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Kohn kat – Métissage and Postmemory in Southeast Asian Francophone and Khmer Literature from 1921 to 2016

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Kohn kat – Métissage and Postmemory in Southeast Asian Francophone and Khmer Literature from 1921 to 2016

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

Kohn kat – Métissage and Postmemory in Southeast Asian Francophone and Khmer Literature from 1921 to 2016

By Angelica So

This dissertation traces the literary production of nationalist Vietnamese and Khmer literatures in 20th-century French Indochina, as well as the 21st-century literary trends within the Cambodian diaspora, in order to analyze the relationship between literature, nationalism, race, memory, and identity. I examine the portrayal of racially and ethnically ambiguous characters in the first Vietnamese novel written in French (Nguyen Phan Long's *Le Roman de Mademloiselle Lys,* 1921), the first Cambodian novel in Khmer (Rim Kin's *Sophat,* 1942), and the construction of Cambodian and Vietnamese identities in relation to one another. I read the construction of the first Khmer novel and the first Vietnamese Francophone novel as nationalist and masculinist projects that attempt to suppress *métissage* and "fix" gender and race, and suppress intercultural and "interethnic" ambiguity in Vietnamese and Cambodian women. In addition, I trace the history of Khmerization from its literary and pedagogical trajectory in the early to mid 20th-century, to its evolution into mass murder during the Khmer Rouge regime, and finally, its re-naissance in the 21st century. The larger implications of this project are to unveil the intersection between *métissage* and trauma, by providing a notion of *métissage* beyond its "Western" understanding, in the Cambodian context. I argue that *métissage* in the Cambodian context is always present – as a source of collective anxiety – in that it threatens Cambodian erasure. The Khmer term for *métis*, *kohn kat* [literally, "child-cut"] acts as the *fil-conducteur* of this dissertation, and serves to link – rather than divide – the concepts of national, racial, and "ethnic" identity. Finally, I consider how the 21st-century literary and artistic productions, within and beyond Southeast Asia and the diaspora, defy national and generational boundaries, and how the diversity of Cambodian and Vietnamese experiences rejects categorization and monolithic national narratives.

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INTRODUCTION

"*Kohn Khmer?*", "*Kohn kat*?"

"Entre moi, Orient et moi, Occident."

— Makhali-Phāl, *Chant de Paix*, 1937

On December 20, 2018, at 11:20 PM, I snaked my way past the crowd of the newly arrived *boriteh* [foreigners] at the Phnom Penh International Airport, who were hunched over a table filling out visa applications, and approached the visa counter. The visa officer quickly glanced at me, handed me a form, and said in English, "Fill this out." I took it, and muttered, "*awkhoun*" [thank you]. Somewhat stunned, he took a second look at me – this time, observing me with some interest – and exclaimed, "Khmer!? *Kohn Khmer*!?" I responded timidly with a simple "*chaah*" [yes], to which he replied, "*Khmer chuoy Khmer*" [Cambodians help Cambodians], retracting the form, and replacing it with a blank sheet of paper. Following this, he asked me in Khmer to write down the names and addresses of my family members, and then, he read the names aloud back to me. Ten dollars and two minutes later, I was issued a "permanent" visa. (Its permanence would only last as long as my passport validity.)

While my first encounter with a Cambodian official temporarily served to prove to myself – by proving to another – that I was indeed *Kohn Khmer*, a "Khmer child," and a "real" Cambodian

– the *concrétisation* of my "Khmerness" would soon disintegrate. The next step required, to move beyond the airport and into the city, was to convince the passport control officer that I really was *Kohn Khmer*. Unlike the first Cambodian official, this officer was skeptical upon looking at me, and asked me a series of questions in English and in Khmer, to which I did not know how to respond. The first question he asked – "Where is your mother?" – caught me off guard, to say the least. I replied in Khmer, "I'm traveling alone." The officer retorted with a series of follow-up questions: "Is your mother meeting you?" "Where are you staying?" "What is in the neighborhood [of your hotel]?" "How much did you pay *Pou*?" ("Uncle," referring to the visa officer). In retrospect, I am not sure if I passed the *Kohn Khmer* test. It was not until recently, as I was completing this dissertation, that I played back the scenario in my head. I wondered if the officer's questions had been "valid," in the sense that a *Kohn Khmer* without a mother present might invalidate the very composition of the term – "Khmer child." As I reflected on this, I wondered what it would take to move from *Kohn Khmer* – or even from *Kohn kat* ["mixed-race"] – to simply *Khmer*. Moreover, how many generations would be considered "too far away" from *Kohn Khmer*?

The overarching goal of my research project – which is to refute the notion that a "real" Khmer (*Kohn Khmer*) exists in itself – is difficult to actualize in practice. I know that a "pure" *Kohn Khmer* does not exist, and yet, I respond to this particular address, and reject the other ones that I have received while researching and living in the U.S., Cambodia, France, and Canada (*Kohn kat,* or "mixed-race," and *Kohn barang*, or "(mixed) French/white") – partially because I acknowledge what they convey only on a superficial level in Khmer (I am indeed not "mixed-race" or French). Yet, philosopher of race George Yancy's concept of "suturing" and "un-suturing" most accurately speaks to my own response when met with the expressions that double as questions and addresses: "*Kohn Khmer*?" and "*Kohn kat*?"

Yancy's notion of "suturing" and "un-suturing" in relation to whiteness and identity is useful towards understanding Cambodian identity – which attempts to preserve "Khmerness" by protecting itself from that which threatens a homogeneous identity.[1] While Yancy's work deals mostly with whiteness in relation to blackness and/or African-Americanness, it is still useful for my reflection on the construction of Khmerness in relation to whiteness, and other identities. Rather than a "white sutured self" and a "white sutured history," Cambodia's identity crisis can be read as a desire to reify a Khmer self within "the context of its socio-political ontological constitution."[2] "Un-suturing" involves keeping the wound open and forces one to wrestle with, or "to tarry with," and "to be vulnerable to," to borrow Yancy's words, the pain of losing one's way in an endless crisis.[3] In the Cambodian context, however, asking one to be vulnerable, and to re-experience crisis, is a heavy task: Undergoing an endless cycle of crises, and resisting the urge to engage in a suturing process, exposes, I argue, Cambodians to a "second genocide," in which survivors risk losing a history, a culture, an identity, and a country – after having recovered them from near extinction.[4] Perhaps, the risk of permanently losing oneself and one's history, and being exposed to a "second genocide," triggers the iterative process of "suturing" and holding on to a "fixed" Cambodian identity. Rather than engaging in a process of "un-suturing" over "suturing," Cambodians may undertake both processes of sewing and opening.

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[1] George Yancy, *White Self-Criticality beyond Anti-racism: How Does it Feel to be a White Problem?*. Refer to the Introduction, pp. 8-23.
[2] *Ibid.* 8, 12.
[3] The process of "un-suturing" can be understood as a "crisis," in the sense that one loses her/his way. Turning to the etymological roots of "crisis," Yancy applies the Greek term *krisis*, or "decision," to the notion of "un-suturing": "The concept of *deciding* denotes a life of commitment to 'undo,' to 'trouble' over and over again, the complex psychic and socio-ontological ways in which one is embedded in whiteness. The decision is one that is made over and over again for the rest of one's life. Hence, the concept of crisis is suggestive of an iterative process that is to be reenacted." Yancy 10-12.
[4] What I call a "second genocide" alludes to Dori Laub's concept of a "second Holocaust," or how survivors of the Holocaust "will experience tragic life events not as mere catastrophes, but rather as a second Holocaust." Felman and Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature*, 65.

The Cambodian process of making or cutting clothing, *kat khaoaowl*, literally "to cut clothing," illustrates the move from a fabrication of a monolithic Khmer identity to the tailoring – or the active re-imagination – of Khmerness based on the multifarious Cambodian experiences in the 21st-century. The meaning and process of *kat khaoaowl* cannot be succinctly defined – as it is an experience unique to each individual and family. [5] In order to illustrate the term, though, I will turn to my own familiarity with the process of *kat khaoaowl*, which is not an individualistic act, but a family activity. *Kat khaoaowl* does not refer to the simple act of cutting or making clothing – but is typically reserved for special occasions, such as for Cambodian weddings and Khmer New Year festivities. The process is lengthy, and typically involves transnational and intergenerational communication, in Khmer and in English. In the case of my family, Cambodian silk is meticulously examined, and then purchased, from either a reputed (through word-of-mouth) shop in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, or in eastside Long Beach, California. After negotiating a price and agreeing on the length to be cut from the cloth, the silk is brought to a respected Cambodian seamstress (sought after and discovered – again, through word-of-mouth). Typically, the brainstorming process – including the discussion of the style of cut and design (usually in Khmer between the seamstress and the parents, and broken Khmer, hand gestures, and rephrasing in Khmer from son/daughter-

[5] The Khmer word, *khaoaowl,* [clothing] is formed by the words *khao* [pants] and *aowl* [shirt]. The transformation of the matrilineal process of silk weaving in Cambodia, into an art form shared with Cambodians of the diaspora, complements Françoise Lionnet's notion of "*mé-tissage*," or "intertextual weaving" by women writers. Em Bun, recognized by the *National Endowment for the Arts* as a "Cambodian Silk Weaver," and her grand-daughter, Cambodian American poet Monica Sok, demonstrate the transference and transformation of Cambodian weaving into a hybrid of "traditional" and "contemporary," as well as "local" and (trans)national art. Bun, who learned how to weave as a child from her mother in Cambodia, immigrated to the U.S. during the post-Democratic Kampuchea period and Vietnamese takeover of Cambodia. She passed on her skills to her daughters, as well as other Cambodian immigrants, through the support of the *NEA* and the *Pennsylvania Council on the Arts* in the 1990s. Em Bun's granddaughter, Monica Sok, has described her poetry as a recreation of her grandmother's weaving process. See Sok's tribute to Em Bun: "The Weaver in My Poems. A Remembrance of Em Bun," *NEA Arts Magazine*. See also, Monica Sok's poem, "The Weaver," *The Adroit Journal* 24. For a biography of Bun and her weaving process, refer to: "Em Bun," *NEA National Heritage Fellowships.* National Endowment for the Arts, 24 Jan. 2013. See also, Kristin Congdon and Kara Kelley Hallmark's *American Folk Art. A Regional Reference. Vol. 1,* pp. 35-36. See also, Lionnet, "Introduction: The Politics and Aesthetics of *Métissage,*" *Autobiographical Voices,* pp. 1-29.

to-parent-to-seamstress), flipping through Cambodian fashion magazines and catalogues, and a fitting – will occur at the seamstress's home. Multiple fittings are likely, as the cloth is cut and designed to fit as closely to the body as possible, and re-adjustments are made to match the weight and size fluctuations that occur from the start to the end of the project. By the end of the process – which can take up to months or a year – Cambodian silk is transformed into uniquely tailored pieces, and scraps leftover from the cloth are turned into items that had not been previously discussed – such as "westernized" Khmer pieces, like one-shoulder bustier tops, and body-hugging pencil skirts with metal clasps. While the process of *kat khaoaowl* may differ from Cambodian-to-Cambodian, I offer my own experiences as a Cambodian American, in order to illustrate the "*imprévisible*," to quote Edouard Glissant, born from the exchanges between Cambodian communities in and outside of Cambodia.[6]

In my dissertation, entitled "*Kohn kat—Métissage* and Postmemory in Southeast Asian Francophone and Khmer Literature from 1921 to 2016," I examine the portrayal of racially and ethnically ambiguous characters in Franco-Vietnamese and Franco-Cambodian literature, and the construction of Cambodian and Vietnamese identities in relation to one another. *"Kohn kat"* [child cut] underlines the intersection between *métissage* and trauma – both individual and collective. Tracing the literary production of nationalist literatures from 20th-century Cambodia and Vietnam, I consider how they reflect ongoing questions of race, nationality, and ethnicity, which continue to be pertinent in the 21st-century. Through historical, political, cultural, and literary analyses – I examine the role of literature in the construction of a modern nation, which attempts to assert its

[6] Glissant, Edouard. "Métissage et créolisation," *Discours sur le métissage, identités métisses: En quête d'Ariel. Sous la direction de Sylvie Kandé.* "J'appelle créolisation cet enjeu entre les cultures du monde, ces conflits, ces luttes, ces harmonies, ces disharmonies, ces entremêlements, ces rejets, cette répulsion, cette attraction entre toutes les cultures du monde. Bref, un métissage, mais avec une résultante qui va plus loin et qui est imprévisible." See p. 50-51.

position by "fixing" gender and race, reinstating precolonial traditions, and preserving a national narrative or origin myth.

Kohn kat. *Dau ga, dit vit. Poussière de vie. Half. Métis. Mixed.* These are not solely words – but titles used to casually address "mixed-race" individuals, or children whose parents are of two distinctly different "races". While such addresses are made nonchalantly and often without much conscious thought by the one who does the naming, the address itself is a violent act that assigns the "mixed" individual to a controlling category. The epithet generally relegates its recipients to a "non-human" otherness. In the specific case of *kohn kat,* it refers to the actual act of cutting. In Khmer, *kohn kat* is the term used to refer to a "mixed-race" individual, or more specifically to a "half-white" Cambodian.[7] While this expression is immediately understood by Cambodians as "mixed-race" or "half-white," its breakdown and the separation of the words reveal the violent undertones associated with the address: *Kohn* ("child") and *kat* ("cut"), literally "child-cut" or "enfant-coupé." The terms come together to create a new category of otherness, distinct from a *Khmer sot;* a *kohn Khmer:* a "full" and "pure" Cambodian.[8] A similar racial division extends into the Vietnamese language – as Doan Bui translates *métis* into Vietnamese and back into French in her novel, *Le silence de mon père* (2016): *Dau ga, dit vit: Tête de poulet, cul de canard*.[9] This expression used to describe "mixed-race" individuals in Vietnamese returns to the origins of the term *métis*.[10] Equally important to note is the phrase's references to the *métis(se)* as a form of a

[7] While *kohn kat* refers to "mixed-race" individuals, the term generally applies to individuals with one parent of European ancestry. For example, a Cambodian individual with a parent of Chinese descent and a parent of Khmer descent would be labeled as either *Chen* ("Chinese" – in its entirety) or *kat Chen* ("half" or "part Chinese"; literally "cut Chinese" or "Chinois coupé"). An individual born of a Vietnamese-Cambodian union would be referred to as *Yuon* (pejorative) or *kat Yuon.*

[8] *Khmer sot* translates to "pure Khmer", in contrast to *Kohn kat*. *Kohn Khmer* ("Khmer child"; "enfant Khmer") is another expression used to depict "pureblood".

[9] See p. 92

[10] In *Les enfants de la colonie,* Emmanuelle Saada refers to the word *métis* and its original meaning, used to refer to the mixing of two different species. She refers to *Le Thresor de la langue francoyse* and its definition of *métis*,

consumable *volaille* or fowl. It must be noted that in this section, titled "Les Bananes et les Français," Bui indirectly highlights her "mixed-ness" by referring to herself as a banana.[11] Or, further removed from life, the *métis* is reduced to indistinguishable particles: *Poussière de vie*.[12] The act of dehumanizing culturally or racially "impure" individuals through violent speech acts is done through literature, and is also experienced in daily social occurrences.[13]

The history of Franco-Vietnamese and Franco-Cambodian unions, the precarious and transgressive status of a *métis(se)* in French Indochina, and the "non-human" association made with *métis(se)*, can be traced through Emmanuelle Saada's work on legal culture and French imperialism in the 19th and 20th century in *Les enfants de la colonie* (2007). Saada's extensive study and historical coverage of the *métis* in French Indochina, most notably her discovery of the first mention of race in Indochina in a legal document from 1928, is relevant to my research, as she merges history, law, politics and literature together. In attempting to respond to *la question métisse,* Saada's work overlaps with postcolonial theory, by linking the origins of the term *métis* to its application to *métis* children in Indochina.[14] Saada, Robert Young, Bui and my own interpretation of *kohn kat* ("child cut") all underline the dangerous and fictitious notions that come with the address, *métis(se):* 1) The first danger being its link to the "non-human," or chimeric world 2) The second being the idea that such distinctions exist – and that one can truly "cut" and divide an individual into "halves" or parts that can never be fully "whole" or "pure."

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which appears for the first time, in 1606 : "Engendré de deux genres de bêtes comme le léopard, d'un lion et d'une panthère, un mulet d'une jument et d'un âne" (25).

[11] "Nous sommes, mon frère, mes sœurs et moi, des enfants 'banane'. Jaunes à l'extérieur, blancs à l'intérieur. Tous nés en France" (Bui 81). [In parallel, in America, "white-washed" Asians are referred to (or self-identify) as "Twinkies"; "white-washed" African-Americans are often referred to as "Oreos".]

[12] See p. 221 of Bui's *Le silence de mon père* (2016)

[13] See Chapter 5, "L'expérience vécue du Noir," of Fanon's *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (1952)

[14] See Footnote a.; pp. 24-25

When I first began writing my dissertation, my intentions were to focus on the physical and literary portrayal of "mixed-race," Sino-, and "interethnic" identities, in French, Khmer, and Vietnamese novels. What started out as a project on *métissage* evolved into one on Khmerization. In particular, I realized that the desire to suppress *métissage* was an underlying component of the nationalist literatures produced by Cambodian and Vietnamese men in French Indochina. Moreover, the first Khmer novel and the first Francophone Vietnamese novel sought to "fix" intercultural and "interethnic" ambiguity in Vietnamese and Cambodian women. The first Francophone novel in Vietnam, and the first Khmer novel in Cambodia, must be read in parallel to the Vietnamese and Khmer nationalist movements towards the end of the French colonial period. The Khmerization efforts sought to increase Khmer visibility through educational reforms, including the incorporation of the Khmer language in high schools, and creating neologisms in place of French loan words in Khmer, toward the end of the French colonial period and during the 1960s.[15] The nationalist reforms reflect Cambodia's anxieties over maintaining and establishing a Khmer identity – at a time in which French, Chinese, and Vietnamese cultural influences and literary production were undeniably present in the Cambodian capital. Considering these factors, the first Khmer novel, Rim Kin's *Sophat* (1942), can be read as a political and pedagogical buttress against the infiltration of foreign "contaminants" into Cambodia. While Khmerization [*Khemarayeanakam*] has specific national implications from the early and mid 20th-century, Khmerization efforts have arguably returned to Cambodia in the 21st-century, after a near-total cultural destruction. *Métissage* in the Cambodian context is always present – as a source of collective anxiety – in that it threatens Cambodian erasure.

[15] Nepote and Khing, "Literature and Society in Modern Cambodia," 79. See also Edwards, *Cambodge,* 95-97.

Looking at Vietnamese Francophone, Khmer, and Franco-Cambodian texts from the colonial period to the present-day, I pay crucial attention to the physical descriptions, social positions, and labels/addresses given to "mixed-race" characters. In my dissertation, I incorporate texts written in French and in Khmer by writers of Cambodian and Vietnamese heritage. Reading Franco-Cambodian texts in both Khmer and in French is crucial to my work, as pejorative terms such as *kohn kat* are omitted in the translations of the original texts. Reading these texts in Khmer allows me to carefully analyze their narrative structures, changes in pronouns, and (mis)translations of Cambodian expressions, in order to uncover hidden political and psychological meanings. My access to Franco-Cambodian texts in Khmer illuminates a notion of *métissage* that is often restricted to its "Western" understanding. In addition, I investigate the way that the figure of the *métis(se)* transcends the boundaries of fixed identity: Much like the "Sino-Khmer" who enters the space of *métis* – originally restricted to those with partial "white" blood – *métis* transforms into a much more complicated term, and evolves into various forms that transcend race.[16]

While I do not wish to make *métis* an all-encompassing label – I examine the evolution of the term, from a title reserved for those marked as "racially different" to one that becomes harder to define in a "postcolonial" society.[17] In particular, for second and third-generation Cambodians and Vietnamese, who may or may not be "racially *métis(se)*" – I ask: What is their status if they are neither "Eurasian" nor "pure"? While there is no set answer to this question – second- and third-generation Cambodian and Vietnamese identity may be considered as a "hybrid" of

[16] Racial theorists who have worked on the "transcendence" of the *métis* include: Edouard Glissant ("Créolisation et métissage," *Discours sur le métissage, identités métisses: en quête d'Ariel,* 1999), Françoise Lionnet (*Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture,* 1989), Anjali Prabhu (*Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects,* 2007), and Homi Bhabha (*The Location of Culture,* 1994).
[17] See Bhabha, *The Location of Culture.*

generations, places, memories, and times, or what Roger Nelson refers to as "hybrid contemporaneity" – the weaving of "old and new, local and global."[18] Moreover, the indefinability of diasporic Cambodian and Vietnamese identities reveals a sense of liberty through a transgression of categorization: The diverse experiences of Cambodian and/or Vietnamese identity can be witnessed through the current and growing transnational art movements, in which Cambodians and Vietnamese of the diaspora explore their identities through hybrid artistic forms that actively re-imagine classical Khmer and/or Vietnamese dance, music, shadow puppetry, and story-telling.

The bodies of work included in my dissertation trace the trajectory of the Vietnamese and Cambodian nationalist literatures from the colonial period, and the development of what I call the "Cambodian New Aesthetics," which extends beyond the borders of Southeast Asia. The first two texts included in my dissertation take place during the Colonial period, which ranges from 1887 to 1954, from the founding of French Indochina to the end of the First Indochina War. They include Nguyen Phan Long's *Le Roman de Mademoiselle: Journal d'une jeune fille Cochinchinoise moderne* (1921), written in French, and Rim Kin's *Sophat* (1942), written in Khmer. The final text in my dissertation – Tian's three-volume graphic novel, *L'année du lièvre* – was published within the past decade, from 2011-2016, and is written in French and Khmer. The jump from the end of the Colonial period to the 21st-century is attributed to the scarce production and recovery of Khmer literature during the De-colonial period.[19] The De-colonial period starts in 1954, or at the end of

[18] Nelson, "On the Coevalities of the Contemporary in Cambodia…," 201; 206.
[19] "Spending time in libraries and museums was not only considered to be useless and a waste of time, but also illegal, as it would allow readers and visitors to acquire unorthodox ideas. That was why hundreds of thousands of books in the National Library in Phnom Penh, the libraries of the Buddhist Institute, the Khmer-Mou Institute, the Pedagogical Institute and other academic establishments were ransacked… Library staff were murdered: 35 out of the 41 employees of the national library were killed." See De Nike, Howard J., et al., *Genocide in Cambodia*, p. 358.

the French Indochina War, following the independence of Vietnam (1945), Laos (1949), and Cambodia (1953).[20] By moving from 1942 to 2011-2016, I draw attention to the evolution of Khmerization from the pre- and post-Democratic era.

Transgenerational trauma and *métissage* are tightly related, and relevant to my research precisely in their intersection. Trauma is transmitted to second- and third-generation Cambodians in multiple forms: 1) The first being what Marianne Hirsch calls "postmemory," or the second-generation's experience of their parents' trauma.[21] 2) While Cambodia's concerns with ancestry and "blood" pre-date the Cambodian Genocide and continue to be central to Cambodian society in the present-day, this obsession with labeling and dividing others is carried out beyond the borders of Cambodian territory: *Ahcan* ("American") or *perngh* ("French") refer to American or French citizens of Cambodian heritage.[22] While these second- and third-generation Cambodians may not be "racially" *métis(se)* or *kohn kat*, they are barred off from entering the category of *Kohn Khmer* or *Khmer sot*. Their nationality marks their difference and justifies their "non-Khmerness." The *métissage* that I am interested in surpasses the "racial" *métissage* of interracial or interethnic unions to include national constructs. It investigates the status of "full" Cambodian or "full" Vietnamese individuals born in the "western" world.[23] With this in mind, I am interested in investigating new modes of understanding and responding to trauma, as it relates to "mixed-identity," from an Indochinese perspective that complements mainstream "Western" thinking.[24]

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[20] The "end date" of the De-colonial period is more ambiguous, and runs up to the 1990s, due to the Cambodian-Vietnamese civil war and the Khmer Rouge party that continued to linger after 1979. "During the span of four years, from 1975 to 1979, at least "1.7 million people lost their lives" under the Khmer Rouge regime, led by Pol Pot. "Cambodian Genocide Program: The CGP, 1994-2015." Yale University: Genocide Studies Program. DC-CAM. Web.

[21] See Chapter 1 of "Mourning and Postmemory," *Family Frames,* 1997.

[22] A Chinese-Cambodian, regardless of her/his nationality, will still be referred to as *Chen* ("Chinese")

[23] It is not my intention to recycle the myth of "full" our "pureblood" ethnicities. In referring to these individuals as "full" – I am referring to the perception of *kohn kat* v. *Khmer sot* individuals.

[24] See Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory* (2009)

The authors selected for my dissertation were not chosen solely for their Vietnamese or Cambodian heritage – but rather for their inclusion of *métis(se)* figures and interracial encounters that contribute to the questioning and making of personal and national identity. Nguyen Phan Long and Rim Kin, both male authors writing from the Colonial period, include ethnically and/or racially ambiguous female characters in the first Khmer novel (Soya in *Sophat*) and in the first Francophone Vietnamese novel (Mademoiselle Lys in *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys*). Despite the fact that neither one is "fully" *kohn kat* – they are given the same status as a "full" *métis(se).* In Mademoiselle Lys' case, however, she surpasses the status of culturally *métisse* by marrying a pro-French Annamite *officier devenu ingénieur* at the end of the novel.[25] Both authors portray a prevented future of racial *métissage.* Not only do these authors focus on interracial relations – but on the unstable and mixed identity of the nation of Vietnam and Cambodia – and between racial "mixed-ness" versus Vietnamese or Khmer "purity" and "wholeness."

Of course, *métis(se)* already implies an impossibility of being whole. Would a *sino-khmer* then be even "less"? In other words, would interethnic relations be treated any differently than interracial ones – and would the status of a child born of such a union have a lower or higher societal status and face the same forms of discrimination?

The final text included in my dissertation, *L'année du lièvre,* stretches beyond the borders of Cambodia and France, thereby escaping categorization, and takes up mixed-media forms. Tian's graphic novel represents transferrable forms of passing on the memory and history of the Cambodian Genocide, while also refusing to be "fixed" or chained to first-generation memory, and stuck in the period of 1975-1979.[26] This "aesthetics of postmemory" is useful to narrate that

[25] See Nguyen Phan Long, 393-394.

[26] Graphic novels are perhaps more efficient ways of getting closer to the experience of trauma through their association of the visual and the text. In *Family Frames* (1997), Hirsch refers to Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman's

which can't be told so easily– especially in cases where there are "too many stories, too much affect."[27] In these graphic novels, family history and History of the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge overlap in a narration full of fragments.[28] They serve to "fill in the gaps" of memory and family silences, in scholastic spaces, like the classroom.[29] Where fragmentation becomes the rule of narration, we get a truer depiction of history, from the untold stories of the dead, unrecoverable and destroyed documents, and no clear sense of what truly happened.[30] *L'année du lièvre* escapes both categorization and a linear narration. Tian contributes to the new aesthetics of postmemory, in narrating the untellable and in revealing the complication of diasporic Cambodian identity.

Research and Methods

From the start of my project, I had tried to remain as "objective" as possible, out of a fear of writing from a place that could be considered "too subjective" or autobiographical. I began researching in the archives – in the conservative sense of the word: Most of my research for Chapter 1 was conducted in Paris, at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, where I perused the original edition of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys* on microfilm. During this time, I also consulted with Khmer literary specialist Hoc Dy Khing, in person and through e-mail, for resources in Khmer and in French, and to learn more about 19th and 20th-century Cambodian history and literature. What transformed my project from one on *métissage,* to one on Khmerization and postmemory,

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Testimony (1991), and to the use of images to connect both first- and second-generation memories. Hirsch refers to Felman's "breaking the framework" to analyze Spiegelman's *MAUS I* (1980) and *MAUS II* (1991) and to interpret the nonlinear form of narrating events. Hirsch refers to the "new aesthetic" and mixed-media forms of narrating memory and mourning.

[27] See pp. 244-45 of Hirsch's *Family Frames* (1997)
[28] See Spiegelman's *MAUS I* (1980)
[29] See Raczymow's "memoire trouée", as described by Hirsch (p. 23, *Family* Frames, 1997)
[30] See p. 25 of Levine's *The Belated Witness* (2006). See also, *Testimony* (p. 62); *Family Frames* (p. 21); *The Belated Witness* (p. 25)

occurred during my time at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute's (SEASSI) Khmer program, under a U.S. Foreign Languages and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowship. I entered the program with the goal of learning how to read and write in Khmer, so that I could read *Sophat* in its original Khmer format – as my first encounter with the text had been in French. Yet, it was the interpersonal communication between other Khmer heritage speakers that allowed me to access a personal-collective archive, beyond the one that I had inherited from my own family. The diverse experiences of other first-generation Cambodian Americans/second-generation survivors – and an exchange of stories and experiences of growing up "Khmer" in different settings – enabled me to examine what "Khmerness" really meant. Moreover, we collectively reconstructed the missing pieces from our history – learning together Cambodian folklore, shadow puppetry, classical dance, and Khmer vowels, consonants, sub-consonants, and formal expressions. Though experiential and personal – it is impossible to disentangle Cambodian "History" from the history of my family, and the history of other Cambodians of the diaspora – namely first-generation Cambodian Americans born in the 1980s and early 1990s. In addition to my time spent abroad conducting research at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ), and the Bibliothèque nationale du Cambodge – my own lived experience as a Cambodian American raised in a Franco-Cambodian-Californian household has shaped my academic work. Moreover, the fields of memory studies, Holocaust studies, critical race theory, whiteness studies, postcolonial studies, history, anthropology, and Southeast Asian studies, have impacted the way in which I examine second-generation identity and transgenerational trauma within the Southeast Asian diaspora.

The combination of legal, historical, photographic, journalistic, and literary texts has also been included in my research. During a four-week period in December 2018-January 2019, I carried out an independent research trip in Cambodia, for which I received research funding. I consulted the French colonial administrators' responses to what they called "La Question Métisse" [the mixed-race problem], in the form of French and Khmer legal and historical documents, between the 1880s and 1950s. At the National Archives of Cambodia, I obtained hundreds of pages of the colonial administrators' drafted solutions to the "mixed-race problem," and/or granted French and Cambodian nationality to "*métis(se)*" Cambodian women and men. In addition, I visited the Lycée Sisowath (formerly Collège Sisowath, where Rim Kin received his French education), and traced Mademoiselle Lys' footsteps by "touring" the "Chinese," "Khmer," and "European" districts of Phnom Penh, as depicted in Nguyen Phan Long's novel.

