Liminality of Justice in Trauma and Trauma Literature

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Edited by

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CONTENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

PI-HUA NI

I
Writing about Trauma: A Polyphonic Dialogue

Writing about trauma—be it in theoretical, clinical or literary terms—is *de facto* generating and participating in a polyphonic dialogue. My term *a polyphonic dialogue* foregrounds first the complexity of trauma as an event and multifarious façades of traumatic experiences. Moreover, this term pinpoints how critical, clinical and creative energy poured into the heated debate and profuse representations of trauma has effected a stimulating and constructive polyphonic dialogue which, in turn, brings about not only more re/visions of theories and studies on trauma but also a broadening of the spectrum pertaining to diverse socio-political contexts of various traumatic events and traumatic experiences. As a pioneer in trauma studies, Cathy Caruth's theoretical corpus epitomizes this polyphonic dialogue of contesting and contested voices about trauma. Caruth's ground-breaking works on trauma have shed light on trauma impact and the significance of trauma narrative in bearing witness to a devastating event. The theorist's interpretation of Freud's writing on trauma (*Moses and Monotheism*, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, for instance) provides illuminating conceptions about trauma and, at the same time, incites many other critics/theorists either to question her defining features of trauma or to acknowledge her contribution to trauma studies and the development of trauma literature. *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), Caruth's first theoretical monograph on trauma, articulates her responses to the criticisms of her earlier delineation and studies on trauma. Initial critical questionings and anxiety result directly from the theorist's conceptualization of trauma. Caruth observes of "a double wound"

wreaked by an overwhelming traumatic event.[1] The savagery of the event itself causes the first trauma. The second ordeal is derived from the belated yet enduring impact of the trauma—the shocking and unexpected occurrence, the incomprehensibility of the scale of violence, the belatedness in grasping its significance and the recurrent return of the nightmare to haunt the survivor. On this double wound, the theorist remarks:

> the wound of the mind—the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world—is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that . . . is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor. . . . [S]o trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on.[2]

Drawing on her conceptualization of trauma as "a double wound," Caruth maintains that a trauma narrative is "a kind of double telling" that oscillates between death and life.[3] The very inextricability of the story of life from the story of death, of this double telling of trauma, constitutes a testimony to history. "[I]t is the inextricability of the story of one's life from the story of a death, an *impossibility* and necessary double telling, that constitutes their historical witness," writes Caruth.[4] Though the foregoing passage clearly expresses Caruth's affirmation of an ethical imperative and possibility for trauma survivors to narrate their traumatic experiences and the theorist's belief in trauma narrative as a testimony to history, the "not known in the first instance," "incomprehensible" and "unspeakable" nature, as Caruth delimits trauma, provokes serious concerns over historical amnesia about traumatic events and incurs disapproval of Caruth's notions on trauma.

Some of Caruth's critical opponents argue that her definition denies the possibility of narrating a traumatic event and bearing witness to history. With a sidelong glance at her adversaries, Caruth explicitly contends in *Unclaimed Experience* for the narration of trauma and survival of trauma narrative: "Through the notion of trauma, I will argue, we can understand

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[1] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.
[2] Ibid., 4. Italics in the original.
[3] Ibid., 7.
[4] Ibid., 8. Italics mine.

that a rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting *history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not."[5] For Caruth, the enigmatic and paradoxical nature of trauma as destruction and survival safeguards the history of trauma.

> The return of the traumatic experience in the dream is not the signal of the direct experience but, rather, of the attempt to overcome the fact that it was *not* direct, to attempt to master what was never fully grasped in the first place. . . . It is because the mind cannot confront the possibility of its death directly that survival becomes for the human being, paradoxically, an endless testimony to the impossibility.[6]

Added to the apprehensions about Caruth's definition of trauma, there are critical voices suspecting the death of language and, by extension, doubting possible representations of trauma. Poststructuralism, a dominant theoretical discourse in academic milieu wherein Caruth and her Yale School's trauma studies first came out, poses as the main cause arousing these contentious voices. Aware of the angst that poststructuralist theories seem to deny us access to language and history, Caruth cites her teacher Paul de Man's 1982 essay "The Resistance to Theory" to assert referentiality of language: "linguistically oriented theories do not necessarily deny reference, but rather deny the possibility of modelling the principles of reference on those of natural law, or, we might say, of making reference like perception."[7] De Man "does not eliminate reference but precisely registers, in language, the impact of an event," argues Caruth.[8] And Tom Toremans' elucidation "Caruth's reading of de Man . . . resides in the demonstration of the actual possibility of transmitting trauma, safeguarding 'the unexpected reality—the locus of referentiality—of the traumatic story,' to the point of reading de Man's critical project as a narrative of trauma" helps bring to the fore Caruth's trust in the power of language—albeit not in the conventional representative terms.[9]

Another restless din babbles about the im/possibility of narrativizing traumatic experiences. Anne Whitehead however argues for Caruth's contribution in that the theorist has pinpointed the paradox and contradiction of trauma and inspired novelists to shift their attention "from the question

[5] Ibid., 11. Italics in the original.
[6] Ibid., 62. Italics in the original.
[7] Ibid., 74.
[8] Ibid., 74.
[9] Tom Toremans, "Trauma: Theory—Reading (and) Literary Theory in the Wake of Trauma," *European Journal of English Studies* 7, no. 3 (2003): 338.

