP, Liam assists with editing manuscripts and ensures that all submissions follow the GSP Submission Guidelines. In addition to his tasks, Liam was also heavily involved in revitalizing parts of the GSP workflow. His areas of interest include genocide studies, media studies, memory studies, international politics.

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About the Art Work
This essay is the result of a combination of interviews conducted with Rithy Panh, Alexander Hinton, Peg LeVine, and Craig Etcheson by the author, as well as the field notes she collected while attending the IAGS conference in 2019 for which she was awarded a conference scholarship by the same organisation.

The author would also like to acknowledge Lukas Meissel for his valuable comments on the piece, especially in the formulation of Ori, a composite character.

The narrative takes place in two iconic tourist and memorial sites in Phnom Penh: The Killing Fields (aka Choeung Ek) and Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum (aka S21).

About the Author
Sabah Carrim has a PhD in Genocide Studies and Prevention with a focus on the Khmer Rouge era. She has authored two novels and a few short stories that have been shortlisted in international competitions.

She is currently enrolled in a MFA in Creative Writing in Texas State University where she has been awarded the W. Morgan and Lou Claire Rose Scholarship and the Arch and Stella Rowan Foundation Scholarship.
The Grey Zone

I’m on a bench, at the fourth checkpoint. Most of us have headsets clipped on, often awkwardly, in our Procrustean world with one-size trying to fit-all. We are listening to the story of a genocide. The Khmer voice of a man on the audio recorder is powerful, all the more since he intimated that he’s a survivor. We are tourists, foreigners, a vulnerability that’s hardly spoken of. Gullible. It’s probably the pathos in the man’s voice.

A fly sits on the back of my palm. My immediate thought is to situate it within the ecosystem of where I am, here at the Killing Fields in Phnom Penh. I explain what I mean, telling my travel companion Ori, how I’ve imagined what the fly must have been feeding on, although it’s not true. It would have been true forty years ago when dead, rotting flesh of bodies lay here. But I like imagining, toying with Time, toying with thoughts, feeling new feelings. Ori is here for the first time, me the twelfth. My sole concern he thinks, is bacteria. Never mind. I have come here obsessively, compulsively, thirsting details, thirsting nuances, desiring more. It could have been done in one session, but I’ve opted for this shabby method. The most profound thoughts I’ve learned, are generated in moments of passivity and indolence.

Ori recommends mosquito repellant, or the citronella oil I always carry in my handbag. ‘No,’ I say, somewhat peevishly, ‘that’s not what I meant.’ Can we stop being fastidious, we the travellers of the world? Can we get over our fixations with sanitisers and antibacterial wipes and door handles and taps and bannisters and people sneezing in airports?

This is a place of overreactions.

Thank god I’m old enough to exercise restraint in voicing my thoughts. Thank god my thoughts are not audible.

I think of the irony of our lives, identifying and avoiding old traps, stumbling and falling into new ones, never knowing. And carrying on, stubborn, fastidious.

‘No,’ I repeat, still looking down at the fly. ‘Let it be.’ This fly is part of the ecosystem of this tourist site, once an orchard. Where the gentle concaves you see in the ground, the Khmer voice says, are erstwhile mass graves from another era.

The atmosphere is not any bit different from my home in Mauritius, at Sir Guy Forget Street, with the chirping of birds, the crows of a rooster, the quiet air of a weekday, a Sunday, a sunny day—because even sunniness has a sound of its own. Though the grass here in Phnom Penh is different. It’s smooth, motherly, like a blanket, vividly green, unlike the sharply defined blades of dark green back home. There it’s young, zealous, impetuous, too keen on knowing, growing, compared to this, which has known, grown, and understood, and still retained softness and permeability. And while thinking about this, I become conscious of how my recent knowledge of the predominance of Buddhist stoicism in Khmer culture has placed a veil before my eyes, and changed the way I see things, the way I describe them.

We keep speaking of removing layers of prejudice from our thinking which we somehow manage to do by exposing ourselves to books and people, and scantily of the ones we add, very subtly while we’re at that.
If I went on, I could find more differences in my entourage. The rest of the vegetation for example, but never mind that. I don’t know the names, and I envy those who do, because every new name signifies a new identity. Heightened awareness. And what could be more empowering than the ability to differentiate things in a mass of confused mess?

I can’t help finding it uncanny that right now in the Killing Fields if I closed my eyes, I could very well be in Mauritius. Because at S-21, now the Genocide Museum of Phnom Penh, a former primary school converted into a security prison between 1975–1979, where 14,000 inmates were tortured, it’s entirely different. There, there are no birds, no chirping, just silence, not even a solemn one, but calm indifference. One immune to violence, death, the past, the pain. One that carries on, despite everything, and may I say, even lightly, cheerfully, mocking us.

Craig Etcheson, a Cambodia expert, told me that an NGO or a parastatal body (I’m not sure which) had wanted to plant flowers at S-21. How horrible, he said, what a lack of respect. Yes, I replied, how horrible, and shook my head. With hindsight, it was sheer complaisance—I’ve read that we tend to do that in conversations. After he left, I asked myself, what if they did? The flowers would have made the air light, given it cheer, mocking us, our seriousness. And suppose a bird had left its droppings of the seeds it had eaten, and flowers started growing by an act of ‘nature,’ would it make it less condemnable?

By planting flowers, the planners, the gardeners would only be capturing the same spirit.

And then life seems to have moved on in many ways. At S-21, they’ve already tidied up so much. I think of what’s left of the barbed wires, once distinctive barriers to liberty, escape, now barely noticeable, where the license to enter and exit no longer hinges upon questions of life and death. I think of the general cleanliness of the premises, the constant repairs and renovations that conceal more and more of the horrors of the past. I think of the board with the clearly defined Do’s and Don’ts that has been rewritten neatly to mark a time in the past when prisoners were constrained by them. I think of the many times the grass has been mowed, weeded, manicured. How sterile it smells there. It mustn’t have been like that forty years ago, in that state of advanced panopticism, where classrooms once classifying children, were further divided to pen prisoners to be disciplined and punished, they too innocent, before and after they had been brought out to be photographed, their nails tweezed out, their heads drowned in tubs of water, pulled and dragged like cattle, until they concocted confessions, denouncing friends and relatives, proving Schopenhauer and Nietzsche right that everyone’s really selfish, and where the totality of their pain and suffering made those premises smell like an animal farm. Now, forty years later, after the blood stains on the wall have faded, planting seeds, growing flowers, adding colour couldn’t possibly make a difference.

I’m not saying Craig Etcheson is wrong. I just don’t see the point in taking sides. There seem to be arguments to support every damn thing these days. The chaos of postmodernism.

I wish like Rithy Panh, the Cambodian filmmaker, who needed to know, to understand, to energise intuition to produce documentaries, that I could also be
here at the Killing Fields in the evenings, at night, when there is no gullibility, when there is a different kind of silence.

You must have heard the crickets at that time, didn’t you Mr Panh? Tell me. Because I want to feel what the prisoners felt when they were brought here in those trucks, blindfolded, on that winding, unpaved, and pebbly road over eight kilometres, from their prison cells in S-21, and hacked to death with axes and sharpened bamboo sticks in pits dug at the Killing Fields. I read that bullets were too few and precious to be wasted on them. Is it true? I want to know Mr Panh, whether you looked up at the sky on those evenings, and saw the same number of stars I see in Mauritius, or whether your sky there was just blank, like in most of the polluted cities of Southeast Asia. Tell me, Mr Panh, did you wait until the noises of the night had died down? Did you wait to feel what it must have been like for a prisoner to smell the stench of dead and dying bodies, progressing through pallor mortis, algor mortis, rigor mortis, livor mortis, and finally putrefaction? Or still, did you try to feel how it must have felt knowing that one would die the following morning? And then, as I imagine many to have experienced, did you wait to feel your heart bursting with hope that it wouldn’t happen? I want to know, Mr Panh, because I am an academic, a researcher, and I have kept a comfortable distance from feeling too much. And now that I am working on a conclusion to my doctoral thesis, I realise there should be none. To conclude is to abbreviate the thought process, to conclude is to be tired of thinking. To conclude would amount to a simplification, to evidence of my gullibility, an affront to the memory of the skulls and bone fragments I see segregated, labelled, and caged in glass boxes, and the chankiri tree where babies and young infants were smashed to death, where music was played to drown the voices of those crying, struggling, bleeding.

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‘If you claim that you don’t know the names of trees,’ says Ori, ‘how did you know it was the chankiri tree?’

‘It’s in books on the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge regime.’

Smiling isn’t allowed here at the Killing Fields. An unspoken rule understandably. But I catch myself doing it when Ori takes a picture. I am seated on a bench (a different one) with thick roots of a tree whose name I don’t know, framing me on three sides. I look around self-consciously. This feels wrong. It wasn’t like that the first time—I was more serious, more morose. The tourists, those first-timers, are probably appalled by my reaction. The guilt. I feel it so easily when I am here. But then, I feel everything so easily over here. This is a sacred place, a place that makes you anxious, uncomfortable. Not because of the rules, no, but the shadows around them. I’m never sure what’s allowed and what’s not. Can I smile, laugh, answer my mobile?

Over here, there can be no comfort in experiencing one emotion at a time. Every emotion is like a runny egg in a tray. At times, you feel guilty for not feeling, like I felt just now. At other times, for feeling too much—especially when you wonder whether you’ve been manipulated into experiencing this or that at different checkpoints. Look at the tourists, stopping where they are told under a covered shelter erected for the purpose, ruminating over what the Khmer voice tells them.
to ruminate. It's not that I doubt the story—I despise the manipulation. Post-structuralism.

'You’re such a rebel. I don’t know anyone who’d think like you,' says Ori, after I share my thoughts with him.

'If I exist, there must be others who feel the same way,' I reply. 'They’re just not saying it.'

Long ago, when I was a teenager, I remember how often I was haunted by bouts of confusion. My thoughts were jumbled up. It made me restless, moody. I kept wondering if other people felt the same way. I recall my journal entries: ‘Something’s bothering me, I don’t know what it is, I need to take some time off to think about it.’ And all efforts were in vain. Today it’s different. My thoughts are clear. I know when and why I’m depressed, confused, happy, angry, sad. I empowered myself by learning how to express my innermost thoughts. A language schoolbooks don’t teach. No longer do I feel estranged from myself—Only from everyone.

As I said earlier, the problem is not the rules but the shadows around them. That grey area, the penumbra. The space that gives us leeway to exercise discretion, to engage creativity, to feel empowered, to feel we exist. The will to power. *Sipo Matador*. And Duch, head of S-21, went all the way. When Duch was given orders to kill, no one told him how to do it. And later in court during his trial, he used it in his defense. He said he merely followed the rules, obeyed the orders, that he was innocent—a puppet. He didn’t tell everyone however, how vaguely these commands were phrased so that he allowed himself to devise intricate ways to carry them out, to mete out the torture, to issue orders to kill.

A book was found on the premises of S-21: *La Torture* by Alec Mellor. It was Duch’s.

Some say Duch didn’t know enough about Communist ideology, others say Duch knew more than Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, those in the maquis. Some say Duch was cultured, others that he was a simpleton. Some say Duch spoke like a wise man, others that he was a glib talker. Some say Duch knew the difference between the works of Michaelangelo and Picasso, others say yes, but only superficially. Some say Duch was so classy he drank cointreau neat with a slice of lemon. Duch was intelligent, Duch was effeminate. Duch liked to laugh, Duch never laughed. Duch was a monster, Duch was just a man. Duch was manipulative, Duch was only pretending. Duch was a liar. Duch had a sharp memory. Duch was a leader. Duch was a follower, a licksplite, constantly in need of someone to hero-worship, like Son Sen, like Christ. Duch saw himself in the figure of St Paul. Duch was charismatic, a teacher who led, who proselytised, who helped cull a typhoid outbreak. Duch was gentle, a romantic—remember how he loved Kim? Duch was sick, a sadist—remember how he tortured Bophana?

Duch.

What if Duch was all of that at different moments, like us? Aren’t we dumb *and* smart, docile *and* resilient, deep *and* superficial? The problem: our bias for fixity of character. It is said that the ingenuity of Stendhal’s *Le Rouge et Le Noir* was that it was among the first novels to present a character (Julien Sorel) who possessed a...
diversity of traits that stood in opposition to one another—a practice that outraged critics of those times, who accused such authors of slander against the human race.

Yes, it's not the rules, but the shadows that cause confusion, that introduce complexity in the matter. A side thought: I've always wondered about that compulsive desire—no, that need in me to flout rules. I keep thinking I'd make a bad employee. I like coasting along borders, exploring them, feeling their limits. A certain languor invades me after one or two instances of obeying, complying. It's tiring to keep doing it well, I tell myself, because obedience is hardly noticed, hardly lauded. Perhaps I am under the constant threat of (Batailleian) death and disappearance, and breaking laws reminds me that I am here. Perhaps I suffer from the perpetual need to feel I exist.

I've thought about it for a long time: It's not getting caught that gives me a thrill. It's deciding what to do with the penumbra.

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I've just landed in Phnom Penh for the first time and hired a tuk tuk from the airport. (This is a moment that took place five years ago that I am now recollecting.) Halfway there, the driver passes me a laminated sheet of paper. He proposes to drop me at the hotel so I can check in and then hire him for the rest of the day. 'Twelve dollars,' he says. I see four faded pictures of tourist sites on the paper with names printed underneath. The options are Choeung Ek (a.k.a The Killings Fields), the Genocide Museum of Phnom Penh (a.k.a S-21 or Tuol Sleng), the Wat Phnom, and the Royal Palace. Like on a menu. 'Let's start with the first two,' I say.

Every other visit to Phnom Penh began exactly like this.

We've just arrived at S-21. I'm here for the sixteenth time, Ori the first. I've stopped going into the classrooms. Except for the first one on the left, in Building A, right after you enter. (I was about to say 'It's my favourite' but one can't—shouldn't—say that.) In it, you see a picture on the wall. It's what the jail cell looked like when it was photographed after the Khmer Rouge regime was defeated by the Vietnamese forces in 1979. In the black and white picture, a half-naked man lies in a metal bed frame, dead, his body discoloured, bloated monstrously—like the drawing by the narrator of The Little Prince, of the boa constrictor digesting the elephant. (Am I allowed to think this? Maybe you can think it, but you should not voice it.) There are also iron shackles, and rod-shaped instruments of torture. Not far off lies an ammunition can, a standard feature in all jail cells, once used by prisoners to relieve themselves. I've often wished other cells in that row had similar gruesome stories to recount. Each with a story of its own, unique for the details, for what it implied about the modus operandi of the Khmer Rouge regime. Strategically, it would have made such an impression—as the pieces of bone fragments and teeth do, left like that, jutting out of the ground along the path we are made to tread in the Killing Fields. Or those eight thousand skulls, piled on top of one another, staring at you through glass cages in the Memorial Stupa at the Killing Fields, drowning you in Repetition, through Homogeneity, weighing you down by the purport and meaning of the term 'genocide.'
It is said that the man who was assigned to re-organise S-21 into a museum, into a tourist site, followed the structure and technique he had used before in a site also converted into a museum to exhibit the atrocities of the Second World War.

Ori walks away on his own to explore. I head towards one of the benches, sheltered by a few trees, where one gets the view of fourteen white raised tombs of the bodies found in Building A, back in 1979. I take a seat, cross my legs, rest an arm along the back rest. Then I notice a signboard that says one should sit respectfully while here. I’m suddenly uncomfortable.

I’ve been thinking that I also have a problem with a different permutation of rules: those we call ‘generalisations.’ In the manner they impose themselves on you, on how destructive they are, refusing to yield to exceptions. How they’re presented to you as all-encompassing dicta and truth propositions. How they become excuses for unfairly imposed sanctions and last-minute accusations. Yes, rules and generalisations are often immune to being called into question.

Writing a thesis is a formidable exercise, no doubt. If you’ve done enough research, most of your propositions or statements of opinion should tempt you into adding a digression that starts with ‘But’, ‘However’, ‘Nevertheless’. (And possibly another series of ‘But,’ ‘However,’ ‘Nevertheless’ to that.) What a challenge it is to sustain the effort over four hundred pages. But there are footnotes, ‘cf.,’ so why not?

Now imagine in real life: We want to get the job done quickly. That’s why we are drawn to generalisations: thinking is tiresome. Introducing exceptions at every bend: painful. We seem to want to avoid complexity. That’s why no one allowed Hannah Arendt to say that a mass killer could have a plainer personality than they’d imagined. That’s why it took so long for people to understand Primo Levi’s quixotic notion of the victim-perpetrator. That’s why no one wanted Peg LeVine to tell the court that not all marriages during the Khmer Rouge era were forced. That’s why no one wanted Alex Hinton to speak about how justice had been meted out in other ways than we thought possible—other than through punishment, retribution, a court of law. That justice in Cambodia, in the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge era, was delivered just as well through silence. Through the burning of incense sticks. Through prayers. Over coffee in an informal chat between perpetrator and victim.

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Ori walks towards me. ‘One of the survivors of S-21 over there is selling his book. You can even have a chat with him,’ he says.

‘Oh. Bou Meng,’ I reply.

‘Why don’t you join me?’

‘No…I don’t feel comfortable in that space. I’ve watched him many times, I wonder if he recognises me by now. I just feel... I don’t know...a sense of discomfort when I think he’s been doing this all his life. The tourists. The book sales. Repeating the story of what he endured ad nauseam ad infinitum. He must be tired, case-hardened, I know it’s money, his livelihood, but I still feel I’d be bothering him.’
‘Maybe you’ve been here too many times,’ says Ori. ‘You’re probably numb to all this. To him.’ Ori is silent for a while. ‘Or, maybe you feel too much.’ Then he strides away in the direction of Bou Meng’s table.

I mull over what he just said. Do I feel too much? If so, why? Which hormone, which neurotransmitter could account for it? I smile at myself, I sneer at my thoughts, my so-called feelings. Posthumanism.

Ori is back after a few minutes.

‘That was strange,’ he says. ‘I bought the book, he signed it, and I didn’t know taking a picture was also part of the deal. Bou Meng pulled me to his side just like that. I wasn’t sure whether I was supposed to smile, like you know…when you take pictures…normal pictures.’

We say nothing, and move towards the exit.

Ori and I are on the verge of leaving the precincts of S-21.

‘You didn’t tell me about your interview yesterday for your PhD, the one with Alex Hinton,’ says Ori.

‘It was great, except for the clanking noises in the restaurant where we had the interview. I have no idea what they were up to. Drove me crazy. Couldn’t concentrate.’

‘Yes, your misophonia.’

‘I mentioned it to Alex Hinton. Miso: hatred, phonia: noise. He asked what sort of reaction I have when I hear repetitive noises, slurping, and all that.’

‘Ha ha. What did you say?’

‘The truth. That it evokes such anger in me that it makes me want to…’

I suddenly realise where I am. In the grey zone between entering and exiting S-21. In a space that evokes anxiety about what’s right and what’s wrong. Instinctively I lower my tone:

‘….kill someone.’

The guilt.
S-21 as a Liminal Power Regime: Violently Othering Khmer Bodies into Vietnamese Minds

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Introduction
The central prison of the Khmer Rouge—with its detention center on the compound of the former high school, Tuol Svay Prey, in the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh—was tasked with uncovering traitorous networks in the populace and especially within its own revolutionary movement.1 Together with several buildings in the surrounding area, Tuol Svay Prey—commonly referred to as Tuol Sleng, the name of a neighboring primary school—became a torture and execution center codenamed S-21, in which inmates were forced to confess to working for foreign powers as agents of the CIA, the KGB, or the Vietnamese.2 In the end, however, as laid out in a party document titled The Last Joint Plan and created from information from confessions at S-21, the Soviets were considered to be the secret head behind all traitorous activities, while the US “colluded” and the Vietnamese acted as “implementors.”3 Every Cambodian resisting the regime was considered a traitor fallen to the territory-swallowing Vietnamese, who were attempting to finalize their centuries-old expansionist plan to annex “Kampuchea,” using the Americans and Soviets as their vehicle. As said in a common slogan, the bodies of the traitors was considered Khmer, but their minds were deluded by Vietnamese thoughts: “Khmer bodies, Vietnamese heads.”4 While almost all sections of the populace, according to the analysis of the party,5 suffered to varying degrees from an infection of individualist and capitalist thoughts, those in S-21 were regularly labeled enemies, who “became one hundred percent Vietnamese” in their thinking.6

While the Khmer Rouge used the derogatory Khmer term Yuon for “Vietnamese,” its use did not necessarily imply that their enemies were working strictly and directly at Hanoi’s behest. Often, it served primarily to denote a duplicitous, devious, and anti-Khmer mind.7 Hence, in terms of semantics, while a “Khmer body with a Yuon head” possessed a twisted “Vietnamese” mind, the enemy might nevertheless be forced to confess that he or she was serving the CIA or KGB. Being Yuon covered “Vietnameseness” and had xenophobic overtones suggesting a dangerous, invisible, duplicitous, and anti-Khmer otherness. Even though many Cambodians would claim that Yuon is just an outdated word for Vietnamese (especially if they sympathize with the current opposition), this article prefers to use the term Yuon or to refer to “Vietnameseness” coupled with otherness rather than simply translating Yuon as Vietnamese.

Thought reform (which others were subjected to by means of productive labor, self-criticism, and indoctrination) would not work on such individuals; they were beyond reform. The problem—and also the thesis of this paper—was that the regime could not solely rely on visual, social, or ethnic characteristics to find and punish enemies of the revolution but also had

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2 The fact that Tuol Sleng was actually a school nearby and not the schooling compound that is now the site of the Tuol Sleng Museum tells a great deal about the lack of knowledge we had for a long time about the size and structure of the actual security compound; Anne-Laure Porée, “Tuol Sleng, L’Histoire Inachevée d’un Musée Mémoire,” Moussons 30, no. 2 (2017).
7 I am grateful for an anonymous reviewer’s comment on this.

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to make treason and, along with this, the Yuon mind visible through violent practice: they had to “uncover” it through liminal ritualization and violent othering. What one can see in S-21—instead of a pre-established compartmentalization—is a constant and ritualized process of violent and liminal othering. This ritualization of violence explains the structure, the scripts and procedural logics behind the violent practices in S-21. The whole institution of S-21 and its violent practices and operations served to reveal a “Vietnameseness” and/or otherness within the victims and to prove not only their guilt with regard to a singular crime but also a long history of treason and collaboration with the enemy, as well as a moral shortcoming that put them outside their own imagined Khmer moral universe and part of a larger scheme. The victims were made to inscribe their non-Khmer nature and Yuon minds on their bodies and into their confessed biographies. The initial and, for the ideology of the revolution, problematic sameness of the victims needed to be reshaped into a profound otherness in terms of thinking, lifestyle, and biography. Violent practices such as torture, mistreatment of inmates, and execution needed to signify or—in a more literal sense—transform the inmates into what the regime believed they had become: essentially Yuon in mind, weak in morality, and traitorous in practice. This enforced and violent transition into a true “other” was accompanied by a semiotic process inscribing Vietnamese- and otherness into the victim through a liminal power regime that served to signify as well as enable a transition to this new status.

Alexander Laban Hinton—inspired by Arjan Appadurai’s theory of ethnic violence—has thoroughly and accurately described the torture at S-21 as a liminal process or lethal rite of passage, “an institutional attempt to organize and crystallize difference on politically uncertain bodies.” He shows how politically uncertain bodies in S-21 were treated as polluted and stripped of their markers of humanity and basic freedoms to “manufacture” an absolute, ethnically codified difference that was inscribed in every enforced expression of the inmates.

This article, while largely in line with Hinton’s analysis, considers additional aspects of liminality, including its symbolism with regard to Buddhist morality (individualistic greed, lust, and striving for power), Buddhist hell (dogs and torture practices), and anti-Vietnamese semiotics as well as discussing the importance of the last stage of the rite at S-21, with mass graves representing permanent liminality or a halted aggregation phase that keeps victims trapped as suffering ghosts (called khmouch).

In so doing, the paper also adds to a literature analyzing extreme forms of violence such as torture or cruelties in concentration camps as liminal practice. Liminality, as described by the anthropologists Victor Turner and Arnold van Gennep, is a stage within initiation rites serving as a passage from one status to another. The key point within this stage, which comes after a stage of separation from the social body, is that the initiate endures a period of being outside the social order during which new forms of identity are inscribed into his or her mind and often quite literally into his or her body. The article thus uses the concept of liminality in order to highlight that the violent passage endured by the victims in S-21 is not just an act of othering, making them Yuon, but it follows a certain ritual script; it has a structure, it uses certain cultural scripts of transition (in this case, for instance, from notions of Buddhist hell), and it is also characterized by typical markers of liminality. Liminal beings are in a stage betwixt and in between; they are considered polluted, dangerous, naked (literally and symbolically),

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10 Ibid.


and wild. They are in a space outside of the social realm, in the wilderness, and they transition. In the case of the inmates of S-21, they seem to transition into the status of being Yuon, which at the same time is the status of being outside of the moral order, of moral otherness.

The violent rite of passage thus—in stark contrast to classic rites of passage such as entering adulthood, getting married, or death rituals—serves to uncover a “Vietnameseness” and otherness, while potentially also forcing the victims into a permanent moral liminality—a point that will be discussed in view of the execution practices of the Khmer Rouge at the very end of this paper. The victims of S-21 die a death which keeps them in an ambivalent stage of either becoming Vietnamese and/or of being permanently caught in liminality. The ritual process serves to separate the victims from being “Khmer;” it visualizes an invisible status as an enemy standing outside the moral and collective order. The article thus proceeds by first explaining the problematic invisibility of the enemies of the revolution. Then follows a section on violent practice in S-21 as a rite of passage of separation, ambiguity, and liminality. Afterward, two sections explain the process of uncovering and inscribing the “Vietnameseness” of the victims through torture and confessions. The article closes with a discussion of the aggregation phase, which normally signifies the moment where initiates enter their new status, but which in this case remains ambiguous and points toward a permanent liminality.

**Invisible Enemies of the Revolution**

The invisibility of the enemy posed a threat to the revolution, and the leadership of the regime constantly engaged in attempts to explain to its underlings how to recognize an enemy. While socioeconomic background was vital in judging the counterrevolutionary potential of people, such as whether they came from upper and higher-educated classes or as “new people” from the cities, almost everyone was considered able to become a loyal follower of the regime—and absolutely everyone was at risk of turning Yuon in mind. Farmers, on the other hand, were considered purer people and the base of the revolution and therefore had more rights, easier access to goods, and protections (including from imprisonment). Most decisive, however, was whether someone resisted the new order. Political resistance made them fundamentally (and ethnically) different. Thus, traitorous thinking was to be derived from traitorous behavior, although this might not be as clear-cut as it seems. While it was made clear that letting an enemy walk free might result in being considered an enemy themselves, cadres had to deal with vague descriptions of their enemies, sometimes tipping into outright comedy, as in this example by Khieu Samphan.

> We see the enemy acting already, but we say ‘Not a problem.’
> This comes from our instructions on not yet being hot. As when the enemy drinks palm sugar water, and then defecates in the drinking tube, we say that he is lazy, not that he is an enemy. In fact, he is an enemy.¹³

The expression “not yet being hot” already introduces an important ideological theme of the Khmer Rouge: those purified into clean revolutionary thought should be clear-sighted enough to recognize enemies simply by observing abnormalities in their behavior. These classic Buddhist themes of purity and enlightenment, in turn, also meant that those who failed to “see” an enemy were not pure and hence might be considered as polluted if not enemies themselves. Seeing enemies where others might not see them developed into proof of revolutionary purity, while not seeing them created a high risk of suspicion.

That is why the notebooks of interrogators at S-21 are full of study sessions on how to recognize enemies. One interrogator, Chan, noted down that “9% [of the population] are weak[,]” Meng-Try Ea, *The Chain of Terror: The Khmer Rouge Southwest Zone Security System* (Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2005), 7.

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1% very weak[,] 1% are enemies.” But how can you know whether someone is a member of the CIA, KGB, or Vietnamese enemy networks? Another interrogator wrote:

There are two types of enemies the Party arrest:

a) People who conduct anti-party activities of all kinds at the local level and those who freely make contact with others beyond the Party’s order.

b) People who appear in connection with [the enemies] in Santebal reports and have been clearly examined and investigated.

The most problematic enemy was the internal enemy: cadres hiding in the party with the goal of destroying it. These were difficult to find. All that could be done was to look out for indicators of sabotage, such as being lazy, being late for work, and slowing down work in any way. Yet, while some in the populace and within the movement were considered merely a bit confused, others to be simply sticking to old habits of being and acting with a “free spirit” (seri-niyum), and still others as having “accidentally” become enemies, those imprisoned at S-21 fell under the category of enemies to be “smashed.” Though the inmates of the security apparatus, known as Santebal, may not have looked like enemies, they clearly were, and there was to be no doubt about it: “As for our security department, the enemies are handcuffed; although they do not have guns and apparently look as if they were revolutionaries, in actuality they are enemies.” Study sessions explaining the party policy towards enemies were not very helpful, either. Notes from these sessions cycle around repetition of vague instructions to look “closely” at the biography of the inmates, to be vigilant with regard to one’s environment (even one’s own colleagues), and to never, ever let a single enemy walk free. The vagueness of the enemy and the fact that anyone could be one created a constant threat that resurfaced upon encounters with the sameness of the other. For one, the party had to insist that cadres should not become “weak,” feel pity, and identify with the enemy. Furthermore, the otherness of the cadres’ own self might turn them into enemies any time. They constantly saw colleagues being imprisoned and killed for their impurities and “mistakes” and feared being next.

Separation, ambiguity, and liminality

The process of interning, torturing, and turning subjects into enemies in S-21 (and beyond) resembled a transformative ritual, a rite of passage into a new symbolic status: that of being one hundred percent Yuon in mind. Victor Turner revitalized Arnold van Gennep’s concept of liminal rituals to describe a three-staged status transition:

Van Gennep has shown that all rites of transition are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or limen), and aggregation. The first phase of separation comprises symbolic

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18 Ibid.

19 Document No. D06938, emphasis added.

20 Interview with former S-21 interrogator by the author, Kandal province, Cambodia, March 30, 2019.
behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions (a ‘state’); during the intervening liminal period, the state of the ritual subject (the ‘passenger’) is ambiguous; he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state; in the third phase the passage is consummated.21

The liminal being is in a state in which it reflects on society, its morals, and its own role in it in order to transition into its new status. While in transition, it is associated with wildness and ambiguity, as it also draws power from being in touch with worlds beyond. It is betwixt, nowhere, ambiguous, dangerous, wild, and in-between.

As in all but in other cases usually non-violent and voluntary liminal rituals, transition for the inmates of S-21 started with separation from the cooperative: a blindfolded transfer signifying the entering of a realm outside of and invisible to the “normal” order, in a secluded and secret space.22 In that new space, they were photographed and registered with number plates and fingerprints, a system stemming from French colonial prisons.23 Then they entered a realm where they were initially treated—in an interaction between physical and social body statuses—as socially unclear and hence unclean bodies without clear identity.24 They were stripped of their clothes (only keeping their underwear) and left shackled, lying close together with dozens of other inmates or in a tiny cell in their own dirt, washed only irregularly in “bathing sessions” with a water hose.25 Dirt became part of their personal space. Correspondingly, they were forced to relieve themselves into an ammunition box. Instead of separating the liminal dirt into the realm of the wild as a sign of ordered spheres and identities, they were forced to eat, sleep, and defecate in the same spot.26

Their treatment as inmates resulted in a complete and violent loss of identity and its articulations. Inmates not only were registered with numbers and addressed by numbers by their guards but also were unable to move and kept in shackles at all times. They needed to request permission for any type of bodily movement (sitting upright instead of lying on the floor, for instance). They were deprived of control of their time. They were even, at times, prevented from sleep.27 They were not allowed to talk to others (just centimeters away). They lived without personal belongings and were unable to perform rituals of any sort. At the same time, they were treated as only numbers, who shared their space with anonymous and, at times, sick, dying, or even dead co-inmates. Correspondingly, the detention rooms were also devoid of character: empty rooms containing only signs of power (shackles, defecation boxes, and boards on which the cadres wrote behavioral rules inmates were supposed to adhere to).28

22 It should be added that this was not an exception but rather the rule under the Khmer Rouge. Usually, larger security centers and reeducation camps had been constructed in secluded areas far off from villages such as former pagodas or school buildings. One reason for this was the need for secrecy. But it also followed rather simple demands of practicality as these concrete buildings and their spatiality usually suited the purpose of detaining, torturing and executing the inmates best. Compare for example the description of localities in the Southwest Zone in Ea, Chain of Terror.
25 Hinton, Why Did They Kill?, 225.
26 Ibid.
At the same time, the liminal beings were like in rituals described by Turner within tribal societies considered polluted, ambiguous, and dangerous. Interaction between inmates was suppressed, possibly also in order to prevent contagious spreading of ideas and counterrevolutionary activities among them. Likewise, interrogators and guards were told not to touch them, such as by beating them with bare hands or feet, but to use wire or wood instead, and strictly advised not to interact with them, not to talk to them about their background and life prior internment. Using bare hands on women particularly was thought to risk pulling cadres into moral offenses and sexual lust, drawing them away from “doing politics.” Interrogators were constantly told to keep their “mastery” (mchas) when interacting with the enemy and to beware of their “reactions” (brati kam), which might endanger them and the revolution: by being attacked as a result of not paying proper attention; by being drawn into emotional reactions, such as feeling pity for them; by becoming hesitant, doubtful, or sexually aroused; by getting angry, losing control, and starting to use violence without political purpose; and, more directly, by losing vital information or allowing individualistic weaknesses such as laziness and self-interest to enter revolutionary practice.

The liminality of the S-21 is also part of its semantics, as, for example, when inmates were called “a-preet” by the cadres. In Cambodian Buddhism, preet are ghosts caught in hell, tormented for the evil deeds they committed in life. They must endure torture for millions of years before they can be transformed into new beings. This liminality also appeared in the naming of the three interrogation units and styles: cold, chewing, and finally hot (mainly depending on the degree of torture involved). This also reflected Buddhist notions of transformation and purification as processes of “heating oneself.” Finally, beyond infrastructural convenience, there was a symbolic element indicating liminal transition in choosing pagodas and schools across the country as places of purification and mental transformation. In addition to being concrete structures that served well for the construction of prisons, these buildings were deliberately chosen for what were seen as, quite literally, “reeducation” centers. Evidence for this notion lies in the facts that colonial and pre-revolutionary prisons were not used for this purpose and that former school buildings were chosen even in Phnom Penh.

Uncovering I: Torture
Torture served to uncover the traitorous mind. In this regard, it differed from the liminal realm of detention, which was devoid of semiotics inscribing identities to the inmates, as one can find many references to the act of making the Vietnamese mind and otherness of the victims visible during torture. This becomes especially clear when reading the explanations of an interrogator about the usage of a technique called paying homage, which indicates the centrality of

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29 Turner, The Forest of Symbols, 93–111.
31 Document No. D15375.
33 Chandler, Voices from S-21, 118.
34 Ian Harris, Buddhism in a Dark Age: Cambodian Monks under Pol Pot (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013), 54.
35 Quite fittingly, S-21 moved to this location from a former Lon Nol prison that was in use until 1976.
uncovering and, simultaneously, transformation (of consciousness) through torture as a violent means of othering:

Paying homage to images of dogs is introduced because it has political meaning – one dog is imperialism, and another dog is the territory-swallowing Yuon enemy. We forced them to pay homage of images of dogs in order to test them because when they were arrested, 90% pretended that they were revolutionists. Once they pay homage to images of the two dogs, it means that they accept they are traitors. Concerning consciousness: we change their consciousness. Concerning assignment: Do they respect Santebal or not?36

Since interrogators noted that they forced inmates to do it several times or for as long as half an hour, “paying homage” probably meant that the interrogated had to remain in a bodily position called “airplane,” a famous torture technique widely applied during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Inmates in this position would resemble followers bowing to the dog image, signifying that they had animal-like masters and belonged to a lineage of a different species.37 Semiotically reinforcing their misled inner servitude to the Vietnamese, these images of dogs often had Ho Chi Minh’s head on it. To further signify that they had deluded minds twisted against the revolution, they were also forced to “pay homage” to chairs, tables, and walls. Similarly simulating an interplay between master and servant, a guard rode piggyback on the inmate on the way upstairs to the cell.38

Some of the torture techniques were also considered “Vietnamese,” as highlighted by Duch during the Khmer Rouge Tribunal: “the […] method was about the suffocation technique that the ‘Yuon’ used to torture prisoners in order to obtain their confessions—that is, putting a plastic bag over a prisoner’s head until the prisoner was unconscious.”39 Besides othering and inflicting pain through techniques such as electrocution, pulling of nails, drowning, cigarette burns, beatings, and pouring salt and soap into open wounds to enable an inmate’s transformation into a confessor, torture semiotics also involved wildness and liminality. Interrogators, for instance, had poisonous centipedes and scorpions crawl over their victims or pulled off their shirts and put them “with the mosquitos.”40 Two techniques signifying their belonging to a liminal space and moral otherness seem disputed: hanging them from a crossbar, previously used by students for sports, as well as drowning them upside-down into a water tank on the patio of the building. While interrogators denied the usage of both techniques, claiming for instance that the water tanks were only used to store fertilizer (also in interviews with the author), former prisoner Vann Nath captured these techniques in a painting, depicting a scene that he claimed to have seen from a window while painting portraits of Pol Pot (see Image 1).

37 Chandler, Voices from S-21, 132–133.
38 Vannak Huy, Bou Meng: A Survivor from the Khmer Rouge Prison S-21, Justice for the Future Not Just for the Victims (Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2010).
40 Document No. D17138.
Especially the upside-down drowning heavily resembles a well-known scene from Buddhist hell, where the damned preet are held headfirst in the same type of water tank. Representations of torments in the subterranean region under control of Yama (or yunreach in Khmer) in bureaucratically exact accordance to the lightness or heaviness of evil deeds committed are well-known and can be found in countless pagodas across country. Here are two pictures, one showing the upside-down hanging of preet in an old mural at Wat Tway Bongkum (see Image 2) and one showing a modern version of the scenery in the Khmer Rouge stronghold Pailin (see Image 3).

