Alterity and the Particular Limits of Universalism

Comparing Jewish-Israeli Holocaust and Canadian-Cambodian Genocide Legacies

by Carol A. Kidron

This study compares the genocidal legacies of Cambodian-Canadian and Jewish-Israeli trauma descendants. Despite important contextual sociopolitical and historical differences, both case studies similarly deviate from the reductionist descendant profile of the pathological, publicly enlisted witness in search of redemptive testimonial voice. Findings thereby allow for a grounded deconstruction of the Euro-Western universalized semiotics of suffering. Set against the above similarities, key differences between Khmer and Jewish self-perceived sense of vulnerability/empowerment, lived experiences of memory and forgetting, and genocide-related moral modes of being not only challenge key axioms in the scholarship and in humanitarian practice but raise epistemological concerns regarding the constitutive role of cultural worldviews often marginalized in sociopolitical analyses.

During my first visit to the wat in Montreal, I wandered around the Cambodian Theravada Buddhist temple in search of surviving traces of genocide.[1] Whether the memory of the Khmer Rouge period in Cambodia was silenced by fear, shame, or posttraumatic repression (Hinton 2004) or intentionally forgotten as part of the politics of identity of refugees and their descendants in a multicultural mosaic (Ledgerwood, Ebihara, and Mortland 1994), my fieldwork in the Canadian-Cambodian diaspora community in general, and at the wat in particular, disclosed the almost total absence of presence of the violent past. Accustomed to the tightly woven presence of the Holocaust past in contemporary Jewish-diasporic and Jewish-Israeli pedagogy, religious ritual, and commemorative landscape, I found this absence perplexing.

I had come to Montreal to compare the legacies of descendants of Holocaust survivors in Israel to the legacies of descendants of survivors of the Cambodian genocide in Canada. Ethnographic interviews with Cambodian descendants were no less confounding, as they repeatedly highlighted the personal and collective benefits of forgetting. Personal accounts of familial silence and forgetting challenged the psychological and sociopolitical hypotheses regarding posttrauma (Young 1995) and the intergenerationally transmitted wounded legacy of descendants (Danieli 1998; Rousseau and Drapeau 1998). Accounts of silence and forgetting reinforced Fassin's (2008:534) critical deconstruction of the universalizing semiotics of suffering—the emergence of a universal set of markers signifying not only the psychic traces of difficult pasts but also signaling the call for intervention and salvation by an array of humanitarian agents of memory to facilitate healing and testimonial voice. How then was I to decipher

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1. The use of the term genocide to describe the massacre, starvation, and expulsion of the victims of the Khmer Rouge is problematic. As outlined by Quigley (2000:6–7), an expert in international law invited to attend the 1979 trial of Pol Pot and Leng Sary to determine whether they could be tried for the crimes of genocide, the term genocide was defined by the UN Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948. Genocide was defined by the convention as the intention to destroy a part of or whole national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. Quigley (as do genocide scholars) explains that the controversy has arisen surrounding the use of the term "genocide" when applied to the case of Cambodia as most of the victims, like the perpetrators, were Khmer—"so there was no racial animus behind the actions." Only a small minority of the victims could be classified as ethnic, religious, or national Other (Chinese, Muslim Cham, and Vietnamese), and due to the political nature of Khmer Rouge motives, it is not clear that the perpetrators intended to kill these victims only due to their ethnic/religious status as Other. Nevertheless, Quigley concluded that as the definition of genocide includes intention to kill a whole or part of a group, then the victimization of Khmer intellectuals or religious leaders would be considered a part of a national and ethnic group and would then be consistent with the UN definition. Genocide scholars, including those Khmer scholars working in Cambodia to document the events, have used the term "genocide," in some cases for lack of a better word, and in other cases due to the emergent genealogy of the term now used to classify a wide array of human loss and suffering. It might be claimed that considering the nature and scale of loss in Cambodia, the use of another term would raise no less difficult questions concerning global hierarchies of suffering.

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my Khmer (Cambodian) respondents' univocal dismissal of trauma theory and repeated references to what they termed "Asian silence" and the almost total absence of traces of the genocide in everyday family life? How might I interpret lay Khmer references to "Buddhist modes of being" and "forward-looking" perspectives, recounted by the youth as responsible for "purposeful forgetting"? In light of their resistance to the therapeutic and humanitarian "political subjectification" of their familial victimhood (Fassin 2008: 533), these lay interpretations of the constitutive impact of culture lead me to the dangerous terrain of cultural alterity and ethnographies of difference. In keeping with transcultural psychiatry and medical/psychological anthropology, was Buddhism merely a protective layer allowing for Khmer resilience (Argenti-Pillen 2000)? As I had set out to explore the phenomenological lived experience of descendants and not processes of psychic denial, resilience, or false consciousness of the silenced, how was I to bridge this gap between trauma theory and ethnographic findings on the ground?

Among Holocaust descendants I had found a similar but less univocal rejection of the pathologizing construct of transmitted post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Although like the Khmer respondents, children of Holocaust survivors interviewed described domestic silence and the absence of the intergenerational transmission of Holocaust tales in their childhood, in contrast to the Khmer, they did depict an alternative silent form of genocide-related interaction and communication, namely, embodied practices of survival, parent-child silent and partially silent interaction, and person-object interaction that together form a diverse matrix of Holocaust presence in the everyday intimate lives of the descendants (Kidron 2009*b*). Moreover, in contrast again to the Khmer, Holocaust descendants experienced their transmitted emotional scars as silently commemorative and voiced their support of monumental collective commemoration. In my recent work, I had avoided relativist explorations of cultural paradigms of memory to explain Holocaust descendant silent yet very much present memory-work, yet in consideration of my Khmer respondents' accounts of forgetting, I had no choice but to turn to the wat as one of three primary community centers for Cambodian youth sustaining a particular Khmer cultural identity. It was the biting words of a monk who gave me the final push down the slippery slope of what some might warn smacks of fundamental cultural relativism (Grillo 2003). After refusing to allow me to attend Sunday school classes at the wat, lest I mention the genocide to the students "and bring evil back into their lives," he appealed, as did Khmer respondents before him, to the precepts of Buddhism to explain his silencing of any discussion on the topic. Failing to fully understand why references to the genocide would threaten spiritual well-being, I responded naively to his Buddhist account of forgetting with a comparative description of the Jewish-Israeli fear of forgetting and national commemorative practices. The monk abruptly responded, "We accept what the past has brought us but look forward and build a strong future, not backward to a dark past—Jews bad education."

The above differences between Cambodian forgetting and Jewish ("bad") memory-work could and should be politically contextualized. The monk's account of Buddhist forgetting might be understood as the enlistment of culture to re-vitalize a particular ethnic minority's legacy in a multiethnic society (Mortland 1994; Smith-Hefner 1994) and/or the last vestiges of fear and avoidance during this foundational period of ethnic and national Cambodian re-habilitation in socioeconomically and politically challenging contexts (Ledgerwood, Ebihara, and Mortland 1994). This would be compared to the Israeli national hegemonic enlistment and strategic propagation of monumental and communal Holocaust memory of an ethnic Jewish majority to sustain the already empowered Zionist state and centrist-right wing policies of occupation (Feldman 2008; Handelman 2004). However, I chose to begin "bottom-up" with the person-near phenomenological experience of Jewish-Israeli and Cambodian-Canadian descendants who spoke predominantly not of macro political or communal dictates but rather of their re-collections of the lived experience of micro processes of silence, forgetting, and remembrance in the domestic sphere. I aimed to explore the familial ground from which and through which descendants asserted cultures of memory and forgetting emerged and intertwined with particular spiritual precepts and national or communal sociopolitical contexts.[2]

With the politically and academically incorrect and volatile lay categories of "Jews" and "Asians" and ambivalent and no less culturally constituted concepts of memory and forgetting in hand, I set out to compare Jewish-Israeli and Cambodian-Canadian trauma descendant genocide legacies. The gap between trauma theory and both Jewish and Cambodian legacies will be shown to further support Fassin's critique (2008) of the universal semiotics of the suffering, pathologized, collectively enlisted, and vocal trauma victim. The differences emergent from the comparison call for further deconstruction of trauma theory and the dichotomy of remembering and forgetting and a renewed debate surrounding the constitutive role of cultural worldviews often marginalized in sociopolitical analyses.

Trauma Theory and the Psychological Construct of PTSD

The diagnostic category of post-traumatic stress disorder (Young 1995) is being applied to an ever-growing number of social ills, labeling previously unclassified suffering as trauma

2. This is in no way to deny the dialectics between cultural precepts and sociopolitical contexts but rather follows the concept of "narrative truth" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 1998:7–8) whereby I seek my respondents' narratively constructed representation of the factors they perceive to be constituting their genocide legacies phenomenologically speaking as their "lives as lived."

related. As in the case of other idioms of illness, the experience of trauma and the resultant disorder entail culturally constituted meaning systems framing how one interprets and practices the suffering self (Hacking 1997; Lambek and Antze 1996). These complex meaning systems are shaped by psychological explanatory models and therapeutic discourses of treatment and recovery (Herman 1992). Yet as critical scholars have noted (McKinney 2007; Summerfield 2004; Young 1995), the trauma construct has become discursively conflated in popular culture and even in some scholarly work with multiple forms of emotional, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical distress producing a growing body of literature referred to as "trauma theory" or "trauma discourse" (Alexander 2004; Argenti-Pillen 2000; Pupavac 2006).

The Trauma Construct and the "Constitution" of the Wounded Trauma Descendant

According to psychological research, trauma victims may suffer from a multitude of emotional and behavioral symptoms diagnosed as PTSD (DSM IV 1994). In pioneering studies on Holocaust victims (Barocas and Barocas 1973), the disorder was found to impair survivor parenting, whereby the effects of PTSD may potentially be transmitted to their children. Although nonclinical findings have failed to show evidence of psychopathology (Sagi-Schwartz et al. 2003), both clinical and nonclinical studies have found that descendants of Holocaust victims may suffer from maladaptive behavioral patterns and a damaged sense of self (Zilberfein 1995). According to the logic of the PTSD paradigm, if left untreated, the long-term psychosocial effects of PTSD could be transmitted from generation to generation. Psychological treatment entails working through the effects of one's family's past and reintegration of painful legacies (Bar-On 1992). Talk therapy in particular would allow the descendant to narratively integrate the silenced past and heal and "historically redeem" the destructive legacy (Herman 1992:242; Leys 1996:123).

Despite the proposed therapeutic benefits of narrating their story (Langer 1991), when attempting to elicit these accounts, researchers have noted that the great majority of trauma survivors have kept the details of their pasts a painful secret. Fearful of hurting their parents and coming to terms themselves with parental suffering, children of survivors are said to have responded with avoidance, participating in a "conspiracy of silence" (Bar-On 1992:82). Characterizing intergenerational transmission and silence in Salvadoran families, Dickson-Gomez (2002:430) asserts, "a traumatized worldview of fear, pessimism and violence is socialized in the next generation," where trauma is transmitted "both explicitly (through illness narratives) and implicitly (through physical distress manifested in *nervios*) to their children through their reactions to and interpretations of everyday events. A form of avoidance and denial is posited by a sort of transgenerational trauma whereby dwelling on the past is too painful." With the help of mental health professionals, human rights workers, and anthropologists, a growing number of descendants are encouraged to articulate their legacy. The question remains, however, whether descendants are not being pathologized and subjectified as victims of distant pasts they themselves have not experienced (Pupavac 2006).

Culturally sensitive studies in critical psychological and medical anthropology have deconstructed PTSD, charting its cultural constitution as an idiom of illness (Breslau 2004; McKinney 2007; Young 1995). As outlined above, somatization of trauma survivors has been interpreted in accordance with culture-specific idioms of distress, which in turn shape their phenomenological experience of suffering and enable or disable the articulation of difficult pasts (Kirmayer 2003). In keeping with Young (1995) and Fassin and Rechtman (2009), an important distinction has been made between trauma as a "real" psychogenic disorder that may or may not be an outcome of a traumatizing event and the scholarly analysis of the PTSD construct as a culture-specific idiom of illness constructed through discourse and practice to represent and make meaningful the survivor's experience of distress. Despite the prevalence of research deconstructing the illness construct of survivor PTSD as pathologizing cultural idiom, with the exception of my work on Holocaust descendants (Kidron 2003, 2009*b*, 2010), there have been almost no ethnographic attempts to critically assess the impact of the construct of intergenerationally transmitted PTSD and to determine whether and how trauma descendants utilize the construct of transmitted PTSD to phenomenologically make sense of their genocide legacy. Do descendants perceive themselves as suffering from transmitted PTSD, or are there alternative culturally particular forms of genocide-related intergenerational transmission and different nonpathological forms of emotive responses to parental traumatic pasts?

Universalizing the PTSD Construct and the Cambodian Descendant

The above research on Holocaust survivors and their descendants has served as a prototypical model for more recent psychological studies of collective trauma worldwide (Altounian 1999; Cross 1998; Ida and Yang 2003). Cambodian genocidal trauma has attracted extensive scholarly attention (Eisenbruch, de Jong, and van de Put 2004; Kinzie et al. 1984). Research has focused on both first- (Hinton et al. 2006; Huang 1998; Marukusen 1992; Rechtman 2000) and second-generation traumatization (Munyas 2008; Rousseau and Drapeau 1998; Sack et al. 1994). These studies conclude that survivors of the Cambodian genocide continue to suffer from PTSD-related emotional scars and somatized bodily distress (Becker, Beyene, and Ken 2000; Hinton et al. 2006; Stevens 2001) while their children—be they in Cambodia, America, Canada, or Australia—have been found to exhibit increased symptomology causally related to their parents' premigratory traumatic

experience.[3] According to Rubin and Rhodes (2005), as witnesses of their parents' traumatic fragmentary narrative reenactments, descendants mirror parental PTSD and ultimately suffer from their own intrusive memories of parental trauma. Findings regarding the positive adjustment of Cambodian youth have been interpreted as signifying overcompensation and psychically burdensome trauma-related intergenerational dynamics (Rousseau and Drapeau 1998). Once again, we may ask, do Cambodian descendants perceive themselves as suffering from the scars of transmitted PTSD? Do they wish to work through and articulate the familial past, or do Cambodian worldviews present alternative meaning-worlds that differentially make sense of genocide memory and constitute different forms of familial interaction and transmission of the past? There have been only two attempts to explore the phenomenological experience of Cambodian descendants (Munyas 2008; Rubin and Rhodes 2005). Both fail to elicit self-perceptions of wellness or illness and are biased, presenting either the accounts of only elite, educated Cambodian youth or a very small self-selected sample of those active in a community-based organization.

Enlisting Wounded Witnesses of Genocide

Although concerned less with individual working through than with the macro processes of the politics of silenced or curtailed collective memory, culture studies (Alexander 2004), collective memory studies (Levy and Sznaider 2002), and human rights discourse (Munyas 2008) also call for the voicing of individual silenced narratives of victimization and subjugation. From this perspective, the narrativization of survivor and descendant legacies facilitates the civic and moral act of public testimony (McKinney 2007). As genocide historians have asserted (Chalk 1989; Kiernan 1996; Kissi 2004), pathos-filled and cathartic testimonies at "truth tribunals" not only document the violent past and contribute to the collective stock of memory but ideally facilitate restitution, reconciliation, and coexistence (Malkki 1996). Turkish activist Munyas (2008), for example, has called on Cambodians to narratively work through their scarred past via public testimony and adopt a humanist moral frame that would allow them to understand genocidal events.[4]

3. Eisenbruch's critical work is an exception in the above clinical and nonclinical research on Cambodian survivors, as he asserts that not only have there been fewer documented cases of PTSD among survivors in Cambodia and the Cambodian diaspora but that therapeutic intervention risks displacing culture-specific forms of healing (Eisenbruch 1991; Eisenbruch, de Jong, and van de Put 2004). According to Rubin and Rhodes (2005), echoing Holocaust research, descendants are said to exhibit signs of avoidance and at best, pick up on fragments of information that provide only emotively demanding moral lessons rather than historical information, or at worst, provide erroneous or demonizing portrayals of the perpetrators.

4. According to Munyas (2008), in this way the genocide would have only "partial relevance," enabling reconciliation with Khmer Rouge perpetrators and descendants culminating in a reconstructed morally and emotionally healthy Cambodia.