While the documentation that I obtained at the archives – including the Buddhist Institute and the French Institute – was useful in understanding the "colonial perspective" of "the mixed-race problem," I turned to other archival sources in order to understand how Cambodians are currently dealing with 21st-century cultural and generational *métissage.* I compared the 20th and 21st-century forms of memorializing Cambodian history, by meeting with Youk Chhang, the Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-CAM), to discuss the new Khmer forms of memorialization, as well as his newest project, The Sleuk Rith Institute.[31] Finally, I witnessed

[31] Plans are still underway to build the Sleuk Rith Institute, but its impressive modern architectural style, designed by Zaha Hadid, and the details surrounding its future of fostering an intellectually diverse community, can be viewed online. *The Sleuk Rith Institute*. *Memory. Justice. Healing.* The Sleuk Rith Institute (SRI), 2014. Web. 11 Dec. 2018. <http://www.cambodiasri.org>. On January 11, 2019, Documentation Center of Cambodia also held a public performance, "Breaking the Silence" (Youk Chhang and Anne-Marie Prins) at the Sleuk Rith Contemporary Art Gallery in Phnom Penh. In addition to being free to the public, it is easily accessible to others outside of Phnom Penh. Refer to: Documentation Center of Cambodia. "Breaking the Silence. A New Cambodian Play." Online video clip. *Youtube.* Youtube, 25 Feb. 2019. Web. 08 Mar. 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPbXqnd-OOY&feature=youtu.be>

the ways in which young Cambodians are re-defining the Cambodian art scene through collaborative artistic and literary productions in the new co-working space, Factory Phnom Penh, and in public spaces, such as Java Creative Café, and the three-story German-Cambodian intercultural center, Meta House.[32]

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1: Fixed Identity and Fixing the Future: Suppressing a Half to be Full

In my first chapter, I examine the problematization of, and the proposed solutions to, cultural *métissage* in the first published Vietnamese Francophone novel, *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys: Journal d'une jeune fille Cochinchinoise moderne. Essai sur l'évolution des mœurs annamites contemporaines* (1921). This chapter investigates how the author, Nguyen Phan Long, founder of the Constitutionalist Party of Cochinchina, uses French grammar and syntax as a rhetorical means for disciplining Vietnamese women in French Indochina. I interpret his use of French literary traditions of novelistic and fictionalized diary-writing to impose Confucian ideals on Vietnamese women, and read his mirroring of French "diary-novels" as a reflection of his desire to respond to *journaux-romans* and their French male authors. In addition, close attention is given to the various addresses, epithets, and allusions used to refer to French and Annamite women in the novel – such as *nhà-quê, con gái*, *congaï,* and *Mimi Pinson* – in order to unveil Nguyen Phan Long's desires and anxieties. In closing, I read Mademoiselle Lys's racialization and division of

[32] Meta House, "Cambodia's first independent media and art center" (opened in 2007) -- along with filmmaker Rithy Panh's Bophana Center, and L'Institut du Cambodge in Phnom Penh -- is one of the only spaces where Cambodians can receive cinema training, view documentaries and independent films, and participate in the local art and music scene. "Country Profile. Approaching a Niche: Documentaries in Cambodia." *DocNet Southeast Asia.* Goethe Institut, 2019. Web. 01 July 2019. <http://www.goethe.de/ins/id/lp/prj/dns/dfm/cam/enindex.htm>

the Cambodian capital's neighborhoods, and her comparison of the *Giao-chi* to the ancient Khmers, in relation to *métissage* – and particularly to the representation of the *métis(se)* as a monstrous hybrid. While there aren't any "mixed-race" characters in *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys*, *métissage* appears in the attempts of its erasure by a Vietnamese male author.

Chapter 2: Cambodia, French Indochina's Middle Child

In Chapter 2, I read the first Khmer novel, *Sophat*, in parallel to the nationalist, political, and pedagogical Khmer reforms (Khmerization), during the last few decades of the Colonial period. I interpret the construction of Cambodian identity in relation to the overwhelming presence of "foreign" (non-Khmer) literature in Phnom Penh up until the creation of *Sophat*. In addition to presenting an overview of the Khmerization movements in the early and mid-20th-century, I read *Sophat* as a nationalist novel that attempts to define Khmerness by "pureness," by suppressing any trace of *métissage* – or his birth mother, in this case. In *Sophat,* the hero's mother is described as "Sino-Khmer", while her son, Sophat, is never referred to as such. While he shares his mother's orphan-status, he unknowingly returns to his biological father, in the form of an adoptive one.[33] His nomadic state, the elimination of Soya and his maternal grandparents, and his return to his biological father can be read as a *tabula rasa;* an erasure of his Sino history, and his transformation into *Kohn Khmer.* In other words, *Sophat*, the Khmer hero, can be read as a reification of the *Kohn Khmer*, and the elimination of the *Kohn kat*.

Chapter 2, which follows the preceding chapter on the first Vietnamese Francophone novel, emphasizes the inseparability of the Khmer language, Cambodian nationalism, and Cambodian

[33] Sophat's mother, Soya, is referred to as "Soya, l'orpheline." See Gérard Groussin's translation of *Sophat,* 19.

literary production. I investigate how Cambodian identity continues to be shaped by its shared history with Vietnam and France. In addition to using genealogical metaphors from the pre-colonial period during the Khmer empire, to the postcolonial and post-Democratic Kampuchea era in Cambodia, I also interpret France's relationship with Vietnam and Cambodia. Using psychoanalytical and postcolonial metaphors, birth order typing, and the political ideology of the 20th-century in Cambodia—I interpret *Sophat* as a political and literary tool to mend its national and cultural precarity.

Chapter 3: Cambodian Family Albums: Tian's *L'année du lièvre* and Cambodian "New Aesthetics"

Chapter 3 speaks to the ways in which Cambodian identity defies categorization, time, and space. I explore how Tian's *L'année du lièvre* represents second-generation postmemory in the form of, what I call, a postmemorial "Cambodian family album." Turning to the fields of memory studies, Holocaust studies, Asian American studies, and psychoanalysis – I read Tian's three-volume graphic novel as a family album, and as a transnational book, that creates and transmits memory. I refer to the Khmer term for "photo album," *sierhpuhl sumraap buht ruuptawt*, which literally translates to "book designated for sticking pictures," to emphasize the fragmentary and creative quality of Cambodian postmemory. Moreover, I argue that Tian's graphic novel reflects the current and growing "new aesthetics" movement, and that postmemorial art serves to refute the characterization of second-generation survivors as inactive and passive recipients of first-generation memory.

While my final chapter calls for a reading of contemporary Cambodian aesthetics as postmemorial texts – or what I call "Cambodian family albums" – my dissertation as a whole has unexpectedly morphed into a personal-familial archive; a Cambodian family album. Like memory-work – which is endless and always undergoing transformation – my family album will continue to build with the alternative art forms underway in Cambodia and within the Cambodian diaspora.

Chapter 1. Fixed Identity and Fixing the Future: Suppressing a Half to be Full

L'éducation de nos filles : enseignement et saignement

At first glance, *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys : Journal d'une jeune fille Cochinchinoise moderne. Essai sur l'évolution des mœurs annamites contemporaines* (1921) appears to be a novel about a young South Vietnamese girl in French Indochina. The title alludes to both a private diary of a modern female adolescent in Cochinchina, as well as an essay on the evolving morals of Annamite women in a contemporary world. While there is nothing particularly unusual about a young girl's diary being written in the first-person, it is most odd that this novel—which serves as both an intimate look into a young Vietnamese girl's life in French colonial Vietnam, and a commentary on contemporary colonial society and its effects on female morals in Vietnam—is forged. That is to say, that this feminine voice is impersonated by a Vietnamese male political figure: Nguyen Phan Long.

Nguyen Phan Long, both journalist and founder of the Constitutionalist Party of Cochinchina, was one of the first Vietnamese writers to publish a novel in French.[34] Considering that *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys* is one of the very first Vietnamese Francophone novels to be published, what is there to be said about the act of a male political activist and journalist writing in the feminine first-person "je" in a simulated private diary?[35] Based on the title alone, the reader

[34] Jack Yeager provides additional biographical information on Nguyen Phan Long in *The Vietnamese Novel in French: A Literary Response to Colonialism* (1987). See pp. 167-8 of the appendix.
[35] See Yeager, p. 168.

expects to encounter a young Vietnamese girl's account of French Indochinese Vietnam and its influences on feminine subjectivity. Yet, what the reader receives is not the personal account of a Vietnamese *mademoiselle*—but rather, a projection of what this Vietnamese *mademoiselle* ought to be, from an influential male authority figure. In other words, before even getting to the content of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys,* gender already stands a central problem.

In this chapter, I examine how Nguyen Phan Long treats the problem of a culturally *métisse* Vietnamese woman by investigating the intersection of gender, sexuality, and race in the preface and the three dissected parts of the *roman*.[36] In each part of the novel, I focus on the ways in which the author attempts to fix and stabilize cultural *métissage*. The first section, "*We* before *I*: Pronouncing Annamite collective identity ahead of first-person subjectivity," highlights Nguyen Phan Long's personal and collective goals for the novel through a close examination of the grammatical and stylistic choices made by the author. In the second section, "The humble *nhà*-quê and *one of those* French women: The undefinable status of Mademoiselle Lys," I focus on the multitude of French and Vietnamese words used to refer to French and Vietnamese women and men in Part I of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys*. I collect a glossary of these terms and examine their roles in the context of the dialogues or personal reflections recorded by the narrator. The third section, "Shifting Mirrors from Fictive Feminine Desire to Non-fictive Masculine Fantasy," centers on the two types of mirrors that haunt the narrator: The "local" mirror that encapsulates

[36]With Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality in mind, I interpret how class, gender, race, and ethnicity cannot exist independently of one another. I consider how the fictional woman presented in the novel, and the real-life Vietnamese *women* of 20th-century Indochina, experience marginalization as a result of being doubly colonized by the French colonizers and the Confucian ideals put into place. The colonized woman's identity is thus inseparable from the patriarchal dominance experienced on both the Vietnamese and French end. Moreover, her identity is further complicated, as she is both "native" and "foreign"—a local inhabitant and an indigenous woman in French Indochina. See: "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum:* Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8.

the collective "nous," and the "desired," "idealized" self that fulfills the author's fantasy of the Frenchwoman. I expand upon the exoticization of the Frenchwoman in section 4, "*Con gái* to *congaï*: Translating and transforming *daughter* into *Mother.*" Finally, section 5, "Au seuil des frontières: Le serpent *naga* et les quartiers de Phnom Penh," centers on the narrator's trip to Cambodia in the middle of her *roman*, and her selective recollection of anecdotes on Cambodian sites and districts.

The novel is split into three parts, each organized into a series of entries. Part I begins in Cantho, Vietnam, shortly before Tet in 1918.[37] Despite the narrator's use of the Gregorian calendar to date her entries, she refers to the end of the year in her second entry dated February 3rd—"the twenty-third day of the twelfth moon"—with the departure of *Ông-Táo* (20). For the next four entries, she describes in detail the preparations for Tet, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, identifying February 10th as the last day of the year (29). Depicting the departure of *Ông-Táo*, *le dieu du Foyer* [Kitchen God], she notes that he will return from Heaven in seven days for Tet, after informing *l'Empereur de Jade* of their annual household activities (20-22). "C'est aujourd'hui, vingt-troisième jour de la douzième lune, que, dans toutes les maisons, on offre le sacrifice d'adieu au dieu du Foyer, *Ông-Táo*, qui s'en va faire au Ciel son rapport annuel. Pendant l'année finissante, le censeur invisible a tenu note fidèlement des faits et gestes des occupants de la maison" (20). The narrator presents us with the difficulties of being an Annamite *francisée*, her marked difference from other Annamite girls, and her pursuit of Monsieur Raynal, a French civil servant. After eight years at a French school in Saigon, Mademoiselle Lys returns to her hometown with a *brevet* in hand. Her absence from home has rendered her unable to recognize Vietnamese dishes

[37]According to the Vietnamese calendar, these dates signal the end of the Year of the Fire Snake in 1917 and the arrival of the Year of the Earth Horse on February 11, 1918.

and table manners. While her inability to relate to other Annamite girls reinforces her superiority complex, she struggles with her self-esteem when comparing herself to Mademoiselle Mellin, the embodiment of whiteness and beauty. Her broken engagement to Monsieur Raynal, and her subsequent depression, are caused by none other than Mademoiselle Mellin, the one whom he truly loves. Part II of the novel is set in Cambodia. In a single entry that runs on for over one hundred pages and is dated a month after her last entry in Part I, the narrator—writing from Cantho—informs us that this trip was planned by her father to distract her from her depression. This journal entry, which interrupts the narrative flow, begins with her impressions of the culturally and ethnically diverse districts of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. It then digresses into a historical account of the Khmer Empire, including its downfall and ransacking by the Siamese. If the purpose of her trip to Cambodia was to alleviate her pain, it proves futile. In Part III, roughly a week after her last entry, we encounter a suicidal Mademoiselle Lys. By the end of Part III and the novel, however, we meet a new and transformed woman. Upon her recollections of her past near-death experiences and her recent encounter with the man who saved her during her childhood, she dismisses any plan of suicide and becomes conscious of her debt to her parents and Annamite society. Toward the end of the novel, she receives a second proposal—this time from M. Minh, a pro-French Annamite soldier. Her final entry begins a few weeks before Tet, almost a full year since the start of the novel, with the narrator happily engaged to M. Minh. The preparations for her wedding overlap with the preparations for Tet, or the Year of the Earth Goat. Declaring that she no longer recognizes her former self in the previous entries, she bids farewell to her *journal*: “Adieu donc, mon cher journal. Mais ce n’est pas le mot ‘Fin’ qu’il faut mettre au bas de ces lignes. Toutes ces impressions, toutes ces joies, toutes ces tristesses et même ces désespoirs, que j’ai consignés au jour le jour dans tes pages, ne sont qu’une préface” (401). While readers never witness

Mademoiselle Lys's transformation into Wife, we receive her final written words, which reveal her preparation for her new role: "J'étais une jeune fille, je vais devenir une femme, la Femme. Car la mission de la femme est d'être la sœur qui console et réconforte, la mère qui humanise les énergies en puissance d'un peu de rêve et de poésie, celle, enfin, qui met dans la société, comme dans la famille, la grâce discrète de son sourire et le rayonnement de sa bonté" (403). The novel conveniently closes with the evolution of Mademoiselle Lys—from a modern cultural *métisse* to an Annamite wife.

Before Mademoiselle Ly's diary even begins, though, the reader is thrown into a colonial-collaborationist, male-dominant space that attempts to preserve gender roles, Confucian values, and an Annamite identity in search of its French mirror image. The conscious decision to employ a female narrator may be interpreted in various ways. In *The Vietnamese Novel in French* (1987), Jack Yeager states that the use of women in literature is always symbolic. In the case of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys,* the female narrator "symbolizes a segment of the Vietnamese people and their country at a certain moment in political history" (127-28). In other words, Mademoiselle Lys is a figure of Vietnam as Nation in the middle of a colonial identity crisis. While Mademoiselle Lys represents Vietnam as Nation in French Indochina, the reader must not forget that what is being recounted is done so under the guise of a Vietnamese feminine voice. *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys*, one of the first Vietnamese Francophone novels to be published, then happens to convey a political message through the medium of a forged feminine voice, as well as an important social commentary on Vietnamese identity, regeneration and nationality—all which are channeled through faux-feminine (re)productivity.

The role and meaning of *genre* become central to the study of Nguyen Phan Long's novel. *Genre* can be understood in at least three ways: The literary genre, *genre* as "gender" in French,

and "genre" as a particular kind of thing that can be fixed and categorized.[38] From the literary genre of the *roman* and/or *faux-journal*, to the French translation of "genre" into "gender", to the bounding of identity based on social classifications and conventions—*Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys* reveals the social and historical perceptions of Vietnamese national identity, through the fictitious journal of a young Vietnamese woman, born in French Cochinchina.[39] With Woman standing in as a symbol for Nation, the narrator's recordings, through Nguyen Phan Long, recount her identity crisis as a culturally *métisse* Cochinchinoise. Her personal experiences become collective ones that reveal much about the Vietnamese identity in the middle of French colonial rule.[40] Moreover, *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys* borrows from the French imagination in order to construct a fictional representation of Vietnamese "identity," and in doing so, the novel itself presents itself as a kind of *métis.*

Le *genre féminin* illustrates the relationship between the literary genre of the *roman* and the *journal intime,* the "female sex", and the classification system created by men to fix and determine a woman's identity. Before interpreting Nguyen Phan Long's *roman,* the following must be observed: i) the "birth" of the *journal intime,* its defining traits—and what they reveal about its "true" author; ii) the assignment of gender to the literary genre of the *roman* and the *journal intime*; iii) the trend of French male writers publishing *faux-journaux intimes*, impersonating young women, in the 19th and 20th centuries, or as early as the 18th century, if one includes the male

[38] One could also add "grammatical gender" (*le genre grammatical*) to this list of the various meanings and applications of *genre.*

[39] Valérie Raoul notes the following three *journaux*: "*vrai, faux, fictif."* Raoul distinguishes "*le faux journal"* from *"le journal fictif* ", stating that *"le journal fictif […] ne prétend pas à la verité."* Pp. 25-26. In my chapter, I use the term "*faux-journal"* to refer to fictional *journaux* that combine the traits of both the *roman* and the diary—including dated diary entries that are recorded regularly, as well as a storyline with a social and/or political message. See Raoul, "Women and Diaries: Gender and Genre." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature,* vol. 22, no. 3, 1989.

[40] The *journal-roman* dates from 1918-1919—and coincidentally falls in the middle of the start-end period of French colonial South Vietnam: 1887 to 1954.

impersonation of feminine forms in the genre of epistolary novels. In the introduction of *Le Journal intime*, Alain Girard depicts certain characteristics of the novel, and its influence on the birth of the *journal intime*, including the (re)presentation of fiction as reality.[41] Girard traces the beginnings of the *journal intime*, on the threshold of the 19th century, noting its relationship with sentimentalism and empiricism.[42] The most important aspect of the *journal intime*, though, is its private dimension. In her article, "Women and Diaries: Gender and Genre," Valérie Raoul identifies the history of the *journal intime*—from its intended form as a "private mode of writing" to its eventual distribution to the public and its acceptance as a literary form.[43] She questions the assignment of gender to the *genre* of the *journal intime,* and stresses that the "secrecy" of the *journal* is what makes it "feminine": "The original non-public, non-literary nature of the 'genuine' diary is the first feature which made it a form of writing considered appropriate for women" (58). Thus, the gendering of the genre—before it could even be considered as such—was linked to it being unpublishable, "non-literary", and authentically private. Its transition from "non-genre" into "genre" included a shift from the private to the public sphere. This move away from the "authentically private" space entailed a male dominance over a "feminine" writing practice. Referring to Jane DuPree Begos' "The Diaries of Adolescent Girls," Raoul notes the peculiar imbalance of gendered expectations of private writing and publishing: "More girls than boys have

[41] Girard, Alain. *Le Journal intime.* Paris : PUF, 1963.
See also: Maurice Z. Shroder, "The Novel as a Genre", *The Massachusetts Review,* Vol. 4, No. 2 (Winter 1963), pp. 291-308.

[42] Girard specifies the moment in which the *journal intime* developed: "Ce nouveau genre d'écrit apparaît à la charnière de deux siècles […] aux alentours des années 1800, avant l'éclosion romantique." Pp. ix-x.
Adding to this, Girard notes that the first diary-keepers were male ideologues of the 18th century, i.e.: Maine de Biran, Benjamin Constant, Joubert, Stendhal. "Ils en vinrent à attribuer au moi et au témoignage du sens intime une valeur privilégiée. […] L'observation intérieure se transforme insensiblement en examen de conscience". See p. x.

[43] The difference between the English "diary" and French "*journal intime*" is important here. Raoul notes that the French "*journal*" was intended for private use, while the English "diary" was not. See Raoul, pp. 57-58.

kept diaries, yet more diaries by men have been published than diaries by women" (58).[44] If diary-keeping were to remain a "harmless occupation" for women, it would have to remain unpublished, and could not become an actual *occupation*.[45] In order to be taken seriously as a literary genre, it had to leave the private sphere—through the publication of diaries by male writers.[46] No longer restricted to the individual, the *journal* becomes a cultural and historical product of the public.[47] We see this in its transformation, from its designated role as a private pastime for adolescent girls, into a surge in posthumous publication by male writers.[48] The "radical change" in publishing "real" *journaux intimes* before one's death indicates a change in writing trends reflective of the society.[49] The writer bears witness to society and his own anxieties, in the form of a confessional.[50] What does this say, then, about the surge in the production of *journaux intimes* by male writers in the

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[44] Begos, Jane DuPree. "The Diaries of Adolescent Girls." *Women's Studies International Forum* 10.1 (1987): 69-74.

[45] Raoul refers to Dale Spender's *Man-Made Language,* acknowledging the self-censorship that comes with societal expectations of the 19th-century woman: "A woman's business was, precisely, to stay away from business, including writing as a marketable skill. Keeping a private diary, however, was generally considered a harmless occupation. By the mid-nineteenth century beautifully bound books of blank pages, complete with padlocks, were a popular gift for adolescent girls." Raoul 58. See also, Dale Spender's *Man-Made Language*. London: Routledge, 1980.

[46] See Raoul, p. 58.

[47] With technological advancement and progress, there was no true "individual", but rather an individual comprising a part of *society*. Girard addresses the birth of the *nouveau genre* with the overlap of the transformation of society and "l'individu." He suggests that "l'individu" transforms in relation to the growing urban population: "[L'individu] se perd dans la masse indistincte. […] Il n'a plus de rapports intimes avec les autres […]. Dès lors, en dépit du pouvoir qu'il se connait, ce moi, unique et irremplaçable, est un moi plus souffrant que jamais. […] Il se réfugie dans le secret, il invente le journal intime." P. xiii; 7.

[48] "Enfin, l'écriture secrète du journal sort peu à peu de l'ombre à partir de 1850, et éclate au grand jour, à la fin du siècle par la publication de nombreux posthumes." *Ibid. x.* Girard also notes that up until the 20th century, *journaux intimes* had only been published posthumously. See p. 4.

[49] "Nouveau genre littéraire et fait de civilisation, le journal intime est inséparable des circonstances de temps et de lieu où il a pris naissance et s'est développé." *Ibid. xx.*

[50] *Ibid. xi.* "Si les origines du journal sont ancrées dans le XVIIIe siècle finissant, et si son épanouissement se produit au début du XXe siècle, cet espace de temps coïncide avec les transformations extraordinaires qu'a connues la société occidentale. […] Sans être nécessairement conscient des changements qui se produisent sous ses yeux, l'homme du XIXe siècle en ressent les conséquences en profondeur."

19th and 20th centuries?[51] Moreover, what happens when the fictive-'I' is intercepted by the *lecteur* or *lectrice* of the *journaux intimes*?[52]

We before *I*: Annamite Collective Identity First

Before entering the *journal intime* of Mademoiselle Lys, the reader encounters the author's dedication to "M. Maurice Long, Député de la Drôme, Gouverneur Géneral de l'Indochine" with the goal of familiarizing M. Long with the Vietnamese people—"the people over which he presides."[53] Following this, the author signs his name, and describes the major goals of his narrative.[54] Nguyen Phan Long outlines his ambitions in the preface, stating the following: "The novel's principal theme is the instruction of our girls. For a few years, many of our compatriots seem to have given into a dangerous fondness for modernism […]. Already, some, going even further, talk about women's rights -- in support of feminism -- which is not, for us, as far as I know, a good import."[55]

In outlining the goals of his book, Nguyen Phan Long employs the following stylistic and grammatical features: repetitive use of the possessive pronoun, *notr*e/*nos*; the first-person plural pronoun *nous*; and the stress pronoun, *nous*. The author's conscious decision to write in the first-person plural pronoun in the preface exhibits an autobiographical quality that exposes his own beliefs on Annamite society and women. Despite this, the first-person plural pronoun forges an

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[51] *Ibid. 36.* "La multiplication des journaux intimes à une époque apporte un témoignage éloquent de la manière dont les hommes de cette époque se représentaient leur personne."
[52] In particular, can the *journal intime* serve equally as the *intimiste*'s and the *lecteur*/*lectrice*'s mirror, and would (s)he find the same flawed image upon encountering the text?
[53] See dedication of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys;* p. 4
[54] See p. 5 of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys*.
[55] This is my personal translation from French to English. The original reads: "Le roman que voici a pour principal thème l'éducation de nos filles. Depuis quelques années, un grand nombre de nos compatriotes semblent céder en cette matière délicate à un engouement dangereux pour un modernisme à outrance qui fait table rase de nos traditions sans tenir compte de nos qualités ni surtout de nos défauts, car nous en avons, est-il besoin de le dire? Déjà, certains renchérissant là-dessus, parlent des droits de la femme en partisans déterminés du féminisme, lequel n'est pas pour nous, que je sache, un bon article d'importation." *Ibid. 5.*

"intimate" connection between the author and his intended audience. Acknowledging his dedication to M. Maurice Long, *Député de la Drôme, Gouverneur Général de l'Indochine*, it becomes clear that the "we" to which he writes includes a French and Vietnamese audience.[56] By writing "we", the author acts as a spokesperson for a particular group -- an uncertain *Annamite* people in a French colonial, post-war 20th century. The preface's first-person plural form of *nous*, thus establishes a sense of collectivity, familiarity, and authority. It sets us up for the *roman*, which is narrated in the first-person, but in the singular form of *je.* The stress on the collective is thus established before the intimate narration of Mademoiselle Lys' life events in the *roman.*

Nguyen Phan Long's use of the *nous* must be differentiated from the disjunctive pronoun, *nous*. The role of *nous* in the latter case places emphasis on a particular (pro)noun. The most striking aspect of this pronoun in the preface is its application in the *negative* form. The author places an accent on the Annamite people, by situating them in relation to the rejection of feminism, "lequel n'est pas pour nous", as noted above by the author.[57]

While the author declares feminism to be an undesirable import to Vietnamese society, his preface to the novel should not be mistaken for an anti-French sentiment. In his book, *Disorientation: France, Vietnam, and the Ambivalence of Interculturality,* Karl Britto stresses the collaborationist message of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys*, by acknowledging Nguyen Phan Long's involvement in the Constitutionalist Party of Cochinchina, and the class of Vietnamese elites who were able to maintain their privileged status as a result of the French colonial regime

[56] The dedication reads : "Je dédie ce livre en témoignage de respectueuse sympathie et avec l'espoir que mon œuvre modeste contribuera à lui faire mieux connaître et aimer le peuple aux destinée duquel il préside." *Ibid. 4.*
[57] p. 5. My translation of the passage retains the author's sentiments against an "importation" of feminism in Vietnam, but the original French version draws a strong line between "us" and "them." In order to reach a coherent English translation, I separate "for us" from "which is not" with a comma (i.e.: "which is not, for us, as far as I know, a good import"). Beyond the direct translation of the passage, I interpret the French "lequel n'est pas pour nous" as [feminism] "which is not for us."

(75).[58] With this being said, Nguyen Phan Long's preface does not turn against the French colonial structures in place–but rather, the French educational system's negative effect on *Annamite* women, including feminism. It must be noted that feminism was also negatively received in the French colonial nation—and even considered a *threat* to French nationalism—at the beginning of the 20th century.[59] French novelists, including, Eugène-Marcel Prévost, quickly took to the pen and page to denounce the movement. In *Debating the Woman Question in the French Third Republic, 1870-1920,* Karen Offen states the following: "Critics who, in their effort to foster a nationalist identity for France, had begun to argue that their nation was invaded, indeed infected […] by morbid outside influences" (201). Referring to Prévost's novel, *Les Vierges fortes* (1900)*,* Offen observes that Prévost equates feminism to a sort of "unFrench-ness", in which "feminist ideas were alien to France, imports from abroad and dangerous."[60] Thus, Nguyen Phan Long's distaste for feminism – "which is not, for us, […] a good import" -- can be read as a French import, in itself.[61] The feminism that Nguyen Phan Long proclaims as "not for us" is also one that is *not* for France.

In order to better understand this, particular attention must be paid to the abundant use of the French possessive adjective *notre/nos*. More importantly, what follows the possessive adjective, "our", is of equal importance. A quick scan of the passage above generates the nouns modified by the possessive adjective *notre* or *nos*: *filles, compatriotes, traditions, qualités, défauts, filles, ambition* (5). From this list, the possessive adjective-noun pair*,* "nos filles" is quite

[58] Karl Britto cites Jack Yeager, stating that "the rejection of traditional cultural values was crucial for breaking free from the French." Britto, p. 35. See Chapter two, pp. 31-70, *Disorientation: France, Vietnam, and the Ambivalence of Interculturality*.
[59] See Karen Offen, Chapter 5, *Debating the Woman Question in the French Third Republic, 1870-1920*.
[60] See Offen, p. 201: "It was Marcel Prévost's two-volume best seller *Les Vierges fortes* (1900) that would link the New Woman to feminism, while at the same time insidiously depicting feminism as an unFrench phenomenon. In Prévost's characterization, the 'true' feminist was a man-hating type who wants to live entirely independently of men. […] Prévost depicted feminism as a new secular religion, international in scope and utterly foreign to France."
[61] See Nguyen Phan Long, p. 5.

revealing: *Nos filles* refers to "our girls", and particularly, "our daughters"—"our *Annamite* daughters". Though subtle, the dual meaning of *filles* as "daughters" and "girls"—and its pairing with the possessive adjective *nos,* pronounced by a male speaker—indicates a collaborative male claim over the female body. In other words, daughters and mothers are always objectified and *possessed* by male-speaking subject(s). The author's insistence on preserving tradition and culture supports the first-person pronoun *nous* that stands in for the Annamite people. Despite stressing "our compatriots'" fear of western modernism's influence on "our girls", and the author's suggestion of instilling in them traditional values of femininity—Nguyen Phan Long pushes a collaborationist agenda that supports Vietnamese cultural values and the French colonial structures in place.[62] "Our daughters" and "our traditions" can thus be understood as a possessive form of the feminine *rôle au foyer* that supports Confucian values, and opposes the effects of a liberal education system on "our" developing Annamite girls.[63]

The most revelatory possessive adjective-noun pair occurs midway in the author's preface, prefiguring Mademoiselle Lys' narrative. In the third paragraph of his preface, Nguyen Phan Long stresses the problem of *notre race*. More specifically, the "future of our race" is the point of emphasis; "the essential problem" (7). Race, when modified by the possessive adjective *notre,* represents the Vietnamese identity, rather than the Asian race. The various meanings and uses of *Annam* and *Annamite* must be noted, in order to understand the nuances between "Annamite",

[62] See Britto, Chapter two, pp. 31-70, "Sentimental Interculturality: Nguyen Phan Long's Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys."

[63] In *Confucianism and Women: A Philosophical Interpretation* (2006), Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee acknowledges the patriarchal structure of Confucianism, identifying it to the source of "women's oppression in China". She notes that women are "groomed to be daughters, wives, and mothers for the sole purpose of perpetuating the patrilineal line"; "women are also deprived of an access to the *wai* realm of *wen* (culture) and *zheng* (governance)." Pp. 152-153. With this in mind, "protecting" *our girls* echoes Confucian values of "grooming" women to procreate. A liberal education would prevent *our girls* from following the path of maternity, and from birthing replicas of other Annamite daughter-mothers. Britto also discusses the relationship between Confucian ideals and Vietnamese womanhood. See Britto, p. 25.

"Vietnamese", and "Asian." During the colonial period, Annam alluded to either the entirety of colonial Vietnam, composed of Annam, Tokin, and Cochinchina—or the colonial region, Annam, on its own. *Le peuple annamite* thus refers to the people of the Annam region, or the people belonging to the entirety of the three colonial regions: Annam, Tokin, and Cochinchina.[64] The use of "Vietnamese", instead of "Annamite", marks a move away from colonial constructions of identity. Though Vietnam did not become independent until 1945, the term "Vietnamese" marks the conscious construction of an identity "untouched" by French administrators and officers. In addition, it depicts a historical and cultural shift. Nguyen Phan Long's anxiety over the post-WWI effects on "our" identity supports this transition.

His anxieties over "the future of our race" and feminism may be understood together as a set-up for the author's project. Shortly after his discussion of race and the changes to be faced in the near future, Nguyen Phan Long informs the reader that his novel is a way of working through his ideas on "our society": "Je m'y suis proposé en effet de tracer, en les réunissant par le fil d'une intrigue, une série d'esquisses présentant le tableau sommaire de notre societé à l'heure où, par suite de la répercussion mondiale d'une guerre sans précédent, de grands changements vont y être apportés, sous l'impulsion des événements ou par la volonté des hommes" (7). Race is contextualized here in anticipation of a morphed post-WWI society. The author expresses his concern over the "great changes" which the Annamite "race" will face in the twentieth century. This anxiety is expressed in the presentation of his project: "Ce livre […] n'a d'autre prétention que d'être un miroir fidèle" (7). Nguyen Phan Long's novel is thus an attempt to work through "some of the misunderstandings engendered by a mutual understanding", between France and

[64] *Encyclopaedia Universalis*. Vol. 9. Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis France, 1985. Print.