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41 Vann Nath, Water Torture, acrylic on canvas, ca. 1980, on display at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and Archive, Phnom Penh.
42 Harris, Buddhism in a Dark Age, 55.
43 Wat Tway Bongkum, picture taken by the author, 2017.
In a similar vein, the dog to which many inmates had to “pay homage” as a representation of a master-servant relationship also plays a prominent role in Buddhist hell. As scavengers and dung-eaters, dogs are considered especially dirty and belonging to the wilderness and its realms of violence, death and its potency. They were often seen running around cremation sites or in some usually rural areas in spaces where dead bodies had been sacrificed to nature before colonial state administration viewed this practice as unhygienic and “unmodern,” gnawing on human remains. This is also why they—and vultures—became part of the regional Buddhist hell iconography, where they devour the tormented preet (see Image 4).

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44 Wat Phnom Yat, Pailin, picture taken by the author, 2015.
46 Wat Tway Bongkum, picture taken by author, 2017.
Paying respect to the dogs as animals of the wild, of out-of-orderness, of violence and death, demonstrates the non-belonging and absolute otherness of the inmates.

Uncovering II: Confessions
The prime instrument for revealing a traitorous mind was, of course, the confession, which in its final version stood at the end of the interrogation process. It marked the dramatic ritual climax signifying the conversion process into a confessed traitor speaking “truth” to its master. However, the confession did not only reconstruct a crime; it was also a meandering tool that uncovered a traitorous identity conspiring with foreign powers, first lured into treason at least decades before. For many inmates, a confession went through several drafts, each version with red-inked instructions in the margins by prison chief Duch for the interrogators to ask more about certain individuals and events, or just exclamations that the prisoner was lying—and, in one instance at least, that the prisoner was “too hardheaded,” so the interrogator may beat him to death. Confessions had to be repeated until they corresponded to the regime’s master narrative of traitorous Khmer networks conspiring with foreign powers.

Counterrevolutionary behavior was not accidental (at least for those incarcerated in S-21), but confession needed to prove that the inmates had weak and amoral personalities, were part of a larger patrimonial network, and to uncover a sociogram of treason. That way, the confession traced not only the evolution of the alleged crime but also the evolution of becoming one hundred percent Yuon in mind. And it served to uncover not only the fact that the inmate became a foreign agent hiding among the people and within the revolution a long time ago, but also that he or she was part of a larger counterrevolutionary conspiracy. Confessions all started with basic socioeconomic information and ran from early childhood until the day they had been arrested by arrested by Angkar, which translates as “the Organization.” It was essential, as stated in a Khmer Rouge manual, to show that they were responsible for economic failures.

In growing rice there are two battles. First, the battle with nature. Second, the battle with destructive enemies. The enemy destruction begins with breaking stalks when seedlings are being transplanted; they don’t transplant from the stalk and the roots at all, they break the stalks to destroy, they destroy during the harvest, they destroy during transport, and they destroy in threshing. Raising crops is a technical struggle, a class struggle, a struggle between revolution and no revolution.

A large chunk of a confession centered on admitting to economic sabotage or slowing down the work of a cooperative to discredit the revolution. Usually, however, the reason that people became traitors in the first place—decades ago, when they were young—was said to be moral weakness relating to individualistic thinking, a poison of the social milieu they had been part of. Typically, someone else—a close contact, such as a teacher, village chief, or boss at work

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48 Judy Ledgerwood, “The Cambodian Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes: National Narrative,” *Museum Anthropology* 21, no. 1 (1997), 86. In the surviving documents, the upper leadership of S-21 very rarely explicitly allowed “hot methods” to be employed until death, as this went against regulations putting the value of information for the collective first; compare for example, Archived Document, “Letter from Duch to Pon,” Document No. E3/376, Virtual Tribunal Archive, Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). Document was archived on April 8, 2019 at the ECCC in Phnom Penh. Killing an inmate before he delivered a complete confession was a punishable crime that could lead to the imprisonment and, consequently, death of the interrogator; Archived Document, “The Activities of Rin in the Office S-21,” Document No. D16983, Sterling Library, Yale University and the Documentation Center of Cambodia, Phnom Penh.

—told them how bad the revolution was; how people were starving; how it ended all material possession, freedom, and religion; and that they would hide and build up forces to bring down the revolution. Counterrevolutionary weakness—making Khmer people receptive to manipulative speeches by imperialist and capitalist others—was usually framed in ways very similar to Buddhist moralities, in which individualistic motives such as greed, delusion, and anger are the root causes of bad behavior. A well-known example for these three individualistic motives as root causes for immoral action is the regionally highly influential Buddhist text on the three realms of the world, *Trai Bhūm*. In a similar vein, non-revolutionary thoughts and behaviors were, in confession, generally said to be caused by individualistic motives such as greed (such as craving private property or luxury consumption or “being excited to meet the family”), power (enjoying authority and control over others), and/or sexual lust (having extramarital affairs, stalking innocent women). Even interrogators themselves had to be vigilant not to fall prey to individualistic thoughts that placed personal comfort and pleasures above the collective:

Must raise the flag [among our cadres] of eliminating the three types of individualisms:

- Individualism in laziness, lazy in thinking, lazy in reflecting, lazy in interrogating harshly in order to deeply understand the true nature of a problem, all the way to being lazy, lazy to walk, lazy to write, lazy to listen, lazy to speak and instruct, lazy to reeducate. The weakest type of laziness is just thinking of sleep.

- Individualism in viewpoint: That we see only ourselves as all good and correct in all then criteria. Meaning that whatever one thinks is all correct, whatever one does is all good.

- Individualism in power and authority: Not sticking to the concrete, not sticking close to the movement, not sticking close to the masses. And power is the second key factor, that is, must study from the movement, must grasp.

The interrogators, guards, medics, and other types of S-21 personnel arrested and tortured into confession themselves were all accused of sabotaging security work due to greed, laziness, sexual cravings, or a will to power over others. All confessions followed a uniform template. They served the purpose of showing that traitors were long-term conspirators and


that this was a counterrevolutionary activity of great proportions, ongoing for decades. Former Minister of Information Hu Nim, for instance, declared:

I would like to tell the party, with respect: After Brother No 2 had two work meetings with me, the last day being 10 April 1977, I gave myself to the party. From then on, I have been doing self-criticism every day. I see that my criminal acts against the Organisation, against the Communist Party of Kampuchea, against the nation and people of Kampuchea, are of great dimension.  

Being on the other side of morality and conspiring against the people made one thing clear to Hu Nim’s confession personality: “I’m not a human being, I’m an animal.” All confessions ended with a list of traitors that served to reveal networks of enemies (khøsæ). Inmates provided lists of names of co-conspirators under torture. Some names were real, and others made up. Some tried to list names of people who had been previously arrested. The Khmer Rouge were not so much interested in reconstructing a crime but rather reconstructing moral flaws as a source of treason. They constructed a complete sociogram of a respondent’s life course alongside everyone the inmate ever knew and, of course, all his or her superiors and subordinates through time. The list of names was often turned into a representation of a counterrevolutionary network (Image 5).

Image 5. Graph of “CIA Networks.”


57 The New Zealander Kerry George Hamill, obviously a Beatles fan, amongst others confessed that he went to a course conducted by a “professor Pepper” at the University of Waikato; compare Archived Document, “The confession of Kerry George Hamill,” Document No. D07139, Sterling Library, Yale University and the Documentation Center of Cambodia, Phnom Penh.


These networks had to be uncovered, outlined, and tracked. Likewise, their non-Khmer, animal-like nature belonging to Vietnamese, CIA, or KGB networks had to be shown and outlined in the confessions. This resulted in at times paradoxical end statements such as this one, where a former electrical worker declared his guilt and his deserving of death while also claiming not to have betrayed the revolution:

I am not a member of the CIA. I confessed to being CIA when confronted with my guilt. I beg the Organization to [kill] me because I have not followed the revolution. ... I deserve to die because the Organization had [once] trusted me. I no longer wish to live, make no protests to the Organization, by way of seeking justice. But I must declare that in my heart I have not betrayed the Organization at all. I declare my guilt ... because I am dying. Long live the glorious revolution! Long live the Revolutionary Organization!60

Aggregation in a Mass Grave or Liminality in Death

Finally, othering, liminality, and semiotics of “Vietnameseness” also surface in the concluding phase of the S-21 liminal ritual, the aggregation stage. For one, the killing of infants by hitting them against a tree “is part of a well-known lexicon of atrocities purportedly committed by the Vietnamese during the early nineteenth century.”61 And of course, throwing dead enemies into a mass grave has the obvious symbolic meaning of signaling death without worth to the collective. However, there is more to the execution process. The classic interpretation of the aggregation phase of rites of passage would be a stage in which initiates re-enter society with a newly attained status and identity.62 The death practices at the execution site Choeung Ek are either a case of this re-entering or a case of permanent liminality for “passengers”—ghosts, in this case—that do not transition into rebirth. What is obvious is that mass graves are against Khmer death rituals. But what are Khmer death rituals exactly, and how do the mass graves relate to them?

The first interpretation would view the mass burials as an aggregation into the social status of a Vietnamese. Ethnic Khmer Cambodians strongly prefer cremation over burial, with burial considered a Chinese, Sino-Khmer, and especially Vietnamese practice. Most classic Khmer religious texts on death rituals “ignore burial as an option.”63 During the mid- until the late 20th century at least, burying the dead, therefore, has strong non-Khmer overtones, if not a specifically Vietnamese iconography. Fitting for this hint at a symbolic dimension to the death practices is that the many executed ethnic Vietnamese were not killed at Choeung Ek, as highlighted by Him Huy, who was in charge of transporting victims there.64 Even more strikingly, Westerners were taken to a place near the prison and—against what the upper echelons of the party must have considered “Western” practice—burned on orders from above.65 This ethnic variation further underlines the symbolic dimension of execution and burial/cremation practices under the Khmer Rouge.66

60 Chandler, Voices from S-21, 79.
61 Harris, Buddhism in a Dark Age, 56.
66 On that note, there is not much known about death rituals under the Khmer Rouge beyond its killing fields for enemies.
Burial is not unknown to ethnic Khmer nor in the religious belief systems of the region, but it usually relates to either “bad deaths” that have no chance of leading to nirvana or to a history before crematories, when corpses had been buried until only bones were left and these remains were later burned. In Khmer traditional beliefs, those who die a tragic and sudden death become ghosts trapped in the world, experiencing grave difficulties in transitioning into an afterworld or rebirth.\textsuperscript{67} Hence, killing Khmer violently and leaving them in a state in between and without later cremation means that—rather than entering a new status as Yuon—it is more likely that liminality (the transition into the afterlife) is halted, and the victims become suffering, trapped ghosts known as \textit{khmouch}. The fact that Khmer view the ghosts of the killing fields as trapped even today shows the symbolic dimension of a possibly permanent liminal existence that might also inform, knowingly or not, the practices of the Khmer Rouge cadres aimed at punishing the enemy even after his or her death.\textsuperscript{68} For the dead enemies, torments went on. Equally, in classic Buddhist conceptions, though not widely popular in Cambodia, \textit{kunapa} is the second of four neighboring hells surrounding the eight hot hells: a swamp of rotting corpses.\textsuperscript{69} Like other torture regimes and also like concentration camps, the violent liminal regime of S-21 not only enforces a new status onto the victim through pain, torture and humiliation, it even symbolically captures the victims in liminality in the afterlife, in this case as trapped and suffering ghosts. On a symbolic level at least, the victims are even after death bound to and tortured within the liminal regime of their executioners.

**Conclusion: Dead Certainty**

For Arjun Appadurai, ethnic violence involves producing a clear difference from uncertain identities, with its perpetrators aiming to produce a “dead certainty.”\textsuperscript{70} The lethal rite of passage toward this certainty in the Khmer Rouge central prison S-21 was infused with semiotics of Vietnamese and absolute otherness; of Cold War narratives; of network politics (\textit{khsae}); of a profound difference in terms of thinking, lifestyle, and biography; of liminal dirt and the loss of markers of humanity; and of Cambodian Buddhist iconography and a discourse of pain, delusion, and transition. This article does not attempt to explain why people killed politically uncertain identities but rather to reveal how violent practices aimed at “manufacturing difference”\textsuperscript{71} followed particular scripts that reflected consecutive stages of a violent rite of passage, expressing cultural ideas of Cold War politics, of “Vietnameseness,” and of an imagined Khmer Buddhist moral universe. The enemy had to bow to the CIA, the KGB, and the Yuon head of Ho Chi Minh to demonstrate his misguided political and ethnic allegiances. He had to declare his non-Khmer and traitorous nature within the situation of torture and within his fabricated confession. Within that confession, he had to declare not only his singular act of treason at a given point of time, for which he was imprisoned, but also that he had been and remained part of a larger, long-lasting scheme and that every act of his life was part of a grand local (as well as worldwide) conspiracy. The enemy had to embody an explanation of the economic failures of central planning. He had to signify individualistic lust, greed, and striving for power as the basis of his thinking and acting. And, of course, he had to prove himself polluted and dangerous, a toxin to the purity of the Khmer collective,\textsuperscript{72} thereby justifying his own execution and permanent liminality as a trapped, suffering ghost.


\textsuperscript{70} Appadurai, \textit{Dead Certainty}.

\textsuperscript{71} Hinton, \textit{Why Did They Kill?}, 225–247.

\textsuperscript{72} Timothy Williams and Rhiannon Neilson, “They will Rot the Society, Rot the Party, and Rot the Army”: Toxification as an Ideology and Motivation for Perpetrating Violence in the Khmer Rouge Genocide?,“ \textit{Terrorism and Political Violence} 31, no. 3 (2019), 494–515, accessed November 9, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2016.1233873.
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Failure to Protect?: Applying the DRRI-2 Scales to Rwanda and Srebrenica

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Introduction
In 2007, The Mothers of Srebrenica, an organization which represents 6,000 women whose family members were massacred at Srebrenica in 1995, filed a civil action in the District Court of the Hague against the United Nations (UN) and the Dutch Government. The Mothers of Srebrenica trial brought international attention to the role in which UN peacekeepers stationed at Srebrenica played in the massacre of over 8,000 Bosniak men and boys by the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) under the command of General Mladić. During the same period, the actions of peacekeepers in Rwanda, particularly those of Lieutenant Luc Lemaire, who by withdrawing the 90 UN troops under his command, abandoned 2,000 Tutsi refugees to be murdered by the Interahamwe, begged the question of what role UN peacekeepers played in the genocides. Were the UN peacekeepers helpless bystanders or were they a culpable party that had the ability to stop massacres but instead made a conscious decision to allow them to take place?

This article reanalyzes both the situational and operational factors on the ground that influenced the decisions of UN peacekeepers during their deployments in Srebrenica and Rwanda. By approaching these events from a mental health perspective, it is shown that there are numerous factors which gravely impacted the mental state of UN peacekeepers. These factors, when combined with the operational limitations which peacekeepers faced, were ultimately detrimental to their ability to take any serious action to prevent genocide from taking place. I take a more in-depth look at the aspects of their experiences which the peacekeepers themselves report as significant or defining factors of their deployment and analyze them using the diagnostic questions asked of returning veterans found in the Deployment Risk and Resilience Inventory (DRRI-2) Scales. The DRRI-2 Scales are an instrument used to assess veterans’ risk of or resilience against developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) following their deployment. The use of these scales will aid in shedding new light on the daily conditions that the UN peacekeepers operated under and which only eyewitnesses who lived these experiences can describe how they impacted their mental wellbeing and the agency they felt they could exercise. This article sheds light on previously under-explored stressors that

2 The Interahamwe was one of the extremist groups, comprised of younger men, who participated in the Rwandan Genocide. See Michael Barnett, Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 54.
3 Journalist Chris McGreal pinpoints one of the key arguments against UN peacekeeping in Rwanda and Bosnia. He states “[t]here were good reasons to question the point of UN peacekeeping in the 1990s and to wonder if it was not costing as many lives as it was protecting by offering an illusion of security. The murdered Tutsis at the school might have stood a better chance if they had fled to Uganda.” This typifies the criticism that UN enclaves in fact did not provide an area where refugees could expect safety, but instead concentrated them to make them an even easier target for the perpetrators who knew that the UN peacekeepers protecting their targets would not open fire on them due to the rules of engagement dictated to them by the UN high command. See Chris McGreal, “What’s the Point of Peacekeepers When They Don’t Keep the Peace?: From Rwanda to Bosnia, Haiti to Congo, Failures Raise Questions About Future of United Nations Blue Helmets,” The Guardian, September 17, 2015, accessed November 4, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/17/un-united-nations-peacekeepers-rwanda-bosnia.
4 To view the diagnostic questions used to understand soldiers' experiences before, during and after deployment, please refer to Dawne Vogt et al., Deployment Risk and Resilience Inventory-2 (DRRI-2) (Boston: National Center for Posttraumatic Disorder (PTSD), 2012), accessed November 27, 2019, https://www ptsd.va.gov/professional/assessment/documents/DRRI2scales.pdf.
would have influenced the heavily criticized decisions of both UN commands in Rwanda and Srebrenica in not doing more to prevent injury or death to civilians.

Before discussing at length the impact which the specific conditions of their deployment had on the agency of UN peacekeepers in Bosnia and Rwanda, it is important to outline the orders which dictated their actions and which they were expected to carry out as soldiers no matter the conditions they faced. For the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Srebrenica, their mandate was outlined in three UN Resolutions: Resolution 819—issued April 16, 1993, Resolution 824—issued May 6, 1993, and Resolution 836—issued June 4, 1993. These resolutions outline that the UN peacekeepers were to ensure that Srebrenica and the surrounding area be established as a safe zone where the ill and wounded could be transported from and to ensure both through forces on the ground and through negotiations undertaken at higher levels that humanitarian aid could reach the enclave unhindered. In Resolution 836, the security council also condemned all efforts by the Bosnian Serb forces to ethnically cleanse the city of Bosniaks. Therefore, the mandate for UN troops in Srebrenica was to protect the safe zone, to ensure that humanitarian aid was able to reach the safe zone and it was implied, although not explicitly stated that UN troops should prevent evacuations of civilians by Bosnian Serb forces. Finally, only in the last resolution issued, UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 836, were UN troops authorized to use force in Bosnian safe zones. Use of force was only authorized in cases of self defense, in response to bombardment or armed incursion of the safe zone by any party involved, or if those parties obstructed the transport of supplies to safe zones.

Particularly for the peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, the growing political concerns of the UN, which will be discussed at greater length later in this article, played a decisive role in the creation of both situational and operational factors which compromised the success of UN peacekeepers in carrying out their missions and ultimately put them at greater risk. Initially, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) established in October 1993, was deployed to see that the Arusha Peace Agreement was adhered to. This mission was a challenge for peacekeepers from the beginning due to the presence of Hutu-extremist elements in Rwanda, the political instability of the Hutu-ran government, and doubts within the UN that the Rwandan government could successfully implement a transitional government. The early Arusha peacekeeping mission was tied to political progress and peacekeepers on the ground were confronted by early 1994, with a rapidly devolving political situation culminating in the assassination of Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana on April 6, 1994, reigniting civil war. With the targeting and murder of Belgian peacekeepers and mounting international pressure, this prompted the UN to make the decision to withdraw the bulk of UN forces in Rwanda on April 21, 1994. UN troops remaining in Rwanda were mandated not only to contribute to a cease-fire agreement, but to also establish safe zones and provide security for the humanitarian aid being delivered to civilians. Most pertinent to our discussion, UN forces in Rwanda were indeed mandated, unlike in Srebrenica, to “contribute to the security and protection of displaced persons, refugees and civilians at risk in Rwanda.”

7 Ibid., 1, paras. 5–6.
8 Ibid., 3, para. 9.
9 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 142.
13 Ibid., 145.

Since its first appearance as a psychological diagnosis in 1980, PTSD has come a long way in terms of recognition as a diagnosis and also in its connection with earlier descriptions of stress-related disorders including the diagnosis of shell shock during and after World War I.\textsuperscript{15} However, it is only with recent conflicts in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan in the early 21st century that PTSD has become a part of the public and psychiatric discourse prompted by research with veterans particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{16} One characteristic of PTSD is that its onset is dependent on external events. This defining feature of the disorder has led to a debate over the validity of PTSD as a diagnosis, questioning if the disorder, which originated in the context of military psychiatry, has become an overapplied social construct.\textsuperscript{17} However, especially for historians who study war, genocide, and displacement, the reciprocal relationship between the psychological factors that drive human agency and their impact on history demands further exploration. We would be dipping into the role of a psychologist if we tried to suppose knowing the inner motivations of a person. What we can reveal as historians are the events and pre-conditions that impact the agency of historical actors. By looking at decision formation and analyzing the agency of historical actors through the lens of mental health, historians have a new tool to understand the factors which impact that agency. This article analyzes the accounts given by the UN commander in Rwanda, Roméo Dallaire, the UN commander at the École Technique Officielle (ETO), Luc Lemaire, the Dutch Commander in Srebrenica, Thom Karremans, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) volunteers at the UN compound in Srebrenica to better understand, given the circumstances under which the UN peacekeepers were working, what can we as fellow human beings have expected from these men?

The tool that I will use to better understand the multi-layered sources of stress which characterized the experiences of UN personnel in Rwanda and Srebrenica are the DRRI-2 Scales. These scales function as a series of questions that allow veterans post-deployment to identify on a number scale how much or how often they were exposed to certain deployment-related factors. These factors either put war veterans at risk, as in, they put stress on the mental health of the individual, or help them to be resilient, providing mental support against developing PTSD.\textsuperscript{18} These scales were modified in 2012 to address a wider range of both intrapersonal factors, such as sexual harassment and also increased concerns, particularly for soldiers deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, of insurgency warfare and exposure to nuclear, biological and chemical agents. I have chosen the DRRI-2 Scales because it is the most detailed assessment of a veteran’s deployment experiences, especially in exploring the relationship with the development of PTSD and witnessing the consequences of war.\textsuperscript{19} This includes witnessing


\textsuperscript{16} For a more complete overview of PTSD as a Diagnosis, please refer to Nancy Andreasen’s article cited above. Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} This refers to a response to the criticisms that Derek Summerfield presents in his paper where he argues that the diagnosis of PTSD is currently being used by anyone who seeks to medicalize their traumatic experiences or seeks compensation for “relatively commonplace events” such as accidents, muggings, or difficult pregnancies. Summerfield even goes so far as to refer to this system as a “trauma industry.” See Derek Summerfield, “The Invention of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Social Usefulness of a Psychiatric Category,” *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 322, no. 7278 (2001), 96, accessed June 28, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.322.7278.95. However, Summerfield’s standpoint was highly criticized by Shalev et. al. in their article “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” where they criticise any medical professional that questions the existence of a disease or disorder rather than trying to relieve the patient of their pain. See Arieh Y. Shalev et al., “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 322, no. 7297 (2001), 1302, accessed November 21, 2018, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25467014.


\textsuperscript{19} The other alternative for a set of risk-assessment scales would be the Critical Warzone Experiences (CWE) scales.
injury or death to civilians, mass displacement, the destruction of homes and communities, and the desperation of those people affected by the conflict. With their mandate to protect and provide relief to civilians, the UN peacekeeping forces’ reason for being there was not to combat an enemy force as with a soldier under normal rules of engagement, but to create the conditions for or help to maintain peace. For this reason, scales which do not explore these experiences would not be of use for the purposes of this research.

The revised DRRI-2 Scales were created to address the shift in warfare specifically experienced by the United States military in the Middle East from the Gulf Wars to the more recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan following September 11, 2001. The subsequent changes were to address that the sustained conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan represented a shift towards insurgency warfare, which involved smaller groups of paramilitaries who could be dispersed among the civilian population. For this reason, for troops deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, missions could quickly shift from humanitarian missions to delivering lethal force. From this brief overview of the background of the DRRI-2 Scales, there are a few obvious limitations in applying these scales to understand the risk and resilience factors present for UN troops in Rwanda and Srebrenica. The first and most obvious being that the UN rules of engagement limited the use of force to such a degree that it was rarely, if ever, used. So, while their mission could shift between providing humanitarian aid and protection to coming under heavy fire, UN troops were not at risk of causing accidental civilian deaths by mistaking them for enemy targets, unlike US troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. Another key limit in the application of the DRRI-2 Scales in Rwanda and Srebrenica is that the scales do not capture to what extent decisions made at a higher level by UN headquarters in New York impacted the success of missions on the ground. The indecisiveness and lack of international support in terms of firepower or pressure from the UN high command and from its member states during both peacekeeping missions was a critical operational risk factor which amplified the isolation and sense of unattainability for UN troops in both locations to carry out their respective mandates to protect safe zones and to safeguard civilians. This lack of support of relief forces, firepower, and a united diplomatic and military response were not inhibiting factors, or certainly not to the degree seen in Rwanda and Bosnia, for the deployments focused on in either the original DRRI or the revised DRRI-2 Scales.

Despite these limitations, using these scales for the purpose of compiling information regarding the deployment experiences of UN peacekeepers suits the scales’ original intended function. The DRRI-2 Scales were created not as a diagnostic tool themselves, but to “provide a research inventory of risk and resilience measures” to assess deployment-related factors and what their implications are for the long-term health of veterans and servicemen. However, creating or using such a catalogue of experiences based on their implications for an individual’s mental wellbeing is often overlooked in historical approaches as a key force behind historical agency. It is these personal and unseen consequences of experiencing traumatic events that often give way to the large-scale events that shape history.

In Rwanda and Srebrenica, the massive operational restrictions stemming from the higher echelons of the UN was a decisive factor which greatly restricted the actions that UN peacekeepers in Rwanda and Srebrenica could take to protect civilian lives. However, what

20 Barnett, Eyewitness to a Genocide, 46.
21 Vogt et al., DRRI-2: An Updated Tool, 710–711.
22 Ibid.
24 Though UN peacekeepers did not have a high risk of accidentally firing on and killing civilians within those limited parameters, in both cases of the evacuation of the UN safe zone in Srebrenica and in Rwanda, the UN withdrawal from the ETO were both decisive actions which directly lead to civilians being murdered. It is beyond the scope of this article to compare the mental health implications of those two actions, but it is certain that UN peacekeepers would have felt some degree of responsibility for those civilian casualties even if they were not the perpetrators.

remains under explored in the historical analysis of these events is how those operational restrictions and higher level “politics” of UN peacekeeping limited the perceived or actual decisions that peacekeepers could take at the time to prevent genocide. By reflecting on the daily conditions, experiences, and limitations described by UN commanders on the ground in Rwanda and Srebrenica through the questions presented in the DRRI-2 Scales, we can better understand their impact on agency.

The revised DRRI-2 shows six categories out of a total of seventeen which have the highest correlation with the development of PTSD. These are: Difficult Living and Working Environment (56%), Perceived Threat (55%), Postdeployment Stressors (55%), Postdeployment Social Support (46%), Combat Experiences (45%) and Aftermath of Battle (43%).

For the purposes of my research, I will focus on what the DRRI defines as “mission-related factors”—these are factors which have the potential to cause stress during a soldier’s deployment. Of those six critical sections, I will also limit my focus to the question sections that have been discussed at length by Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire, (then) Lieutenant Luc Lemaire, and Colonel Thom Karremans and clearly constitute defining aspects of their respective deployments with the UN in Rwanda and Srebrenica. Therefore, I will not be including the section that focuses on Postdeployment Social Support, nor will I discuss the section on Postdeployment Stressors. Furthermore, I will not be analyzing several questions from the section on Combat Experiences (Section D of the DRRI-2). This is due to the fact that questions 1, 2, 8, 12, 13, 16, and 17 of this section ask if soldiers were involved in scenarios where they fired their weapon, launched an assault on enemy troops or otherwise used violence to subdue a perceived enemy threat. These questions are therefore irrelevant to the UN peacekeeping forces in Rwanda and Srebrenica, as they were under strict orders not to use force to achieve their mission. Additionally, a further four questions in this section that ask whether or not soldiers witnessed a member of the unit of civilians being seriously wounded or killed are discussed at length under the sections Perceived Threat and The Aftermath of Battle (which has been identified in this article as Post-Combat Experiences and therefore will not be discussed at length in the Combat Experiences section). I will also note for each section discussed in this article, if any further questions are not relevant to this research and why, the most notable being questions relating to exposure to nuclear, biological and chemical agents (NBCs).

**Difficult Living and Working Environment**

The first section I will be exploring is Section C of DRRI-2, which focuses on the environment in which soldiers were deployed and the conditions of their daily lives during deployment. It is by analyzing the accounts of the day-to-day environment that the UN personnel in both Rwanda and Srebrenica had to operate in and the questions asked by DRRI-2 Scales that we can gain some understanding about how those conditions impacted the mental state of UN troops. Section C focuses on analyzing aspects of the deployment environment and living conditions which after a period of time would have a negative impact on someone’s mental health. These include questions such as: Could you sleep? Did you have enough food? Was the climate of deployment uncomfortable? Could you shower when needed and were you living in sanitary

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27 Ibid., 3–4.
28 Hereafter referred to as (General) Dallaire, (Lt.) Lemaire and (Col.) Karremans.
29 Vogt et al., DRRI-2, 5.
30 However, it is also noted that the CWE scales provide a condensed measure of perceived danger during deployment which tended to focus more on direct exposure to combat, which also proves problematic as the UN soldiers in Rwanda and Srebrenica were under a strict order to not fire their weapons unless their own lives were at risk. See Karen-Inge Karstoft et al., “Perceived Danger During Deployment: a Rasch Validation of an Instrument Assessing Perceived Combat Exposure and the Witnessing of Combat Consequences in a War Zone,” *European Journal of Psychotraumatology* 9, no. 1 (2018), 3, accessed November 16, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2018.1487224.
conditions? Were you allowed do the things needed to get your job done? Could you get as much privacy as you needed?\footnote{Ibid., 4.}

In Karremans' testimony against VRS General Ratko Mladić at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in July 1996, he describes the conditions of the UN enclave in Srebrenica as it was cut off by the VRS blockade one year before, from April to July 1995.\footnote{Ibid., 637.} Karremans' testimony reveals that if he or the other Dutch soldiers in Srebrenica filled out Section C of the DRRI-2, many of their responses would reflect a high degree of exposure to adverse conditions in their living and working environment. Karremans' testimony describes an atmosphere of desperation experienced by UN troops in the final weeks before the forced evacuation from the Srebrenica enclave. He describes that due to the blockade, refugees under their care were starving and without adequate medical attention while UN troops lived off their combat rations for a considerable period of time.\footnote{Ibid., 636.} Their ability to perform necessary daily tasks such as showering or more critically, carrying out their mandate to provide aid and relief to Bosnian refugees were crippled by the fact that they operated without electricity for weeks. This lack of electricity was compounded by the fact that the Dutch battalion also experienced heavy rain which lead to cold, damp conditions and also several roads leading into the enclave became impassable.\footnote{Ibid., 637–638.} Finally, in terms of humanitarian aid being allowed into the enclave, the period between April and July of 1995, represents a distinct break with the ability to negotiate the entry of humanitarian aid that the UN and other relief organizations in Srebrenica previously enjoyed. Karremans makes it clear that the freedom of movement agreement for humanitarian aid decided in 1993 no longer applied to Srebrenica by this period.\footnote{Ibid., 645.} This, compounded with impassable roads and lack of fuel for vehicles, meant that UN troops were physically trapped inside the Srebrenica enclave. Furthermore, the restriction of movement meant that for the UN soldiers inside the enclave, there was a critical lack of supplies, of personnel, and also no relief troops for current UN personnel who had been trying to improvise under the critical conditions inside the enclave.\footnote{Ibid., 637–638.} Finally, before Karremans' first meeting with Mladić on July 11, he acknowledges in his ICTY testimony that he and the other UN troops in Srebrenica had had no sleep for the previous five days. This was due to the intensified shelling of the city by the VRS and the resulting displacement, death and injury within the enclave and in the surrounding area.\footnote{Ibid.} With the retreat of UN troops and refugees to the Potočari enclave, living conditions were very similar in that they were exceptionally overcrowded; there was little water in hot conditions and UN convoys which provided the only chance for medicine, food or even for timely evacuation on the ground, were not allowed through Bosnian-Serb blockades.\footnote{Cedric Ryngaert, “Peacekeepers Facilitating Human Rights Violations: The Liability of the Dutch State in the ‘Mothers of Srebrenica’ Cases,” Netherlands International Law Review 64 (2017), 510, accessed April 18, 2020, \url{http://doi.org/10.1007/s40802-017-0101-6}.}
Karremans’ account of the daily conditions within the Srebrenica enclave is supported by various personnel with MSF. Those working for MSF describe the logistical nightmare of trying to provide food, medicine, and adequate shelter for the enclave which was critically overpopulated with refugees and consistently bombarded by heavy artillery fire from Bosnian-Serb forces. There are numerous references to the VRS barring vital humanitarian aid from entering the city, amounting to as much as seventy percent of supplies not reaching the enclave. MSF coordinator, Eric Stobbaerts, estimated that the city was filled with almost four times its pre-war population. He also describes that the only food available in the Muslim enclaves were flour, oil, tinned meat, and powdered milk, causing severe immune and nutritional deficiencies. What the MSF testimonies do is help to give an idea of how the environment created by the Bosnian-Serb blockade and bombardment of the city impacted Karreman’s ultimate decision to allow the forcible displacement of the Muslim population from the city in July 1995. It is also important to note, unlike the timeline of events in Rwanda, which constituted a much shorter timeframe, the city of Srebrenica experienced these conditions in increased severity over a period of three years. This of course, constitutes a prolonged exposure to increasingly desperate conditions in the city as evermore refugees fled to the enclave, more people became injured due to shellings and a critical lack of shelter, food and water. The threat in Srebrenica that existed for months, if not years, prior to the UN’s withdrawal, was that people were being left to starve, freeze, or die of disease and the UN, due to the Bosnian-Serb blockade, could do little logistically to fulfil their mandate to maintain the safe zone. To give an idea of just how injurious the daily conditions were to the health and life were of those within the Srebrenica enclave, it was calculated by the Court of Appeals which retried the Mothers of Srebrenica case in 2007, that the victims of the Srebrenica massacre had a mere thirty percent chance of survival if they had been able to remain within the UN enclave after July 12, 1995. This horrific reality of daily life in the UN enclave in Srebrenica left Karremans with little choice but to withdraw on July 11. It is made clear through the MSF reports already discussed in this section, that Karremans and the UN personnel under his command faced grave challenges in protecting human life within the enclave due to the obstacles that were present in providing adequate humanitarian aid and adequate living conditions. As will be discussed in the following section on perceived threat, the chance of successfully carrying out their mandate only would have continued to decrease for
peacekeepers as and if more shelling had occurred directly targeting the enclave following the initial barrage on July 11.49

Regarding the conditions of the UN enclaves in Rwanda, Dallaire reported that UN enclaves in Kigali already began to run out of food in April.50 They also reported that water was an ongoing struggle as more people, especially wounded people, flooded in.51 It is also evident from Dallaire’s documentary, that UN safe areas, for example the one at Amahoro Stadium in Kigali, became, in his words, “like a concentration camp.”52 Amahoro Stadium at its most critical point, swelled with an estimated twelve thousand people seeking the protection of UN troops. Dallaire describes that people were being protected by the UN who surrounded the stadium, only so they could die inside due to lack of food and water.53 Furthermore, Dallaire described the horrendous smell which was a result of having nowhere inside the stadium for the dead to be buried.54 For the most part, in terms of movement on the ground, UN troops in Rwanda, unlike in Srebrenica, did have the freedom of movement necessary to accomplish daily tasks.55 However, Dallaire reports that when it became clear that the United States, Canada, and even the UN were not willing to lend any support to the mission in Rwanda, it gave a complete sense of isolation to the mission. Without any support, Dallaire reported that he felt surrounded.56 The sense of isolation and being surrounded by the enemy that Dallaire described became literal as the Interahamwe took, at one point, three sides of the city of Kigali.57 This sense of isolation to the UN missions in both Srebrenica and Rwanda was also a critical factor in increasing the perceived threat to peacekeepers and will be discussed further in the following section.

Based on the accounts provided by Karremans and Dallaire which describe the conditions and environment they experienced during their respective deployments in Srebrenica and Rwanda, it is likely that they and other personnel under their command would acknowledge to having high exposure to the stressors presented in questions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, and 14.58 Furthermore, due to the intense shelling of both the UN enclave in Srebrenica and the UN Headquarters in Kigali, Karremans, Dallaire, and most likely many of the men under their command would indicate, in answering question 8 of Section C, that they suffered frequent exposure to loud noises during their deployment.59 The frequency of bombing or shelling on UN enclaves will be discussed at length in the following section on perceived threat. The comparison of DRRI-2 and the accounts of Karremans and Dallaire show that they were exposed to many stressors that originated from the daily environment in which they worked. Their descriptions show that they were in extremely uncomfortable conditions for months on end and that environment also became increasingly restricted as a physical space. Therefore, it

49 Ibid., 640.
51 Note: This also implies that water was limited for the UN personnel inside the enclaves, both for showering and more importantly, drinking. Dallaire describes that water was rationed for UN troops to a single glass a day for washing. For description see Dallaire and Beardsley, _Shake Hands with the Devil_, 263–264.
53 Ibid., 00:55:05.
54 Ibid., 00:54:59–00:55:45.
55 Dallaire comments in his biography: “Driving under a firefight is unnerving to say the least, especially in an unarmored vehicle, but it would become a daily experience.” This would indicate that even though there was a certain level of risk attached, UN personnel and vehicles had the access and ability to move about on a daily basis. For quote, see Dallaire and Beardsley, _Shake Hands with the Devil_, 265.
56 Ibid., 00:48:38.
57 Ibid., 00:52:27.
58 Vogt et al., DRRI-2, 4.
59 Ibid.
is only logical that Karremans, Dallaire and any peacekeeper holding a position of command in Rwanda and Srebrenica would not entertain any options that would either prolong or intensify the desperate conditions that they were working in. This includes the decision made by Karremans to agree to a withdrawal of UN troops from the Srebrenica-Potočari compound on July 21, 1995.