In the same interventionist spirit, scholars of ethnicity and immigrant studies have also called on the Cambodian diasporas to work through and publicly testify to their genocide past. In contrast to the above, these community-based scholars believe that promoting knowledge and intergenerational dialog surrounding the genocide will help close the generation gap and ultimately empower the socioeconomically challenged and marginalized ethnic minority (Ledgerwood, Ebihara, and Mortland 1994). Community-based researchers/activists are thus working to establish organizations to enable genocide education and commemoration, which would eventually be managed by a Khmer youth vanguard immersed in their heritage (Kwon 2006).

Despite the above scholarly work, questions remain regarding the politics of memory and community activism. Do descendants wish to access verbal accounts of their legacies and publicly commemorate violent histories, or are there other channels of remembrance, other forms of silent transmission of the past interwoven in everyday life (Halbwachs 1980)? When exporting Eurocentric models of traumatic suffering and resistant testimonial voice to victims worldwide, to what degree has humanitarian interventionist and community-psychology discourse and practice taken culture-specific conceptions of suffering, healing, and memory-work into account? As Argenti-Pillen (2000) and Rousseau, Morales, and Foxen (2001) ask, has Eurocentric psychosocial and politicized memory-work weakened the survivor's link to traditional forms of healing and remembrance rather than ameliorating their suffering or liberating them from the yoke of subjugation? Have disempowered immigrants/refugees become the targets of a new form of discursively constituted "victimization" (Ong 1995, 1996; Pupavac 2006)?

Alternative Anthropological Perspectives

Anthropologic holistic and grounded methods can pave the way for a more culturally sensitive exploration of the descendant's phenomenological experience of transmitted PTSD, familial silence, and enlistment to public forms of commemoration, allowing descendants to articulate their "lived experience" of suffering and voice. Although path-breaking, the majority of ethnographies have focused on the ethical and political implications of giving voice to silenced victims (Scheper-Hughes 2002) and top-down analyses of enlistment of survivors (Handelman 2004) or of students in national commemorative practices (Feldman 2008). The subfield of the anthropology of genocide, particularly Hinton's work on Cambodia (2004) and Argenti and Schramm's volume on intergenerational legacies of violence (2009), have presented a culture-sensitive portrayal of the impact of trauma and alternative forms of commemoration. Nevertheless, accounts often utilize a rhetoric of salvation as the anthropologist turned activist hopes to redeem victims from the "shadows of silence" (Waterston and Rylko-Bauer 2006). The lived experience of the silent or silenced past may not always be

politically motivated, performed as acts of resistance, or as capitulation to hegemonic indoctrination. Scholarly interest in the way memory has been put to work to re-present politically meaningful pasts or the way memory has been hegemonically forgotten has elided the way everyday mnemonic practices are sustained and transmitted to create the silent yet lived presence of the past (Kidron 2009*b*) or how families and communities intentionally marginalize or forget and ultimately make absent difficult pasts.[5]

In response to the above critique, the past few decades have been witness to a new wave of critical scholarship unpacking not only humanitarian intervention (Fassin 2008; Malkki 1996; Theidon 2006; Wilson 2001) but also exploring culture-specific sources of resilience (Foxen 2000). Attempts to normalize the pathologized and medicalized can be seen as part of the broader trend of "anthropology of hope" (Eggerman and Panter-Brick 2010:72). In the spirit of transcultural psychology and psychological anthropology, studies of resilience have mapped the constitutive and palliative impact of culture in the trajectory of illness from etiology (cause of illness) to symptomology culminating in indigenous healing practices (Argenti-Pillen 2000; Kirmayer, Brass, and Valaskakis 2009). Enriching partnerships are depicted between indigenous caregivers and biomedical practitioners (Foxen 2000). Yet in line with Fassin (2008) and Langford (2009), the rhetoric of salvation often does not permit for a more critical exploration of the differential experiences of vulnerable or resilient selfhood, or distress and disorder (Horwitz and Wakefield 2006). Particularly in the case at hand, the concept of transmitted trauma remains a Euro-Western construct, emergent primarily out of concern for improved global health care and epistemically framed by core therapeutic axioms founded on a hermeneutics of suspicion where early familial dramas and toxic transmissions constitute the traumatized "suffering self" (Illouz 2008:171–177; Pupavac 2006). Echoing biomedical and psychosocial constructs such as risk (Lock et al. 2006) signifying core experiences of danger and discomfort, the construct of resilience too assumes that the core self is essentially vulnerable and in need of protection. We may ask, however, are selves not shaped by culturally and contextually specific ontological (vulnerable or strong) modes of being and (catastrophic or safe) life-worlds?[6]

In order to critically evaluate the construct of the vulnerable, pathologized, and enlisted Holocaust descendant and explore the "everyday lived presence" of the Holocaust past, I undertook an ethnographic study of Holocaust descendants in Israel entailing 75 interviews with second- and third-generation descendants and participant observation at multiple meso-public sites of memory (Kidron 2005). Contrary to the literature, the majority rejected or critiqued the pathologizing construct of PTSD, and while concerned with the fate of Holocaust memory, they expressed little or no desire to participate in collective monumental commemoration as carriers of Holocaust memory. Instead, they presented accounts of (*a*) the silent nonpathological presence of the past in embodied person-person and person-object interaction in the everyday life of the family (Kidron 2009*b*) and fragmentary tales of survival that transmitted an enriching genocide-related meaning-world and (*b*) survivor-specific nonmonumental communal practices of Holocaust memory in voluntary meso-public organizations that simulated intimate family silent memory (Kidron 2010).

In light of the above critical reading of the literature and my previous findings, this paper asks, do descendants in other cultural/sociopolitical contexts accept or resist the pathologizing construct? Do they retain alternative culture-specific responses to traumatic suffering, other forms of remembering or forgetting? Do they resist enlistment to collective sites of testimonial memory? If so, what may account for differential responses? In order to answer these questions, I undertook a comparative study of descendants of Holocaust survivors in Israel and descendants of survivors of the Cambodian genocide living in Canada.

Comparative findings show that Khmer respondents totally reject the pathological profile of transmitted PTSD and show a disinterest in any form of public articulation of their past. In contrast to Holocaust descendants, Khmer descendants recount the almost total absence of nonverbal presence of the genocidal past and refer to Asian silence and not PTSD-related avoidance to account for this silence.[7] Nevertheless, genocide was thought to tacitly constitute forward-looking and empowering modes of being. In contrast to the avowed centrality of Jewish memory-work in the Israeli sample, attitudes regarding Karmic accountability were presented to account for the marginality of Khmer genocide-related memory-work. Comparative findings will be shown to challenge key axioms in the scholarship pertaining to the pathologization of trauma victims, humanitarian intervention in global sites of suffering, and the enlistment of survivor testimony. Findings will also raise critical implications regarding the role of culture in the construction of differential experiences of wellness, memory, and forgetting together constituting divergent genocide legacies.

The Comparative Case Study and Methodology

In-depth interviews were conducted using a semistructured and thematic format. Interviewees were asked open-ended questions about themselves and their families, allowing them to narrate and present the self as they saw fit. I conducted

5. Although beyond this discussion, there is extensive literature on the politics of forgetting (Zolberg 1998), as well as fascinating ethnographies on the semiotics of constructing and deconstructing past relations (Battaglia 1993) and identity work and forgetting (Carsten 2007; Feuchtwang 2007).

6. Argenti-Pillen (2000) asks whether there may be cultural immunity to trauma.

7. It might be noted that Rechtman (2000), Nickerson and Hinton (2011), and Hinton et al. (2006) do describe survivor accounts of the genocide articulated in clinical settings.

55 in-depth interviews with children of Holocaust survivors. Accessing the sample using the snowball method, Israeli descendant respondents ranged in age between 35 and 55, with equal gender representation.[8] The great majority were born in Israel to survivor parents who had emigrated to Israel from Europe in the late 1940s and 1950s after surviving Nazi extermination camps, forced-labor camps, ghetto incarceration, or extended periods of hiding. After an initial period of economic hardship, the majority achieved middle to upper middle class status, and the majority of descendants had some form of higher education.

Twenty-three in-depth ethnographic interviews were undertaken with Cambodian-Canadian descendants, who were between the ages of 17 and 26 and residing in Montreal, Quebec, and Toronto. Participant observation was also undertaken at the Cambodian-Canadian Association of Toronto (from which initial respondents were accessed) and at a Buddhist pagoda (wat) in Montreal. In the case of the majority of descendants, their parents had emigrated to Canada in the mid to late 1980s after surviving conditions of forced migration, forced labor, near starvation, and the loss of loved ones. Forty per cent of the interviewees were born in refugee camps on the Thai border. After arriving in Canada, survivor families experienced severe economic hardship, and nearly 2 decades later, many families still live in inner-city low-income housing, and at least 60% recounted some form of substance abuse and parental separation/divorce. Fifty-five per cent of descendants attend or have attended a community college/university.

Narratives of Silence: The Israeli Case

In keeping with Euro-Western logocentric conceptions of silence, the therapeutic discourse has framed trauma-related silence as suspect and as awaiting redemptive voice. Philosophers of disaster, culture studies, and literary critics have read silence as signifying the failure of words to express sublime forms of experience thought to be "unspeakable" (Kidron 2009*b*). In both cases, silence is assumed to imply the absence of the transmission of knowledge regarding what has yet to be voiced. In the same vein, Holocaust and genocide literature as well as PTSD-related psychological literature abound with references to the unspeakability of the survivor's traumatic past (Langer 1991) and tales of descendant pained ignorance. At the outset of my interviews with Holocaust descendants, it was thus no surprise that they claimed that due to the silence in their homes, they had little to tell regarding their parents' past.

When asked why they did not break the silence and ask questions, the great majority of descendants explained that they feared opening up old wounds and hurting their parents. Sylvia explains, "I think I felt I would hurt them, I didn't think they could take going back *there*. But . . . to be honest, it was . . . also fear of hearing what they would say or how they would say it . . . I just wanted to leave it alone." Descendants would then proceed to tell me who had perished in their families and where their parents had spent the war years. However, they could provide only approximate details of the dates or duration of their incarceration/hiding. When I asked them about their experience of familial silence, evocative accounts of the fleeting yet sorely felt presence of the past emerged. Emma recounts:[9]

> E: I'm sorry, but I think I don't have much to say, I don't know more than just very basic facts about my parents' experience. You know, they were in Auschwitz, they were liberated and made Aliya [emigrated to Israel]. I don't know . . . they . . . We never spoke about it at home. You didn't speak about it . . . at least not then. There was just silence. [long pause] But you know, it was there, all the time, everywhere.
>
> C: What was there?
>
> E: The Holocaust . . . [pause] It was like a dark cloud hanging over everything.
>
> C: Could you tell me what you mean by a dark cloud?
>
> E: It's hard to describe.
>
> C: Could you maybe tell me what it felt like?
>
> E: I guess it's a mood, or . . . maybe more . . . It's hard to put into words.

Emma accounts for her "ignorance," pointing to the fact that speech, as a medium of the transmission of knowledge, was not utilized. The phenomenon is contextualized, as she explains silence surrounding the Holocaust was previously normative behavior. After pausing however, she refers enigmatically to a nonverbal form of presence, as she states that "it," or the Holocaust, was "everywhere," perhaps foreboding, like a "dark cloud." Beyond Emma's use of the metaphor, it was impossible for her to describe in words what a cloud/Holocaust felt like. Also evoking the complex feeling-world constituted by traces of the Holocaust past, Chanit too describes the presence of the Holocaust in her home: "It's so very hard to say what it felt like . . . I guess you might say it was a kind of echo resonating . . . all the time." An echo is not a static or continuous sound but it rather undulates, heard one moment and gone the next. The echo cannot transmit a clear content of events or voices from the past, but rather one is left only with the vague impression of what was and is no longer. Paradoxically, despite

8. Similar questions were used with both Holocaust and Cambodian descendants. These questions attempted to elicit responses along the following themes: parental past and present behavior and parent-child relationship; childhood memories of genocide-related dialog or story telling and/or genocide-related practices in the home; past and present "consumption" of trauma-related discourse and cultural products, participation in genocide-related practices in the public domain, and finally, the envisioned future of commemorative practices.

9. All names were altered for confidentiality. Names of Cambodians have been "anglicized" for greater confidentiality due to the very small size of the community.

their inherent movement, both the cloud and the echo remain present in the home "all the time."

The metaphoric descriptions above raise numerous questions. How can the Holocaust be "present" in the home without speech? Something absent must be signified in order to become present. However, without speech and the knowledge speech entails, how is the Holocaust past signified? Failing to put this form of presence into words, can descendants articulate other forms of nonverbal media that signify the presence of the genocide past without explicit awareness of their process of signification? After a number of "failed" interviews eliciting only references to domestic silence and the absence of historical knowledge, I experienced a breakthrough with one descendant who recalled her own embodied responses to what she termed the "presence of the Holocaust" every night when her mother cried in her sleep. In response, I changed my opening question from, "What do you know about your parents' past?" to "Was the past present in your home?" From that point on, I received hours of accounts of the nonverbal and partially verbal forms of Holocaust presence, including parent-child silent face-work, person-object interaction, and diverse forms of embodied practices of survival forming a silent matrix of genocide presence interwoven within the everyday domestic life-world (Kidron 2009*b*). In the comparative study herein I present accounts of person-object interaction, practices of survival, and fragmentary tales of survival.

The Silent Presence of Genocide in Everyday Life

Aliza, a 54-year-old descendant described her mother as an extremely distant parent. Although always taking care of her basic needs, her mother was preoccupied with herself and often seemed to be "emotionally absent." The distant survivor parent did not speak of her Holocaust past nor did her children ask questions. Nevertheless, Aliza also recalls moments in which her mother became transformed, softer, and revitalized:

> A: Sometimes, in the late evening, my mother would go into her closet and pull down a shoe box. She would open it up gently, like it would break if she did it quickly or roughly . . . she would take out photos of her parents and her first husband, who were all killed in the war. She would sit down on the bed and I would sit quietly next to her. She would stare at the people in the pictures for a long time, sometimes smiling, sometimes sadly . . . I would smile with her, look at the photos with her, and tell her how handsome her husband was. She'd like that. She would get this funny smile like a teenage girl.
>
> C: Did you ever ask her what happened to them?
>
> A: No, I couldn't. . . . I mean in the beginning when she was looking at them she looked happy, I couldn't remind her that . . . and at the end . . . Well, anyway, she'd take a very deep breath and quickly put everything back in the box and say something coldly about getting back to my homework . . . and she'd lose that look in her eyes, well, you know, of longing and emotion. Her eyes would go blank again. Like always. But . . . I still remember those moments together, looking at her pictures, and her smile [long pause], even laughing together, I felt close to her then, I felt she was letting me in . . . to that place . . . the world she lost. As a child, I don't think I could understand all this, but I think somehow . . . I felt it, that sense of being let in . . . to her world.

Read through the lens of the therapeutic discourse, Aliza might be considered the victim of her mother's daily trauma-related emotional numbness and apathy. Even in the brief moments when her mother was revitalized by her past, not only did she fail to provide her daughter with a narrativized familial history but she also does not verbally express her nostalgic longing. Thus despite Aliza's attempt to accompany her mother on her virtual "visits" with her prewar family, she ultimately does not breach her mother's silence to constitute her own Holocaust and pre-Holocaust legacy. However, Aliza's moments with her mother, although fleeting, allowed her to emotively join her mother in her nostalgic journey. Aliza discloses her sense of having been allowed entry to what was otherwise a coveted private parental experience and, as she states, to feel close to the otherwise emotionally absent mother. Intimate bonding was made possible via person-object interaction with the photo (Latour 1996), whereby the survivor's mementos act as material conduits bridging time and space to allow for the virtual experience of copresence in the distant past. Silent face-work (Goffman 1959) between mother and child allows for the intersubjective empathic experience of "being there" (Sharron 1982:64) in the Holocaust past "together." By no means belittling the challenge of interacting with the emotionally absent parent, Aliza re-collects, alongside her memories of parental absence, emotional presence, sharing, and even laughter. The text calls on us to move beyond psychological and popular cultural frames of intergenerational dysfunctional silence to uncover the underlying silent connection, interaction, and "communication" and consider silence as a "container" facilitating movement into the past.

Beyond person-object interaction and face-work, descendants also depict the intergenerational transmission of practices of survival. The "lived body" (Merleau-Ponty 1962:90) of the survivor parent is described as a receptacle of past corporeal experience (Seremetakis 1994*a*; Young 2002), continuing to embody and re-present distant sensations of fear, cold, sickness, and hunger in the most mundane moments of family life. It is also the body that then responds by reenacting Holocaust-related strategic precautionary practices, as the fearful, cold, sick, or hungry body re-members and repeatedly performs the strategies perceived to have saved it. Descendants recounted recollections of parental practices of survival and their own "inherited" practices of survival. Ron recounts what he calls his "morning ritual":

> R: Before I leave the house, I always kind of ask myself,

what do I need to have with me . . . just in case. I always take something to read, in case I get stuck somewhere, and then there's aspirin and allergy medicine, and oh yes . . . food [laughing]. Is this so crazy . . . I mean you never know, if you get stuck somewhere, why be hungry.