Annam (7). His collaborationist anti-feminist stance and concern for "the Annamite people" prepares us for the message behind the novel, *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys*. "Our Annamite daughters" must prepare themselves for the role of motherhood. *Nos filles*—our daughters—are indebted to "carrying" and preserving Vietnamese culture and tradition.[65] Nguyen Phan Long's preoccupation with *nos filles* reflects his own personal anxiety, comprised of a fear of an uncertain future for Vietnam. In her book, *The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Psychoanalysis, Photography, Deconstruction* (2012), Elissa Marder notes that "by subsuming women too quickly into the category of 'mothers' (or potential mothers), women are assigned to a particular, symbolically loaded place within the culture: the place of 'home,' 'origin,' 'certainty,' and 'nature,' indeed the very place of 'place' itself" (4). "The cultural concept of 'Mother' as the symbolic place-holder for 'home'" is at least doubly dangerous when considered in the context of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys*—a book used to *éduquer.*[66] Referring to "our own birth" as a "missed event" to which we have no access, Marder states: "Not only are we not able to be 'present' to the event of our own birth, but someone else, the mother, is there at the scene—in our place—without being there as our witness, proxy or representative. […]" (4). The double-danger presents itself here in the precocious transformation of Annamite girl-daughter into "potential mother." Not only has she missed the event of her own birth as daughter—but she has also missed the event of being "'present' at the scene" as "'Mother.'"[67] To this extent, she is "doubly 'absent'" to herself as "potential mother", in the event of the anticipation of the unbirthed child to be *produced*.[68] The confusion over the relation of "Mother" to "home" is thus further disturbed: Is

[65] My use of "Vietnamese" here refers to "ethnic" Vietnamese identity. I use "Annamite" to refer specifically to the people of Vietnamese descent, born and living in French colonial Vietnam.
[66] See Marder, p. 4.
[67] Marder, pp. 4-5
[68] See Marder, pp. 2-5. Like the "unnatural" "maternal function", the literary production of the Annamite daughter-"potential mother" is produced onto paper, by the male author's pen. Moreover, it is anticipated to be consumed by a male readership, i.e.: M. Maurice Long, *Député de la Drôme*, *Gouverneur de l'Indochine*.

France or Vietnam ("Annam") the "homeland" to the author and fictional Annamite daughter?[69] Finally, the failures of "converting" daughter into "potential mother" and the doubly-missed "event" of her rebirth *functions* as the male author's own anxiety and desire to protect and preserve Vietnamese-ness.[70] Nguyen Phan Long's anxieties can thus be interpreted as his own missed event of birth—his conflicted ties and cultural affiliation with France and Vietnam—and his search for a Mother(land). Here, the cultural, political, and biological are linked, and the message behind the *roman* becomes clear. *Féminisme* is not for *us*—not for *our girls*; *our daughters*.[71] The author stresses the primary theme of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle:* "l'éducation de nos filles" (5). Yet, his novel is in actuality an instruction manual on how to *éduquer* ("raise"; "bring up") "our daughters" with traditional Confucian values in a contemporary society. Mademoiselle Lys is both a "reproduced" daughter, responsible for reproducing other daughters, as well as a "produced" "potential mother" who stands in for a desired "home" and "potential Nation"; a protector of "an unknown future."[72] The author's anxiety over a "tabula rasa of our traditions" puts the task on "our girls" to serve as protectors of a bloodline.[73]

Having taken into consideration the traits and the beginnings of the literary genre of the *journal intime*, we can return to Nguyen Phan Long's goals of writing the first Francophone Asian *roman*. As mentioned earlier, he states in the preface that "ce livre […] n'a d'autre pretention que d'être un miroir fidèle" and dedicates his work to the *Député de la Drôme, Gouveneur Général de*

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[69] See Chapter 1 of Françoise Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage.*
[70] Referring to one's "missed encounter with the event of birth" as a "primordial source of anxiety," Marder adds: "Psychoanalytic theory has defined anxiety as an automatic psychic reaction to a missed encounter in the past (modeled after the missed encounter with the event of birth) that is then mechanically reproduced and projected onto an unknown future in order to forestall the effects of an unforeseen event." See pp. 5-6.
[71] See Nguyen Phan Long, p. 5.
[72] See Marder, pp. 5-6.
[73] I interpret the author's choice of words, "inculquer à nos filles les vertus", as "injecting" or "implanting" traditional domestic "feminine" roles and virtues into "our daughters"; preserving Vietnamese "blood" and Confucian traditions. See p. 5 of the preface.

l'Indochine.[74] This "faithful mirror" is both French and male, and directly refers to Stendhal's definition of the "realist" novel.[75] In particular, Nguyen Phan Long mirrors the literary trends of French male authors from the 19th and 20th centuries, by writing in the style of a "feminine" *faux journal.* The title, *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys,* undeniably pays tribute to the literary trend of male authors "adopting the supposed voice of a female narrator" (Raoul, "Women and Diaries: Gender and Genre" 59). Raoul states the following, in her article, "Women and Dairies: Gender and Genre":

> The young girl adjusting to the 'rôle' of woman and wife was in fact perceived as the stereotypical '*intimiste.'* This reflected in the large number of diary novels produced by men in France in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, bearing titles such as *Journal d'une jeune femme* and constituting a sub-genre of the diary-novel which culminates with Gide's *La Porte étroite* and *L'Ecole des femmes* (59). [76]

Nguyen Phan Long's mirroring of these "diary-novels" reflects his desire to respond to these *journaux-romans* and their authors. His mimicry of these novels reflects his ability to read, receive, and *respond* to the "common attitude" as a "*lecteur du XXe siècle.*" [77] On another level, he seeks to find his French mirror image, by writing back to a specific French and male *lecteur*. In doing so, he anticipates their recognition of the familiar French "diary novel." *Le Roman de*

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[74] See p. 7 of the preface.

[75] « Eh, monsieur, un roman est un miroir qui se promène sur une grande route. Tantôt il reflète à vos yeux l'azur des cieux, tantôt la fange des bourbiers de la route. Et l'homme qui porte le miroir dans sa hotte, sera par vous accusé d'être immoral ! Son miroir monte la fange, et vous accusez le miroir ! Accusez bien plutôt le grand chemin où est le bourbier, et plus encore l'inspecteur des routes qui laisse l'eau croupir et le bourbier se former. » Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le noir : chronique du XIXe siècle,* Vol. 8, Paris : Michel Lévy Frères, 1854. P. 354.

[76] Raoul cites her previous article, *"Discours du 'je' féminin imaginaire : les femmes intimistes dans le roman français.*" *Atlantis* 10.2 (1985) : 66-73.

[77] See Girard, pp. x-xi: "Une attitude commune devant la vie et devant le moi se dégage enfin qu'un lecteur du XXe siècle a le sentiment de reconnaitre"

Mademoiselle Lys, modeled after the French "diary novel", reflects a similar identity crisis, over male identity in the wake of the 20th century. In addition to this crisis of gender, though, is the anxiety over racial ambiguity. In order to fix—or resolve—the fragmented male identity in the time of the (post)war, the female sex needed to be *fixed* through the columns of the *faux journal*.

Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys attempts to suppress difference—or the "half-ness" or "mixed-ness"--that threatens *genre*. Nguyen Phan Long carries this out in the following ways: Writing in the place of a young Annamite woman, he defines gender roles and femininity, and reveals her difficulties of acceptance by both the Vietnamese and French people, due to her Vietnamese ethnicity, French schooling and mastery of the French language. Mademoiselle Lys is thus used as a model to represent the dangers of French feminism and education, as well as the difficulties – if not the impossibility – of interracial marriages. In this sense, the female narrator serves as a protector of Vietnamese ethnicity, identity, and Vietnam as Nation. The narrator -- perpetually situated in-between French or Vietnamese cultural settings -- reads herself through the gaze of the Vietnamese or French other. In this set-up, the author wrestles with defining a *kind* of "Vietnamese-ness" in parallel and in contrast to a certain type of "French-ness." Finally, the author records Vietnamese-ness in the genre of the Francophone novel. By doing so, the author attempts to be on par – culturally, and thus racially – with France. Cutting the *halfness* out of one's [Vietnamese] identity can thus be read as an act of preserving one's bloodline and/or culture: It is a survival tactic on the author's part.

The humble *nhà-quê* and one of *those* French women: The undefinable status of *Mademoiselle Lys*

While racial epithets and descriptors appear elsewhere in the novel, I focus primarily on the scenes in which they appear together in abundance, and on scenes of mirroring. A particularly

striking scene depicts Mademoiselle Lys' attempt to find her mirror image, by juxtaposing French and Vietnamese identities, in the form of letters, and especially *names*. She begins the entry recorded on April 20th, stating the following: "Il y a deux jours, une *bà-già* des environs vint me trouver, une lettre à la main. […] Seriez-vous assez bonne, mademoiselle Hai, pour m'expliquer ce qu'il y a dedans ?" (70-71).[78] The scene above begins with the introduction of the following characters: The *bà-già*, the two letters—a legible "masculine" one and an "undecipherable" feminine one—and the narrator.[79] The first thing that must be noted is the presentation of the *bà-già*, who is never given a personal name. She is described as *une bà-già des environs*; "a local old lady". While the narrator refers to her as a *bà-già* to the reader, she responds to the woman, addressing her as *Gi Năm.*[80] In addressing the reader, the narrator also refers to the *bà*-già in pejorative terms—as *la vieille* or *la bonne vieille.* The multiple forms of addressing the woman, without actually informing the reader of her personal name, emphasizes her foreignness—which includes her "Vietnamese-ness". The narrator already underlines her difference from the *bà-già* in taking pride in her ability to decipher this illegible French letter. Her translating of the letter serves as a "test" of her "Frenchness." Passing the test, for Mademoiselle Lys, would include receiving a French reflection. Thus, the narrator's copying of this feminine French letter into her diary entry must be read with skepticism.

The letter from Paris, dated "le 5 mars 1918", is copied and recorded into Mademoiselle Lys' diary entry, dated "20 avril". The intimate two-page letter expressing the Frenchwoman's

[78] The term, *bà-già,* appears for the first time on p. 13, but this is the first appearance of the *bà-già* as a significant character. *Bà* in Vietnamese refers to "grandmother." The 2014 *Tuttle Mini Vietnamese Dictionary: Vietnamese-English/English-Vietnamese* defines *bà* as "old", and *già* as either "grandmother", "lady", "madame", or "you". Read together, *bà-già* forms "old lady".
[79] See pp. 70-71.
[80] It is likely that *Gi* is a misspelling of *chị,* the Vietnamese term for "older sister" or "big sister." In this case, the narrator's use of *Chị* is non-familial. The use of *chị* is interesting here, as it would imply that the woman is not much older than Mademoiselle Lys. The reader, however, receives the other address, *bà-già.*

love for the *bà-già's* son, asking for the *bà-già*'s consent for marriage, and demanding approval as Daughter-in-law, is blocked from the intended audience. Instead, it is received by the narrator and shared with the reader.[81] The message itself is lost in Mademoiselle Lys' simple translation of Louise Hiron's letter: The narrator reduces the two-page letter to one sentence: "C'est une jeune française qui désire se marier avec votre fils" (73). While the narrator's reduction of Louise's message is important—the real significance lies in the interaction between the *bà-già* and the narrator—the reaction to one another's reaction(s).

Following Mademoiselle Lys' one-sentence summary revealing Louise's desire to marry the *bà-già*'s son, the "old woman" responds with hostility, referring to Louise as "one of those madames [sic]": "Mon fils épouser une demoiselle française! s'écria la vieille tout effarée, en levant vers moi sa figure terreuse et parcheminée où les fatigues du labeur quotidien avaient imprimé de bonne heure leurs stigmates" (73). It is worth noting that the *bà-già* and her son are presented together in a situation of relationality, and that he is only referred to by name once in the text. The language of possession ("your son" [votre fils], "my son" [mon fils], and eventually "our son" [notre fils]) reveals a preoccupation with filiation that defines and fixes identity. The old woman continues to juxtapose a Vietnamese "we" from a French (female) "them", stating: "Il veut épouser dites-vous, une de ces belles madames que nous voyons à la ville, qui portent des robes si jolies, effroyablement chères, qu'on dirait quasi fées. Mais il est fou, ce Liên, pour avoir osé lever

[81] Though technically not an epistolary novel, *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys* mirrors the narrative techniques and literary elements of popular French "letter-novels" of the 18th-century, such as Pierre Choderlos de Laclos' *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782). Nguyen Phan Long's inclusion of correspondence in his *journal-roman* contributes to and complicates the multiple voices in the novel—the "many layers of readers", as Françoise Meltzer states in her analysis of the epistolary genre. "Laclos' Purloined Letters," *Critical Inquiry* 8.3, p. 517. Meltzer refers to Jacques Lacan's reading of Edgar Allan Poe's 1844 short story, "The Purloined Letter", in his "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" (*Yale French Studies* 48, 1972) and applies it to the interruptions in letter-novels, like Laclos' *Les Liaisons dangereuses*. Despite the reoccurring "lost, suppressed, stolen, or intercepted letter" of epistolary novels, Melzer acknowledges that "there always is a *destinataire*." Meltzer 517-518. In addition, she states that the "final reader" is also "the final *destinataire*", referring to Lacan's interpretation of the letter that always reaches the intended audience. Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'"; Melzer 518.

les yeux jusqu'à une de ces dames. Il n'est même pas digne de délier les cordons de leurs souliers" (74).[82] In emphasizing the "fairy-like" quality of the "madames," the Frenchwoman leaves the human realm, entering a foreign and exotic one on the verge of extinction.[83] Mademoiselle Lys defends Louise, upon receiving the old woman's remarks. More importantly, she attempts to school the *bà-già* on Louise's reality, and simultaneously corrects the old woman's usage of *nous,* by distancing herself from the *nous* and stressing *vous*, instead: "Voyons, Gi Năm! Oui, ce doit être une jeune fille charmante, et bonne, et jolie, comme vos belles madames.[84] Mais elle est d'une autre condition que ces dames. Elle est, sans doute, aussi pauvre que votre fils et vit honnêtement, comme lui du travail de ses mains" (74). Mademoiselle Lys separates herself from the *nous* ("we") stressed by the *bà-già*, and also emphasizes Louise's unconventional racial-social status to highlight her own precarious position that fails to meet societal expectations and norms. The Frenchwoman is "of another condition". Despite being white, her financial status matches that of the *bà-già*'s son. In defending Louise, Mademoiselle Lys attempts to confirm her uncertain position in society. Unlike the Frenchwoman, however, she surpasses her financial status despite being non-white. Yet, her identity is just as—if not more—ambiguous. The narrator consciously separates herself from the *nous* emphasized by the *bà-già*. As made evident in this passage, the *bà-già* seeks out the narrator due to her French schooling and mastery of the French language.

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[82] Aside from the stereotyping of the chic and affluent French woman, the bà-già also introduces her son into the dialogue, and addresses him for the first time by his name: Liên.
The reader can deduce that the *bà-già* cannot read or speak French, based on her inability to read Louise's letter, and her dependence on Mademoiselle Lys' familiarity with the French language. The dialogue between the narrator and the *bà-già* thus seems questionable. We know that the *bà-già* must be speaking Vietnamese… but would that mean that the narrator is also communicating with the "old lady" in Vietnamese, despite her attempt of distancing herself from this Vietnamese "we" that the *bà-già* repeats and emphasizes?

[83] Ruth Amossy refers to the *physiologie* of the *grisette* in her article, "Les « Physiologies » et la littérature industrielle" (*Romantisme,*no. 64 1989). Borrowing from *Paris au XIXe siècle* (1841), the *grisette* is (re)presented as "une fleur indigène qui ne pousse qu'à Paris." See Amossy 116-117. See also p. 35, *Paris au XIXe siècle* (1841).

[84] The narrator's privileged position in Annamite society separates her from both the *bà-già* and the "poor" Frenchwoman, as well. Social class and status thus further complicate Mademoiselle Lys' position in society. She still fails to find her mirror image in either French or Vietnamese "half", and remains fragmented.

D'une autre condition, the narrator is neither *blanche*, nor does she fit into the category of an Annamite nous. Her unusual and undefinable status is further complicated by the fact that she fails to meet the description that she utters to defend the Frenchwoman's "other condition": The Frenchwoman is "just as poor as the *bà-già*'s son", and "lives honestly", like Liên, through hard labor with her hands (74). The narrator's privileged position, made evident by Mademoiselle Lys' education and social circle, distinguishes her from the "we", *le peuple annamite*; her race separates her from Annam's compatriots.

While the narrator's status in Annam is as ambiguous as the Frenchwoman's standing in France, her defense of Louise can be read as an attempt to mirror the Frenchwoman. By responding to Louise in French on behalf of the *bà-già,* and translating Louise's letter to the *bà-già,* Mademoiselle Lys reflects less of a desire to marry in her place, and more of a desire to couple with Louise. In rejecting the *nous,* uttered by the *bà-già*, and in emphasizing the cut from this *nous* with a returned address of *vous* to the *bà-già,* Mademoiselle Lys attempts to realign herself with another group. The *bà-già* thus stands in for the collective "we" of Annam.

Shifting Mirrors from Fictive Feminine Desire to Non-fictive Masculine Fantasy

After the *bà-già* expresses to the narrator her anger with her son and Louise, Mademoiselle Lys responds: "Je vois que vous ne connaissez pas ces jeunes filles" (74-75). In this statement, she implies that she holds a certain knowledge over Frenchwomen which the ignorant bà-già does not hold. Her rejection of an Annamite *nous* can be traced back to the very first entry, 2 février 1918, in which she describes her return home following an eight-year absence with "les bonnes Soeurs, *à Saigon"* (11).[85] Following this, the narrator experiences herself through a local mirror—from

[85] Mademoiselle Lys, an only child, returns from her stay with the "nuns"; "holy sisters."

the reactions of the villagers of Thói-An-Cantho. Her absence from and return to the city, with a *brevet* in her hand, signals her difference: "Les réflexions naïves de ces braves gens m'ont beaucoup amusée et–faut-il le dire?–un peu flattée" (12-13). Though Mademoiselle Lys highlights her superior status over other Annamite women, her inability to reintegrate into society serves as a source for her anxiety and desire to find another mirror.[86] In attempting to find her reflection, she turns to Louise.

The narrator's interception, translation, and copying of the letter can be read as a desire of acceptance into another group, one that is separate from the *nous* that includes the *bà-già* and *le peuple annamite*. The journal entry begins with and ends with the narrator's takeover of the voice of the *bà-già* and the Frenchwoman: The narrator offers two translations of the handwritten letter: In the first case, the supposed letter is copied carefully into her entry and offered to the reader. In the second instance, after the reader receives the message, the narrator reduces the two-page letter into one simple sentence in French, delivered to the *bà-già:* "It's a young Frenchwoman who wants to marry your son" (73).[87] In summarizing the letter in one simple breath, she acts on behalf of Louise. Rather than acting as a simple translator and transmitter of a foreign message, she temporarily embodies that which she cannot become: *Une de ces madames* [sic]; *une de ces jeunes filles*.

Her role as translator and transmitter thus fulfils her desire to take on the impossible identity. In closing the entry, after the *bà-già's* unenthusiastic acceptance of the Frenchwoman's wish, Mademoiselle Lys pens a letter to Louise, congratulating and offering her relationship

[86] In Britto's *Disorientation* (2004), he analyzes Nguyen Phan Long's preface to *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys*, and Nguyen Phan Long's goal of the novel: "The ideal francophone novel would serve as a *miroir fidèle* […]". See pp. 50-51 of "Novels and Mirrors: The Intercultural psyche".

[87] "C'est une jeune française qui désire se marier avec votre fils." P. 73.

advice. Her letter surpasses the length of Louise's letter; she also has the last word, in closing the entry with her response to Louise without signing the letter. In overstepping her role as translator and transmitter of a simple "oui", the narrator personalizes the letter, in complimenting the Frenchwoman's beauty, and admiring her interracial marriage. In expressing that Louise and Liên's union of "la Grande France d'Europe à la France d'Asie" is a model that should be imitated, the narrator reveals her own desires (85). Moreover, she writes to Louise, as a sort of confidante, wishing to find a reflection.

What is most striking in the *20 avril* entry is what lies *in-between* the translated letter from Louise and the narrator's written response to the Frenchwoman. Mademoiselle Lys acts as a translator for the *bà-già*, and a middleman for Louise and the bà-già, but she also acts as a transmitter of a male fantasy—particularly one belonging to the author, Nguyen Phan Long.

Prior to the *bà-già*'s hesitant approval to her son and Louise's marriage, and the narrator's response to Louise, Mademoiselle Lys digresses from the epistolary form and literary narration, and problematizes *métissage* and identity, through Duc de Montpensier's reflections on Rudyard Kipling's statements on racial mixing. Before this analytical reflection that reads as an essay, Mademoiselle Hai paints an image of "ces Mimi Pinson" to the *bà-già*. The narrator gets caught up in the poetic representation of French femininity, citing a few lines of Alfred de Musset's 1845 novella*, Mimi Pinson.* In "Types ou stéréotypes? Les « Physiologies » et la littérature industrielle" (*Romantisme,* no. 64, 1989), Ruth Amossy highlights the difficulty of differentiating "type" from "stereotype"—"scientific schema" from "ideological discourse" (114). She relates the "physiologies" used to establish "types" in the 19th century to the present-day application of

"stereotypes" and "stereotyping" in the social sense of the 20th and 21st centuries (115-116).[88] The specific "physiologie de la grisette" represents a mass-produced "image-modèle" used to categorize and "fragmentize" and subdivide society into "milieu, professions, conditions" (115-116).[89] "Ces Mimi Pinson"—"these Mimi Pinson types"—thus complements the (*stéréo*)*type* of the literary *grisette* and her entrance into the modern French cultural imaginary.[90] Nguyen Phan Long's literary appropriation of De Musset's "immortalized" "Mimi Pinson type" reveals both French cultural power—as well as the power of the male gaze. While the *grisette* already classifies two marginalized groups into a single category—the lower class and (young) women—its (re)emergence in Indochina adds another dimension to the previous groups of classification: race.[91] Somewhere between its appearance in the dictionary and its move from literary to cultural product, the Parisian *grisette*—Mimi Pinson—becomes a French national symbol that seeps into the French Indochinese world. Paris as Capital—and Mimi Pinson, the Parisian *grisette*—emerges as a familiar stereotype that fixes itself into French Indochinese history: "Et je me mis à dépeindre à la bonne vieille ces Mimi Pinson, si gracieuses, si séduisantes, élégantes comme des princesses avec leurs robes très simples, embellissant tout ce qu'elles touchent de leurs doigts de fée" (Nguyen

[88] It is worth noting the etymology of "stereotype" in order to consider how "*ces Mimi Pinson*" and the "*grisette*" reinforce sexism and classism. Amossy demonstrates this by translating the "*stereos*" of "stereotype" in Greek: "'Stereos' signifie solide et de là solidifié, figé [Harding 1968 :259]". In other words, "to stereotype" is "to fix", "box in"; or to "*catégorise abusivement.*" P. 114.

[89] *Ibid.* 116-117. "La grisette, donc, est une jeune ouvrière pauvre, industrieuse, jolie, insouciante et généreuse. […] Livrée à toutes les tentations du vice par la misère et les possibilités que lui réserve sa beauté, elle n'y succombe pas."

Ibid. 114. "En bref, le stéréotype offre comme le type une image-modèle des choses et des êtres."

[90] *Ibid.* 117. The following traits are associated with the *grisette* in literary texts (as listed by Amossy): "Jolie, gracieuse, propre, soigneuse, coquette, pauvre ouvrière, industrieuse, modeste, désintéressée, généreuse, gaie, rieuse, imprévoyante, insoucieuse." Adding to this, she states : "Le stéréotype de la grisette ne se limite nullement aux physiologies. Il constitue une image d'époque, qu'ont popularisée pour la postérité d'autres genres littéraires. Ainsi le petit conte d'Alfred de Musset (1846) a attaché un nom à la charmante créature qu'il a contribué à immortaliser."

[91] "*Grisette*" first appears in *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (1694) ; it is defined in the following manner : "Terme qui se dit par mépris d'une jeune fille, ou d'une jeune femme de basse condition."

Phan Long 75).[92] At this moment in the entry, a switching of mirrors occurs. *Ces Mimi Pinson* marks the author's projection of a male fantasy. Yet, the *sexual* fantasy also concerns *sex*, as depicted in the author's preface. The literary, cinematic, and cultural (re)productions of "Mimi Pinson" of the Industrial Age bleed into the Colonial era, and contain—or "stereotype"—sex, class, and national identity. By fixating on "Ces Mimi Pinson," Nguyen Phan Long returns to an anxiety expressed over *nos filles* [annamites] and the role of Woman as a carrier of race, culture, and tradition. The plural demonstrative adjective, "ces," when paired with the proper noun, "Mimi Pinson," indicates the author's *distancing* from Mimi Pinson, whereas the possessive adjective, "nos," paired with "filles," signals a *relation* with and to the [Vietnamese] girls/daughters. *Ces,* rather than *nos,* shows that: Mimi Pinson types do not belong to Vietnam; they cannot—or are unable to—be possessed [by Vietnamese men]; Vietnamese girls/daughters belong to—are possessed and possessable by—Vietnamese men. *Ces* Mimi Pinson can thus be read in parallel to the author's stance on feminism—"lequel n'est pas pour nous […] un bon article d'importation." Moreover, the demonstrative adjective, when paired with Mimi Pinson, reflects a divergence from the possessive adjective-noun pair, "nos filles," and the stress pronoun, "nous," referring to the Vietnamese collective. If Mimi Pinson is unpossessable by Vietnamese men, then how are we to read Liên's ability to penetrate the taboo? While Mademoiselle Lys expresses excitement over Louise and Liên's interracial marriage, the author presents the problem of these "seductive" Mimi Pinson types, capable of interfering with the preservation of a Vietnamese bloodline. Following this ode to Mimi Pinson, the author uses the *bà-già* to voice his concerns over the future of *nous,* and the preservation of tradition: "Qui veillera après nous au culte des ancêtres et à l'entretien de leurs tombeaux?" (76). Noting that the *bà-già* represents *le peuple*, and that the author speaks

[92] Here, the narrator paints a stereotypical of the image of The Frenchwoman, alluding to Alfred de Musset's novella, *Mimi Pinson* (1845). It's also worth noting that "mimi" is a colloquial term for "mignon" ("cute").

through her in order to voice his concerns over the preservation of tradition, culture, and the Annamite "race", what follows is of equal importance. The *bà-gia*'s anxiety over this loss is accentuated by her separation of *us* and *them*, and continued through what appears to be the author's digression on the "duality of race" presented through cited arguments from Rudyard Kipling and the Duc de Montpensier.

The *bà-già* makes the following remarks, following Mademoiselle Lys' portrayal of *ces Mimi Pinson*: "Ils ont beau dire qu'ils reviendront un jour au pays ; je sais que notre fils est perdu pour nous. Et dire que nous avions des vues pour lui sur une petite *nhà-quê*, humble comme lui et nous ! Celle-là, nous l'aurions appelée sans hésiter notre bru. Mais l'autre. . . " (76). The "old lady" draws the line between *us* and *them*, by stating that "*our* son is lost for *us*". Her stress on *us* and *our* is emphasized in juxtaposing *celle-là* and *l'autre. . . That one* is the familiar one in which she would not hesitate calling *our* daughter. *But the other one*—the foreign Mimi Pinson—is not even communicable. *Mais l'autre. . .* is sufficient in describing her, despite its incompleteness, followed by a trail of ellipses. Moreover, the term *nhà-quê* is used to define *nous;* the *nous* that includes a desirable daughter, and excludes Mademoiselle Lys, and Louise—as well as other *Mimi Pinson*s. *Nhà-quê*, composed of two Vietnamese nouns, *nhà* ("house"; "home") and *quê* ("native"; "countryside"), originally refers to a home in the countryside—and is applicable to a person.[93] In this case, *nhà-quê* designates a simple Vietnamese woman, uncorrupted by the city life. While this term is used to highlight the difference between the *bà-già*'s undesirable French daughter-in-law, it also reaffirms Mademoiselle Lys' inability to identify with the *nous* stressed by the *bà-già*. More importantly, it exposes the difference between the *bà-già*, the narrator, and the Frenchwoman and

[93]For Vietnamese-English translations and definitions, see Phan Van Giuong's *Tuttle Mini Vietnamese Dictionary* (2014).

reveals the differences among and across race and class. Though never directly stated, the *bà-già* and her son are of a lower social status than Mademoiselle Lys. The *bà*-già's "figure terreuese" visibly marked by grit and what can be assumed as laborious hours in the field under the sun matches the *nhà-quê* "type."[94] Mademoiselle Lys, unlike the *bà-già,* has no "fixed" home and cannot claim to live a "simple" life. Nor, can she claim to be unaffected or "uncorrupted by the city life." Yet, like the *bà-già,* she cannot be typed as a Mimi Pinson. Class difference separates them from a Vietnamese (stereo)type, whereas "race" and nationality unite them through an exclusion from the desirable "image-modèle" of the *grisette.* Perhaps, it is this "proof" supporting the narrator's difference that causes the digression that follows.