**Perceived Threat**

Section G of the DRRI-2 titled *Deployment Concerns*, focuses on the dangers that soldiers felt they were exposed to during their deployment. There are several questions in this section that focus on biological concerns such as infectious disease, medicines available, and exposure to NBCs which, from Karremans, Lemaire, and Dallaire’s accounts of UN deployment in Bosnia and Rwanda, are not discussed as primary points of concern. Due to that fact, I will not discuss threat of infectious disease or exposure to NBCs as stressors that impacted the spectrum of action in which the UN operated in. However, what UN peacekeepers’ accounts can attest to is the perceived threat from shelling, direct threats including assassination and in the case of Rwanda, other artillery such as Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs), from various elements present in the two conflict zones. Through Dallaire and Karremans’ testimonies, it is apparent that even as a peacekeeping force, the lives of UN peacekeepers faced numerous threats during their deployment.

Karremans and the UN peacekeeping force in Srebrenica were aware, due to the restriction of movement in or out of the enclave due to bad weather and the Bosnian Serb blockade, that if the city was shelled, they would not be able to organize a timely evacuation. Karremans’ ICTY testimony demonstrates that he felt the conditions inside the enclave were inhumane and that due to the restriction of movement in or out of the enclave, refugees and UN personnel alike, were trapped inside the enclave. Beginning on July 6, 1995, the city came under direct assault by the VRS under the command of General Mladić. The area surrounding the enclave fell under heavy shelling from the artillery which completely surrounded the city. This lasted until July 11 when the UN enclave itself was shelled directly, constituting an immediate threat to the lives of all inside the enclave. The shelling between July 6 and July 11 displaced an estimated 40,000 refugees, roughly 19,000–25,000 of which fled to the Potočari compound approximately six kilometers northwest of the city. It is important to note that even if the defense of the Srebrenica enclave was no longer attainable, that upon leaving, the UN’s mission was compromised not only in terms of their ability to protect refugees, but also by moving to a position which rendered them more vulnerable to attack. In terms of UN troops being able to respond with use of force to VRS attacks, the only option for Karremans at Srebrenica was to request close air support from NATO. During the period between July 6 and July 11, NATO only provided close air support starting at 2pm on July 11. However,
Karremans testified that he felt NATO support was “too little, too late” and in fact, lead to further aggression and threats made by General Mladić to shell the enclave at Potočari.68

There are also numerous examples of threats and intimidation tactics which contributed to the perceived threat to the Dutchbat. In one of their meetings, General Mladić directly threatened to shell UN troops and the thousands of refugees under UN protection if Karremans was not able to stop NATO air strikes against the VRS.69 Karremans’ testimony also indicates that he felt Mladić had the military capability to carry out this threat and that there was no safety from Bosnian Serb shelling either at Srebrenica or later at the enclave at Potočari.70 During their first meeting and even before, via radio communication, General Mladić indicated that if the air strikes against his troops were not stopped, he was willing to directly shell the UN compound and the immediate surrounding areas which risked not only mass refugee but UN casualties as well.71 Mladić’s threat of shelling is also further confirmed by the Nederlands Institut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (NIOD) report on Srebrenica. The NIOD report states that the VRS’s mortars and guns were directly visible from the entrance gate to the Potočari compound and would have caused “carnage among densely packed masses of refugees.”72 These numerous factors left Karremans and the other UN troops both powerless and extremely vulnerable to attack because they had no effective means with which to engage the VRS if fired upon.73

At the critical point of evacuating refugees out of Potočari beginning on July 12, Dutchbat troops have been accused of “aiding” the separation of male refugees which ultimately allowed for the massacre of one hundred to four hundred men from the Potočari compound.74 Very much so, the VRS forces controlled this event. Not only by design, through ensuring that they provided the only transportation which could access the compound, but also by disarming UN troops during the evacuations. Going beyond simply forcing peacekeepers at gunpoint to discard their weapons and flak jackets, one VRS soldier “demonstrated” that the UN flak jackets could not stand up to their armor-piercing rounds.75 So not only was there physical disarming of UN troops, this one instance served as a further psychological reinforcement that even if they had this protection (which had now been removed from them), UN troops did not stand a chance in a combat situation against the VRS. If they did not comply with the evacuation of refugees under VRS terms, even if they witnessed the separation of able-bodied men from refugee line-ups, there would be no barrier to them being eliminated should they resist.76

In Rwanda, General Dallaire believed the Interahamwe were emboldened by stories of how the UN presence as a peacekeeping force sent to protect the civilian population in Bosnia was essentially disregarded by Bosnian Serb forces. Dallaire also felt that the Interahamwe’s use of intimidation in attacking and even killing UN personnel was also a viable tactic to encourage

68 Ibid., 643–644.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., 644.
71 Ibid., 653.
73 Keeping in mind that the means by which Karremans and the Duchbat had to mount a military response to any VRS heavy artillery attacks was by requesting close air support, it is the repeated failure of NATO to respond to these requests that resulted in the Dutchbat being left powerless and vulnerable against the VRS. As previously discussed, Karremans described the NATO air strikes on the afternoon of July 11th as “too late and too little” and in fact, Karremans describes them as a factor which put UN soldiers and refugee lives at greater risk because of the response they provoked from General Mladić. See The Prosecutor v. Karadžić and Mladić, 643.
74 New York Times, UN and the Netherlands Are Sued.
75 NIOD, Srebrenica, 2046.
76 Ibid., 2060.
UN forces to withdraw rather than risk casualties.\textsuperscript{77} Therefore, unlike in Bosnia, the Interahamwe had no hesitation in directly targeting UN personnel with bombs, grenades, land mines and other forms of firepower. In his documentary, Dallaire casually laughs during his ten-year anniversary return to Rwanda “[even] driving down this road without someone taking pot shots at you is already an improvement.”\textsuperscript{78} Dallaire also noted the fear among UN staff at headquarters in Kigali when the building came under direct bombardment with grenades and machine gun fire starting in mid-April 1994. These bombardments carried on for months and extensively disrupted the day to day workings of the UN forces, as all personnel were forced to retreat to the ground floor of the UN headquarters building during the bombardments.\textsuperscript{79}

Based on Dallaire’s account of the UN mission in Rwanda, there was an omnipresent threat to life due to unidentified persons, but almost certainly the Interahamwe, who fired at UN trucks whilst out on the streets performing their duties and also direct bombardment on the UN headquarters in Kigali. Another example of intimidation tactics used by the Interahamwe which was perceived as a threat to peacekeepers’ safety were described by Lemaire at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in 1997.\textsuperscript{80} In his testimony, Lemaire commented that during the period where refugees were gathering to the UN safe zone at the ETO (also referred to as the Don Bosco School), there was a constant presence by the Interahamwe monitoring their activities.\textsuperscript{81} He noted that they would watch the envelope from the crossroads 300-meters up the road from the school; and as time went on, those groups got bigger, up to fifteen people sometimes with weapons. In addition, vehicles full of Interahamwe would regularly drive by. Gunfire could be heard regularly in the area and was attributed to murders being committed by the Interahamwe. Lemaire himself described the presence of the Interahamwe as “being surrounded.”\textsuperscript{82} For Lemaire, it is quite possible this perception of being surrounded was fueled even further by the fact that unlike in Somalia, where Lemaire and a portion of his men had served, when enemy individuals approached in close proximity, UN troops could not fire at them if necessary.\textsuperscript{83} In his ICTR testimony, Lemaire describes that the rules of engagement for Rwanda put peacekeepers in close proximity to paramilitary forces, particularly at roadblocks, in highly threatening situations and that due to the rules of engagement, they were forced to yield in these situations. Lemaire felt that the new rules of engagement, which only allowed for use of force in cases of legal self-defense, resulted in less effective ways for the UN to carry out their mission and defend themselves. In this case, this change in the rules of engagement particularly if any UN troops had served in Somalia where they were heavily equipped and were authorized to use force if necessary, made the perception of being surrounded as powerful as if they had actually been encircled by paramilitaries.\textsuperscript{84}

In addition to the threat that shelling posed to the lives of UN troops, another added piece of leverage that General Mladić and the VRS took over Karremans and the UN command was that they secured UN hostages.\textsuperscript{85} The timeframe in which those hostages were taken indicates that this move was strategically planned by the VRS. Between July 8 and July 10, General Mladić attacked numerous UN checkpoints near the UN enclave at Srebrenica, so by the time Karremans was ordered to his first meeting with Mladić, Mladić had 55 UN soldiers as hostages.\textsuperscript{86} Naturally, the meetings with Karremans are significant because during those

\textsuperscript{77} Dallaire and Beardsley, \textit{Shake Hands with the Devil}, 240.
\textsuperscript{78} Raymont, \textit{Journey of Roméo Dallaire}, 00:04:34.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 00:49:12; Dallaire and Beardsley, \textit{Shake Hands with the Devil}, 308.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{The Prosecutor v. Georges Anderson Nderubumwe Rutaganda}, Rutaganda—Redacted Transcript of 01/10/1997, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), October 1, 1997, ICTR-96-3-TRA001504/1, 26–27.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 11–12.
\textsuperscript{85} \textit{The Prosecutor v. Karadžić and Mladić}, 675.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
meetings on July 11 and 12, Karremans was informed that all Bosniak refugees would be forcibly evacuated from the region. Furthermore, the targeted massacre against Bosniak men and boys also began on July 12, two days after the UN hostages were secured. It is highly likely that if General Mladić’s intention to remove or ethnically cleanse the area of all Bosniak Muslims had been compromised, the lives of those UN hostages would have been under grave threat. Therefore, it is clear that the lives of Karremans, his men stationed at the enclave in Srebrenica, and the hostages, who were also under Karremans’ command were under grave threat by the VRS. By July 12, 1995, Karremans found himself and his unit surrounded, unable to carry out their orders, with no hope of backup or support and limited to no supplies. This fundamentally influenced his decision to comply with the forced evacuation of the remaining refugees by the VRS. This decision could be viewed as a withdrawal to a defensible location in order to save some of the refugees Karremans was charged with protecting. It is clear that at Srebrenica and possibly more so at Potočari, due to the operational constraints, rules of engagement and enemy threat, he would have had minimal success in protecting civilian lives or ensuring the safety of his men otherwise.

In Rwanda, based on the accounts of Dallaire and supporting insight given by his Executive Assistant in Rwanda, Major Brent Beardsley, the perceived threat posed by the Interahamwe and other extremist factions, originated from the fact that they, in a matter of a day, were able to execute a series of seemingly well-planned murders of any government officials who could have soothed the mass tensions that had come to a head after the assassination of President Habyarimana. This included both Hutu moderates and Tutsis within government of which extremist forces within the military knew exactly where they and their families could be found and murdered within days, if not hours, of the President’s assassination. Furthermore, extremist propaganda made it clear that there was a distinct anti-Belgian sentiment among the Interahamwe and other factions. This resulted in a situation where, unlike in Bosnia, UN soldiers were not just taken captive, they were tortured and killed. On April 7, 1994, ten Belgian peacekeepers were murdered by Major Bernard Ntuyahaga of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR), despite the warning sent by Dallaire on January 11, 1994 to UN high command in New York expressly stating that there was a plot to murder Belgian troops.

The murdered Belgian peacekeepers had been sent by Dallaire to guard the house of the Rwandan Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingimana, where they were disarmed and transported to

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87 Ibid., 679–680. The timing of the capture of the 55 UN hostages is, of course, suspicious as it directly proceeded Karremans and Mladić’s first meeting. The timing would suggest that the hostages were clear leverage so that there would be no further air strikes and no resistance as the area was ethnically cleansed through the forced evacuation of Bosniak refugees.

88 Ibid., 644.

89 Ibid., 669. Another note regarding UN hostages captured by the VRS: A further twelve to fourteen UN troops who were stationed along the evacuation route were also captured by the Bosnian Serb Army on July 12 and held for two days. It is unclear if they were taken as hostages or for another target purpose, possibly to divert certain trucks for the VRS to remove Bosniak men and boys for supposed interrogation. However, it is likely that the true intent was to kill some if not all males found with this diversion of vehicles. See also Ibid., 667.

90 In the case of the assassination of several Hutu-moderate government officials, these murders were planned and executed specifically by the Presidential Guard. See Dallaire and Beardsley, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 232.

91 Ibid.

92 One example of such propaganda was reported by Dallaire following the murder of the ten Belgian peacekeepers, where extremist radio broadcasts painted Belgian peacekeepers as being responsible for President Habyarimana’s assassination. See Ibid., 240.

93 Refers to the report sent by General Dallaire in January 1994 which stated that not only Hutu extremist elements in Rwanda were planning and had the capability to murder large numbers of Tutsi civilians but also states: “Belgian troops were to be provoked and if Belgian soldiers resorted to force a number of them were to be killed and thus guarantee Belgian withdrawal from Rwanda.” See *The Prosecutor v. Georges Anderson Nderubumwe Rutaganda*, Fax Dated 11 January 1994 from General Dallaire, UNAMIR, Kigali Addressed to Major General Baril, United Nations, New York, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, January 11, 1994, ICTR-96-3-672, 1.
Camp Kigali and were murdered by Ntuyahaga the same day. Dallaire’s command was heavily criticized for not taking some kind of action to extract the Belgian hostages on April 7. However, Dallaire felt that he was in an impossible position. Dallaire believed if a UN force had gone in to rescue the ten Belgian peacekeepers being held hostage, he estimates that would have risked “twenty, thirty casualties and on top of that, they could just blast the shit out of my headquarters and my mission would have been over.” This indicates that Dallaire did not feel at the time that he had the manpower or the firepower to launch a rescue operation without risking casualties or opening himself up to an attack on his headquarters due to a lack of presence there. Furthermore, he felt that such a mission would not, due to the likely loss of life, be supported by the UN high command and its member states.

The Interahamwe eventually became so emboldened that they threatened Dallaire himself as the Force Commander of UNAMIR in Rwanda and issued daily death threats that if he were seen by the Interahamwe, he was to be immediately stopped and killed. This not only threatened the life of Dallaire himself but also, he reports that any UN soldiers who fit his vague description were targeted and some narrowly escaped being killed before Dallaire could pull them off the streets. The murder of the ten Belgian peacekeepers, the threats to numerous peacekeepers while carrying out missions, and targeting Dallaire himself, indicates that UN troops had numerous reasons to perceive a grave threat to their own lives during their deployment in Rwanda.

Not only is it evident that the perceived threat to the safety of UN peacekeepers on the ground greatly limited the range of decisions that Dallaire felt he could make, it also directly impacted the perceived range of options that the UN and the international community had to intervene and to stop the genocide. In its conception, the murder of the ten Belgian peacekeepers on April 7, 1994 was intended to and ultimately lead to the withdrawal of UN forces from Rwanda. As a political officer with the UN during the genocide, Michael Barnett even went so far as to postulate that the UN took no affirmative action because of the risk it posed to the UN’s reputation by becoming further embroiled in an “ethnic conflict that spelled little possibility of success and only danger and failure.” Two weeks of deliberation, debates, statements, and recommendations for action suggested by Dallaire resulted in the opposite of any affirmative action; instead, the result was the withdrawal of bulk of UN peacekeepers from Rwanda on April 21, 1994. This decision made it very clear that the influence or action that the UN would exercise to prevent violence undertaken by the Interahamwe against Tutsi civilians in the months to follow would be very limited. Barnett maintains that the UN’s decision to maintain only a small token peacekeeping force was not made to protect civilian lives or to prevent genocide, in fact, it greatly limited the operational capabilities of peacekeepers on the ground. The small UN force who remained past early April 1994, remained to preserve self-interest, to symbolize their continued concern and even to mask their unwillingness to send in an intervention force. The lack of communication, withdrawal of the bulk of the UN peacekeeping force and indecisiveness of the UN and its member states would have most

95 Raymont, The Journey of Roméo Dallaire, 00:23:39–00:24:36.
96 Dallaire and Beardsley, Shake Hands with the Devil, 240–241.
97 Ibid., 380–381.
99 This intent was made clear to Dallaire via his informant Jean-Pierre. He explained that extremists saw the Belgian troops as the “backbone” of the UNAMIR mission and if they could force the withdrawal of the Belgian contingent, the UN mission would collapse. See Dallaire and Beardsley, Shake Hands with the Devil, 143–144.
100 Barnett, The Politics of Indifference, 144.
certainly increased the perceived threat and actual threat of the Interahamwe to Dallaire and UN troops on the ground.

During this period of indecision, lack of communication and endless political deliberation by the UN high command after the murder of the Belgian peacekeepers, Dallaire recounted the event of the Belgian withdrawal from the ETO on the outskirts of Kigali. Today, this event is one of the most well-known examples of how the perceived threat of the Interahamwe felt by UN peacekeepers directly lead to actions taken by peacekeepers to withdraw or remain passive in protecting Rwandan civilians during the genocide. On April 11, 1994, 2,000 civilians who had gathered at the school with the belief that they could expect protection under the UN were murdered by the Interahamwe after Lemaire withdrew the Belgian-UN troops under his command. As commanding officer, Lemaire requested permission to withdraw to the airport. Dallaire also believed that Lemaire purposefully did not inform either his commanding officer in the Belgian forces or Dallaire that they were protecting Rwandan civilians at the site. In describing the circumstances which Lemaire’s troops operated under at the school and what lead to their withdrawal, Lemaire addressed numerous factors that presented a real threat to the troops under his command. These factors included the severe lack of personnel, the change in the rules of engagement, namely the order to not fire their weapons except when being fired upon and a lack of armored vehicles, heavy weaponry, and anti-tank missiles. Lemaire believed all these elements played a role in why his troops could not be effective in stopping massacres already taking place in early to mid-April. It is also important to note that while Lemaire’s decision to withdraw knowingly was undertaken at the cost of refugees’ lives, it is in part, a consequence of the orders guiding UNAMIR forces in Rwanda at the time. Peacekeepers’ role at this time was primarily to monitor and report the situation on the ground, act as mediators and to help uphold the Arusha Agreement under UN Resolution 872 and its extension under UN Resolution 909.

In Rwanda, UN peacekeepers faced an added difficulty in identifying who was a member of the Interahamwe. Major Beardsley referred to it as the “third force.” The Government of the Rwandan Republic and the rebels, known as the Rwandan Patriotic Front were considered the first and second forces, the third force that Beardsley refers to was the Interahamwe. The first two powers in Rwanda agreed for peace with the Arusha Accords signed in 1993; however, the Interahamwe were described by Beardsley as the “youth-wing extremists” that were determined that the Arusha Agreement would not be implemented. Dallaire confirmed that during the Rwandan Genocide were as young as fourteen and fifteen years old. Thus, this indicates that members of Interahamwe were not a clearly defined

103 Dallaire and Beardsley, Shake Hands with the Devil, 289–290.
104 McGreal, What’s the Point of Peacekeepers?.
105 Dallaire and Beardsley, Shake Hands with the Devil, 289–290.
106 Ibid., 290. There is no question that Lemaire would have been ordered in one form or another to withdraw as all Belgian troops were being withdrawn from Rwanda, but the question remains: Did Lemaire consciously or unconsciously omit the fact to his commanding officer that has was guarding Rwandan refugees? What would have influenced him to do so?
107 In Somalia, according to Lemaire, UN troops were permitted to fire their weapons in cases when enemy forces were warned and did not comply; so, for example, they could destroy roadblocks if they were not removed upon request before coming into a close proximity. Lemaire perceived this as an important factor as he also testified that his men due to these changes in the rules of engagement, put themselves at daily risk when they were forced to yield to threats and intimidations at roadblocks where they were in very close proximity to the enemy. See The Prosecutor v. Rutaganda, Rutaganda—Redacted Transcript, 36–37.
111 Raymont, Journey of Roméo Dallaire, 00:10:22–00:10:55.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid., 00:13:53.
enemy military force. They were a fraction of the local population, and when not in the Interahamwe’s brightly colored uniform, they were not readily identifiable as an enemy when in plain clothes, especially because they could include children among their ranks. These were local people, in many cases that turned against members of their own communities. In Lt. Lemaire’s testimony, he points out that in the days following President Habyarimana’s assassination, the UN command could not identify exactly who ordered the killing of the Belgian peacekeepers. Lemaire states that “these potential enemies could be FAR troops, gendarmerie elements or civilians who were working for Interahamwe because these people on several occasions individually or in groups in a joint manner put our troops, the Belgian troops in difficulty.” Finally, he also discusses the challenges his troops faced in protecting the refugees at the ETO. Lemaire believed that due to one significant aspect of the Rwandan Genocide, namely neighbors attacking neighbors looking to “settle their scores,” that paramilitaries would risk invading UN safe zones if it achieved the purpose of massacring those inside whom they felt had wronged them.

Based on the testimonies of Dallaire, Lemaire, and Karremans, it is likely that the Dutch army stationed at Srebrenica-Potočari and the UN troops in Kigali, Rwanda would have responded negatively to all questions in Section G of the DRRI-2 that do not pertain to NBC’s, disease or pesticides comprising the following questions: 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12. It is clear that the UN felt that due to their lack of firepower and heavy artillery and additionally, the superior tactical positions that the VRS and the Interahamwe had, that the decisions the peacekeepers could make were greatly limited. Furthermore, in Rwanda, UN peacekeepers faced the added difficulty of the enemy being sometimes previously unidentified or non-uniformed children, but who, nevertheless, were a threat to the lives of UN peacekeepers. These stressors therefore indicate that decisions made by peacekeepers to protect civilians despite the risks to their own lives, were made through UN peacekeepers putting their exceptionally vulnerable circumstances aside. It also should not be taken lightly that in both cases where UN troops have been internationally accused of abandoning refugees to be massacred during the UN withdrawals from Srebrenica-Potočari and from the ETO school in Rwanda, that there was not simply a perceived threat, but a real and compounded threat to life. In both cases, the enemy used hostages, direct threats, and showcased their immediate armed presence by positioning themselves just outside the enclaves for all to see. Every day the UN spent being exposed to these stressors would have also been spent dealing with the reality that at any time, they would have no realistic way to defend themselves or the people under their blanket of protection. Furthermore, both UN forces had no reasonable expectation of rescue if the situation against them turned violent. This is a situation that few soldiers in modern military conflicts, let alone civilians have practical experience with.

Combat and Post-Combat Experiences
Section E of the DRRI-2 is concerned with post-battle experiences. Its goal is to ascertain to what degree a soldier was exposed to the suffering or death of civilians or fellow military personnel. The questions asked in this section take such lines of inquiry as to whether or not a veteran witnessed the death or dismemberment of either fellow soldiers or civilians, if they witnessed civilians begging, saw civilian homes or communities that had been destroyed, or if they handled human remains. Both Karremans’ and Dallaire’s forces were deployed to Rwanda

115 Ibid., 135.
116 Vogt et al., DRRI-2, 8.
117 Raymont, Journey of Roméo Dallaire, 00:13:53.
118 McGreal, What’s the Point of Peacekeepers?.
119 Note: This overview generalizes the lines of inquiry for all questions in section E, aside from questions 11 and 12, which are not relevant to the experiences described by peacekeepers in Rwanda and Srebrenica. See Vogt et al., DRRI-2, 6.
and Bosnia due to the presence of or perceived risk that mass human suffering was either imminent or already occurring in those regions as a result of civil war. This section will explore the instances where both UN forces, in their efforts to maintain UN enclaves or safe areas for displaced civilians, witnessed numerous examples of human suffering and death in their respective regions of deployment. In the case of Dallaire, he witnessed personally the aftermath of the murders of his own troops by the Interahamwe and assisted in the removal of disfigured civilian remains in Kigali.\textsuperscript{120}

At the UN enclave in Srebrenica, the experiences of the UN were defined by the goal of the Bosnian Serb army to displace the Bosnian Muslim population and through depriving them of food, electricity, and medical supplies to force both the Muslim civilian population and peacekeeping operations to leave the region.\textsuperscript{121} While we do not have a direct account from Karremans himself on his personal experiences witnessing the aftermath of targeted attacks intended to displace and kill Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica, we do have an idea of what those working in the Srebrenica enclave would have witnessed regarding this based on MSF accounts.\textsuperscript{122} It is almost inevitable that UN troops stationed in Srebrenica witnessed the displacement of thousands of people as the enclave was overwhelmed with displaced civilians either from the surrounding area or whose homes were destroyed by the shelling of the city. An area before the war which housed approximately 6,000 people now held around 23,000.\textsuperscript{123} MSF reports emphasize that these displaced civilians were entirely dependent on aid rations for survival, but also critically lacked water and adequate shelter from the heat or from the cold.\textsuperscript{124} With only a fraction of aid shipments being allowed in by VRS, it is impossible to imagine that UN personnel stationed at Srebrenica did not witness instances of civilians begging for food or other assistance as MSF was operating under the protection of the UN within the enclave.\textsuperscript{125} Furthermore, due to the shelling of the enclave, the evacuation to the enclave at Potočari and finally, the penultimate forced evacuations of all Bosnian Muslims to Tuzla, civilians seeking UN protection lost their homes, their belongings, and experienced their communities destroyed—not once, but multiple times.\textsuperscript{126} This indicates that UN personnel stationed at Srebrenica would likely indicate a strong exposure to questions 1, 2, and 3 of section E which ask if they witnessed civilian suffering as an aftermath of war.

Stobbaerts also indicates that UN troops would have been exposed to severe injuries to civilians or civilian casualties. The MSF report indicates that by April of 1993 alone, five doctors at the hospital in Srebrenica had already performed almost four hundred amputations.\textsuperscript{127} The MSF team at Srebrenica received a steady stream of war-injured people throughout the over two-year period that they were posted in the area. However, when the enclave itself was targeted with heavy artillery, both the MSF team and UN personnel became direct witnesses to civilians being injured or killed. On July 6, 1995, a total of six rockets, 150 artillery, tank bombs,  

\textsuperscript{120} After the bodies of the ten Belgian peacekeepers were recovered, Dallaire personally visited the morgue to view the bodies. See Dallaire and Beardsley, \textit{Shake Hands with the Devil}, 258. For further examples, see Raymont, \textit{Journey of Roméo Dallaire}, 00:52:50–00:53:06; and Dallaire and Beardsley, \textit{Shake Hands with the Devil}, 348.

\textsuperscript{121} \textit{The Prosecutor v. Karadžić and Mladić}, 635–636.

\textsuperscript{122} For examples of accounts where MSF describe the number of wounded and providing medical relief following instances of shelling or other attacks, please see MSF International Movement, \textit{MSF and Srebrenica: 1993–2003}, 48 and 51.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 36

\textsuperscript{124} Note that two press releases from MSF, the first from December 19, 1994 and the second from July 12, 1995 solidify this overall picture of the conditions displaced civilians faced in the Srebrenica enclave. See Ibid., 37. See also Ibid., 56–57.

\textsuperscript{125} For example, looking at the MSF press release from December 19, 1994, it describes that with the amount of food being allowed into the enclave, refugees were only receiving approximately 905 calories per day in the Srebrenica enclave, less than half of the normal recommended requirement. See Ibid., 37.

\textsuperscript{126} For the MSF description of the shelling of the city of Srebrenica and the mass evacuation to Potočari please refer to Ibid., 52–53. For further details on the forced evacuation of refugees to Tuzla please see Ibid., 55.

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 21–22.
mortar bombs as well as countless shells were dropped on the city of Srebrenica, with two rockets exploding directly within the UN compound. By the end of the day, MSF reported that thirteen people were injured and four had been killed. This demonstrates that UN personnel in Srebrenica, though perhaps not as closely as MSF doctors and staff, would have also been exposed to civilians and possibly even their own personnel, being severely wounded, disfigured, or killed, especially when the enclave came under direct attack. These situations are represented by questions 4, 5, 10 and (possibly) question 7 of Section E of the DRRI-2.

In Rwanda, unlike in Srebrenica, it is confirmed by General Dallaire that UN troops were also directly involved in the removal of bodies and regularly witnessed the aftermath of massacres against civilians. In his documentary, Dallaire discusses how the smell of corpses that had been left to rot in houses and scattered on the streets all over the city became so overwhelming that the UN could no longer do their job at headquarters due to the smell. In his biography, Dallaire describes the smell of the bodies and lingering aftermath of the massacres that were already taking place within the first five days of the genocide. He describes his memory of this in vivid detail: “The odour of death in the hot sun; the flies, maggots, rats and dogs that swarmed to feast on the dead. At times it seemed the smell had entered the pores of my skin.” In order to continue on their duties, the UN had to gather the bodies from the area surrounding the UN compound and burn them only a short distance away from headquarters. Another instance where the UN forces in Rwanda directly witnessed the aftermath of an attack on civilians was on May 1, 1994, at the protected site of the Sainte Famille church in Kigali. At Sainte Famille, a bomb fell in an area where thousands of civilians were seeking refuge in a UN protected part of the church compound. When Dallaire and his men arrived after the bomb fell, they witnessed a scene of devastation—“[s]evered limbs and heads, children ripped in two, the wounded turning their bewildered eyes toward you at the moment at which you can actually see the life expire from them, the smell of burnt explosives mixed with burning blood and flesh.” Hundreds of civilians turned to Dallaire for answers, rescue, and for the UN to protect them. These two accounts are some examples of numerous instances where General Dallaire and his men directly witnessed the destruction of homes and communities, saw the severe disfigurement of civilians, the bodies of dead civilians, and were involved with the removal of human remains. This indicates that Dallaire’s immediate command in Kigali would have also responded negatively to questions 3, 8, 9, and 13 of Section E of the DRRI-2.

One instance described by General Dallaire also indicates that he and other UN troops under his command would also respond affirmatively to many questions in Section D of the DRRI-2 titled Combat Experiences. In his biography, Dallaire describes an attack on a UN patrol in June 1994. Dallaire was called to an incident where two of his men had been wounded when their vehicle was believed to have hit a landmine and were then fired on again while trying to extract themselves from the vehicle. Later, the wounded UN troops were detained by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), who were allies of the UN in stopping the genocide. The UN soldiers were robbed by members of the RPF and one UN soldier was minutes from being taken away and killed. Later, the more severely injured soldier, Major Manuel Soza, became the

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128 It is also important to note that the MSF team logbook noted that “[t]he number of dead people will be probably much higher since they don’t arrive at the hospital.” See Ibid., 48.

129 Vogt et al., DRRI-2, 6. In Rwanda, as shown with the previous discussion of the conditions at the Amahoro Stadium and Sainte Famille safe zones (see following paragraph), the UN peacekeepers deployed in Rwanda would have experienced similar suffering among civilians due to the aftermath of war. Therefore, they also would then express similar responses to questions 4, 5, and 10 as the Bosnian UN peacekeepers.

130 Dallaire and Beardsley, Shake Hands with the Devil, 289.

131 Raymont, Journey of Roméo Dallaire, 00:52:50–00:53:06.

132 Dallaire and Beardsley, Shake Hands with the Devil, 348.

133 Vogt et al., DRRI-2, 6.

134 Dallaire and Beardsley, Shake Hands with the Devil, 423–424.
twelfth UN soldier to die during his deployment in Rwanda.\textsuperscript{135} It was later confirmed by RPF leader and future President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, that the attack on Dallaire’s men had been carried out by the RPF, which constitutes as “friendly” fire.\textsuperscript{136} This incident from June 1994 and Dallaire’s previous wry comment indicating the frequency of shots fired at UN vehicles in Kigali, indicate that certain UN personnel in Rwanda would likely report exposure, if not frequent exposure, to the situations indicated by the following questions in Section D of the DRRI-2: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 11.\textsuperscript{137}

The situations discussed in this section involving the exposure of UN troops in Rwanda and Srebrenica to the suffering, injury, and death of civilians as well as fellow peacekeepers have various implications for their mental wellbeing. One implication is these experiences can trigger a sense of danger and heightened risk reminding peacekeepers that they worked in a daily environment where the risk to their own life was quite high. Furthermore, every dead, maimed, desperate, displaced, starving, or dehydrated individual could also be a reminder of the failure of UN troops in carrying out their mandate to protect and preserve lives within the safe zones. Herein lies one of the great limitations of not having a set of scales like the DRRI-2 Scales specifically tailored to UN peacekeeping missions. With both sets of DRRI scales having been written to assess the impact of conditions and circumstances faced by the US military in the Middle Eastern theatre,\textsuperscript{138} there are numerous aspects of the scales which are not applicable or do not adequately address key deployment-related factors which were also a source of stress and therefore limited the range of decisions possible for UN peacekeepers. One example discussed in this section is the politics of preservation that stemmed from UN use of force in Somalia, particularly with the Battle of Mogadishu in 1993, which lead the UN security council to review the authorization to use force to coerce cooperation.\textsuperscript{139} The negative impact of the UN peacekeeping mission in Somalia heavily dictated a change in the rules of engagement that peacekeepers would be expected to operate under in Srebrenica and Rwanda, which was namely, to use persuasion rather than force to achieve their missions.\textsuperscript{140} However, Lemaire expressed several times in his ICTR testimony that he felt the change in the rules of engagement and the unwillingness of the UN to heavily arm its troops in Rwanda had a profound negative impact on their ability to carry out their mission and stop the genocide.\textsuperscript{141} Lemaire also describes that he felt Dallaire’s recommendations as to the number of troops needed and critical recommendations to the UN in New York to change the rules of engagement to allow the peacekeepers to intervene and stop the distribution of weapons were ignored.\textsuperscript{142} Fundamentally, the unwillingness of the UN to allow for use of force in certain situations and the numerous examples of the UN and member states’ failure to provide timely military support when requested left peacekeepers surrounded and unable to adequately defend themselves if they came under attack.\textsuperscript{143} The overriding political concerns of the UN and its member states in the 1990s provided an insurmountable obstacle to the success of peacekeepers in protecting safe zones and the people within them. These types of stressors have the possibility for many individuals to develop feelings of self-doubt, a negative view of the UN whom they looked to for leadership, support, relief and the blanket blue helmet protection, hopelessness, exhaustion, hyper-vigilance, and of course, fear for their safety which would have all greatly impacted their decisions in the field. Without the security or even possibility of relief

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 424.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 431.
\textsuperscript{137} Vogt et al., \textit{DRRI-2}, 5.
\textsuperscript{138} Vogt et al., \textit{DRRI-2: An Updated Tool}, 710–711.
\textsuperscript{139} Barnett, \textit{The Politics of Indifference}, 151–152.
\textsuperscript{140} Dallaire and Beardsley, \textit{Shake Hands with the Devil}, 264.
\textsuperscript{141} The Prosecutor V. Rutaganda, Rutaganda—Redacted Transcript, 46.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 43–44.
\textsuperscript{143} Note that Lemaire particularly connects this lack of military support to the fate of the refugees at the ETO. See Ibid., 30–31.
forces, adequate weapons, or supportive military maneuvers and under the kinds of daily conditions described in this article, can we have reasonably expected peacekeepers to have made different decisions that would have prevented genocide from taking place? Could we have expected them to remain in indefensible areas, surrounded by enemy fire and where peacekeepers themselves were, on certain occasions, directly targeted and would have been killed if they had taken any action to prevent massacres from occurring? Was it possible to expect this under conditions which are known to make soldiers in other cases, who are able to use force if necessary, seriously vulnerable to developing serious and long-term mental health problems?

Conclusion
The DRRI-2 Scales and other diagnostic tools for assessing risk or resilience to developing PTSD provide an invaluable tool for researchers seeking to better understand the human agency behind traumatic events such as genocide. By applying the DRRI-2 Scales to the experiences of UN peacekeeping forces in Rwanda and Srebrenica, we can better understand how the daily conditions during their deployment negatively impacted their mental state and the range of perceived options they could take under those conditions to protect civilian lives. Through analyzing those daily conditions and comparing them to various questions from the sections of the DRRI-2 Scales that specifically focus on deployment stressors, we are able to break down the experiences that the UN peacekeepers had during their deployment to understand their cumulative negative impact on the mental health of peacekeepers. However, the use of these scales does have certain limitations in terms of how much they can contribute to understanding the particular conditions and limitations that peacekeepers faced in Rwanda and Srebrenica. What it should prompt however, is the development of certain frameworks of analysis that consider factors such as daily living conditions, sustained exposure to combat environments, exposure to injured or wounded persons, operational limitations, and perceived threat to life when judging those who witness acts of violence, massacres, or genocide taking place. We expected the UN peacekeepers in Rwanda and Srebrenica to have stopped or prevented acts of genocide, but was it actually possible for them even as soldiers to achieve this under those circumstances? In truth, we expected trained soldiers with inadequate ability to subdue enemy threats in highly dangerous, stressful, and ultimately indefensible positions to somehow overcome these circumstances and make decisions that would have put their lives and possibly the lives of those under their protection at risk with little chance of success.

It is clear that the mental health of UN peacekeepers, which shaped the decisions they made on the ground, faced multi-layered and persistent sources of stress that had to be managed on a daily basis. The eyewitness testimonies explored in this article have shown the daily conditions in which UN peacekeepers operated was a persistent source of stress. These included lack of water, food, sleep, freedom of movement, and also exposure to horrendous smells, including that of rotting corpses and loud noises from artillery fire. UN peacekeepers in Rwanda and Srebrenica were forced to try to carry out their mandate whilst operating under these conditions for months on end with no relief and no area to retreat to for rest. Additionally, UN personnel were faced with the daily reality that carrying out their mandate to protect put their own lives directly at risk. In Bosnia, the primary threat to life for UN peacekeepers was mainly the bombing or shelling of the surrounding city, later escalating to target the UN enclave itself. In Rwanda, threats to life came from numerous sources including the bombing of the UN headquarters, land mines, and deliberate targeting of UN peacekeepers on patrol and other daily threats and intimidation. In both cases, UN peacekeepers were also taken hostage for purposes of gaining leverage over UN decision-making; however, in Rwanda, peacekeepers were executed as a further threat to the remaining peacekeepers and to prompt the withdrawal of international troops. Additionally, the safety of UN peacekeepers and those they sought to protect were under constant threat due to the fact that both peacekeeping operations were undermanned, under-equipped, and were greatly restricted in the acts they could take to defend themselves, the safe zones, and the civilians inside. Finally, UN peacekeepers regularly
saw the severe injury, desperation, death, and displacement of civilians who were the victims of civil war and genocide. They faced the daily reality of only being able to partly carry out their mandates to protect and help civilians due to numerous operational constraints and lack of support from the higher echelons of UN command and its member-states. In the case of Rwanda, UN peacekeepers witnessed and even were forced to handle the corpses of murdered Rwandans and in some cases, their own men, with shocking regularity and intensity. It is my opinion that anyone seeking to critique the actions or non-actions of UN peacekeepers in Rwanda and Srebrenica should re-examine their conclusions based on the current research and headways made in understanding the implications of multi-layered stress that soldiers to varying degrees experience in conflict zones and the risk that this poses to the mental health of the individual.