C: So, when did you start doing this "ritual?"

R: I don't know, who knows, I have to admit my bag was always heavier than my friends' bag at school. They'd laugh at me, having all that food with me . . . you'd think . . . Well, you know.

C: What?

R: It's one of those things, our parents did to us. One of their "gifts." My mother would spend an hour packing food just to go to Tel-Aviv for the day [an hour away from home]. When I would pack for the army every Saturday night, it was a nightmare. They [his parents] would be running in circles around me bringing me stuff. The food, the medicine, the warm clothes in summer [grinning], just in case.

C: In case what?

R: [long pause] Well . . . I guess . . . in case of disaster. They were taken away, in the middle of their lives, just like that. Taken away. I used to ask myself, if I had five minutes, or even an hour like they did, to pack up my life in a bag, what would I take? Well I guess that's the ritual. I'm prepared, just in case.

Although one might wonder why packing one's bag for a long day at school, work, or the army implies anything out of the ordinary, Ron repeatedly mentions that his supplies are packed "just in case," because "you never know" or you may "get stuck." If we were to have any doubt regarding the descendant's retrospective interpretation of his practice, he proceeds to trace the source of his behavior to parental behavior in his childhood and ultimately back to the Holocaust past. Recounting the way genocide victims "packed up their lives," Ron recalls preparing as a child for this scenario, imaginatively and kinetically going through the motions, exercising his "packing" skills first with his parents and later in adult life. He sardonically refers to his inherited practice as their "gift," rationalizing the utilitarian behavior as his legacy of ultimate preparedness "in case of disaster" that they experienced. By the end of the descendant's account, the three chronotopes loose their chronological linearity, as Ron's present ritual of reenactment is homologized with the past merging to create one common legacy and one common mode of being, namely, that of survivorhood.

Fragmentary Speech and The Constitution of Genocidal Presence

Despite the silence in survivor homes, descendants recount parents' sporadic fragmentary verbal references to their Holocaust experience. These references took two forms: the first, what Wajnryb terms "Holocaust dicta" (2001:192), and the second, fragmentary tales of survival. Dicta were brief one-sentence references to conditions withstood during the Holocaust such as cold, hunger, forced labor, and the threat of death. The majority of descendants describe hearing dicta in the most mundane moments of daily life, arising when they complained of their own relatively minor hardships, eliciting in their parents critical references to their own survivor suffering. As Dan explains, dicta such as, "You think you're hungry, you don't know what hunger is" were opportunities to access rare bits of descriptive information, embodied sensations and ultimately for moments of empathy: "When they told me I had no idea how hungry one could be, I would try to imagine what it was like not to eat, or to eat so little and to be weak, so I could understand how it was for them."

Mythic Tales of Survival

Despite their initial disavowal of knowledge regarding concrete events in their parent's Holocaust past, almost all descendants interviewed recalled their parents' having occasionally and apparently spontaneously recounted a near-death experience. Like the dictum above, they were always brief and devoid of temporal or spatial coordinates that might historicize the tale. Told with great pathos, in monologue form, they never triggered a dialog with family members nor did they evoke questions.

Beth recounts her father's tale:

B: You know, . . . I remember my father . . . told us that there was a lake near the ghetto and every day he would escape and swim across the lake and steal food for him and his father and then swim back across the lake, trying to keep the food dry, and sneak back into the ghetto without getting caught. If he were caught, they would have killed him for sure. He would emphasize how difficult it was to swim in the cold water and how he kept going by thinking about how he couldn't let his father down. . . . He was only 10 years old.

C: Did you every ask questions or ask for details?

B: No, never. He just told his story and that's it. But thinking about my life I realize that I'm swimming that lake too. I've made choices that were wrong, that made my life difficult but I didn't alter my path, no matter what. No matter how hard it was, I always tried not to disappoint anyone, especially family. Even when I should have changed paths, given up, been selfish, I kept swimming along. Just like my father. But now . . . with my career in shambles . . . I'm not sure I can make it to the shore this time.

Emphasizing the perseverance required to escape the ghetto, and make it across the cold lake, Beth highlights her father's bravery, endurance, and commitment to the welfare of his imprisoned father. However, moving beyond the mundane content and structure of familial oral history, the tale takes on mythic proportions. Beth does not know which ghetto her father was in. Keeping with the "story grammar" of mythic tales, there is an "ambiguous setting that could be

anywhere" while at the same time the tale follows a "mythic sequence" further mystifying the "hero's" skills of survival (McAdams 1993:26). These "domesticated family myths" function as "the symbolic coinage of exchange between generations" transmitting key values, beliefs and practices, allowing for a model for personal and familial choices (Bertaux and Thompson 1993:36). As such, Beth "transposes" the embedded meaning of her father's swim across the lake to her own personal choices and sacrifices.

Familial Post-Trauma

When asked about their parents' mental health, 70% of the Holocaust descendant sample stated that their parents did suffer from symptoms of post-trauma; however, 80% of this sample insisted that considering the intensity of their suffering, they were highly resilient and strong and did not require therapy. Regarding their own mental health, the great majority of descendants asserted that they were not suffering from the transmitted effects of PTSD. The entire sample showed familiarity with popular cultural literature on transmitted PTSD and approximately 25% had experienced some form of short- or long-term psychosocial therapy or support group. Nevertheless, more than half of this "psychologically sophisticated" sample critiqued the transmitted PTSD construct and the efficacy of therapy as did almost all of those who had not undergone therapy.[10]

A closer reading, however, of descendant accounts of psychological wellness discloses an interesting phenomenon. Descendants claimed that they were in fact *srutim*, a Hebrew slang expression literally translated as "scratched." Although parallel to the ironic use of the English slang "cracked," it also implies the superficiality of their wound. Descendants claimed that these scars were not markers of pathology, disorder, or even experienced as distressing but rather were relatively benign emotive markers of difference. Penny explains: "I've done therapy, so okay, we are *srutim*, but after awhile you get sick of picking at your *kishkis* (Yiddish for guts or entrails), figuring out why we feel differently about the world, about the past, about our parents, I just want to move on with my life." Despite Penny's awareness of the limits of her "narcissistic self" (Lasch 1985), her critique of the illness construct does not question the constitutive impact of the Holocaust on her "different" emotional makeup and worldview. Echoing Penny's re-interpretation of descendant-transmitted scars as a mode of being rather than as a psychological disorder, Leah adds another interpretative layer as she describes the "scratch" as a permanent testament to the past:

> I have had a very hard life. But I am proud of the fact that I know who I am and have worked on myself, dealing with all my emotional *sritot* [scratches] and I hope improving myself all the time. But this Holocaust thing . . . It's just too intense, part of our flesh. . . . You can't really "cure" it. It will always be there . . . to remind us of what happened. Carrying it, is not only about us and our lives, but about something larger. . . . It's the kind of burden you have to carry.

By virtue of the emotional "burden" she carries, Leah perceives herself as fulfilling a "larger" moral mission of collective Holocaust commemoration. As asserted regarding descendants who attended a support group for children of Holocaust survivors (Kidron 2003), the accounts of the permanence of an emotional wound, and the disinterest in coping skills or disbelief in what Leah terms a "cure," is conceptualized as a form of descendent commemoration.

If descendants accept the valorized role of carrier of memory for the "larger" cause of collective commemoration, one may ask if this constitutes a culturally particular idiom of distress that may be "translated" into the therapeutic construct of the transmitted effects of PTSD? Alternatively, the scratch might be considered a marker of a particular phenomenological experience incommensurable with the dichotomy of wellness or illness. As will be discussed below, if cultural meaning-worlds differentially frame the moral order pertaining to the value of genocide memory and filial obligations, then it is reasonable to consider that descendant emotive markers, such as recollections of intersubjective moments with traumatized parents and surviving embodied practices "in the flesh," might also be differentially experienced, tolerated, and conceptualized. From the above emic accounts it appears that descendants normalize their wounds, experiencing them as different emotional modes of being ("how we feel differently about the world") they can "live with" rather than as disorder. Moreover, if the markers of emotional difference in descendant subjectivity subtly signify the semiotics of a morally valuable Holocaust presence and not merely a personal maladaptive form of suffering, then treatment ("picking at your entrails"), healing (the "cure" for memory), and closure are not only untenable but undesirable. In contrast to the "minimal narcissistic" therapeutic self in search of healing and individual meaning, collective meaning-worlds may even be perpetuating individual scars as collective testimonial badges of honor. Considering analyses of culture as a protective layer (Argenti-Pillen 2000), although descendants are not immune to the transmitted "effects" of parental trauma, once interpreted as a desirous burden of memory and not as maladaptive psychological disorder, one cannot univocally "diagnose" descendants as either solely vulnerable or resilient to distress as they paradoxically remain both vulnerable to and empowered by the scars of past "difference."

10. As clarified above, the question posed to the descendants and in the paper herein is not a diagnostic one as to whether they are or are not suffering from PTSD but rather whether and how the illness construct as cultural construction does or does not meaningfully frame their experience. As seen in the discussion that follows, descendants articulate emotive difference using an alternative cultural idiom, allowing for an analysis of the semiotics of their experience rather than a psychological diagnosis of their mental health.

Particular Meaning-Worlds of Commemoration

The above phenomenological experience of the descendant wound as silently commemorative must be contextualized within both deep structural Jewish paradigms of memory and Israeli-Jewish monumental practices of memory. The remembrance and reenactment of the past are key tropes in Jewish culture. In traditional liturgical texts, biblical founding myths structure Jewish conceptions of time and causality in history (Yerushalmi 1982). Reenactment takes place via ritual and liturgy where perpetual narration of mythic sequences guarantee that they remain culturally embedded as blueprints for interpretation. The imperative of personal remembrance encompasses the commemoration of communal and personal dead. The individual, perceived as the eternal witness embodying memory, and the community of which he/she is a part, loop back to the past in order to make that past present and to create a meaningful "place" for the events and people on the continuum of history. Filial responsibility to the memory of one's parents and ancestors is of special importance and is deeply embedded in Jewish cosmology and praxis. The individual is also obliged to transmit the past to future generations. However, the Jewish witness need not have been an eyewitness to the past, as knowledge of the past is sufficient to require testimony and transmission (Young 1988).[11] These deep structural Jewish paradigms of memory have found intense "revival" and transposition in the Israeli nation state as state-sponsored memorial sites and ceremonies publicly glorify Holocaust survivors and fallen war heroes, collectively enlist survivors and bereaved families, and engineer pedagogic pilgrimages to Holocaust death-worlds (Feldman 2008). All these forms of memory-work function to perpetually weave the past into the everyday lives of the nation and constitute the moral mission of those citizens prepared to carry the burden of collective and personal memory.[12]

In keeping with the above Jewish cultural and national mnemonic tropes, the descendant sample unanimously expressed great concern with the future of Holocaust commemoration. Beyond the silent form of embodied-emotive commemoration of the transmitted "scratches" of the Holocaust past, the majority also recounted partaking in private votive practices of lighting candles in memory of the Holocaust dead and those more religiously observant recounted participating in synagogue-based communal prayers commemorating both family members killed in the Holocaust and communities lost to the genocide. Interestingly, however, when asked about the transmission of the Holocaust past to their children, or participation in public forms of commemorative testimony to the past, the majority of descendants explained that they preferred to remain silent (despite state enlistment) and allow survivor grandparents and the education system to transmit personal and collective legacies. Others recounted with little regret that after exposure to practices of survival and Holocaust-related meaning-worlds in their childhood, their children (the third generation) too would have to "learn to know and to feel" the wounds of the past "for all those had died." When further broaching the subject of descendant avoidance of public commemoration, respondents provided two recurring explanations. The first presented the matrix of silent presence in the home as "surviving through them in every breath we take" at once obviating the need for objectification in the public domain and constituting (consistent with Jewish paradigms) descendants as walking testament to the past. The second common response expressed concern over the misrepresentation of their private memories where historicity would usurp lived memory.

The Cambodian Case Study

Comparing Cambodian-Canadian and Jewish-Israeli responses to the genocide is extremely challenging, particularly due to the subtle dialectic between socioeconomic and political realities in the two contexts on the one hand and cosmological and cultural differences on the other hand. First and foremost, the Cambodian experience of genocide has been colored by the unique socipolitical context of the massacre and starvation of Khmer victims by Khmer Rouge—members of their own ethnic group (Ledgerwood, Ebihara, and Mortland 1994; see Robben 2005 on conflictive memory).[13] In contrast, Jewish genocide victims historically perceived their perpetrators as a potentially antagonistic ethnic and religious Other before the Holocaust. Postgenocide survivor experience has also been shaped by drastically different social contexts. In Canada, Cambodian refugees were positioned as a religious and ethnic minority, socioeconomically underprivileged in a relatively prosperous host country (McLellan 1999), exacerbating and/or providing alternative sources of distress (Sack et al. 1994). In contrast, the Jewish survivor was assimilated into the existing European-Jewish majority while their economic hardship of resettlement was

11. It should be noted, that nonobservant Israeli Jews partake in these rituals in the domestic sphere and in civil religious commemorative public practice.

12. It is important to note that although the world is experienced as a dangerous place, and Jewish fate is most certainly conceptualized as catastrophic (Yerushalmi 1982), cosmological scenarios framing martyrdom must be taken into account before classifying Jewish ways of being within the binary of either safe or dangerous culturally constituted life-worlds.

13. In 1970, General Lon Nol deposed Prince Sihanouk in a military coup and then allied with the United States, at which point the Cambodian monarchy was renamed the Khmer Republic. United States and South Vietnamese forces entered Cambodia to block a North Vietnamese incursion. Communist insurgency, aided by North Vietnamese support, culminated in 1975 in the downfall of the Khmer Republic and the rise of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) and Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime. The CPK instigated the evacuation of urban populations to the countryside to work as farmers. Beyond the brutal mass roundups and executions of intellectuals, bureaucrats, businessmen, educated Cambodians, and Buddhist monks, hundreds of thousands died of starvation and disease. The total death toll between 1975 and 1979 has been estimated 1–3 million.

not only substantially shorter but collectively shared with the native population. Although at first silenced by the ethos of native-born Israeli strength, the legacy of the victimhood of Jewish survivors has now found a relatively univocal voice in shared Israeli national master narratives of suffering and multiple monumental forms of public commemoration. This must be compared to the relative absence of public memory-work in Cambodian diaspora communities around the world (Stevens 2001). However, as will be discussed below, these differences have also been shaped by key cultural Jewish and Buddhist paradigms of memory entailing extremely different approaches to death, history, and commemoration (Hinton 2008; Hughes 2003; Langford 2009; Thompson 2006).[14] Insights into the differential cultural constitution of trauma legacies will emerge precisely through the descendants' deployment of subtle similarities and more blatant differences.

Khmer Narratives of Silence

As in the case of children of Holocaust survivors, Khmer young people had little knowledge of their familial past and described silence in their homes surrounding the genocidal past.[15] Unlike Israeli descendants, the great majority could not even provide minimal information such as the names and locations of cities/villages or refugee camps where their parents had been during the genocide or even how many, how, or even which of their relatives had perished. Forty per cent expressed relative disinterest in exploring that period of Cambodian history. Sandra, for example, recounts, "I think my mother had a sister who did not survive. I don't know what happened to her, she never spoke about it. I never asked my mother or my father any questions. I was born in a refugee camp on the border, but even about myself, I never thought of getting into it." When asked to explain why she didn't ask her parents about their experiences or her own difficult first years in the camp Sandra paused and hesitatingly responded, "Why bring up sensitive issues, and besides, the older generation of Khmer don't really speak about these things . . . . You don't spill your guts, you just deal with things on your own." Penny too appeals to Khmer normative behavior to account for silence:

> It's one thing for us to know that they suffered but it's another thing to talk about it. They don't bring it up and we don't ask questions. I don't think they want to get into it. . . . *My people don't talk about suffering,* cry or show emotions. *To allow for the passage of life is a way of living, you just be.*

In great contrast to Jewish-Israeli descendants (who made no reference to Jewish-Israeli normative forms of familial interaction), Cambodian descendants present cultural explanations to account for familial silence.[16] Penny also hints at the fact that the culture specific curtailment of expressions of emotion in general is part and parcel of a Khmer "way of living" or mode of cultural being instrumental to maintaining "the passage of life" or the state of "just being."