of what is remembered of past to how and why it is remembered."[10] To make an adequate representation of trauma impact, novelists count on mimicking its forms and symptoms, "registering the shocking and unassimilable nature" of trauma.[11] Consequently, novelists of trauma fiction employ or develop various new narrative strategies (fragmentary, repetitive narratives for example) to give expression to a victim's trauma impact—belatedness in reception and suffering of the haunting trauma memories. The fact that "trauma narratives are characterized by repetition and indirection"[12] attests to Caruth's inspiration and influence in the development of trauma literature. Chiming with Whitehead, Gabriele Schwab and Roger Luckhurst assert that Caruth's classic model of trauma helps bring about experimental forms and narrative devices to recapitulate traumatic experiences and bear witness to history. Schwab argues that trauma narrative is paradoxical in nature because it is an act both against memory and against forgetting. Traumatic writing is "against memory" in that the trauma is too painful and thus unspeakable. But it is an act at the same time "against forgetting" because the trauma, the loss, the unspeakable experience must be told and thus assert life. To capture this paradox, traumatic narrative resorts to experimental forms to express the unspeakable and the suppressed memory and to represent the will to break silence and fight against forgetting and erasure. "Literary writings of traumatic history often resort to experimental forms in order to approximate trauma through the tracing of traumatic effects and their inscription in mind, body, and language," observes Schwab.[13] Dispelling her critics' assumption that her trauma theory deprives the possibility of narrativizing trauma story and history, Caruth demonstrates—with her discussion of Honore de Balzac's *Colonel Chabert* and Ariel Dorfman's *Death and the Maiden* in *Literature in the Ashes of History* (2013)—the literary power of telling trauma stories and inscribing alternative history to challenge totalitarian metanarrative on traumatic events. Caruth's critical and literary endeavor with her 2013 work gains critical applauses and, above all, exerts great influence in the literary studies of trauma literature. As Kathleen Ong Xin Wei states, Caruth's new attempt in *Literature in the Ashes of History* to identify a site within history where trauma can be

[10] Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 3.
[11] Ibid., 83.
[12] Ibid., 3.
[13] Gabriele Schwab, "Writing against Memory and Forgetting," *Literature and Medicine* 25, no. 1 (2006): 111. Also see Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 79-81.

creatively animated can serve as "a productive framework" for critics of trauma literature to examine "how trauma can either metabolize an individual into foreclosing the world, or create a continuing dialogue with loss for the unfolding of a world-in-becoming."[14] Given the foregoing examples, it suffices to say Caruth as well as the Yale school has initiated us to recognize trauma as a psychological wound, inspired novelists to develop narrative ploys fitting for representing trauma impact and shaped the literary studies of trauma literature. Nevertheless, the cacophony within the dialogue on trauma never dies out.

As early as in the late 1990s, theorists and critics have fluted notes cautioning about monologicalizing and monolithicizing the trauma issue. Though her research focuses on the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and the sexual abuse of women and children, Kali Tal disavows her book *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* as "a study of *all* survivors in *all* circumstances."[15] Instead, the critic acknowledges the variety of traumas, their effects and cultural-political representations and defies the assumption that we can posit one single model universally applicable to address various traumas and their respective complex socio-historical-political contexts. As Tal puts it: "I do not believe in universally applicable, 'normative' models."[16] This note can be inferred as Tal's caution against idolizing Caruth and prominent trauma theorists of the Yale school. Moreover, Tal rings alarms which warn us how writing about traumas might aim—under specific political circumstances and cultural codification—to silence rather than give voices to trauma victims. The critic classifies mythologization, medicalization and disappearance as three prevailing strategies of cultural coping to hide and evade injustice implicated with trauma. Tal defines the strategy of mythologization as "reducing a traumatic event to a set of standardized narratives (twice- and thrice-told tales that come to represent 'the story' of the trauma) turning it from a frightening and uncontrollable event into a contained and predictable narrative."[17] This approach opts to turn trauma narrative into a cliché and to downplay or even to erase the atrocity and terror of the traumatic event. Medicalization as a tactic of cultural codification places the focus on the trauma victims and posits them suffering from "illness"

[14] Kathleen Ong Xin Wei, "Departing toward Survival: Reconsidering the Language of Trauma in Cathy Caruth, Ingeborg Bachmann and W. G. Sebald," *Advances in Literary Study* 2 (2014): 100.
[15] Kali Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3. Italics in the original.
[16] Ibid., 3.
[17] Ibid., 6.

that can be "cured" within existing or slightly modified structures of institutionalized medicine and psychiatry.[18] Discursive strategy of medicalization would direct the public to take the traumatic impact for illness which can be cured and thus make us fail to recognize brutality and haunting effects implicated with trauma. The third alarm Tal bellows is her call against the stratagem of disappearance—a narrative maneuver which undermines the credibility of the victim and denies the existence of a particular trauma.[19] Following the 911 attack, critics have noticed Manicheanism in western politics, culture and emerging discourses addressing the trauma issue. Susannah Radstone's essay "Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics" presents this critique and calls for trauma theorists' ethical consciousness and urges them to move beyond "a culture of pure innocence and pure evil."[20] "Trauma theory needs . . . to act as a check against, rather than a vehicle of the Manichean tendencies currently dominant within western politics and culture," writes Radstone.[21]

As time moves into the second decade of the millennia, critics of trauma literature start to utter their dissatisfactions about the classic trauma model and suggest revisions. Anne Goarzin as well as other revisionists sees Caruth's classic model too partial and unsatisfactory for focusing on major-scale traumatic events and consequently excluding "smaller" traumas. Caruth's theory is also censured for being Eurocentric and failing to address the issues of trauma represented in colonialism and postcolonialism. As a result, certain traumatic events and texts are canonized whereas others marginalized or ignored.[22] Therefore, Goarzin sharply puts that the "'ability to listen' to the other does not encompass the otherness of the non-White, non-Western subject."[23] In literary studies of trauma literature, scholars sound not only an outcry against the classic model of trauma theory but also a blatant clamor asserting the stronger power of literature in addressing trauma. Introducing *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*, Michelle Balaev pinpoints revisionists' reproach of the classic model of trauma theory initiated by Caruth. Whereas the classic model designates universalism of the