Bibliography


How can I continue living in such a town with such people, waiting for someone to beat me or even kill me? You can’t even go out on the street without someone giving you mean looks or shouting something at you just because you are not wearing high heels or a short dress.

—Sanja, a lesbian woman from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2015.

Introduction
Since the end of the country’s genocide in 1996, life has been difficult for queer people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Eight people were injured by homophobic protesters at the country’s inaugural gay pride festival in 2008. In 2014, a hate group attacked Sarajevo’s Queer Film Festival, wounding three. Two years later, a group of men stormed a popular gay bar yelling homophobic slurs, throwing bottles, and threatening to detonate a bomb.

Anecdotal evidence gathered throughout my travels in the country during 2015, 2016, and 2017 suggests homophobia has steadily worsened since 1996. People I spoke with linked the increasing violence to an uptick in nationalism following the genocide. However, it is difficult to begin confirming their suspicions because little research on the connection between queerness and genocide exists. Matthew Waite’s 2018 article “Genocide and Queer Politics” constitutes the most significant contribution to queer understandings of genocide to date. Waite describes his article as “the first systematic critical analysis of genocide with respect to queer politics.” Waite uses queer theory, specifically as drawn from Foucault and postcolonial studies, to destabilize understandings of groups in genocide discourse. He concludes that if we include sexual orientation and gender identity in our understandings of protected groups, then violence against queer people in Nazi Germany, Uganda, and the Gambia can accurately be described as genocidal. Waite discusses the heteronormative foundations of both genocidal violence and genocide discourse, but most other research on queer politics and genocide does not go beyond the questions of whether violence against queer people constitutes genocide and if sexual orientation and gender identity should be included in the definitions of vulnerable groups. While this is a worthwhile discussion, I am also interested in how queerness interacts with and is implicated in genocides already clearly defined as such according to the law, i.e. those directed at racial, religious, national, and ethnic groups. As such, in this paper, I pose the following question: How can scholars of Genocide Studies learn from the queer theory-Genocide Studies nexus?

4 Ibid., 55.

To answer, I demonstrate how three distinct queer theory concepts can be layered with Genocide Studies to reveal novel insights into some of the field’s preeminent questions. Specifically, I draw on queer intellectual curiosity, heteronormativity, and reproductive futurism. I begin this article by briefly introducing queer theory. Then, in section one, I contend that Genocide Studies should pay more attention to the empirical experiences of queer people during episodes of genocide. In section two, I argue that when we deploy heteronormativity as an analytic in Genocide Studies, we can improve our understanding of how genocide unfolds and what makes it possible. Finally, in section three, I use reproductive futurism to critique definitions of genocide that obscure queer life. I conclude that connecting queer theory with Genocide Studies yields empirical, analytical, and normative insights into the latter. Deploying queer theory concepts in Genocide Studies ensures the field pays attention to queer lives, something all academic disciplines should strive for, and advances the field’s understanding of genocide as a phenomenon.

An Introduction to Queer Theory

Queer theory emerged from LGBT Studies and Women’s Studies during the 1990s. In popular culture and conversation, “queer theory” is sometimes used to describe a cogent and cohesive school of thought. However, queer theory lends its name to a group of diverse and, at times, contradictory ideas. As Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, two of the original queer theorists write, “it [queer theory] cannot be assimilated to a single discourse, let alone a propositional program.” All queer theories and queer theorists, however, share a certain queer sensibility. What do I mean when I say queer? Eve Sedgwick defines queer as “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically.” Queer is not synonymous with LGBT. Queer is more expansive and, hopefully, travels across time and culture more easily (though not perfectly). Berlant and Warner go on to describe the aspirations of queer theorists to open space for “publics that can afford sex and intimacy in sustained, unchastening ways; publics that can comprehend their own differences of privilege and struggle; publics whose abstract spaces can also be lived in, remembered, hoped for.” I have made it the goal of this paper to contribute to the opening of spaces for queer publics in Genocide Studies.

As I mentioned, queer theory is not one monolithic idea. Thus, I have specified three queer theory concepts I am weaving with Genocide Studies in this paper. I hope that others, upon seeing the utility of building bridges between queer theory and Genocide Studies, bring other queer theories and theorists into the field as well. In section one, I explore queer intellectual curiosity, a term borrowed from International Relations (IR) scholar Cynthia Weber, which she defines as

a method that refuses to take for granted the personal-to-international institutional arrangements, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that figure ‘homosexuality’ and the ‘homosexual.’ It investigates how these figurations—these distillations of shared meanings in forms or images—powerfully attach to and detach from material bodies and are powerfully mobilized in international politics, challenging the common assumption that (homo)sexuality is trivial in international politics.

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8 Berlant and Warner, Queer Theory, 344.
9 Cynthia Weber, Queer International Relations: Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge (Oxford University Press, 2016), 19.
Weber’s queer intellectual curiosity is inspired by Cynthia Enloe’s feminist curiosity, which lead Enloe to ask: “Where are the women?” When Enloe first posed this question in her 1990s IR classic *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, she was interrogating why women and their lives did not appear in research on international politics, and attempted to address this gap. Thankfully, feminist IR has (sort of) moved beyond the issue of empirically including women in scholarship. Queer IR has not. I am not faulting queer IR. To the contrary, I am pointing out the necessity of doing empirical work to answer the question: Where are the queers? In section two, I apply the concept of heteronormativity to genocide. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner named the concept of heteronormativity in their 1998 article “Sex in Public.” Heteronormativity identifies the heterosexual couple as the “referent or the privileged example of sexual culture.” However, heteronormativity extends beyond the realm of sexual and romantic behavior. All parts of society, its institutions, and its understandings privilege and make compulsory heterosexuality and a binary understanding of gender. “Contexts that have little visible relation to sex practice, such as life narrative and generational identity, can be heteronormative…while in other contexts forms of sex between men and women might not be.” As perceived failures or successes of heteronormativity attach themselves to subjects beyond the sexual and romantic, queerness has the potential to morph and “mutate” into a “metonym” for race, nationality, and religion. Through this process queerness and heteronormativity become integral to the social construction of groups targeted for genocide.

Finally, section three builds from Lee Edelman’s concept of reproductive futurism, which he lays out in his 2004 book *No Future*. Of the concepts I am borrowing, reproductive futurism is the most contested amongst queer theorists. Edelman argues “the politics of reproductive futurism” is “the only politics we’re permitted to know.” While Edelman agrees with other queer theorists that the heterosexual couple holds a privileged role in society, he adds that the Child that that couple produces holds the most privileged position because “the Child has come to embody for us the telos of the social order and come to be seen as the one for whom that order is held in perpetual trust.” Our politics and social order are not designed to benefit us, but a future and imaginary Child. We often make extreme sacrifices in the name of the Child. Edelman deems that which subverts the logic of reproductive futurism, queer. Edelman urges readers to adopt what he calls “queer negativity” in order to challenge this social order in which the future is “always purchased at our expense.”

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13 Ibid., 15.


17 Ibid., 11.

18 Ibid., 3.

19 Ibid., 4.

20 Ibid.
“Where are the Queers?”: The Need for Empirical Research
An Empirically Grounded Field

Genocide scholars have long relied upon collecting first-hand accounts of events from victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. Along with individuals’ narratives, researchers use legal documents, military records, and government communications to reconstruct how and why genocide takes place. Thus, the experiences of witnesses to and victims of genocide carry tremendous weight in both the study of genocide and normative attempts to address it. As the field of Genocide Studies has matured, more scholars have begun to recognize the importance of disaggregating the experiences of people occupying different social positions. Yet, the unique and specific experiences of queer people during genocide remain absent from this type of research, limiting our understanding of genocidal processes and our ability to support recovery.

While Genocide Studies does not lack more theoretical contributions, empirically based findings currently constitute the bulk of research in the field. In large part, this can be attributed to the field’s tendency to focus on a series of case studies, primarily from the twentieth century, including the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, Cambodia, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia. The first generation of genocide scholars attempted to explain the Holocaust using more universal theories. Newer texts focus on case-specific interactions at multiple levels of analysis. Genocide scholars today typically build theoretical insights from “knowledge gained in the archives and in the field.” A growing consensus believes genocide is contingent, casting doubt on the need to create a general theory and highlighting the importance of context-specific knowledges.

Three core texts in Genocide Studies exemplify this tendency: Christopher Browning’s *Ordinary Men*, Eric Weitz’s *A Century of Genocide*, and Scott Straus’ *The Order of Genocide*. In *Ordinary Men*, Browning argues that Germans were driven to commit extreme violence due to the pressures of group socialization. Browning supports this contention with excerpts from the pretrial interrogations of 210 former members of Reserve Police Battalion 101. These records allowed him to analyze demographic information, like age and Nazi party membership, about the members of the battalion. Additionally, 125 of the testimonies were “sufficiently substantive” to allow Browning to reconstruct a detailed narrative of the events that unfolded when Germany ordered Reserve Police Battalion 101 to the killing fields of Poland. Weitz similarly relies on the testimonies of individuals in his book. However, he chooses to draw from the “memoirs, literature, and trial transcripts” of victims rather than perpetrators. Unwilling to separate narrative from analysis, Weitz argues that “convey[ing] the sheer brutality and horror that people experience as victims,” represents an important part of explaining genocide. Turning once again to the perpetrators, Scott Straus’ account of the Rwandan Genocide contends that far fewer civilians took part in the violence than previously believed. He bases his findings on in-depth interviews with over 200 convicted perpetrators. Straus

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24 Ibid.


28 Ibid., xiii.
argues that their accounts provide “the best method for generating theoretically relevant information about perpetrators.”\(^{29}\) Plenty of other important works in Genocide Studies rely on individual accounts, like interviews and memoirs, to support their arguments. These works demonstrate the critical role people’s experiences play in shaping how scholars conceptualize and attempt to understand genocide. Researchers have begun to pay more attention to the ways in which people’s genocide narratives differ according to their social positionings. The difference between male/female, men’s/women’s, masculine/feminine experiences has inspired the most scholarship.\(^{30}\) Within the past thirty years, a sub-field examining “gendered” experiences of genocide has emerged. These scholars’ make the central argument that examining the different ways men and women participate in genocide leads to insights into gender politics and improves our ability to identify genocide.\(^{31}\)

Studies that look at the empirical differences between men’s and women’s experiences serve two primary functions. First, they draw attention to the disparate ways perpetrators attack men and women, making previously hidden patterns of suffering visible and improving humanitarian responses. Scholars first noticed these patterns during the 1990s genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Women were systematically raped in both countries. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, it is estimated that perpetrators raped 50,000 women in the first year of the violence alone.\(^{32}\) The systematic nature of sexual violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda led many genocide scholars to conclude that rape constitutes a strategy of genocide.\(^{33}\) In 1998, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda issued a precedent-setting decision—they convicted former government official Jean-Paul Akayesu of crimes of genocide, including rape.\(^{34}\) These findings never would have emerged without research that paid special attention to the experiences of women. Similarly, in the 1990s, researchers discovered a pattern of violence unique to men’s and boys’ experiences. Men and boys are often separated from the rest of the population and massacred. There are at least fifteen cases of genocide in which this pattern of events has unfolded.\(^{35}\) Highlighting men’s experiences as unique, as opposed to the norm, revealed an important facet of genocide.

Second, the ways perpetrators treat men and women according to their sex/gender says something interesting about the causes and mechanics of particular genocides and genocide more broadly.\(^{36}\) Even when men and women face similar outcomes of genocidal violence, the ways in which they are targeted reveal how genocidaires conceptualize their goals. Many people, including scholars, perpetrators, and victims, consciously or sub-consciously interpret


\(^{30}\) When I use the terms “men” and “women” in the rest of this section I am referring to the heteronormative understanding of gender and sex as unified and binary that is hegemonic in most of the world and that is inaccurate and violent to trans and non-binary people. Unfortunately, this is how sex and gender are commonly conceptualized in most of the locations discussed and in much of the research. I have adopted their terminology for clarity. I think we can still learn from this research. But it further demonstrates the need to interrogate where queer people, and specifically trans people and nonbinary people, have been obscured in Genocide Studies.


\(^{33}\) Lisa Sharlach, “Rape as Genocide: Bangladesh, the Former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda,” *New Political Science* 22, no. 1 (March 2000).

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 93.


Genocide as a process of destroying the reproductive potential of a group. This became most obvious when men’s and women’s experience were examined separately. A pattern emerged in which individuals are attacked per their gender role in the family and society, a phenomenon labeled relational violence by Elisa von Joeden-Forgey. Perpetrators target women as mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters and men as fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers, centering ideas of family and reproduction in the genocide discourse.

Collecting empirical evidence about sexed/gendered experiences of genocide moved the common sense thinking in the discipline forward. If the discipline generally accepts that sex/gender differences matter empirically, it should not be much of a stretch to imagine that differences in gender identity and sexual orientation matter too. However, despite a common sense in the discipline that should encourage empirical investigation into queer experiences of genocide, this type of research has historically been limited.

Here are the Queers: Past and Future Empirical Research

Virtually all of the existing empirical research into queer experiences of genocide concerns gay men in Nazi Germany. While the campaign against homosexuals appears briefly in many texts about the Nazis, the first sociological and statistical account of the Nazis’ persecution of homosexuals was not published until 1977. Carried out by a team of German researchers led by Rüdiger Lautmann, the report analyzed documents from the thirteen camps that incarcerated homosexuals. A decade later, Richard Plant utilized Nazi records and camp archives to compile a historical account of the Nazi campaign against homosexuals. In 1995, Gad Beck published An Underground Life, a memoir about his life as a gay Jewish man in Nazi Germany. His represents the most thorough first-hand account of these events. These texts reveal that queer people were intentionally targeted for incarceration, torture, and death by the Nazi regime. From 1933–1944 between 50,000 and 63,000 men were convicted of homosexuality. Researchers estimate anywhere from 5,000 to 15,000 of them perished in concentration camps.

Many people have conceptualized the Nazi campaign against homosexuals as separate from and unrelated to the regime’s genocides of Jews, Roma and Sinti, and Slavs. The Nazi campaign against homosexuals appears fairly often in research on Nazi Germany, but not commonly in research on the Nazis’ genocides. Research on persecution of homosexuals typically circumvents the word genocide, while genocide research on Nazi Germany tends to avoid mention of violence against homosexuals. However, the evidence suggests persecution of queer people was intimately linked to the Nazis’ genocidal campaigns. Nazi records show that homosexuals were murdered and imprisoned in the name of purifying the German race and punishing those who failed to produce Aryan children. The “campaign against Germany’s homosexuals must be understood...as but one part of the larger war on eugenic inferiors.”

Violence against queer people was the other side of the coin of violence against Jewish people and ethnic minorities. On May 14, 1928, the Nazi Party published its clearest statement on homosexuality.

It is not necessary that you and I live, but it is necessary that the German people live. And it can only live if it can fight, for

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37 von Joeden-Forgey, Gender and Genocide, 62.
38 Ibid., 73.
42 Plant, The Pink Triangle, 149.
43 Ibid., 154.
44 Waites, Genocide and Global Queer Politics, 53.
life means fighting. And it can only fight if it maintains its masculinity. It can only maintain its masculinity if it exercises discipline, especially in matters of love. Free love and deviance are undisciplined. Therefore, we reject you [homosexuals], as we reject anything that hurts our nation. Anyone who thinks of homosexual love is our enemy.  

Empirical evidence from Nazi Germany indicates that the persecution of queer people was an important part of the Nazis’ genocides. Without empirics about the treatment of queer people during other genocides, no comparative work can be done on this topic. Leaving us unable to discern for certain if persecution of queer people was unique to the Nazis, or if it is a common feature of many genocides (though, as I will argue subsequently, it is most likely the latter).

Moreover, queer victims may face continued persecution following genocide. In West Germany, for example, homosexuality continued to be illegal until 1969. Some gay men were liberated from the concentration camps only to be transferred to jails. Most were rejected by their families and communities. As Plant concludes, “for homosexuals, the Third Reich did not fully end with its defeat.”  

Queer people facing continued violence after the end of a genocide require special protection and dedicated humanitarian assistance. However, without further empirical research into queer experiences of genocides, we have no idea what this protection and assistance should look like, or even how dire the need for it is. If Nazi Germany serves as any indication, there may be dozens of other ways queer people uniquely suffer during and after genocide. New empirical research would go a long way towards making their suffering known—the first step to addressing it. Gendering Genocide Studies also led to new ideas about the mechanics of particular genocides and genocide as a phenomenon. The next section discusses in depth how queering the field has the potential to do the same.

Research on the fate of queer people in Nazi Germany did not appear until more than thirty years after end of World War II, in large part due to a taboo on discussing queer history. The archival material was available during almost that entire period, but researchers were uninterested. I fear that our current lack of empirical research may, at least in part, be attributable to similar reasons. However, valid reasons exist besides anti-queerness that explain why we are lacking empirical evidence. In the first place, researchers face many challenges when conducting empirical genocide research of any kind. Countries in the midst of and emerging from genocide are challenging to access and often pose a danger to researchers. Second, in many post-genocidal countries people put themselves at risk by being public about their queerness. This may be due to laws banning homosexuality or societal attitudes. Thus, it may be difficult, and perhaps even unethical, to identify willing research partners. Finally, queerness as an identity does not travel easily. Labels like “LGBTQ” and “queer” emerged from Western countries and do not always fit post-colonial contexts; nor should they be made to fit. Unfortunately, due in large part to the legacies of colonialism, many recent genocides occurred in formerly colonized countries. Creating a complicated ethical and theoretical situation for researchers attempting to do comparative work on queerness in genocide. Ignoring indigenous understandings of sex, sexuality, and gender or forcing labels created in settler-colonial states onto people would not advance the field but reproduce the violence we are attempting to address. I raise these concerns not to discourage empirical research about queer people during

46 Ibid., 50.
48 Ibid., 181.
49 Ibid., 15.
genocide, but to acknowledge the necessity of practicing critical self-reflection as scholars and as a Genocide Studies community before we engage in this research.

There are several places where I think empirical research into queer experiences of genocide would be revealing. As mentioned in the introduction, an increase in homophobic violence seems to have followed the genocides in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. If a connection between new anti-queer attitudes and the genocides exists, it is likely that anti-queer attitudes and actions were also prevalent during the genocides. As such, empirical research in the former Yugoslavia could be enlightening. Moreover, because the countries in the region do not outlaw homosexuality, queer activist groups operate in most countries, and some people are publicly out, it would be less dangerous to interview queer people in the former Yugoslavia. Empirical work is also needed in Chechnya. Some scholars contend the two brutal wars waged against Chechnya by the Russians during the 1990s constitute genocide.\footnote{Human Rights Watch, “‘They Have Long Arms and They Can Find Me’: Anti-Gay Purge by Local Authorities in Russia’s Chechen Republic,” June 6, 2017, accessed July 7, 2019, https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/05/26/they-have-long-arms-and-they-can-find-me/anti-gay-purge-local-authorities-russia.} In the aftermath, Chechen nationalism and adherence to traditional identities and values experienced a resurgence. State-directed homophobic violence broke out in 2017. The Chechen government began arresting, detaining, torturing, and murdering people suspected of homosexual activity.\footnote{Waites, Genocide and Global Queer Politics, 48.} Researchers should investigate whether or not a connection exists between the genocide of the 1990s and the current homophobic violence. While researching in Chechnya would be logistically and ethically challenging, researchers could draw upon the large Chechen diaspora, which includes queer people who have recently sought refuge outside of Chechnya.

In this section, I argued that genocide scholars have built the discipline’s most important scholarship from empirical research. More recently, scholars have begun to disaggregate experiences of genocide according to various differences, including sex/gender. We must build on these methodological norms in the discipline and empirically investigate queer experiences of genocide. The existing empirics, drawn from Nazi Germany, suggest this research would teach us much about what occurs inside a genocide and how to better assist the most vulnerable in its aftermath.

**Heteronormativity as an Analytical Lens for Understanding Genocide**

*Existing Theories of Sex/Gender and Genocide*

Beyond empirically appearing queer people in Genocide Studies, borrowing the concept of heteronormativity from queer theory can help us better understand the conditions that make genocide possible. Heteronormativity gives rise to genocidal violence against queer communities and the ethnic, religious, national, and/or racial groups targeted. Scholars like Adam Jones and Elisa von Joeden-Forgey who have gendered Genocide Studies have drawn attention to the way genocidaires utilize hegemonic gender roles, particularly as they relate to family, to enact their crimes. I agree with Jones and von Joeden-Forgey but argue that we must include the concepts of sexuality and gender identity in their analysis. Heteronormativity makes possible the gender roles and familial hierarchies that support genocidal processes. Heteronormativity has already been deployed as a lens to analyze nationalism, and what is genocide if not nationalism in extremis? Thus, it should not be too much of an intellectual leap to apply heteronormativity to genocide. After running through this analysis, it will become evident that we must further investigate the various and nuanced ways heteronormativity provides structure and logic to genocide.

Genocide discourse has long been dominated by straight, cisgender men from the United States and Europe, allowing “patriarchal power and heteronormativity” to mark the boundaries of the discourse.\footnote{© 2020 Genocide Studies and Prevention 14, no. 3 https://doi.org/10.5038/1911-9933.14.3.1786.} However, the word heteronormativity made its first appearance in the Genocide Studies literature in Adam Jones’ 2006 article “Straight as a Rule:
Heteronormativity, Gendercide, and the Noncombatant Male.” Rather than provide an analysis of how heteronormativity functions in the context of genocide, Jones focuses on the way the existence of hegemonic masculinities contributes to high mortality rates amongst noncombatant males during genocide. He argues that in a culture in which military masculinity marks the hegemonic ideal, unarmed men of battle-age represent a “failure and/or rejection of masculinity.” However, feminized noncombatant men constantly possess the ability to pick up arms, (re)adopt a hegemonic model of masculinity, and pose a threat to their enemy. This contradiction—at once disgustingly feminine and frighteningly masculine—explains the ire and violence directed at noncombatant men. While early on in his article Jones briefly discusses heteronormativity, he constructs his argument around the “deeply gendered” identities men and women embody in times of genocide. As I will discuss further after introducing von Joeden-Forgey’s argument, hegemonic gender constructions are not synonymous with heteronormativity, nor do they offer a complete picture of the concept.

In her 2010 article, “The Devil in the Details: ‘Life Force Atrocities’ and the Assault on the Family in Times of Conflict,” Elisa von Joeden-Forgey elaborates on the concept of relational violence and introduces the term “life force atrocities.” While her article does not include a single mention of heteronormativity or heterosexuality, I believe it still brings us closest to an existing theory of heteronormativity and genocide. She argues that “while directed at the destruction of large groups, [genocide] is inextricably tied to families.” More than any other social institution, by producing children, educating children in the group’s religious and cultural norms, and serving as the affective center of daily life, families organize and perpetuate groups. As such, destruction of the group requires destruction of its life force—the family. Von Joeden-Forgey defines life force atrocities as violent acts that either invert the “proper hierarchies and relationships within families and thereby irrevocably break sacred bonds” or mutilate and desecrate “symbols of group production.” Examples of life force atrocities include forcing family members to murder or torture each other, injuring genitals, rape, and killing infants and pregnant women. While these cruelties seem strange and perverse, which of course they are, they appear in genocide after genocide. Using the examples of the Armenian genocide, the Rwandan genocide, and the Holocaust, von Joeden-Forgey concludes that “the inversion and desecration of sacred familial hierarchies are the primary organizing principles of the violence…genocidal cruelty aims precisely at the ties that bind men and women together.” Yet, this analysis lacks an explanation of why family serves as the organizing unit of most groups and how perpetrators so easily exploit existing family hierarchies and gender roles.

Integrating the concept of heteronormativity, and with it an attention to sexuality and a non-binary understanding of gender, into Jones’s and von Joeden-Forgey’s analysis strengthens both of their arguments. Jones defines heteronormativity as “culturally hegemonic heterosexuality.” However, as the originators of the term explain, heteronormativity goes beyond heterosexuality vs. homosexuality. Heteronormativity represents a constellation of

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55 Ibid., 455.
56 Ibid., 457–458.
57 Ibid., 458.
59 Ibid., 6.
60 Ibid., 2.
61 Ibid., 3.
63 Jones, Straight as a Rule, 451.
64 Berlant and Warner, *Sex in Public.*
practices, impacting people of all sexualities, that serve as a “tacit but central organizing index of social membership.” While heteronormativity begins with the privileging of heterosexual sex as normal and right, “[heteronormativity] is produced in almost every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law; commerce; medicine; and education; as well as in the conventions and affects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture.” The form of hegemonic masculinity Jones draws upon and the family hierarchies von Joeden-Forgey centers only exist because of heteronormativity. Heteronormativity rests first and foremost on a gender/sex binary separating men and women. From this binary, men and women adopt distinct and correct roles within sexual and familial relations. “Evident in most conceptualizations of gender is an assumption of heteronormativity. In other words, to become gendered is to learn the proper way to be a woman in relation to man, or feminine in relation to the masculine.” Heteronormativity not only leads to divisions between men and women, but to the subordination of women to men. And, importantly, the oppression of people perceived as not correctly performing masculinity or femininity. As such, heteronormativity produces the hegemonic masculinities, and subordinate masculinities and femininities, and family hierarchies that enable genocidal violence against noncombatant men and life force atrocities. We cannot fully understand genocide when we end our analysis at gender, for doing so takes heteronormativity, gender’s organizing institution, for granted.

Applying Heteronormativity to Genocide Studies

At this point, after arguing that heteronormativity has been absent from Genocide Studies to the determinant of the field, I would like to provide an example of what deconstructing genocide’s heteronormative foundations might look like. I use queer Nationalism Studies as my entry for the following argument. However, I do not begin to believe my approach is the only way to use heteronormativity to better understand genocide. Forays into queer Genocide Studies could be made from the perspective of Security Studies, Military Studies or Terrorism Studies—all of which have adopted the use of heteronormativity as an analytical lens. The purpose of the next section is not to present a definitive understanding of how heteronormativity functions in a genocidal context, but to demonstrate one way in which heteronormativity proves useful in analyzing genocide. This section poses an open question and issues an invitation to further investigate the connections between queer theories and genocide.

Nationalism constitutes a form of political identity containing two interlinking objectives. One is territorial—to maintain or achieve statehood. The second is ideological—to secure a belief in a collective identity. Nationalists ultimately strive to align the ideological

65 Ibid., 5.
66 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 214.
69 Ibid., 216.

community and the territorial state. International Relations takes a particular interest in nationalism because IR scholars are interested in the construction of and conflict between states. Feminist IR scholars have revealed the ways in which “group reproduction—both biological and social—is fundamental to nationalist practice, process, and politics.” After all, in order for the nation-state to exist and continue to do so, there must be members of the nation. Group reproduction in the modern nation-state is heteronormative because non-reproductive sex threatens the nation/state building project. States discipline non-reproductive sex “by insisting that the bedroom is heterosexual and that a primary purpose of family life is sexual reproduction.” Built on a presupposed natural binary of female/feminine and male/masculine, nationalist understandings of biological and social reproduction construct “heterosexual coupling as the basis of sexual intimacy, family life, and group reproduction.” We cannot extricate heteronormativity from nationalism and state building. As a result, nationalism more often than not results in the exclusion and oppression of queer people. It is not too far of a leap practically or intellectually from nationalism to genocide. Nationalism always poses a threat to “those whose identity is at odds with the projected image of homogenous national identity,” namely other national minorities. In times of extreme nationalism or nationalist conflict, the result has often been murderous. Of course, not all nationalist projects turn genocidal, but one has difficulty imagining a case of genocide that was not preceded by nationalist sentiments. In fact, some argue that the advent of the nation-state and its supporting ideology—nationalism—is what makes genocide possible. Whether or not one believes genocide predates the nation-state, the similarities between nationalism and genocide are undeniable.

As such, if nationalism is heteronormative, and genocide is one nation/nationalism attempting to eradicate another nation/nationalism, then genocide can be conceived of as competing heteronormativities. As explained previously, heteronormativity supports the nation-state and nationalist agendas. Thus, the perpetrators of genocide attempt to perform the best heteronormativity and weaken the heteronormative foundations of their targets. In defense, groups targeted for genocide have an interest in safeguarding their own heteronormative foundations. As a result, heteronormativity becomes strengthened on all sides during episodes of genocide. This helps explains the gendered/sexed violence identified by Jones and von Joeden-Forgey as well as increased violence against queer members of the perpetrator and victim groups.

As a result of genocide’s heteronormative foundations, perpetrators of genocide persecute queer people within their own group in the name of strengthening the nation and encouraging group reproduction. During the bloody breakup of the former Yugoslavia, the nationalist and genocidal governments of Croatia and Serbia both adopted staunchly anti-queer stances. In Croatia, an increased attachment to Catholicism accompanied rising nationalism.

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72 Peterson, *Sexing Political Identities*, 36.

73 Ibid., 39.

74 Ibid., 45.

75 Ibid., 39.


77 Peterson, *Sexing Political Identities*, 35.


Traditional Catholic morals, including heteropatriarchal gender roles, became more important. To be a good man meant being a warrior defending homeland and family. Women were meant to produce children and support male soldiers. People who deviated from these assigned roles and their associated sexualities were demonized, particularly lesbians, who “were labelled as dangerous and destructive for the new Croatian state and its moral values.” While Orthodox Christian Serbia did not see the same ascendance of Catholicism, queer people faced similar changing attitudes. Lepa Mladjenovic, a lesbian activist living in Belgrade during the genocide, recounts being attacked during an action with the anti-war lesbian group Labris.

He pushed me to the wall, broke my glasses and shouted, “You dirty lesbian, I can throw you in this door and kill you – no one would know. Clear off!” When I asked him who he was, he exclaimed, “Don’t you utter your dirty words. The mosque is the place for you.” Lesbians were dirtying his straight male street, just as Muslims were dirtying his straight Serb street.

Mladjenovic’s story highlights not only the danger queer people face during genocides, but the manner in which they quickly become associated with the other group(s)—ethnic, national, religious, or racial—targeted by the genocidaires. Queers are depicted as traitors to the nationalist cause.

Perpetrators are less interested in attacking queer individuals amongst the victim group(s), but they attack all of their victims in ways connected to heteronormativity. As von Joeden-Forgey explained earlier, genocidaires aim to undo the foundations upon which their victims’ lives are built by attacking familial hierarchies. Typically, both the perpetrators and victims understand family through heteronormative gender roles. Perpetrators exploit these shared understandings to imbue specific acts of violence with symbolic meaning. In other words, they are attempting to damage their target group(s)’s heteronormative structures as a means of weakening their society. During the genocide against Bosnian Muslims, for example, much of the violence consisted of inversions of/attacks on heteronormativity. Mothers were threatened with the murder of their children unless they submitted to being raped, usually in front of their children. Men were also subjected to sexual abuse. In one documented instance, a father and son imprisoned together in a camp were forced to perform sexual acts on each other. It was common for male prisoners to have their genitals mutilated and castrated. A 1994 investigation ordered by the United Nations Security Council found...

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81 Ibid.
84 Ibid., 59.
85 Ibid.
The guards did not come up with these torturous acts out of nowhere. Rather, the violence becomes intelligible when viewed through the lens of heteronormativity, a social institution shared by the perpetrators and their victims. If the guards were just interested in torturing their prisoners, they might have cut off a hand or a leg. But by cutting off their victims’ penises, the guards attacked the part of a man’s body that makes him capable of heterosexual sex and reproduction; making him less worthy within a heteronormative context. And the stigma both men and women endure from being raped only functions in a world in which women are valued for their sexual purity and men for their ability to penetrate and not be penetrated.  

The examples from the former Yugoslavia demonstrate that heteronormative logics enable violence during genocides against queers and non-queers. Beyond what I have shared, little empirical evidence exists about persecution of queer people or heteronormative violence against non-queer people during genocides—one more reason to pursue empirical work in queer Genocide Studies. Thus, I do not pretend to believe that I have proven anything about genocide’s true nature (if that is even possible or a desirable goal). In this section, I argued through existing theory and examples that it is reasonable to believe heteronormativity makes possible genocide and that we can better understand how and why genocide works when we examine both genocide as a phenomenon and individual cases through a heteronormative lens; and if heteronormativity enables genocide, perhaps queerness contains strategies of prevention and mitigation.

Reproductive Futurity and the Erasure of Queer Lives

The Definition of Genocide and an Emphasis on Reproductive Futurity

Since Raphaël Lemkin coined the term genocide in 1944, its definition has been highly contested. In fact, definitional debates dominate much of the existing literature. However, most definitions of genocide share an emphasis on the impairment of the group’s biological and cultural reproduction. I argue that this emphasis excludes those who do not and/or cannot contribute to a group’s biological and cultural reproduction, or are perceived as such, namely poorer people and queer people. However, non-reproductive members of groups are still subjected to genocidal violence by perpetrators due to their membership in the targeted collectivity. By obscuring non-carriers of genes and culture, genocide scholars have made the deaths of members of lower economic classes and the queer community somehow seem like less of a crime. A troubling implication of this type of thinking is that the lives and deaths of these people also become less important to the victim group during their collective process of resistance and recovery. Moving forward, genocide scholars should attempt to refrain from replicating the same heteronormative and anti-queer logics that contributes to both wholesale genocide and violence against queer people.

The first definition of genocide appeared in Lemkin’s 1944 volume *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Lemkin defined genocide as:

...the destruction of a nation or an ethnic group...Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the

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86 Fascinatingly, Waites argues in his pathbreaking article that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda’s decision in the Akayesu case set a precedent that could be used today to start prosecuting and punishing anti-queer violence committed as part of the destruction of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. See Waites, *Genocide and Global Queer Politics*, 58.

destruction of the essential foundation of the life of national groups with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.\textsuperscript{88}

Notice the focus placed not on atrocities committed against a large number of individuals, but on the health of the nation as a whole. Phrases like “the essential foundation of the life of nation groups” highlight this focus. An important facet of the nation’s health, according to Lemkin, is not only its ability to exist, but its ability to continue to exist. Lemkin conceived of destroying, or attempting to destroy, a culture as a distinct and particularly evil crime.\textsuperscript{89} Lemkin’s understanding of genocide as a crime that goes beyond mass killing also appears in the 1948 United Nations’ Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide, which Lemkin played an important role in drafting. Alongside “killing members of the group” and inflicting bodily harm, Article II of the Genocide Convention lists “imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group” and “forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” as crimes of genocide.\textsuperscript{90} This indicates a continued conviction that genocide constitutes a distinct atrocity because it interferes with biological reproduction (preventing births within the group) and cultural reproduction (forcibly transferring children to another group).

As Genocide Studies evolved from Lemkin and the Genocide Convention, many definitions continued to emphasize reproduction. For example, Helen Fein, the founder and first president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, defines genocide as

\begin{quote}
...sustained purposeful action by a perpetrator to physically destroy a collectivity directly or indirectly, through interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group members, sustained regardless of the surrender or lack of threat offered by the victim.\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}

Here, Fein clearly highlights the importance of “biological and social reproduction.” Von Joeden-Forgey also states distinctly that, “Genocide is a historical process that is, at its core about group reproduction.”\textsuperscript{92} Philosopher Claudia Card, writing about social reproduction, concurs.

Specific to genocide is the harm inflicted on its victims’ social vitality… When a group with its own cultural identity is destroyed, its survivors lose their cultural heritage and may even lose their intergenerational connections.\textsuperscript{93}

The above collection of genocide definitions demonstrates that the future, and the ability of a group to continue as it presently exists in that future, holds a unique and influential position in the thinking of many genocide scholars and the discipline of Genocide Studies as a whole.

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\textsuperscript{92} von Joeden-Forgey, \textit{The Devil in the Details}, 62.
\end{flushright}
Who Do These Definitions Exclude?
The emphasis on genocide as a crime that interferes with cultural and biological reproduction risks obscuring violence perpetrated against real and perceived non-reproductive group members. Two communities that fall into the category of non-reproductive, real and/or perceived, are poor people and queer people.

Lemkin’s and others’ definitions of genocide rest on the underlying assumption that distinct cultural groups are intrinsically valuable because they contribute to the richness and progress of human civilization. Lemkin declared “all our cultural heritage is a product of the contribution of all nations,” citing the contributions of people who hailed from groups targeted by the Nazis—people like Einstein, Spinoza, and Chopin. As his examples demonstrate, Lemkin associated culture and the potential for cultural reproduction with high culture. It was elites and intellectuals, according to Lemkin, not peasants, the working class, or the uneducated who transmitted culture. Following this logic, Lemkin would find that “the murder of a poet is morally worse than the murder of a janitor” and that the destruction of a library or mosque is more abhorrent than the burning of a home or barn. Even if unintentional, the classism and elitism inherent in definitions like Lemkin’s is apparent.