In the same vein, approximately half of the Cambodian descendants surprisingly appealed to "fundamental" (Grillo 2003) essential Khmer and even Asian "difference" to account for familial silence. Rachel, for example, asserts, "We [Khmer] don't speak our minds easily. *We're born that way."* Seth refers even more blatantly to stereotypical ethnocultural alterity, "My family is a *typical Asian family*. We don't talk so much, we don't discuss things at the table the way others do."[17] Craig too asserts, "We Asians, we learn at a very young age to keep things inside—we have a *culture of silence, they don't talk, we don't ask."*

Keith too speaks of cultural difference while directly challenging the PTSD construct: "The older generation in Canada, they don't talk. It's taboo. It's problematic to ask them questions, that's *just who we are. It's not that we're traumatized or something, we don't talk about it because that's just Cambodian culture.*" Although, according to the therapeutic discourse, silence might signify the presence of repressed traumatic memory, according to Keith's "narrative truth" it is Khmer cultural normative behavior and not trauma that sustains familial silence. Moreover, the descendants above all highlight a lay awareness of the differential interpretation of and relative value accorded to speech and silence in different cultures (Crapanzano 2004).

Although one might wonder whether the above accounts are merely cases of self-stereotyping, as Ong (1995) and Mathews (2000) note, despite the rhetoric of universalism in academic, biomedical, or pedagogic circles, first- and second-generation Southeast Asian immigrants are comparatively far less vocal about their emotions, particularly suppressing the expression of emotional distress. Kim and Marcus (2002) and Butler, Lee, and Gross (2007) find that Asian suppression of emotional responses is strategically undertaken for prosocial reasons of sustaining interactional harmony and does not yield social anxiety as it does for Euro-Americans. Silence in intergenerational interaction takes on additional cultural modalities as according to Mathews (2000) it is considered improper for Asian young people to question elders regarding what might be emotively disturbing. In tune with these findings, mental health practitioners have noted that the cultural avoidance of speech surrounding emotionally distressing mat-

14. The above comparison is also impacted by the constantly changing dynamic of political and cultural changes both in Israel and in Cambodia surrounding collective and personal commemoration and particularly the dramatic turn of events pertaining to the truth tribunal.

15. It should be noted that Khmer descendants were far more reticent than Israeli descendants. Their responses were on the whole briefer than those of Israeli descendants.

16. Beyond the fact that the multicultural context of Canada may promote the kind of politics of identity that entails reflexivity regarding the Khmer-Canadians' unique cultural heritage, the encounter with me as Other may have allowed for reflexive cultural self-presentation.

17. For a discussion on Asian silence see also Dunlop (1999).

ters is expressed in the Khmer idiom of distress known as *kit chraen*, or "thinking too much" (van de Put and Eisenbruch 2002). Ethnopsychological "treatment" of "thinking too much" calls for the distraction of the sufferer by talking to them about enriching aspects of their lives, so that they not dwell on difficult emotions.[18]

Culture or Context of Silence?

Khmer descendant awareness of Cambodian or Asian culturally particular silence stands out most blatantly in comparison to Jewish-Israeli tacit and unvocalized references to what has been interpreted as Jewish cultural paradigms of memory and commemoration. It is important however to consider whether the above representation of Khmer emotional restraint as Khmer or Asian silence may have emerged in the multicultural setting of Canadian society, where Cambodian youth are grappling with the identity politics of difference and the push and pull of integration and cultural revival. In contrast, the Jewish particular ethos of Holocaust memory and commemoration has long since become canonized as the nation state's grand narrative and civil religion (Feldman 2008) allowing the normative practices of familial and collective memory to become taken for granted aspects of everyday life. Although they were most certainly exceptions in the larger Khmer sample, a number of descendants did voice awareness of the role of socioeconomic and political contexts in defining the contours of familial silence. Their negotiation between the constitutive power of culture and context is indicative of the dialectic at the heart of descendant legacies.[19]

As Sarah explains, "Cambodians do not openly share their problems, they just deal with it. . . . There's a lot of *pressure just to survive* and there's no time or energy to share your feelings, *anyway, Cambodians don't share their feelings*. . . . I did speak to my father once when I was twelve . . . but I didn't want to open old wounds." Larry also refers to the more pressing and multiple problems shared by the Cambodian immigrants in Canada, but he provides a further piece of the emergent cultural puzzle to account for parental silence assuming nevertheless that social change will inevitably impact Khmer silence: "I think my parents were ashamed of what happened to them. . . . They thought it happened because they were weak. *Silence is strength and if you speak about it—it makes you weak*. The stronger the community gets, I think they might start to speak about it, but now they still have too many problems to solve."

For both Sarah and Larry, the imminent struggle for survival in the socioeconomic context of everyday immigrant life can account for the silence surrounding the genocide. It should be noted however that even when considering the link between familial silence and the macro social context, both Sarah and Larry interpret contextual challenges through a culture-specific lens of Khmer cultural difference. Khmer do not "talk about feelings anyway" (Sarah) and "silence remains a form of strength" (Larry) regardless of context.

Moreover, although diverse, almost all the above accounts depict silence as signifying strength rather than psychological pathology or maladaptive intergenerational relations. In contrast to the case of Holocaust descendants, one does not sense that Cambodian parental silence was experienced as the oppressive "presence of absence," or as a "cloud" or "echo" hovering over the lived experience of the family. As will be discussed below, the silence described by the Khmer respondents also does not embed alternative silent forms of presence such as person-object interaction or embodied practices of genocide survival but rather to facilitate the absence or attenuation of engagement with the genocide past. Might one characterize this absence as forgetting? Sam insists that silence need not imply forgetting:

> S: We Cambodians don't like to speak about the past. Especially if you experienced bad things you keep it inside. We don't share anything private, and if you do it's only in the family . . . and even with your family . . . not much. If it comes up . . . we just listened. They told the story and we just listened. The story told itself, we just let them tell it.
>
> C: Did you ever think of asking questions?
>
> S: If you interrupt . . . the details don't reveal themselves. There is really no need anyway for the details. Everybody understands suffering and does not need affirmation of what kind it was . . . *for a mind to indulge in such misery does not breed the kind of attitude the Khmers have, Khmers are strong, proud, forgiving but not forgetful.*

Sam's subtext appears to hint at the incompatibility of voicing genocidal suffering on the one hand and strength and forgiveness on the other. However, despite assumptions that remembrance is dependent on testimonial voice, Sam also seems to be saying that silence need not imply forgetting. Yet again, what kind of presence might allow for remembering without commemorative voice? Did descendants experience a silent alternative form of genocidal presence and transmission in the home as did the Israeli descendants or do Khmer cultural norms surrounding personal or collective suffering

18. In fieldwork I undertook in the summer of 2010 in Cambodia (Kidron 2011), one descendant noted that she was advised by a mental health practitioner that she and her siblings distract her distressed mother with positive dialog about the family when she the survivor recalls her genocide suffering. This appears to have been an alternative to silent endurance. Although accounts of this practice did not arise in interviews in Canada or in other interviews in Cambodia, it parallels references in the literature to the Khmer idiom of distress known as *kit chraen*, or literally "thinking too much" (van de Put and Eisenbruch 2002), where victims who think about suffering are distracted by others and encouraged not to dwell on difficult pasts. The avoidance of thinking too much about suffering appears also consistent with cultural precepts discussed below regarding the Khmer marginalization of memory of suffering.

19. I would like to thank Nicolas Argenti for his insights regarding this dialectic (see Kidron 2009*a*) and Argenti's and Schramm's extensive contribution in the preparation of an earlier attempt to grapple with preliminary comparative findings (Kidron 2009*a*).

and strength promote total absencing of the past and forgetting?

Silent Presence or the Normative Absence of the Genocidal Cambodian Past?

Contrary to the Holocaust descendant sample, the majority of Cambodian descendants do not depict a matrix of silent genocidal presence in the Cambodian home. There were no accounts of parent-child silent face-work, interaction with surviving objects, or food, health or risk-taking related embodied practices of survival. At the end of my interviews, I asked descendants whether, despite the silence they described, they had experienced "the presence of the genocide in their homes," and all but two descendants replied either that they had not or did not understand the question. The two descendants who did depict the material presence of the past in the home described memory-work at domestic shrines that included photos of their relatives who had perished in the genocide. It is important to note, however, that in contrast to Aliza's person-object interaction above, these photos were embedded in an array of other nongenocide-related family relics, part of the familial meditative corner facilitating the "merit-making" related to the engagement with and commemoration of all family ancestors (Mortland 1994) regardless of the nature of their death.[20] When asking Seth about memory-work at the shrine, he explained he too would access "merit from the dead" but insisted, "All the dead are the same . . . there's no difference how or when they died. We respect them all and get merit from all of them." Seth's account points to an important distinction between the perpetual and taken-for-granted domestic presence, engagement and sustained relations with all ancestral dead in Khmer homes (or on the publicly celebrated Festival of the Dead, or Pchum Ben), without any reference to the genocide or nongenocide context in which they died, and the Jewish-Israeli practices of domestic engagement almost solely and particularly with the presence of Holocaust past.[21] Yet despite the pointed absence of presence of the genocide past in Khmer silent embodied interaction and materially mediated interaction with ancestors, is there an alternative form of genocide presence in the home?

Verbal Fragmentary Transmission of Genocidal Past

Parallel to the case of Holocaust descendants, a majority of Cambodians describe the occasional and spontaneous fragmentary verbal references to the genocide past. As in the Holocaust case, these references take two forms: short dicta and the longer yet no less fragmentary mythic tales of survival, both embedding explicit moral lessons regarding valorized modes of being. Echoing numerous Khmer accounts, Craig recalls his mother's commentary on the world: "She'd say, 'keep your eyes open, people can be bad, there are those who might hurt you, and you can never know.'" Aiming not only to transmit their view of the world and tools of survival, Cambodian parents would also use the dictum to discipline and educate what they perceived as potentially spoiled children. Unlike most of the more empathic descendants, Mike resented his father's remarks: "I'm sick of my father telling me, 'you're lazy, when I was your age I carried shit all day on my back.' I don't have to feel bad or lazy because of that, things are different now." Although the above dicta are not situated within a wider historical narrative, they provided glimpses of the death-world that their parents had experienced, and they also morally frame the descendant worldview. This point is articulated by Ken: "I guess it would have been important for us to document our parents' story, but parts of the story would always get lost anyway, and what's really important is not the story but the themes and universal values that are under the surface, that's what we need to pass on."

Mythic Tales

Far less than the Holocaust sample, only 5 out of 23 Cambodian descendant accounts relate mythic tales of survival. Although relatively infrequent, these mythic tales also embed moral messages and validated key scenarios of survival. Sean recalls:

> My mother would tell me, "You think you're tough, but if I dump you in the woods you wouldn't last a day, because you wouldn't know what to do. I know what to do. You grew up in Toronto . . . I made it in Toronto with nothing in my pocket. I've lived in those camps. I know what it's like to look for and eat grasshoppers, I know what it feels like to have bombs falling down next to you. I know what it's like to watch a kid die in front of you. See kids deserted on the road and you want to pick them up but you can't because you need to watch out for your own, so that's why you need to keep working hard." A couple a days ago my mom fought with my sister. She nagged at me that I don't help her with my sister. Now that I'm older I think I understand now . . . that you gotta work hard and watch out for your own.

From hunger to near-death experience, the witnessed ex-

20. In contrast once again to Holocaust descendant accounts above, memory-work at the shrine did not entail any intersubjective bonding with their parents. It is difficult to determine whether the absence of bonding is related to the solitary votive nature of this form of prayer or whether intimate parent child interaction would breach the rather strict limits surrounding intergenerational emotive interaction (Mathews 2000).

21. During participant observation at the Festival of the Dead, or Pchum Ben, Khmer worshipers asserted that there was no difference between prayers to and for the genocide dead and those who had died in other circumstances. In great contrast, the Jewish absence of daily "mundane" interaction with non-genocide-related deceased ancestors and the marked engagement with the genocide dead and the conditions of the death-world in which they perished points to the relative domestic presence of the Holocaust past (as event and not just as "relations") and in comparison the relative absence of the Khmer genocide past in the Cambodian home.

ecution of innocent lives and the moral crisis of showing a blind eye to suffering, the survivor leads her son vicariously through hell to transmit a lesson of hard work, responsibility, and family solidarity. Despite his young age of 17, Sean adopts his mother's worldview in the practice of everyday life.

Betty recounts her mother's battle to survive alone after she lost her entire family. This tale creates an exceptionally symbiotic emotional link between mother and daughter as her tale of survival includes Betty as her yet unborn child:

> My mom told me how my father was killed, her parents, two sisters, and a brother all in one day. She was pregnant with me and wanted to die . . . but she knew she had to struggle to survive for my sake. She had to pretend to be illiterate so the Khmer Rouge wouldn't kill her and dirty her face so they wouldn't see how white she was [the rural peasant class was often darker skinned]. After all that you can't help but realize how life is precious and appreciate every minute.

For Betty, the events of the transmitted historical tale may be perceived as her own personal foundational narrative. As reflected in the Jewish tales above, and in Sean's tale, all genocidal domestic myths (Natanson 1970) may be read as moral founding events, framing one's moral universe and shaping descendant meaning-worlds.[22]

Traumatic Legacies

The great majority of Cambodian Canadians interviewed asserted that neither their parents nor themselves suffered from the psychosocial scars of genocide. In great contrast to the Holocaust sample, they also did not refer to any form of descendant emotional wound or different emotional mode of being. Interestingly, in tune with Panter-Brick and Eggerman (2010) and McKinney's (2007) findings regarding the primary impact of socioeconomic hardship on trauma victims and their families, a number of descendants attributed their parents' emotional crises not to the genocide past but to their economic adversity and difficult acclimation to Canadian life, while only one descendant, a mental health practitioner, attributed these crises to war-related post-trauma.[23] It should be noted that mental health practitioners describe the prevalence of the cultural stigma surrounding mental illness in Cambodian communities (Hinton et al. 2006).

Most unexpected however, were the much more frequent and lengthy unsolicited references to Cambodian culture, specifically Buddhist precepts, as a source of resilience accounting for the absence of trauma-related suffering. Ken explains, "Buddhism tells us that suffering is a part of life. This helped my father get over his traumatic experience. Belief systems like Buddhism are meant to strengthen people and help them succeed." Karl's comparison of his parents' attitudes also brings home the contribution of Buddhist beliefs:

> My grandfather was a Buddhist monk. He learned peace of mind and how to deal with suffering and passed it on to my mother. She can tell me about the bad that happened but also about how you can get over it, and she teaches me that life has a good side to it too. My father, on the other hand, he still hasn't dealt with what happened because he isn't connected to his spiritual side.

Sam was particularly insightful regarding the topic of trauma:

> The literature talks about these people [survivors] as victims who have been traumatized and that they're sick and miserable. I felt that these people were really strong and healthy and not weak or sick. And after they survived it made them even stronger. Like my father said, during the Y2K thing [panic about a technology crash at turn of millennium] that "nothing could beat me now, I lived through much worse. I can survive on almost no food. I've done it before I can do it again." So I think they were really resilient, really strong enough to start their lives again. And they know they survived because they were strong.

Regarding Buddhism Sam is no less expressive:

> I think the mentality, the way you live your life in general effects how you experience suffering. They believe in karma, so they believe the fact that it happened, your suffering, or death, is an effect of natural causes. . . . They accept what happened to them . . . not being angry, bitter or vengeful. . . . Acceptance here does not warrant the fact that it is acceptable conduct, but rather that it happened, it's horrible but we must move on because it was just a matter of karma.

I asked Sam if it was possible that the Khmer may still have suffered the long-term effects of trauma despite what he describes as Buddhist acceptance. He responded, "The nature of the strength that prevails above all else leads me to believe that the effects of trauma are negligible. . . . Trauma is like Atkins diet 2.0, it's just the next fad." On the subject of intergenerationally transmitted trauma, Sam adds, "They say things can affect you even in the womb . . . these are just conjectures . . . I was very young [in the refugee camp], and what affects you is the context where you grew up and for me that was Canada, and I have no recollections of the early years, so it didn't affect me."

22. As in the case of the Holocaust descendants, Cambodian respondents were asked whether they felt that the genocide had in any way defined their sense of self, their attitudes about others, and their view of the world. As reflected in the dictum and mythic tales, respondents highlighted their view of the ideal self as stoic, hard working, and committed to their families. Once again echoing the Holocaust sample they also asserted that they could not help be wary of those who may wish them ill.