[18] Ibid., 6.
[19] Ibid., 6.
[20] Susannah Radstone, "Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics," *Paragraph* 30, no. 1 (2007): 26.
[21] Ibid., 26.
[22] Also see Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 21-23.
[23] Anne Goarzin, "Articulating Trauma," *Etudes irlandaises* 36, no. 1 (2011): 6, http://etudisirlandaises.revues.org/2116.

unspeakable and unrepresentable silence about trauma, revisionists of pluralist trauma model proclaim the representable possibility of trauma and trauma's varied values in literature, society, etc. On their difference, Balaev writes that

> Some alternative approaches start with a definition of trauma that allows for a range of representational possibilities. Alternative models challenge the classic model's governing principle that defines trauma in terms of universal characteristics and effects. . . . Understanding trauma, for example, by situating it within a larger conceptual framework of social psychology theories in addition to neurobiological theories will produce a particular psychologically informed concept of trauma that acknowledges the range of contextual factors that specify the value of the experience.[24]

Challenging the monolithic concept of trauma's inexpressibility, Balaev and her likes take a step further to claim that literature is more diffuse and varied than the classic model to address and represent traumatic experiences. Given the ongoing re/shaping of trauma theory and the intricate relationship between trauma theory, trauma fiction and its literary studies which inspire, stimulate and enrich each other in their development, it is impossible to take Balaev's claim as the finale to the debate on trauma. It is also impossible to orchestrate a comprehensive discourse—theoretical, literary or clinical—to address ever happening traumatic events and multifariousness of traumatic experiences. What can be certain is to take trauma survivors, theorists, novelists and critics as witnesses to traumas. I make this suggestion by riding on Caruth and Robert Jay Lifton's statement of moral commitment for their professions. In their 1990 interview (published in Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 1995), Caruth observes that Lifton as a researcher of trauma and testimony is attempting to bear witness to traumas. Lifton consents to Caruth's remarks and avows that: "In each study, I experience something of the event and upheaval I'm exploring, and of course there must be a certain element of witnessing in that. And there is also a sense of commitment to the idea that illumination, or some kind of insight, can help serve human purposes. . . . But over time, doing study after study, one develops a sense of what is right for one as a scholar and a human being."[25] Echoing Lifton's

[24] Michelle Balaev, "Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered," in *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*, ed. Michelle Balaev (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 2.

[25] Robert Jay Lifton, "An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton," by Cathy Caruth, in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 146.

commitment, Caruth concludes her *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) by asserting the value of the relevant professions and research fronts: "The passing on of the child's words [testimony] transmits not simply a reality that can be grasped in these words' representation, but the ethical imperative of an awakening that has yet to occur."[26] Besides trauma survivors breaking silence, theorists, psychoanalysts, writers of trauma and literary critics can serve, in different ways, to safeguard the hi/stories of traumatic events. Writing about the polyphonic dialogue on trauma in this section, I employ frequently acoustic diction to evoke an aural image. My deliberate language choice—seemingly creating a stark contrast to the nature of trauma—expresses however a hope that whoever locked up in silence about traumas would eventually give voices to their experiences; theorists, scholars and writers about traumas amplify those voices with their continuous studies and representations—albeit their diverse and contentious views would generate an ever cacophonic rather than symphonic dialogue. Our monograph *Liminality of Justice in Trauma and Trauma Literature* chimes in this polyphonic dialogue on trauma hopefully to avert silencing of traumas, to magnify those voices and, as Lifton states, to bear witness.

II
(In)Justice in Trauma and Trauma Literature

As the title *Liminality of Justice in Trauma and Trauma Literature* suggests, this monograph attempts to probe into the demarcation of trauma and victimhood and the entailed issues of justice, injustice and (in)justice—given that a victim might concomitantly be a (forced) victimizer and vice versa. Different from the foregoing scholarship on trauma and trauma literature which places focus on victim's trauma impact and voicing in trauma narrative, this collection foregrounds the rarely discussed liminal status of victim-(forced) victimizer in a traumatic event. Framed in this critical lens, the contributors of this volume explore the complexity of trauma and victimhood, challenge—respectively with fieldwork and literary studies—the dichotomous victim/victimizer categories in trauma and address dual status of victim-(forced) victimizer and the profoundly liminal nature of (in)justice pertinent to this peculiar role.

Azra Rashid's "On Trauma: Women Perpetrators of the Khmer Rouge" (Chapter 2) unfolds and tackles with her fieldwork the (in)justice which

[26] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 112.

the Khmer Rouge women perpetrators have borne for their voluntary engagements in Cambodia's horrific genocide. With a succinct discussion of Cambodia's complex colonial history, exploitation and the deep divide between social classes, Rashid first illustrates that these women victimizers of the bloody killing are historically wronged people and thus victims in the first place. Rashid goes further to identify Cambodia's cultural preaching of women's obedience, Buddhist doctrine and Khmer nationalism as ideological means which the Khmer Rouge government employed to indoctrinate women from the lower social classes and incite them to commit the slaughtering of millions of Cambodians. Yet, Rashid's interviews in Cambodia and studies of some women perpetrators' cases show that women victimizers are also traumatized in Cambodia's collective trauma. They killed and brutalized people and are simultaneously traumatized by the killing. Without an understanding of the (women) perpetrators' dual role as victimizer-victim and the (in)justice they have borne, it is not possible, Rashid contends, to achieve meaningful reconciliation in Cambodia.