Much like certain definitions of genocide render the impoverished invisible, conceptualizations of genocide that center the future obscure queer people. In his 2004 polemic, *No Future*, queer theorist Lee Edelman argues that the political as we know it, is built around “the affirmation of a value so unquestioned, because so obviously unquestionable, as that of the Child whose innocence solicits our defense.” There is no room to debate whether or not we should be centering the figure of the Child. All political debate, and “political” here is broadly conceived, centers around how best to protect children. Importantly, these discussions usually center future children, rather than existing, embodied children—hence Edelman’s invocation of “the Child.” Edelman labels this phenomenon “reproductive futurism,” which he defines as terms that impose an ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations.

Genocide Studies is heavily invested in reproductive futurism. Historically, victim groups have been conceptualized as organic collectives. Groups eligible for protection from genocide have only included those that can “reproduce and multiply themselves in a manner understood heteronormatively as both natural and good.” Genocide scholars define their subject according to reproduction. They also justify their research in the name of preventing genocide and saving future generations (i.e. children) from the scourge of genocide.

Often times, anti-queer institutions, such as laws banning gays and lesbians from teaching or adopting, are justified as necessary to protect children. Moreover, until recently, in Western culture, the idea of queer parents raising children had been unthinkable. As a result of these logics, Edelman invokes queerness to describe “those not fighting for the children, the

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94 Moses, *Concept of Genocide*, 23.
95 As written by Raphaël Lemkin in a Memorandum Dated June 5, 194 and addressed to Dr. Robert Kempner. See Moses, *Concept of Genocide*, 28, footnote 32.
96 Moses, *Concept of Genocide*, 23.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism.” Queerness—both as a refusal of reproductive futurity and as a practice or identity—threatens particular social orders and “social order as such, insofar as it threatens the logic of futurism on which meaning always depends.” When we cast genocide as abhorrent because it threatens our social order, constructed from a logic of reproductive futurism, we also catch queerness in our net—characterizing it as similarly dangerous and destructive because of the way it calls the future into question.

The implications of this move are three-fold. First, genocide scholars replicate the logic deployed by genocidaires. Second, the deaths of queer genocide victims become less important to both genocide scholars and targeted communities. Third, recovery efforts directed by supposed international experts ignore existing people’s trauma and reify heteronormative and genocidal logics.

Initially, genocidaires and genocide scholars deploy the same logic of reproductive futurism. Perpetrators of genocide take advantage of the norms of reproductive futurism by justifying their atrocities with arguments about ensuring security and prosperity for future generations. For instance, in a 1934 speech to German youth, Adolf Hitler declared: “No matter what we create today and what we do, we will pass away one day. But in you, Germany will live on...We see in you the promise that our work was not in vain.” Additionally, genocidaires understand that their victims also value children above all else and stake their hopes on future generations. This explains why perpetrators target children for death and extreme violence. In Rwanda, the leaders of the genocide specifically directed assailants to murder children. Propagandists frequently reminded people that even the youngest posed a threat. After all, every Tutsi soldier had once been a baby. “Of the bodies exhumed by Physicians for Human Rights at a mass grave in Kibuye province, some 44 percent were of children under the age of fifteen and 31 percent were under ten.”

While genocide certainly represents this attitude in the extreme, Edelman argues that reproductive futurism encourages limiting the rights of existing people in the name of protecting future children. The idea that we must sacrifice now for the benefit of our children and our children’s children echoes across many different cultures and throughout history. Though it has strong roots in Protestantism, which, as a consequence of colonialism and imperialism, is an influential cultural force across the globe. It makes sense, then, that genocidal leaders justify gruesome and extreme violence in the name of future generations. Framing genocide as an unfortunate but necessary sacrifice. As discussed earlier, genocide scholars also deploy ideas of reproductive futurism by focusing on children and future generations as the locus of a group’s identity. In doing so, genocide scholars must be wary of reifying, rather than explaining, perpetrator’s behavior.

Next, the reproductive futurism inherent in many definitions of genocide makes queer deaths seem less important, both to scholars and victims. Queer people exist in every group and in every time period. They are inevitably caught up in waves of genocidal violence. However, if preventing the reproduction of culture and people is what makes genocide particularly evil, the logical, though likely unintended, extension of this idea is that killing carriers of culture and genetics is somehow more genocidal than killing perceived non-carriers. While our understandings of what types of families are available to queer people are rapidly changing,

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102 Edelman, No Future, 3.
103 Ibid., 11.
106 Ibid.
107 Edelman, No Future, 11.
108 Ibid., 4.
most same-sex couples cannot biologically reproduce and, historically, queer people have been perceived as infertile. Further, when the family is the center of cultural life, which it so often is, queer people without children also do not play as essential a role in passing down cultural traditions. So, by extension of the logic of futuristic definitions of genocide, the deaths of queer people are less genocidal than the deaths of non-queer people. Perhaps this logical conclusion, even subconsciously, plays a role in why so few genocide scholars have done empirical work with queer victims of genocide.

Moreover, this type of thinking contributes to victim groups turning on or failing to protect queer members of their community. For reasons discussed in section one, we do not know much empirically about how queer members of targeted groups e.g. queer Armenians, queer Tutsis, and so on, are treated by their friends and families in the midst of genocide. However, it is not difficult to imagine that as targeted groups become more nationalist and natalist in the face of genocide, they too begin to exclude, isolate, and persecute queer people. As a result, queer people may have higher rates of fatalities during genocides because they are cut off from the support, safety, and solidarity community members provide each other. We do know that in Nazi Germany, while other prisoners detained in similar conditions received aid and care packages from family and friends outside the concentration camps, homosexual prisoners did not. What happens to queer people persecuted by their community for being queer and by another community for their ethnicity, nationality, religion, or race? With both researchers and targeted groups dedicated to ideas bound up with reproductive futurism, we do not have a complete answer to that question.

Finally, when genocide experts and international humanitarians whose understandings of genocide are built around reproductive futurism arrive to help rebuild societies after genocide, they may focus primarily on rebuilding families and efforts to reconcile children of different backgrounds. In doing so, they inadvertently minimize the trauma of adults and those who fall outside of normative understandings of family, like widows, rape survivors, and queer people. They also tend to entrench the heteronormative structures that, as discussed in the preceding section, create an environment where nationalism and genocide flourish. Since these experts understand genocide as an event that “disrupts and destroys” family, they place a “special emphasis” on “rebuilding families and fostering cohesion.” “Children and youth, in whom visions of national development are invested, are central to post-conflict state-building efforts.” In Rwanda, for example, the post-genocide government declared its goal was to become a middle-income country by 2020, resting most of their hopes on the education of the 65% of the population under the age of 25. Of course, children, like anybody else, are worthy of care and concern following genocide. However, when everyone places all of their bets on the next generation, it can devalue the current generation and human life in the process. Addressing the individual stress and trauma and cultural stress and trauma caused by genocide requires extreme attention and nuance. By overemphasizing the nuclear family and children, however well-intentioned, those aiding reconstructing efforts may be robbing others of the care they need and deserve.

In this section, I made a normative critique of Genocide Studies as a discipline. Many genocide scholars define genocide as interference with biological and cultural reproduction. I applied Lee Edelman’s concept of reproductive futurism to these definitions and critiqued them for erasing queer people and others who are or are perceived to be non-reproductive, namely

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110 Plant, The Pink Triangle, 169.
111 von Joeden-Forgey, Gender and Genocide, 79.
113 Ibid.
114 Meierhenrich, Genocide, 298.
the impoverished. As a result, Genocide Studies normalizes, though unintentionally, an understanding of the concept that reifies genocidaires’ logic, deemphasizes queer lives during genocide, and contributes to heteronormative reconstructions of post-genocidal societies. Martin Shaw’s 2007 definition of genocide provides an example of a definitional direction to move in:

…genocidal action can be defined as action in which armed power organizations treat civil social groups as enemies and aim to destroy their real or putative social power, by means of killing, violence and coercion against individuals whom they regard as members of the groups. Thus, genocide is a type of unequal social conflict between two sets of actors, which is defined primarily by the type of action carried out by the more powerful side.115

While Shaw’s definition is not immune to critique, it emphasizes the destruction of current, living people based on their membership in a social group. While not explicitly a queer definition of genocide, and I do think there is a space and need for a queer definition of genocide, a definition like Shaw’s does not devalue non-reproductive life. Rather, it criminalizes the taking of or harm to all life. In addition to discussions about including sexual orientation and gender identity in definitions of protected groups, we must also have a much-needed discussion about re-defining genocide in a more inclusive and queer way.

Conclusion
This paper argues for the empirical and analytical utility and normative necessity of building bridges between queer theory and the study of genocide. I used the queer theory concepts of queer intellectual curiosity, heteronormativity, and reproductive futurism to demonstrate why bridging is necessary and what it might look like. While the empirics are currently limited, I drew examples from Nazi Germany, the former Yugoslavia, Chechnya, and Rwanda, to help demonstrate the need for a queerer Genocide Studies. I did not intend to convince the reader of any one truth about queering Genocide Studies in this paper. Rather, I hoped to convince the reader that queering Genocide Studies has value. The constructive arguments I did make, such as the argument that heteronormativity makes possible genocide, serve as examples of the way queer theories of genocide might work. When I began scrutinizing the puzzle of genocide and queerness, I planned to empirically examine heteronormativity as a precondition of genocide. Early in the research process it became clear the existing literature base and archives are insufficient to support empirical investigation. We need a robust research program on queer(er) Genocide Studies that produces a wide array of primary sources and literature investigating the myriad possible connections between queerness and genocide.

Bibliography


Introduction
Since Myanmar’s independence, the borderlands have been characterized by periodic and cyclical violence as ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) have fought against state military offensives. Despite the evident asymmetry between the well-equipped and extensive Tatmadaw and the many rebel groups that remain, at least to some degree, poorly organized and underfunded, war has plagued the borderland communities since independence.\(^1\) A barrage of human rights abuses has come in the wake of the low-intensity, long-term war, waged by the Tatmadaw who have historically viewed civilian populations with suspicion and often as acceptable collateral damage. Such a precedent as this has been accepted whilst the military dominated the state during the period of the military junta. However, as Myanmar has begun its transition towards a seemingly democratic state, with the triple transition process, there has been a fall in the levels of direct violence experienced within the borderlands.\(^2\) Whilst this could be considered a positive development, this paper will question the authenticity of these changes. Though direct violence has reduced, forms of indirect violence and crimes against humanity have continued. Transition has not ended state sponsored violence but rather transformed it. As such, there has not been an end to the crimes against humanity for these communities, but rather the mechanisms by which it is conducted have transformed over time.

The first part of this paper will focus on actions against the minority communities within Myanmar’s borderlands as enacted under the military junta between 1962 and 2008.\(^3\) It will identify how key events changed the relations between the military and these local populations, including the introduction of the Four Cuts strategy, the major offensives of the 1980s and the ceasefire agreements of the 1990s. The second part will identify how the triple transition introduced to Myanmar in 2008, and led by the military, has and has not altered the actions of the military and their engagements with local communities within the borderlands.\(^4\) The final section will focus on how the process of the triple transition has transformed the methods used to continue the violence and marginalization of these populations within the

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\(^1\) The Tatmadaw is the title of the Myanmar military forces. Here, the two terms Tatmadaw and military will be used interchangeably.

\(^2\) Within this paper the author will refer to the country before 2008 as Burma and in the post-2008 period as Myanmar. Although the name was officially changed during the 1989 change of government, it was not widely accepted prior to the transition period which began in 2008. This does not reflect the personal views of the author or her participants or identify any preference or support for differing groups within the country. The triple transition process in Myanmar was identified and outlined by The World Bank in 2012 as part of their interim strategy for working in Myanmar. See “World Bank Prepares Interim Strategy Note for Myanmar,” World Bank, August 10, 2012, accessed October 5, 2020, http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/08/10/world-bank-prepares-interim-strategy-note-for-myanmar.

\(^3\) Though this period includes several differing formations of the Burmese state including a military junta, one-party state, and a socialist regime, all of these regimes have been dominated by the military at almost all levels of governance. Therefore, the similarities between such regime types and governance models provide strong grounds for analysing them together under one time period.

\(^4\) This section will draw on evidence from the Karen and Kachin experiences, in line with the field research completed by the author. It is not to suggest that this is a universal experience to all borderland communities within Myanmar but exemplifies some of the common experiences communities have and continue to face along the frontlines between the EAOs and Tatmadaw.
borderlands. This article will build on research and insights collected by the author on several research trips to the areas under study and with activists working inside Myanmar from along the Thai-Burma border. By engaging with local perspectives on the continuing human rights situation along the border, the article is able to move beyond national and internal rhetoric on transition and democratization that has too often been the foci of international engagement within Myanmar since 2015.

Myanmar’s government and military have faced myriad threats from ethnic oppositions, and most recently have been implicated in an ongoing genocide in Rakhine against the Rohingya people. Not to minimize the scale and devastation of the plight of the Rohingya, the oppression they face from the state both in terms of conduct and reasons for such oppression present an anomaly in relation to historic state policy. As such, this paper focuses not on the Rohingya crisis but the experiences of other ethnic groups within the borderlands, particularly the Karen and Kachin communities based in the east and north of the country, who have experienced a process of slow genocide since independence. Both these ethnic groups have faced systematic oppression and been victim to crimes against humanity. Though, at times these experiences have diverged, there is great commonality between their experiences when they are viewed over time. The Karen and Kachin have mounted large-scale rebellions against the state with popular support from their home communities. Though their experiences do not match every minority group within Myanmar, nor does the experience detailed below represent all of those within each of these communities, their more comprehensive organization and international outreach has provided an insight into these regions and communities that have long been neglected.

**Burma Under the Military 1962–2008**

When Burma was granted independence by the British colonial powers in 1948, it was already a state in crisis. War ravaged Burma had witnessed several brutal fronts during World War II as well as two separate occupying forces and numerous bombardments from air and ground troops. Though desired, independence did not bring peace to Burma, with the assassination of the country’s leader, Aung San and his cabinet occurring just before the historic handover. Factionalism plagued not only the cabinet but across the country, with mounting insurgencies from both communist and ethnic cleavages. Consequently, the military staged a coup d’état in 1962 with the aim of unifying both the government and the country. This responsibility has become institutionalized within the Tatmadaw, who, at their core believe their role is to maintain the territoriality of the Union and protect it above all else.

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5 It is important to note that there is debate on how independent the institutions of state and military are within Myanmar given the transition that has been ongoing since 2008. As this paper focuses on state-sponsored violence and the use of soft as well as coercive power, it accepts the premise that though these institutions are separate, it is almost impossible to distinctly separate their actions within this environment.


The Tatmadaw solidified their role as state leaders through the 1974 adoption of the “Burmese Way to Socialism,” which saw Burma isolate itself from the international stage. This policy of isolationism ruined Burma’s economy, going from one of the fastest growing Asian Tigers to applying for Least Developed Country Status (LDC) in 1987. Though devastating for Burma’s peasant population throughout the country, the borderland communities found themselves in an even more precarious position.

Thirty years of Burmese independence had resulted in 30 years of war within the borderlands. The mountainous jungle terrain and asymmetrical power structures between the Tatmadaw and EAOs forced the latter to adopt guerrilla tactics, entrenching conflict as part of daily life and blurring the lines between armed groups and civilians. This entanglement of civilian and rebel life was identified by the state and became the target of the Four Cuts counter-insurgency policy adopted during the 1960s. It aimed to remove the four supply lines EAOs required for survival: food, funds, recruits and intelligence. Yet, the implementation treated civilian communities as collateral damage with tactics including mass forced relocation, razed villages and farm-holds, the widespread use of landmines as well as systematic arrest and torture policies. This was in addition to restrictions and hardships that communities faced because of the war, such as arbitrary arrests, forced portering, illegal torture and execution as well as rape of women and children. Further, discriminatory state policies failed to protect other minority rights, such as the lack of official recognition of minority languages and culture in favor of the Barmar majority cultural and religious signifiers. Communities in the borderlands faced three overlapping types of state oppression during this period: direct violence (as a consequence of the war); violence as a consequence of state sanctioned counter-insurgency strategies; and oppression of cultural norms and rights through the prioritization of the Barmar identity.

This peaked in the mid-1980s when the violence leveled against the Karen population drove thousands across the border to Thailand. By the end of the junta period, such refugees and displaced people officially numbered over 150,000 along several camps on the Thai-Burma border. In part, this increase is related to the decision by the central command to force Tatmadaw battalions within the borderlands to “live off the land.” This policy saw the central government and military cease funds for supplies to their battalions, forcing them to extract it from the civilian population. In the borderlands, where the Tatmadaw were perceived as an invading force, there was little to no civilian support for these battalions. Consequently, to survive, battalions committed further abuses against civilian communities, confiscating their food supplies, stores, livestock, and equipment as required, often razing villages or killing.

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13 Pedersen, Secret Genocide, 8–9, 50.
14 KHRG, Foundation of Fear, 38–63.
16 KHRG, Foundation of Fear, 24–25.
community leaders to eliminate any evidence.\textsuperscript{19} In this period, communities in the borderlands faced an additional threat to the lives and livelihoods from the military and they became victims not only to counter-insurgency policies but over direct competition for resources.

Though a number of ceasefires were signed in the early 1990s, including in Kachin State, conflict continued in Karen. Unable to reach an agreement with the Karen National Union (KNU), the Tatmadaw launched increasingly ferocious offensives against key locations within Karen and other regions under the control of KNU forces. This included their capital and headquarters Mannerplaw, which had grown to be an oasis for pro-democratic forces from all parts of Burma.\textsuperscript{20} Consequently, communities in Karen continued to experience the denial of their rights and structural insecurities from the ongoing conflict, counterinsurgency and other government policies, as well as the lack of official recognition of the cultural rights.

Whereas the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) signed a ceasefire with the government in the 1990s, though this did not necessarily protect local populations from crimes committed by the state. As Sadan’s work on the second Kachin ceasefire highlights, in the 17 years of “peace” created by the 1994 agreement, the population still faced high levels of militarization and remained vulnerable to abuses.\textsuperscript{21} The military government pursued aggressive investment strategies within the region, often in areas not under their own control.\textsuperscript{22} This gave the military remit to enter such areas to secure locations for development whilst further cutting the KIO off from their own territories and traditional revenue streams.\textsuperscript{23} For civilian populations, this meant vulnerability to forced relocations, forced labor, and confiscation of resources as battalions were and remain under instruction to live off the land. Thus, despite the presence of ceasefires in some borderland regions, communities remained vulnerable to state violence and oppression as they were within the conflict regions.

Under military control, the ethnic minorities in Burma’s resource rich borderlands have experienced systematic human rights abuses that amount to crimes against humanity. The forced relocation of 100,000’s of people remains the clearest reminder of this. However, restrictions on cultural and religious freedoms of these communities, the cyclical violence they have faced, and the removal of livelihoods and ways of life have culminated in much wider reaching implications for these communities who feel their whole way of life and existence has been under threat.

**Myanmar and the Triple Transition: A Work in Progress**

The acceptance of the 2008 Constitution started a process that would become known as the triple transition in Myanmar.\textsuperscript{24} The document itself set out the institutional changes and structure of what political transition the country would take. It further outlined an economic plan for market liberalization, ending the state-centric policies of the socialist and junta eras. To achieve the institutional frameworks and goals set out within it, the need to further transition from war to peace was clearly underscored. Myanmar’s triple transition had begun.

At the institutional and macro-conception, regime transition in Myanmar has progressed smoothly, achieving successive goalposts in its quest to democratize. Though the progress toward regular institutional elections may have been achieved, the representativeness


\textsuperscript{20} Pedersen, *Secret Genocide*, 8-9, 50-51.

\textsuperscript{21} Sadan, *War and Peace*.

\textsuperscript{22} Interview Kachin Activist, interview by Author, Face to Face, Chiang Mai, June 17, 2018.


of the governments it elects are suspect. The military continue to hold twenty-five percent of seats within government and held onto core positions and ministries within the new government. Further, both elections since 2008 have missed areas deemed too unsafe or unstable for them to be conducted.²⁵ Demonstrably, the military may have stepped back from day to day governance, but they have chosen to remain a shadow in the halls of government, poised to tackle any deemed threat to Myanmar’s development.

Beyond the institutional structures, transition to democracy leaves much to be desired for local communities. Many in Myanmar continue to struggle to access their political and human rights along with the resources to fulfill their basic needs. Those living in conflict zones in Shan, Karen, and Kachin have been denied voting rights in elections.²⁶ Most notably the Rohingya in Rakhine were denied the right to vote in 2015 with no national parties fielding any Muslim candidates.²⁷ This electoral marginalization has contributed to the mounting oppression of rights minorities within the borderland already face.

When President Thein Sein took office in 2010, there was fear that little would change given his military ties. On the contrary, he oversaw a period of dramatic reform focusing on the overdue economic liberalization of Myanmar. Under his leadership, the country saw major increases in development aid and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to help improve infrastructure and harvest many of Myanmar’s rich natural resource deposits.²⁸ International funders arrived, buoyed by the belief that economic transition would aid Myanmar’s political and conflict transitions. Yet, they were also pulled by the rich investment opportunities from large-scale infrastructure projects, including deep seaports and new railroads, to resource rich lands that include precious stones, oil, and teak. Alterations to the rules governing FDI in Myanmar, along with increased length of land leases to foreigners broke down many of the boundaries investors had previously faced.²⁹ This resulted in an unprecedented wave of FDI to Myanmar in 2010.³⁰

The establishment of the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was the last act of Thein Sein’s government and the first multilateral ceasefire ever secured within the country. This ended much of the direct violence that had characterized the borderlands since independence, including the solidification of the peace between the KNU and the government, suspending the world’s longest civil war.³¹ Although direct violence was suspended, the lack of compromise between the EAOs and the Tatmadaw resulted in only the preliminary agreement being signed. This has led many to note the agreement is “surface only” and that the complex framework that


has been built around the NCA is there to ensure the military advantage at every stage.\textsuperscript{32} This, in itself, was reminiscent of the previous bilateral ceasefires which were more akin to business transactions, suspending direct violence for economic gain than a substantial commitment to the peace process they were trying to emulate.\textsuperscript{33}

Peace and reconciliation were placed at the top of the National League for Democracy’s (NLD) priorities when they took office in 2015.\textsuperscript{34} Yet, it was the military negotiators that maintained the major role within the peace talks, with the government taking on the role of mediators.\textsuperscript{35} Despite increasing the number of talks and peace conferences, little has been achieved in terms of results for Myanmar’s peace process. In 2018, hope seemed to arise as two new groups joined the agreement, yet this was soon dashed by inter-signatory clashes.\textsuperscript{36} Concerns increased later that year when the KNU and Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), two of the largest groups within the NCA, decided to suspend their membership after a number of confrontations with Tatmadaw in EAO defined territory.\textsuperscript{37} Though the final cause of suspension, the incursions were not the sole reason for this decision. Both groups publicized frustrations with the peace process and cited the government and the military’s unwillingness to compromise, as well as the establishment of new preconditions they had been expected to sign before negotiations could continue.\textsuperscript{38} This has reflected growing frustrations with the peace process which for those involved has lacked the necessary compromise on both sides to progress effectively.\textsuperscript{39}

The common obstacle to effective change is the role of the military within transitional processes. The military holds its allocated seats and sections within the political arena and is able to override many government decisions with little established transparency to hold them accountable for their interventions. Though officials seated in the military blocks of each of the houses have shown surprising independence and engagement with parliamentary process, on several occasions, the military’s ability to override political process has been obvious.\textsuperscript{40} Most notably, under Thein Sein, the government announced a ceasefire with the KIO, only to have the Tatmadaw completely ignore the government directive.\textsuperscript{41} It is this notion of elevated importance that permits the military to act outside the law without impediment. Although the NCA has reduced the levels of direct violence in many areas of the borderlands, the military continue to wage war against non-NCA signatories. As identified by Jones, under the Kachin ceasefire
which ended in 2011, the military continued to pursue control of land and communities held by EAOs through other means. The use of economic development and infrastructure projects as a mechanism to permit the military to enter, secure, and control territory identified as under EAO control has become a preferred strategy of the military. With the 2011 ceasefire breakdown occurring over a military outpost adjacent to one of the major dam projects along the Kachin-China border. This created localized escalations in violence, including the forced relocation of local communities either in the name of development or due to mistrust of the military. There are now over 100,000 displaced people in Kachin State and along the China border. Thus, the presence of ceasefire did not alleviate the threat to society of slow genocide but rather altered the methods to which it is being conducted.

Yet, direct or indirect violence are not the only methods of dispossession employed by the state and military in relation to minority communities. Many communities in the borderlands still face issues accessing justice and state services with many identifying increasing crackdowns on their freedom of expression since 2015. There are three main reasons for this. First, in conflict areas, justice is difficult to achieve as often, would be cases are resolved directly between perpetrators and victims and involve a fiscal settlement, rather than an attempt to achieve justice. Second, should any case involve the military, the Tatmadaw will ensure that it is heard in a military court where family and local leaders must gain permission to attend and there is less accountability. In both these instances, though a form of resolution may be offered to victims, there is a lack of accountability and transparency that leaves victims and their families vulnerable to further intimidation and injustices. Yet, on the few times cases do make it to civilian courts, there remains no guarantee of transparency or accountability—over fifty percent of judges have a military background in Myanmar, including both the Chief Justice and the Attorney General. Further, all cases are heard in Burmese and although under the law all minorities speakers may have a translator, many are not aware of their rights and so remain vulnerable within the justice system. Thus, justice remains inaccessible to many.

Yet, institutional obstacles are not the only barriers ethnic minority communities face in achieving justice for crimes committed against them. Traditional customs and cultural practices have also prevented victims from seeking justice. There is a saying in relation to Myanmar’s legal practice—“Keep the cases small, and make small cases disappear,” which is equivalent to—“do not air your dirty laundry.” It discourages victims from coming forward, which is already an issue due to the institutional, financial, and accessibility barriers minority communities already face in accessing justice in Myanmar. Further, the increasing use of new laws to prosecute individuals criticizing the government has resulted in law being viewed as a tool of oppression rather than one of liberation. This is particularly in reference to the use of 66d, a telecommunications law, which has been levied against numerous human rights

42 Jones, Understanding Myanmar’s Ceasefires, 104–105.
46 Human Rights Activist, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Chiang Mai, June 25, 2018.
47 Ibid.
48 Ex-Political Prisoner, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Yangon, July 4, 2019.
49 Women’s Rights Activist, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Karen State, December 3, 2018.
50 INGO Official, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Yangon, November 16, 2018.

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defenders and critics of the NLD government. As one interviewee noted, “the laws have now been established, but they are being used as a weapon of oppression.”

Additionally, state-society relations appear to be deteriorating with the state persistently refusing to listen or cooperate with active civil society organizations. While this had been possible for many civil society groups during the Thein Sein era, many have found it increasingly difficult to be heard by government officials. Some of the interviewees noted that the change was merely a bureaucratic one, requiring civil society to request permission at least three days before. Others claimed, due to their own affiliations or lack of official registration, they were now unable to get meetings with government officials or organize workshops. This seemed to suggest a variable willingness by the government to engage with civil society and a civil society space that seemed to be restricting since 2015. This not only impacts freedom of expression but the ability of communities to mobilize and engage with the government on a communal platform.

Changing Face: Patterns of Human Rights Abuses in Myanmar

In recent reports by Shan and Karen civil society, there has been a documented shift in the kinds of human rights abuses committed against civilian populations. Previously, in periods of conflict, the majority of cases have centered around extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests and disappearances. Now, both communities report increasing cases of land confiscation and forced relocation. In Kachin, it has become the most prominent issue as the ongoing war has allowed for cronies and military elites to grab land in the name of security and development. The combination of displacement and land grabbing has resulted in abandoned villages being sold to the Chinese; meaning, communities having no place to return to. In Karen, though there is no active war, communities face similar abuses with land grabbing occurring in both ceasefire and non-ceasefire territories. As one interviewee described, “since the signing of the NCA there has been little change… because some groups are now legal, they can come and do business. One group near my village have expanded mines a lot [sic] and it is not good. It is ruining our water supply and we have many landslides; it has ruined crops and roads.”

References:
52 Yangon Based Karen Community Leader, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Mae Sot, December 12, 2018.
54 Justice NGO Worker, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Karen State, November 28, 2018.
55 Women’s Rights Activist, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Karen State, December 3, 2018.
58 Human Rights Activist, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Chiang Mai, June 25, 2018.
60 Community Youth Leader, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Karen State, July 9, 2019.
This identifies a pattern of change in the methods of control and domination orchestrated by the Tatmadaw. When war and control by coercive means becomes a less viable option, such control is maintained through other more indirect forms, such as economic accumulation.

It is therefore possible to see a shift in the methods of oppression adopted and utilized by the military in relation to the borderland communities. In the junta period, society as a whole has faced a range of oppressive measures including limitations on their freedom of speech. Those communities residing within the borderlands faced additional repressive policies through the orchestration of Four Cuts and the human rights abuses that occurred because of the wars ongoing around them. These policies of oppression disproportionately impacted the lives of civilians within the borderlands causing many to be forcibly relocated or to flee to Thailand.

Yet, this relocation in itself has become part of the oppression of communities and their rights. First, the journey to relative safety held great risks due to the high density of mines in many borderland areas. Forty years later, many remain in camps, with dwindling supplies and even less to return for—they have been left reliant on humanitarian handouts which are increasingly drying up as more international assistance focuses on the transition in Myanmar.

Second, as part of displacement, these communities lost access to their farms and villages and therefore, their cultural and traditional customs. A healthcare worker who grew up in one of the camps noted that few of her generation wanted to return: “They do not know Karen State, we cannot read or speak Karen, it is not our home. As we cannot farm in the camp, few would know how to make a living if we went back. We do not know our own tradition this way.”

Consequently, communities that fled violence may have protected themselves from direct repression but are still experiencing the impacts, albeit indirectly, of such violence as well as the oppression of their cultural and traditional practices.

Since the transition began in 2008 and the ceasefire signing in 2015, there has been a substantial reduction in these directly oppressive policies that characterized the junta period. Outright violence because of war has dropped almost completely in areas where ceasefires have been signed. The counterinsurgency policies of the 1960s are no longer used to try and root out dissenting forces. Nevertheless, communities within the borderlands still face higher levels of repression by state forces than those of the ethnic Barmar majority at the center of the state.

Indirect and structural violence continues to limit these communities’ rights to peaceful living and accessing their human rights. Despite the ending, or freezing of armed conflicts, human rights abuses continue to be committed. Sporadic deaths and arbitrary arrests continue, as well as cases of rape conducted by Tatmadaw officers. The most common abuses now center on the confiscation of land and the use of forced labor, often characterized by the state as voluntary labor carried out by villagers—laying roads, carrying heavy loads, and so forth. This increase is related to the new method of control the state is imposing on the borderlands: control through economic development and state incursion into ethnic minority areas. By auctioning off traditionally held lands, many of which are resource rich, the state is reaping economic benefits, gaining access to lands and communities, and asserting control previously inaccessible to them. The consequence of such actions is creating a new wave of displacement as people attempt to move away from state control and presence due to fear of state repression.

Despite the differing situations in Karen and Kachin State, the former experiencing a reduction in violence due to the ongoing ceasefire, the latter currently an active war zone after ceasefire breakdown, economic investment is being used as a weapon of oppression in both.

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61 Pedersen, Secret Genocide, 3, 103.
63 Community Health Worker, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Yangon, July 5, 2019.
64 Community Human Rights Organisation Worker, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Mae Sot, June 22, 2018.
65 KHRG, Foundation of Fear, 72–74.
66 Brenner, Rebel Politics, 83–84.
discussed earlier, the Kachin ceasefire broke down in 2011 over damming sites in Kachin State and the increasing presence of the Chinese investors and Tatmadaw in KIO territory. Unrest over development projects in Kachin has not diffused, with the Myitsone Dam project being permanently suspended due to civil unrest. Yet, fighting continues over resource-rich land such as Jade mines and land abandoned by those forced to flee, now secured through plantation projects. Karen interviewees noted that since the reduction in fighting in Karen as part of the ceasefire, the Tatmadaw now fought for land through land rights and access, as one put it, “they do not come with guns anymore, they come with letters.” Moreover, militarization in Karen is not decreasing but increasing since the ceasefire, so although there is less violence, communities do not feel safer or more secure.

The development of the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Law (VVFL) in Myanmar exemplifies how legal practice and development are being utilized to marginalize and dispossess minority populations in Myanmar’s borderlands. Historically, all land is owned by the state and can be rented long term if it is registered by the land holder, this ignores all traditional land ownership within the borderlands. Thus, effectively dispossessing whole communities from the lands which they have resided on for generations. Further, registration of land and land licenses is in the hands of village and tract administrators, as they have a say in what is termed vacant or fallow and these administrators are often corrupt or biased. The basis of which has left communities feeling dispossessed and helpless: “The law gives the government a lot of authority now to take our land. They have taken it, it is already sold off.”

Lastly, the state and military forces are using the NCA to coercively co-opt the EAOs into the state. By promising peace and providing the space for negotiation through a multilateral framework, the transitional governments have been able to secure a further reaching end to hostilities than ever before. This has been a positive development, but actions since the establishment of the NCA have uncovered a darker side to the negotiations. Rather than developing points of agreement and commonality between those involved, recent talks have become stagnant, unable to move past the major obstacles to peace such as demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration. This included new directives which include a commitment to one national army and a reconfirmation of non-secession from the state. Such demands, even after the failure of talks to produce any definitive outcomes in past years, highlights the

69 Member of Karen Refugee Council, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Mae Sot, December 12, 2018.
70 Community Human Rights Organisation Worker, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Mae Sot, June 22, 2018.
73 Justice NGO Worker, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Karen State, November 28, 2018.

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superiority the military continue to hold, even at the negotiating table. They are not attending to compromise; they wish to see all actors “brought into the legal fold.”  

The talks and peace conferences continue to be promoted as a place of open discussion and debate with all armed actors and the support of the NLD government. This has legitimized the actions of the military and government, both domestically and internationally, as they show a commitment to peace. Consequently, it has left the EAOs in a precarious position. If they join and engage with the peace process, they risk being co-opted into a single state and army under the control of the Tatmadaw, an organization for which they have no trust. Or, should they leave or not sign, they risk losing legitimacy and support both internationally and domestically for being spoilers within the process.  

Being labelled a spoiler is a real concern as groups outside the peace process complain of pressure to join from their counterparts within the NCA, noting they are seen as stubborn and backward rather than legitimate or principled among their peers.

Legitimizing a Repressive State: Co-opting the International Community

So far, this article has highlighted how, while the methods have changed, the state and military’s attitude towards ethnic communities has remained the same. Many borderland communities continue to face high levels of repression through indirect means, leaving them few options, either to be repressed and have limited to no rights, or to leave. This is despite the triple transition process, that is supposedly aiming to create the idealistic peaceful, democratic, market driven state. As Myanmar is opening to the international environment, they open themselves to increasing oversight and intervention by the international community; an environment typically not conducive to continuing human rights abuses and discriminatory practices that go against the international norms. This section will postulate that Myanmar is minimizing such concerns through a policy of co-optation with the international community. By inviting investments through the auctioning of its globally finite natural resource deposits and large-scale infrastructure projects. It has managed to create a competitive market where investing states are more willing to overlook or negate humanitarian concerns in favor of major investment opportunities. The presence and previous dominance of investment by nations unencumbered by westernized international norms has also contributed to this position by removing the possibility of investors to place steep conditions on their investment projects.

Thein Sein’s major package of economic reforms split Myanmar open to international investment after an extended period of isolationism under the junta. The introduction of competitive parliamentary elections provided a clear signpost of change to the international community, with many choosing to drop their sanctions against the state in favor of providing Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). Since the commitment by the junta to “disciplined democracy” in 2008 and the reforms of the 2011–2015 government, Myanmar’s GDP has steadily grown, averaging around eight per cent per year. As democratic practice began to be institutionalized and reform realized, international interest and investment skyrocketed. That is not to suggest that during its period of isolationism, both self-imposed (pre-1988) and externally enforced (post-1988), Myanmar experienced no international investment. During its isolation from the international community, many regional powers

76 Ceasefire Official, Interview by Author, Face to Face, Chiang Mai, June 28, 2019.
78 Kachin Activist, Interview, Face to Face, Chiang Mai, June 18, 2019.
79 Hull, Every Day Politics, 10–11.
80 This increasing international oversight can be exemplified through the establishment and conduct of the UN Special Envoy to Myanmar in the wake of the Rohingya Crisis and violence in Rakhine. This envoy later extended their work to include suspected Crimes Against Humanity committed in Kachin and Karen State.
including Thailand and China invested heavily in their neighbor, though often, through unofficial methods. They benefited from the black markets along the borderlands and the ability to access the scarce resources such as teak and jade through cooperation with EAOs consequently gaining from Burma’s war economy throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Though the brutal state repression of the 8888 pro-democracy uprising did cause international outcry and a flurry of sanctions to be levied against the government, the impact on the economy was not as far-reaching as might have been expected. Having pursued a neutralist and isolationist discourse with the international environment, the disruption the sanctions aimed to bring to Burma’s economy was perhaps not as effective as the imposers of such policies may have hoped.

Despite international sanctions, Myanmar’s neighbors took an alternative approach of cautious engagement with the state. Rather, the regional powers began to invest and engage economically with the government. Japan, India, Thailand, and China all became major investors within the country’s large infrastructure and border investment projects. As the government began to agree to numerous ceasefires throughout its borderlands, it consolidated control within such regions through economic means. By granting licenses to its regional investors, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) was able to extend its control in territory previously beyond its oversight while simultaneously removing revenue streams from its ethnic rivals. This policy of economic domination has been well documented within the ceasefires in Kachin and later Karen State. The success of such policies demonstrated an effective alternative to state expansion and control within the borderlands that did not require the risk of retribution and disfavor the use of direct coercive means had created.

Developing the characteristics of a democratic regime does not ensure its institutional embedding. Elections are now the primary method of state legitimation, both within authoritarian and democratic states. Increasing numbers of states are falling into the typology of a competitive authoritarianism which mixes traditionally democratic and authoritarian features into a hybrid form of governance. Despite this knowledge, and the growing wariness of elections in post-war and transitioning states, the presence of elections continues to be the most notable signifier of change for many within the international environment. The success of the opposition to not only compete but to also win and be allowed to take power proved to be a sufficient level of development for much of the international community. From an electoral and institutional standpoint, Myanmar seemed to be achieving its transitional goals; however, as we focus on transition within the borderland, it becomes clear this is an attempt to protect the central state and military rather than truly reform.