The digression occurs exactly in-between the event of the first letter written by Louise—and the *bà-già'*s dismissal of the situation—and the *bà-già'*s "consent" voiced through Mademoiselle Lys in a letter to Louise. The passage that follows runs on for seven pages, and takes on a different literary genre. The feminine voice and narrative form is interrupted by what reads as the author's reflections on racial mixing. The author cites Rudyard Kipling, and takes the liberty of analyzing Duc de Montpensier's reflections on Kipling's statements, from his article, *Les Disparates,* published in *La Revue Hebdomadaire* (76). The uncomfortable problem underlined by Mademoiselle Lys is inferred to be one concerning racial mixing, particularly, "the duality of race" (76).[95] Before interpreting Duc de Montpeniser's commentary, the reader is presented with a quotation from Rudyard Kipling: "Il faut [...] rester dans sa race, sa caste, son milieu. Que les Blancs aillent aux Blancs, que les Noirs aillent aux Noirs ; alors, si l'on a des ennuis, […] ils n'ont

[94] See p. 73.
[95] "Voilà un problème particulièrement délicat. La *Revue Hebdomadaire* a publié récemment sur ce sujet d'actualité, sous le titre : *Les Disparates,* un article du Duc de Montpensier, qui n'est en somme, qu'un long commentaire de la phrase suivante du célèbre écrivain anglais Rudyard Kipling." P. 76.

rien de soudain, d'étrange, d'imprévu" (76).[96] Kipling's statements reveal more than a fear of *métissage*—they reveal what Historian-Anthropologist Ann Stoler refers to as "a threat to white prestige, an embodiment of European degeneration and moral decay."[97] Though Stoler interprets *métissage* in the Southeast Asian (Netherlands Indies and French Indochinese) context, her research and understanding of *métissage* in the Southeast Asian context is relevant to its appearance in Nguyen Phan Long's Franco-Vietnamese *roman*, and applicable to the "cultural hybridity" experienced by Kipling in British Colonial India.[98] While acknowledging the differences of the "mixed-blood problem" across various colonial contexts, Stoler identifies the dangers of *métissage* that surpass "race", stating:

> Mixing called into question the very criteria by which Europeanness could be identified, citizenship should be accorded, and nationality assigned. Métissage represented, not the dangers of foreign enemies at national borders, but the more pressing affront for European nation-states, what German philosopher Gottenlieb Fichte so aptly defined as the essence of the nation, its 'interior frontiers.'[99]

Working with Fichte's "interior frontier," Stoler reads *métissage* in the 19th-century context as "a powerful trope for internal contamination" and "a metonym for the biopolitics of the empire at large."[100] This depiction of *métissage* in the colonies shares the rationale of scientific racism,

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[96] While Kipling is quoted, a direct quote from the Duc de Montpensier's is never given, making it difficult to separate the voice of the narrator from that of Kipling, the Duc de Montpensier, and the author.
[97] P. 199 "Sexual Affront and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia", *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (U of California, 1997). See also: "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in Colonial Asia," *Gender at the Crossroads: Feminist Anthropology in the Post-Modern Era* (U of California, 1991).
[98] Stoler 226-27.
[99] Stoler 199, 228. The concept originates from Gottenlieb Fichte; Stoler builds on Etienne Balibar's research "*la frontière intérieure*", in which the "frontier locates a site both of enclosure and contact and of observed passage and exchange." See "Fichte et la Frontière Intérieure: A Propos des Discours à la nation allemande," *Les Cahiers de Fontenay* 58/59 (June 1990).
[100] *Ibid.* 199.

exemplified in Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des race humaines* (1853), in which he states: "Nations die when they are composed of elements that have degenerated."[101] Applying the overlapping colonial and "scientific" preoccupation with racial mixing to its reinsertion into a literary text thus reveals both Kipling and Nguyen Phan Long's anxieties of degeneration. Under the guise of a national concern, both male authors appear to work through their own "mixed" identity. Kipling, "racially" white, and Nguyen Phan Long, "racially" Asian, share a fear of contamination from the *métissage* in the colonies that un-fixes their *milieu.*[102] The fusing of race, politics, gender, and nation at the "interior frontier" thus makes colonial anxieties of nation and definitions of race inseparable from personal identity crises.[103] The "digression" that produces a plurality of male voices, inseparable from one another (Kipling, Duc de Montpensier, and Nguyen Phan Long), in the middle of Mademoiselle Lys' fictive *journal*, enacts the "interior frontier" defined by Fichte and Stoler in terms of "contamination" or even "contagion." Located between Louise's demand for adoption, and the *bà-già*'s consent to Louise's marriage to her son (voiced through Mademoiselle Lys), the author's citation of Kipling can be read as a preoccupation with a mutual fear of degeneration. Its appearance and placement within the *roman* suggests that *métissage* threatens the determinants of Europeanness—or in this case, Asian-ness. Returning to Louise's letter, it is important to note the Frenchwoman's request that comes along with Liên's parents' approval. Though removed from Mademoiselle Lys' one-sentence translation of the letter, the "old lady" already rejects the wish that is never verbally transmitted to her: Louise's demand

[101] P. 24, Chapter 4, *The Inequality of Humans Races.* Translated by Adrian Collins. William Heinemann, 1915. Original source in French, publ. 1853.
[102] See Stoler 216: "Attention to upbringing, surroundings, and milieu did not disengage personal potential from the physiological fixities of race. Distinctions made on the basis of *opvoeding* (upbringing) merely recorded race in the quotidian circumstances that enabled acquisition of certain cultural competencies and not others. The focus on milieu naturalized cultural difference, sexual essence, and moral fiber of Europeanness in new kinds of ways."
[103]Stoler 212, 215. See p. 215 for a discussion on the Indies colonial law in 1898, and *métissage*'s tainting of the criteria "for determining nationality" (i.e.: "*jus soli* [place of birth] and *jus sanguinis* [blood descent]").

for *adoption*: After requesting consent for their marriage, Louise exclaims: "Je serai si contente de vous voir m'adopter pour votre fille !" (72-73). The Frenchwoman's request of "adoption" by Liên's parents and the *bà-già*'s reluctance to accept her as her daughter can also be read as an allegory of the colonial situation, when read in the voice of Nguyen Phan Long. The *bà-già*, standing in for *le peuple annamite*, and Louise, representative of *La Grande France d'Europe*, express two polarities. Yet, in this colonial narrative, *La Grande France d'Europe* seeks, if not begs, adoption from *La France d'Asie*. The author emphasizes France's vulnerable position, following the war, which ultimately affects *La France d'Asie*. Generation, degeneration, and *regeneration* are problematized by the author, through the feminine voice of Louise, and the revulsion to the Frenchwoman by the *bà-già*.[104]

Following this reversal of the colonial figure of France as *mère-patrie* seeking adoption from its colonized "children", and the *bà-già's* revulsion to such a request, the narrator interprets Kipling's statements on interracial mixing. The narrator—or author—applies Kipling's colonial fear to "the colonized's" side. Kipling's fear of interracial mixings and *l'imprévu* resulting from such unions, expressed in the quote above, is one shared by the *bà-già*; *le peuple annamite*. The move here is interesting, as the implications are that *La France d'Asie* wishes to merge with France and become French, through marriage and citizenship. Yet, in this case, Louise anticipates a post-war regenerative problem, and dreams of saving her country by producing a new generation of

[104] Stoler discusses the (white) fear of degeneration of the (white) race in the colony. While De Gobineau emphasizes racial degeneration, Stoler notes the concern over "Indo-European pauperism." P. 210. Fear of impoverishment then begins within its own "racial caste" of a different social class. Stoler also notes how *métissage* transgresses colonial, national, and class order, noting that the "poor white men and native women" of the Dutch East Indies and French Indochinese colonies carried the potential of (re)producing "Dutch and French citizenship to a younger generation." Pp. 226-27. Kipling's "white fear" inscribed in Nguyen Phan Long's *roman* offers an alternative perspective from the "colonized" side: Concerns over *métissage* and degeneration from the author's perspective allows us to consider the threat it poses to Annamite identity (rather than solely "European" or "white" identity)—and the national pride and value tied to it. The "radical" dimension of *métissage* thus poses a threat to both "colonizer" and "colonized" in terms of national and cultural identity. See Françoise Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage.*

children.[105] Following this, the narrator comments on Kipling's hybrid identity. More importantly, the use of *métis* in the novel appears for the first time.

The narrator presents Kipling's stance on interracial mixing as flawed, claiming that Kipling contradicts his own thesis. This is supported by an interpretation of Kipling as *métis*, himself, despite his status as a white man born in colonial India. Kipling is defined as: "un Eurasien, autrement dit un métis, un anglo-indien" (76-77). While Kipling's status as *anglo-indien* is arguably appropriate, historically speaking, considering the original application of the term to British colonials living in India, it is both surprising and problematic that he is presented as *anglo-indien, Eurasien,* and *métis* in *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys*.[106] Nguyen Phan Long uses Rudyard's "mixed" status to contest the hypocrisy of his statement urging one to stay in one's caste and race. But this begs the question: How does Kipling move from colonial writer, of British descent, to a "mixed-race" child of India? It is unclear whether or not the author conflates the three terms, *métis, Eurasien,* and *anglo-indien*—or if he is truly arguing for Kipling's "duality of races", in applying the post-1911 definition of *anglo-indien* which becomes synonymous for *Eurasien*.[107]

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[105] "Vous qui lui avez donné sans hésiter votre fils, vous ne refuserez pas, je pense, de l'aider dans son œuvre de régénération en permettant à votre enfant de fonder un foyer avec une de ses enfants à elle, pour que nous lui en donnions à notre tour. Car nous en aurons, j'en suis certaine […]." Pp. 72-73.

[106] In "Who are the Anglo-Indians" of his book, *The Anglo-Indians: A 500-Year History*, S. Muthiah states: "It was in the 1911 census that the government of Lord Hardinge officially termed those of mixed blood, children born of European fathers and Indian mothers and children born of their offspring, as 'Anglo-Indians'. Till then they had been called—ignoring such derogatory terms as 'half-caste', half-and-half' and 'eight annas'—Eurasians (a term they thought disparaging, though it was well accepted in Singapore, Malaya, and Hong Kong), Indo-Britons, and what was, curiously, for long commonly used, East Indians".
S. Muthiah traces four centuries of "Anglo-Indians" in his book, noting that up until 1911, the term 'Anglo-Indian' had been used to describe the British themselves. See "Who are the Anglo-Indians?" of Part I.

[107]Referring to Kipling, the author-narrator remarks: "C'est sans doute à cette dualité de race qu'il doit son talent si neuf, si original." See pp. 76-77. In *The Anglo-Indians: A 500-Year History,* Muthiah states that prior to 1911, children of a European father and indigenous mother were referred to as "Eurasian." In Ravoux's "Aspects sociaux d'un groupe d'Eurasiens" published in *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris* (1948), he studies the social aspects of Eurasians, and defines *Eurasiens* in Indochina, as : "les métis de Jaunes avec une race étrangère, blanche dans la majorité des cas". (See page 180 of the article.) In addition to this, Le Petit Larousse Illustré (2004) defines *eurasien*, as both an adjective and a noun : "Se dit d'un métis d'Européen et d'Asiatique, partic. Au Viêt-Nam, en Inde et en Indonésie".

Immediately following his depiction of Kipling as "mixed" and after claiming that he contradicts his thesis against interracial unions, the author-narrator reflects on the process of assimilation, adaptation, transformation—and American identity. In particular, he refers to the disappearance of a heritage and the formation of a new identity. After referring to animals' adaptation to their environment, the author argues that the formation of American identity is based on a metamorphosis which includes suppressing one's heritage. This appears to set up his main argument that supports the *problème particulièrement délicat*, expressed by the *bà-già* and interpreted by Mademoiselle Lys, earlier.[108] The author-narrator hypothesizes a scenario in which a man and a woman of a different race are brought together and experience a reciprocal attraction. Referring to it as a "problem", he adds that the biggest issue is "l'imprévu, l'*inconnue*" (81-82).[109] The return to the problem of interracial marriages is made after his reflections on American identity and assimilation—and it also serves as the transition statement to the reentry into the literary narration. Immediately following this simulative reflection on mixed marriages, deemed dangerous by the Kipling and the author-narrator, the author-narrator returns to main storyline, reintroducing the *bà-già* into the scene. Coincidentally, what follows is the *bà-già*'s despondent approval of the interracial marriage between Liên and Louise, and Mademoiselle Lys' written

[108] Following the *bà-già*'s expressed disdain towards Louise (as adoptive daughter), the *bà-già* leaves the scene, and the narrator states: "Voilà un problème particulièrement délicat." Immediately after this, she presents Rudyard Kipling's statement on interracial unions, and refers to Duc de Montpensier's article on Kipling's remarks. P. 76.

[109] In the original text, the author refers to "l'imprévu" (masculine), and "l'*inconnue*" – in italics. It is unclear whether or not the feminine form of *inconnu* is a spelling mistake, or whether it was intentional. It appears to be the latter based on the italicization of *inconnue*. The author states: "On met en présence deux créatures humaines, un homme et une femme de races différentes, et l'on décide *ex cathedra* qu'ils feront ceci, qu'ils ne feront pas cela, comme l'on pousse les pièces d'un jeu d'échecs. Mais l'inclination qui attire l'un vers l'autre, qu'en fait-on ? C'est une donnée aussi du problème; c'en est l'imprévu, l'*inconnue.*" P. 81. Placing two different "creatures" in the same space thus poses the threat of producing unforeseeable circumstances ("l'imprévu) – more specifically – the possibility of generating a *métisse* (l'*inconnue*). It is also worth noting that the choice of words used to refer to *métissage* in this passage ("*imprévu*" and "*inconnue*") bears a striking resemblance to those used by Edouard Glissant to define *créolisation* ("inouï"; "imprévisible"). See pp. 47-53. Glissant, Edouard. "Métissage et créolisation." *Discours sur le métissage, identités métisses : En quête d'Ariel.*

response to Louise Hiron.[110] In writing the letter, the narrator searches for a desired French mirror image—and the author once again projects his own fantasies into the first-person narration of Mademoiselle Lys.

Despite the fear of being seduced by "ces Mimi Pinson," as stated earlier in the entry, the author depicts the Frenchwoman as both a threat and a fantasy, further highlighting the idea of interracial unions as "dangerous."[111] Mademoiselle Lys' letter that seeks acceptance from a female French companion also reveals the reductive stereotypes of Louise and *those other women.* While the narrator and Louise have never met—Mademoiselle Lys doesn't even sign her personalized letter—she idealizes her, and in doing so, creates her—or rather constructs her desired self.[112] Referring to Louise's letter as "charming" and to Louise's beauty, she imagines the letter to be written by "a petite Frenchwoman, who is on top of that, a Parisian, pretty in the way that only a Parisian can be, valiant and… a bit *romanesque.*"[113] As a humble confidant, the narrator thus justifies her relationship advice and praise of Louise and Liên's marriage. She then expresses her wish for others to follow in her example. In the letter, Mademoiselle addresses an ambiguous "vous." While it may refer to both Liên and Louise, it appears that the narrator is directly addressing her feminine confidant, Louise, in the singular form. She exclaims: "Je voudrais que beaucoup de vos compatriotes imitassent votre exemple. Les mariages comme le vôtre achèveront d'unir indissolublement la Grande France d'Europe à la France d'Asie" (85). Reading and

[110] Rather than replying with a simple "yes" on behalf of Liên's parents, the narrator takes over: "Je m'assis à ma table et rédigeai tout d'une haleine la réponse des vieux, en laissant courir ma plume, qui écrivait sous la dictée de mon cœur. Cette gentille Parisienne ne se doutera jamais qu'une petite Annamite a plaidé sa cause auprès de ses beaux-parents. Je mis beaucoup du mien dans la lettre, dont je me rappelle encore très bien les termes" (83-84).
[111] Almost like the "monstrous" *métis*. See: Françoise Vergès' *Monsters and Revolutionnaries*: *Colonial Family Romance and Métissage* (1999).
[112] The narrator refers to Louise as "fine et aimable", and belittles herself in comparison. Yet, she simultaneously claims to be her equal. See *Le Roman…*, pp. 85-86.
[113] "[…] *une* petite Française, et qui plus est, une Parisienne, jolie comme vous seules savez l'être, vaillante et… un peu romanesque, si je ne me trompe." P. 84.

interpreting this "vous" as a singular, personal-feminine address to Louise thus presents another projection of the author's fantasy. "*Your* compatriots," and "*your* example" refer to Louise's French compatriots—or more specifically, her French female compatriots. Her example is particular—in that the typical colonial male-indigenous female narrative is flipped. In fact, this interracial arrangement is the kind that the Duc de Montpensier discourages.[114] Louise, exemplary of all Mimi Pinsons, thus represents a specific colonial problem—that of racial and cultural degeneration through French (female) and Annamite (male) unions. Louise and Lien's marriage echoes Kipling and the Duc de Montpensier's attempts of maintaining fixed categories of race and class, in order to avoid unanticipated, unpredictable, and unknown results from racial mixing. This (male) colonial problem also mirrors the (post)war problem of racial intermingling. In *Les enfants de la colonie: Les métis de l'Empire français*, Emmanuelle Saada refers to the particular historical moment of "le 'drame métis'" that leaves the colony and enters the French metropole. Citing World War I as the event where French female and Indochinese male relations are conceived, Saada remarks that laborers met at the site of the factory.[115] Despite racial difference, the financial status and site of labor united these men and women, leading to interracial relationships and marriages, like that of Liên and Louise. Their fictitious union—which the narrator calls "exemplary"—is faithful to the setting of the novel and historical events. The narrator writes in the period of World War I, and Louise expresses her anxieties of regeneration following the loss of lives on the French side of the war. Moreover, Louise and Liên's encounter occurs—due to their shared misfortune and misplacement in society—at the factory.[116] The narrator's desire for others to imitate this

[114] We receive is the narrator-author's interpretation of his statements on interracial unions in the Annamite-French context. See p. 77 of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys.*
[115] See p. 45 of Chapter 1, "Une question impériale", of Saada's *Les enfants de la colonie* (2007).
[116] In Louise's letter to the *bà-già*, she explains how she met Liên: "Couturière dans une maison de modes, proche de son usine, je l'ai abordé un jour qu'il se tenir sur le trottoir d'un air triste." P. 72.

French woman-Indochinese male relationship can thus be interpreted as the author's personal fantasy of revolting against the colonial anxiety of interracial unions; *le drame métis.*

Con gái* to *congaï*: Translating and transforming *daughter* into *Mother

The four consecutive journal entries spanning from July 11th to August 12th 1918 trace the events leading up to and following the narrator's encounter with Frenchman Monsieur Raynal. In these entries, new addresses are made, along with epithets and racial stereotypes—ranging from *animal fantastique* to *congaïe*.[117] More specifically, the first two entries depict her encounters with two men—one with a pro-French Annamite soldier, M. Minh; one with a French civil servant, M. Raynal. Her awareness of her mixed-identity undergoes different transformations depending on the man with which she interacts. With M. Minh, she becomes daring and unfiltered—traits that her parents attribute to her French schooling. Mademoiselle Lys' encounters with M. Raynal and other French women and men at the July 14th celebration prompt the narrator to acknowledge her privileged position in French Indochina—as well as her exclusion from both the French and Annamite communities.

The narrator's entry on July 11th depicts her encounter with M. Minh and his hasty departure from the narrator's house—what her mother refers to as a yet another "failed marriage project" ruined by the narrator's "sottises" and uninhibited speech (145). Her pride and unique position in society is highlighted later in the passage, in the penultimate paragraph in which she reminds us of her status that separates her from the *bà-già*'s *nous*, and from the Mimi Pinsons. The narrator boasts having been the only indigenous girl selected for the *défilé*, comparing her

[117] See pp. 148-164 of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys.*

emotional state to that of a French schoolgirl entering the real world.[118] Immediately after expressing her soon-to-be entry into the "world," she remarks her racial and cultural difference, as well as her unpreparedness for the event. After making the excuse that she does not know how to dance and has no interest in learning, she notes her limited freedom due to her cultural difference: Unlike the Frenchwomen, she cannot dance freely—certainly not with other men: Such physical contact would include a feeling of giving away part of herself.[119] Thus, before the grand event even occurs, she already visualizes and plays out the cultural, sexual, and racial differences between her and the other women, lamenting that she will always remain "une petite sauvage" (147). In closing the passage, she depicts Mademoiselle Mellin, who serves as her French counterpart and desired mirror image. Again, the narrator's desired reflection conflates with the author's male erotic fantasy: "Quel piquant contraste! Un animal fantastique, enfanté par l'imagination asiatique!" (148). In other words, she too is a savage in the Asian (male) imagination—rather, the author's "world".

The narrator recounts her impressions of the *14 juillet* celebration, as well as her encounter with Frenchman Monsieur Raynal. The opening scene of the entry resonates with the author-narrator's development of ideas in his "essay" on American identity.[120] The July 15th entry alludes to at least two colonial influences—Chinese and French—in the French Independence Day festival, and depicts a blending of cultures and peoples in the setting.[121] The narrator depicts a

[118] "Voilà qui achèvera de me poser en jeune annamite moderne. L'événement aura lieu dans trois jours. Je m'y prépare avec une douce émotion, comme une petite pensionnaire française frais émolue du convent, à son entrée dans le 'monde'." See pp. 146-7.
[119] See p. 147.
[120] See pp. 79-80.
[121] In the chapter, "Language Education and Foreign Relations in Vietnam" (*Language Policies in Education*, 2013), Sue Wright states: "The Chinese ruled Vietnam for 1,000 years, from 111 BC to this time, they created a system of schools to train first their own children and subsequently the children of the Vietnamese aristocracy to staff the state bureaucracy, the mandarinate. Under the Tang dynasty (618-907), the competitive examination system was introduced. Education was in Chinese […]. In 1939, Vietnam became independent." P. 226.

scene in which she participates in an ironic celebration of French Independence in the setting of colonial Vietnam in 1918—the height of World War I.[122] Within the description, juxtapositions and blending of different *regions*, colonies, and countries are portrayed. Describing the *défilé,* she recounts *une mignonne Alsacienne* at the front, driving a car, with a hairdo that she interprets as a symbol of her mourning of "the mutilated Homeland."[123] In addition to this, she notes the children dressed as warriors, with painted faces "de vermillon d'encre de Chine" (149). Despite being loyal to France, and to M. Maurice Long, *Député de la Drôme, Gouverneur Géneral de l'Indochine,* the author reminds the reader of the multinational and multiracial mixings in Indochina. In doing so, he portrays an evolving colonial Annam, and a modern France under construction. In the passage above describing the 14 juillet *défilé*, the author alludes to the Chinese and French influences in Annam, yet also hints at a form of Western colonization of its Western European neighbors. The description of the event begins with an Alsatian figure, at the front of the procession. While her hair is interpreted by Mademoiselle Lys as a symbol of "mourning", it is unclear which homeland for which she grieves: France or Germany?[124] Alsace – representative of the French-German dispute – reveals concerns over French identity under the threat of military and cultural changes. In a sense, the colonial becomes colonized by the infiltration of foreigners, the mixing of languages, and inter-European battles. The scene of the *14 juillet* celebration counters notions of fixed French identity, by highlighting one of the aspects that defines national identity: Language. In the following passage, Mademoiselle Lys paints scenes along the quai. She describes the

[122] Though the 14 juillet *défilé* is being narrated the following day, on the 15th, the author published the novel in 1921, meaning that the overlap of the 15 juillet diary entry and the beginning of the historical Battle of Reims on the Marne River (beginning on July 15, 1918) may be a conscious decision on the author's part.
[123] "la coiffe aux ailles noires semblait symboliser le deuil de la Patrie mutilée." P. 143. For the description of the Alsatian woman, see p. 149.
[124] "Between 1870 and 1945, Alsace changed hands four times. After each conquest and reconquest, the victorious state tried to impose its laws, its customs, and its language." See page 1 of Liliane Vassberg's *Alsatian Acts of Identity: Language Use and Language Attitudes in Alsace* (1993).

intermingling of Europeans, Annamite women, and the various voices, tones, and accents of various languages that get muddled in one place (150).[125] From the depiction in the previous passage, in which *une mignonne alsacienne* leads the parade, it becomes clear that the mixture of languages is composed of at least French, Chinese, Vietnamese, and perhaps German.[126] The confusion of the people and languages depicted excites the narrator. Immediately following this description, the narrator recounts her first encounter with Monsieur Raynal. From this meeting forward, the narrator reveals to us a series of family names, first names, personal names, and hypocorisms.

It is appropriate that Mademoiselle Lys' memory of her first encounter with Monsieur Raynal is dominated by an excess of floral imagery. Though the narrator modestly detracts attention away from herself by remarking on Mademoiselle Mellin's beauty, Monsieur Raynal reassures Mademoiselle Lys of her particular beauty. He states: "You are the violet, the soft and modest violet that exhales a penetrating fragrance; your companion is the dazzling and intoxicating rose. And it's the violet that I prefer" (152).[127] The figure of the rose, the violet, and the *lys* in a scene that celebrates French nationalism reveals the narrator's consciousness of her difference in race, class, and sexuality. Her invitation to participate in a white space highlights her status as a "privileged" indigenous girl, distanced from the "simple" *nhà-quê* and the "seductive" Mimi Pinson. The designation of flowers to each of the woman is not arbitrary, but reflects the Victorian era's "language of flowers."[128] Considering this, it is important to examine how the figure of

[125] "Les complets blancs des Européens, les toilettes claires des dames, les robes bariolées des femmes annamites et les habits noirs des indigènes se confondaient dans une cohue bigarrée, au milieu d'un joyeux brouhaha de voix et d'exclamations sur tous les tons et dans les langues les plus variées." P. 150.
[126] In the introduction of Vassberg's *Alsatien Acts of Identity*, the author states: "In Alsace, a German dialect has been spoken for 15 centuries. In 1918 about 90% of the population still used the dialect in everyday situations." P. 1.
[127] This is my direct translation from French-English. See the original, p. 152
[128] Delacroix (Mme). *Le Langage des fleurs, nouveau vocabulaire de Flore, contenant la description des plantes employées dans le langage des fleurs, par Mme Delacroix.* Paris : Delarue, 1881.

woman and flower reinforce sexual and national stereotypes. Though the narrator does not identify as a "humble *nhà-quê,*" Monsieur Raynal's comparison of her to the *violette* implies that he sees her as such.[129] In other words, despite her privileged class difference, she is still perceived by the "colonizer" as "colonized." In contrast, Mademoiselle Mellin, symbolized by the rose, shares the fairy-like and exoticized traits of *la grisette.* In *Le Langage des fleurs, nouveau vocabulaire de Flore* (1881), the rose is defined in contradictory terms, marked by the keywords, "innocence" and "fraicheur," and presented as dangerous and seductive. Compared to the violet, described as "hiding beneath the grass" (103-105), the rose captivates and stands out in the crowd of flowers. Rather than defining the rose, Madame Delacroix appears to write an ode to it, referring to the rose as "la reine des jardins"; "bien aimée des dames et la première qu'on veut dans son jardin"; "comme Vénus entre les autres déesses" (83-84).[130] While it is tempting to read the rose as a symbol of desire and love, the figure of the rose must be considered beyond its beauty, or stand-in for "a beautiful woman" and "love", and unmasked for its representation of "the human *ideal.*"[131] The intoxicating power of the rose reflects its deadly appeal in Georges Bataille's revelation of its external beauty of the corolla—"the sign of desire."[132] The poetry that celebrates the rose's dangerous beauty, such as its "arme d'épines," or the impenetrable rosebud enclosed by a wall

[129] *Ibid.*103-105. The violet is defined by the following keywords, "*modeste, timidité, pudeur.*" The flowers that appear to be most significant are followed by poems celebrating their beauty and particularities. In this case, the redundancy of "simple" and "humble" dominate the portrait of *la violette,* and appear to describe the "humble" *nhà-quê.* It is also worth noting the following lines: "Modeste en ma couleur, modeste en mon séjour,/ Franche d'ambition, je me cache sous l'herbe;/ Mais si sur votre front je puis me voir un jour,/ La plus humble des fleurs sera la plus superbe." The association of modesty to the violet contrasts with the word "viol" and the root of the word "violence" in *violette.*

[130] Mme Delacroix organizes the flowers alphabetically, beginning with one to a couple of keywords. Depending on the significance of the symbol of the flower, the keywords are followed by a sensual description and one—or a couple of—poem(s). In the case of "*rose*," its description is followed by five poems celebrating its dangerous beauty. I.e.: "Et pour garder sa beauté pure,/ Arme d'épines son berceau", p. 85.

[131] See p. 12 of Georges Bataille's "The Language of Flowers" in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939* (Ed. Allan Stoekl. Trans. Allan Stoekl, Carl R. Lovitt, and Donald M. Leslie, U of Minnesota, 1985). [Original source in French: pp. 173-79, "Le Langage des fleurs" in *Œuvres complètes,* I, Paris : Gallimard (1970).]

[132] Nguyen Phan Long 152 ; Bataille 11.

within a dream sequence, supports Bataille's (re)writing of the coded Victorian *langage des fleurs:* "The most admirable flower […] would not be represented, following the verbiage of the old poets, as the faded expression of an angelic ideal, but, on the contrary, as a filthy and glaring sacrilege" ("The Language of Flowers" 13).[133] By offering Monsieur Raynal a rose boutonnière before sending him on his way over to the personified Rose (Mademoiselle Mellin), the narrator-author returns to him his own (ideal) image.[134]

Considering the role of flowers, Mademoiselle Lys' name in itself represents that which she aspires to be: *blanche*. While she can never be an intoxicating rose, the narrator *appears* to enter the *milieu*—if not racially, then culturally. While impressive, her literary references and fluency in the colonial language allow her only partial entry into the realm of Monsieur Raynal and Mademoiselle Mellin. Unlike the external beauty—the corolla—of the rose, the narrator hides modestly beneath the grass.[135] In the white space, she exudes self-consciousness, self-deprecation, and struggles in her interaction with M. Raynal—correcting her statements out of fear of seeming commanding; redirecting attention away from herself due to her "misplacement"—whereas she appears verbally uninhibited with M. Minh. What allows her to superficially navigate the space in-between *nhà-quê* and *grisette*—violet and rose—is the reclaiming of her identity through the figure of the *lys*, defined in excessive whiteness and purity.[136] Through the language of flowers,

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[133]It is worth noting that "bouton de rose" is defined by the keyword(s) "jeune fille," p. 21, *Le Langage des fleurs,* See also, *Ibid.* p. 85; *Le Roman de la rose* (Guillaume de Lorris ; Jean de Meung).

[134] This can be read in parallel with Guillaume de Lorris' Ovidian narrative, in which the protagonist sees a rose in lieu of his reflection.

[135] Delacroix 103.

[136] Delacroix 53-54. Defined by the keywords, "pureté" and "noblesse," the "*lis*" is also described as "comme le cygne parmi les oiseaux, destinée à nous montrer le blanc dans ses teintes les plus agréables", and celebrated in verse: "De tous temps le *lis* fut l'emblème/ De l'éclat de la blancheur."
It is also worth noting the etymology of *blanc(he)*, which is defined as "de la couleur de la neige, sans aucune teinte" (c. 950-1000), linked to the Germanic word, "blank." The *blancheur* of the *lis* thus evokes more than a yearning to become white – but a desire to erase oneself and start anew.

the narrator and author's preoccupation with "whiteness" can be read as an attempt to superficially remedy her/his inferiority complex.[137]

Mademoiselle Lys's personal reflections in the *12 août* entry contain an exorbitant amount of reflections on personal names, epithets, and racial and class insinuations with the revelation of names. In a single excerpt, the reader receives Monsieur Raynal's full name, and the symbolic and official name belonging to the narrator. In the midst of admiring and romanticizing Monsieur Raynal, the narrator devalues her Vietnamese name—and in doing so, depreciates herself:

> Lucien! Ça vous a un air léger, pimpant, spirituel, qui répond bien à l'impression que produit celui qui le porte. Lucien Raynal. Quel joli nom! Je suis un peu comme Balzac, qui cherchait des noms expressifs pour ses personnages. Le hasard m'a servie à souhait. Pour moi, le lys m'a donné son nom: je m'appelle en effet, Nguyen-thi-Hue. M. Raynal trouve que le vocable de la fleur gracile, à la blancheur de neige, à la forme simple et élégante, qui avait autrefois l'honneur de figurer dans les armoiries des rois de France, sied bien à ma petite personne. En ce qui me concerne, je n'aime pas beaucoup ce *thi* banal et incolore qui s'intercale en parasite dans tous les noms de femmes (160-61).

The introduction of the Frenchman's full name, Lucien Raynal, serves to contrast her own Vietnamese name, Nguyên-thi-Huê.[138] His name epitomizes Frenchness—and reminds her of her indigenous status. The thing that she despises most about this name is the banality of this *thi* that she shares with other Vietnamese women, and more importantly, its parasitic nature that preys

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See the online French linguistic database, *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales,* created by the *Centre national de la recherche*, for additional origins and sources.

[137] P. 152. After accepting Monsieur Raynal's "ingenious" floral comparison, the narrator directs him to Mademoiselle Mellin to receive a cup of tea from her "white hand."

[138] Nguyen Phan Long appears to be mirroring Honoré de Balzac: Lucien Raynal alludes to Lucien de Rubempré (*La Comédie humaine*, 1830). Mademosielle Lys may also be inspired by Balzac's novel, *Le Lys dans la vallée* (1836).

upon all female names. In his book, *Disorientation: France, Vietnam, and the Ambivalence of Interculturality* (2014), Karl Britto notes that *thi* is a "common female marker" in Vietnamese (42). The narrator's pseudonym obviously represents a lily, but Britto notes that "hue is the Vietnamese word for 'lily'", as well (42). Despite her annoyance with the "banality" of the female marker *thi*, the narrator has no qualms with the address, *Mademoiselle.* In translating her name, and retaining a French feminine marker and flower that symbolizes the *fleur du lys*, she attempts to erase her "indigenous" identity and take on a French one. Like her exoticization of Lucien Raynal's name, she creates a fictive fantasy: Mademoiselle Lys attempts to insert herself into the royal French history by renaming and reconstructing her French identity. Unlike the Vietnamese marker *thi* that defines her gender and indigeneity—the French title, *Mademoiselle,* is an attempt of elevating herself from a "little person" to join Lucien Raynal—whom she refers to as *Prince Charmant*—and "les rois de France."[139]

In the same journal entry, the narrator eavesdrops on a private conversation between her mother and father. Concerned about Monsieur Raynal's interest in their daughter, Nguyên-thi-Huệ's mother questions whether or not to give their daughter over to the Frenchman. Her concern for her daughter—and their family's—reputation is emphasized through her enunciation of the narrator's personal name, *Thằng-Hai;* the French appropriation of a Vietnamese term uttered by an "indigenous" Annamite—*congaïe;* an allusion to the law on interracial marriages in French Indochina. Unaware of her daughter's invisible presence, she exclaims the following to her husband: "Mais je ne puis me faire à l'idée de l'avoir pour gendre. Oserai-je l'appeler avec une

[139] The title "Mademoiselle" (as an honorific) may be more ambiguous than it might appear to be. It can be a designation used by a performer or even a prostitute. In the late 19th and early 20th century, *Mademoiselle du bitume* and *Mademoiselle du Pont-neuf* were used to refer to *les filles publiques.* See *Dictionnaire d'Argot fin-de-siècle,* p. 169.

affectueuse familiarité : *Thằng-Hai ?* […] En outre, son mariage aura beau être consacré par la loi, notre fille sera, pour la majorité des gens qui la verront sans la connaître, non pas une *madame* respectable, mais une *congaïe* comme tant d'autres" (163).[140] The narrator's pet name already suggests a division in two. The second half of her name, *Hai*, translates to the number "two" in Vietnamese.[141] Her mother's enunciation of [Thang] *hai* thus indicates her difficulty in determining the lesser of two evils. Acknowledging the stigma attached to Vietnamese women in relationships with French men, Hai's mother hypothesizes her fate as 1) An indigenous woman in an official relationship with a French man; a *congaïe*; 2) an indigenous woman legally married to a French man. What occurs then in uttering *Hai* is an anticipatory transformation of the narrator from girlhood to womanhood—from daughter to wife. Though the proposal is not finalized until the next diary entry, the decision on the matter is made clear from Hai's mother's comments. Like the *thi* belonging to so many other women—Hai must avoid being marked as "une *congaïe* comme tant d'autres" (163). More importantly, she must avoid this reputation by transforming into an "honest *woman*"—a "respectable *madame*" (163).