Pursuing the issue of (in)justice in trauma, Pi-hua Ni analyzes in "Trauma and Liminality of Justice: Shawna Yang Ryan's *Green Island*" (Chapter 3) the Taiwanese American novelist's literary representations of the collective trauma impacting Taiwan and the Taiwanese American community. Ni's critical study on Ryan's portrayal of the protagonists' liminal status respectively as victim-forced victimizer and forced victimizer-victim not only lays bare how the 228 Massacre and White Terror reign (1947-1987) in Taiwan had impacted and dehumanized its people but also challenges the victim/victimizer paradigm in trauma theory and literary representations and studies of trauma fiction. Moreover, Ni pinpoints Ryan's literary achievements in renovating trauma narrative, metafiction, Taiwanese American literature and Asian American literature.

In Chapter 4 "'*I Plead Guilty*': David B. Feinberg and the Subversion of the 'AIDS Victim' Trope," Anna Ferrari focuses on the subversion of the AIDS victim trope in David B. Feinberg's writings and directs our attention to Feinberg's dual role as a victim-victimizer traumatized by AIDS and traumatizing—through his deliberate physical and literary displays of the disease and sufferings—his fellows in New York's gay community. With an in-depth reading of the gay writer's works, Ferrari illustrates Feinberg's representations of trauma impact not only as belated haunting on the victim but also as an ongoing and living trauma for the AIDS patients. Therefore, Ferrari's study challenges the classic model of trauma theory which defines trauma as belated responses to an overwhelming event and foregrounds "AIDS as a different kind of trauma."

Mei-Chuen Wang presents, with her essay "Guilt, Diaspora, and Colonial Domicide: Trauma in Richard Wagamese's *Indian Horse*," another type of genocide and trauma with her discussion of Canada's Indian residential schools and insightful exploration of Wagamese's novel. Wang also addresses the twofold suffering of the trauma survivor and the problematic issue of (in)justice fictionalized in *Indian Horse* wherein the victimized and traumatized Indigenous protagonist, to gain certain favors from the Catholic father, becomes a voluntary complicit with his perpetrators and in the inhumane assimilation institution. Given the evasive policies/apologies of the Canadian government and the Catholic Church in tackling transitional justice for the victimized Indigenous people, Wang calls our attention to Wagamese's vigilance—through her interpretation of the conversation among the protagonist and other survivors—against reconciliation without taking justice into consideration.

Chapter 6 "The Trauma of Negotiating Identification in David Chariandy's *Brother*" is Rae-ann Smith's study of the Canadian novelist's fictionalized illustration that the white's dominant racial and gender discourses have impacted the self-identification of the black people in the postcolonial Canadian society and traumatized the black family and community when conflicts and confrontations end up in tragedies. Smith's interpretation demonstrates that a thorough assimilation of the mainstream values would make the black become victimizers traumatizing their loved ones and themselves and generate a collective trauma to the black community struggling for their diaspora identity.

Applying Gilles Deleuze's concepts of "bare repetition" and "real repetition" into her reading of Toni Morrison's representations of traumas, Catherine Ju-yu Cheng discusses in "Traumatic Texts/Texture in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*," the last chapter of this collection, how black men as victims of racial injustice in the Nobel laureate's dystopia become brutal victimizers traumatizing and committing injustice against people of other races and of the other sex—including their own black women. With her focus on the healing power of narrating and Morrison's depiction of the Convent women as healed trauma survivors who set out to help and heal other victims, Cheng argues that Morrison's *Paradise* as a trauma fiction serves as a convincing example that literature can serve as a vessel for bringing forth "a people to come" and new possibilities in life.

With these six long chapters dealing with (in)justice in traumas, revising trauma theory and expanding the spectrum of trauma issues in literary representations, this monograph is dedicated to those who break silence about their traumatic experiences and those who write about and

study traumas. Their voices might be contesting each other; nevertheless, they defy amnesia about traumas through voicing out.

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CHAPTER TWO

ON TRAUMA: WOMEN PERPETRATORS OF THE KHMER ROUGE

AZRA RASHID

Abstract

Historically and globally, many women have actively participated in war efforts and have borne some responsibility in wartime killings. Many Cambodian women joined the Pol Pot-led revolution in the years leading up to the 1975 fall of Phnom Penh and they participated in killing a quarter of Cambodia's population during the four-year rule by the Khmer Rouge. To study women's involvement with the Khmer Rouge and their participation in killing does not just acknowledge their existence in the Khmer Rouge killing machine in ways that are currently not spoken about, but it also helps us to understand women's agency and trauma in the Cambodian genocide. This paper looks at the turbulent history of Cambodia that led to the ascent of the Khmer Rouge to power and examines the Khmer Rouge perpetrators as historically wronged people. Focusing on the women perpetrators of the Khmer Rouge, this essay closely examines perpetrator trauma with the help of the testimony of Bet Bouen, a former member of the Khmer Rouge, to investigate women's motivations behind joining the Khmer Rouge, the trauma women perpetrators caused to others and the trauma they endured themselves.

Keywords: women, war, trauma, perpetrator, Khmer Rouge

> The crisis at the core of many traumatic narratives . . . often emerges, indeed, as an urgent question: Is the trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it?[1]

In August 2021, more than a decade after its establishment and with an investment of nearly $300 million, the United Nations-backed Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) held its last public hearings before winding down. The tribunal, comprising both Cambodian and international judges, was tasked with prosecuting the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. In their four-year rule, the Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot, killed an estimated 1.7 to 1.9 million people—between 21 and 24 percent of the entire Cambodian population. The ECCC convicted Nuon Chea, who ranked second in command to Pol Pot, and Kaing Guek Eav, also known as Duch, who commanded the notorious Khmer Rouge prison, Tuol Sleng. The tribunal found Nuon Chea and Duch guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced them to life in prison. They have both died now. The third person convicted is Khieu Samphan, who acted as the chief of state for the Khmer Rouge. He was found guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity, including murder, extermination, deportation, enslavement, imprisonment, torture, persecution on political, religious and racial grounds, and other inhumane acts (forced transfers and marriages) committed between April 17, 1975 and January 6, 1979.[2] Appealing the court's decision in 2021, Khieu Samphan still denies his involvement in the genocidal policies of the Khmer Rouge. Nuon Chea also never fully admitted his guilt and maintained that he had acted in what he believed to be the best interests of his country. Kaing Guek Eav, on the other hand, showed remorse during his trial and asked for forgiveness.[3] The ECCC has been presented with evidence and survivor testimony that prove that these men and many others, under Pol Pot's directions, operated within a systematic, state-run killing machine that was the Khmer Rouge. There has been a significant amount of research on

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[1] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 7.