23. Sarah asserts, "Our community is struggling with poverty, unemployment and substance abuse. Many of us come from broken families. Our parents' lives were disrupted and they will never be able to really pull their lives together here in Canada. All this contributes to their emotional distress." When telling Sarah that my other respondents attributed their parents' emotional battles to the socioeconomic status and difficult acclimation to Canadian life she mentioned and not to genocide-related trauma, she responded that this reflected their ignorance and not the Cambodian reality.

How are we to understand the above evocation of Buddhist principles? Although often ignored, religious canon as well as lay religious sensibilities act as critical mechanisms for the intergenerational transmission and preservation of cultural legacies as these sensibilities embed normative modes of being, encapsulating the ideal moral order and schemas of selfhood (Mortland 1994; Ong 1995; Wessels and Strang 2008:203–205). In times of social transition and rupture, religion may become an ideological resource with which to resist culture loss and assimilation or a more resistant means to revive difference. In the case of Cambodian communities in the diaspora, Smith-Hefner (1994:26) has found that Khmer self-identity is strongly associated with Theravada Buddhism to the point where Christian converts are considered traitors to Khmer culture. Scholars of Cambodian Buddhism highlight a number of key cosmological principles in the Khmer moral universe that have taken center stage in the Cambodian lay interpretation of the genocide and its aftermath (Collins 1990; Hinton 2008; Thompson 2006). Echoing the monk's critique of Jewish memory and descendant accounts of "resilience" or immunity to trauma, memories of past suffering and victimhood must be accepted as one's karma, without undue attachment to the past as all material existence is impermanent. Redemption is to be found through the long incremental process of *samsara*—death and rebirth, potentially endangered by cycles of violence and vengeance. Justice will be meted out individually and collectively through karma while any individual attempt to dwell on evil and suffering will lead to individual illness and social distress (see Nickerson and Hinton 2011). Like the cycle of death and rebirth, even the most difficult of pasts can be "buried" and regenerated with the proper forward-looking attitudes (Hughes 2003; Langford 2009; Thompson 2006).

Two important caveats, however, may be added to the above analysis. First, one might assume a gap between Buddhist cannon and lay descendant knowledge of Buddhism and question the relevance of concepts such as karma and merit in contemporary descendant experience. Beyond the contention that the ethnographer should accept respondents' phenomenological lived experience (in our case of Buddhist frames) as narrative truth (Kidron 2009*b*); as Hinton notes (2008:77), lay local religious idioms (regardless of their canonical equivalence) receive their force from ontological resonances of deeper cultural logics and cosmology allowing the researcher to unpack how these deeper cosmological principals and related idioms structure descendant responses.

Second, in the Cambodian-Canadian diasporic community, appeals to Buddhist readings of experience are most certainly impacted and perhaps even activated by the multicultural Canadian context. As Keith reflexively noted, he joined the Asian students' club and began to explore his heritage for the first time when he discovered "how different he was from white students." Hinting again at the dialectic between culture and context, the unique meaning-world of karma might not have been as attractive, had Keith successfully integrated into "white" majority culture. Khmer Buddhism may be one of many cultural scripts available to the young Bricoleur, and not all scripts solely resonate with Khmer cultural sensibilities.

Commemoration

Perhaps even more surprising than descendant attitudes toward traumatic legacies, is their disinterest in and in some cases complete rejection of all forms of commemorative practice, be it first- or second-generation commemoration. When accounting for their general disinterest in commemoration, descendants offered folk theories pertaining to the role of history and memory in the Cambodian worldview—once again appealing to lay understandings of Buddhism. Ron explained that "time itself from a Buddhist perspective was in fact an illusion," making collective memory superfluous. The majority asserted that although it was important to know about the "Pol Pot time," the genocide should not be considered more important than other events in their past. In great contrast to the perceived centrality of the Holocaust in Jewish history and collective memory, Penny explains, "We accept the past and deal with the present, the genocide is over, we look toward the future. It was just one event and not even a major one." When asking Seth if he would be interested in establishing a memorial in Canada to commemorate the genocide, he asserts, "I don't think we need one, everyone remembers their own dead privately at home. We could have a heritage and history museum, though." Asking how much of the museum would be dedicated to the genocide, he appeared confused and asked me to explain a number of times, until he responded, "Everything would be represented equally, the genocide is just one part of our history."

Again in contrast to the distinct and extensive commemorative practice surrounding Holocaust memory and martyrology of Israeli war dead, Rachel more directly links her view of commemoration and what she terms the Khmer attitude toward memorialization of the dead when she explains: "Khmer don't see any difference between remembering those who died a 'natural' death and those who died in the genocide—all of them visit us on Pchum Ben (Festival of the Dead) and we celebrate with all of them in the same way." Contrary to Rachel's account, canonical Buddhism does in fact distinguish between those who die a violent death or are deprived of proper burials (as in the case of genocide victims) and those who do not, as the former require corrective ceremonies to put the dead to rest. However, once the deviation is ceremonially rectified, all dead are ultimately commemorated in the same manner (Langford 2009; Thompson 2006).

If the genocide is only one of many events in history and survivors or descendants do not feel obliged to make that past publicly present in any distinctive manner, what of the transmission of the genocide past to future generations, is there to be no future genocide legacy among Cambodians in Canada? When asking Seth whether he wishes to transmit anything about the genocide to his children he said, "No, not

openly, unless they asked me questions." When asked about her children, Rachel too, whose father had lost 200 relatives in the genocide, asserts, "Why burden them with this? We accept the past and look to the present."

Referring to the content of potential transmission, and echoing Israeli descendants, Kevin asserts that there is no point to transmit the story of the genocide to a third generation because, "We cannot tell it as our parents would, something would always be lost, anyway, what is truly important is not the story. . . the values that are under the surface of the story." Larry too critiques the prospect of public commemoration, explaining, "Telling thousands of people about genocide turns the event into public property and then it loses its value, we need to tell it only to those who can really appreciate its meaning, its sentiment. Our parents should tell it, but only to those who can relate to its meaning." Both Kevin and Larry's text account for the disinterest in the intergenerational transmission of genocide history that would lack authentic historical value and sentiment. Yet they do highlight the one valorized function of transmission namely the perpetuation of key values or "meaning" embedded in these tales. Recalling the findings regarding dicta and mythic tales, the one and only surviving form of presence of the past constituting future genocide legacies appears to be key moral values emergent from the genocide and the resultant ideal modes of (forward-looking) being. It is interesting to note that if the above children of Khmer survivors do not take on themselves the social role of carrier and transmitter of a genocide story and/or carrier and transmitter of an embodied form of memory, as did the Holocaust descendants above, it may be erroneous to call these children of Khmer survivors genocide descendants.

Yet without the genocide "story," can the transmission of genocide-related values function as a form of remembrance? Although genocide engendered these key values, can their transmission sustain the commemorative presence of genocide or will the event ultimately be forgotten? Sam's view of future transmission provides an answer:

> Now if I have children who are as inquiring as me, then I'm pretty sure they will discover what happened in the past, but none of this is *relevant to the situation they are in* and also it *does nothing in terms of making them better people.* What we ought to do is learn to love them and . . . *pass down the virtues that were taken from our parents* as it pertains to the situations related to the war. *It is important for it to remain in history, but not to be reflected on in the future. A future remembered in good nature is better than a forgotten past reflected upon in sorrow.*

Sam succinctly and critically asserts that only genocide related "virtues" should be passed down to a third generation. The narrowing of descendant legacies is far from accidental as it is aimed to serve an ethical function to "make them better people" while also meeting only "relevant" needs of the contemporary contextual "situation" of Canadian-Cambodians. As for the transmission of the history of genocide, Sam claims it is important for it to "remain in history," yet as Nora (1989) insightfully notes, the historicity of commemorative documentation relegates the past to monumental sites of memory or to the archive preserving only "dead or duty memory." As historical documentation is "frozen," awaiting the occasional reader, historicity allows for the forgetting of lived sensory or embodied memory of the past. This is apparent in Sam's essentially contradictory statement that despite the importance of historicity, the past should not be "reflected upon in the future." Following Sam's rationale, other possible forms of re-presence of a commemorated genocidal past, such as reenactments or practices of survival would be both "irrelevant" to the Khmer situation and would not contribute to their moral careers. The consequent fate of the past is brought home most powerfully in Sam's final words, calling on descendant generations to remember what may be commemorated in "good nature" and not in sorrow. Echoing the monk's critical words at the outset of this paper, remembrance of the past should be selectively engineered to sustain—the good "education" and "nature" of a morally valorous individual creating a model for and of the future Khmer selfhood and society rather than regressively reflecting on the sorrowful and painful past that was and should have been forgotten. For both Sam and the monk, the genocide can be both present and absent, selectively regenerated even in its minimal form of surviving ethically strategic values.

Commemoration in Changing Cultural Contexts

As in the case of silence, traumatic legacies, and Buddhism, it may be possible to trace descendant disinterest in commemoration to identity politics in the Canadian context and not solely to particular Khmer cultural modes of being. A number of descendants contextualized the absence of commemorative practice in Canada. Larry explained, "We don't speak about the past in public because of fear of what others might say, they might reject us." Rachel touches on the most sensitive contextual factor when she hesitatingly asserts, "The Khmer are fearful of revenge, we just want to live, with no trouble. The Khmer Rouge live here too, so we keep silent." Keith provides an interesting synthesis of culture and context:

> Here in Canada, our parents have worked hard, we had no identity, there was no one to teach us who we are, but I started to read about Buddhism, from a book my teacher gave me. Although we suffered, we now have an opportunity to start life anew—a second chance—we are still fresh—we still don't know how to build our lives, we lost so much of our culture. But this is an opportunity to begin again and find the truth. We are all reborn.

Genocide, concomitant culture loss, and postwar legacies of migration are syncretically interpreted through the lens of Buddhist folk theories of rebirth (Thompson 2006), retaining

a forward-looking worldview while conscious of the challenges and temporary obstacles of the immigrant context. Yet as Keith makes clear, Buddhism and the related forward-looking attitude cannot be disentangled from the socioeconomic context of Canadian life—where the local wat and community center work hard to provide youth with a very selective Khmer heritage lost to the genocide and endangered by assimilation. While framing the new truth for Khmer descendants, community leaders might, however, have differently framed the ethnic revival appealing to the politics of victimhood, trauma as heritage, and continued reenactment of loss and suffering had the past been read through alternative cultural paradigms of memory and commemoration. As reflected in recent monumental commemorative projects in Cambodia that seek international legitimacy and collective cohesion through the re-interpreted and enlisted past (deviating from local discourses and practices of memory; see Hinton 2008:66), the Khmer may still go the route of what critical Israeli scholars consider commemoration in the service of xenophobic state nationalism (Feldman 2008).

Discussion

This study has compared the lived experience of transmitted genocidal legacies of Cambodian-Canadian and Jewish-Israeli trauma descendants. Despite important contextual sociopolitical and historical differences, taken together, both case studies similarly deviate from the reductionist descendant profile presented in the literature of the pathological, publicly enlisted, and vocal witness in search of redemption. Set against the above similarities, key differences emerge between the Khmer and Jewish genocide legacies entailing different self-perceived senses of emotional vulnerability/resilience, divergent channels of memory, and forgetting and differing genocide-related moral modes of being. These differences challenge key universalizing axioms in trauma theory, Holocaust and genocide scholarship and humanitarian practice, thereby allowing for an empirically grounded deconstruction of the Euro-Western universalized semiotics of suffering (Fassin 2008). Finally, findings raise important implications surrounding the constitutive role of particular cultural, spiritual, and cosmological worldviews in the construction of the above divergent genocide legacies.

Deconstructing the Universal Semiotics of the Traumatized or Resilient Self

Both the Khmer and Jewish descendants challenge the pathologizing construct of transmitted PTSD and trajectory of therapeutic working through and healing. Moving beyond the question of pathology into more subtle forms of emotive experience, the differences between the two samples are instructive. The Khmer sample not only resists the stigma of pathology, they also insist on "immunity" to trauma-related emotional distress, appealing to Buddhist forward-looking modes of being and valorized "forgetting" to account for emotional wellness. In great contrast, Jewish descendants present their "scratch" as trauma-related marker of emotional difference. The Holocaust descendant's emotive scar is subjectively interpreted as a Jewish-Israeli culturally valorized form of commemorative re-membering and as such not experienced as univocally distressing and perhaps sacrificially worn as empowering badge of honor. Both accounts thus defy reductionist categories of disorder and even distress as we know it.

In light of the fact that both Jewish and Cambodian descendants "normalize" the psychosocial legacy of familial trauma, the comparative study also calls for a critique of the concept of resilience.[24] Despite scholarly interest in resilience (Bonanno 2004), the majority of accounts present trauma victims and their descendants as psychosocially impaired. Positive qualities such as strength of spirit, human endurance, and even hope (Eggerman and Panter-Brick 2010), are portrayed as inevitably copresent (or as waging a valiant battle) with distress and at times disorder.[25] According to transcultural psychiatrists and psychological and medical anthropologists, culture, in the form of ideological and religious beliefs, cosmology, and/or national, communal, and familial bonds, may act as a "protective layer" buffering the self from the deleterious impact of traumatic stress (Eggerman and Panter-Brick 2010; Eisenbruch, de Jong, and van de Put 2004). A critical reading of the concepts of resilience and protective layer discloses that the core self—whether benefitting from the "protection" of culture or somehow deprived of culture's protective shield—is assumed to be essentially vulnerable to trauma.[26]

If we were to open up the subjective space in which the Euro-Western self dialogs with traumatic experience and explore the discursive framing of the postmodern "troubled self" (Gubrium and Holstein 2000), it becomes clear that psychoanalytic concepts of selfhood, early traumatic family dramas, working through, and closure (Illouz 2008) syncretically intertwine with Christian axioms of confession, salvation, and redemption (Fassin 2008; Hinton 2008; Langford 2009) to constitute individual vulnerability, ontological insecurity, and perpetual dependence on agents of healing (Cushman 1990). Taking into account neoliberal discourse, the suffering self has the inalienable right to wellness (Pupavac 2006; Shweder 2000) and as such must be saved from toxic family relations

24. In the tradition of critical scholars such as Young (1995) and Lambek and Antze (1996), it is not my intention to make light of trauma-related victimhood nor to normalize psychological suffering that for some, despite the data presented herein, may make for a debilitating legacy. Rather, I assert that the case studies present evidence of alternative experiences of selfhood, diversity, and resultant responses to personal and familial suffering that have been elided by the above Eurocentric conceptions of suffering selfhood, traumatic experience, and therapeutic memory-work.

25. Echoing this duality of strength and disorder, the term "resilience" signifies the ability to recover normalcy after the potentially debilitating stress of adversity (Dickson-Gomez 2002; Horwitz and Wakefield 2006).

26. I am indebted to Laurence Kirmayer for enriching discussions on the topic of resilience.

and silent scars of the past. It is voice and testimony that mark not only one's freedom of confessional speech but the means through which confession in therapeutic memory-work purges the self of the burden of past experience facilitating closure and healing.[27]

Considering the above "genealogy" of the suffering self and its trajectory of memory-work and healing, the Euro-Western therapeutic gaze might erroneously envision the silent sacrificial containment of the past (in the Israeli case) or the religiously framed selective forgetting of the past (in the Cambodian case) as psychosocial maladaptive behavior, unfinished mourning, repression, or denial. Yet descendants do not experience the self as essentially vulnerable, troubled, and in need of redemption. Turning again to the "alternative" semiotics of suffering in our case studies, the Jewish-Israeli self emerges as superficially and sacrificially wounded (scratched), yet Jewish precepts frame the experience of the wound as part and parcel of filial and collective moral obligations, thus constituting the endurance of scars as a valorized and normative mode of being. Although the world is certainly perceived as a dangerous place, survival and "redemption" are guaranteed precisely through the perpetual albeit silent embodied re-memberance of the past in the present. In the Cambodian case, the descendant perceives the self as immune to genocidal psychosocial wounds as Buddhist precepts disable recursive backward-looking memory-work and intergenerational transmission of traces of the past. Although the world is perceived as a dangerous place, redemption is framed as dependent on the acceptance of the illusive quality of being and suffering and future moral rectitude rather than on personal commitment to vocal or silent commemoration of suffering. Thus, only the moral lessons of genocide and the moral modes of being can be considered valuable living traces of the past in the present. In both case studies it is apparent that the Eurocentric trajectory toward redemption moving from vulnerability to testimonial voice and working through and finally culminating in closure and the absence of the presence of the past is superfluous. The emergent gap between the Euro-Western semiotics of suffering and the Cambodian and Israeli experience raises serious doubts regarding global intervention in sites of suffering and the act of transcultural "translation" of diverse responses to adversity into languages of pathology and victimization (Fassin 2008) that do not take into account particular cultural selves, worldviews, and trauma-related legacies.