The narrator's split in "two" and the revelation of her familial name create multiple divides and constructions—the most obvious one being her interracial and intercultural identity. Yet, her mother also attempts to determine her fate, by "consenting" to the marriage proposal in order to avoid her daughter's stigmatization as a *congaïe*. In doing so, she transforms her daughter from the category of *mademoiselle* to *Madame*, and creates a Woman out of her. The use of *congaïe* here is interesting—as it appears to be the French appropriation of the term, *con gài*. While the Annamite term refers to "la fille", the term was borrowed and redefined in French colonial terms,

[140] Before announcing her daughter's familiar name, the narrator's mother poses the rhetorical question of whether she should *dare* to do so. It begs the question—how have her parents been addressing her outside of the novel?
[141] See *Tuttle Mini Vietnamse Dictionary,* p. 86. Also, Britto, p. 42.

based on numerous Frenchman-Indigenous woman unions in Indochina.[142] The mother's conscious decision to use it in the French way, *congaïe*, is evident through its juxtaposition against "une *madame* respectable" (163). Its definition is thus based on the thing that it is *not*; the thing that her daughter *should be*.[143]

Au seuil des frontières : Le serpent *naga* et les quartiers de Phnom Penh

Part II of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys* runs on for over a hundred pages in a single entry recorded on October 28th—a whole month since her last entry in Part I.[144] Due to Mademoiselle Lys' depressed state following her broken engagement to Monsieur Raynal, her father takes her on a trip to Cambodia for a change of scenery. Part II of the novel thus begins by informing the reader that she has returned from her trip to Cambodia. Having returned home, in Cantho, she records her impressions of the culturally and ethnically diverse districts of Phnom Penh, Cambodia.[145] The first line of her journal begins with the following statement: "Je suis rentrée depuis trois jours d'un voyage au Cambodge. Papa, inquiet de mes traits tirés et de mes yeux battus, m'avait proposé de me faire changer d'air en m'emmenant avec lui aux célèbres ruines d'Angkor. […] Nous nous étions embarqués sur un bateau des Messageries fluviales qui partait pour Pnom-Penh [sic]" (224). Mademoiselle Lys' first encounter with the Cambodian capital occurs from a

[142] In *Le Petit Robert 1* (1991), the word, *congaï/congaye* is defined in French as "Femme annamite (au temps de la colonisation)"; the original 19th century Annamite term, *con gaï*, is defined as "la fille".
[143] Despite the Vietnamese and French definitions, the common public perception of *congaïs* was extremely stigmatized. Writing from the French colonial perspective, Douchet writes in *Métis et Congaias d'Indochine* (1928) the following: "Le terme congaie n'est que la transformation par les Français du mot annamite 'con gai' qui s'applique aussi bien aux toutes jeunes filles non encore mariées qu'aux femmes de mauvaise vie. […] Petites, elles le sont en raison de leur race. […] La congaie est toujours sans aucune exception de basse extraction de la société indigène et il n'en peut être autrement." Pp. 7-8.
[144] The last entry of Part I occurs on September 27th; p. 216 of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys*.
[145] *Indo-China. Geographical Handbook. Naval Intelligence* (2006) defines Cantho as "the largest town in central Cochin-China." P. 472.

distance, on a boat leaving from Mytho.[146] Before landing, she dissects Phnom Penh into three districts: "Du pont du bateau la ville apparaît à nos yeux dans une mer de verdure, d'où émerge comme un phare le dôme du Phuôm. Nous débarquons. Les arbres, dont les cimes se rejoignent en voûte, les rues en terres de Bienhoa, semblent fraichement peints les uns en vert, les autres en rouge. Nous parcourons les trois quartiers de la ville" (226). She distinguishes and defines each of the three neighborhoods by their nationality and/or ethnicity—*européen, chinois, cambodgien* (226-227).

The first neighborhood that she introduces to the reader—the European one—is presented as neat, *coquet*, and alluring: "Le quartier européen a un aspect propre et coquet; on y trouve quelques bâtiments de belle allure" (226). While the author paints the *quartier européen* as clean and orderly, the *quartier chinois* is "a bazar," which suggests disorder, and indicates an oriental perception of the *bāzār*—the "oriental" public market (227). Despite the chaotic element, there is a certain uniformity in the Chinese district that matches that of the European one: "Le quartier chinois a l'air d'un immense bazar avec ses boutiques toutes semblables les unes aux autres le long desquelles courent des galeries couvertes où le promeneur circule à l'ombre" (227). In this sense, both the European and Chinese neighborhoods are identifiable. The European and Chinese neighborhoods each appear to have clearly defined traits that allow the narrator to distinguish one from the other: One is orderly; the other is chaotic. More importantly, what interrupts the two neighborhoods is the *naga.* Described by the narrator as "horrible," the seven-headed serpent appears to interrupt the "clean" and "alluring" European neighborhood. It visibly marks the border between a European space and an Asian one: "Près du Trésor, mes regards, attirés par le

[146] The guide, *Indo-china. Geographical Handbook. Naval Intelligence* (2006), describes My Tho as "the terminus of the Trans-Indo-Chinese railway, and is the most important town of Cochin-China after Saigon and Cho Lon. It handles large quantities of rice as well as a great variety of goods brought by river from Cambodia." P. 233.

mouvement animé de la batellerie indigène, tombent tout à coup sur les sept têtes horribles du serpent *naga* s'épanouissant en éventail à l'entrée du pont jeté sur le canal de ceinture." (226). Mademoiselle Lys notes that the naga-serpent appears in Cambodian and Chinese architecture. Interestingly, she uses the possessive adjective, "nos," in order to refer to a shared cultural symbol. In doing so, it is unclear whether or not she consciously aligns herself with Cambodian and Chinese ethnicity and culture.[147] Referring to the naga, she remarks the following: "Le serpent polycéphale est un motif décoratif aussi commun dans l'architecture cambodgienne que le dragon dans l'architecture chinoise, d'où dérive la nôtre" (227). Its visibility from afar and its placement at the entrance of the bridge and the canal thus represents a threshold that serves to divide and distinguish Asian-ness from whiteness. While the naga and the bridge symbolically and geographically draw a line between Asians and whites—the distinction between Chinese, Cambodian, and even Vietnamese culture and identity remains ambiguous. The narrator's recognition of the seven-headed naga-serpent as a symbol in Cambodian, Chinese, and Vietnamese culture highlights a form of *métissage* that amalgamates and confuses race and nationality.

Reflecting on her first impressions of Cambodia from a boat on the border of Vietnam and Cambodia, the narrator writes in the present from the place of Cần Thơ. Like the *nâga* on the bridge that penetrates the narrator's view from *le quartier européen,* the boat crossing the Mekong over to Phnom Penh reflects a shared and mixed inter-Asian history and culture.[148] Moreover, it emphasizes the creation of Indochina. *Indochine* is concocted from its location between "Indo" (India) and "China". The three French Indochinese countries comprising *Indochine*--Vietnam,

[147] The *nâga*, a "symbol of the water", is also present in Indian, and other Southeast Asian culture. In *L'Empire des rois khmers,* Thierry Zéphir states: "L'animal mythique, un cobra polycéphale, est lui-même issu du fonds culturel indien adopté et adapté par les différents peuples de l'Asie du Sud-Est." P. 17.

[148] The travel guide, *Lonely Planet,* states: "The Mekong Delta was once part of the Khmer kingdom, and was the last region of modern-day Vietnam to be annexed and settled by the Vietnamese. Cambodians, mindful that they controlled the area until the 18th century, still call the delta 'Lower Cambodia.'"

Cambodia, and Laos--are thus collectively defined by their placement in-between two other entities.[149] Coincidentally, through the figure of the *nâga,* the reader receives the story of India's conquest of Cambodia, and the Chinese colonization of Vietnam. Moreover, the multiple heads present an alternative model to the in-betweenness of Indochina.

The *nâga* also serves as a cultural marker that transmits the original story of the Cambodian-Indian encounter. In *L'Empire des rois khmers*, Thierry Zéphir describes the *nâga* and the Cambodian origin story:

> Jadis un brahmane d'origine indienne, Kaundinya, s'unit avec une princesse-serpent indigène, la *nâgi* Somâ. Cette légende, qui situe entre le "civilisé" (le brahmane indien) et le "non-civilisé" (la princesse autochtone) l'origine des plus anciennes lignées royales au Cambodge, celle des monarques du Fou-nan, peut s'interpréter comme l'image déformée, la mémoire inconsciente de quelque événement historique se rapportant aux premiers contacts entre Indiens et Khmers (18).

Like the origin myth that makes its way into the Cambodian conscience, the serpent weaves its way into Sino-Cambodian architecture and the narrator's memory. Upon identifying it from the edge of the *quartier européen,* she travels to a place that predates Cambodian national identity. The narration of the novel undergoes a transformation as the narrator continues her journey from nationally and ethnically distinct *quartiers*. In particular, her experience in the *quartier cambodgien* marks her.

While the narrator devotes one-sentence summaries to *le quartier européen* and *le quartier chinois,* and two sentences to the *naga,* she loses herself in the description of *le quartier*

[149] By Vietnam, I refer to the French colony Cochinchina, and French protectorates Tonkin and Annam.

cambodgien. Her fixation on the Cambodian district indicates her identification with it. She runs on for pages at length before centering in on the architecture of *le palais royal cambodgien*, and her arrival in Siem Reap (227-232). Though the narrator divides Phnom Penh into three *quartiers,* she distinguishes *le quartier cambodgien* from the center of *le quartier cambodgien--le palais royal.* Despite her short stay, she writes with a certain familiarity of the neighborhood and people, claiming that the Cambodian district is "the heart of the capital" where "Cambodians feel most at home" (227).

> Le quartier cambodgien, moins riche, a plus de couleur locale ; c'est là, au cœur de la capitale, que les cambodgiens se sentent vraiment chez eux. La taille bien prise, les épaules carrées, les jambes droites, le gros orteil des pieds écarté comme chez les *Giao-chỉ,* nos ancêtres, les cheveux coupés en brosse, ils passent d'une démarche indolente, tels des descendants d'une race de rois déchus. Les hommes portent une veste de coton et un *sampot* que certains remplacent par un pantalon court. Les femmes, vêtues également du *sampot,* croisent sur leurs seins une écharpe légère et chatoyante, qu'elles déplacent souvent pour éviter la chaleur et disposent de façons variées avec la grave nonchalante de Célimène jouant de l'éventail. Chez quelques-unes le costume national est modernisé : jupe tombante, robe pincée à la taille, serrée aux poignets et entr'ouverte sur la gorge. Les femmes riches ornent leurs robes, de dentelle et se parent de bijoux et de ceintures de soie et d'or (227-228).[150]

[150] In the original text, on p. 227, "sampot" is defined in a footnote as follows: "Pièce de soie ou de coton roulée autour des reins et dont un coin est relevé entre les jambes et fixé par derrière à la ceinture, de manière à en faire une sorte de culotte bouffante."

Returning to her use of the possessive adjective, *nos* (attributed to *our* shared cultural and architectural symbol: the *naga*), Mademoiselle Lys compares the locals of *le quartier cambodgien* to "les *Giao-chỉ,* nos ancêtres" (227).[151] Whereas *le quartier européen* and *chinois* were able to be categorized neatly, the narrator depicts *le quartier cambodgien* in a confusing manner: On the one hand, the district is defined as authentic, home to the local Cambodians. On the other hand, the narrator self-identifies with the people and the neighborhood. Like the *naga* represented earlier, the narrator implies that a shared history between Cambodia, China, and Vietnam exists. The *Giao-chi*, she remarks, resemble the Khmer people; the descendants of a race of fallen kings (227). By referring to the locals as "des descendants d'une race de rois déchus," she alludes to the grandeur of Angkorian Civilization, as well as the collapse of the Khmer Empire.[152]

The local characters of *le quartier cambodgien*, based on Mademoiselle Lys' description, are further divided by gender: Cambodian men, the descendants of the fallen Khmer kings, are likened to the ancient Sino-Annamite "*Giao-chỉ,*" while the local Khmer women are compared to the 17th century French literary coquette, Célimène, from Molière's comedy, *Le Misanthrope,* with some donning a modernized Cambodian costume. Moreover, the "local" Cambodian *quartier*--the most heterogeneous neighborhood--possesses, and is possessed by, Mademoiselle Lys. The narrator's comparaison of the Khmers to the *giao-chỉ* alludes to a Sino-Annamite atavistic deformity, and a colonial *deformation.*[153] The literal translation of *giao-chỉ* interrelates

[151] In Barbara West's *Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Asia and Oceania,* West maps out Vietnamese nationality through a timeline. She refers to 111 B.C.E. as the period where "Chinese troops invade Nam Viet and claim it for the Chinese Empire. Northern Vietnam comes to be known as Giao Chi." P. 879.

[152] The multifarious *quartier cambodgien* is reflective of the multifaceted Bayon Temple, characterized by its smiling faces carved and assembled in stone. Though the Bayon Temple is situated in Angkor Thom, and not in Phnom Penh, it represents the ancient Angkor Empire, and pre-dates Cambodia's modern-day capital, Phnom Penh.

[153] See Bonifacy, 702.

with its ethnonym.[154] In his 1908 article, "Les Kiao-Tché, étude étymologique et anthropologique," Commandant Bonifacy traces the various meanings and histories of *giao-chỉ*, and decomposes the expression, *kiao tche* into two Chinese characters, "Kiao (交), qui signifie croiser, réussir," and "tche (趾), qui signifie pied" (699). Noting that the Chinese character "tche" also translates into "toe" or "big toe," East Asian Historian William Duiker and Southeast Asian Historian Bruce Lockhart translate the term *giao-chỉ* into English as "intertwined feet" and "crossed toes" (147).[155] The physical deformity of the foot becomes an ethnic marker of the *royaume d'Annam* and *la race Annamite.*[156] Citing M. Madrolle and Colonel Diguel's etymological and anthropological findings on the *giao-chỉ*, Bonifacy draws attention to the relation between a physical deformity and an endonym.

> La conclusion de M. Madrolle est que l'on doit comprendre par Kiao tche, comme nom de race, les autochtones de l'ancien Kuin du même nom, c'est-à-dire les Tai et les Annamites, tous deux mongoloïdes, chez lesquels on rencontre encore des « Pieds croisés ».
>
> Le colonel E. Diguel, dans « Annam et Indo-Chine française », dit que parmi les Qui, tribus vivant sur les confins de l'Empire chinois « se trouvait la race des Giao chi (croisés doigts de pied) qui n'est autre que la race annamite. Ce nom très caractéristique lui venait d'une particularité physique qu'elle est seule à posséder avec quelques Chinois du Sud, les Malais et les Manillais, et consistant en un écartement exagéré du gros orteil et du doigt de pied voisin auquel il est pour ainsi dire opposable comme le pouce à l'index […] ».

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[154] Ferlus, Michel, "Formation of Ethnonyms in Southeast Asia", p. 4. See section 3.3: "Sino-Vietnamese *Giao,* in Kiao-tche/ *Giao Chi* 'ancient name of Vietnam,' has been attested since 207 BC […]. The expression *Giao Chỉ* is represented by *Catti-* in Ptolemy's *Cattigara,* and by *Cochi-* in *Cochinchina,* one of the names for the Đại Việt transmitted by the Portuguese."
[155] See *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam,* Ed. 3, p. 147.
[156] Bonifacy, 701-702.

> Il n'est pas indifférent de connaître l'opinion des Annamites eux-mêmes à ce sujet. Ils sont persuadés que leurs ancêtres étaient tous affligés de la difformité qui se trouve actuellement à l'état de rare exception parmi eux. Ils croient avoir été influencés par une forte dose de sang chinois qui aurait rectifié cette disposition atavique (702).

The development of an Annamite origin myth and national consciousness can thus be traced to an inherited atavistic deformity. In addition to the inter-Asian and interethnic relations inherent in the "Annamite race," it is worth noting the geographic crossover of North and South; physical deformity, and appellative and geographical deformation. According to Lockhart and Duiker, "Some scholars believe that the name *Giao Chỉ* is the source of the "'Cochin' in Cochin China," arguing that the original term was corrupted by the Portuguese" (147).[157] If the exonym, Cochinchina, originates from the expression *giao chỉ,* then at least two geographical switches occur upon the European colonization of Vietnam: The deformation of *giao chỉ* and its transformation into Cochin(china) replaces its association with Northern Vietnam with Southern Vietnam, or colonial Cochinchina.[158] The second transformation occurs in the pre-French colonial association of *Giao chỉ* with Vietnam, which also served as the "ancient administrative term for the Red River Delta in northern Vietnam," and the French colonial use of Annam to refer to the French

[157] Adding to this, Lockhart and Duiker note that "the 'China' would then have been added to distinguish it from Cochin in India, since many early sources outside the region included the area of Vietnam in what they designated as 'China.'" See pp. 75-76. *Nam* (south) and *kỳ* (term, period) form *Nam kỳ*--the Vietnamese expression for Cochinchina. It is worth noting, though, that *nam* also translates to "male (human being)." See Giuong Phan Van's *Tuttle Mini Vietnamese Dictionary,* p. 102; 117.

[158] The relation between Northern Vietnam and Southern China should equally be noted. Lockhart and Duiker define *Giao Chỉ* as the "ancient administrative term for the Red River Delta in northern Vietnam," adding, "The term *Giao Chỉ* (ch. *Jiaoehi*), which means 'intertwined feet' (sometimes translated as 'crossed toes'), was first introduced during the reign of Triệu Đà in the kingdom of Nanyue/Nam Việt and might have referred to the Chinese view of the sleeping habits of the non-Chinese peoples of the south, who slept in communal fashion with their feet together and their heads extending outward. Giao Chỉ became one of two provinces into which the region of the Red River Delta was divided and referred to the lower region of the Red River." p. 147.

protectorate, or the central region of Vietnam, and the entirety of Vietnam, and the Vietnamese (Annamite) people and race.[159]

The presence of the *giao chỉ* in *le quartier cambodgien* may be explained by the physical gap present in *giao chỉ,* depicted as "un écartement exagéré et du doigt de pied voisin," and the various meanings of "giao" (交), including "croiser" and "réussir."[160] The apparent contradiction between "croiser" and the *écartement physique*, present in the expression *giao chỉ,* reveals Mademoiselle Lys' efforts to reconcile her split identity, by attempting to close the gap between the northern and southern division(s) of Chinese, Portuguese, and French colonial Vietnam.[161] Moreover, the specific affiliation between "les *Giao-chỉ*, nos ancêtres" and "des descendants d'une race de rois déchus," establishes a fraternal bond between the Khmers and the (Sino)Annamites. Mademoiselle Lys signals to the reader the pre-European grandeur of *le royaume d'Annam* and *le royaume khmer d'Angkor,* and in doing so, inscribes within the narrative the history of Asian Empire.[162] While Mademoiselle Lys dissects the Cambodian capital into three bodies, it is *le quartier cambodgien* that is further subdivided with traces of the other two—the Chinese and the European bodies. By comparing the race of fallen Khmer kings to the *giao-chỉ,* the narrator establishes a historical and genealogical relationship between Cambodians, Annamites, and the Chinese. What is most striking, though, is the parallel drawn between the local Cambodian women

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[159] Referring to the Portuguese "corruption" of *Giao Chỉ,* Lockhart and Duiker note that "*Giao Chi* (Chinese *Jiaozhi*) [was] an early name for Vietnam." See pp. 75-76. For more on Chinese-ruled Vietnam and the Red River Delta, see Lockhart and Duiker, 147. It should be noted that while the French used *Annam* and *Annamite,* the term itself was rejected by the Vietnamese: "The term, meaning 'pacified South' in Chinese, was offensive to patriotic Vietnamese and was dropped after independence." Lockhart and Duiker, 24.

[160] Bonifacy 699; 702.

[161] *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys* precedes Vietnamese Independence from France in 1949, and the partition of Vietnam of 1954, yet Nguyen Phan Long seems to allude to or anticipate both of these events in the novel. See Lockhart and Duiker, 24; 40-41.

[162] The Khmer Empire began around the 9th century and lasted until the 15th century. In Bonifacy's study, *Kiao tche* (*giao chỉ)* is designated the ancient "royaume d'Annam." See Bonifacy, 702. Also worth noting is Lockhart and Duiker's acknowledgement of Annam's pre-French colonial meaning, from the seventh century, "when the Tang dynasty integrated several provinces of occupied Vietnam into the single protectorate of Annam" (24).

and the French women of the "Asian imagination."[163] In addition to being presented as similar to Molière's Célimène, the coquettish Khmer women mirror *le quartier européen*, which is described as "propre et coquet" (226). Moreover, the Cambodian women are exoticized in the same manner as the Frenchwomen, Louise and Mademoiselle Mellin, with their "fairylike" qualities and foreign style of dress. *Le quartier cambodgien*, which incorporates elements of the Chinese and European *quartiers,* replicates itself as it simultaneously subdivides into three.

Mademoiselle Lys returns to the figure of water and the *nâga* throughout the section, and in doing so, she highlights both the indefinability of Cambodian identity and the link between Cambodian, Indian, Chinese, and Vietnamese cultures. The bridge that juts out of the canal between the European and Asian *quartiers*, and the "serpent polycéphale" that adorns it, serves as a passageway that connects the French, Chinese, Cambodians, and foreigners in Cambodia (226). In contrast to the definable *quartier chinois* and *européen*, the *quartier cambodgien*, is undefinable. While "moins riche," it is the place where "local" [Cambodians] reside. The narrator's attempt of classifying the neighborhoods of Cambodia is futile. Unlike the *quartier européen* and *chinois* that shared a certain uniformity, the *quartier cambodgien* is too diverse—despite it being the "authentic" or "local" neighborhood—and cannot be contained. In addition to this, the captivating wealth of the royal palace of Phnom Penh defines the *quartier*. The "less rich" district is also one of authenticity, superficiality, and grandeur. Through the figure of *le palais royal,* the narrator juxtaposes the old and the modern; the west and the east. The statue of King Norodom placed in the center of the *palais royal* mimics French monumental tributes to Napoleon Bonaparte. From her privileged position as an outsider given access to the palace, Mademoiselle

[163] Nguyen Phan Long, 148.

Lys describes the *palais* royal as a sort of European-Cambodian hybrid that rises from the *quartier cambodgien*:

> Au centre du quartier cambodgien s'élève le palais royal, ensemble un européen et de constructions cambodgiennes. Grâce à l'aimable intervention du ministre du Palais, à qui papa a été recommandé, nous sommes autorisés à visiter la pagode royale, qui n'est ouverte au public qu'aux jours de fête. C'est sans doute l'affluence de peuple en ces solennités que salue dans la cour, d'un geste large, le bicorne à la main, la statue du bon roi Norodom caracolant en uniforme de général de la République sur un cheval fringant. Cette attitude martiale doit étonner quelque peu les vieux cambodgiens […] (228).

Modern influences coming from France disrupt traditional Khmer cultural aspects. Moreover, the pagoda is described as having an over-the-top, ornate and modern style, fused with a Khmer architectural style (229). The imitation-marble and the "rococo" style of the pagoda highlights Cambodia's attempt—and failure—to represent the grandeur of both Angkor of the Khmer Empire, and the French Empire.

Before leaving for Angkor, the narrator describes the plant and animal life at the exit of the sanctuary. Described as "free", "undefinable", "wild", and "diverse", the scenes of nature reflect the overall hybrid nature of *le quartier cambodgien*, in contrast to the itemizable rose, violet, and lily.

> En sortant du sanctuaire, on voit autour des galeries des plantes et des fleurs rares soigneusement entretenues. C'est, au contraire, une végétation libre et luxuriante que l'on trouve au vaste jardin du Phnom, sillonné de larges avenues bordées de grands arbres à riche qui embaume l'air d'un arôme indéfinissable. Des pelouses, des corbeilles, des cages

> de reptiles, d'animaux sauvages, une volière où une grande variété d'oiseaux confondent leurs cris et leurs coloris divers, achèvent de donner à l'endroit l'aspect d'un jardin botanique (230).

Following this, the narrator returns to the royal palace's attempts of reinventing and mimicking the Angkor period. The "reproduction des statues d'Angkor" reminds the reader of the greatest period of Cambodian history--the Khmer Empire (230). Like the imitation marble that accompanies the Khmer architecture of the pagoda of the royal palace, the ancient and the modern coexist, and highlight a failed attempt of preserving and reliving the history of the Khmer Empire.[164]

Only after this private exploration of the royal palace, does the narrator feel satisfied enough to continue her journey toward Angkor. Again, water serves as the form of transportation that connects her from the "Old World" to the "New World" of Cambodia. Traveling across the lakes, the narrator and her father pass by the "old capitals" of Cambodia. The narrator remarks the following: "Notre curiosité satisfaite, nous continuons notre voyage vers Angkor, en traversant les lacs. C'est d'abord le Tonlé-Sap, où nous passons devant les capitales successives du Cambodge, dont le passé a connu bien des vicissitudes : *Oudong, Lovek,* qui gardent encore quelques vestiges de leurs anciennes splendeurs" (231). In addition to passing by Cambodia's successive capitals, the narrator repeatedly contrasts the boat's position above the Cambodian mangroves and history beneath the water. The narrator also describes the boat evolving with the clusters of submerged trees peeking out of the water, before finally arriving in Siem Reap. "Nous naviguons au-dessus de la forêt noyée, comme en pleine mer : nous sommes sur le grand lac. Dans la nuit, le bateau

[164] See p. 229.

atteint l'embouchure de la rivière de Siêm-Reap, où il jette l'ancre. […] Notre embarcation évolue parmi les îlots formés par les cimes des arbres submergés" (231). Even after her arrival in Siem Reap, the narrator continues to describe the transition from the boat, to the "terre détrempée, boueuse," and to the eventual "monotonous," hard soil of the city (231-232). The transition from wet to dry accompanies the movement from traditional to modern. Crossing over Cambodia's ancient capitals and waters by boat, the narrator lands in a muddy in-between zone, traveling by *charrette*, before approaching a "modern" Angkor by car (232). Once the narrator arrives in Angkor, the narrator loses her narrative style of recounting personal observations and first-person experiences. She announces her depressed state upon witnessing "une civilisation disparue" (232), before turning her personal account into an orientalist narrative of Cambodia's history. After describing her indifference, disappointment, and *tristesse*, she expresses a state of being that matches that of the ruins. Like the destruction of the ancient Khmer civilization and the debris, she reveals to the reader the following:

> Je me sens écrasée devant ces vastes palais et ces temples immenses recouverts de soubassement au faite de moulures et de sculptures burinées, fouillées, ciselées dans d'énormes blocs de grès. Et, plus haut que l'admiration, une pitié rétrospective parle en moi ; j'essaie de me représenter la somme colossale de travail qu'exigea leur édification. Que de peines et de souffrances pour aboutir à la destruction et à l'oubli ! (233).

The narrator's personification of the ruins, the phantom builders, and debris of the past lead her to a self-effacement. The sight and the sites "crush" her. While the "mute stones" come to life in the form of awoken fossilized ancestors, Mademoiselle Lys *depersonifies*. Moreover, her narration

transforms along with her "crushed" and "blasé" spirit.[165] Her personal account of her experiences and impressions are replaced with Cambodian history reminiscent of Geoges Cœdès' works on Southeast Asian history and myths.[166]

For the next hundred pages, the narrator remarks the history of the civilization of Angkor, also known as Yaçodharapura (235).[167] Returning to the figure of the *nâga* prevalent in Chinese, Vietnamese, and Cambodian architecture, from the beginning of Part II—the narrator paints an image of the *nâga* and the history of *Kambupuri.*[168] In doing so, she recycles the Cambodian origin-myth of Kambu and the Brahmins, and the great civilization of the Khmer Empire--before ultimately informing the reader of its downfall. In particular, Mademoiselle Lys transports the reader—and herself—to the year 1145. Celebrating the greatest period of the Khmer Empire, the narrator time travels and relives Suryâvarman's rule (248). More importantly, she describes Angkor—or Yaçodharapura—as a powerful city and a meeting point of exchange of objects, and between people:

> L'admirable position de la cité n'avait pas peu contribué à sa prospérité. Assise non loin des bords du Grand Lac, elle voyait affluer dans son port, à l'époque des hautes eaux, les navires de l'Inde, de la Malaisie, de la Chine, du Japon, de Java et de Sumatra, qui lui apportaient des étoffes d'Occident, très appréciées des Khmers, pour leur largeur et leur

[165] "Ici, ce ne sont que des pierres muettes, au milieu d'une solitude désolée, où plane un morne silence, à peine troublé par le murmure des bonzes, doux et grave comme une prière pour les trépassés." Pp. 233-234. Given that the narrator is the projection of the male author's fantasy, this moment of disillusion is suspect in relation to the fantasy of the narrative voice.

[166] See George Cœdès' *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (1968) and *Inscriptions du Cambodge* (1937-66).

[167] See: Cœdès, George. *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia.* Honolulu: East-West Center Press, c.1968. Print.

[168] "La paix rétablie, Yaçovarman, selon les termes d'une inscription, 'pour éviter le retour de ces criminelles espérances qui épient les points faibles d'un royaume et tuent les rois', avait organisé un service d'espions et fait construire une solide citadelle qui le mît à l'abri des surprises. Il en avait fait sa capitale et l'avait appelée *Kambupuri*, la ville de Kambu" (236). See also : George Cœdès' *Inscriptions du Cambodge* (1937-66).

> finesse, et qui coûtaient plus cher que le satin de Chine, de l'or en feuilles et en barres, des vases en cuivre, des soieries bigarrées, de Tchen-tchéou, des plateaux en laque de Wen-tchéou, des porcelaines bleues de Ts'iuan-tchéou, du mercure, du vermillon, du papier, du soufre, du salpêtre, du santal, de la racine d'iris, du musc, de la toile, des parapluies en papier huilé, des marmites en fer, des nattes de Ming-tchéou en grande quantité. Les jonques échangeaient leur cargaison contre les produits du pays : plumes d'oiseaux, ivoire, cornes de rhinocéros, cardamome, cire d'abeilles, huile végétale, poivre, curcuma, résine, écailles de tortue" (248-249).

While the narrator celebrates the best years of Khmer history and Empire, and recounts its downfall and ransacking by the Siamese, the narrator presents the (pre)Angkorian and contemporary Cambodia as always having been a hybrid, in-between *lieu* of exchange.[169] It is of no coincidence that the narrator chooses to recount in detail the current capital of Cambodia (Phnom Penh) and the old capital of the Khmer Empire (Angkor). It is more telling, though, that the *palais royal* at the center *le quartier cambodgien* in Phnom Penh serves as a reconstruction of Khmer Empire that travels into the cultural imaginary.[170] The local place—the authentic Cambodian place—is also one that travels outside and within itself, constructed from wars and unions with its neighboring countries. In such, Mademoiselle Lys reflects on ethnic, racial, and national identity, through an exploration of meeting-points, upon her return from a sister-hybrid site.