[2] "Khieu Samphan," Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, accessed January 4, 2022, https://www.eccc.gov.kh/en/indicted-person/khieu-samphan.

[3] Scott Neuman, "Nuon Chea, Top Khmer Rouge Leader, Dies at 93 While Serving Life Sentence," *NPR,* August 5, 2019, https://www.npr.org/2019/08/05/748158149/nuon-chea-top-khmer-rouge-leader-dies-at-93-while-serving-life-sentence.

what motivates perpetrators to kill—some do it for nationalistic, racist, religious ideologies and others out of fear. However, most of the existing research is focused on the male perpetrator and the trauma caused by men in war, while the female perpetrator largely remains missing from the discourse.

In *Three Guineas,* Virginia Woolf famously wrote that men make wars because for men there is some glory, some necessity, some satisfaction in fighting that women do not feel, nor enjoy.[4] The idea of war mongering as something against women's nature has helped to position women activists and feminists for decades in their anti-war efforts, but there are also feminists, with Cynthia Enloe as the most prominent among them, who have critically examined women's militarization and participation in war. Historically and globally, there have been many women who actively participated in war efforts and bore some responsibility in wartime killings. Many Cambodian women joined the Pol Pot-led revolution in the years leading up to the 1975 fall of Phnom Penh. They participated in killing a quarter of Cambodia's population during the four-year rule by the Khmer Rouge. Just like their countrymen, the women killed not by sending people to gas chambers or in a chemical explosion, but by torture and guns, at close proximity. To study women's involvement with the Khmer Rouge and their participation in killing does not just acknowledge their existence in the Khmer Rouge killing machine in ways that are currently not spoken about, but it also helps us to understand women's agency and trauma in the Cambodian genocide. Their reasons for joining and the extent and nature of their involvement can help us understand the nuanced ways women are impacted in war. Focusing on the women perpetrators of the Cambodian genocide, this paper closely examines the existing research on trauma and posits that people who survive trauma are not always its victims; perpetrators can also experience the trauma of war. The current study looks at the turbulent history of Cambodia that led to the ascent of the Khmer Rouge to power and examines the Khmer Rouge perpetrators as historically wronged people. It closely examines the testimony of Bet Bouen, a former member of the Khmer Rouge, to investigate women's motivations behind joining the Khmer Rouge, the trauma women perpetrators caused to others and the trauma they endured themselves. This kind of reading of women's trauma can improve the national efforts for justice and reconciliation in the aftermath of mass atrocity.

[4] Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1938), 6.

I
Trauma: Victims and Perpetrators

In the last several decades, there has been a growing interest among academics in studying trauma. This has largely been due to the many wars waged in the twentieth century and the challenges posed to historical representation of the trauma faced by millions impacted by those wars. The interest in studying victim's trauma has also been supported by the publication of particular texts that have become seminal within trauma studies. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (1992), Cathy Caruth's edited collection *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996) are considered some of the early texts that have helped to shape our understanding of trauma today. In their efforts to articulate and theorize trauma, many scholars of trauma turn to psychoanalysis to demarcate the boundary between knowing and not knowing. Cathy Caruth builds on Sigmund Freud's work that describes a pattern of suffering that is inexplicably persistent in the lives of certain individuals who have experienced painful events. According to Caruth, "In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena."[5] Trauma cannot be located simply in the original traumatic event in the individual's past because the occurrence of the event defies comprehension. Trauma, because of its unassimilated nature, has an endless impact on the life of a survivor. Since experiencing a traumatic event may take place as an inability to know it, the memory of that event often returns in flashbacks, nightmares and other repetitive forms. In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub provide a further discussion of the unregistered nature of trauma, arguing that the observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out, or they malfunction, during massive trauma. They argue that this renders historical trauma as "an event without a witness."[6] The inability of the mind to register the traumatic event means that a survivor's recollection of that event could be corroborated and that its occurrence defies comprehension. Recollection or memory of a

[5] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 8.
[6] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 75.

traumatic event then becomes an event in itself. The existing psychoanalytic research on trauma offers an explanation to account for omissions and elisions in the memories of survivors seen in documentaries that deal with traumatic events. Dori Laub in "Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening" documents a Holocaust survivor's recollection of what she experienced in Auschwitz. The survivor remembered seeing four burning chimneys during the Auschwitz uprising and thought it was "unbelievable."[7] Later on, the accuracy of the woman's account was questioned as only one chimney was destroyed and not all four. But Laub argues that the woman was not testifying to the simple historical facts but to the survival and resistance and the unbelievability of what she had witnessed. Trauma as witnessed by this particular survivor was not only about what she suffered through but also a departure from the site of trauma and its recurrence in her recollection of it. However, as Laub writes, there is a need in all survivors to tell and thus to come to know their stories. She writes, "One has to know one's buried truth in order to be able to live one's life."[8] The research on trauma calls on survivors to tell their stories and engage with their trauma in order to transform their unassimilated traumatic experiences into experiences that have been assimilated into their consciousness.