This alteration in regime and transition toward the democratic, market-liberal and peaceful state encouraged investors from outside the region to step forward. The longstanding

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83 Core, Burma/Myanmar, 100; Turnell, Burma’s Economic Transition, 482.

84 Jones, Understanding Myanmar’s Ceasefires, 104; Core, Burma/Myanmar, 100.

85 The SPDC took over control of the state between 1997 and 1998 after the dissolution of the State Law and Restoration Council in late 1997. Though the some of the military elites did alter the type and overall aspect of the regime did not.


sanctions programs against Myanmar’s military state were eased by both the US and EU.\textsuperscript{90} Such relaxation of sanctions has generated much needed investment in core infrastructure such as Norway’s investment in Myanmar’s telecommunications which aimed to see mass extension of mobile and internet infrastructure throughout Myanmar.\textsuperscript{91} This plan, and the subsequent investment in it, opened the use of mobile phones to the mass market in a way that had previously not been possible in Myanmar. Thus, the institutional transition attracted non-traditional, western investors to enter the Myanmar markets, as the minimum bars for democratization were met.

Much of the investment Myanmar now receives is focused on and within its borderland areas. These regions have remained extremely underdeveloped due to the harsh terrains, distance from the center, and the continued insecurity caused by ongoing hostilities. These regions are also the sites of many of Myanmar’s natural resource deposits which remain relatively untouched. Many of the deposits Myanmar boasts within its portfolio are demanded not only on a regional level but globally and this relative abundance has Myanmar dubbed as the world’s last frontier.\textsuperscript{92} As such, there is both high interest and limited supply of the resources Myanmar has for possible future investment, creating a highly competitive market for outside investment.

In addition to the resources Myanmar’s land has to offer, Myanmar’s lack of infrastructure and investment have proven similarly enticing to external funders. Myanmar sits on the edge of South-East Asia, along the Bay of Bengal, a location of strategic importance that has been noted since the colonial era.\textsuperscript{93} This positioning, and its proximity to regional powers China and India, have made infrastructural development of Myanmar particularly attractive to its neighbors. Notably China, Japan, and India have invested heavily in major infrastructure projects including the deep-sea ports along the coast, the Asia Highway connecting India to much of South Asia and train and gas lines from the its coast to China’s interior up across Myanmar’s mainland.\textsuperscript{94} This is mainly to extend and further develop the investing countries own trade routes as well as to help establish the investors stake within Myanmar and the region’s infrastructure; which as we will see, has resulted in the marginalization of local communities and a minimization of the local positive externalities such investment projects have brought.

The State has granted long-term licenses to its natural resources, permitted the damming of its rivers, approved developments on its ports and transport links. Myanmar itself has been up for auction.\textsuperscript{95} Yet, the benefit of such projects and investments has had little to do with a vision of a modern Myanmar. As investment in Myanmar has increased, so has the cronyism within the state.\textsuperscript{96} The ex-Generals of Myanmar’s infamous military have been able to

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{91} Nyo, \textit{Taking Stock of Myanmar’s Economy}, 121.
\bibitem{94} Tun, \textit{Myanmar Signs Ceasefire}.
\end{thebibliography}
guarantee a more than comfortable retirement through the development of partnerships with investing parties. Their control and worth has skyrocketed along with Myanmar’s GDP and FDI figures, giving them further personal freedoms as well as increasing control over the state through alternative means; thus, helping them secure powerful positions to offset their loss of power from the junta as part of the transition.

Increased investment in Myanmar, whether it is or not skimmed off by corrupt officials, should theoretically result in some benefit to local communities through the provision of work, improved infrastructure and services. The premise that economic development can be a catalyst for change within society has led many civil society organizations to promote economic development as a method to peace. However, this assumes that the positive externalities from such projects permeate to the local communities around which such projects occur. Yet, the practice of implementation by the state and military within Myanmar is disrupting the diffusion of positive externalities to local communities in favor of redirection toward state-sympathetic communities and the investing partners.

Primarily, in the borderlands such as Karen state, this has been done through the resettlement and forced relocation of local populations. Since the establishment of the new regime and the signing of the NCA in 2015, direct fighting in much of the state has reduced. Yet, there have been increased accounts of land confiscation and forced portering as Tatmadaw forces clear areas for large-scale infrastructure and development projects. The reported land confiscation and grabbing cases for purposes of development highlight how the state is altering and utilizing its’ own policies to tactically marginalize minority populations by delegitimizing their claims to the land on which they reside.

Due to the insecure environment, the Tatmadaw has effectively carved out a role for itself as defender of large-scale investment projects. Their presence and security ensure the safety and tenability of such projects for investors through guaranteeing such activities are protected from insurgents. This role of the military has licensed and legitimized their presence in areas previously inaccessible to them either through insurgent occupation or due to ceasefires with said groups. As many of the communities residing in these areas fear the military and the possibility of reprisals or human rights abuses, many will choose to flee, creating further humanitarian issues due to the increasing numbers of IDPs. Thus, positive externalities from such development projects cannot be realized by local communities as many flee or are forcibly relocated on the eve of such projects. Instead, communities experience the loss of livelihoods, traditional lands and customs, and are faced with increasing insecurity.

For communities that do remain in the locality of large investment projects, there is still little chance to access the benefits of development. Many are forced to work for free through forced labor by the military especially in relation to building roads and other access points. The military have recently defended themselves against such claims, publicizing the villagers’ willingness to volunteer for such projects, though little evidence can be provided to support this claim. In many of the larger projects, especially those with regional investors, the workforce is brought in from the investing country and as such, jobs are not offered to the local

97 Farrelly et al., Explaining Myanmar, 5.
100 Hull, Everyday Politics, 13.
community. Though industrialization is increasing, communities are experiencing a loss of livelihoods rather than a transformation as they are marginalized from the process.

Furthermore, for many of the projects, such as the damming of the Irrawaddy and Salween rivers to create electricity, the outputs are not intended to benefit the local community but to provide resources for the investing nation. This lack of benefit to the host communities has been a cause of rising tension within Myanmar, escalating so steeply that the Chinese backed Myitsone Dam project has been suspended entirely. Such projects therefore negatively impact communities through forced displacement, forced labor, militarization and loss of livelihoods; yet, they do not gain from the products of such large scale projects. Thus the notion of development as peace is not present in Myanmar’s borderlands, it is a tool of oppression.

Local communities within Myanmar’s borderlands are finding themselves under threat from the military occupation both within war and ceasefire zones. Economic development is playing a key role in ensuring the central state’s increasing influence, be it hostile, within Myanmar’s borderlands. The continued investment and acceptance of state strategies has legitimized the military’s actions, not merely within the borderlands in this newly transitioning state but internationally. These (in)actions by the international community underline a sense of acceptance, that use of force and oppression in the name of development and modernity is an acceptable compromise when access to globally finite resources is at stake.

By opening Myanmar’s borders and resources up to international investment during a period of ostensible democratic transition, the military have been able to create a competitive market for some of the world’s most finite resources. The opportunity to invest on such a large scale and in some of the most lucrative industries in a state so requiring of development has proven too enticing for states once in opposition to Myanmar’s regime. Now the opportunity has been offered, and the international community has not only accepted but celebrated such progress, they find themselves captured. Enticed by economic incentives that have been made attainable by a level of political change, the international opposition to Myanmar’s autocratic state has crumbled. Yet, the state itself has remained, camouflaged by layers of democratic characteristics. Its actions against its minority people proves the superficiality of the changes made within the institutions of government.

As such, the international community has been effectively co-opted into compliance with the state. By creating a competitive market of investors, including regional and international powers with differing perspectives on the usefulness and appropriateness of sanctions, Myanmar has successfully positioned itself within the international economic market. It has been able to defend itself from the possibility of punitive actions by ensuring a backstop of alternative investors. The promotion of Myanmar as one of the last global frontiers, especially in relation to its rich natural resources, has increased the incentives for partnerships from investors that may have previously been more cautious regarding investing in such a volatile environment. Now committed, such investors find themselves within a system of high-stakes for disinvestment—if they do not invest, they will not get to again and the opportunity will be lost to another international investor.

For the communities that live in the villages and rural areas undergoing increased international investment, the forms of state repression they face are changing. Rather than experience the direct impact of violence from conflict related offensives and extensive counter-

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102 KHRG, Foundation of Fear, 47.
104 Kiik, Nationalism and Anti-Ethno-Politics, 375.

insurgency policies, they face a more indirect form of state repression. Under the new transitional state, state repression is now formed of a system of co-optation that includes incentives for both domestic and international elites, crimes against humanity related predominantly to land confiscation due to investment and development projects and continuing human rights abuses related to the presence of armed actors within these communities. These communities are left at risk of continued practices of extensive state repression that obstructs people’s ability to access their basic needs, livelihoods and basic human rights.

Conclusion

Mass state repression that has been ongoing since Myanmar’s independence is resulting in a “slow genocide” of its ethnic minority peoples. Through a kaleidoscope of methods, including the use of direct violence, indirect or systematic violence, and the restriction of rights and access the Myanmar state has effectively severed the ties between many communities, their livelihoods, and ways of life. Though the ongoing crimes against humanity may not result in the skyrocketing deaths per annum typically related to genocide, the forced relocation and removal of traditional lifestyles is stifling minority culture, communities and common ties. By creating environments where communities—tied to the land not only for their livelihoods but also culturally and, for many, spiritually—are either forced to move or flee from fear. Through systematic and purposeful methods, the state is creating an environment that is effectively ending a community without eliminating its members.

State oppression can take many forms and as regime type has changed within Myanmar, so too has the application of state repression against the borderlands. Under the military junta from 1962 to 2008, repressive tactics included the non-recognition of cultural and social identity; as a direct consequence of the ongoing wars, and as part of the repressive counter-insurgency strategies implemented by the state. As such, wars have been ended through ceasefire negotiation, both bilaterally and through the NCA process, and political transition has begun to take hold, the forms of state oppression have altered to match this new environment. Direct violence, typically related to wartime experiences, has dropped significantly. In its place, new, indirect forms of oppression have become the norm. The forced removal of communities from their traditional lands, alongside continued cultural repression and sporadic lapses into violence have become the new, preferred methods of the state.

By adapting to this new environment of the triple transition process, the military have succeeded in co-opting parties previously against state action. Through the development, signing and continued dialogue of the NCA, as well as the provision of financial incentives, the military and government have been able to co-opt EAOs. Through the offering of licenses, land and natural resource deposits, they have been able to co-opt those within the international environment into supporting a government undergoing transition. This leaves communities in these regions vulnerable to aggressive state policies aimed at the restriction and elimination of minority identities, by reducing the audiences and forums for them to articulate and advocate for their rights and needs.

Myanmar’s triple transition process has altered the way that human rights abuses and state repression is not only carried out but also characterized; both nationally and internationally. Through the promotion of democratic characteristics and developments, coupled with the economic incentives such a resource rich country can provide, the state has been able to create a layer of protection for itself. It has co-opted national and international opposition into its systems and methods of governance including, but not limited to, its policies for the repression of minority rights and culture. In doing so, it has ensured itself the financial investment the country required to develop whilst maintaining enough institutional independence from any one investor to be able to conduct itself without concern for the investors’ preferences. Though Myanmar is in need of investment, investors must also be held responsible for their roles and contributions to the legitimization of a regime that uses democratic transition not to reach any democratic ideal but to become acceptable enough to be a recipient of such projects.

Bibliography


Introduction
Franco-Cambodian cartoonist Tian’s three-volume graphic novel, *L’Année du lièvre* (2011–2016), recently released in English as *Year of the Rabbit* in a three-part single volume (2020), provides witness to the events of the Cambodian Genocide from 1975–1979 in Cambodia. The graphic novel, recounted through the eyes of Tian’s father, Khim, documents his family’s multiple escapes from death under the Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese Occupation, as well as in the Khao-I-Dang refugee camp on the Cambodian-Thai border. *L’Année du lièvre* also addresses the initial hearings against Khmer Rouge leaders in the 2009 Tribunal, and preserves family memories from pre-1975 Cambodia, and his family’s resettlement in France in 1980 in the form of hand-drawn photographs and photo albums.

This article seeks to demonstrate the dual function of *L’Année du lièvre* as what I call a “Cambodian family album,” or a personal-collective archive used to transfer to subsequent generations of the history of the Cambodian genocide; the collective memories of pre-1975 Cambodia which precede the Khmer Rouge takeover of Phnom Penh; and the Cambodian humanitarian crisis and exodus of the 1970s–1990s. The conceptualization of the family album is derived from the literal translation, from Khmer into English, of the term “photo album” — “book designated for sticking pictures.” The translation of the term emphasizes the fragmentary and creative nature of postmemory, or the second-generation’s experience of their parents’ trauma. Memory studies scholar Marianne Hirsch’s concept of postmemory—originally conceived with second-generation Holocaust survivors in mind—aptly applies to 1.5- and second-generation Cambodian genocide survivors: “Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated.” The testimonial quality of Tian’s *L’Année du lièvre* is characteristic of autobiographical comics, especially those used to recount genocide, trauma, and displacement such as GB Tran’s *Vietnamerica* (2010), Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* (2000), and Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1980; 1991). Comics scholar Elisabeth El Refaie defines autobiographical comics as “a loose category of life writing through the use of sequential images and (usually) words.” Other comics scholars—notably Hillary Chute, Andrew Kunka, and Frederik Byrn Køhlert—have also emphasized the testimonial aspect of autobiographical comics, in which the reader participates as witness. While Tian’s graphic novel fits the genre of autobiographical comics, this article reads *L’Année du lièvre* as a family album in order to demonstrate how the Cambodian family album exceeds...
categorization; in other words, family albums can be autobiographical comics, but not all autobiographical comics can be family albums. This article begins with an analysis of the graphic novel as family album and moves beyond the comics medium and sequential art format to show how Cambodian identity is being reshaped and renegotiated through what I call “Cambodian new aesthetics.” The family album is thus considered more broadly and beyond the medium of comics and argues that second-generation survivors take on an active role in the process of (post)memory work through new and imaginative aesthetic forms. In closing, this article considers the ways in which Franco-Cambodian and Cambodian-American artists such as Franco-Cambodian filmmaker Denis Do, Cambodian-American choreographer Prumsodun Ok, and Cambodian American poet Kosal Khiev contribute to redefining Cambodian identity in the 21st century.

Reading the Graphic Novel as a Family Album

Like the survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime, photos, memories, and keepsakes that existed before the 1980s outlasted their intended destruction and continue to act as tools to recount fragmented histories within Cambodian family albums [ខ្មែរសន្តិសុខ]. The Khmer term for “photo album” [ខ្មែរលេខិតត្រកូល] may be broken down into several words, 1) sierhpuhl [ខ្មែរ], or “book,” 2) sumraap [ខ្មែរ], or “[designated] for,” 3) buht [ខ្មែរ], either “to close,” “to stick/to glue,” or “closed/blacked off,” 4) ruup [ខ្មែរ], or “portrait,” or “photo,” 5) tawt [ខ្មែរ], or “to record” (i.e. record document on camera), 6) ruup tawt [ខ្មែរ], or “photograph” (reversing the words, tawt ruup, would mean “to take a picture”). The family album, or “book designated for sticking pictures,” thus suggests an invitation to enclose memories in the book—rather than to close the book. The specificity of Cambodian postmemory may be illustrated through the term buht [ខ្មែរ] in the photo album, or the family album. In Khmer, the word, buht [ខ្មែរ], has multiple meanings: Buht can mean “to close” or “to be closed,” or indicate that something is walled off and inaccessible. Yet, it can also refer to the act of gluing or sticking. The latter contradicts the act of closing, but both meanings in Khmer function to depict the creative process of memory work. The function of buht in the expression “photo album” emphasizes the creative act of assembling and fastening memories in a book. It is then, the act of collating and gluing the fragments of “disparate sources” that generates and produces memory.5

The album, comprised of three volumes, contests the notion of 1975–1979 as a past history and buried memory. In addition to enclosing within the album the narrative of his own family’s survival in Democratic Kampuchea, Tian communicates where his family members settled after 1980 (France and Canada), within a supplemental family album, at the close of the trilogy. In doing so, Tian transmits to the reader the history of the Cambodian exodus, and the Cambodian Diaspora, in the three volumes, published in 2011, 2013, and 2016. Within L’Année du lièvre, the reader witnesses the narrator’s birth, near-death, and symbolic rebirth in France. The overlap of the year of the author’s birth, 1975, with the historical association of 1975 with the Khmer Rouge takeover of Cambodia, reveals the impossibility of separating the personal-familial history from the larger History.6 In particular, the figure of le lièvre, alludes to the


6 The boundaries between the dual meanings of “histoire” in French (“story” and “history”) are often blurred. The uppercase “h” in History refers to the chronic sense of the term; the lowercase “h” alludes to a personal narrative. The overlap between the history of Democratic Kampuchea and Chan Veasna’s autobiographical tale is depicted via the author’s birth in Volume 1. See Tian, Au revoir Phnom Penh, 42; Veasna, Year of the Rabbit, 53. The trilogy closes with a birth announcement, at the entrance-exit of the Khao-I-Dang Refugee Camp. The final panel depicts a family of four, framed by two tailless speech balloons. The balloon on the left-hand side of the panel reads: “Une nouvelle vie en France allait s’offrir à nous! Et en cadeau…” To the right, the text reads: “Nous allions avoir un petit frère pour Chan.” [We would be able to start a new life in France. And as a bonus...Chan would have a little brother.] See Tian, Un nouveau départ, 110; Veasna, Year of the Rabbit, 368.
trickster rabbit in Cambodia’s oral and written folktales. Additionally, the rabbit’s wit—used to escape death countless times—reflects Tian’s survival story. Much like Br’er rabbit and trickster tales from Africa, the Caribbean, and the U.S. South, Cambodian folktales are inundated with the cunning hare that uses its wits to outsmart others. Khmer linguist Chhany Sak-Humphry stresses the importance of the hare as hero in Cambodian culture, and includes the following stories, in her compilation of Khmer folktales, Tales of the Hare, which include: “How the Hare, Caught in a Snare, Escaped (& Rescued Some Fish!),” “How the Hare Escaped the Jaws of the Crocodile,” “How the Hare Punished the Crocodile for Seeking Revenge,” “How the Hare Rescued a Man and Punished the Crocodile,” “Judge Hare and the Fish Trap in the Tree,” “How Judge Hare Helped a Man Get His Wife Back,” and “How the Hare Tricked a Spirit.” Judith Jacob also notes that the rabbit is “Brer Rabbit in a different setting,” emphasizing his ability to “[escape] from death over and over again.” Thus, Tian’s Cambodian Family Album not only reproduces but, as I would argue, creates and reconstructs Cambodian memories—including the literary and oral histories preceding 1975–1979—and reimagines the trickster rabbit in the form of repeated survival tests depicted in his family album. Even for survivors of the genocide, the repetition of an escape from death follows them in the form of survivor’s guilt, or in what Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub call a second holocaust, upon re-experiencing a traumatic event.

The title of the trilogy, L’Année du lièvre, is engraved in the Cambodian collective memory as the beginning of the Cambodian Genocide. The takeover of Phnom Penh starts the three-volume narrative and precedes the author’s birth in the graphic novel. The very first page of the trilogy depicts a framed, full-page panel. Beneath the chapter heading, a representation of faceless men standing on a tank with raised fists, guns, and flags, is accompanied with the caption, “LE GLORIEUX 17 AVRIL 1975.” The family album thus begins with a familiar illustration of The Fall of Phnom Penh which appears similar to the historical recounting of the Cambodian genocide. In particular, the album opens with the monumentalization of 1975 as a historical event. The caption, which is written in capital letters, “LE GLORIEUX 17 AVRIL 1975,” mimics the inscription of tombstones, and commemorative plaques. Moreover, the Khmer Rouge takeover mirrors the domination of Tian’s personal history and memory of 1975—1975—the start of the erasure of time and the entry into the Year Zero—also overshadows Cambodians’ celebration of the New Year. The flashbulb memory of the Cambodian Genocide—synonymous with the Fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge, April 17, 1975—nearly overlaps with the three-day celebration of the Cambodian New Year. In particular, the album opens with the commemoration of the Fall of Phnom Penh, and the Khmer Rouge takeover of Cambodia on April 17, 1975 overshadows Cambodian New Year as well as the other cultural and historical traditions.

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7 Also worth noting is the representation of Jews as mice in Art Spiegelman’s Maus. See Art Spiegelman, Maus I: A Survivor’s Tale: My Father Bleeds History (New York: Pantheon, 1986); Spiegelman, Maus II: A Survivor’s Tale: And Here My Troubles Began (New York: Pantheon, 1991).
9 Chhany Sak-Humphry, Tales of the Hare: 27 Classic Folktales from Cambodia, ed. Kent Davis (Holmes Beach: DatASIA, 2010).
12 Tian, Au revoir Phnom Penh, 1; Veasna, Year of the Rabbit, 13.
13 In his graphic novel, Impasse et Rouge, Franco-Cambodian graphic novelist and Cambodian Genocide child survivor Séra also recounts the Khmer Rouge occupation of Phnom Penh while referring to the New Year of the Hare on Monday, April 14, 1975. See Séra, Impasse et Rouge (Paris: Albin Michel, 2003), 24.
traits of Cambodia that precede and follow 1975–1979. The historical date of la chute de Phnom Penh (the Fall of Phnom Penh) thus affects how future New Year celebrations will be shaped by the memory of the genocide. In particular, the overlapping events come to resemble the cyclical nature of a traumatic repetition compulsion: The birth of a (new) year is also synonymous with the death of a city and nation—the beginning of genocide. Time and chronologizing history are further complicated considering the Khmer Rouge’s erasure of time and restarting of the clocks to Year Zero. 14 1975 thus marks the start of its own erasure. The pre-Democratic Kampuchea form of keeping time would not return to Cambodia until 1979. Thus, L’Année du lièvre belatedly writes into history the erasure of the historical records preceding 1979. Though Tian cannot separate 1975 from his own history, the creation of the H/historical Cambodian Family Album can be read as a conscious attempt of reclaiming his and Cambodia’s history beyond the containment of 1975–1979. Moreover, L’Année du lièvre represents “the conflation of private and public memory.” 16 What appears as crystalized and an illustration of a historical record transforms, especially in Volume 3, into a commemorative album that finds itself in-between private and public art—past and present memory. Young’s reflections on the memory-work from the Holocaust context may be applied here to Tian’s graphic novel.

Instead of allowing the past to rigidify in its monumental forms, we would vivify memory through the memory-work itself—whereby events, their recollection, and the role monuments play in our lives remain animate, never completed. In this light, we find the performance of the Holocaust memorials depends not on some measured distance between history and its monumental representations, but on the conflation of private and public memory, in the memorial activity by which minds reflecting on the past inevitably precipitate in the present historical moment. 17

By the close of Volume 3, Un nouveau départ, the album re-opens itself, through the inclusion of a supplemental family album, entitled “Un nouveau départ après 1980.” 18 Rather than closing the three-volume album with a linear recounting of the Khmer Rouge history, the narrative moves forward, and beyond, with Tian’s family’s renaissance. In a 2011 podcast interview with France Culture, Tian—who spent the first five years of his life in displacement from 1975 to 1980—notes that he has few memories of his childhood. His creation of L’Année du lièvre enabled him to trace his forgotten history.

J’ai eu très peu de souvenirs de mon enfance. Je les ai retrouvés en réalisant cette bande dessinée, L’année du lièvre. Et du coup, quand j’étais petit, j’avais beaucoup de souvenirs en France. Donc, j’avais l’impression que ma naissance a commencé dès que je suis arrivé en France. [I had very few memories from my childhood. I found them by creating this graphic novel, Year of the Rabbit. And when I was little... I had many memories in

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16 Young, The Texture of Memory, 15.
17 Ibid.
18 “Un nouveau départ après 1980” is included at the end of Volume 3. It takes the form of a chapter but isn’t labeled as one. The pages in “Un nouveau départ après 1980” are left unnumbered, but it immediately follows page 110. See Tian, Un nouveau départ, page after 110. See also chapter “A New Beginning—1980 and beyond,” in Veasna, Year of the Rabbit, page after 368.
France, so I felt as though my birth began as soon as I arrived in France.]

The desire to forget and to begin anew is a common and shared experience in first-generation, and child survivors of the 1.5 generation. Tian’s association of his birth with his arrival in France is comparable to filmmaker Rithy Panh’s experience as a child survivor. Tian and Séra’s graphic novels, and Panh’s films reconstruct and reframe history from the point of and for members of the Cambodian Diaspora. The graphic novel, like film, offers the possibility of freeing oneself of the weight of the past and lingering unconscious memories. It is worth noting that Franco-Cambodian artist and Cambodian Genocide child survivor Séra (Phousséra Ing) was the first graphic novelist to visually narrate the personal and collective traumas of the Cambodian genocide, in *Impasse et rouge* (1995). He also recounts the Khmer Rouge occupation of Phnom Penh while referring to the New Year of the Hare on Monday, April 14, 1975 in his graphic novels, *L’Eau et la terre: Cambodia, 1975–1979* (2005), *Lendemains de cendres: Cambodia, 1979–1993* (2007), and *Concombres amers: les racines d’une tragédie, Cambodia, 1967–1975* (2018). Tian’s *L’Année du lièvre*, however, is the first Franco-Cambodian graphic novel intended as a trilogy. While both 1.5-generation graphic novelists, Tian and Séra, visually recount the atrocities of the Cambodian genocide in the graphic novels, their styles are vastly different. Séra’s photo-realistic style and use of somber colors to capture the violence of the Cambodian genocide differ from Tian’s cartoonish style and juxtaposition of pastels with shades of black. As genocide scholar Caroline D. Laurent notes, the spatial layout of *L’Année du lièvre* allows for an active reader participation. The reader’s active involvement in the reading/viewing process emphasizes the collaborative and creative aspect of the postmemorial album. In “Un nouveau départ après 1980,” Tian inscribes into the sub-album the following encounter with his mother. Turned towards his mother, Tian asks, “Alors, maman, tu l’as lu?,” [So, Mother, have you read it?] to which she responds, with the album in her hands: “J’ai essayé, mais je n’ai pas réussi à dépasser le 3e chapitre. Ça doit correspondre à ta naissance…” [I tried, but I could not get past the third chapter. That must be around the time of your birth…] Tian’s mother thus closes the album prematurely before her son’s belated rendering of his own birth. The seemingly contradictory overlap between premature and belated experiences of memory reflect Tian’s status as being a member of the 1.5 generation, which is characterized by both “premature bewilderment and helplessness.”

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21 Séra, *Impasse et Rouge*.


23 Caroline D. Laurent, “(Re)creating the Past: Representations of Cambodia in Francophone Sequential Art” (Panel discussion at the 14th Biennial Conference of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, July 14–19).

24 “Un nouveau départ” is a 7-page narrative enclosed within—and immediately following—Volume 3. All of the pages are left unnumbered. The first page of “Un nouveau départ” is opposite page 368 in the English version and opposite page 110 in Vol. 3 in the French version. See Tian, *Un nouveau départ*, page after 110; Veasna, *Year of the Rabbit*, page after 368.

Family Uprooting Under the Khmer Rouge Regime

What I refer to as the “Khmer Rouge Family Album” appears briefly within the greater Cambodian Family Album. Situated at the halfway point of Volume 1, *Au revoir Phnom Penh*, and immediately following the chapter dedicated to the memory of the author’s birth, Chapter 4, “Angkar,” the Khmer Rouge Family Album emphasizes its place within the Cambodian common memory without becoming the dominant narrative. The juxtaposition of the two albums is observable through the Chapter 3 and 4 titles, “Veasna,” and “Angkar.” The reader witnesses the birth of Chan Veasna, the author known as Tian, in the village of Ta Prom. The Chan tree, to which the author owes his name, reappears throughout the chapter and stands over Chan and his family as a protector. His name reveals his family’s attempt to merge his past and future destiny: “Chan Veasna, Chan c’est le nom de cet arbre qui pousse tout près de la cabane et Veasna veut dire destin, en espérant que sa vie sera heureuse.” [Chan Veasna, Chan is the type of tree outside the hut, and Veasna means destiny, in the hope that he’ll have a happy life.]26 Chan’s birth in 1975 occurs on Democratic Kampuchean soil—the site of mass murder and destruction—but the Chan tree, deeply rooted in the soil and watching over Chan Veasna’s family, pre-dates the Communist Party of Kampuchea. Chan’s parents attempt to override their misfortune by naming their child after the tree. Moreover, Chan’s shared birth-place and time with the historical event of 1975 indicates that his personal-family album is also a survival tale in which generation occurs from destruction. Moreover, the author’s birth, which occurs alongside the Chan tree, on Democratic Kampuchean soil, functions as a part of the endless Buddhist life cycle of life-death-rebirth.27

The visual and verbal play on cultivation—in the form of the Chan tree in Volume 1, and the family trees in Volumes 2 and 3—as well as the visual and verbal depictions of Khmer Rouge ideology of uprooting in Volumes 1–3 speak to the themes of survival and destiny.28 The subsequent chapter following the birth of Chan Veasna must be considered in regard to its symbolic and literal meaning. Chapter 4, “Angkar” [អង្គរ], or “The Organization,” immediately follows the preceding chapter, entitled “Veasna” [វាល្ម], or “Destiny.” *Angkar*, which refers to the leaders of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, can be interpreted in at least two ways: The political organization controlling Democratic Kampuchea, and the structured act of organizing, ordering, and arranging.

The Khmer Rouge Family Album reads as a separate narrative a part of the trilogy-Album: It interrupts the reading process, visually and narrative-wise. The uniformed panels, minimalistic design, and use of gutters—which appear for the first and only time throughout the trilogy—complement *Angkar’s* fixation on organization and structure. The Khmer Rouge Family Album is limited to two pages, in which each page includes clearly defined gutters used to separate three tiers of two panels.29 In the two-page spread, Khmer Rouge propaganda is succinctly exclaimed in each panel; the outline of Angkor Wat, and dramatic red shading, is repeated to symbolize Democratic Kampuchea, blood, and communism. Remaining true to The *Angkar’s* “faceless” organization, the Khmer Rouge members are featured without any facial features, aside from the mouth—which is either represented by a single line in the form of a smile or a neutral expression, or a left- or right-angle bracket used to indicate a mouth agape.30 While it is tempting to separate it from the rest of the whole of Tian’s Cambodian Family Album, the history of destruction must be read as a part of the History of family memories and survival.

28 The family trees are included in the front matter of volumes 2 and 3, in the original French edition. In the English edition, the first family tree follows the preface, and the second family tree follows the postface. Note: These pages are unnumbered in both editions.
30 Ibid.

Volume 2, *Ne vous inquiétez pas*, expands on the Khmer Rouge’s attempts of suppressing genealogical family ties under *Angkar*. The recurring appearance of trees throughout the volume stands against *Angkar*’s intentions of uprooting and eradicating Cambodian genealogy, culture, and identity. Like the Khmer Rouge Family Album in Volume 1, Tian demonstrates the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) ideology by inserting into the narrative an organizational chart of *Angkar*’s classless hierarchy.\(^{\text{31}}\) At first, the organizational chart appears to contest the author’s family trees—which the reader encounters in a two-page spread at the start of Volumes 2 and 3; yet, after reading the organizational chart in relation to the Khmer translation of “organizational chart” and “destiny,” the Khmer Rouge and Cambodian Family Albums merge together. The top of the chart, labeled “*Angkar*,” and represented by a monstrous and watchful eye, replaces the protective Chan tree represented in Volume 1. The redundancy of the “organization” appears in the translation of *Angkar*: it also sprouts from the tentacle of the watchful eye in the form of a speech balloon that reads, “Tout est organisé [...],” or “Everything is organized,” and manifests itself in the form of an organizational chart.\(^{\text{32}}\) Translating the Khmer expression for “organizational chart” reveals the Khmer Rouge’s inability to rid itself of *Veasna*, or destiny. The combination of the words, *Angkar* [អងេរ] , “organization,” and *leik* [លោក], which means “number”, as well as “position” and “rank,” forms *angkar leik* [អងេរលោក], or “organizational chart.” Yet, *leik* also refers to what could be translated into English as “destiny,” “chance,” or “fortune.” For instance, in colloquial Khmer, to have a “big” or “tall” *leik* (i.e.: *leik thuum* [លោកធូម]; *leik khpuurh* [លោកខេរ] ) means “to be lucky,” or to be blessed with a good destiny. Thus, the organizational chart that represents *Angkar* in Chapter 3 could be read as an unintentional, or inevitable, return to destiny, or *Veasna* [វាលោប]. Despite the Khmer Rouge’s attempt of writing over Khmer genealogy and suppressing familial ties, the Chan tree persists despite its ordered destruction.

Throughout the trilogy, Tian juxtaposes the Khmer Rouge slogans and *Angkar*’s organized massacres with Cambodian proverbs, symbols of cultivation, *Veasna*, and survival. Reading the Khmer Rouge slogan in all uppercase letters: “COUPER UNE MAUVAISE HERBE NE SUFFIT PAS, IL FAUT LA DÉRACINER” [Cutting a weed is not enough—it must be pulled up by the roots]—against the Khmer proverb: “Il faut planter le kapokier puis le palmier”—the Cambodian Family Album offers an alternative memory of persistence, and escapes typical victim narratives.\(^{\text{33}}\) The Khmer Rouge slogan in capital letters highlights the extremism of *Angkor*’s ideology. The metaphor of cultivation must be considered in relation to Cambodian agricultural history—from the Khmer Empire, and the Democratic Kampuchea regime—in order to demonstrate the role of production and peasantry in the Khmer Rouge’s recruitment strategies and self-definition. Historian David Chandler notes that between 1945–1979, the final years of French colonial rule and the end of the Democratic Kampuchea, “some four-fifths of the population were farmers.”\(^{\text{34}}\) While it is known that the Communist Party of Kampuchea’s recruitment strategy entailed targeting poor peasants, the role of French archaeologists’ influence on the CPK ideology is often overlooked. The Khmer Rouge’s fixation on rice cultivation and the peasantry is in part due to the circulation of the “intensive irrigation theory,”\(^{\text{35}}\) which historian Ben Kiernan describes as “the view of French archaeologists and

\(^{\text{31}}\) Tian, *Ne vous inquiétez pas*, 34; *Veasna*, *Year of the Rabbit*, 170.

\(^{\text{32}}\) Ibid.

\(^{\text{33}}\) The expression, “Il faut planter le kapokier puis le palmier” [One must plant the kapok tree] is the equivalent to the proverb, “See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.” Yet, it also implies that in order to survive, one must plant Kapok and palm trees around the house. See Tian, *Au revoir Phnom Penh*, 76; *Veasna*, *Year of the Rabbit*, 88. See also, Tian, *Au revoir Phnom Penh*, 103; *Veasna, Year of the Rabbit*, 239.


\(^{\text{35}}\) Ibid.
scholars who pioneered study of the ‘lost world’ of medieval Khmers.”

According to Kiernan, the theory, which was responsible for the old Khmer Empire’s economic wealth, “was accepted as fact until the 1980s.” The Khmer Rouge ideology of the 1970s—which included “abolishing class distinctions, destroying prerevolutionary institutions, and transforming the population into unpaid agricultural workers”—is thus connected to pre-Democratic Kampuchean, and French colonial history.

Reading the plant metaphor in the Democratic Kampuchea context reveals that élagage (pruning), and the removal of weak and damaged branches in order to promote the general health of the tree is insufficient to the rebuilding of Kampuchea. Angkar’s role as the “mother and father” to the Khmer people under the Khmer Rouge regime would thus entail a radical uprooting, rather than pruning. The déracinement (uprooting) by the Khmer Rouge would result in damaged roots, and decades of trauma to the people and the nation. The Khmer proverb, “Il faut planter le kapokier puis le palmier,” embraces the process of rooting anew and rebuilding after destruction. In particular, the proverb refers to survival, as one must feign ignorance in order to survive. The figurative and literal meaning of the proverb implies the protection of Cambodian genealogy through the act of cultivation of the Kapok tree, the (sugar) palm tree, and eventually the rebuilding of Cambodia’s culture and nation. Tian’s family album—a survival tale of re-rooting—represents Cambodia’s past and present traumas, and its regenerative identity.

The Khmer Rouge slogan and the old Khmer proverb reveal Cambodia’s complex national identity, which may be defined by its (auto)destructive and self-preserving tendencies. First, it should be noted that under the Khmer Rouge, trees were converted into weapons and tools. The use of trees was deemed “a technique cheaper than using bullets,” according to population geographer James Tyner: “During the genocide, the Khmer Rouge simply smashed infants and small children against trees—a technique cheaper than using bullets.” The transformation of the national tree of Cambodia, the sugar palm tree, daom thnaot, into a killing machine is rendered on the cover of Volume 2, Ne vous inquiétez pas. Palm trees, alternated with the bright red Democratic Kampuchea flags, align the background of the cover. Two speakers are fastened to each palm tree, which represent how the trees now serve as an extension of Angkar’s eyes, ears, and mouth. The Khmer Rouge slogans which are integrated into the album in capitalized letters, can thus be read as the diffusion of Khmer Rouge propaganda, slogans, songs, and orders through the nature-turned-machine sound systems. Moreover, the Khmer proverb, “Il faut planter le kapokier puis le palmier,” which translates to the Three Wise Monkeys’ maxim, “See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil,” may be read in parallel to the Khmer Rouge slogan, “L’Angkar a les yeux de l’ananas” [Angkar has the eyes of a pineapple]; the watchful eye of Angkar. In other words, the trees, which serve to amplify and transmit Angkar’s orders, also become chlops, or child informants, used to report individual and transgressive acts—such as picking and pocketing fruit, vegetables, and flowers—to Khmer Rouge leaders.