By "sister-hybrid site," I mean to draw attention to the narrator's self-identification with the hybridity of *le quartier cambodgien* in Phnom Penh. In doing so, I refer to the narrator's personification and gendering of Phnom Penh, and the author's anxieties over the "grands

[169] See pp. 326-330.
[170] See Stuart Hall's *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997).

changements" underway, from the lingering aftermath of WWI. Mademoiselle Lys' fixation on the Cambodian capital's complexity counterintuitively accentuates the similarities between Vietnam and Cambodia.[171] Mademoiselle Lys' intimate revelations can thus be read as a real concern over the "great changes" underway—and the author's concern over the collective Annamite identity under threat by colonial powers and its neighboring Asian countries.

While it is tempting to reduce Phnom Penh's architectural and historical mixed-ness to an ideal blending of differences—a kind of melting pot—its stark heterogeneity emphasizes the impossibility of the reconciliation that Mademoiselle Lys seeks. The crossing and blending ("croiser;" "réunir"), inherent in the *giao* of *les Giao-chỉ, nos ancêtres*, complements the act of weaving ("tissage") in *métissage.* Looking beyond the surface level, however, it becomes clear that the *métissage* in the Southeast Asian Francophone context is fixed by 1) a drive to suppress itself 2) the constant fear of mixing 3) the desire to maintain, or preserve, national identity.[172] As the reader slips further into the pages of the *journal-roman,* Mademoiselle Lys' narrative

[171] Though the publication of *Le Roman…* occurs in 1919, it is worth noting the history of "twin" and "sister cities", which originates in Western Europe, following WWII, as an attempt to maintain stable social, political, and economic relations within Europe. While the "sister-city phenomenon" is typically associated with European and North American cities, attention must be given to cities networking across and beyond "first" and "second-world" countries. Inter/intra-Asian sister city efforts should also be considered in the context of the foundation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)--which originally excluded "Indochinese" countries. What originally started as a five-member association of "non-communist" countries in 1967 (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand) expanded in the 1980s and 90s to incorporate Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and eventually Cambodia, under the motto of "One Vision, One Identity, One Community." Moreover, the sister city pairing of Phnom Penh—the city with which the narrator identifies—and Can Tho—the place from which the *roman* begins—should be considered in light of their recent "twinning" as of 2006. See *Le Roman...,* pp. 6-7; Leszek Buszynski's "Southeast Asia in the Post-Cold War Era", pp. 830-47; Wilbur Zelinsky's "The Twinning of the World: Sister Cities in Geographic and Historical Perspective," pp. 1-31. For the gendering of sister-cities, see Hilding T. Svartengren's "The Feminine Gender for Inanimate Things in Anglo-American", pp. 83-113; Gustav Wendt's *Syntax des heutigen Englisch.* For a list a list of Phnom Penh's sister cities, see *Phnom Penh Capital Hall*; see also, *The Phnom Penh Post's* "Phnom Penh's Family Expands."

[172] While *métis* is derived from its Latin form *mixtus,* the French prefix *mé*(*s*) indicates a lack; a negative quality. Beyond its literal translation, *Giao-chỉ,* the physical deformity, reflects a malformation. See G. Lozinski's "Remarques sur l'origine du préfixe français mes-, me-".

successfully distracts the reader from Nguyen Phan Long's objectives, which are made clear in the preface: Nguyen Phan Long's ambitions include preventing the French education of *our* Annamite girls, and preserving Confucian and Annamite values and culture. Nguyen Phan Long's novel reveals itself to be a national project at a precarious time, "par suite de la répercussion mondiale d'une guerre sans précédent."[173] The first Asian Francophone novel borrows and amends the French schooling techniques of drilling used to generate national filiation: *Nos ancêtres, les Giao-chỉ* thus replaces the atavistic expression, transmitted from France to its colonies, *Nos ancêtres les Gaulois.*

The construction of the first Vietnamese Francophone novel, *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys,* and the first Khmer novel, Rim Kin's *Sophat,* occur toward the end of the French colonial period in Indochina and during the interwar period.[174] Rim Kin's novel, which appears nearly two decades after the publication of *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys,* shares Nguyen Phan Long's intentions of preserving national traditions, history, and values. In the same way that *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys* is inseparable from the author's political involvement in the Constitutionalist Party of Cochinchina, the first Khmer novel converges with the Cambodian nationalist movements in mid-20th century. The link between *métissage* and nationalism is more evident in the Cambodian case: Unlike Nguyen Phan Long's novel—which includes non-Vietnamese characters, landmarks, and influences—*Sophat* promotes Khmer purity and erases foreign bodies from its history. While Nguyen Phan Long expresses a fear of cultural erasure caused by the French education of Annamite girls, Rim Kin expresses a desire to protect Khmerness, under threat of foreign attack

[173] Nguyen Phan Long, 7.
[174] According to R.B. Smith, *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys* first appeared as a "serialized story" in the French-language and Vietnamese-run newspaper, *L'Écho annamite* in 1919. See Smith, 136-137. According to Hoc Dy Khing, *Sophat* was written in 1938, before its publication in Saigon in 1942. See René Laporte and Pech Thinh's translation of *Sophat*, p. 8.

by the Chinese and Vietnamese in the Cambodian capital. Fostered by a desire to guard and protect national identity and heritage, a non-violent expression of political discontent evolves into the utmost form of violence—genocide.

Chapter 2. Cambodia, French Indochina's Middle Child

Forty years after the Cambodian Genocide[175], and twenty years after the dissolution of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia's past continues to haunt its survivors. Though the Democratic Kampuchea's takeover fits neatly into a categorizable four-year period (1975-1979), the atrocities of the past bleed into the present—inscribed in survivors' memories, mass graves, and in the form of historical documentation used as evidence in the ongoing Khmer Rouge tribunal.[176] The Cambodian Genocide thus extends beyond the historical period of 1975-1979, and forms a part of the contemporary Cambodian national identity. Moreover, the inescapable traumas of the past construct the shared cultural memory of the Cambodian Diaspora, and contribute to the difficulty of defining what it means to be Khmer in the 21st-century. One of the worst crimes against humanity, specifically confined to the period of 1975-1979, would grow to become a global issue of interest.[177] The Cambodian Justice Act (US 1994), put into effect under President Bill Clinton,

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[175] The Khmer Rouge (Communist Party of Kampuchea) took over Cambodia from April 17, 1975 until January 7, 1979, when the Vietnamese troops seized Phnom Penh. The Khmer Rouge "continued to exist until 1999 when all of its leaders had defected to the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), been arrested, or had died." Dy, Khamboly. *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*, pp. 1-3.

[176] The following (ex)members of the Khmer Rouge are still in the process of being tried for crimes against humanity committed between 1975-1979, in 2018: Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea, Meas Muth, Ao An, Im Chaem, and Yim Tith. For court documents, allegations, and transcripts, see *Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia*.

[177] p. 29, "Searching for the Truth. Number 5, May 2000." "As a direct consequence of the law, in late 1994 the US government provided a substantial grant to Yale University's Cambodian Genocide Program. Yale University […] established in January of 1995 an office in Cambodia called the Documentation Center of Cambodia, or DC-Cam. […] As the work of DC-Cam researchers proceeded to uncover and publicize new information about the magnitude and scope of the Khmer Rouge genocide, the international media began to pick up reports of these discoveries and spread them around the world. This resulted in a rising international outcry around the world for genocide justice in Cambodia, increasing pressure on the United Nations to consider establishing an international criminal tribunal to judge the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. In January 1997, the DC-Cam separated from Yale University and became an autonomous Cambodian research institute, and thus as a direct consequence of the Cambodian Genocide Justice Act, an important new Cambodian institution was born."

symbolizes international efforts to close the chapter of Cambodia's past by prosecuting Khmer Rouge officers of the Democratic Kampuchea regime.[178] Yet, it also represents Cambodia's identity, which continues to be defined by its complex international relations—specifically with The U.S. and Vietnam.

This chapter looks at the first published Khmer novel in Cambodia, Rim Kin's *Sophat* (1942), and examines the link between Khmer literary production, and the Cambodian reformist movements that occurred within the last few decades of French colonial Cambodia. Before exploring the nationalist messages in *Sophat*, I investigate the beginnings of Cambodia's Khmerization movements towards the end of the French colonial Cambodia, and the inseparability of the language, literary, and educational reforms from the Khmer nationalist political movements. This chapter thus seeks to trace the evolving forms of Khmerization in pre- and post-Democratic Kampuchea, and considers the creation of the first Khmer novel as a form of "fixing" or filling the lack of Khmer representation in colonial Cambodian society, in hopes of preserving it for the future generation of Cambodians extending beyond Southeast Asia.

Cambodia's past and current political climate, and Cambodian nationalists' Khmerization efforts in the French colony, must be read alongside the first Khmer novel: Rim Kin's *Sophat*. Looking at the combination of historical fact, the Khmer origin myth, and the political ideology of

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[178] The Cambodian Genocide Justice Act (Sec. 572, policy) refers specifically to the Khmer Rouge crimes committed from 1975-1979.
(a) In General.—Consistent with international law, it is the policy of the United States to support efforts to bring to justice members of the Khmer Rouge for their crimes against humanity committed in Cambodia between April 17, 1975, and January 7, 1979.
(b) Specific Actions Urged.—To that end, the Congress urges the President—
(1) to collect, or assist appropriate organizations and individuals to collect relevant data on crimes of genocide committed in Cambodia;
(2) in circumstances which the President deems appropriate, to encourage the establishment of a national or international criminal tribunal for the prosecution of those accused of genocide in Cambodia; and
(3) as necessary, to provide such national or international tribunal with information collected pursuant to paragraph (1)." (pp. 26-29, "Searching for the Truth. Number 5, May 2000.")

the 20th century, I interpret the sudden transfers—or seizing of—power from lineal to collateral descent, metaphorically. Following my interpretation of genealogical metaphors from pre-colonial to post-DK Cambodia, I turn to France's relationship with her Indochinese children, analyzed via psychoanalytical and postcolonial metaphors, and birth order typing in the field of psychology. Based on the elements discussed above, I interpret the role of *Sophat,* the first Khmer novel, and its significance as a pedagogical, political, and literary tool. Finally, re-Khmerization, Khmer re-generation, and re-naissance of the 21st century will be contextualized in its present and developing state.

Khmerization Efforts from Pre-Democratic and Post-Democratic Kampuchea

Khmerization continues to pose a problem in contemporary Cambodian societies, extending into the diasporic Cambodian communities. While it is tempting to reduce it to the Khmer Rouge ideology of the period of 1975-1979, Khmerization precedes Democratic Kampuchea. The term is loosely used today, but Khmerization has specific nationalist implications, which may be traced to the *Khemarayeanakam* journal and movement in mid-20th century Cambodia. Southeast Asian scholars such as Michael Vickery, Penny Edwards, Klairung Amratisha, Saveros Pou, and Hideo Sasagawa have addressed the trend of adopting Khmer as the principle language in Cambodian schools and government, in opposition to French, in the 1940s and 1960s in Cambodia. Vickery states: "A committee was established to 'systematize the creation of new words', and the results were published in a new journal called *Khemarayeanakam,* which means literally 'making the Khmer language a vehicle" (319).[179] Amratisha adds that

[179]While both Vickery and Amratisha translate *Khemarayeanakam* into "making the Khmer language a vehicle," Sasagawa takes the liberty of translating *Khemarayeanakam* into Khmerization. In addition to translating the title of the "educational magazine" into Khmerization, and addressing the National Assembly's official acknowledgement in 1967 of Khmer as "the teaching language in schools", Sasagawa, like Edwards, attributes Khmerization to Chuon

Khemarayeanakam became policy through the use of Khmer "as the language of instruction in secondary schools."[180]

Arguably, Khmerization precedes the establishment of the *Khemarayeanakam* magazine and policy of the 1960s. Southeast Asian Historian and scholar Penny Edwards attributes Khmerization to the intersection between Khmer nationalist movements and Khmer language reforms, led by Chuon Nath (1883-1969) and Huot Tath (1891-1975).[181] Nath and Tath's nationalist reform efforts, which included "notions of a national culture and a national language," conveniently occurred "as a critical juncture in the growth of colonial education."[182] Khmer educational reforms were "in a constant demand of nationalists" in the 1940s, and in particular, in 1943, "the year in which the French 'met mass passive resistance' in response to 'their attempt to impose Romanization on written Khmer" (Vickery 315).[183] Yet, even after "the administration had been officially Khmerized in the 1960s," the French language continued to prevail as the dominant mode of power.

Nath, a Cambodian Buddhist monk, and to his creation of the first Khmer-language dictionary. See Sasagawa, "The Establishment of the National Language in Twentieth-Century Cambodia: Debates on Orthography and Coinage."

[180] For a table of Cambodian literature taught at secondary schools in Cambodia in the 1960s, see pp. 192-3, Amratisha, Ch. 4, "Post-independence: the novel and society." Also worth noting is the return to "traditional and nationalist" educational materials in Cambodia following the collapse of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. "The Ministry of Education since 1979 has been firmly in the hands of pre-1975 professional pedagogues. […] Reading texts are in general the same as in the old days, and to the extent that there have been linguistic innovations they are along the lines developed before 1975 by a group of Khmerizing nationalist educationists (the *Khmerarayeanakam* movement), most of whom perished under Pol Pot" (Vickery 310-11).

[181] See Edwards, p. 95-97. Also worth noting is Nath and Tath's reforms to Buddhist practices. "The monastic quest to restore the uncorrupted text and the original words, meanings, or practices of the Buddha in addition to the scholarly projects to retrieve the past purity, conservation, and the explicit or implicit fear of 'vanishing' would all emerge as critical themes in Khmer nationalism" (96-97).

[182] Edwards, p. 96; p. 123.

[183] Vickery also notes: "The first modern political movement under So'n Ngoc Thanh gave prominence to the language issue in its newspaper *Nagaravatta* ('Angkor Wat'), the first independent Khmer-language newspaper, which appeared between 1936 and 1942' (315).

> French education was so effective among the elite that many of them could not express themselves with equal facility in Khmer. […] In the 1960s many official documents were circulated in French, or at least first composed in French and then translated. French was still essential for a successful administrative career above the lowest levels, and in fact represented a barrier against individuals of poor or rural origins who had been unable to acquire it. (Vickery 315)

Moreover, Thanhism[184]--and the threat of a Vietnamization of Cambodia--rivaled the Cambodian nationalists' agenda of Khmerization, during the transitory period of French colonial Cambodia and Independent Cambodia .[185] Vickery states that, while Sihanouk had envisioned Khmerizing the schools, "The Thanh government showed an intention to make the most of such independence as had been granted" (24).[186] Both Sihanouk and Thanh shared a vision of "reawakening the historical grandeur of 'Kampuchea'—but Thanh's ministry's ambitions of "[achieving] the union of all peoples in Cambodia, especially the Annamites [Vietnamese] and Khmer" opposed

[184]Following Cambodian Independence in 1945, "King Sihanouk […] abrogated all treaties with the French, promulgated a new Basic Law, and formed a government of traditionalists who had already made administrative careers under the French." Yet, in May 1945, "So'n Ngoc Thanh, an anti-French and anti-royalist nationalist, was brought back from Japan […] and he was soon appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. Then, after a group of his young followers invaded the palace on 9 August, Sihanouk was forced to make Thanh Prime Minister." Vickery, *Kicking the Vietnam Syndrome in Cambodia,* pp. 23-24.

[185] Sihanouk enjoyed, for the most part, popularity in post-independent Cambodia, until the late 1960s: Sihanouk's neutral position in international affairs, "his break with the United States and his seemingly pro-communist foreign policy," caused conservatives to turn against him, "while Cambodian radicals opposed his internal policies, which were economically conservative and intolerant of dissent." See Chandler, David P., and Leonard C. Overton. "Cambodia."

[186] When the Japanese took over all authority from the French in March 1945, Son Ngoc Thanh was brought back and imposed on the government as Foreign Minister, and in August, after a palace coup by his follows, was made Prime Minister. Vickery notes Thanh's exile in France in October 1945; his eventual return to Cambodia in 1951 and his growing popularity in Cambodia in the 1950s, especially among Youtevong's Democratic Party Democratic; his return as Prime Minister in 1972 (Vickery, "Looking Back at Cambodia," 92-94; 109-110). It is also worth mentioning that upon his return in 1951, Son Ngoc Thanh "began publishing a newspaper, *Khmer Awake*," or *Khmer Krauk* [ខ្មែរក្រោក], "which pushed for independence, and in the spring of 1952 suddenly left Phnom Penh to form a new Issarak group on the Norther Khmer-Thai border. The Democrats were accused of aiding him – a charge which they did not take great pains to deny" (94).

Sihanouk's Khmerization plans excluding the Vietnamese.[187] Based on the French language's role and status-value in Cambodia, Thanh's aim of implanting Vietnamese "as the first foreign language" in Phnom Penh was considered a danger to the Khmer identity: "The Thanhist group wished to eliminate French influence and remove that language from primary schools; and among the Phnom Penh intellectuals there was a movement to introduce 'Annamite', that is Vietnamese, as the first foreign language."[188]

In a piece on societal and literary changes in modern Cambodia, published in *Essays on Literature and Society in Southeast Asia* (1981), Jacques Nepote and Hoc Dy Khing note the trend of Khmerization in schools. The meeting point of reality and fiction is remarked in "Literature and Society in Modern Cambodia": "In 1956 Cambodian literature (including modern authors Rim Kin, Nu Hach, Nhok Them) began to be studied in school; in 1959 the Khmer language became the official language; in 1960 the Khmerization of primary schools started. The language itself Khmerized by creation of neologisms to replace the vocabulary of foreign origin."[189] Prior to Rim Kin's novel, the most prevalent cases of literary talent in Cambodia came from Sino-Vietnamese and French writers. Even the first newspaper established in a non-French language in Cambodia

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[187]Vickery, *Kicking the Vietnam Syndrome in Cambodia,* pp. 24-25. Below are the following program initiatives announced under Thanh's governance as Foreign Minister in July 1945, which Vickery cites from the newspaper, *Cambodge*, no. 94, 17 July 1945; no. 87, 6 July; no. 96, 17 July; no. 116, 11 August; no. 9, 30 March; no. 110, 4 August; no. 121, 17 August; no. 79, 27 June; no. 124, 21 August; no. 126, 23 August; no. 127, 24 August. See also, Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power* (1985), p. 51.
(1) Support the Great Asian War, which is the emancipation of the peoples of this part of the world
(2) only complete victory will guarantee independence
(3) reawaken the historical grandeur of 'Kampuchea' [in French]
(4) create a national army
(5) achieve the union of all peoples in Cambodia, especially the Annamites [Vietnamese]
(6) concentration of all economic activities

[188] *Ibid.* 24-25. Adding to this, Vickery states: "This was apparently not popular with the king, for suggestions emanating from the palace were Khmerization of the schools, without Vietnamese; and while Thanh was advocating for 'close relations with the Annamite Empire', Sihanouk spoke against a Vietnamese government proclamation to unify all of the old Vietnamese Empire's territory, if it included Cochinchina."
[189] See p. 79, footnote 50

was non-Khmer, highlighting the influence, significance, and power of "foreigners" in Cambodia. More importantly, it seemed to switch the role of "outsider" attributed to "foreigners", by outcasting Khmer-speaking Cambodians and having them fill the role of "outsider." Nepote and Khing remark the following: "Certainly it was the French presence which was responsible for the origin of Cambodian periodicals; nevertheless we must note that the first newspaper in Cambodia in a local language was the Vietnamese weekly *Cao-miên Huong-truyên* in 1929; the first Cambodian weekly being *Ratri thnai saur* in 1935."[190] Despite a desire to erase their influences, writing in reaction to foreign writers and literature inevitably *linked* them to what they wished to remove from society. "Many, if not the quasi totality of the writers are Sino-Cambodian or Vietnamo-Cambodian. But very often they have changed their names and present themselves as 'Cambodians.'"[191]

The motivation toward creating and promoting Khmer literature, in the time of French colonial rule, stemmed largely from a fear of losing Cambodian identity and culture.[192] In the most recent French translation of *Sophat*, Hoc Dy Khing attributes *shame* to the creation of the first Khmer novel. Rim Kin expresses his push toward writing "'pour ne plus avoir honte devant les étrangers'" (Khing 7). *Sophat* can be read as an attempt to "save face" from the humiliation of "foreigners" outpublishing Cambodians. Preserving Cambodia's honor and Khmer identity through literary production thus becomes a national objective. Rim Kin's experiences at Collège

[190] See Nepote and Khing, pp. 79-80, footnote 51
[191] P. 81, footnote 55
[192] In "The Cambodian Novel: A Study of its Emergence and Development" (1998), Klairung Amratisha notes: "Authors construct the new identity of 'Khmerness' by mixing the traditional ideal and western aspects of achievement', and that "the early Cambodian novel" was used to construct Cambodian national identity and consciousness (162-166).

Sisowath reveal Cambodia's drive to prevent being "shamed" in front of, and by, "non-Cambodians":

> Depuis sa première année de collège, il écouta, observa, réfléchit et élargit ses connaissances par la lecture de livres étrangers et particulièrement de livres français. Le Collège Sisowath, ouvert aux élèves de toute l'Indochine, recevait beaucoup de jeunes Vietnamiens. Le Vietnam, riche en écrivains, publiait beaucoup. Les marchés de Phnom Penh étaient inondés de livres vietnamiens. (Khing 7)

Cambodia's competitiveness can be read as a sibling rivalry motivated by the presence of Vietnamese *bodies* and books in its capital. Like Fichte's "interior frontier" and Stoler's interpretation of *métissage* as an "internal contamination," the line between *foreign* and *relative* is blurred.[193] The relationship between colonial Annam, Cambodia, and Laos may be understood as a fraternal one, based on the male gendering of the nouns in the French language (*le Viêt nam, le Cambodge, le Laos*), as well as the fraternal language used by the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) and Ho Chi Minh in the 20th century. My interpretation of this fraternal bond follows the conventional form of birth order in the form of three siblings: The oldest, middle, and youngest child. Considering the chronological establishment of the protectorates and the colony of French Indochina—based on Southeast Asian specialist Christopher Goscha's adaption of historian Hugues Tertrais' map of French Indochina—Vietnam may be considered the older brother of Cambodia and Laos. Though the protectorates, Annam and Tonkin, were integrated into French Indochina as early as 1883, the Treaty of Saigon in 1862—"which turned the southern section of […] Annam into […] *Cochinchine*"—marks the start of France's territorial acquisition in

[193] See Chapter 1, footnotes 68 and 69.

Southeast Asia.[194] Shortly after the Treaty of Saigon, Cambodia (1863), Tonkin and Annam (1883-1885), and Laos (1893) were established as French protectorates.

The metaphor of France as a mother figure to its (ex)colonies—in Africa, Asia, and Oceania—reveals the past and current ways in which its "(ex)children" see and (re)construct themselves. Sigmund Freud's "family romance", and Françoise Vergès' "colonial family romance" in *La Réunion,* can also be applied to other colonies under French colonial rule. In the particular case of French Indochina, the adoptive mother figure unveils the sources of Cambodia's inferiority complex, national consciousness, and complicated relationship with its neighbor, Vietnam.[195]

> French republican colonial rhetoric filled the tie between France and its colony with intimate meaning, creating what Freud has called a 'family romance,' the fiction developed by children about imagined parents. In the colonial relation, however, it was a fiction created by the *colonial power* that substituted a set of imaginary parents, La Mère-Patrie and her children the colonized, for the real parents of the colonized, who were slaves, colonists, and indentured workers. (Vergès 3)

Despite being a metaphoric adoption, the colonization of French Indochina reified the desire of adoption and affection—"created by the *colonial power*"—from its Mère-Patrie. Naturally, what would ensue would be unequal preference given to certain children. Disproportionate "love" shown to one child over another one would thus lead to sibling rivalry. In Vergès' reading of

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[194] *Goscha, Christopher. Going Indochinese: contesting concepts of space and place in French Indochina,* p 15; 21.
[195] See Chapter 1 of Françoise Vergès' *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage* (1999).

"family romance" and the *fraternité* born out of the French Revolution, she applies it to the colonial case, emphasizing the fiction of *fraternité* and *liberté* that fails to extend beyond the *métropole*:

> The family romance is the invention of children. Yet in the case of the colony, it was the invention of men constructing France as the parents of the colonized. Colonial family romance is therefore a romance created by the colonial 'parents' who invented a single parent (La Mère-Patrie), a character mixing the feminine and the masculine: the castrating *and* protective mother. […] However, colonial family romance was also invented by *revolutionary* men who embraced the ideal of fraternity and liberty and aspired to expand a social bond based on this idea. The fraternal bond dreamed by metropolitan brothers was affected by colonialism and its logic of racism. Colonized men might be their brothers, but they were their little brothers. (5)

If the French colonies failed to fit into the French republican model of *Liberté, égalité, fraternité,* they had to find a place in La Mère-Patrie's heart—or possession. Certainly, they were not seen as equal to the *métropole*, and therefore could not be regular "brothers." Before establishing an impossible fraternal bond, a filial one had to occur. From the figure of adoption, the colonies of French Indochina could then find a form of fraternity.[196]

The desire to move out of the shadow of the "older brother," Vietnam, was difficult—if not unachievable—for it depended on foreignness as a source of inspiration to "prove" itself. Moreover, being the "second-born" entailed writing belatedly. This is not to say that the Cambodian novel was *not* successful—that would be far from the truth: "Le 'premier roman khmer' enthousiasma tous ses lecteurs, nationaux et étrangers. Ce fut un succès éclatant et la

[196] The Indochinese Union was established in 1887, but originally included Cochinchina, Annam, Tonkin, and Cambodia. Laos was incorporated in 1893. See Ch. 2 of Spencer Tucker's *Vietnam* (1999).

première édition fut épuisée en six mois", Khing states (8). However, Cambodia's relationship with its colonial mother, France, and brother, Vietnam, led to an inability to untangle itself from them. Despite a revival of Khmer consciousness, and a desire to move away from *La Mère-Patrie* and Vietnam, Cambodia could not rid itself entirely of its colonial past. Even as it strove to free itself from French influence toward the end of the colonial period, its moment of "awakening" arrived belatedly, years after its Vietnamese sibling:

> Vietnam was always in advance in its neighbours in opposing the French colonial presence. In the course of the 1920s and 1930s in Vietnam the Vietnamese Communists became a vital if almost constantly persecuted force. The same two decades in Cambodia and Laos saw virtually no nationalist, let alone Communist, agitation against the colonial administration.[197]

Nonetheless, Cambodia's attempt to free itself from the French colonial administration occurred in the form of symbolic cultural and literary production, coincidentally at the end of the colonial period.[198] Though less assertive, in comparison to the Vietnamese communist forces in the 1920s and 1930s, Cambodian rebellion against its colonial parent can be linked to the Cambodian novel. In her doctoral dissertation on *The Cambodian Novel: A Study of its Emergence and Development*, Klairung Amratisha remarks that "the second half of the 1940s was also a period when Cambodian nationalism developed rapidly and the primary political objective was complete independence from France."[199] Though Rim Kin had already published multiple short stories and poems prior to his publication of *Sophat,* the "first Khmer novel" was published in Vietnam before finally

[197] See Osborne, p. 206, *Southeast Asia: An Introductory History* (2013).
[198] Cambodia and Laos gained their independence in 1953; Vietnam gained its independence in 1954. See Osborne, pp. 345-346.
[199] Amratisha also notes that 1949 was "the year that educational institutions including all French schools and Pali schools were transferred from French to Cambodian control". See p. 91

appearing in Cambodia in 1942.[200] An immediate success, *Sophat* inspired other Cambodian intellectuals "to try their hand at writing novels."[201] The end of the colonial period resulted in a change of pedagogical trends where novels such as *Sophat* became part of the required reading materials in middle school: "L'œuvre le plus connu de Rim Kin est *Sôphat* écrit en 1938 et publié en 1942 à Saigon. Ce roman fut inscrit au programme de l'enseignement secondaire du premier cycle en classe de 5ème moderne de 1955 à 1975".[202] In 1956, shortly after the end of the Indochinese Union, *L'Association des écrivains khmers* (Khmer Writers' Association) was established, in which Rim Kin served as one of the founders and presidents.[203] With supposed Independence from its colonial mother and siblings, Cambodia attempted to rebuild and preserve its Khmer identity, in the form of *novel* creations in the literary world—set in the modern city or countryside—as well as recycled narratives celebrating the grandeur of Angkor and the Khmer Empire.

Cambodia's fixation on its past grandeur and inscription of Khmerness into the novel can be traced to its "in-between problem"—a term I use to refer Cambodia's a) precarious geographic placement in-between Thailand and Vietnam, b) position or rank as Son no. 2, or the middle child, based on the birth order metaphor, and c) unstable identity, as a result of its physical location and birth order effect.

> For several hundred years Cambodia has been wedged between the nation-states of Thailand and Vietnam. Phnom Penh and the Mekong River basin are within hours by road

[200] See Khing, p. 8 : "En 1938, il écrivit son roman *Sophat*. Il le fit publier avec l'accord du Président du Conseil mais, comme il manquait d'argent, il dut emprunter trois cents riels à la caisse de l'Association. Deux mille exemplaires édités à l'imprimerie Man San (Sud Vietnam) arrivèrent au Cambodge en janvier 1942".
[201] See Amratisha, p. 85
[202] See Khing, pp. 11-12.
[203] See Khing, p. 11

> of Ho Chi Minh City and Bangkok. Although poor in mineral wealth, Cambodia's small population, its rich alluvial soil, and the Tonle Sap, or Great Lake, the richest freshwater fishing ground in the world, have made the country susceptible to outside influences and tempting to immigrants and invaders.[204]

Faced with the risk of conquest from its Southeast Asian neighbors or French colonization, the latter was arguably the better option, as it promised to maintain Khmer traditions and social structures, and protected Cambodia from its incorporation into another Asian body of land.[205] Thus, in colonizing Cambodia, France acted as a savior, adopting Cambodia as one of its Indochinese children and protecting it from harm.[206] Kiernan also observes the role of the French colonial protectorate in its efforts to preserve Cambodian territory, culture, and identity. He states that the "ninety years of a French colonial protectorate […] preserved, even enhanced the country's traditional monarchy and social structure" (4-5). France attempted to shield Cambodia from "other foreign influences, especially Vietnamese ones and especially communism, until French rule in Indochina broke down under the impact of—precisely—Vietnamese communism" (5).[207] In addition to being landlocked and "wedged between" Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, Cambodia was now figuratively "walled-off" from "foreign influences" (Kiernan 3). In other words, the surrounding Southeast Asian countries became "foreign," whereas France, far beyond Southeast

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[204] Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1941*, p. 3.
[205] Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime. Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79*, pp. 4-5.
[206] Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1941*, p. 3. "In the nineteenth century the Thai fought with Vietnam for Cambodia's territory, population, and allegiance. Had the French not arrived to impose their protectorate on Cambodia in 1863, those parts of the kingdom east of the Mekong might well have come under Vietnamese control and the area to the west might have been dominated by the Thai."
[207] Though Kiernan draws attention to France's concerns of foreign—especially Vietnamese—influences on Cambodia, Vietnamese influences and Vietnamese communist influences are not synonymous and should not be treated as such. The threat of communism occurred at the end of French colonial period, and continued to grow following the independence of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The French protectorate on Cambodia (1863) and the "birth" of Indochina (1887) pre-existed "the growth of Asian communism" c. 1929-1930. See Smith, R.B. "The Foundation of the Indochinese Communist Party, 1929-1930."