People who survive trauma are not always its victims. Caruth offers a reading of Freud's interpretation of Tasso's story in his romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*.[9] Tancred, the hero, kills his beloved Clorinda in a duel while she is disguised in the armor of an enemy knight. After burying her, he makes his way into a forest, where he slashes a tall tree with his sword. Blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again. According to Caruth, Tancred's actions, first killing his beloved in battle and then wounding her again, represent the way that the experience of a trauma cannot simply be left behind and that it repeats itself, uncontrollably through the unknowing acts of the survivor.[10] Tancred indeed has to deal with the reality of death's impact through the repetition of his own trauma. Caruth asks, "Is the trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it?"[11] While the encounter with death ends

[7] Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, ed. Shoshan Felman and Dori Laub (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 59.
[8] Ibid., 63.
[9] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 2-3.
[10] Ibid., 2.
[11] Ibid., 7.

one's life, the survivor has to experience and live his or her trauma repeatedly. Encounter with trauma leaves a long-lasting impact on anyone who survives it—victims or perpetrators. Saira Mohamed argues, "A person may be a 'victim of trauma' in the sense of being a person who experiences an event as trauma, without being the victim in that traumatic event."[12] She writes that perpetrators can experience their crimes as trauma.[13] For perpetrators of crime, being directly involved in a violent situation can cause a deep psychological impact, which can result in a repetition of trauma in the form of adverse physical, social, or emotional consequences. However, a vast majority of existing research conceives trauma as an experience of victims and there remains a significant resistance to studying perpetrator trauma. In *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Daniel Jonah Goldhagan argues that Germans were motivated by their long-incubating virulent and violent "eliminationist" anti-Semitism.[14] He presents perpetrator trauma by providing descriptions of the world of the perpetrator. He describes in his book the horror and the gruesomeness of the killings for the Germans. In other words, he attempts to present perpetrator trauma from the perpetrator's point of view. Christopher R. Browning's *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* provides an account of how ordinary men with no history of violence were motivated to kill and transformed into perpetrators of atrocities during the Holocaust. Browning writes about the initial killing by the Nazi soldiers as traumatic and distressing to them.[15] These attempts have been considered by Dominick LaCapra a "contribution to perpetrator history."[16]

The resistance to studying perpetrator trauma may be originating from a variety of different sources—the need to hear from the trauma victims and ensure an account of history that does not forget the victims, and the belief that the perpetrator deserves all the negative consequences in the aftermath of their crimes. Most importantly, as Mohamed writes, "Acknowledging their humanity might be alarming; it forces us to reckon

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[12] Saira Mohamed, "Of Monsters and Men," *Columbia Law Review* 115, no. 5 (2015): 1208.
[13] Ibid., 1162.
[14] Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996).
[15] Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, 1st Harper Perennial ed., reissued with a new afterword by the author (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998).
[16] Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 121.

with the idea that, if they are capable of committing these horrors, then perhaps we all might be able to do the same."[17] For most people, perpetrators of mass atrocity are different from the rest of us, which means that we cannot possibly commit those crimes ourselves. Treating the perpetrator as a monster makes them unique and distant from the rest of us. Primo Levi, a Holocaust survivor, writes, "We must remember, that the diligent executors of inhuman orders were not born torturers, were not (with a few exceptions) monsters: they were ordinary men."[18] However, Stanley Milgram's shock experiments of 1963, influenced by the Nuremberg trials in which many Nazi soldiers said they were just following orders, showed that the ordinary people are also capable of committing extraordinary crimes. In Milgram's experiment, subjects administered shocks well into the danger zone if the authority relations were clearly indicated and supported. Even though subjects were debriefed after the experiment, they suffered an emotional impact, a trauma, knowing that they obeyed orders and kept administering shocks. Milgram noted that within 20 minutes of the experiment, one of the subjects in his study was "reduced to a twitching, stuttering wreck, who was rapidly approaching a point of nervous collapse."[19] A former participant in Milgram's experiment later explained, "The experiment left such an effect on me that I spent the night in a cold sweat and nightmares because of the fear that I might have killed that man in the chair."[20] In the same vein, many other participants in Milgram's experiment experienced symptoms associated with trauma. While Milgram's work is often studied in understanding obedience to authority, it also provides useful insights into perpetrator trauma, notably the idea that perpetrators can experience their own crimes or wrongs as trauma.

With only three Khmer Rouge leaders convicted of crimes against humanity and genocide, a vast majority of people who actually committed these crimes remain free and they maintain that they had no choice. The actual number of these perpetrators is in the thousands. With no accountability, they are living in the same villages, cities, neighborhoods as their victims. Learning about perpetrator trauma can allow us to see

[17] Mohamed, "Of Monsters and Men," 1165.
[18] Primo Levi, "Primo Levi's Heartbreaking, Heroic Answers to the Most Common Questions He Was Asked About 'Survival in Auschwitz,'" *The New Republic*, February 17, 1986, https://newrepublic.com/article/119959/interview-primo-levi-survival-auschwitz.
[19] Alette Smeulers, "Milgram Revisited," *Journal of Perpetrator Research* 3, no.1 (2020): 220.
[20] Ibid., 223.

perpetrators as humans who made certain choices in life. Understanding the female perpetrators allows us to see how nationalist and revolutionary ideologies of the Khmer Rouge maneuvered gender, what motivated women to kill, and the place that gendered experiences were to take in the post-Khmer Rouge society. The following section takes a closer look at the case of Cambodia and what motivated people to join the Khmer Rouge and take part in the horrible crimes committed against their compatriots.