For scholars of traumatic memory, humanitarian workers and mental health practitioners alike, descendant accounts also depict the processes and practices though which alternative genocidal legacies are constituted. Far from the traumatizing killing fields of genocide or the globally exported communal health clinics, the data point to the often-ignored mundane site of the domestic life-world and the everyday banal parent-child microinteractions where silently stoic or "immune" descendants are constituted. In the tacit moments of intergenerational meaning making, religious worldviews constitute the moral and ideological tools with which to survive diversity inseparably interwoven in the life-world as they know it. The case studies call on us to further explore the role of ideological and/or spiritual meaning-worlds (Eggerman and Panter-Brick 2010) in the constitution of what has been conflated under the binary constructs of "traumatized selves" or "resilient selves." In the case at hand, "resilience" might be re-conceptualized not as a reified psychological state—not another global measure of health and illness (Breslau 2004)—but rather as the complex ideational experience of human acceptance and endurance of the ebb and flow of life's challenges, what Kleinman (2006:3) terms "moral" lives "amidst uncertainty."

Memory, Forgetting, and Commemoration

In accordance with Argenti-Pillen (2000), one cannot decipher psychosocial responses to traumatizing events without an in-depth understanding of the way diverse cultures either valorize, marginalize, or disable the acts of remembrance or forgetting. In the Israeli case study, Jewish paradigms of filial obligation particularly to the Holocaust dead valorize embodied practices of survival and emotive wounds as sites of personal and familial genocide memory obviating healing and disabling forgetting. In the Khmer case, Buddhist precepts of karma and Samsara promote acceptance of one's fate and discourage dangerous attachment to the violent past disabling the memory of genocidal suffering. Although the genocide dead are not forgotten, they are enveloped within the wider category of worship and material engagement with seven ancestral generations.

Exploring the everyday process and content of memory-work in the two studies, at first glance domestic silence in both Jewish and Khmer cases appeared to signify the absence of intergenerational transmission of historical accounts and the inevitability of forgetting. Agents of memory might be called for to recover repressed or silent memory, to restore intergenerational dialog blocked by the "wall of silence" so that confessions and testimony could facilitate the purging of painful pasts toward archival documentation and/or personal, familial, and even collective closure and healing. However, if utilizing a broader definition of re-membrance as the process in which the absent past is made present (Handelman 2004), then both case studies point to alternative forms of silent or partially silent presence and remembrance that resist voice.

The subtle forms of silent memory-work further problematize the already porous binary relations between remember-

27. For a comprehensive discussion of the geneology of the therapeutic self in postmodernity, see Illouz (2008), and for a critique of the neoliberal assumptions regarding personal salvation and distress see Shweder (2000). The presupposition that non-Euro-Western societies might require the intervention of global trauma brokers to become liberated from the burden of repressed or denied trauma (and erroneously channel trauma into spiritual or cosmological meaning-worlds) recalls Scott's (2009) thesis regarding Southeast Asian democratic anarchy that resists what might be considered the normative "evolution" toward statehood.

ing and forgetting (see Argenti and Schramm 2009). In the Jewish-Israeli case, alternative forms of nonverbal interaction and embodied memory silently and tacitly embed the presence of genocidal death-worlds in the everyday life-world of the family. From the perspective of descendants, who fear the loss of intimacy and authenticity in public forms of commemoration, it is actually verbal, historical, and collective memory that verge on forgetting. Although there is no parallel matrix of intersubjective and embodied memory in the Khmer household and Cambodian accounts more blatantly speak of the virtues of "forgetting," here too the genocide past is made present via dicta and mythic tales in which genocide-related worldviews and moral modes of being are interwoven and transmitted. If "Khmerness," as descendants know it, encapsulates empowering moral sensibilities emergent from the genocide, then an alternative form of mnemonic "presence" and transmission has most certainly taken place. Although not contributing to a historical canon or to monumental commemorative projects, it sustains the legacy of human perseverance within violent life-death-worlds and thereby challenges our conceptualization of processes of forgetting. Paradoxically, if the valorized legacy of genocide is, as the monk and many respondents assert, a future founded on the moral lessons of the past without looking back "in sorrow," then it is monumental commemoration and representation of evil and past suffering that will culminate in the "forgetting" of the moral sensibilities ethically worthy of remembrance.

Beyond the above alternative forms of silent remembrance, the comparative study also brings into focus a very different content of Israeli and Cambodian memory, in each case pointing to what is considered worthy of remembrance, in the familial life-world. For the Jewish sample, the cloud or echo and the intersubjective moments of face-work with surviving photos constitute the permanent presence of a foreboding past and a bittersweet nostalgic longing for pregenocidal relations and life-worlds. The feeling tone or emotive and embodied sensibilities of lost worlds are sustained as an inevitable part of the texture of everyday life and familial interaction. In great contrast, the feeling tone of genocide and of pregenocide life in Cambodia or genocide-related embodied practices are not sustained in everyday life in Khmer households, but rather only the occasional moral lessons of the past are interwoven in verbal pedagogic tales for future strategic and spiritual guidance. Thus, for the Jewish descendant the "scratch" or wound is the most personal and authentic "site" of commemoration, whereas for the Khmer it is their moral modality of selfhood. In the Jewish case, it may be asserted that the "purpose" and outcome of remembrance is the sustained preservation of the lived bodily and emotive experience of the past within the present, whereas for the Khmer it is only the ideational lessons of the distorted and corrected moral universe that must be preserved and instrumentalized in the present and future.[28]

The above subtle differences between the Jewish embodied genocidal past and the Khmer instrumental moral universe, are pointedly reflected in descendant differential attitudes toward commemoration and generational transmission. As descendant familial memory-work did not entail historical testimonial accounts of the past, neither sample wishes or is equipped to document or transmit genocidal oral history. More importantly, familial modes of re-presentation or absencing of the past have shaped descendant perceptions of the centrality or marginality of any form of public commemoration and defined if, how, when, and where one is to publicly commemorate. For Jewish descendants, there are two distinct but equally valued forms of commemoration: individual and familial silent presence, in the body, in the emotional mode of being, in practice, in interaction, and in moral lessons on the one hand; and public historical documentation and ceremonial re-membrance on the other hand in which the majority of descendants do not participate. For the Khmer, if the genocide past is located in one's spiritual and moral universe, in everyday moral choices, and not in shared familial or communal re-presentation, then the concept of commemoration is a contradiction of terms.

The relative absence of an intersubjectively sustained, reenacted, or embodied presence of the genocide past in Khmer households and the descendant rejection of the viability of public forms of commemoration are echoed in the absence of genocide-related public memory-work in Khmer communities in Montreal. This perhaps strategic absencing of the genocide in the communal sphere raises ethical questions regarding the already controversial Euro-Western genocide memorials in Cambodia (Hinton 2008; Hughes 2003). "Dark-touristic" museology, often modeled on iconic Holocaust memorials, entails the semiotics of death on display (Lennon and Foley 1999) incongruent with Cambodian death-related practices pertaining, for example, to the public display of unburied remains (Langford 2009). In the same vein, the establishment of Cambodian truth tribunals modeled after Euro-Western conceptions of testimonial memory, confessional voice, and Christian precepts of forgiveness and retributive justice has triggered critique of truth regimes that deviate from local meaning-worlds (Hinton 2008:79; Wilson 2001). If the Cambodian descendant self emerges as the sole site of the past, not as a damaged or subjugated self in search of confessional voice, wishing to purge and heal the self, but one that silently contains and sustains the past interwoven in a moral forward-looking mode of being, then what are the ramifications of the global imposition of transnational therapeutics and monumental genocide memory-work that regressively re-presents distressful "bad memory?" Although the cultural translation of Western commemorative practices or tribunals in today's glocal environment need not entail the production of similarity or identity but rather may

28. If despite their important differences, both Jewish and Khmer samples maintain some form of presence of the past in everyday life, then it might be claimed that co-presence of the past in the present has altered the way descendants experience the linear flow of temporality.

create a syncretic and creative transformation of local Khmer culture (Bhabha 1994), the question remains, What is lost in translation (Clifford 1997) when these universal languages and signs of suffering differentially impact particular meaning-worlds?

Universalizing Culturally Particular Life-Worlds

The above discussion has repeatedly highlighted the constitutive role of culture in descendant legacies. Particular cultural sensibilities are deployed in references to Asian silence, Buddhist acceptance, and the Jewish burden of memory. Culture-specific religious, cosmological, and spiritual worldviews also shape the very distinct contours of Jewish emotive "markers" of difference ("scratches") and the Khmer experience of well-being and moral rectitude. Despite traces of a revival of debate surrounding culture with a big C (Borofsky et al. 2001; Fisher 1999; Grillo 2003) and recent interest in applied cultural competency, ethnographic explorations of cultural alterity in its own right remain problematic (Abu Lughod 1991; Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Studies of cultural alterity often evoke the scepter of essentialism or anxiety over the elision of macro political, historical, or socioeconomic factors. Sociopolitical contextual analyses do in fact allow for the more comforting route of translation of particular responses to suffering into a universal common language of power, subjugation, and victimhood, while seemingly giving voice to the cultural diversity of local idioms of distress.[29] Therapeutic discourse and trauma theory has also emerged as a discursive universalizing force, classifying, condensing, and regulating the diverse lived experiences of suffering into one common language of suffering. The above findings call for renewed attention to the "particular" limits of this universalizing axiomatic language, where translation of Khmer or Jewish descendant accounts into the universalized Euro-Western semiotics of suffering, would have ultimately overshadowed subtly unique and multifaceted responses to genocide. As Levinas (Peperzak and Levinas 1993: 109–121) warns, the other in all its alterity is "always more than can be contained," and we would do well "to allow others to reveal themselves" in all their diversity. This will depend no doubt on whether we can see beyond the horizons of our own particular epistemological axioms and rhetoric of salvation that have reified a universal vulnerable suffering self.

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29. From a universalist perspective, the fact that religious paradigms are central to the above analysis of difference is particularly "discomforting" as religious precepts are often mistakenly considered regressive or associated with fundamentalism (Ewing 2006) or risk slippage into generalization (Abu Lughod 2002).

Comments

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How do bodies remember (Fassin 2007)? Or, more precisely, how do they remember violence? The question has been at the heart of much anthropological research in recent years, as ethnography has opened itself to new issues and new fieldwork about situations of oppression, persecution, war, and genocide (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). But they were not the first ones to address this issue. For more than 100 years, psychiatrists and psychologists have provided their response: trauma. Whether they consider it to be located in the psyche or in the brain, whether they name it "traumatic neurosis," which involves mistrust, as was the case in the first half of the twentieth century, or call it "post-traumatic stress disorder," which legitimizes the victims, as it was presented in the past 3 decades, they see trauma as the signature of the violence: it is the scar attesting to it—in a court, before an insurance company, and, perhaps even more significantly, in the face of history (La Capra 2001). The problem is that anthropologists, when they go to places where violence occurred or when they talk to people who endured it, often do not find such empirical evidence of trauma.

This is, at least in part, the observation Carol Kidron makes on the basis of several dozen interviews of children of Jewish Holocaust survivors in Israel and of Cambodian genocide survivors in Canada. Not only do these second-generation victims not recognize their own experience in terms of the clinical entity one presumes they are affected by, but they also insist on the silence their parents kept in their presence about the hardship they lived through and the suffering resulting

from it. Although the author suggests that it might be a form of psychological resilience in the case of the Holocaust survivors, and a sort of cultural resistance in the case of the Cambodian survivors, the silence of both parents and children is troubling. It is troubling because the existence of trauma, a notion that alternately refers to a set of symptoms and metaphorically to a specific experience, is generally taken for granted: it has become part of our commonsense. It is troubling also because trauma is invoked publicly by the spokespersons of the victims, those who transform their misfortune into a moral cause and make claims for rights in the name of their suffering.

Like Carol Kidron, several doctoral students and young scholars in anthropology working in Guatemala, Bosnia, Congo, and other sites where large-scale massacres were perpetrated, have told me over the years of their ethnographic distress as they were not able to identify empirical traces of the tragedies people had lived through, while nongovernmental organizations and international agencies were not only affirming the high prevalence of trauma but developing assistance programs in which psychiatrists and psychologists searched for symptoms and proposed treatments. Of course, no more than the author of this study did they imply that their findings signified that the survivors and their descendants were not deeply affected by such tragedies. Yet the imported and imposed mental health categories did not seem to grasp their experience and even seemed to be resisted by them: people rejected their victimization through both pathos and pathology. When confronted with this discomfort from my interlocutors, my reaction was to reassure them—anthropologists do not look at the world in the same way and therefore do not see the same things as experts of the psyche do—but also to suggest to them to explore further this discrepancy.

This is what Carol Kidron does, and even if it is probable that her analysis would have been enriched had she been able to go beyond interviews and do observation of the everyday life of those she tactfully studied, her cautious but firm analysis provides four promising lines of reflection. First, traces of these tragic events have to be tracked down in the small facts of the ordinary (Das 2007): the devil of history is in these mundane details. Second, culture shapes the experience and even more clearly the expression of these traces (Kwon 2008): there is no universal way to socially manifest and represent the legacies of violence. Third, economic realities and life adversities impose their immediacy and urgency on people's existence, often preventing the articulation of suffering (Manz 2005): the precariousness of the present weighs on the memory of the past. Fourth, trauma is not only a psychological category, it is also a sign performed in the public sphere to mobilize emotions and solidarities (James 2010): both on the side of the survivors (commemoration for the Jews and concealment for the Cambodians) and of those who intervene in their name (nations, organizations, spokespersons), there is always a politics of trauma.

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The serious comparison of cultural cosmologies (i.e., Kapferer 1988) is rare in today's anthropologies. Kidron, by developing the "particular limits of universalism"—so well phrased, since it positions the universal within the particular and, no less, the limits of universalism (without turning to relativism or reductionism [e.g. Rapport 2007])—is doing serious comparison. Each set of her informants—Jewish-Israelis, Cambodian-Canadians—resonates with distinctively different cosmological premises of how worlds constitute their own, different, self-integrities. The premises relate directly to cultural memory and commemoration, which I raise briefly through rhythms of time.

The obvious: the Judaic cosmos emerged from the radical rupture between the transcendent creator, God, and human being. The creator exists outside and beyond the cosmos of his creation and his eternal existence is independent of his cosmos. God gave to the Jews the basic laws with which to govern their lives, with the promise that when His People are fully worthy—the eschatology of the End of Days—he will raise the dead and create the perfect existence for all. His People have striven ever since to make this so.

This organization embeds a rhythm and pulsation within the Jewish cosmos (and that of the other surviving monotheisms). This rhythm is one of a rising pulsation, ascending toward the transcendent, failing, falling away. This upward pulsation carries the potential for the redemptive moment that will heal the primordial rupture, and this pulsation is repeated through different social units: the 24-hour day, the 7-day week, the month, the year, the seventh year, the fiftieth year. This rhythm of time is pulsating and climactic, morally encoded, lineally moving from high to low, holding within itself impulsions from fragmentation to unification (Handelman 1998:223–233). This too is the rhythm of Jewish holidays, their sorrows remembered in darkness, their overcoming appearing in the light of the following day. This temporal rhythm encourages distinguishing and cherishing those dead whose very pathways to death—self-sacrifice, martyrdom—embody the rhythm itself. Many events of such death are inscribed and recounted throughout Jewish history as the memory of tribulations overcome on the rising way to redemption. God's decision to end time is the ultimate coding of this rhythm of redemption which is no less the rhythm of secular Israeli Jews. I suggest that Kidron's Jewish informants were responding to this deeply cultural rhythm which codes remembrance and commemorates disaster as ontological common-sense.

Buddhist cosmoses are profoundly holistic, holding themselves together primarily from within their own interiority (Handelman and Lindquist 2011:19–28). The historical Buddha never ceased being human. In his extinction of self he became

the infiniteness of cosmos. Yet this was not transcendence but closer to the utter homology of human and cosmos, a profound interiority of cosmos. The *ultimate* rhythm of time accomplished by Theravada Buddhism through *karma* and *samsara* is that of the evenness of the continuousness of the temporal, ending with *nirvana*. Buddhist time is textured differently. Hardly accidental is it that scholars have been attracted to analyzing Buddhism in terms of the interior flows of systems theory (e.g., Macy 1991), while Judaism is so frequently discussed in terms of its categorical legalism. The Jewish commemoration of certain tragic deaths rather than others is fully in keeping with the rupture and rhythm of Jewish time. However, the Cambodian-Canadians are enjoined (here, explicitly by the monk) not to rupture the holistic integrity of *all* the dead, not to value certain dead over others, for this would disturb their karma and that too of the living themselves. The monotheisms do not enable the future that Buddhism does. Monotheists are offered a single life and an infinite hereafter—a mono-life and a mono-hereafter. Buddhists are offered life after life, each depending on and from previous ones, enabling future ones with the ultimate goal of departing existence and becoming cosmic emptiness (itself fullness).