Asia, became familiar. Any French influence on Cambodia could thus be considered non-foreign—even Cambodian. Ironically, in adopting Cambodia as a French protectorate, Cambodia retained its identity while simultaneously assuming a French (af)filiation.[208]

As noted earlier, establishing the French Protectorate of Cambodia preserved Khmer tradition and its monarchy, by maintaining Khmerness and blocking off Vietnamese and other influences from its neighboring countries. Rather than replacing or contradicting Khmer society and culture, French colonization complemented the Angkor Kingdom and contributed to the transmission of the Khmer origin myth.[209] Yet, identifying with a past grandeur allowed French colonizers to be quick to ridicule the "decline" and degeneration of modern Cambodians, and justify their civilizing mission.[210]

> Between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, a kingdom now known as Angkor in northwestern Cambodia had dominated the Southeast Asian mainland, extending its influence over much of Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos. In the fifteenth century, a Thai Buddhist kingdom, Ayudhya, replaced Angkor as the paramount power in the region, and

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[208] Vickery, *Kicking the Vietnam Syndrome,* pp. 1-2: "Under the French Protectorate, not only were royalty and the special type of bureaucracy supporting it not destroyed, they were solidified and protected under a benevolent, for them, French umbrella. Domestic opposition to the king, whether from royal pretenders or the lower orders, was successfully suppressed, and Cambodian kings, from Norodom (r. 1864-1904) to his great-grandson Sihanouk (r. 1941-1955, 1993-2005), sat more solidly on their thrones than at any time since Angkor."

[209] I do not intend to refute or deny the history of the ancient Khmer Kingdom, but attempt to highlight the national myth of Cambodia circulated by Cambodians, historians and anthropologists of the 19th and 20th centuries. See Chandler, David. *The Tragedy of Cambodian History. Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945,* p. 6. "French scholars busied themselves with Cambodia's early history, listing its kings, translating its inscriptions, and describing its greatness." It should be noted that to this day, Cambodians still identify with the ancient Khmer H/history. The Cambodian-Indian origin myth, celebrating the intermarriage of Brahman Kaundinya and the *Nâgi Princess* Somâ, marks the beginning of ancient Khmer genealogy and history. See Thierry Zéphir's *L'Empire des rois khmers,* p. 18; Ledgerwood, 250; Klairung Amratisha's dissertation, "The Cambodian Novel: A Study of its Emergence and Development", p. 14.

[210] Chandler, 6. "At the same time French administrators froze Cambodians institutions in place and protected it from the perils of autonomy. As they created something known as *Cambodia,* the French bequeathed the Khmer the unmanageable notion that their ancestors had been for a time the most powerful and most gifted people of mainland Southeast Asia. They also decreed that Cambodia's subsequent attempts to live within its means represented a decline. Cambodians responded to these contradictory signals by using the grandeur of their past as a framework for the present and identifying themselves with Angkor."

> the area occupied today by Cambodia faded in importance. When the French extended their protectorate, there were fewer than a million people who owed allegiance to the Cambodian king, and although Angkor Wat was a place of pilgrimage for Cambodia Buddhists, no one in the country knew the names of Angkorean kings or could decipher Angkorean inscriptions.[211]

Under the French protectorate, Cambodia retained its history and Angkorean identity. In doing so, the French served as a *Mère-Patrie* to look after Khmer matrilineality[212] and royal genealogy. King Sihanouk Norodom's initial reign (1941-1955), which coincides with the period of the French Protection and Colonization of Cambodia, also matches the French and Cambodian efforts to maintain ancient Khmer history and matrilineal descent. Sihanouk, referred to as "King-Father" by Cambodians, "was on his mother's side, the grandson of King Monivong (r. 1927-41), whom he succeeded to the throne at age 18."[213] Despite the presence of the monarchy and Sihanouk's symbolic role in guarding Khmer matrilineality, the King-Father played the role of the *Mère-Patrie*'s son. Following Cambodia's Independence from France, Sihanouk continued to fulfill the role of son, and exemplified the "in-between problem" by maintaining neutrality in political

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[211] *Ibid.* 6-7.

[212] The cultural anthropologist, Judy L. Ledgerwood, refers to the problem of circulating the history of Khmer kinship, or "The Matriliny/Matriarchy Myth." Firstly, she stresses that "matriliny" is *not* synonymous for "matriarchy", and argues that referring to contemporary Khmer society as "matrilineal" is problematic (255). Referring to the portrayal of past and current Khmer society as "matrilineal" in anthropological studies, such as Jacques Népote's work ["Parenté et organisation sociale dans le Cambodge moderne et contemporain. Geneva: Olizane" (1992)], and "the idea of ancient matriarchy" included in "the standard curriculum in schools in Cambodia," [see Ledgerwood, footnotes 2 and 3], Ledgerwood addresses the historical "conceptualizations of Khmer kinship as matrilineal and argues that these notions were the products of a particular academic paradigm and specific anthropological models of human evolution" (247). See pp. 248-50 for particularities on the prevalence of ancient Khmer matrilineal descent in priestly and royal genealogies.
Ledgerwood also implies that the value of women in Khmer society does not make Cambodia a matriarchal society, --"it suggests that women's actions have social value" (257). ("Khmer Kinship: The Matriliny/Matriarchy Myth." *Journal of Anthropological Research* Autumn 51.3 (1995): 247-61.)

[213] See The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Norodom Sihanouk."

affairs, ultimately leading to his dethroning and the Cambodian coup of 1970.[214] 1953 represents Cambodia's Independence from France, but it is Sihanouk's replacement by Lon Nol that more accurately reflects the end of French colonial rule in Cambodia. The dissolution of *le Royaume du Cambodge* (1953-70), and its succession by the US-backed Khmer Republic (1970-75)—and shortly after, the Democratic Kampuchea (1975-79)—symbolize the destruction of Khmer matrilineality.[215]

The transfer of power from the *la Mère-Patrie* and King Father—to Marshal Lon Nol, and eventually, the Khmer Rouge Brothers—can be read as a conversion from lineal descent to collateral descent. In addition to a switching of lines, matrilineal rule transforms into fraternal power between the mid-1940s and 1970s in Cambodia. Whereas the French colonial period celebrated ancient Khmer kinship in harmony with the *Mère-Patrie's* adoption of Cambodia, the (post)Independent period witnessed a severing of lineal descent.[216]

Decades before Democratic Kampuchea's takeover, during the last decade of French colonization, Cambodia saw the rise of Khmerization and the birth of multiple communist political movements.[217] It is of no coincidence that many of the movements grew out of opposition to both

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[214] See footnote 11, p. 5 of dissertation; p. 12, "in-between problem." See also, Vickery, *Kicking the…*, p. 35. See also, Vickery, 74: "It must be remembered that no Cambodian regime since independence in 1954 lived on its own resources. Foreign aid, increasing from year to year, supported the budgets of both Sihanouk's monarchy (1954-1970) and Lon Nol's Republic (1970-1975)."

[215] Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime,* Second Ed., Introduction; Vickery, *Kicking the…*, Ch. 1.

[216] Cambodian matrilineality was analyzed via anthropological and historical sources; I interpret the Khmer communist movements in the 1950s-70s in Cambodia and brotherhood discourse based on legal kinship and inheritance rights. "Collateral descent" in legal terms could be interpreted as an entitlement or rights to "Khmerness", rather than the inheritance of status (or privileges associated with social class).
"Lineal descent" and "collateral descent" are defined and distinguished in The US Legal, Inc's *Legal Definition*: "The acquisition of estate or real property by inheritance from father to son, or grandfather to son or grandson. It is distinguished from collateral descent which is succession from brother to brother, and cousin to cousin, etc. [Levy v. M'Cartee, 31 U.S. 102 (U.S. 1832)]." (https://definitions.uslegal.com).

[217] See pp. 5-9 ("The Early Communist Movement," "The Creation of the Khmer People's Revolutionnary Party [KPRP])", "The Workers' Party of Kampuchea [WPK]", and "The Communist Party of Kampuchea" [CPK]). Dy, Khamboly. *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979).*

the monarchy and the French presence in Cambodia. Kiernan notes that "Cambodia's transformation into Democratic Kampuchea began in 1945."[218] The transition from matrilineal Cambodia to collateral, fraternal Cambodia should first be read as a brotherhood shared between anti-colonial Cambodian nationalists and Vietnamese communists.

> For the future of Cambodia, the most important of these new nationalists were two Khmer Krom[219], named Son Ngoc Minh and Tou Samouth. Both had started their careers as monks, and while studying in Phnom Penh they participated in the 1942 demonstration.[220] After the French reimposed their control in 1945, both left the monastic life to pursue political careers. In 1946 they joined the Indochina Communist Party, led by Ho Chi Minh. The longer France tried to hold onto its colony, and the more backing Paris got from the USA, the more Cambodians embraced an alliance based on mutual interest with their Vietnamese neighbors, disregarding historical animosities.[221]
>
> By 1954, when the French abandoned their Indochinese colonial war and withdrew from Cambodia and Vietnam, Son Ngoc Minh and Tou Samouth had built up a formidable Issarak, or 'independence' movement. It had an army of five thousand Cambodian fighters (and numerous village militias) backed by an alliance with the Vietnamese victors of Dien Bieh Phu.[222]

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[218] Kiernan also notes that "Cambodia's first modern political demonstration" occurred in July 1942 after "the French arrested two Buddhist monks for preaching nationalist sermons." *The Pol Pot Regime. Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79;* 12-13.

[219] *Khmer Krom* [ខ្មែរក្រោម] are the ethnic Khmer in Southern Vietnam. See Glossary at the end of chapter.

[220] See Kiernan, *How Pol Pot,* p. 44, and Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, *Indochine,* C.P. 24, "Propagande rebelle," DPSR 27 June 1949, doc. 5, n.5

[221] Based on chapters 1-4 of Kiernan's *How Pol Pot Came to Power*.

[222]The Khmer People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP) led Son Ngoc Minh and Tou Samouth's Khmer Issarak Association. Kiernan notes that "Minh and Samouth had established the KPRP in 1951 under the supervision of Vietnamese communists", composed of "over one thousand members, mainly from the two largest sectors of Cambodian life: the peasantry and the monkhood." Kiernan attests that the KPRP's recruitment and "nationalist

The Vietnamese-Cambodian fraternity, however, would soon be replaced by a "Khmer" brotherhood, defined by the CPK, with the elimination of all (br)Others—or foreign brothers. If the presence of Vietnamese bodies and literature in Phnom Penh posed a threat to Cambodian identity, then the "internal contamination" within Cambodian borders could be considered a *fraternal contamination*, which would require an ethnic purge; the removal of foreign contaminants.[223] Chandler attributes the "radicalization of the opposition" to Sihanouk to "the final phases of the first Indochina war [1946-54]," and the influence of French education on the founders of the CPK. Referring to Saloth Sar (Pol Pot), Son Sen, Ieng Sary, Khieu Samphan, Thiounn Prasith, Mey Man, Khieu Thirith, and Khieu Ponnary, he states: "Their experiences in France set them apart from Cambodians at home who collaborated with the French, confronted them as Democrats, or fought them as Khmer Issarak and Viet Minh."[224] The CPK, or Khmer Rouge, initially enforced fraternal exclusivity by separating themselves from their Vietnamese "brothers" and "comrades." Thiounn Thioeunn and Thiounn Chum—literal brothers and Khmer Rouge brothers—expressed their extremist Khmer nationalism and their denunciation of a Vietnamese-Cambodian brotherhood:

> Two other young Cambodians with palace connections, Thiounn Thioeunn and Thiounn Chum, had been sent to study in Hanoi from 1942 to 1945; according to their 1979 account, they found that "Vietnamese intellectuals spoke of Angkor as their own." After the war the two men went on to Paris, Thioeunn completed a degree in medicine and Chum a doctorate in law. […] The Thiounns all developed left-wing contacts, but their nationalism was so fierce that they refused to meet the Vietnamese communist leader, Ho Chi Minh. Chum

struggle for independence" enabled the Democratic Kampuchea's eventual reign. See pp. 12-13. Also, *Samakhum Khmer Issarak.* In *How Pol Pot Came to Power.*

[223] See pages 7-8 of this chapter; Fichte's "interior frontier" and Stoler's "internal contamination."

[224] Pp. 51-52, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History.*

> recalls: "In Paris during the Fontainebleau Conference, in July 1946, we were called to Vietnamese delegation. 'You will pay your respects to Uncle Ho.'[225] They said. But we answered, 'He is not our 'Uncle Ho.'' Then they said, 'We are brothers. You should pay your respects.' But we did not do it."[226]

Though "Uncle" in English and Khmer may both refer to an "adoptive" Uncle figure, the various nuances and uses of the term, "Uncle," in Khmer should be defined. "Pou" (ឪ), is commonly used out of respect and politeness to address strangers; it can also be used to address acquaintances and the younger brother of one's parents. ("Om" [អ៊ំ] is the term of address for older siblings [brother or sister] of one's parents.) Thus, it is unclear whether "Uncle" is a translation of "Pou" (ឪ) or "bong" (បង), the term used to refer to an older sibling, friend, or acquaintance—"comrade" in this case. The ambiguity between បងand ឪ, as "Uncle", "brother", or "comrade," is therefore further complicated in Khmer. Regardless, the CPK rejection of Vietnamese relation is made clear through the Khmer brothers' political speech act. Extending this disdain for the Vietnamese, the Khmer Krom (ខ្មែរក្រោម)—Khmers born in the southern region of Vietnam—would also be deemed unworthy of fraternity, as they were "Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds."[227] The CPK took advantage of the Vietnamese communists' "use of Cambodian territory for sanctuary from American attack", the United States' intervention in Vietnam and B-52 bombardments, and incoming (Khmer Krom) refugee population fleeing Vietnam, to recruit

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[225] See "Cambodian Familial Glossary" at the end of the chapter.

[226] Kiernan, 10-11, as quoted in Jan Myrdal's "Why is There Famine in Kampuchea?" (*Southeast Asia Chronicle,* n. 77, February 1981, p. 17).

[227] The slogan, "They were Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds," according to Kiernan, "was to echo throughout the DK experience, [suggesting] the readiness of the Pol Pot regime to suppress not only ethnic minorities like the Cham, but also huge numbers of the Khmer majority. This readiness was justified on the racial grounds that they were not really Khmer, evidently, because their minds could not be controlled. Racial ideology expressed political suspicion." *The Pol Pot Regime,* 3-4.

Khmer Rouge brothers.[228] Arguably, the CPK's "fraternal" society could be interpreted as a replacement of its matrilineal-colonial history under Sihanouk and France, an elimination of (matri)lineal descent, and fratricide (beginning with its denunciation of its Vietnamese brothers). The rise of Pol Pot and the CPK entailed breaking off family tree branches, and replacing the King-Father with powerful Brothers. Known as Brother Number 1, Pol Pot (Saloth Sar), ran Democratic Kampuchea under the faceless Angkar,[229] along with his brothers, Nuon Chea (Brother No. 2), Ieng Sary (Brother no. 3), and Son Sen (Brother no. 4), during 1975-1979.[230] During the DK, "The Khmer Rouge asked all Cambodians to believe, obey and respect only Angkar Padevat, which was to be everyone's 'mother and father.'"[231] In eliminating all family ties, fratricide evolved into genocide, and swept out Khmers through a forced exodus.[232]

In the first Khmer novel, fraternity is established clearly before a filial-paternal recognition. More importantly, ambiguous family relationships and the figure of the orphan runs throughout the novel, and they are further confused in their translations. Early on in *Sophat,* the Khmer orphan-hero interrupts a physical fight between two local boys and a smaller boy named Narin. After

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[228] *Ibid.* 17-19. Kiernan states, "By 1970 Cambodia's frontier with Vietnam was breaking down." As Vietnam and the US troops continued to use Cambodia as a battleground, Cambodians saw the death and destruction of their land and civilians: "Starting exactly a year before the coup [on March 1969], over thirty-six hundred secret B-52 raids were also conducted over Cambodian territory. They were codenamed Menu; the various target areas were labeled Breakfast, Snack, Lunch, Dinner, Dessert, and Supper. [W. Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia,* London: Deutsch, 1979, pp. 65, 24; S. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Henry Kissinger in the Nixon White House,* New York: Summit Books, 1983, p. 27] About 100,000 tons of bombs were dropped; the civil toll is unknown. The U.S. aim was to destroy Vietnamese communist forces in Cambodia to drive them back into Vietnam." This, paired with the wave of Khmer refugees escaping war in South Vietnam, benefited the CPK, as they "use the bombing's devastation and massacre of civilians as recruitment propaganda and as an excuse for its brutal, radical policies and its purge of moderate communists and Sihanoukists" (Kiernan, 18-19).

[229] Dy, 1. "The CPK created the state of Democratic Kampuchea in 1976 and ruled the country until January 1979. The party's existence was kept secret until 1977, and no one outside the CPK knew who its leaders were (the leaders called themselves 'Angkar Padevat')."

[230] Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History,* 265.

[231] Dy, 2. Angkar's self-proclaimed and enforced role as "mother and father", and the designation of all "pure" Khmers as brothers and comrades also reflects incestuous relations.
It is worth nothing that Khieu Ponnary, Pol Pot's wife, was the sister of Khieu Thirith—Brother no. 3 Ieng Sary's wife. See Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime,* 11.

[232] Kiernan, 25-27.

saving Narin, Sophat and the boy establish a fraternal bond, in the form of verbal and physical communication. First, it must be noted that Sophat and Narin refer to one another as "bong" [បង], "older brother," and "puhown" [ប្អូន], "younger brother."[233] Though the address of "bong" and "puhown" extends beyond the biological, and is casually used between acquaintances and friends, the physical act that follows blurs the boundaries between "brother" and "friend."[234]

> អ្នកទាំងពីរចាប់ដៃក្តាយ៉ាងណែន ញញឹមញញែមមើលមុខគ្នាទៅវិញទៅមក។
> ឈាមដែលរត់ក្នុងសាច់សរសៃអ្នកទាំងពីរ
> ហាក់ដូចជាប្រមែប្រមូលរត់ចូលគ្នាក្នុងរវេលានោះ។
>
> [The two of them shook each others' hands firmly, smiling, looking at each other, back and forth. Blood flowed through both of their flesh and blood, and seemed to mix together as one.][235]

Translated into French by René Laporte and Pech Thinh, the two boys' handsake is expressed as a blood pact: "Les deux garçons se donnèrent une solide poignée de mains, et se regardèrent en souriant. C'était comme une sorte de serment de sang qu'ils venaient d'échanger."[236] This act of solidarity occurs between two male orphans. Narin's role as adopted son must be read in relation to Sophat's transformation into adopted and biological son. It must be noted that while Narin is characterized by his orphan status--"le neveu de l'épouse d'un grand mandarin et orphelin de père

[233] The combination of "bong" [បង] and "puhown" [ប្អូន] forms "bong puhown" [បងប្អូន], which translates to "siblings" or "relatives." See "Cambodian Familial Glossary" at the end of this chapter for additional explanations.
[234] *Sophat,* Ch. 3.
[235] This is my translation of the Khmer original. See Smith, p. 43.
[236] P. 34.

et de mère"--his adoptive mother is defined by her inability to conceive: "Sa tante n'ayant pas d'enfant l'avait recueilli et l'élevait en le considérant comme son propre fils."[237]

Rim Kin's novel culminates with Lok Suon's revelation to Sophat as his biological father, and concludes with Sophat's marriage to Mann Yann, "la soeur de Narin"--the adoptive daughter to Lok Suon.[238] While the Khmer hero, Sophat, ascends to the position of Son no. 1, or Lok Suon's only "true" son, the fate of Narin is abandoned and left unresolved. Thus, the first Khmer novel, occuring at the time of the Khmerization movement, perplexingly presents itself as a purely Khmer novel while inscribing within it widows, orphans, and childless mothers, and marriages between orphans and widows. Despite being the first Khmer novel and influencing the Khmerization of scholarly curriculum, *Sophat* demonstrates Cambodia's identity crisis towards the end of French colonial Cambodia, and finds itself in-between the CPK ideology, stressing fraternal bonding, and the French concerns over Khmer matriliny.[239]

Sibling Rivalry within French Indochina.

In the previous section, genealogical metaphors—ranging from the Khmer Empire to post-Independent Cambodia—were read in parallel with Khmer issues of origin and the historical events fueled by those preceding it. This section focuses on the colonial family metaphor specific to France and its three Indochinese children, adopted in the following order: Vietnam,[240] Cambodia, and Laos. Cambodia's "in-between" position reappears again, in the form of the "middle child," wedged between its colonial siblings, Vietnam and Laos. Using the family metaphor of France as *La Mère-Patrie*; the colonial proverb, "Le Vietnamien plante le riz, le

[237] *Ibid.* p. 34.
[238] See René Laporte and Pech Thinh's translation, p. 40.
[239] See Footnote 38.
[240] Cochin China, Tonkin, and Annam

Cambodgien le regarde pousser, le Laotien l'écoute pousser"; and birth order typing used in psychology—I examine the effects of colonization on Khmer literary production and identity-formation in 20th-century Cambodia.[241] Before attempting to work through the Vietnamese and Cambodian "sibling rivalry," we must start with their shared "mother." [242] In the psychology of families, the eldest, middle and youngest child each have respectively certain traits. The middle child is often the neglected one, the first a leader, and the third more cherished.[243] In Psychotherapist Karin Jaque's *Quelle place dans la fratrie?: identité fraternelle et influence du rang sur la personnalité* (2008)—a collection of individual stories sequentially arranged by birth order—she portrays a child's place in the family, and his/her relationship with his/her mother as a fight for survival. "*Conquérir l'amour maternel*"[244] symbolizes a familial war in which those born after the eldest become *les su(rv)ivants,* regardless of their role as *cadet, l'enfant du milieu,* or *benjamin*.[245] In particular, the sibling rivalry for maternal affection intensives when the children are of the same gender, according to Karin.[246] While the eldest is defined by his leadership, and his occupation of the position of "number one," the second or middle child is defined by his

[241] The expression, "Le Vietnamien plante le riz, le Cambodgien le regarde poousser, le Laotien l'écoute pousser" circulated among the French, and French-speaking Cambodians, during the French Indochinese period (Late 19th-20th c.). In *Kamlang Phiasaa: A Khmer Heritage Language Textbook,* Frank Smith remarks its relevance in Cambodian culture, translating it into English: "The Vietnamese make the rice grow, the Cambodians watch the rice grow, the Lao listen to the rice grow" (214).

[242] Land disputes between Vietnam and Cambodia existed prior to French colonization of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. It is not my intention to derive Vietnamese-Cambodian tensions from a "western", colonial source. In terms of Cambodian literary production and themes of nationalism, however, it is important to understand the history of French Indochina and the French Empire's relationship with its Southeast Asian colonies.

[243] Marc Szajder, pediatrician and author of *Les Aînés et les cadets* (2011), refers to the *cadet* as "le petit chef" and *l'aîné* as "le premier chef de la famille" (40). The first-born is typed as "perfectionniste, méticuleux"; "gardien des lois" (19). The second-born, he states, has a harder time adjusting and establishing his place in the family once the third child is born, changing his role from *le cadet* to *l'enfant du milieu* (48).

[244] Emphasis in italics is in the original text. Karin 75.

[245] Referring to the eldest child, Szajder states: "C'est lui qui fonde le sentiment de la parentalité, contrairement aux suivants " (18)

[246] "La *rivalité* qui oppose souvent ces deux enfants n'a ni la même raison ni la même tonalité. D'un côté, elle est teintée de la colère due à une perte, présumée ou non, aux dépens de celui qui croit avoir été volé, usurpé ; de l'autre, cette rivalité du « moi aussi » pousse à une tentative de conquête qui a de la peine à s'apaiser. L'aîné peut se détourner de la mère ou vouloir se venger éventuellement sur le petit ; le second n'a pas l'ombre d'une chance de battre son précurseur pendant longtemps" (75).

survival. The middle child, "l'enfant engagé dans cet espace de *guerre sur deux fronts à la fois*", has to distinguish himself from *l'âiné* to guarantee his survival.[247]

The metaphor of *La Mère-Patrie* and her colonial child(ren) moves from the historical context in French Indochina (1887-1954), to the literary in the form of Cambodia's first novel produced by Rim Kin, *Sophat* (1942). The sibling rivalry, as "a fiction created by the *colonial power*", leads to an awakening of Cambodian national consciousness built upon an anxiety vis-à-vis its oldest sibling; its urgency to survive and to prove one's worth to its "imagined parents."[248] Though this is only one of the factors leading to Cambodia's surge in literary production, it is significant in interpreting its fixation on Khmerization during and following French colonial rule. Cambodian nationalists—whether they were pro-Sihanouk or communist—were so pre-occupied with Khmerization efforts that they contributed to their own (self) destruction.[249] The struggle for proclaiming one's Khmer identity towards the end of the French colonial period can be interpreted through Frantz Fanon's analysis of violence in *Les Damnés de la terre* (1961). Khmerization efforts, from either camp of pro-Sihanouk, Thanhist, or CPK members, reflect a belated awareness of the fact that "coexistence is not possible."[250] Fanon emphasizes that the goal was *not* to become the colonizer—but to take the place of the colonizer [*prendre la place du colon*].[251] Ultimately,

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[247] Karin, pp. 44, 80. See also, Karin, 43-44; Vickery, *Kicking the Vietnam Syndrome,* 1. Karin states, "le second enfant opte rapidement pour un comportement opposé à celui de l'âiné" (43-44). Reading this in alignment with the colonial metaphor, it is interesting that Vickery notes Cambodia's defiance in following other Southeast Asian countries' transition into capitalistic societies. Vickery states: "Among all of the countries of Southeast Asia which came under western colonial control, it was only in Cambodia that imperialism failed to perform what Marx in an early analysis accepted as its historic task – to smash the existing 'feudal' system and thereby open the way to the development of more progressive capitalism. / In the other states of Southeast Asia the old structures were in varying degrees replaced by one or another type of European system based on capitalism" (1).

[248] See Vergès, p. 3

[249] Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime,* 27: "In the end, it was enemies created by the regime itself—foreign and domestic, armed and unarmed, political operatives and sullen survivors—people alieneated by the regime's attempt to destroy perceived enemies, who brought about its downfall."

[250] P. 458. Fanon, Frantz. *Les Damnés de la terre. Frantz Fannon—Œuvres.* 1961. Paris: La Découverte, 2011.

[251] Fanon, 564.

the various movements of Khmerization and the difficulty of finding one's place in (post)colonial society led to "autodestruction collective," fratricide, and "suicide collectif."[252]

Whether or not *La Mère-Patrie* reserved preferential treatment of its colonies, the "fiction" of filiation ultimately led to very real rivalry between its Southeast Asian children. The stereotypical traits and psychological effects associated with birth "rank," especially the first-born's designation as the real *chef,* and the second-born's role as *le petit chef*, complement the Vietnamese-Cambodian sibling rivalry. Returning to Vergès' "colonial family romance" explored in Chapter One, the fictional fraternity created through the form of colonial filiation results in a disharmonious fraternal relationship, as well as an unequal division of attention and affection from its parent: "In the empire, fraternity masked the continuity of primogeniture—the law whereby the firstborn son received the heritage to detriment of the other brothers and sisters." (5). In the case of French Indochina, this analogy is applicable to the foundation of the Indochinese Union and its aftermath. First, it must be noted that Cochinchina was the first true colony established in French Indochina. In "French Indo-China" (*Vietnam,* 1999), Spencer Tucker addresses the history of French Indochina, and states the following: "In 1887 Paris formed its conquests into French Indo-China. […] Technically only Cochin China was an outright colony, the others were merely protectorates" (36). In addition to establishing Cochin China as France's first Southeast Asian colony, he also addresses La Mère-Patrie's rationale behind her adoption, citing the race against the British toward China as the primary reason.[253] An investment in the first-born was thus profitable, as "Paris saw Vietnam chiefly as a means of accessing the China trade and hoped that France might be able to penetrate the Chinese interior by means of the Mekong River into Tibet

[252] Fanon, 465.
[253] See Ch. 2, "French Indo-China" (*Vietnam,* 1999)

and the Red River into Yunman" (27). Yet, upon discovering "that the Mekong was not navigable to the interior of China", *La Mère-Patrie* set her sights on the Red River toward Northern Vietnam, "[hoping] that, unlike the Mekong, the Red River might offer a viable commercial route to the Chinese interior" (30). Of course, acquisition of foreign land, and the preservation of the French Empire, also reassured France's anxieties in relation to its neighboring countries.[254] An investment in the first-born child resulted in its "success" as "France's richest colony."[255] Yet, La *Mère-Patrie*'s investment in her child is actually an investment in herself, masked beneath the maternal function of protecting her *enfants*. Vergès' take on the "family romance" in the French Revolution and her application of it to the colonies must be considered here, in order to understand the manipulation of Marianne's colonial children—and the psychological effects that lead to the "sibling rivalry" between her Vietnamese and Cambodian children. Vergès refers to the imaginary filiation and fiction of parental affection toward her colonial children in the following passage:

> The rhetoric of the French revolutionary community of brothers paradoxically justified the subjugation of peoples in the name of *fraternité, liberté, égalité.* […] In the prerevolutionary romance of colonialism, the relations between the colony and the metropole were not suffused with affective ties and metaphors of love and protection. Men went to the colony to find gold or bring the word of Christ. The 'savage' occupied a complex site in the European imaginary, whether as a monster or an innocent, but there was no discourse about bringing a political ideal. The monarchy had imposed patriarchal rule; the republic would propose a rule among equals, under the symbol of Marianne. The state would play the role of a benevolent mediator, protecting the children against

[254] See pp. 36-37 of "French Indo-China"
[255] Tucker refers to Vietnam as "France's richest colony" (37). In doing so, it is assumed that he is referring to the totality of Cochinchina, Tonkin, and Annam.

> patriarchal tyranny. The republic's protection would naturally extend to her colonies. Colonization was the expansion of republican brotherhood, and France was La Mère-Patrie, protecting her colonized children from the abuse of local tyrants. With this fable, the French state aspired to substitute an ideal model of filiation for the historical colonial filiation. Colonial family romance invented *one* parent, the Mère-Patrie, and consequently sought to impose a process of identification that rejected the reality that each human being has *two* parents. (4-5)

This role of Marianne as a protective mother figure to her children outside of the metropole, and the allure of *fraternité,* was even less achievable in the colonies. Nonetheless, it left a lasting mark on its (ex) colonies, as certain French institutions remained, even after their "separation" from *La Mère-Patrie.* Tucker also notes the effects that the French Revolution had on Vietnam, remarking the following:

> Assimilation built on the principles of the French Revolution of 1789 that professed the universality of French civilization. It attempted to bridge the gap between humanitarianism and the actualities of French colonial rule. It was bound up in the French term *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission), a kind of generous cultural imperialism that suggested the French government should undertake to make the colonies a carbon-copy of France in institutions and in culture. (36-37)

This *mission civilisatrice,* in the form of adoption and filiation, creates a desire of mimicry. The form of adoption can be compared to the "logic" of Freud's "family romance", in the form of rejecting one's birth parents—symbolic of one's culture—in favor of an imaginary "new set of

parents" (in this case, only one parent).[256] In other words, the fiction of true adoption by a French *Mère-Patrie* allowed Vietnam, *le premier chef de la famille,* to fulfill its duties as the role model of French Indochina. Molded into the role of the "oldest child," Vietnam sought out to mimic its adoptive parents. Despite the imbalance in investment of its colonial children, Cambodia was cast in Vietnam's shadow, and negatively stereotyped. Vergès' "colonial family romance" reveals the effects of a fictional filiation, and Marianne's ability to blame its child when (s)he misbehaves:

> Colonial family romance established a founding myth, the myth of the 'unique root' against which Edouard Glissant has argued. The construction of an ideal parent associated with whiteness and Europe denied the dimension of race in the making of colonial identity. The fable gave France the means to console itself when colonized 'children' would rebel and to repress the reasons for which they rejected her. It was their ingratitude, rather than her tyrannical 'love,' that explained their behavior. (4-5)

Alternatively, this "colonial family romance," when applied to the Vietnamese and Cambodian context, can be read as a form of neglect of one child, in favor of the other. It problematically allows the child—especially, the "middle child"—Cambodia, in this case—to misplace blame on its sibling and "birth" parent. Returning to the French colonial proverb, "Le Vietnamien plante le riz, le Cambodgien le regarde pousser, le Laotien l'écoute pousser", we can observe the colonial views and preferential treatment of its French Indochinese children.