II
Perpetrators as Historically Wronged People

Genocide, as defined in Article II of the Genocide Convention, is an act committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.[21] The acts include: killing or causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. The othering of a racial or ethnic group as outsiders, their dehumanization, and a manufactured fear of them in the dominant national discourses often play a crucial role in acts of genocide. In Cambodia, the ECCC found the Khmer Rouge leaders guilty of committing genocide against the Muslim Cham minority and ethnic Vietnamese, as well as crimes against humanity and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions. Scholars of history and war, including Joanna Bourke, Dave Grossman, and James Waller, agree that distance is inversely related to the ease with which individuals kill, meaning it is easier to kill when the target is farther away than killing a human being face-to-face.[22] Unlike the Holocaust where war technologies made it possible for a few people to kill many and from a distance by sending them to gas chambers, in Cambodia, many people were involved in the killings of many others. Prior to the Khmer Rouge era, distinctions and resentments existed in Cambodia mainly along

[21] "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," UN General Assembly, 1951, accessed January 22, 2022. https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3ac0.html.

[22] See Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (London: Granta, 2000); Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2009); and James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

class lines, between the peasantry and the urban dwellers. The nationalist rhetoric of the Khmer Rouge was fueled by the existing class distinctions, which many historians (like Ben Kiernan, Adam Jones, Hilary Grant) attribute to the country's colonization by France.

Prior to the French rule, regional conflicts and seizures by Thailand and Vietnam had already created instability in Cambodia. In 1863, after colonizing Vietnam, France made Cambodia a protectorate. The French rule in Cambodia, as in its other colonies, focused on a civilizing mission and economic exploitation. The economic reforms instituted by the French colonizers were centered on heavy taxation of the peasantry. The French subjected the Cambodian rural population to a system of corvée, which required that individuals must provide labor for ten days annually in return for 30 cents per day or pay 300 cents to the administration to avoid the physical labor.[23] For the poorer peasants, there was no real alternative than physical labor. Starting in 1916, many peasants protested in Phnom Penh and other parts of Cambodia against the financially oppressive colonial presence. As a result, in the early twentieth century, the peasants in Cambodia emerged as a powerful political force committed to resolving their economic and political grievances. The French struggled to retain control of Cambodia as the anti-French sentiments began to rise. To alleviate the rise in poverty and counter the nationalist sentiments in East Asian countries, the Colombo Plan was first proposed in January 1950 at the Conference of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers held at Colombo, Ceylon. When financial aid under the Colombo Plan was offered to Cambodia in 1951, it was primarily to serve the strategic political and economic interests of donor countries, such as the United States. Many of the training programs, development aid and projects supported by the Colombo Plan were in cities and benefited the urban population instead of those living in the rural areas. As a result, there was a rise in resentment among the rural population towards the urban elites. Ben Kiernan notes that prior to the Khmer Rouge era, Cambodia nearly comprised two separate and seemingly disconnected societies: the rural society comprising 80 percent of the country's population that was engaged in subsistence rice cultivation and the rest largely urban, producing a few goods for the international market and consuming mostly international commodities. The peasantry provided food for the urbanites but received little from the city dwellers.[24] The French colonization of Cambodia and

[23] Milton Osborne, "Peasant Politics in Cambodia," *Modern Asian Studies* 12, no. 2 (1978): 218-19.
[24] Ben Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 5.

the local, regional and international political climate cemented the divide between the peasant class and the ruling elites of Cambodia.

Prince Norodom Sihanouk took advantage of the public's disillusionment towards the French colonizers and used it to garner public support. After a colonial rule of 90 years, Cambodia won its independence from France in 1953; and under Sihanouk's rule, the country was renamed the Kingdom of Cambodia. Sihanouk defined himself as a nationalist and imposed one of the most impactful policies regarding Cambodian citizenship—limiting citizenship to only those who could speak Khmer and identified with Khmer customs.[25] Sihanouk controlled nationalist discourses in Cambodia by banning publications in Vietnamese and Thai, and works of Khmer literature that did not seem aligned with his vision of Khmer nationalism. Sihanouk played a major role in the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK); he is credited with giving the party their French name "Le Khmer Rouge." The nationalist ideas around Cambodia's grand past and moral superiority and distrust of its neighbors, which helped Sihanouk gain support and power in the 1950s, were similar in nature to those propagated by the Khmer Rouge. In 1965, Sihanouk broke off relations with the United States to allow North Vietnamese guerrillas to set up bases in Cambodia in pursuance of their campaign against the US-backed government in South Vietnam. Lon Nol overthrew Sihanouk in a military coup in March 1970 and proclaimed the Khmer Republic. The overthrowing of Sihanouk's government and Sihanouk's alignment with the Khmer Rouge were among the reasons why the Khmer people, especially those in the rural areas where the king's support was the strongest, were sympathetic towards the Khmer Rouge. The war in Vietnam allowed the CPK not only to reimagine relations with Vietnam but more importantly gave the party a new enemy in the form of the United States of America. In 1970, Lon Nol sent the army to fight the North Vietnamese in Cambodia, as per the American interest in the region. On 9 December 1970, President Nixon told Henry Kissinger: "I want a plan where every goddamn thing that can fly goes into Cambodia and hits every target status open . . . I want them to use the big planes, the small planes, everything they can."[26] This was the start of a massive bombing campaign against North Vietnamese forces on Cambodian soil. Kiernan notes that by 1973, half a million tons of US bombs had killed 100,000 Cambodian peasants and devastated the countryside. It was as a result of corruption, poverty,

[25] Ben Kiernan, "Myth, Nationalism and Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 3, no. 2 (2001): 198-201.
[26] Ben Kiernan, "Coming to Terms with the Past," *History Today* 54, no. 9 (2004): 16.

and lack of safety that many Cambodians joined the Khmer Rouge in the early 1970s—they saw the Khmer Rouge as a revolutionary force.[27]