What does this say about the cultural comparison of Jewish-Israeli descendants and Cambodian-Canadians? In a sense, the latter are descendants of themselves, perhaps self-descendants. Is this "the attenuation of familial and communal memory," or is it memory using quite different textures of time, in keeping with the recursive character of Buddhist teleology? In Judaic culture, time is valorized both as history and as metahistory. In both instances, with a powerful linear thrust even as past and present fold into one another. Details of memory are crucial here because this folding easily unfolds into its component time segments, which are known as such through their particulars of memory. Yet, if the very texture(s) of time are relevant to Cambodian Buddhist culture, then perhaps the very *feeling of time* remains even as the particulars of death and past lives depart as irrelevant?

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Memoropolitics and the Cultural Dynamics of Genocide Memory

Carol Kidron presents an illuminating study of the traces of genocide memory in everyday family life among Israeli Jewish descendants of Holocaust survivors and Canadian Khmer descendants of survivors of the Cambodian death camps. She uses person-near ethnography to examine how familial memory practices interact with individual, communal, and societal processes of identity construction and commemoration after genocide.

Trauma theory claims survivors' genocide experiences inevitably leave marks on their descendants. In some versions, the transgenerational effects on descendants mirror the survivors' own trauma—though it is more plausible that descendants' experience will reflect the impact of parental anxiety and overprotectiveness, or else preoccupation, depression, and emotional unavailability.

In her ethnographic work, Kidron has documented the many ways that survivors' silence communicates the trace of genocide within the family, but she does not find much evidence of the traumatic wounds among descendants that trauma theory predicts. In her Israeli sample, most Holocaust descendants—who were well acquainted with trauma theory—declared that their parents suffered from symptoms of post-trauma but felt they themselves did not suffer from transmitted effects of post-traumatic stress disorder. While they did not see themselves as ill, many descendants referred to themselves as "*srutim*," a Hebrew slang word meaning "scratched."

Calling the traces of their parents' suffering "scratches" serves to minimize it. Yet, these scratches were described as not just on the surface but as "part of our flesh" and, thus, intrinsic to the self. This acknowledgment fits well with religious, cultural, and state injunctions to remember the past through identification and enactment. Israeli Jewish descendants valorized the role of carrying genocide memory both as a filial duty and a responsibility for the collective.

In marked contrast, among the Canadian Cambodian participants, Kidron found an "almost total absence of presence of the violent past." They dismissed trauma theory and made repeated references to "Asian silence." This they related to cultural norms of family life, and to a particular Buddhist "mode of being" that does not dwell on the past but purposefully forgets to allow "forward thinking." Emotional containment, restraint and letting go of negative emotions are viewed as marks of maturity and the path toward individual and collective well-being.

Kidron suggests that the ways that both Jewish and Cambodian descendants tended to normalize the legacy of family trauma have implications for our understanding of individual and collective resilience. Resilience may reside not only in individual traits but also in cultural practices and specific strategies may contribute to resilience in the appropriate social context (Kirmayer et al. 2011). Hence, the Israeli "silent sacrificial containment of the past" and the Khmer "religiously framed selective forgetting of the past" reflect particular kinds of culturally based strengths that may work in their respective social contexts.

But questions remain. When Khmer descendants insist on their "immunity" to the emotional sequelae of trauma exposure do they describe a reality or prescribe it for themselves, in harmony with values that connect them to the world of their ancestors and community? When Jewish descendants in

Israel refer to their *srutim*, scratches, as traces of a distinctive Holocaust history, do they affirm historical continuity and solidarity with their families (lost and present) as well as with the larger community and the State (which draws its claims to legitimacy in part from the catastrophe of the Holocaust), or do they obliquely protest against this politically driven burden of memory?

More broadly, to what extent does Kidron's ethnographic account challenge a universalized a Euro-Western semiotics of suffering that underwrites trauma theory and its accompanying therapeutic practices? Elaborating the cultural and sociohistorical embedding of memorial practices certainly has bearing on the consequences of trauma for individual mental health—but it does not entirely answer questions of outcome and adaptation, since it is possible that modes of (non)remembering that meet cultural expectations are morally valorized yet cost individuals something in terms of their subsequent mental health and resilience. The mental health consequences of memorial practices cannot be understood entirely in intrapsychic terms since they involve social transactions (Kirmayer 1996). There may be major social costs for the individual who rejects dominant ideologies, just as there may be psychological costs for those who rigidly adhere to the prescribed social script. This points to the need to study the psychological and social dynamics of trade-offs in the person's ongoing effort to construct a socially viable and valorized self (Wikan 1990). This work occurs at the junction of interpersonal interaction and larger discursive formations, and its study demands a combination of the methods of ethnography and cultural hermeneutics or discourse analysis (Hacking 2004).

Kidron ends with a call to respect the otherness presented to us by every person as recognized in Levinasian ethics. In truth, Levinas never sufficiently engaged the issue of cultural difference (Levinas and Poller 2003). This is precisely what ethnographic research like Kidron's can provide, giving substance to the abstract notion of alterity in ways that reveal the complex weave of personal and communal strands in the wake of genocidal violence and destruction.

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This is another powerful and important paper by Kidron. She addresses two main issues, namely the transmission of memory and the effects of genocide to the second generation of survivors and the cross-cultural comparison of such transmission and effects. Kidron argues carefully that trauma theory is inadequate to understand either the Israelis or the Cambodians she has interviewed. Moreover, insofar as the Israeli and Cambodian experiences are markedly different from one another, no universal theory will do and hence no generalized form of intervention is called for. I admire Kidron for daring to step on sacred ground and challenge hallowed assumptions. I think she is right in her conclusions and that she portrays especially the accounts of the second-generation Israelis with great finesse and subtlety.

Kidron tries to understand the lived experience of those who survived horrendous events, including the ways they choose to talk about the events or keep silence and to take seriously their own explanations for why they talk or keep silent. She then raises numerous frameworks for explaining the difference between the Jews who want to know about the past (and the legions of therapists, nationalists, and others who think it is necessary to *talk* about it) and the Cambodians who resolutely do not want to do either. We might call this (in part) a difference in language ideology. Kidron shows that, whatever the extenuating social, political, and material factors, the Cambodians explain their silence in a positive way, according to Buddhist ethics, while the Israelis speak in terms of a Jewish ethics of remembrance.

One factor Kidron does not fully address is the distance in time elapsed in the two cases. Victims of the Holocaust did keep quiet for a long period, until their story was validated by the Israeli state and a broader public eager to hear their testimony. A number of Cambodian descendants explained their reluctance to speak in Canada. One said, "We don't speak about the past in public because of fear of what others might say, they might reject us." This is not dissimilar to my parents who on arriving in Canada during the early 1940s noted the disinclination to speak any further in German. Nevertheless, this observation is not sufficient to explain Kidron's findings of the different meanings attributed to silence within the respective Jewish and Cambodian families.

Kidron might give more consideration to the fact that her Israeli subjects were speaking to someone they recognized as an insider whereas her Cambodian subjects were not. Further, in a striking remark Kidron mentions failing, then learning, to ask the right question of the Israelis. Did she have sufficient time and experience to discover the "right question" to ask the Cambodians? This is of course not a question that can be answered (and that could be asked of any ethnographer).

I wonder how Cambodians would answer questions concerning the dead rather than the living and especially about those who remained unburied or whose descendants died with them, leaving no one to mourn them properly. It is interesting how the Cambodian response, couched in Buddhist ethics, appears to differ from that in Vietnam, where the aim is bury the wandering dead and transform restless ghosts into ancestors (Kwon 2006, 2008). Kwon has even argued recently (Kwon n.d.) that Vietnamese consider it is primarily the improperly buried dead rather than the living who suffer from trauma. The Cambodian response is also different from that of Cheju Island in Korea where cold war politics made it impossible to speak for several decades about the massacre except indirectly by means of shamanism (Kim 2001).

I would push Kidron's comparison of the two cases a little further to ask whether the genocide of the Jews signs and perhaps seals a much longer narrative of historical travail in a way the Cambodian killing fields do not. The actions of the Pol Pot regime have no place in a Cambodian metanarrative. Thus the cultural differences between the two cases have to not only with distinctive linguistic ideologies or arguments about the ethical value of suffering, survival, and silence, but also with the distinctive meanings attributable to the respective critical events themselves.

To the extensive literature cited here I add one book that offers interventions to the trauma debate written by philosophers (Golden, Brown, and Bergo 2009).

I close by making explicit a point that Kidron perhaps implies. It is *we* who want the past made present, not those who suffered it. Why do we want it? Vicarious excitement, a chance to empathize, to displace anxiety, to share in the honor, validation, or redemption it appears to bring? We want to share it without actually suffering it, perhaps to cry for a few minutes on behalf of the victims or survivors, but not either to live it, or live with it, or actively relive it (if that is what survivors and their children do).

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Beyond Traumatology

The crucial intervention of Carol Kidron's essay is to question a universalist theory of trauma that partly derives from a Christian narrative of redemption through testimony. The striking ethnographic conversations recounted here reveal the peculiarity of the idea that violent memories can be cured and illuminate how genocide survivors and their descendants, both Israeli Jewish and Canadian Khmer, respond to the aftereffects of extreme violence through silent forms of bodily and moral practice.

One of the most important, if somewhat underplayed, insights of the essay is that both Jewish and Khmer descendants of genocide survivors evoke alternative temporalities in their responses to their parents' memories. Kidron notes, for instance, that "chronotopes lose their chronological linearity," as the son of a Holocaust survivor reenacts the rite of packing for a possible disaster. The author locates such rituals within a Jewish "paradigm of memory" involving a temporal loop "to make the past present." Similarly, the son of a survivor of the Khmer Rouge regime draws on Buddhism to claim that sequential time is an illusion that makes memory "superfluous." The refusal of testimony, taken alongside repetitions of bodily practice (whether Israeli Jews packing extra supplies or Canadian Khmer feeding the dead at Pchum Ben) could be taken to constitute a refusal of the relegation of violence to the past, instantiating instead a concatenation of past and present within everyday or ritualized material actions. Such moments in the paper suggest the way that trauma theory depends on the convergence of a medico-theological confessionalist model with a conventional understanding of historical time. Kidron's ethnography offers a rich opportunity to question the temporal assumptions that underwrite universalized traumatology.

With that in mind I wonder if she might be too quick to dismiss the relevance for trauma-work of the Khmer interchanges with the dead that take place at domestic shrines and wats. Because her interlocutors insist that all the dead are the same, and because the rites for the dead include nongenocide family relics, might she be underestimating the potency of these practices for dealing with unsettled memories and unsettled dead? It's not clear why interactions with those who died under the Khmer Rouge and those who died in other ways, would need to be segregated in order for these practices to constitute a significant site where Khmer respond to troubling effects of violent pasts. The very process of permitting the genocide dead to be absorbed into the benign collectivity of ancestors could be understood as a forceful means for pacifying violent memories. Arguably, ongoing material interactions with the dead (offering them food, writing their names on slips of paper given to the monks during Phchum Ben, washing urns filled with remains) creatively interlayer past and present, going beyond simply remembering the dead in order to invite them into present social practice.

What I find least convincing in an otherwise compelling essay, is the separation (however heuristically intended) of culture from sociopolitical conditions. Accounts of the past, as Kidron herself observes, are shaped by the sociopolitical circumstances in which they emerge. Memories can be expected to take very different forms in Cambodia where there are still land mines and mass graves, than in Canada where Khmer face the more structural violence of racism and poverty. An interpretation of Buddhism as emphasizing forgetting would surely be more salient for Khmer in North America, than for Khmer in Cambodia, where Buddhism has long taken on various political colors. Furthermore, the intermingling of Khmer of various political backgrounds into one community might militate against public commemorations that could identify some as victims and others as perpetrators. That the Canadian Khmer themselves should offer culturalist rather than political explanations for how they approach the past is hardly surprising. As Kidron acknowledges, experiences of minoritization tend to enhance cultural self-consciousness and articulations of positive cultural attributes. In the Israeli case, the descendants' domestication of their parents' memories seems clearly influenced by a need to resist the nationalization of memories enforced by the Israeli state. Rather than argue for a revival of culturalist over political explanations, it might be more productive to acknowledge that cul-

tural affiliation and historical-political position cannot be usefully disentangled.

Finally, to interpret alternative responses to genocide memories as culturally specific might limit the possibility that those alternatives can travel. Rather than simply place cultural caveats on trauma theory, why not allow diverse responses to past violence to intervene in trauma theory and alter it at its very heart? Arguably, the options offered by Israeli Jews and Canadian Khmer for addressing the traces of violence in their lives have relevance, not just for particular cultural contexts, but for a re-imagination and re-theorization of human responses to the effects of extreme violence. Opening the way toward such a re-theorization is perhaps the most powerful contribution of Kidron's essay.

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In a tightly reasoned comparison of Jewish-Israeli and Cambodian-Canadian trauma descendants, Carol Kidron argues that the two groups construct different genocide legacies, and deviate from the standard descendant profile of traumatized witnesses seeking redemption through public testimony. Second-generation Cambodians look toward the future; emphasize personal, familial, and collective silence as the Buddhist mode of being; and dismiss Western post-trauma theory that regards silence as pathological repression. Holocaust descendants are less categorical in rejecting the notion of intergenerational trauma, and sustain their everyday remembrance through embodiment, objectification, and verbal and nonverbal parent-child interaction. This article shows the merit of an anthropological critique of universalizing trauma theories and diagnostic manuals. Kidron debunks such decontextualized and decultured approach in a very convincing, empirically grounded manner. Having said this, I believe that her excellent analysis could have been strengthened by showing the processual nature of the cultural construction of genocide legacies. One possible way would have been to interpret these practices as manifestations of mourning rather than trauma.

Mourning is the process of coming to terms with loss. We can safely assume that genocide survivors and descendants mourn in many different ways, ranging from impeded to chronic mourning with normal mourning in the middle. According to the influential grief-work hypothesis developed by Freud (1968 [1917]) and Bowlby (1981), both extremes are pathological because the bereaved need to work through personal losses by severing the affective ties with the deceased. Kidron's fine-grained ethnography confirms the finding of death scholars that people can function well without such emotional unraveling by incorporating the dead in their daily lives through active remembrance and ongoing narration (Green 2008; Hallam and Hockey 2001; Klass, Silverman, and Nickman 1996; Walter 1996). The second shortcoming of the grief-work hypothesis is an overemphasis on loss and the neglect of the reconstitution of the bereaved's life. Loss and reconstitution deserve both attention to understand people's context-specific sense of bereavement. Constructivist social psychologists have therefore dismissed the grief-work hypothesis as an inadequate explanation of the heterogeneous mourning process (see Valentine 2006).

In my current research on the different ways Chileans and Argentines mourn the disappeared of their dictatorial regimes, I have drawn on the dual-process model of coping with bereavement (DPM) that conceptualizes mourning as an oscillation between an intermittent attention to primary losses revolving around the bond with the deceased (loss orientation) and a complementary concern for secondary losses dealing with life's challenges without the deceased (restoration orientation). Bereaved persons do not only try to make sense of their losses but also of their lives. This differentiation does not parallel the binary opposition between trauma and resilience because both mourning strategies may contain positive and negative affects. The term restoration comprises thus also the inability to rebuild a shattered life (Stroebe and Schut 2001, 2010). I believe that a conceptualization in terms of mourning rather than trauma is justifiable because Jewish-Israelis do not regard themselves as traumatized but scarred, while Cambodian-Canadians only acknowledge being more sensitive to life's vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the clinical status of the two groups is unknown and irrelevant to the article's argument (see note 10).

The emphasis on loss orientation is prominent among Holocaust descendants, as manifested in domestic silences, nonverbal emotional utterances, and dicta. These manifestations would be maladaptive according to the grief-work hypothesis but are meaningful for descendants because loss orientation is a moral obligation in Jewish culture. Cambodian-Canadians are predominantly restoration oriented. They show little interest in the genocidal past and value silence as strength. Past suffering is not regarded as a wound or scar but accepted as karma as a part of life. Not commemoration but looking toward the future is the Buddhist way and also the immigrant's way, albeit in the conscious awareness of the moral lessons learned by survivors.