Cambodian Resilience and Rhizomatic Identity

The Kapok tree, which is well-known in Ta Prom, Siem Reap, for its impressive and invasive roots that weave their way into and over the historic temple illustrates the cyclical
and circular notion of death, which converges psychoanalytic theory and Buddhist philosophy. Post-1970s Cambodian identity, which is based largely on survival, complements critic Cathy Caruth’s reflections on trauma, including the question of whether trauma is “the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it.” The resilience of the Cambodian root systems also matches the survival story of Volume 1, Chapter 5, entitled “Il faut planter le kapokier, puis le palmier,” as well as the three-volume Cambodian survival tale. The Kapok’s roots, which simultaneously devour and maintain the structure of Ta Prom, illustrate French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s conceptualization of the anti-genealogical “rhizome,” which “assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers.” Ta Prom serves to concretize the grandeur of the Khmer Empire, yet it also represents the entanglement of life and death, as the Strangler Fig and Banyan trees’ root systems wrap around and make up the structure of the temple in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Rather than simply recycling the Khmer origin myth of past grandeur, however, Ta Prom and its root systems depict the inseparability of past, present, and future histories. The superimposition of life and death further illustrates the intertwining of histories and family relations, in the form of the cultivation of crops over the human remains from the Khmer Rouge regime. Southeast Asian anthropologist Anne Yvonne Guillou notes: “After the trauma of the Khmer Rouge regime, people gradually became more involved in making a living and rebuilding their lives. Rice fields and fruit trees were planted again over the mass graves, which symbolically meant that the life-cycle was starting again.” The Chan tree, which shares the author’s site of birth and name, also shares a history with the Kapok’s root system that symbolizes and defines Ta Prom—Chan’s village natal. Furthermore, the Kapok’s complex root systems complement the mangrove forests in Cambodia, which are also under threat, and demonstrate how Cambodian identity cannot be configured in the same way as a European family tree system. The national tree of Cambodia, daom thnaot [Borassus flabellifer], and the California palm, Washingtonia filifera, represent Cambodian rhizomatic identity, which is largely shaped by displacement. Since the first wave of Cambodian immigration to America, the palm tree has doubled as a symbol for the Cambodian nation, as well as Cambodians of the Diaspora. In particular, Long Beach, California, the largest hub of Cambodian Americans, is integral to the Cambodian collective memory. Considering the complex root systems of the Kapok tree, and the Cambodian mangroves, as well as the displacement of Cambodians in the U.S., Canada, France, and Australia, uprooting proves to be a difficult, if not an impossible, task. Moreover, the unforeseeable effects of the Cambodian exodus following the Cambodian Genocide have muddled the boundaries of national, ethnic, racial, linguistic, and generational boundaries.

47 To further illustrate how the palm tree constitutes Cambodian identity and displacement, I offer my father’s statement on re-rooting in California in the 1970s. While driving down the tree-lined streets in Los Angeles in 2008, he remarked that, the Californian palm trees, water, and warm climate reminded him of his childhood and hometown in Battambang, Cambodia.
Cambodian Displacement and Postmemorial Albums

Postmemorial Cambodian family albums—or the creative art forms used to commemorate personal and family histories—are useful in activating memories, burying the ghosts of one’s, or one’s family’s past, and burning one’s own demons. While postmemorial albums conflate private and public memory, they primarily serve second-generation survivors. Unlike the physical cremation process, Cambodian family albums invite the successive generations to contribute to the endless memory-work by: a) transforming the postmemorial text/album itself through active participation, and b) constructing their own family albums in literary and art forms, such as film, graphic novel, essay, poetry, and music; what Cathy Schlund-Vials calls “Cambodian American memory work.”

The reader, like the visitor of a memory-site or memorial contributes to the reconstruction of the text through her or his own presence and experience of the site/text.

Chapter 5, “Il faut planter le kapokier puis le palmier,” of Volume 1, Au revoir Phnom Penh offers a vignette of one of the many near-death encounters escaped by Tian’s family. By the end of the chapter, the reader witnesses how Tian’s family passes one of many survival tests—by refusing to board a boat destined towards death. The narrative juxtaposes the inside and outside of a temple: In a single full-page panel, the reader looks straight on to the center of the page. The focal point, which takes up nearly half of the page, is the back of Buddha’s head, which is recognizable by the etchings of carved stone and his long ear lobes. The reader takes on the perspective of Buddha, becoming his eyes and ears, and looking over the characters in the scene: The only ones that appear in color—in hues of purple—are the members of Tian’s family, including baby Tian, lying in between his parents. Directly across from Buddha are the open doors that lead to two Khmer Rouge officials in all black. The faceless Khmer Rouge leaders are framed by the doors in front of them and by the two ends of the Pont des naga (Naga Bridge) in the background. Upon closer observation, small splashes of red frame the photograph. To the upper left and upper right hand, red and white striped cones adorn the columns. A pair of small Buddhas is placed in the foreground—one to the left of the larger Buddha, and one to the right. What nearly goes unnoticed appears in the foreground, on the left and right shoulder of the Buddha overlooking the temple, and in-between the two smaller Buddhas. Despite being in the foreground, the following four characters appear hidden due to the focus on Buddha and the movement in the mid-ground and the background: A silent prayer ritual takes place, with the burning of incense. A man to the larger Buddha’s left meets his eyes as he walks by, while three others—to Buddha’s right—pray in silence. A man and a woman in a sampot (traditional Khmer garment, worn from waist to ankle), with her legs to her side, are in the middle of praying, while the other woman is knelt over facing the floor indicating that she is either at the start or the end of her prayer. Upon closer inspection, small touches of red appear in between the larger Buddha and the four characters. The straight lines, evenly spaced out between red specks, represent incense sticks and the process of duht tupp—to call on one’s ancestors, to ask for protection, and/or to ask for forgiveness. In juxtaposition to this scene, the panels on the adjacent page depict the faceless Angkar, represented by the two Khmer Rouge officials at the edge of the entry and doorway, whose voice appears in the form of speech balloons shooting out from palm tree-audio systems. The funeral ritual depicted in this scene confronts the Khmer Rouge’s takeover of Cambodian value systems and symbols.

While the color red in the Cambodian context is often associated with the Khmer Rouge, its pre- and post-Democratic Kampuchean connection to traditional marriage ceremonies counters its symbol for communism, blood, and mass murder. What Cambodians refer to as a “Knot-Tying Ceremony” is an important step in Cambodian marriage rituals, in which family members and guests tie a

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49 Tian, Au revoir Phnom Penh, 74–76; Veasna, Year of the Rabbit, 86–88.

50 Tian, Au revoir Phnom Penh, 68; Veasna, Year of the Rabbit, 80.

51 Ibid.
red string (“blessing string”) around the bride’s wrist and the groom’s wrist. The red string “blesses” the couple with good health and fortune, and must not be removed as it protects the couple from bad luck. The association of red with tradition and protection also appears in the form of offering incense, in the form of red batons, at the pagoda. Its subtle inscription within the middle of Volume 1, *Au revoir Phnom Penh* can thus be interpreted as an attempt to commemorate and protect Cambodia and its survivors. Moreover, the scene of prayer in the pagoda serves to reclaim the color red, which has since the Khmer Rouge regime become associated with communism, mass murder, and blood, through the association of the following: the red and white krama (traditional Khmer scarf) worn with the all-black uniform during the Khmer Regime; the red and yellow Democratic Kampuchea flag; and the Khmer Krahaam, or the Khmer Rouge [ស្រុកក្រសាច].

Up until the last chapter of Volume 2, Tian narrates the events of the Khmer Rouge as they unfold, starting from 1975. By dividing what feels like a series of never-ending and impossible tests of survival in the span of four years—into three volumes of seven chapters each—the text allows the reader to experience how time drags on and also witness the impossibility of surviving each test. This is why the *album-souvenir* at the end of Volume 2 is so surprising: Time equal to, or exceeding the amount, recounted in the three volumes collapses to a two-page spread selecting moments from a course of four years before 1975. What Tian labels an “Album-souvenir avant 1975,” at the close of Volume 2, *Ne vous inquiétez pas* includes a scrapbook of his unframed snapshots that were lost and/or never taken, arranged out of order, and meant to be offered and passed on to the next generation. The *album-souvenir* illustrates what life was like in Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge takeover of Phnom Penh: He presents a collage of his parents’ marriage in Phnom Penh in 1974, his grand-uncle strumming an acoustic guitar, a snapshot of a traditional Khmer dance at the marriage ceremony, and his grand uncles in the middle of a game of hacky sack—le seï. Unlike the square-framed panels within the chapters, and like the family portraits in the family tree, the recreated photographs in the *album-souvenir* take the shape of an oval, resembling portraits intended to be framed as keepsakes. The photos pre-exist 1975—the event of his birth and the historicized start date of the Cambodian Genocide. The *album-souvenir* defies both the categorization of Tian’s family history to the period of 1975–1979 and the reduction of Cambodian identity to the history of the Khmer Rouge regime. A couple of factors are useful towards reading the a-chronological organization of pre-1975 family photographs—Tian’s age at the time of the takeover of Phnom Penh and his family’s escape to France, and Tian’s role as both a child survivor and a child of adult survivors. As noted earlier in this paper, in an interview with *France Culture*, Tian reveals that he recalls little of his childhood and that the 1984 film *The Killing Fields* enabled his parents to talk about the Khmer Rouge regime. Four years after having immigrated to Lyon, Tian’s parents presented him with stories of his life in Cambodia, and their shared history under the Khmer Rouge regime. When asked how he was able to construct a graphic novel from an absence of memory, Tian remarks that after the release of *The Killing Fields* in France, his parents provided him with anecdotes about the Khmer Rouge, linked to his childhood: “Ils me parlaient des petites anecdotes sur les Khmers Rouges mais liées à mon enfance.” [They told me about little anecdotes on the Khmer Rouge—but linked to my childhood.] After the screening of *The Killing Fields* and asking his parents about their life in Cambodia, he engaged in a quest for knowledge of Cambodia—beyond the killing fields. Tian’s reflection on “l’histoire de [ses] parents” and Cambodia can be interpreted as a desire to remember and to understand what happened during the first few years of his life. Referring to his discovery of Cambodia’s rich history, which was not only “linked to this tragic history,” Tian states: “Quand j’ai découvert que c’était vraiment une...
grand civilisation avant, et puis que, par la force des choses, il a eu cette tragédie-là, je commençais quand même à réfléchir sur l’histoire de mes parents.” [When I discovered that it was a great civilization before and then that by the force of things, it had this tragedy, I began to think about my parents’ history.] Rather than being read as out-of-order, the hand-drawn photos in the pre-1975 album may actually follow the order in which the histories were received.

While photographs predating 1975 occur within an album-souvenir at the end of Volume 2, an album of post-1980 memories is placed in the final pages of Volume 3. The multiplication of albums within the family album turns into an abyssal self-reflexivity, with the reproduction of L’année du lièvre, in two photographs of the third and final album, “Un nouveau départ après 1980.”

Like Volumes 1 and 2, Volume 3 holds a 7-chapter narrative that sequentially elaborates on the 1975–1979 saga. Volumes 2 and 3 share the same layout—both are framed within family portraits and albums either preceding or following 1975–1979. Volume 3, in particular, offers an alternative account of life after 1975–1979. In other words, the Cambodian family album transforms into a postmemorial book and offers the reader a glimpse of 1.5- and second-generation postmemory. Initially, the family tree inscribed at the beginning of Volume 3 appears to be a replica of Khim and Lina’s genealogical tree at the start of Volume 2. Upon closer inspection, however, Volume 3’s tree signals to the reader who survived the genocide—and who did not—through the subtle fading out of certain family portraits juxtaposed with colored individual portraits hanging from the adjacent branches. Upon this discovery, the reader receives the residual affective hauntings transferred over from Tian and his ancestors. In addition, the post-Narrative scrapbook that closes Volume 3, “Un Nouveau départ après 1980,” differs from the album-souvenir in Volume 2, and the 7-chapter narratives of the trilogy. For the first time, the family appears in motion. Left unframed, the family members—depicted in the bonus family album within the larger three-volume album—appear in conversation. Moreover, the transmission of histories occurs in the form of various mediums drawn by Tian, including a tape recorder, telephone, the exchange of family photos, direct oral transmission between characters, and even a replication of L’Année du lièvre.

Tian’s use of the mise en abyme—what Lucien Dällenbach refers to as “the repetition within a work of ‘the subject of the work’ ‘on the level of the character’”—occurs within the graphic novel through his illustration of L’Année du lièvre in the third volume. In addition to recording his father’s narration of the family history, Tian depicts his very own book, L’Année du lièvre, being passed down and shared with those depicted in the narrative. In order to illustrate Tian’s album, which is placed into abyss, to literally translate the French term referring to the figure of style, I will present a verbal photograph of its insertion into the post-1980 album, “Un nouveau départ après 1980.” On pages 2 and 3 of the book, the appearance of the physical album is passed along, in the hands of three family members: 1) Tian’s mother, Lina, whom he addresses as “Maman,” 2) One of his maternal uncles, or one of Lina’s brothers—either Uncle Koliane, or Uncle Samay, and 3) Tian’s maternal grandmother, Vanny, whom he addresses affectionately as “Yeay.”

56 Ibid., 01:14:22–01:14:38.
57 The author’s father and mother, Khim and Lina, are shown deciding whether or not to abandon their photo album, before fleeing Phnom Penh. Tian, Au revoir Phnom Penh, 19; Veasna, Year of the Rabbit, 31.
58 The family trees are included in the front matter of volumes 2 and 3, in the original French edition. In the English edition, the first family tree follows the preface, and the second family tree follows the postface. Note: These pages are unnumbered in both editions.
you read it?) Lina, dressed in a patterned lilac shirt, and what appears to be—from the half of
her body depicted—a Khmer sampot, responds by stating that she could not advance beyond the
third chapter. Upon closer inspection, the mother-and-son portrait captured by the author
resembles the cover of Volume 1 itself. The “original” cover depicts Lina in the same patterned
lilac shirt, which ends above her hips and slightly surpasses her biceps on the cover. Yet, now
that Lina and the shirt has aged, the sleeves reach her lower biceps. Though Tian is depicted as
a baby in his mother’s arms on the front cover, he resembles his father, Khim, in the hand-
drawn photograph of him in conversation with his mother. On the cover of Volume 1, his father
is turned away, looking off to the right. The reader thus receives a still frame of his family on the
day of the takeover of Phnom Penh and a profile shot of his father’s right side. Tian, in
conversation with his mother, is also turned to the right, presenting the reader with a view of
the right side of his face. He shares with his father a prominent nose, from his profile, as well as
the same noticeable bangs swept upward in the direction of his gaze. Like Tian, his father is
dressed in a long-sleeved shirt, which is left unbuttoned at the neck, forming a V-neck shirt and
tucked into blue jeans. Khim’s style of dress in 1975, seen on the cover of Volume 1, matches
Tian’s clothing, which is depicted in a borderless panel in “Un nouveau départ après 1980” in
Volume 3. The subsequent page in “Un Nouveau départ après 1980” depicts, in the upper left-
hand corner, a scene in which Tian presents his maternal grandmother and uncle each with a
copy of L’Année du lièvre. Though the cover is difficult to decipher in the snapshot, it appears
to be Volume 1—based on the silhouette of smoke drawn in on the cover of the book held
between his grandmother’s hands. Tian stands in the middle of one of his uncles (Uncle Koliane
or Uncle Samay), and his grandmother, who is seated partially upright in a reclining bed. In
addition, he finds himself between two of the replicas of L’Année du lièvre, pointing to a picture
in the album that his Yeay holds in her hands. While the reader does not see the picture, it is
implied that the photo is self-referential, and one from the “album-souvenir avant 1975,” as Tian
remarks: “Yeay, je t’ai dessinée avec Ta dans votre maison…” [Grandma, I drew you with
Grandpa, in your home…]64

The mise en abyme of the album illustrates the active and creative quality of postmemory.
In addition to the replication of albums depicted in the pages of L’Année du lièvre, the author
circulates and transmits the family narrative that he received from his parents in the 1980s. The
act of transmitting the narrative, in the form of the graphic novel, back to the original “actors”
of the history, serves first to confront the family silences and to prevent perpetuating the
unconscious transmission of family trauma, then to demonstrate how first-generation testimony
is a collaboration of first and 1.5- or second-generation encounters. It should be noted that the
collaborative memory work between Tian and his parents begins with a family discussion,
following the release and the screening of The Killings Fields in 1984. Yet, the discussion is
endless—described by Tian as coming one-after-the-other; linked to one another [s’enchaîner]:

61 See cover art for Volume 1, Au revoir Phnom Penh. See also, Tian, Un nouveau départ, third page after 110; Veasna, Year
of the Rabbit, third page after 368.

62 Ibid. Khim’s clothing in Volume 1, particularly his denim jeans, characterizes him as the “new people,” in
juxtaposition to the “old people” in Democratic Kampuchea: “The Khmer Rouge were determined to turn the
country into a nation of peasants and workers in which corruption, feudalism and capitalism could be completely
uprooted.” Dy, A History of Democratic Kampuchea, 16. See also, Ibid., 47: “Nearly everyone who was known to be
well educated was put to death. No one dared to wear glasses or speak foreign languages; it was a sign that they
were educated. Many urban Cambodians, in particular, had to conceal their past and their talents, and pretend to
be illiterate.” Volume 2 begins by showing the reader the route traveled by Khim and Vithya (Khim’s uncle) from
Phnom Penh to Roneam: “After their arrest by Khmer Rouge militia, Khim and Vithya’s families were sent to a
village to be reeducated according to the principles of Angkar.” Veasna, Year of the Rabbit, 138; Tian, Ne vous
inquiétez pas, 2. Khim’s wardrobe change from Volume 1 to Volume 2—from jeans into an all-black, long-sleeved
shirt and pants, with a checkered red-and-white krama—signals a transformation of Cambodia into Democratic
Kampuchea. See Veasna, Year of the Rabbit, 141; Tian, Ne vous inquiétez pas, 2–5. For a representation of the “new
people,” see Veasna, Year of the Rabbit, 188; Tian, Ne vous inquiétez pas, 52.

63 Tian, Un nouveau départ, fourth page after 110; Veasna, Year of the Rabbit, fourth page after 368.

64 Ibid.
“Je commençais quand même à réfléchir sur l’histoire de mes parents. Donc, il y a eu au départ une petite, euh, une discussion, puis, après, ça s’est enchaîné…” [I started to reflect on my parents’ history/story. So, there was, at first, a little discussion, and then, after, things came one after another…]65

Finally, the role of the tape recorder represents the conflation of past and present, and of first- and second-generation memory. The Franco-Cambodian tape recorder mirrors the shared history between father and son in Spiegelman’s Maus. Hirsch notes the following: “Vladek talks into a tape recorder and Art asks him questions, follows up on details, demands more minute descriptions. The testimony is contained in Vladek’s voice, but we receive more than that voice; we receive Art’s graphic interpretations of Vladek’s narrative.”66 Tian’s graphic novel is different as the recorder appears only once, at the end of the trilogy, within the six-page surplus album, “Un nouveau départ après 1980.” In Tian’s case, the tape recorder appears in a single panel, at the end of the trilogy, within the surplus album, after the 1975–1979 narrative. Moreover, the three-volume novel includes more than his father’s direct testimony—but also his mother’s inability to read her son’s rendition of their lived experiences in Cambodia. Yet, the trilogy closes with the post-1980 album, which begins with a visual-verbal, or photographic, reproduction of the start of his family’s oral narrative. The simple display of the recorder, and the conversation between father and son in the 1980s represented by speech balloons without lines represents the fragmentary nature of testimony. Moreover, the recording, which is “played” and/or shared with the reader decades later in 2016, within the third volume of L’Année du lièvre, follows the structure of Cambodian oral narratives—characterized by non-linear narration, digressions, and repetition. Tian’s album thus closes with a verbal-visual photograph of a return to oral narration that mirrors the circular and cyclical aspect of Cambodian storytelling.

By the end of the trilogy and on the last page of “Un nouveau départ après 1980,” the reader witnesses a still frame of Tian and his son, and the transmission of history, orally, from father to son. Tian (Chan Veasna) indicates to the reader: “Chan est devenu papa à son tour et pour transmettre son histoire, il parle du Cambodge à son fils.” [Chan became a father, himself, and in order to transmit his history, he tells his son about Cambodia.] With their eyes locked, his son exclaims in a speech balloon, “Papa! Un jour j’irai dans ton pays, le Cambodge!”67 The album thus closes with the intersection of first-, 1.5-, second-, and third-generation memories and dialogues. Moreover, his son’s last words allude to two things: The stress on the possessive adjective, ton, or “your,” paired with the substantive, pays, or “country,” subtly reveals the complexity of second- and third-generation identity. While many second- and third-generation Cambodians of the diaspora are immersed in their parents’ culture, language, and history, a distance and gap remains, and a desire to “know the world of [their] parents” dominates.68 In addition, the fact that Chan’s (Tian) son has the last say in the trilogy alludes to the Cambodian diasporic literary-arts and new aesthetics movements, in flux, and in the process of being created and recreated. This endless movement of memory, and postmemorial work, is evident on the cover of Volume 3, Un Nouveau départ, and within the album. The final page of the album presents a panorama of Phnom Penh shot from above with the author’s remarks on the present and future of Phnom Penh. In three paragraphs, Tian reflects on the economic development and changes in the capital, commenting on the conflation of tourism and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal in the 21st century.

65 Broué and Gardette, Cambodge, 01:14:34–01:14:52.
66 Hirsch, Family Frames, 12.
67 English translation: Papa, I want to go to Cambodia to see your country! See Tian, Un nouveau départ, seventh page after 110; Veasna, Year of the Rabbit, seventh page after 368.
68 Hirsch, Family Frames, 245.
Beyond the Graphic Novel: Cambodian New Aesthetics and the Personal-Collective Archive

Returning to Deleuze and Guattari’s characterization of the “rhizome,” Cambodian identity may be interpreted as growing endlessly in various directions: The conjunction of Cambodian displacement following the 1970s, the “new” identities born in and beyond Cambodian communities in France, Canada, the U.S., and Australia, and the urbanization of Phnom Penh in the late 20th and 21st centuries, emphasize the difficulty of defining Khmer identity. Turning to the cover of Volume 3, which illustrates Tian’s family in displacement, the reader notes that what appear to be branches are actually Kapok roots. The roots resurface—bursting from the center of the temple and its rubble, and also appearing in Lina’s left hand. Lina can be seen sweating, following behind Tian and Khim, and holding the roots for balance. Enveloped by trees, Tian and his parents, Lina and Khim, and two others are shown walking atop a temple. In juxtaposition to the first album cover, which depicts the family frozen in fear and turned in the opposite direction of the incoming traffic, the cover of the third and final album, *Un Nouveau départ*, shows the family in movement, rushing forward towards what is out of frame, and imperceptible to the reader. In addition, Tian is pictured as an infant, asleep on Khim’s back. The representation of child survivor Tian as asleep and facing forward evokes the activation of 1.5- and second-generation dormant memories. Moreover, the snakelike roots bursting from the temple that provide Lina balance illustrate Cambodian rhizomic identity, which is endlessly transforming itself upon the mixing and merging of the diverse memories of Cambodians across various generations, locations, and experiences.

This article concludes with a definition of Cambodian rhizomatic identity and Cambodian ontology—beyond the comics medium, generational and geographical boundaries, and the genealogical notion of family. The postmemorial family album is derived from Hirsch’s conceptualization of the “aesthetics of postmemory,” which she defines as “a diasporic aesthetics of temporal and spatial exile that needs simultaneously to (re)build and mourn.” In addition, this section examines Cambodian identity in relation to the potentiality of rupture, as well as the evolving and collaborative quality of the rhizome. Postmemorial aesthetics also resonate with Martinican philosopher Edouard Glissant’s concepts “creolization” and “identification,” which emphasize the multiplicity of cultures, identities, and timelines: “Instead of electing one past, these Caribbean civilizations build a functional métissage, situated in the present (‘today’) and branching out to an open-ended future.” The aspect of creolization is useful in understanding the relation between Cambodian identity and 21st century diasporic artistic production. Like the overlapping of past, present, and an open-ended future, first-, 1.5-, second, and third-generational memories converge. The entanglement of memories leads to new artistic possibilities. Such art forms demonstrate the creative potentiality of displacement and fragmentation—as characterized by Deleuze and Guattari’s principle of asignifying rupture: “A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines.” Postmemorial aesthetics chooses the latter, interacting with old lines to form new possibilities. In the case of Cambodian new aesthetics, pre-Democratic

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70 Loichot, *Between Breadfruit and Masala*, 129. On métissage, and the untranslatability of the word, see Françoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 13. “The word does not exist in English: one can translate métis by ‘half-breed’ or ‘mixed-blood’ but these expressions always carry a negative connotation, precisely because they imply biological abnormality and reduce human reproduction to the level of animal breeding.” The meaning of métissage, here, goes beyond—what Martinican philosopher and theorist Edouard Glissant’s considers—a mathematical logic that produces predictable categories. Like his concept of créolisation, it refers to l’imprévisible [the unpredictable], the potentiality of incalculable and unforeseeable exchanges. See Edouard Glissant, “Métissage et créolisation,” in *Discours sur le métissage, identités métisses: En quête d’Ariel*, ed. Sylvie Kandé (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999), 49–51.

Kampuchea forms of art are restored, preserved, and reimagined. Asian American scholar Khatharya Um demonstrates the fragmentary yet continuous quality of second-generation memory through the metaphor of a broken chain.

The metaphor of a ‘broken chain’ [depicts] the sense of discontinuities that all of us refugees feel in our lives—the physical loss, the sense of dislocation and displacement, the disruption, rupture and loss in cultural transmission based as it is so much on oral tradition, the absence of closure; many of us have no way of knowing what happened to our loved ones—only that they had disappeared. There can be no marker of remembrance save on mass graves. Despite the severance—in the historical, in the generational, in the cultural sense—there is something fundamentally innate that continues to bind us as a refugee generation. Perhaps for many of us, the war—especially within ourselves—is far from over.73

It should be noted that while rupture activates the creative component of postmemory, it can never be completely full, nor should it seek to be. However, this shared sense of loss—combined with the overlapping of timelines and trans-generational memories—contributes to forming a cohesive sense of identity in second-generation survivors. This fragmentary yet cohesive quality of postmemory thus illustrates the Cambodian family album, or “book designated for sticking pictures.” The creative aspect of rupture can also be visualized through 1.5-generation Vietnamese artist Binh Danh’s chlorophyll prints of S-21, or Tuol Sleng prisoners in Phnom Penh.74 The artist manipulates organic and manmade materials—using leaves, resin, and sunlight—to recreate prisoners’ photographs. The 2006 exhibit, “Ancestral Altars,” which was held in the Haines Gallery in San Francisco, California, nods to the French technological influences, borrowed and practiced by the Khmer Rouge, in the form of archiving “criminal” daguerreotypes. In addition, the chlorophyll and resin recreation of S-21 portraits allude to the re-appropriation of the space that held the prisoners: What served as a high school to Cambodian students prior to April 17, 1975 transformed into one of the deadliest prisons—S-21, under the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979—and into a museum, in 1979, used to document the Khmer Rouge atrocities during the Vietnamese Occupation of Cambodia. Danh’s exhibit thus captures the transnational and trans-generational component of postmemorial art, and also demonstrates the imaginative and creative quality of loss.

The interlacing of absence and excess, and rupture and suture, should be considered in relation to the growth of artistic production by members of the second-generation of Cambodian genocide survivors.75 The surge in postmemorial art serves multiple purposes: to examine and to express one’s hybrid identity in multiple “ethnic” or transnational forms, and to connect and discover one’s history through the creative artistic process. The new aesthetics of Cambodian postmemory, like the Khmer sampot and krama, embody the mixed-ness and intersection of old and new. In particular, their composition and role as cultural and national symbols vary across time and space and undergo continual change. In the case of the krama, the quotidian accessory transformed into a symbol associated with the Khmer Rouge regime—as depicted in Tian’s L’Année du lièvre through the black uniforms paired with red and white checkered kramas. Yet, it is the sampot—the “national garment of Cambodia”—an

75 “Being un-sutured involves a continuous process of renewal and commitment.” George Yancy, ed., White Self-Criticality beyond Anti-racism: How Does it Feel to be a White Problem? (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 5–6. For examples of “suturing” and “un-suturing,” see also, ibid., 8–11.
aesthetic form itself that demonstrates the postmemorial generation’s contributions to rebuilding and shaping Cambodian-ness. From its intricate weavings to its various styles and the innumerable ways to fold it, the sampot represents what Roger Nelson refers to as a “hybrid contemporaneity.” Interpreting Cambodian artist Chan Dany’s exhibit, “Sampot: The Collection of Small Things,” Nelson remarks the “multiplicity of contemporaneity in Cambodia,” adding: “A vision of Cambodia emerges that is at once old and new, local and global. The articulation of contemporaneity refuses the dominant narrative about nation, centered on the temples of Angkor Wat and the traumas of the Khmer Rouge. Yet it also resists the tendency to overlook or downplay historical continuities.”

Though the Cambodian family album must be considered beyond the comics medium, it is worth noting the history of Cambodian comics, which continues to be shaped by French and Belgian influences. The first Cambodian comic book is credited to Khmer cartoonist Uth Roeun in the 1960s: His popular comic based on the Cambodian trickster Torn Chey circulated widely in Cambodia in the 1980s and continues to be read by Cambodians of the diaspora. Despite having lanced the graphic novels scene in Cambodia, his advice to Cambodian artists, “[d]on’t write about killing and war,” has been largely disregarded, as illustrated by Tian and Séra’s representations of genocide in the graphic novel. The 21st century Cambodian arts scene can thus be understood as a creative process born from the intersection of Cambodia’s past colonial and Khmer Rouge histories, and the collaborative efforts of “local” Cambodian and diasporic Cambodian communities.

The continued displacement of Cambodians—including the movement of Cambodian Americans from the U.S. to Cambodia—illustrates the unpredictable and transnational aspect of Cambodian new aesthetics. Cambodian American prison poet Kosal Khiev—who was born in the Khao-I-Dang refugee camp in 1980, raised in California, served time in the U.S. prison system, and deported to Cambodia in 2011—is representative of the group of Cambodian American refugee deportees. This sudden expulsion is particular as it causes 1.5- and second-generation Cambodians to experience arguably the most traumatic aspect of “postmemory,” which is “the condition of exile from the space of identity.”82 What was once considered the world of their parents—one which they sought to understand but could never fully know—becomes their own. Khiev’s spoken word poetry affectively communicates this sense of loss—and documents his experiences of navigating and rediscovering Cambodian language, culture, and identity.83 Crisis and exile is conveyed through a new aesthetic in flux with the displacement of second-generation Cambodians—whether by choice or through forced exile.

French film director Denis Do also communicates historical elements of the Khmer Rouge regime through the medium of animated film. Do’s film, Funan, also serves to examine his Franco-Sino-Cambodian identity. Funan depicts the personal and collective events of the Khmer Rouge regime as experienced by his mother, Chou. The medium is arguably more accessible to viewers—as scenes of graphic violence are never fully visible to the audience.

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Ibid., 206.

John A. Lent, Asian Comics (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 120.

Ibid., 122.


Hirsch, Family Frames, 243.

Masahiro Sugano, dir., Cambodian Son (Studio Revolt, 2014), 90 minutes.

Denis Do, dir., Funan (Bac Films, 2018), 84 minutes.
Rather, scenes of rape and murders are implicit. For instance, gunfire is heard and reflected in the form of bright flashes on Chou’s face. In addition, the film follows a non-linear form and illustrates how memories are “filled in,” in the form of blank spaces which slowly become saturated with pigment: When Chou’s son, Sovanh, is separated from his parents, the audience experiences the young boy’s daydream, in which he re-experiences his birthday with his parents. A white space takes over the screen; Sovanh appears smiling in a birthday hat, then one-by-one, his parents are drawn in. Do’s conscious sensitivity to the sights and sounds—and the pacing of the narrative—allow the viewer to participate as a willing witness.

The Cambodian new aesthetics is perhaps best exemplified through Long Beach, California-born and Cambodian ex-patriot choreographer Prumsodun Ok’s artistic renderings. Since 2017, Prumsodun Ok & Natyarasa, Cambodia’s first all-male and LGBTQ dance production, has been reshaping Cambodian identity through a contemporary take on Khmer classical dance. In their performance, *Vajramala: Spirit of Khmer Dance*, dancers perform to traditional Khmer music as well as “foreign” and popular contemporary music, such as UK singer-songwriter Sam Smith’s 2014 hit song, *Lay Me Down*. Ok’s contributions to the arts has allowed for inclusivity within the dance world—as prior to 2017, Khmer classical dance was comprised of a predominantly female cast, with Cambodian Princess Buppha Devi in the Cambodian imaginary. His revival of Khmer classical dance serves to preserve a once dying art and narrative form, which faced near annihilation during the Khmer Rouge regime. More importantly, Ok revamps a traditional aesthetic form, and in doing so, he calls for a more fluid definition of Khmer-ness beyond a monolithic and genealogical model.

The creative aspect of postmemory—always in movement—allows one to become an active subject rather than an inactive viewer or listener. The 21st century processes of remembering, mourning, and (re)creating in the Cambodian diaspora demonstrate postmemory work, which exchanges with, and builds off of first-generation memory. The purpose of the Cambodian new aesthetics is not to fully recover memory; nor does it function to reconstruct the past. Rather, it serves as a testimony to the experience of second-generation Cambodian genocide survivors and demonstrates how 21st century Cambodian identity moves beyond national and generational boundaries. In closing, it must be noted that while the Khmer and Buddhist form of mourning is circular, the Cambodian postmemorial album attempts to break the cycle of the unconscious transmission of trauma by actively involving the subsequent generations in the process of mourning.

**Bibliography**


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85 Ibid., 01:00:54–01:01:11. The viewer witnesses a scene of dangling feet, implying suicide by hanging. This immediately follows a scene depicting a young girl’s (Lily) sexual assault—which is never explicitly represented. Ibid., 00:57:12–00:59:46.

86 The gunfire is audible and reflected on Chou’s face. See Ibid., 01:05:44–01:05:47. The incident follows the exchange of dialogue between an armed Khmer Rouge soldier and an old woman. “Vous allez voir ce qu’Angkar réserve aux ennemis de la Révolution!” [You’ll see what Angkar has in store for enemies of the Revolution]—“Pitié! Je n’ai rien fait!” [Mercy! I didn’t do anything!]. See Ibid., 01:05:39–01:05:44.

87 Ibid., 00:36:58–00:37:19.


Smith, Sam. “Lay Me Down.” Track 10 on *In the Lonely Hour* (Standard Edition), Capitol, 2014, CD.


Um, Khatharya. “Specificities: The Broken Chain: Genocide in the Re-Construction and Destruction of Cambodian Society,” *Social Identities* 4, no. 1 (1998), 131–154. h t t p s : / / d o i . o r g / 1 0 . 1 0 8 0 / 1 3 5 0 4 6 3 9 8 5 1 9 2 4 .


Gender, Age, and Survival of Italian Jews in the Holocaust

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Introduction
Though scholars of genocide have addressed the role of gender in these horrors, scholars of the Holocaust have only recently examined this issue. Fear of seeming to minimize the horrors of the Holocaust for all Jews made discussions of gender differences “irrelevant and even irreverent,” as one writer remarked.1 Death for all Jews was the aim of the Germans and their allies, whether the Jews were male or female, young or old. And yet, as in all other aspects of life and death, gender and age mattered. “Even though the Germans were committed to sending all Jews to their deaths, for a variety of reasons women and men traveled toward that destination on distinct roads,” Nechama Tec has written. I will examine those distinct roads by looking at sex differences in deportation and survival of Italian Jews with a particular focus on the intersection of gender with age.

Gender and the Holocaust
Previous research has illuminated some aspects of the influence of gender on Jewish life and death in the Holocaust. As more survivors came forward to tell their stories and as women’s history became more mainstream, the discussion of the experiences of women in the ghettos, labor camps, and in hiding became more frequent.3 Most of the work that has been done on the role of gender in the Holocaust is based on personal testimonies through interviews, diaries and autobiographies, ghetto histories, and other textual records and have focused on changes that each stage of the Holocaust brought about in women’s and men’s roles and on sexual violence.4

Very little of what we know about gender is based on larger collections of information. Indeed, until recently, most empirical social science, including political science, has avoided the study of the Holocaust entirely despite its centrality to other interests of political scientists.5 It may be that scholars believed that translating the horrors of the Holocaust into facts and figures somehow diminished the inhumanity of what was done. Or they believe that the overall numbers are so horrific, nothing can be learned by studying them.9

But Tec’s “distinct roads”7 have many branches that need to be explored. Geographers of the Holocaust have described the gendered nature of many of the Holocaust’s important sites and processes, including the transports that carried millions and in so doing led to the

4 See, for example, works cited in footnotes 1, 2, and 3.
7 Tec, Resilience and Courage, 12.
separation of men from women and broke families apart. Whether Jews were in ghettos or camps, or on trains, or hiding in forests, gender mattered. In almost every setting, women were more vulnerable and able to be exploited even as they took on new roles outside the home as workers and, often, as representatives of their families. Throughout the war, women were at risk for rape and sexual violence. Many were forced to trade sex for survival; and the rape of Jewish women by both German soldiers and rescuers was, if not common, certainly not rare.

Demography was also at the root of those distinct roads. Jewish women, like gentle ones, were in the majority of their communities in most countries that fought in World War I. The “women surplus” was a much-discussed social phenomenon during the interwar years. In Italy, in 1931, there were 792 men for every 1,000 women in the population. And women were an increasing proportion of the Jewish population in nations under Nazi control. For example, Jewish women were 52% of the German Jewish population in 1933, but 58% in 1939. This increasing imbalance occurred partially because women were more likely to stay behind to take care of elderly relatives or other family members, while men had more opportunities and incentives to emigrate. A majority of those emigrating from Germany were men. Men were subject to greater physical threats during Kristallnacht and in the early part of the war. They were more likely to be rounded up and deported to labor camps. In this early period, men were more likely to commit suicide.