The Khmer Rouge published periodicals and magazines that were frequently used for propaganda. These publications carried articles focused on the imagined everyday prosperous life of Cambodian people under the Khmer Rouge. An August 1973 article published in the youth periodical *Revolutionary Young Men and Women* asserted that "human society is divided into . . . the oppressor class and the oppressed." [28] The article clearly defined who the oppressors were, namely the imperialists, feudalists, capitalists, and reactionaries, and the ways they exploited the oppressed. The goal was to mobilize the youth into joining the Revolution. As Alexander L. Hinton notes, "Khmer youth, upon receiving this education in the political principles, the revolutionary consciousness of the party, all found rage strongly mounting. [Their rage] manifested itself as a struggle movement to contest American imperialists and the oppressor classes in whatever guise."[29]

The Khmer Rouge propaganda framed the non-peasant class in Cambodia as the "elite," the colonizer, and the enemy. Defined loosely within the Khmer Rouge propaganda the elite was the feudal landowner, imperialist, capitalist, members and sympathizers of the Lon Nol regime, city dwellers, etc.—anyone who was deemed an oppressor of the peasant class. In its publications, the Khmer Rouge made a clear distinction between the real Khmer and the "other":

> It is necessary to draw a clear line between us and the enemy and stand on our side to make the revolution. First of all, let us determine who we are. "We" means our nation, people, worker-peasant class, revolution, collective system of the proletariat, cooperatives, trade unions, Revolutionary Army and KCP. The "enemy" includes imperialist aggressors and lackeys of all stripes; the enemy has the intention of annexing and swallowing our territory; the enemy which is planted within our revolutionary ranks; the enemy in the for[m] of the feudal-capitalist and landowner classes and other oppressor classes; the enemy in the form of private and individualist system; and particularly, the expansionist, annexationist Vietnamese enemy.[30]

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[27] Cambodia's current prime minister, Hun Sen, joined the Khmer Rouge in 1970.
[28] Alexander L. Hinton, *Why Did They Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 73.
[29] Ibid., 73.
[30] Ibid., 211.

In 1975, Lon Nol's government was overthrown by the Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot. The fall of Phnom Penh left many Cambodians stranded abroad and a vast number of Cambodians fled the country to the neighboring Thailand and Vietnam. The year 1975 was declared "Year Zero" by the Khmer Rouge, money became worthless, basic freedoms were curtailed, and religion was banned.

During the four-year rule by the Khmer Rouge, nationalist ideologies and violence were used to incentivize people to comply with the regime's policies. Scholars of the Cambodian genocide, for instance, Elizabeth Becker, David Chandler, and Karl Jackson, agree that Pol Pot's communist ideologies were informed by and derived from multiple sources, including Maoism, European Marxism, Stalinism and Khmer nationalism.[31] The Khmer Rouge demanded a total surrender of individuality to the benefit of the collective. Yet, despite having banned religion, the Khmer Rouge relied on Buddhist teachings of self-renunciation, mindfulness and self-control.[32] These Buddhist concepts resonated with the Khmer Rouge's idea of proletarian consciousness, enabling the recruits to use self-criticism, self-control and mindfulness to discern the party's line. The gender ideology of the Khmer Rouge was in some ways inspired by the Maoist policies in China. The Khmer Rouge tried to erase outward differences between men and women by making women appear more masculine—women were forced to cut their hair short and dress in the same clothes as men. At the same time, women were expected to work like men and the responsibilities placed on them vis-à-vis economic production undermined the traditional gender role of women in Khmer society.

The Khmer nationalist ideology glorified the historic era of the Angkor Empire. The Angkor era was seen as the height of the nation's past glory and the Khmer Rouge wanted to claim back the lost past. Pol Pot believed in recapturing Cambodia's lost glory and productivity, and capital from agriculture, specifically rice production, was going to help achieve that end. The regime claimed, "With water we can have rice, with rice we can have everything."[33] The goal of the Khmer Rouge was to become an

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[31] See Elizabeth Becker, *When the War Was Over: The Voices of Cambodia's Revolution and Its People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986); David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia,* 4th ed. (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 2008); and Karl Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975-1978: Rendezvous with Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[32] Kosal Path and Angeliki Kanavou, "Converts, Not Ideologues? The Khmer Rouge Practice of Thought Reform in Cambodia, 1975-1978," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 20, no. 3 (2015): 310.

[33] Kiernan, "Myth, Nationalism and Genocide," 195.

economically independent society and with that intention the Khmer Rouge forcibly moved all city dwellers to the countryside to become agricultural workers. For this work, the peasantry comprised the base of the Khmer Rouge support. They were considered "base" people and the deported city dwellers were "new" people. The Khmer Rouge depicted the peasants as "pure" and city dwellers as "corrupt." They used a classification system to "categorize people into those having 'full rights' to 'candidates,' and 'depositees.'"[34] City dwellers, who were considered "new people" and "depositees," occupied the lowest position in this social order. Hundreds of thousands of people working in cultural industries were killed; it is estimated that at least a quarter of the country's population, or 1.7 million people, were killed during the Khmer Rouge era. The lives that were considered worth taking, and taking in masses, belonged to people who were seen as enemies, and the people who took those lives were ideologically driven men and women. Mahmood Mamdani writes,

> There is a demarcation between life that is considered worth taking (or giving) and life considered worth preserving (or enriching). When the life in question is that of groups, involving large numbers, the decision is inevitably political. Though it may be taken under the pressure of necessity (economy) or the force of habit (culture), we need to highlight the decision as conscious, as the result of a deliberation. If not, we risk losing sight of any difference between humans and animals.[35]

In the last few decades, there has been a wide array of scholarship on the Khmer Rouge. However, most of that writing has been focused on the ascent of the Khmer Rouge into power and the gender-based violence perpetrated from 1975 to 1979 against women. But to view the history of the Khmer Rouge in such limited scope silences the agency of women who participated in genocide; and this view also blocks us from understanding their motivations for joining the Khmer Rouge and the trauma they incurred during the four-year rule of the Khmer Rouge.

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[34] Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?*, 192-93.
[35] Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), 196.