I wholly agree with Kidron's argument that certain theories about intergenerational trauma may be problematic for both populations and that therapeutic treatment might do more harm than good because of a lack of fit between people's cultural makeup and Euro-Western etiology. Still, I encourage her to be more attentive to cultural cues of Jewish-Israelis about life's triumphs—shown in tales of survival—as well as defeats that stand apart from the traumata. Cambodian-Canadians, in turn, have subtle loss orientations, such as the care of family shrines, which deserve more ethnographic attention. For religious and cosmological reasons, loss gives

more meaning to Jewish-Israelis, while restoration is more meaningful to Cambodian-Canadians, but both groups manifest also culturally less prominent complementary orientations within the dual mourning process. The proposed approach attenuates the stark contrast between the two groups of trauma descendants and demonstrates that genocide legacies are dynamic constructions whose oscillations between periodic attention to loss and to restoration change the multiple ways in which successive generations deal with the legacies of genocide.

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The links between trauma, traumatic memory, and post-traumatic syndrome now seem natural, even inevitable. For many people, the scientific template is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): the idea that terrible events create terrible memories against which one defends oneself by practicing avoidance and emotional numbing. It also seems natural that trauma can be secondhand, a psychic wound acquired while witnessing the direct victims of terrible events. The diagnostic manuals are explicit concerning this possibility and specify in lawyerly detail the conditions under which authentic witnessing can occur. The text does not explain how or why witnessing has this power over us, but we know anyway. Traumatic witnessing is powered by empathy—emotions and meanings that observers spontaneously share with the immediate victims of the events. It all seems so obvious and natural that one wonders that it needs repeating in the diagnostic manuals. Perhaps it is the other way around: that is to say, we have gradually assimilated an understanding of traumatic memory, empathy, contagion, and self-defense that originates in these and earlier texts. In either event, the traumatic process seems natural and therefore universal.

Everything that we know about responses to Holocaust trauma and second-generation trauma vindicates this view. Epidemiological surveys show that (in 2005) 30% of Cambodians were diagnosable with PTSD, and two-thirds of Khmer immigrants to the United States would also qualify for this diagnosis.

Carol Kidron juxtaposes post-Holocaust trauma with Khmer responses to the Cambodian auto-genocide. After reading her account, one is less certain about the inevitability of the linkages underpinning PTSD. Is Khmer "silence" evidence of symptomatic denial (as the clinical template would suggest), or does it express profound historical and existential differences separating Kidron's Jewish and Khmer informants? What does it mean when Khmer advise themselves to focus on the karmic future rather than the violent past? Is the attitude symptomatic, habitual, or merely pragmatic? A Khmer victim is careful about what he says about the past: Khmer perpetrators and their families are listening and vengeful. Likewise the influence of "empathy" on witnesses is unclear. Is empathy expressed beyond one's family an acquired trait or a neurobiological reflex, or is it a combination of these two? To the extent that empathy is acquired, it needs to be measured empirically and not simply assumed. But this is precisely what the epidemiologist's instruments fail to do.

PTSD is intractably heterogeneous. It is defined by a singular etiology but is the product of multiple, alternative etiologies. The term "PTSD" has three meanings: they denote three different things but are used interchangeably. This practice gives PTSD the mistaken appearance of homogeneity and universality.

The first meaning is *textual*: it refers to the diagnostic criteria that are listed in the current DSM, the official diagnostic manual. The second meaning refers to the *prototype* case: the patient whose symptoms and etiology unambiguously correspond with the diagnostic text. The third meaning refers to *clinical or epidemiological populations*—aggregations that are particular to time and place.

PTSD's textual meaning is *monothetic*: that is, it identifies a nosologically unique set of features, necessary and sufficient for making the PTSD diagnosis. Prototype cases, when they exist, exhibit these features: they are *homogeneous* but also rare. Clinical populations of PTSD are *heterogeneous* because of the malleable nature of memory (a subject that I cannot discuss here) and because of the social and historical factors responsible for aggregating and representing clinical populations. Are Khmer behavior and self-reports described by Kidron evidence of a universal condition, PTSD? The answer is both yes and no. The textual version of PTSD says "yes," and the standardized protocols and so forth based on the text vindicate this claim. I assume that there are prototype cases of PTSD among the Khmer. If so, they also affirm a "yes" response. On the other hand, the population to which the diagnostic label is attached (via technologies and conventions particular to psychiatric epidemiology) is doubtlessly heterogeneous. Among these people, silence about the Cambodian genocide is not necessarily symptomatic.

Reply

I would like to sincerely thank the commentators for their most insightful readings of the article. Overall the commentators exhibited great tolerance of my culturalist position, "thinking with" my more "'narrow" parameters rather than against them although my position most certainly goes against the grain. Nevertheless our emergent conversation becomes potentially most interesting when the commentators critically re-consider the limits of my proposed cultural determinism. While Didier Fassin and Jean Langford problematize the eli-

sion of contemporary sociopolitical contexts, Laurence Kirmayer and Tony Robben suggest that psychological models of wellness and grief cannot be entirely removed from an analysis of postgenocide experience. Expanding on my analysis of Israeli and Khmer descendant life-worlds, Handelman, Langford and Lambek propose an alternative cosmologic analysis of Jewish and Buddhist temporality further breaching the 'limits' of cultural particularity and determinism.

Cultural Determinism and the Elision of Sociopolitical Contexts

Fassin frames my findings under the rubric of the politics of trauma. According to Fassin, present contexts cannot but "weigh(s) on the memory of the past." Langford too is ill at ease with the marginalization of the constitutive role of sociopolitical contexts and recommends a more balanced presentation of the dialectic between culture and context. I agree of course that a depiction of sociopolitical contexts is critical to any ethnographic analysis. Nevertheless, I remain wary of the political contextualization of descendant memory-work as it may create one more globalizing category subsuming diverse ethos of remembering and forgetting in a universal category of enlisted/resistant vanguards of memory. In keeping with my literature review, I fear this would elide not only important differences in cultures of memory but also in national contexts of commemoration.

Moreover, the primacy of cultural constitutive factors is grounded in my findings. In line with the concept of "narrative truth," the data charts the way respondents' narratively deploy particular Jewish and Khmer semiotics of memory to make their experience meaningful, while marginalizing sociopolitical factors. Even when narrating for example the impact of Canadian identity politics on the revival of interest in Buddhism, communal rebirth was interpreted through a Buddhist lens—again supporting a case for cultural determinism.

We might ask why descendants and leaders promote Buddhist traditional cultural world views to revitalize Khmer-Canadian identity rather than benefiting from the potential capital to be had by deploying the politics of trauma-related victimhood as have other minoritized descendants of historical trauma (Kirmayer et al. 2011). Should this be interpreted as political resistance to Euro-Western world views or is it the self-sustaining work of culture? As cultural brokers (such as the monk who terms Holocaust commemoration "Jews bad education") and descendants negotiate between the benefits of particular Buddhist ethos and the universal semiotics of trauma—they, as Fassin suggests, "enter" the arena of the politics of trauma. Following this logic, according to Fassin and Lambek the ultimate choice to enlist Buddhist frames rather than trauma discourse would then be read as a "political" act of resistance.

However, recalling Brown's (1996) controversial critique of the excessive use of the term "resistance," the reduction of complex motivations and life-worlds to political acts of resistance often elide other more grounded culture-specific factors. As Fisher (1999) notes regarding Mayan cultural logic, despite the disabling and enabling role of sociopolitical contexts and the historical evolution and "travels" of diverse cultural repertoires, cultures are characterized by a number of particularly resilient deep cultural schemas or logics. Whether conceptualized as a particular cosmology as Handelman suggests, or historico-temporal rhythm as Handelman and Langford propose, short of drastic culture loss, cultural selves tacitly sustain these core schemas as prisms through which they ontologically experience and preserve their life-world. Discourse and practice incongruent with these core schemas are discarded or selectively refashioned.

My recent work in progress (Kidron 2012) examines new ruptures in the above cultural "stasis" of Khmer meaning-worlds. I currently examine the selective enlistment and refashioning of Western forms of testimony by a small elite minority of Khmer memory brokers in Canada and Cambodia. This vanguard strategically enlists the capital to be had in the global semiotics of survivor testimony while carefully rejecting the pathologizing/victimizing component of the trauma narratives which even for these glocalized Khmer youth remains incongruent with core Buddhist schemas of cultural selfhood and cosmos. Further research is called for to disentangle the dialectic between culture and context in ways that would capture both the "survival" and accommodation of cultural meaning-worlds even in contexts of cultural change.

Psychological Models of Wellness and Illness

Both Laurence Kirmayer and Tony Robben suggest that psychological models of trauma and grief should not be entirely discarded. The proposed utility of these models in both the Jewish and Khmer case implies that biomedical-psychological knowledge systems are at least on some level epiphenomenal to cultural particularities. These models are thought capable of universally diagnosing not only genocide related psychic outcomes but gauging the "normalcy" of short- and long-term trajectories of mourning and concomitant presence or absence of the past in the lives of those who mourn the genocide dead. Yet both Kirmayer (2003) and Robben (2005) have shown, despite universal psychic and physiological responses to suffering, experiences of loss are framed by particular cultural meaning-worlds shaping one's ontological sense of wounded selfhood or victimhood, one's sense of safety/anxiety in the cosmos, and the trajectory and meaning of relations with the living and dead. Psychic outcomes, as Kirmayer points out, are a complex weave of both universal responses and particular meaning-worlds. As both scholars note the trajectory of grief may be culturally framed to resolve and come to terms with loss or to sustain mourning.

As an anthropologist, I have carefully steered away from any possible claim to diagnose the outcome of traumatizing

events or for that matter therapeutic intervention. Falling short of Young's (1995) pioneering work tracing the geneology of the trauma construct, I do not presume to determine whether transmitted trauma is a real entity or a culturally constructed artifact of particular historical and political contexts. Instead I am concerned with the way the trauma and transmitted trauma constructs are or are not enlisted (and why)—to make distressful personal, familial, or collective experience meaningful. I also examine the way "competing" culturally particular concepts of loss, mourning, valorized memory, and death shape the self-attributed sense of wellness or illness of survivors and their descendants.

As seen in my findings, I would assert that in both Jewish and Khmer cases cultural frames pertaining to the centrality or marginality of the genocide past and the dead may drastically alter the tolerance of what might be identified biomedically as "universal" outcomes of trauma, loss, and extended "mourning." In keeping with Young's assertion that my findings imply that the construct of transmitted trauma is not "inevitable" and his claim that trauma is in fact an "illness of time" (1995) signifying what should and should not be remembered, this would explain not only the diversity of responses to potentially traumatizing events and loss of significant others, but also the short- and long-term diversity of responses to therapeutic intervention when incongruent with particular schemas of suffering. The question that remains then at the heart of transcultural psychiatry is what is the benefit of the imposition of a Euro-Western therapeutic semiotics of suffering and loss in divergent cultures? Moreover, returning to a more ontological and phenomenological reading of cultural schemas, to what degree can deeply felt meaning-worlds alleviate the potential "reality" of so-called universal psychic suffering and maladaptive outcomes?

Kirmayer's very pertinent question regarding the trade-offs entailed in cultural meaning-worlds that validate carrier status and emotional "scratches" or silent parent-child relations clearly highlights the importance of psychological studies that examine the role of cultural meaning-worlds as source of resilience (Kirmayer et al. 2011). Yet based on my findings, I propose that any evaluation of the emotional burden of trade-offs must be committed to robust culture-sensitive analysis without which a "diagnosis" of wellness would risk erroneous translation of culturally particular experiences of suffering and sacrifice. The analysis would have to take into account entire networks of cultural meanings and the hierarchical relations between them. Illustrating the challenge of such an analysis, the path to Jewish spiritual redemption through emotional woundedness emerges as incongruent with therapeutic redemption. In Kirmayer's terms, there is a clear trade-off, yet it is tolerated not as a cruel act of fate but as a valorized burden gratefully withstood. Again we are left with the question of whether the wounded yet valorized descendant is more or less resilient having found meaning and moral capital in their psychic burden. Examining the entire network of their meaning-world, the Jewish trade-off does not appear to be subjectively experienced as emotionally discomforting. Regarding the Khmer one might ask if silent parent-child relations are experienced as psychically burdensome avoidance, or do hierarchical parent-child relations and resultant respectful Asian silence reframe that silence in ways that forestall emotional distress. As Young provocatively asks, culture specific constructions of survivor-descendant relations, and cultural conceptions of emotional displays of suffering and identification with hierarchically distanced family members may even impact the likelihood of empathy.

Robben's proposed model of grief most certainly entails concepts that capture a broader range of cross-cultural experiences of loss. In fact authors cited by Robben such as Klass, for example, have broadened their understanding of "continuing bonds" with the dead after undertaking cross-cultural comparisons of grief-work in Euro-Western and Eastern cultures. Although I am certain that the use of the above Euro-Western therapeutic grief related constructs might be useful for the practitioner/ethnographer when comparing and culturally translating transcultural concepts of mourning, I am concerned that—as in the case of the trauma construct—Western grief-related concepts embed culture-specific assumptions regarding loss, death, and familial relations. In the hope that the lived experience of grief not get lost in translation, I would propose that where possible we ground ethnographies in the Other's alternative therapeutic semiotics even if they imply a deconstruction of our taken-for-granted therapeutic constructs.

Alternative Temporality and the Cosmologic Presencing/Absencing of the Genocide Past

Handelman, Langford and to some degree Lambek suggest that Khmer and Jewish differential genocide legacies may be accounted for not only by cultural ethos but by more pervasive "root" cosmological differences. This analysis moves beyond my own cultural determinist position proposing that monotheistic and polytheistic cosmos may exhibit differential cosmos-specific relations with the past, the dead, and even the self. According to these scholars, antithetical temporal rhythms characterizing the Jewish and Buddhist cosmos enable or disable, respectively, the presence or absence of the genocide past. Although Langford questions the "segregation" of the genocide/nongenocide dead, the above readings of temporal rhythms also account for the way different cosmos enable or disable genocide commemoration and the presence of the genocide dead as distinct from the wider category of familial dead. As Lambek insightfully and succinctly concludes—in contradistinction to the Jewish cosmos, temporally structured to experience repeated trajectories of loss and redemption—in the Khmer cosmos, there could be no room for a metanarrative of genocide.

The above absencing of the genocide and the genocide dead, brings me to Lambek's methodological critique of questions posed to Khmer respondents. I agree that despite my

multiple alternative phrasings (and the assistance of a Khmer informant), I might have failed to "translate" my question regarding the presence of the genocide past into terms culturally comprehensible to the Khmer. However, I did triangulate Khmer insistence that my question regarding the presence of the past was incomprehensible and "impossible"; participant observation at ancestor veneration and the Festival of the Dead; and interviews with monks and lay worshippers. Findings all point to the consistent absence of the category of genocide dead and for that matter any lingering material or interactional re-presencing of the genocide past.

In keeping with Lambek's depiction of Kwon's (2008) study of Vietnam, the Khmer cosmic balance and the spiritual fate of the deceased and their living relatives are endangered by a violent or "bad death" and/or the failure to receive blessings designed to usher the dead to future lives and *samsara*. Genocide deaths are classified as bad deaths, but after receiving mass ceremonial blessings, these genocide victims along with all other victims of bad deaths are considered sanctified and liberated. I would therefore respond to Langford's question pertaining to the pacifying effect of ancestor veneration on postgenocide mourning by asserting once again that my findings show that pacification through relations with the dead occurs for the inclusive category of familial dead. If the spiritual journey of a ceremonially liberated genocide victim is equivalent to that of any deceased relative, why would we assume that ancestor veneration of the genocide dead would uniquely pacify genocide mourning, much less heal (the Euro-Western construct of) trauma?

Relinquishing Universal Semiotic Meaning

Inevitably we all juggle multiple repertoires, negotiating the cultural ethos. I have no doubt that Khmer youth and Jewish descendants are facing a future of hybrid meaning systems as they consume what Langford terms "traveling" responses to genocide memories. Yet despite culture-sensitive ethnographic readings of the alterity of the Other and the limits of universal semiotics, the ultimate challenge remains to continue to deconstruct cultural translations that universalize the diversity of lived experience. Although empowered by moral or scientific regimes that are "good to think with," it is our onerous task as ethnographers to perpetually hone our own semiotic system and the very concepts and constructs through which we make meaning for and about the Other and ourselves.

—Carol A. Kidron

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