Gender differences were most striking among the aged. Of elderly widows and widowers left in Germany and Austria in 1939, more than 80% were women.

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12 Ibid.
16 Kaplan, Keeping Calm, 50–51. In 1936–37, 54% of Jewish immigrants to the U.S. were men and during the 1933–1942 period, 52% of immigrants to Palestine were men. More than 92% of immigrants to Palestine in this period were Jewish. See Harry Seebec Linfield, “Statistics of Jews,” The American Jewish Yearbook 45 (September 30, 1943–September 17, 1944), 600, accessed November 14, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23602908.
18 Kaplan, Keeping Calm, 50–51.
Women were less likely to die from malnutrition and diseases caused by poverty, starvation, and filth. For example, in the Lodz ghetto, the male death rate was more than three times as great as the female in the 20–25 age group. Women were more likely than men to “pass” for Aryan and be able to hide among the Christian community. On the other hand, evidence suggests that women were more likely than men to be rounded up and slaughtered in mass killings and possibly sent to extermination camps. An analysis that examined gender differences in the destination of Jewish deportees from Western Europe to the east found that women were more likely than men to be sent to extermination camps, and at Auschwitz, to be murdered on arrival. By a small but significant margin, they were also less likely to survive the war.

In most cases, we know little about gender differences in the locations where men and women were sent; the differences in the treatment of men and women as the war went on, and the relative fate of men and women sent to labor camps and ghettos.

Age and the Holocaust

The fate of the elderly has been told myriad times. Nazi principles called for death of those Jews unfit to work, and the elderly and the very young were both consigned to that category. “Selections” took place repeatedly: in ghettos, labor camps, and Auschwitz. Hundreds of survivor testimonies reveal their separation from their elderly parents or younger siblings upon arrival at Auschwitz, for example, and learning that they had been murdered within hours. Others report elderly and middle-aged parents being rounded up in local Aktionen while they, as working-age teens or young adults, survived, or watching a parent die on a death march, from starvation, violence, and disease.

We have only limited data on specific survival rates of older people on arrival at Auschwitz or through the war. Reportedly, 91% of prisoners over 51-years-old were murdered on arrival in a few transports of Jews from the Lens area of France to Auschwitz compared to 59% of}

22 Welch, Gender and Selection.
26 Aktionen (plural for Aktion, though many popular works use the anglicized Aktion) was the German word for the round ups of Jews in a community. Amidst violence and bloodshed, German security officials (often assisted by local police), rounded Jews from the homes, gathered them in a central place, and after hours or days marched or drove them somewhere locally to be murdered or transported them by trains to killing camps.
those from the same transports aged 16–40. But beyond that, we have little information beyond anecdotal evidence about age differences in that first selection at Auschwitz or survival overall.

A study of survival rates of the Jews of Amsterdam based on comparing registries of Dutch Jews with lists of survivors and victims found no significant differences in survival of men and women but significant differences among age groups. The very youngest group (5-years-old or younger) had a higher survival rate than other groups, and groups over thirty, and especially over 50, the lowest rates. Tammes’ earlier study documented much higher survival rates among those less than 15-years-old than among older adults, while his most recent complex analysis indicated that women and older people were more likely to die in the first three years of the war than men and younger people, but less likely after July 1943.

But studies of survival in other locations are rare, if available at all. The scope of the Holocaust was so vast and data so incomplete. Just as with gender differences in survival, in most cases, we have little beyond anecdotal evidence to document age differences in survival.

**Italian Jews and the Holocaust**

Each country’s experience during the war was unique, of course. Italy’s was quite different from its Western European neighbors because, as an ally of Germany, Fascist Italy was not occupied until late in the war.

Italy’s relatively small Jewish community is one of the oldest in the world. Many of the nearly 48,000 Italian Jews were descendants of families who had lived there during the Roman Empire. Others had ancestors who had fled there when expelled from Spain and Portugal in the late 15th century. On the other hand, as many as 10,000 were Jews from other countries who had migrated there before the war or fled as refugees during the 1930s.

Most of those born in Italy were well assimilated into Italian society. In fact, about 10% of Italian Jews were members of the Fascist party, about the same percentage as the non-Jewish population. Others, however, were active in the resistance against the Fascists.

After signing an alliance agreement in 1937, and with only modest popular support, the Italian government promulgated a series of anti-Jewish measures starting in 1938. The new laws prohibited Italian Jews from holding public jobs, marrying non-Jews, owning large factories, attending public schools, or traveling freely. The Italian state “started down the path of state racism and antisemitism….”

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32 Ibid.

33 Tammes, *Surviving the Holocaust*.


As long as Italy was a combatant in the war, the Italian government did not deport Jews nor threaten their lives despite the sanctions against them.\footnote{Hilberg, Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders, 421–432. Here, Hilberg describes the years of pressure by the German government on Mussolini to take more drastic steps.} Foreign Jews in Italy were interned in both the small towns and concentration camps;\footnote{Most were confined to villages, but several camps were established too. See Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, “The Fascist Concentration Camps: From Internment to Deportation: Concentration Camps and Jews in Italy during World War II,” Centro Primo Levi (blog), November 5, 2015, accessed October 29, 2020, https://primolevicenter.org/printed-matter/the-fascist-concentration-camps/; Eric Lamet, A Child at Confino: The True Story of a Jewish Boy and His Mother in Mussolini’s Italy (Avon: Adams Media, 2011); Sarfatti, The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy; Zuccotti, The Italians and the Holocaust.} but outside Italy, Italian troops largely protected Croatian Jews under their control along the Croatian coastline, Greek Jews in the part of their country occupied by Italy, and French Jews living in the southeast of France under Italian occupation.\footnote{David Cesarani, Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933–1949 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2016); Robert O. Paxton, Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940–1944, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1972); Laurence Rees, The Holocaust: A New History, 1st ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2017).}

In August 1943, King Victor Emmanuel removed Mussolini’s Fascist government from power. When the new government signed a truce with the Allies the next month, German troops quickly entered Italy from the north, moving down the peninsula to occupy northern and central Italy and installing Mussolini as head of the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI), also known as the Republic of Salo. Mussolini’s government controlled the part of Italy occupied by Germany and German troops.

Jews were then at great risk. 97% of Italian Jews lived in Rome and regions north of Rome.\footnote{Sarfatti, The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy, 30.} The Allies had invaded Sicily in July and mainland Italy in early September but were far south of Rome and meeting tremendous German resistance as they very slowly moved north. Most Jews who had been interned in southern Italy were safe but not the rest.

Once they were in Italy, the Germans moved quickly to imprison Jews and ship them to camps in the east. Transporting Jews by train to Eastern Europe to be murdered en masse was a key part of the Holocaust.\footnote{A chilling examination of the horrors of the roundups, transit, and arrival of these deportation trains is found in Simone Gigliotti, The Train Journey: Transit, Captivity, and Witnessing in the Holocaust, 1st ed. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).} By October 1943 when the Germans and their Italian collaborators began the roundup of Italian Jews, the Nazi murder camps—Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka—had already closed after killing more than 1.75 million Jews in just twenty-one months.\footnote{Stone, Quantifying the Holocaust. These camps were constructed for the sole purpose of murdering Jews quickly and efficiently after the Wannsee conference had coordinated plans to murder all of Europe’s Jews. See Mark Roseman, The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution: A Reconsideration, 1st ed. (New York: Picador Paper, 2003); Gerhard Wolf, “The Wannsee Conference in 1942 and the National Socialist Living Space Dystopia,” Journal of Genocide Research 17, no. 2 (April 2015), 153–175, accessed November 2, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2015.1027074.} Eighty percent of those Jews deported from Italy were transported to Auschwitz, both a killing center and a slave labor camp.\footnote{See Table 2 below.}

The first to be sent were Jews living in Rome. In mid-October, the German SS captured more than 1,250 Roman Jews.\footnote{Zuccotti, The Italians and the Holocaust [1996], 101–138.} Within two days they sent 1,020 of them to Auschwitz where nearly 60% of them were murdered immediately and almost all the rest were eventually murdered or died from starvation and disease during the next several months (only sixteen people survived).\footnote{Liliana Picciotto Fargion, Il Libro della Memoria: Gli Ebrei Deportati dall’Italia (1943–1945), 2nd ed. (Milano: Mursia, 1991), 59.}
These actions were legitimized by the Manifesto of Verona, written by the Congress of the Italian Fascist party meeting in November 1943, declaring that Jews were foreigners and enemies. This gave the imprimatur of the RSI to the roundups, deportation, and murder of Jews in Italy.47

After the arrest of Jews in Rome,48 the Italian police, or the German SS, or sometimes both, arrested Jews in other cities and towns. They were taken to local prisons or other sites nearby to be held until they could be deported. Many were sent on to a transit camp in Fossoli (near Carpi), Bolzano, or Trieste. A few hundred were sent to an RSI concentration camp in Borgo S. Dalmazzo in Piedmont.49 Piera Sonnino, for example, writes of her family’s arrest in Genoa.50 The family’s ancestors had lived in Italy for generations. On October 12, 1944, after being taken to a local Gestapo headquarters and questioned, the family was moved later that night to an Italian prison in Genoa, which Piera found shockingly primitive. They were imprisoned there for a week, then taken by truck to Bolzano. The next day, SS guards oversaw their journey to Auschwitz in sealed freight trains.51

Unlike the Sonninos, a large family with few resources, many native Italian Jews were able to hide in rural villages, in churches, or with friends.52 Nearly 90% escaped deportation.53 Foreign Jews were more vulnerable. Their networks with Christians were smaller and many could not speak Italian so hiding with natives was difficult. More than one-third of those Jews transported from Italy were foreign born.54

Ranging in size from a handful of prisoners to 1,020 people, 42 transports left Italy for Auschwitz (31 transports), Ravensbruck (5), Bergen-Belsen (4), Flossenberg (1), and Buchenwald (1). The largest transports went to Auschwitz (see Table 1 below); only two of the eleven transports to the concentration camps took more than one hundred prisoners. The rest carried fewer than fifty each. The last transport to Auschwitz left with four prisoners on November 1, 1944; after that, three transports took a total of 56 Jews to Ravensbruck, the last on February 24, 1945.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Survivors</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Auschwitz</td>
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<td>Auschwitz</td>
<td>April 5, 1944</td>
<td>609</td>
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<td>Milan Verona</td>
<td>Auschwitz</td>
<td>January 1, 1944</td>
<td>605</td>
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<td>Auschwitz</td>
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<td>581</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fossoli Verona</td>
<td>Auschwitz</td>
<td>June 26, 1944</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fossoli</td>
<td>Auschwitz</td>
<td>February 22, 1944</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borgo S. Dalmazzo</td>
<td>Auschwitz, via Drancy</td>
<td>November 21, 1944</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Largest Transports of Jews from Italy.55

47 Sarfatti, The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy, 187–189.
50 Sonnino, This Has Happened, 78–97.
51 Ibid., 92–98.
52 See, for example, Edda Servi Machlin, Child of the Ghetto: Coming of Age in Fascist Italy: 1926–1946: A Memoir (Croton-on-Hudson: Giro Press, 1995).
53 Cesarani, Final Solution, 668.
54 Picciotto Fargion, Il Libro della Memoria, 28.
55 Ibid., 38–65.
Those deported to Auschwitz were subject to an immediate selection where some were selected for labor, but most were immediately murdered. Primo Levi, who was deported from Fossoli in February 1944, describes the terror:

The door opened with a crash, and the dark echoed with outlandish orders in that curt, barbaric barking of Germans in command which seems to give vent to millennial anger…In less than ten minutes all the fit men had been collected together in a group. What happened to the others…we could establish neither then nor later: The night swallowed them up, purely and simply. Today, however, we know…that of our convoy no more than ninety-six men and twenty-nine women entered the respective camps of Monowitz-Buna and Birkenau, and that of all the others, more than five hundred in number, not one was living two days later.56

Those not sent to Auschwitz were sent to other concentration camps in Germany. Most of these were Libyan Jews who had been brought to the Italian mainland in 1942.57 The Germans had set up camps such as Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, and Flossenberg before the war, mainly as places to send dissidents and criminals. As the war progressed, more and more people, including Jews, were sent there from the camps in the east now overrun by the Soviet Army. By late 1943 until the end of the war in 1945, overcrowding and consequent disease and starvation killed tens of thousands.

The exact mortality rates in these camps may never be known. However, inmates sent to concentration camps did have some chance of surviving; while most died of starvation, disease, and overwork in the camps, some escaped to the forests where they were hidden by peasants or fought as partisans, others fled to larger cities and hid or passed as Christians, and there were others who had valuable skills and were protected until late in the war, giving them a greater chance of survival.58

Data and Methods

Data for this paper include information on all 6,775 Jews deported from Italy from September 1943 to March 1945 during the German occupation. The data are drawn from Liliana Picciotto’s compilation of basic biographies on all Italian Jews rounded up and sent east.59 Around 95% of the deaths of Italian Jews (and foreign Jews living in Italy) occurred among those on the transports.60
Our database consists of information on the transport and the individual deported. Transport characteristics include the departure point, date, and destination. Individual characteristics include age, gender, and fate, that is, whether they were liberated, gassed on arrival, died on the transport itself, or died in Auschwitz or one of the other camps. Those who died in the camps a few days after liberation were coded with deaths other than gas. Where known, the place of death was also coded, but 40% were unknown.

We will test two hypotheses concerning gender, three hypotheses concerning age, and two hypotheses looking at interaction of gender and age:

1. We expect that women were more likely than men to a) be gassed on arrival at Auschwitz and b) to have higher overall mortality rates.
2. We expect that those over 60 (the old) and under 15 (the young) were more likely to be sent to Auschwitz than the middle-aged group.
3. We expect that the old and the young were more likely to a) be gassed on arrival at Auschwitz and b) be less likely to survive than those in middle age groups.
4. Finally, we expect an interaction between sex and age, with women in child-bearing and child-rearing ages (15–44) more likely than similar aged men to be gassed on arrival at Auschwitz and less likely to survive.

Findings
Table 1 indicates that 53% of those transported from Italy were men, quite different from the overall Western European transports where 56% were women.

The impact of gender on the fate of Italian Jewish deportees
Men and women were deported in roughly similar proportions to Auschwitz, on the one hand, and concentration camps on the other (see Table 2). A few more women than men were sent to Bergen Belsen and Ravensbruck, which was mostly a woman’s camp. No women were sent to Flossenberg. Equal proportions were sent to Buchenwald, and equal proportions were unknown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
<th>% Men</th>
<th>% Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auschwitz</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bergen-Belsen</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravensbruck</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flossenburg</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchenwald</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 (6,775)</td>
<td>100 (3,557)</td>
<td>100 (3,197)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Destinations of Deported Italian Jews.

These findings can be compared to another analysis of transports from all over Western Europe where women were somewhat more likely to be sent to both Terezin and the killing camps. However, these differences appeared to be due to the time in the war that deportations occurred. By the time that the Italian Jews were deported, the killing camps and the ghettos,

61 Welch, Gender and Selection.
except for Lodz, were closed. Most of the rest of Western European Jews had already been transported. Terezin was open but Germans chose not to direct Italian transports there. The late arrival of Germans in Italy after the killing camps had all closed may explain much of the difference between Italy and the other Western European countries.\textsuperscript{62}

To examine the proportion gassed, we will examine only deportees to Auschwitz, since none of the other camps to which the Italian Jewish population were sent had a selection process on arrival where some were sent to be immediately gassed. In most Auschwitz transports, before anyone was registered in the camp, amidst shouts, screams, beatings, and snapping dogs, the passengers were sent to one side for an immediate walk to the gas chamber, or to the other, for temporary reprieve as a slave laborer. The shock of arrival overwhelmed most people who survived to write about it. Piera Sonnino, for example, writes of her family’s arrival on a freezing end-of-October day:

I feel like I had entered a dimension where nothing is human, that is utterly hostile to everything human, a dimension that has absorbed even its own creators...a cold machine muddy and dark, fatal and inexorable, topped by a small flame that I see for an instant as in the distance it breaks the darkness, as if the sky were burning. I don’t know yet what it is.\textsuperscript{63}

Hundreds of survivors’ reports indicate that old people, children, mothers with children, those with evidence of even mild disabilities, such as wearing glasses, and others who did not look fit to work were sent directly to the gas chambers. Working-aged men and women who looked fit, except for women with small children, were often kept alive for slave labor. There were many life and death moments for prisoners at Auschwitz, and this was the first. Piera Sonnino describes how she and her sisters were placed in one group and taken away, her older brothers in another group, and her parents in a third. It wasn’t until later that day that she learned from another prisoner that her parents had likely already been murdered.\textsuperscript{64}

Men and women assigned to slave labor were registered and given a number. Those sent directly to the gas chambers were not registered. An analysis of 253 transports to Auschwitz from all over Western Europe found that about 57% of the prisoners were gassed immediately.\textsuperscript{65}

Overall, Italian Jews were sent to immediate death at Auschwitz at a much lower rate than those prisoners on other Western European transports. Italian Jewish women were significantly more likely to be gassed on arrival at Auschwitz compared to their male counterparts (see Figure 1 below), a finding consistent with overall Western European patterns. The difference between men and women is about 10% and is statistically significant. Our expectation is supported by these data.

\textsuperscript{62} Yitzhak Arad, \textit{Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps} (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2018).

\textsuperscript{63} Sonnino, \textit{This Has Happened}, 97–98.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 104. Her mother was 58, her father 64. Only Piera of their family of eight survived even though all six teen-aged and adult children survived the initial selection.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid. These data are from the 194 of 290 Auschwitz transports for which there are gender data.
Figure 1. \( N=5566 \). Gender differences in surviving the first selection are significant at .01, gender differences in overall survival are not significant.

However, contrary to our expectation, as the figure also shows, the overall survival rate of men and women sent to Auschwitz was nearly identical. The starvation, murders, disease, brutality, and inhumane working conditions at Auschwitz and its subcamps killed nearly five out of six women who were sent to slave labor and an even higher proportion of men.

Survival rates of Italian Jews not sent to Auschwitz were considerably higher. Of the 557 deported Italian Jews not sent to Auschwitz, 74% survived to liberation. Women were significantly more likely to survive than men, 78%–70% (sig at < .05). Unfortunately, around 90% of those whose destinations we know were sent to Auschwitz.

Taking into account both those sent to Auschwitz and those who went to labor camps, the overall survival rate of Italian Jews was 12% for men and 13% for women (difference not significant). The slight advantage for women is entirely due to the better survival rates of those sent to labor camps.

The impact of age on the fate of Italian Jewish deportees

Though official statistics collected at Auschwitz do not record information on ages of individuals, voluminous anecdotal evidence tells us that elderly people and children were much more likely to be immediately murdered than working-age men and women. One study of survival among Amsterdam Jews also documented the much smaller chances of survival among older people. The study, based on the entire Jewish population, not just those deported, documented higher rates of survival among the very young who were often hidden and deported in smaller proportions than those who were older. But we have no information about how general this pattern was.

In Figure 2, we examine the relationship between age and the probability of execution on arrival at Auschwitz and on survival among all the Auschwitz deportees. We coded age into broader groups reflecting likelihood of survival: less than 5-years, 5–14 years, 15–30 years, 31–45 years, 45–59 years, and older than 60.

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66 Tammes, *Surviving the Holocaust*. 

Figure 2. Age differences in surviving first selection and surviving the war are each statistically significant at .001. N’s range from 208 for the youngest group and 440 for the 5–14 group; 1,334 for the 45–59 age group, 1,257 for the 60 and over group, and 1,250 for the 30–44 cohort. There were 959 aged 15–29.

Less than 10% of toddlers survived the initial selection. Most of those aged 5–14 years were also immediately murdered. Those few who survived at this stage were teenagers who must have looked older than they were. Indeed, more than 70% of those aged 12 but less than 20% of those aged 13 and 14 were immediately murdered. Many young teen-aged survivors report they told the selection officer they were older than they were or were advised to do so. During the initial selection at Auschwitz, Elli Friedmann, aged 13 from Somorja, Hungary, was told by Dr. Joseph Mengele himself to say she was 16. He exclaimed “Goldenes Haar,” (Golden Hair) and touched her blond braids.67 Ruth Kruger, from Vienna, was forever grateful to a young women clerk assisting with selection in her Auschwitz barracks. She whispered to Ruth to say she was 15, not 13, and then commented to the officer making the selection that Ruth looked strong.68 Almost all of those in the 15–44 age groups survived the initial Auschwitz selection, along with nearly 80% of those in the 45–59 group.

On the other hand, only 8% of those sixty and older survived their first day at Auschwitz. There were no clear patterns by age among those 60 and over suggesting that it was the appearance of strength and vigor that mattered.

As we saw in Figure 1, being sent to slave labor on the prisoner’s first day did not mean that one would survive Auschwitz. After surviving the first selection, chances of survival until liberation were only one in eight if one was under 15-years-old, but only one in about ten for those from 30–44 and almost one in twenty for the 45–59 group. The highest survival rate was 17% among those aged 15–29. Among those 1,257 Italian Jews who were 60 and older, no one survived Auschwitz.

The possibilities of survival in the other camps were considerably better than probabilities of survival at Auschwitz in all groups. All of the 43 young children survived, and a majority of the rest did too except among the oldest cohort. Even though the N’s are small, the survival of the youngest cohorts is remarkable.

Taking into account those who were sent to Auschwitz and those sent elsewhere, chances of survival until liberation were low (see Table 3 below), though it varied substantially among age groups. Only 2% of those over 60 and 6% of those from 45–59 survived to the end of

the war. The hardships of the labor camps, the starvation diets, and the typhus and other diseases took their greatest toll on the oldest. But the survival rate of young adults was not high either. The highest survival rate was among the 15 to 29-year-olds where 24% survived, one-third more than either the next youngest or next oldest cohort.

Overall, then, we have seen large differences among men and women in the first selection at Auschwitz, significant gender differences in survival in labor camps, and small to negligible gender differences in survival at Auschwitz and overall survival. Now we turn to the interaction of gender and age and its impact on survival.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of age</th>
<th>Less than 5</th>
<th>5–14</th>
<th>15–29</th>
<th>30–44</th>
<th>45–59</th>
<th>60 and over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of deportees to</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor camps who</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>survived to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% all deportees</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who survived to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N's of labor camp;</td>
<td>43; 264</td>
<td>86; 547</td>
<td>128; 1,554</td>
<td>142; 1,497</td>
<td>96; 1,579</td>
<td>49; 1,526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all deportees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Both relationships significant at .01. N of those deported to labor camps=544, overall=6,566.

The combined impact of gender and age on the fate of Italian Jewish deportees

Figure 3 further illustrates the relationship between sex, age, and being murdered on arrival at Auschwitz and on survival. Age is arrayed by five-year increments, with the youngest being younger than five and the oldest category, 85 and older.

Figure 3. Includes only those sent to Auschwitz (N=5,588).
Figure 3 confirms dramatically the common wisdom about selection at Auschwitz and specifies the differences that were found. The fate of very young men and women (and girls and boys) and older men and women was nearly identical, with almost all being sent immediately to the gas chambers to be murdered. There are striking differences between the 5–9 age group, where almost all are murdered and the 10–14 cohort, where a significant minority of both boys and girls survive that initial selection. At 15, the proportion sent to immediate death falls again. At the other end of the age structure, most men and women aged 55 survive the selection and most 60 or over die. There is only one anomaly in the data, with a few men in the oldest category (85 and over) not being immediately murdered.

The significant gender differences come in the young adult and adult categories. Women are much more likely than men to be executed if they are between 15 and 44. Some women of these ages are pregnant and many had children of less than 15, factors leading to immediate death. It would be surprising that women in their mid-teens fit this profile, but some of them may have looked childish and been treated like children slightly younger, while the older members of this 15–19 cohort may have had infants or toddlers or been in care of younger siblings.

The anomaly here is that women and men differ in the 55 to 59-year-old span too, an age when women are unlikely to have small children. In this age group, men are executed at a rate more like those in the immediately younger cohort, while women are part way between the younger and older cohorts. Of course, the brief biographies do not report the health status of anyone, and it may be that women in this age group are sicker, frailler, or appear older than the men. They may have been with grandchildren. By 60, both men and women are clearly seen as not able to work and the proportion murdered immediately increases dramatically. Our expectation about gender and age differences in the initial selection at Auschwitz was confirmed.

As we indicated above, men's larger chance of surviving the initial selection does not give them a bigger chance of survival. Figure 4 below illustrates overall survival at Auschwitz. In only one age cohort, ten to fourteen, are gender differences significant and in that case, girls are more likely to survive than boys. In the next older cohort, 15–19, somewhat more men than women survive, but the difference is not significant. In the young and middle age cohorts there are no differences between men and women. And as we noted, no one from Italy in the oldest age cohorts survived Auschwitz.

Figure 4. Includes only those sent to Auschwitz (N=5,588).
As we described earlier, survival was much higher among those sent to labor camps than those sent to Auschwitz. An examination of the 544 people sent to labor camps for whom we have age and gender data indicates there are no gender differences in survival in each age category. Age, rather than gender, determined survival in these camps. The slightly greater chance of women surviving labor camps overall is because a higher proportion were in the 15–29 age group where survival was higher and less likely to be in the oldest group which had the lowest survival rates.

Examining differences in survival amongst both of those sent to Auschwitz and those sent to labor camps, we find that, in most age cohorts, a slightly greater proportion of women than men survive (see Figure 5 below). The exception is the very oldest cohort (85-years and older), where men appear more likely to survive the war. That is because the only person surviving in the 44-person cohort was a man. In most age cohorts, men and women’s survival rates were about equal, with 4% more women surviving in the 35–39 age cohort.

![Figure 5. N=6,554. No gender differences were significant within age categories except the 5–9 year olds.](image)

Of note, in the age categories where women were more likely to be immediately murdered at Auschwitz, gender differences in overall survival were nil.

In the final analysis, we add the year of transport to factors predicting being gassed on arrival at Auschwitz and overall survival. We regressed whether or not one was gassed on arrival on dummy variables measuring gender, the age categories used in Table 1, interaction terms for gender and the ages where women are more likely to be murdered immediately, and the time of the transport: in 1943 (the omitted category), early 1944, late 1944, and 1945. The 1945 dummy variable is not included because arrivals were not sent to Auschwitz after November 1944 and the Soviet army liberated the camp in January 1945.

Table 4 below summarizes the impact of these factors. Being deported in early 1944 reduced chances of being sent to the gas chamber by 4% compared to 1943. Age was a significant factor throughout, with those aged 5–14 and those 60 and over being significantly more likely to be gassed on arrival than the up-to-4 age group. As documented in the earlier analysis, all other groups, from 15–49, were significantly less likely to go to the gas chambers.

Controlling for age, women were about 3% more likely than men to be selected for the gas chambers on arrival but women in the 15–29 age group were 10% more likely and in the 30–44 group 6%.

Of note, the factors in this equation predict over half the variation in those selected to be murdered on arrival. But other factors also made a difference, especially appearance. Those who
appeared weak or disabled were likely to be sent to be murdered no matter what their ages were. Then, there is a matter of luck, as exemplified by the stories of Ruth and Elli cited above. Looking like an older teenager rather than a younger one or a younger woman instead of an older one; having blond hair; or being able to hide a minor disability all mattered.

This model illustrated in Table 4 does not fit survival very well. That is because time of transport is very highly correlated with being sent to Auschwitz and we have seen that the survival rates of those sent to Auschwitz are much lower than those sent to labor camps. All Italian transports that left in 1943 went to Auschwitz as did 90% of those in the first half of 1944 and 76% in the second half of 1944. Conversely, no 1945 transport went there.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, first half 1944</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, second half 1944</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 5–14</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 15–29</td>
<td>-.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 30–44</td>
<td>-.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 45–59</td>
<td>-.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 60 and over</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women age 15–29</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women age 30–44</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Predictors of Selection for Murder on Arrival at Auschwitz
*F=549.6, significant at .00, R2=.50. Omitted categories are ages 0–4 and 1943. N=5,543.

In Table 5 below, we examine gender differences in survival by year of transport. From the 1943 transports, men were significantly more likely to survive, but in the 1944 transports, women were. In the first half of 1944, the peak of the Italian transports, women’s survival rate slightly exceeded that of men, an advantage that grew in the second half of the year. As we saw in Figure 1, overall survival was almost identical. These patterns are mirrored if we add transports to labor camps to those from Auschwitz. Men had a significantly higher survival rate from the 1943 transports and women in 1944. Survival rates in the forty-three people on the 1945 transports was about equal.69

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-first half</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-second half</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Percent Surviving at Auschwitz by Gender and Year of Transport.
*Gender differences significant at .01.

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69 I initially thought that these differences could reflect age differences between men and women in each year, but they do not. For example, women comprised more of the elderly even in 1944 where their overall survival rate was higher.
Conclusions

Tracking the fate of European Jews who lived through or died in the Holocaust is a monumental task. We have a rough idea of how many died in each country, but accurate data on who lived and who died in communities are still being painstakingly compiled. Without such analyses, it is impossible to assess the fate of different populations within the Jewish community.

Though the Italian Jewish men and women who were deported were only a small fraction of all Jews sent to labor camps, death camps, and Auschwitz, having a complete picture of each on an individual basis allows us to home in on the factors that led to survival or death. The data included in this article are inclusive of all Jews deported from Italy to Germany and the east.

The analysis sheds new light on old verities but also offers different perspectives. Our understanding of gender and survival in the Holocaust was sharpened. As many have reported, women and children were much more likely to be sent to the gas chamber on arrival at Auschwitz. We documented substantive and statistically significant differences between men and women in immediate execution at Auschwitz. Differences in the 15–44 age group were large, yet most Italian Jewish women survived the first day’s selection for the gas chambers.

However, men’s higher survival rates on their first day did not lead to better overall survival rates at Auschwitz. The conditions of labor at Auschwitz and its subcamps sentenced almost everyone who survived their first days to death before liberation. And thus, unexpectedly, overall survival rates at Auschwitz for women and men among the Italian Jewish deportees were equal. The toll of starvation, disease, filth, and later selections on the survival of those sent to do hard labor meant that death came to most of those initially spared from the gas chamber.

The analysis also increased our knowledge of the proportions of different age groups who were put to death on arrival at Auschwitz. The overall impressions that it was the young and old and women were certainly confirmed, but there were a few children who were not executed on arrival. We can only guess about why that was. We know that some children, especially twins, were taken for medical experiments. 70 We have argued that some of those aged 13 and 14 might have been judged to be older and able to work.

However, also as we had expected, survival rates for the elderly were negligible. Most sent to Auschwitz were murdered on arrival. Why were some spared? Perhaps they looked younger than they were. Even so, all those elderly who survived that first selection died in Auschwitz before liberation. A few survived in other labor camps but overall, the survival rate was very low for all cohorts over 60.

The period of deportations in Italy was short compared to other countries and that fact increased overall survival rates. By the time Italian Jews were transported, the killing camps were closed. That said, in 1943, all were sent to Auschwitz where the probability of survival was minimal. Probabilities of survival were higher for those transported in 1944, even for those sent to Auschwitz. These data support the conclusions about all transported Western European Jews, based on transports, not individuals. 71 Survival rates were tiny for those transported in 1941 and 1942, were slightly higher in 1943, and then much higher in 1944. Almost everyone survived 1945 transports.

There are significant caveats to our findings. The study did not look at overall survival of Italian Jews, only those who were deported. However, almost all Italian Jews who died did so as a result of deportation. About three hundred died in Italy. 72 The great majority of the Italian Jewish population was not deported, and thus the 87% survival rate of Italian Jews is estimated to be the highest in Western Europe except for Denmark. The low death rate within Italy contrasted with the high mortality of those deported is similar throughout Western Europe but

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71 Welch, *Gender and Selection*.

very different from the Shoah in Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, the findings of gassing and survival for those who were deported may be relevant to other national populations where larger proportions of the Jewish population were deported.

Despite these caveats, we have learned more precisely the relative fate of men and women and older and younger Italian Jews. We have also estimated the impact of timing of deportation on the survival rates of those deported. Thus, our findings, while limited, add to our understanding of history’s largest genocide.

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Gender, Age, and Survival of Italian Jews in the Holocaust


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Extraordinary Justice: Law, Politics, and the Khmer Rouge Tribunals
Craig Etcheson
New York, Columbia University Press, 2019
470 Pages; Price: $63.78 Hardcover

Reviewed by Suzanne Schot
University of Groningen, The Netherlands

In Extraordinary Justice: Law, Politics and the Khmer Rouge Tribunals, Craig Etcheson combines his personal experience as chief of investigations in the Office of Co-Prosecutors at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) with research he undertook for more than two decades to analyze how the relationship between law and politics may explain the creation and functioning of war crimes tribunals. In particular, Etcheson presents a detailed analysis of how Cambodians and the international community sought to bring Khmer Rouge leaders to justice by emphasizing the relationship between these two distinct, yet intertwined, concepts.

The thread throughout the book is based on the analytical framework presented in the introduction, which considers ideological approaches to the relationship between law and politics. Etcheson distinguishes between three general approaches, namely classic legalism, strategic legalism, and instrumental legalism, which differ in their orientation towards the influence of politics. Given the implications of this framework for understanding the development and functioning of past, present, and future war crimes tribunals, there are many reasons why those interested in the ECCC and war crimes tribunals more broadly are encouraged to read this book; of which a few are discussed below.

The book devotes attention to many facets which explain how the ECCC eventually came into existence and how it operates as a result of the struggles between the three ideologies mentioned above. Before attention is drawn to the ECCC, however, Etcheson considers how Cambodia reconstructed its legal system after the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979 and which legal ideologies inspired its reformed legal system. Hereafter Etcheson addresses the dynamics at play when the People’s Revolutionary Tribunal (PRT) was set-up to prosecute two leaders of the Khmer Rouge for genocide in 1979. Both the criticism the Tribunal faced in relation to its legitimacy and effectiveness, as well as the legal challenges the Tribunal encountered are discussed. Etcheson analyses how this Tribunal, its proceedings, and aftermath nevertheless led to negotiations that would eventually lead to the creation of the ECCC.

The negotiations that took place in order to create the ECCC form a large part of this book. Etcheson considers in great length and detail the negotiations that took place between Cambodia and the UN, which eventually led to an agreement to create a mixed tribunal. Particular attention is devoted to the tension between ensuring international standards and respecting Cambodian sovereignty. As Etcheson indicates, “the ECCC would be established in cooperation with the UN, but the international standards in legal affairs that the UN sought to protect was at odds with the Cambodian insistence on maintaining political control over judicial...
proceedings.”\textsuperscript{2} The subsequent tension between Cambodia and the UN led to another two years of negotiations, hereby “making it much less likely that aging potential defendants would survive long enough to see their day in court.”\textsuperscript{3} Other negotiations addressed by Etcheson include those that took place over the budget of the ECCC, its venue, and how the court would be, and eventually was, staffed. In addition to the negotiations that took place, the book also offers an analysis of the more legal challenges that occurred before, during, and after the initiation of proceedings before the ECCC. Legal and evidentiary challenges and opportunities surrounding the investigation and prosecution of crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge are meticulously analyzed by Etcheson, and he in particular discusses defense strategies and their implications for proceedings.

In his conclusion, Etcheson also critically engages with discussions on the legacy of the ECCC and whether there should be follow-up transitional justice activities in the wake of the ECCC. In relation to the legacy of the ECCC, he remarks that almost none of the evidence admitted at trial has been released to the public via the courts website or through any other means, and stresses the importance of making this evidence available for historians and other researchers.\textsuperscript{4} Although not explicitly mentioned, victims and witnesses may, of course, also have an interest in the public availability of the evidence admitted at trial.

Etcheson’s analysis of the relationship between law and politics offers not only a framework to understand the dynamics at play when individual criminal responsibility is sought for those who commit international crimes, such as genocide, but it also draws attention to the significant lapse of time that may occur as a result of the struggles inherent to the confrontation between the three general ideologies presented in the introduction. As mentioned above, Etcheson found that the time that passed as a result of negotiations made it less likely that aging potential defendants would survive long enough to see their day in court. The lapse of time therefore raised the important question who could still be prosecuted. The number of individuals who would eventually be indicted by the ECCC would be determined, amongst others, by precisely this. As Etcheson mentions, “one thing that made these decisions a little easier for the co-prosecutors was the fact that thirty years after the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime, there were simply not many senior leaders remaining alive to answer criminal charges.”\textsuperscript{5} This may indeed make the decisions a little easier for the co-prosecutors or others involved in the prosecution of the crimes, but for the victims and witnesses this may mean that justice will have been delayed and may therefore be denied.

This may lead the reader to question how the concepts or ‘justice’ or ‘truth’ may also play a role in the framework of law and politics the author offers throughout his analysis. In the introduction, Etcheson writes that one of the things he learned along the way “is that certain words, words that may seem quite simple from the face of it – like ‘truth’, ‘justice’, and ‘law’ – are in fact very complicated. They mean different things to different people. Consequently, getting people to agree on them can be exceedingly difficult and time-consuming.”\textsuperscript{6} Although the book is already extraordinarily detailed in its analysis of the relationship between law and politics, a (brief) critical analysis of how these concepts may also be intertwined with how war crimes tribunals come into existence, operate and unfold would have been interesting. Even more so since they are briefly addressed in the introduction and draw attention to very fundamental concepts underlying international criminal justice.

Built on personal experiences and scholarly research, the book makes a significant contribution to existing scholarship on not only the ECCC, but also transitional justice more broadly. This is predominantly a result of Etcheson’s approach towards the relationship between law and politics and how he incorporates and intertwines his findings with primary

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., 99.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 100.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 348.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 198–199.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 2–3.
sources and anecdotes. Key lessons can be learned from the book about the dynamics between law and politics in the creation and functioning of war crimes tribunals. This makes the book essential for a broad audience, including academics and practitioners with an interest in international criminal law, transitional justice, the ECCC, and potentially those working in the field of international relations and international organizations.