The metaphor of rice, agriculture, and cultivation must be considered in its application from the colonial context, but also in Cambodian agricultural history from the Khmer Empire, the DK regime, to the present-day. Before interpreting the proverb in relation to its colonial family

[256] See Vergès, pp. 3-4

metaphor, the history of Cambodia's rice production and peasantry will be interpreted from its pre-revolutionary days to its significance in the Khmer Rouge's recruitment and self-definition. Chandler notes that "in the years of 1945-79," the time between the final years of French colonial rule and the end of the Democratic Kampuchea, "some four-fifths of the population were farmers." Chandler also notes that "Prerevolutionary Cambodia was "an overwhelmingly rural economy, […] dominated by subsistence rice cultivation."[257] The CPK relied on the peasantry, specifically "targeting poor peasants, and particularly their teenage children, who had no enduring ties to the land or traditional village community" (Kiernan 6-7). The Khmer Rouge could be defined by their preoccupation with Khmerness, rice cultivation, and the peasantry, in general. The Khmer Empire and "the 'intensive irrigation' theory" circulated by French archaeologists motivated the Khmer Rouge to enforce unattainable goals of rice yields (Kiernan 8).[258] The Khmer Rouge ideology of the 1970s, and valorization of *l'ancien peuple* thus stands in opposition to the Khmerization represented in Rim Kin's *Sophat,* which offers a modern image of Phnom Penh and Cambodia, from its urban setting to its principle characters who share the Cambodian capital, and the city, as their home.[259]

> The DK regime abolished money, evacuated cities and towns, prohibited religious practices, suspended formal education, newspapers, and postal services, collectivized eating after 1977, and made everyone wear peasant costumes. Its economic plan called for

[257] "Prerevolutionary Cambodia was 80% peasant, 80 percent Khmer, and 80 percent Buddhist." Kiernan, 5.
[258] The myth of "the 'intensive irrigation' theory" of the Angkor kingdom "was the view of French archaeologists and scholars who pioneered study of the 'lost world' of the medieval Khmers." According to Kiernan, the theory, which was responsible for the economic wealth of old Khmer Empire, "was accepted as fact until the 1980s." See Kiernan, p. 8.
[259] During the Khmer Rouge regime, "new" and "old" people were distinguished. See p. 29, *Sothik* (Marie Desplechin, Sothik Hok, Tian; Paris: L'école des loisirs, 2016). "Pour les Khmers rouges, le pays se divise en deux camps ennemies. D'un côté, l' 'ancien peuple', celui des campagnes, des pauvres, des pêcheurs et des paysans. De l'autre côté, le 'nouveau peuple,' celui des villes, des gens riches et des gens instruits. L'ancien peuple est noble, courageux, et indépendant. Le nouveau peuple est souillé, mauvais, et soumis aux étrangers. Les Khmers rouges ont décidé de détruire le nouveau peuple et ses mauvaises habitudes."

> average national yields of rice that were more than twice as high as those in the most productive areas of Cambodia. The regime proposed to wage a class war and turn the economy around by abolishing class distinctions, destroying prerevolutionary institutions, and transforming the population into unpaid agricultural workers. In May 1975 a government spokesman proudly announced that 'more than two thousand years' of Cambodian history had ended.[260]

The colonial and Angkorean myth thus coincides with unrealistic *Angkarean* aspirations. Ironically, rice harvesting and land cultivation under the DK produced millions of deaths. The Post-DK period, however, attempted to make up for the deaths through regeneration and reproduction, in the form of births, as well as economic and societal cultivation. Based on the action associated with each child in the colonial proverb—Vietnam, who plants the rice; Cambodia who watches it grow; Laos who listens to it grow—the eldest one would merit the colonial mother's trust. The proverb complements the psychological typing that insists that those who follow the birth of the first-born, regardless of being second- or third-born, can never amount to the status of the *chef de la famille*. Considering this, it is appropriate that the French encouraged Vietnamese immigration into Cambodia, so that their first-born sons could "fill the ranks of French colonial civil service" and let their Cambodian brothers watch as they led the colony.[261] The Vietnamese son signifies productivity and activity, while the Cambodian inactively watches, and the Laotian listens. Though the proverb states that the last two sons watch and listen to the rice

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[260] Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History,* 1.

[261] Amratisha, 63-64. "The French encouraged the steady immigration of Vietnamese into Cambodia long before the end of the nineteenth century. The 'trained' Vietnamese, who were familiar with the overall administration of Indochina, were imported to fill the ranks of the French colonial civil service. […] In the countryside, Vietnamese fishermen living on boats or in fishing villages along the Mekong and the Tonle Sap formed the largest portion of commercial fishermen in the country."
It is also worth noting that "the Vietnamese in Cambodia were considered an indigenous population, having the same rights as Cambodians," in the French colony. *Ibid.* 65.

grow—it is also implied that the Vietnamese learns directly from the French colonizer; the Cambodian learns from his Vietnamese brother who learns directly from the colonizer; the Laotian learns second (or third) hand from his Cambodian brother who learns from his Vietnamese brother who learns from his colonial mother.

The unequal investments in sons can be summed up in Vickery's assertion that "Cambodia was not a very important component of French Indochina" (*Kicking the Vietnam Syndrome,* 10).[262] Adding to this, Cambodia's lack of progress, in comparison to Vietnam, reaffirms the stereotype of the second-born who fails to live up to its older sibling: "In contrast to Viet Nam, Burma, or Indonesia, colonialism had not carried out its progressive task of destroying the old society and setting foundations for capitalism, let alone socialism" (*Kicking the Vietnam Syndrome,* 10). Yet, the depiction of Cambodia as unproductive and lazy—and Vietnam as responsible—in the rice proverb is flawed. "In 1963, Cambodia had a record rice harvest. In 1964, that record was broken. Rice exports soared and the country's balance of trade was positive for the first time since 1955."[263] Kiernan notes that Vietnamese rice production declined due to the effects of the Vietnam War in the 1960s. As a result, "large amounts of Cambodian rice began to be smuggled across the Vietnamese border to the [American and Vietnamese] armies, causing Cambodia's "record rice harvest" to plummet.[264]

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[262] Vickery notes: "French control was maintained by a parallel structure of a *Résident Supérieur* in Phnom Penh, subordinate to the Governor-General in Hanoi, and *Résidents* at the provincial level, who gave 'advice' to their Cambodian counterparts. The old Cambodian state structure was left in place, the prestige of king, royal family, and aristocracy was preserved, with in fact much greater security from internal disturbances, provincial administration under governors from dominant local families was maintained, and in their usual activities most Cambodian villagers rarely had to deal with a Frenchman." *Ibid.*

[263] Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime,* 16-17.

[264] "Prince Sihanouk's Cambodia depended for its revenue on taxing rice exports. It now plunged towards bankruptcy." *Ibid.*

In addition to being stereotyped as lazy and unproductive, Cambodians struggled to gain a place in society.

> The French colonial administrators were notorious in both Cambodia and Laos for importing and giving preferential treatment to the Vietnamese, whom they saw as productive and industrious compared to the Khmers. […] The French gave the Vietnamese most of the low level administrative jobs in Phnom Penh, giving them power over many Cambodians. They also gave them preference in education and other opportunities in Cambodia.[265]

The *affiliation* between "birth order" and levels of work ethic ignores its financial and time-investment in one child over the other, and attempts to "blame" its children for what is interpreted as "bad behavior."[266] The refusal to accept responsibility over one child's "success" over another's "shortcomings" exemplifies the illusion of Marianne, the protector. In Cambodia's case, this internalization of a fictional filial rank--associated with false notions of inferiority--ultimately led to a misplacement of anger, resulting in a renewal of nationalism built on an experienced vulnerability; a lack of protection. A combined fear of being endangered by foreigners and foreign culture, and an anxiety over the loss of one's identity, contributed to Cambodian cultural production in the form of the first Khmer novel.

Sophat--The First Khmer Novel.

[265] See pp. 213-213 of Frank Smith's *Kamlang Phiasaa* (2006).

[266] In this chapter, I refer to the stereotypes of birth order, as well recycled stereotypes on Cambodians (as viewed by the French) and on Vietnamese (viewed by the French and by Cambodians) from other texts. It is not my intent to recycle these harmful stereotypes, nor do I support them.

In order to study Cambodia's first Khmer novel, one needs to trace its literary and linguistic ancestry, beginning with the Khmer language. Amratisha notes in Cambodia's foundational dates in literary and Khmer history.

> The Khmer term for literature, *aksarsāstr,* is derived from the Sanskrit words *aksar,* which means 'letter, alphabet, script, writing' and *sāstr,* which means 'text, book, document, science, knowledge, education, explanation.' Thus, we might begin the study of Khmer *aksarsāstr* with the origin of 'letters', of writing. According to the legendary origin of Funan, ancestors of the Cambodians had lived on the land called Kauk Thlork for a very long time. Their leader was a beautiful intelligent woman called Nagi Soma, the daughter of the king of the Nagas (the dragon of the Underworld). The Hindu Brahman Kaundinya arrived by boat from southern India, married the dragon princess and became the first king of Funan. Kaundinya brought with him the Indian alphabet which the Cambodians adopted and adapted to record their spoken language. (13)[267]

The history of its script (អក្សរ) presents Khmer—language and identity—as a hybrid creation, making the concept of "real" Khmer a fantasy.[268] The marriage of Brahman Kaundinya and Nagi Soma contradicts any notion of purity. Khmer literature (អក្សរសាស្ត្រខ្មែរ) is thus a "synthesis" of Indian and Khmer cultures.[269] Amratisha states: "If Kaundinya symbolises the poetic literature in Sanskrit of the pre-Angkor period as Nagi Soma represents the Cambodian folktales in oral tradition, many of which pre-date the Christian era, the classical literature of Cambodia from the

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[267] For the legend of Kaundinya and Nagi Soma, see: Ly Theam Teng, *Aksarsāstre Khmaer,* 2nd ed, (Phnom Penh: Seng Nguon Huot, 1960), pp. 1-4 and Rüdiger Gaudes, "Kaundinya, Preah Thaon, and the "Nagi Soma": Some Aspects of a Cambodian Legend" *Asian Folklore Studies,* 52, (1993), pp. 333-358.

[268] Kiernan 11. Pol Pot's penname was *khmaer da'em,* "The Original Cambodian." [ខ្មែរដើម]. (See "Additional Khmer Terms" at the end of the chapter.)

[269] For Khmer/English translations and transliterations, see "Additional Khmer Terms."

fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries can be compared to the marriage of this mythical couple" (14). It must be noted that both Khmer and Sanskrit co-existed in the Khmer Empire, and that before the 13th and 14th centuries—"when the Brahman influence in Cambodian society began to decline and Sanskrit language was replaced by Khmer in official use"—the two were hierarchized in a literary and social cleavage (15). Up until then, the Khmer language had been associated with commoners, whereas "the Sanskrit language and poetic forms of writing was restricted to the elite" (15). It was not until the French colonization of Cambodia that Khmer literature transformed from verse to modern prose.[270]

Despite the gap in the Cambodian literary trajectory, influences from Indian, French, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Thai literary production can be witnessed in the making of Cambodian identity.[271] The 16th century in particular witnessed an ode to Indian culture, with the creation of *Reamker*—"the Khmer version of the great Indian epic Ramayana," the *Cpāp*[272] (The "Codes of Conduct"; "a genre of didactic moral poetry"); the 18th century birthed the verse-novel genre.[273] Before its transformation into a protectorate and colony, Cambodia witnessed a literary boom in the 19th century. "The reign of King Ang Duon (1841-1860) is frequently referred to by Cambodian scholars as the 'Golden Age' of Khmer literature, the most significant and productive epoch. The

[270]Amraitsha points out that French literary trends did not directly impact Khmer literature until the last quarter of the 19th century. 44-45.

[271] Amratisha, 33. "Owing to the fall of Angkor and the predatory invasions of the Siamese and the Vietnamese, no written literature which can be dated from earlier than the sixteenth century survives."
The establishment of Khmer literature may be AD 611. "The earliest dated inscription in the Khmer language, which could be regarded as the beginning of Khmer literature, is from AD 611, found at the site of Angkor Borei in Takeo province." *Ibid.* 31.

[272]ច្បាប់, pronounced "chbaap", refers to the law in Khmer. See "Additional Khmer Terms." Amratisha notes that "the content of the *Cpāp'* are concerned with the activities of the entire Cambodian society" and "provided Cambodians with practical rules, based on Theravada Buddhist concepts, for coping with everyday life" (26).

[273]Amratisha 18; 25; 38. Also worth noting is the translation of Buddhist texts from Pali to Khmer (i.e. The *Jakara* tales); p. 39.

king himself was a renowned scholar and poet."[274] The most significant *transformation* in Khmer literature, however, occurred in the French colonial period. Though it would be easy to attribute the modernization of Khmer literature to the arrival of the French in Cambodia, it is more likely that modern Khmer prose arose from a combination of foreign elements. Moreover, the physical presence of the Vietnamese and Chinese, coupled with their unavoidable literary production, in Cambodia led to a belated but hasty game of "catch-up" for Khmer writers.

Before the publication of *Sophat,* written in 1938 and published in Saigon in 1942, modern Khmer prose writing occurred in the columns of weeklies and magazines.[275] Though the printing press and French publications had already been established in Cambodia by the late 1880s, it was not until the 1920s and 30s that Khmer publications truly took off.[276] Cambodian journal publications coincided with the period of significant literary production by the Vietnamese and Chinese in Cambodia, following the appearance of "the first local language newspaper in Cambodia"—in Vietnamese: "The first local language newspaper to appear in Cambodia was a Vietnamese newspaper, the *Cao-mien Huon-truyen.* It began in 1929 as the weekly supplement in Vietnamese of the French newspaper *L'Echo du Cambodge*" (67). Journalism was key to securing one's place in the colony. Additionally, it "helped popularize prose writing" (78). The introduction of Cambodia's magazine, *Rātrī Thnaī Saur* (រាត្រីថ្ងៃសៅរ៍) in 1935 may be the beginning of the

[274] *Ibid.* 39-41. The "Golden Age" experienced "Thai influence on Khmer literature […] particularly in the genre of popular Buddhist literature or *Samrāy*" (41).

[275] See Khing's presentation of the author and novel, p. 8. Kin, Rim. *Sophat.* Trans. Rene Laporte and Pech Thinh. Ed. Hoc Dy Khing. Annotated ed. Phnom Penh: Editions ANGKOR, 2015. Print.

[276] Amratisha, 73. "Journalism, like printing technology, was introduced to Cambodians by the French at the end of the nineteenth century. It was just a decade after the installation of printing presses in Phnom Penh that the first newspaper produced in Cambodia, *Le petit Cambodgien*, appeared. This private newspaper, lithographed from a hand-written text, was in circulation between 1899-1900. About ten years later, printed newspapers emerged, beginning with the *Impartial de Phnom Penh* and the *Opinion du Cambodge;* nevertheless, it was only with the publication of the long-lived *Echo du Cambodge,* began in 1922, and the new *Impartial du Phnom Penh*, published from 1925, that newspapers became firmly established in Cambodia. It was also in 1925 that a bilingual journal, the *Bulletin Elementaire Franco-Khmer,* printed half in Cambodian and half in French, appeared for the first time."

modern Khmer literary movement, as it showcased the talent of upcoming Khmer writers (including Rim Kin) before the official publication of their work.[277]

> The year 1935 witnessed the birth of the magazine in which modern Cambodian literature may truly be considered to have been born. The fruit of a French and then Vietnamese venture, *Rātrī Thnaī Saur* [Saturday Night] was the weekly Khmer language literary supplement of the newspaper *L'Echo du Cambodge.* It was in this magazine that the short stories and serialized stories of the first modern Cambodian writers appeared. Rim Kin, generally regarded as the author of Cambodia's first modern novel, made his debut here, publishing his first short stories and short poems in its pages.[278]

The 1930s could thus be considered the beginning of Khmerization efforts in colonial Cambodia. 1930 also established the Buddhist Institute, and with it, the "revival of classical literature" which was no longer reserved for the court and now available to the public (46-47). "Former monks who had a good knowledge of Pali, Sanskri and literature, as well as poets, were asked to join the Institute. […] The Institute soon became the principal publisher of the country."[279] Within the same timeframe, Cambodia witnessed the celebration of new and old: classics and modern texts. Creative prose publications in magazines and the transcribing and archiving of classics at the Buddhist Institute increased with the growing enrollment numbers of Chinese and Vietnamese students in the colony. In addition to the literary rivalry between Vietnamese and Cambodian writers—they faced a similar problem in the schools. In Khmerizing the market stalls, perhaps

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[277] រាត្រីថ្ងៃសៅរ៍ in the Khmer original (រាត្រី translates to "night" or "evening"; ថ្ងៃសៅរ៍ means "Saturday").

[278] *Ibid.* 75. See Footnotes 58 and 59; Jacques Nepote and Khing Doc Dy, "Chinese Literary Influence on Cambodia in the 19th and 20th centuries", pp. 336-337; Khing Doc Dy, *Ecrivains et Expressions Littéraires du Cambodge au XXème Siècle,* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993), p. 32.

[279] The journal *Kambujasuriyā* was launched in 1926, in which religious and didactic poetry written by contemporary writers but in traditional style appeared regularly. […] It was also […] where fiction in prose narrative form appeared." Amratisha, 46.

Cambodians had hoped to increase Khmer representation in the schools. During the colonial period, it must be noted that the schools in Cambodia were made up of predominantly Vietnamese and Chinese (male) students.[280]

> As they lived mainly in the urban areas, the Chinese and Vietnamese middle-class were among the first groups, apart from the royal family and high-class Cambodians, to experience the modernization of society during the French era. When state and private modern schools based on the French model were established in Cambodia, more than half of the pupils were Chinese and Vietnamese. For instance, when the Ecole du Protectorat was opened in 1873, Vietnamese boys constituted the largest group of pupils. Students of the Lycée Sisowath in the 1930s were largely drawn from the Chinese and Sino-Khmer merchant families as well as those of Vietnamese civil servants. (66-67)[281]

It is no surprise that political-literary Khmerization efforts by Cambodian nationalists and Khmer literature grew together. Literary Khmerization efforts did not necessarily defy French order, but challenged its "enemies."[282] Cambodia's desire to gain or conquer French maternal love can be read through Khmerization efforts, in the form of literary production, including Rim Kin's *Sophat.*[283] Noting the ethnic division within the schools, and the dominance of foreign script and language in Cambodia in the early-mid 20th century, authors such as Rim Kin attempted to define Khmerness in order to survive. Literary production represented Cambodian cultural power at the

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[280]Formal education for girls was not available in Cambodia until 1907.

[281]See Footnotes 40 and 41, Amratisha, 66. See also, Jacques Nepote, "Education et Développement dans le Cambodge Moderne" *Mondes en Développement,* p. 772-773 ; F. Brechet, *L'Enseignement Populaire et les Ecoles de Pagode au Cambodge,* (Hanoi, 1927), p. 5 quoted in B D Smith, *Motivation and Modernisation in Cambodian Education,* Unpublished BPhil thesis, University of Hull, 1972, p. 63 ; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 129. For details on transformations in Cambodian education during the colonial period, see Amratisha, pp. 55-67.

[282] Returning to Cambodia's "in-between problem": The French "protected" Cambodia from its neighbors. In adopting it, France preserved Khmer culture, and attempted to block off any "foreign" influences, especially Vietnamese ones. See Kiernan, 4-5. *The Pol Pot Regime*

[283] Karin, p. 75: "Une relation de fratire s'inscrit donc toujours dans une *relation à la mère, à garder ou à gagner.*"

end of the colonial period, and served as a means of passing on ideals of Khmer identity. *Sophat* continues to be one of the most well-known Khmer texts, today. Considered a Cambodian classic, it has been translated into French multiple times, and is also taught in classrooms outside of Cambodia. In the 1994 French edition of *Sophat*, Groussin remarks that 2,000 copies the first edition of Rim Kin's first novel were sold within six months of its release.[284] Rim Kin invented both the first Khmer novel and Khmer hero.[285] Coincidentally, he shares his status as *fils unique*-turned-*orphelin* with Sophat. In the colonial context—*sans* parents—Rim Kin's transformation from son into "bastard" can be read as a need for adoption. In other words, *La Mère-Patrie* would fill the place of his parents-by-birth, and offer an attempt of reconciliation with his fragmented identity.

When Rim Kin first wrote *Sophat* in 1938, Cambodia had already experienced a push toward Europeanization. The 1930s witnessed "the reform of education from the informal schooling in the *vatt* to the French-styled lycée", which undoubtedly impacted the Cambodia's modern literary movement. Rim Kin joined the group of Cambodians part of "a new urban middle-class, a class of western-trained people" (Amratisha 60). It is curious that *Sophat* portrays modern Cambodian society without any "foreigners"[286], considering Cambodia's largely diverse population of Vietnamese and Chinese students, and French administrators and teachers at the time of the early and mid-20th century. Amratisha notes that "the absence of any foreigners" was a

[284] See p. 9: "C'est en 1938 qu'il composa son œuvre majeure, *Sophat.* Comme il n'avait pas d'argent pour sa publication, il emprunta 300 riels à l'Association des Anciens Élèves du Collège Sisowath. Le livre fut imprimé au Viêt-Nam et sortit en 1942**.** Il eut un immense succès puisque les 2.000 ouvrages de la première édition furent épuisés en six mois."
[285] See Khing's presentation of the author, p. 8. *Sophat.* Ed. ANGKOR, 2015.
[286]See *Sophat:* A Khmer novel. Annotated and exercises prepared by Frank Smith, 2nd ed. 2008; p. i.: "Cambodians were starting to think about their national identity as well, and in fact, Rim Kin wrote *Sophat* partly as a reaction to the proliferation of foreign prose novels (in Khmer translation) in Cambodia, particularly those of the Vietnamese. To this end, there are no foreigners in this novel."

conscious decision on the author's part, stating: "Rim Kin wanted to promote the identity of Cambodians in their own country and make it clear that Cambodia belonged to Cambodians" (110-111). Arguing that Cambodians had "no books about themselves", they accessed "their problems and successes through the character of Sophat" (111). On the surface, Rim Kin's prose novel distinguishes itself from the previous generations of stories of Empire. Its ambitions of depicting the real Khmer society of the 20th century recycles traits familiar to the origin myths on Khmer origin. Smith notes: "This was the first time a Cambodian put pen to paper to tell a creative story in prose," as verse-form had previously dominated literature in Cambodia for centuries. In a reaction to the literal and literary presence of foreign works in Cambodian cities, Rim Kin aspired to inscribe "real" Khmers into Cambodian history, and consciously removed non-Cambodians from his novel, making it "100% Khmer."[287] Though its prose form unarguably distinguishes *Sophat* from previous Khmer texts in verse, its content cannot truly separate itself from histories preceding 20th-century Cambodia. Rim Kin's novel is neither purely modern nor 100% Khmer. While the mathematical expression, "100% Khmer," characterizes Cambodia's first novel and the society represented within *Sophat*—it also seeks to equate "'real' Khmers" to "unmixed" and "uncontaminated" influences: Khmerhood, and the ideal of a homogeneous filiation and quality of "Khmerness" is observable in Khmer epithets for Cambodians: *Kohn Khmer* [កូនខ្មែរ], which literally translates to "Khmer child" is synonymous for Cambodian; Khmer. While *kohn Khmer* implies uniformity, *Khmer suht* [ខ្មែរសុទ្ធ], composed of the words "Khmer" [ខ្មែរ] and "pure" [សុទ្ធ] emphasizes the "100% Khmer" quality of being Cambodian. In addition, it counters

[287] *Ibid.* Smith, i. Referring to the characters in *Sophat,* Smith states: "Everybody, and the social and cultural context in which they live, is 100% Khmer… at least in the way that Khmer culture and mores were conceived of the author's time."

"mixed-ness," as *suht* also translates to "clean, without impurities," and "unmixed."[288] Yet, to be (100%) Khmer is to already be hybrid; to have mixed origins. While it is problematic to attempt to calculate one's "racial makeup" and to derive one's national, ethnic, or racial origins, Cambodian identity continues to be defined by mathematical expressions. Despite Cambodia's attempts of defining Khmerness by purity, its history is chiefly defined by interracial—or interspecific unions. Two legends in particular demonstrate this: 1) The origin story of Cambodia, which begins in the Funan Kingdom, with the marriage between the Kaundinya, "the Hindu Brahman" who "arrived by boat from southern India," and Princess Nagi Soma, Daughter of the king of the Nagas 2) the legend of the construction of Angkor Wat, the national symbol of Cambodia.[289] Cambodians trace the beginning of their history and derive their origins from the Funan Kingdom, which begins with the marriage of Kaundinya and Nagi Soma, centuries ahead of the existence of the Khmer Empire. While the Naga princess transforms into Queen upon marrying Kaundinya, she also becomes "indigenous" and "uncivilized," before the formation of the Funan royal lineage.

> Jadis, un brahmane d'origine indienne, Kaundinya, s'unit avec une princesse-serpent indigène, la *nagi* Somâ. Cette légende, qui situe entre le civilisé (le brahmane indien) et le non-civilisé (la princesse autochtone) l'origine des plus anciennes lignées royales au Cambodge, celle des monarques du Fou-nan, peut s'interpréter comme l'image déformée la mémoire inconsciente de quelque événement historique se rapportant aux premiers contacts entre Indiens et Khmers. (Zéphir 18)

[288] See Kheng.info and the "Cambodian Familial Glossary" at the end of Chapter 2.
[289] Amratisha, 13-14; Zéphir, 18. Khmer literature is thus inseparable from the origins of Kaundinya, as he "brought with him the Indian alphabet which the Cambodians adopted and adapted to their spoken language." Amratisha, 13.

The hybrid origin story and marriage between a "civilized" Brahman and an "uncivilized" *princesse-serpent* is useful toward problematizing *métissage* in the Cambodian context. To further examine Cambodian identity, the "100% Khmer" question must be considered in relation to gender, race, and class. When comparing Nagi Soma's social status to the 20th-century Franco-Cambodian author Makhali-Phal's, the link between *métissage* and Khmerization becomes hypervisible. The "indigenous" royal Cambodian woman's identity is complicated in and beyond the French protectorate, and comparable to Nagi Soma's royal-uncivilized status. Makhali-Phal (Nelly-Pierrette Guesde)—granddaughter of King Sisowath, and one of the first (Franco)Cambodian female writers to have published in French—embodies the complications of *métissage*, and of defining Khmerness in the 20th century.[290] Like *la nagi Soma,* Makhali-Phal's mother's royal descendance and marriage to the French *gouverneur général* Pierre Guesde blurs questions of race, nationality, and (pure)blood: Makhali-Phal's "indigenous" status in the French protectorate is atypical, being the daughter of a Cambodian princess and a French colonial administrator. Her status would be further confused outside of it, upon relocating to the metropole. Members in her French social circle characterized Makhali-Phal as "mythologique," "hiératique," "majestic," and an "intermediary" between Europe and Asia.[291] More importantly, she was described, or constructed, in the mathematical terms associated with Khmerness: "Everything about her evoked the aura of a royal heritage. Her niece stated that Makhali-Phal had an 'esprit'

[290]Makhali-Phal's date of birth varies across sources, but it appears that she was born between the last few years of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. After moving to France at the age of 8, she sought to retain her Khmer heritage and history through writing a number of poems and novels in French that follow traditional Khmer narrative styles. Some of her most popular works include *Cambodge*—her first published work made up of three poems (1933); her first novel, *La favorite de dix ans* (1940); her last novel, published a couple of months before her death in 1965, titled *L'Asie en flammes.* See Chapter 1 of Harris' dissertation, *The Epic Novel as Poem: Makhali-Phal.*

[291] The use of "intermediary" here iterates Mademoiselle Lys' support of the union of "la Grande France d'Europe" and "la France d'Asie." See Chapter 1, "Fixed Identity and Fixing the Future," p. 33; *Le Roman de Mademoiselle Lys,* 85.

that was 100 percent Asiatic" (Harris 5-6). Despite all odds, Makhali-Phal, *métisse,* epitomizes Khmerness, in the contradictory terms that define her. More importantly, she transgresses the Khmer epithets, in becoming *Kohn Khmer* [កូនខ្មែរ] and *kohn kat* [កូនកាត់].[292]

The legend of Angkor's foundation also disconcerts and reaffirms Khmer ontology, or the quality of being "100% Khmer."[293] To be (100%) Khmer is to also be hybrid--depending on the interspecific unions and products. The foundation of Angkor, according to the Cambodian legend, can be traced to two important human, or half-human, figures—Popusnokar (Prah Pus nokar) and Prah Kèt Mealea. The story—which takes place in "l'an 600 de l'ère de Bouddha" in the province of Shanghai—recounts how Popusnokar, Angkor's architect, came to be born from the union of Lim Seng, a poor Chinaman, and Dibsodacan, a *devi*—who is convicted by Indra to spend six years on earth as a human and wife to Lim Seng (131).[294] Being the son of a *devi,* and already demonstrating natural talent for drawing and sculpting, Indra allows him to temporarily reside in the divine kingdom in order to receive a *formation en architecture* from the *devaputra.*[295] Upon completing his training, Indra designates him responsible for the construction of the *royaume* in Cambodia—which will be a) a replica of part of Indra's kingdom, b) the royal kingdom in which Prah Kèt Mealea, son of Indra and Queen Vong of Cambodia, will reign and reside. Upon the

[292] See "Cambodian Familial Glossary" at the end of the chapter; see also the section below, "Soya, l'orpheline, ou Soya, *kohn kat* [កូនកាត់]?"

[293] For the legend of *La fondation d'Angkor,* see Guillaume-Henri Monod's *Légendes cambodgiennes que m'a contées le Gouverneur Khieu,* 1922, reprinted in Ch. 6 of *La fondation d'Angkor et autres légendes cambodgiennes*, 2016.

[294] Like Sophat, Popusnokar leaves home in search of his birth mother. After the six years of her condemnation as a human are up, she returns to the divine kingdom as a *deva*. Popusnokar is thus abandoned by his mother at age 5, and his father does not reveal to him that his mother is a *deva* until age 10. His reunion with his mother allows him to visit Indra, King and God of the *devas*, and to receive a *formation* as an architect from the *devaputras,* or the sons (*putra* in Sanskrit) of God (*deva*). See footnote 119 and glossary at the end of the chapter.

[295] See Glossary at the end of the chapter. *Devi* is the feminine form of *deva*. *Devata* [ទេវតា] also refers to the non-human, godlike deities; a class of (super)beings. The legend complements the origin story of Kaundinya and Nagi Soma's marriage: *Devi* and *deva* are Sanskrit words with Vedic origins. Monod refers to Popusnokar's mother as a *deva*, but it is more appropriate and likely that Dibsodacan is a *devi*, or a female deity. *Deva riech* [ទេវរាជ] is, according to Kheng.info, the epithet of Indra; a synonym for "god-king."

completion of the construction of the Cambodian Kingdom, however, two important transformations occur that distinguish the Chinese-*devi* son (Popusnokar) and the royal Cambodian-*deva* son (Prah Kèt Mealea). After Popusnokar's replication of Indra's *royaume,* Indra descends from the heavens to crown his son, thus transforming him into Arothpulpearso Prah Kèt Mealea, God-King of Cambodia. Popusnokar, on the other hand, transforms into a Chinaman, returning home to China, "son pays natal" to share with the Chinese his architectural teachings (151). The way in which Indra refers to the two adolescents reveals how class, maternal versus paternal inheritance, and ethnicity determine more than Khmerness—but who and what is able to be "hybrid."[296] In addition to being cleansed of his "odeur humaine" before meeting Indra, Indra classifies him as belonging to the "race humaine" before sending him to Cambodia.[297] Prah Kèt Mealea, Indra's son of his "propre race," receives a spiritual cleansing, in which seven *Brahma* recite incantations to ensure him a life and reign of 400 years.[298] Yet, it is the legend's ending—which closes with the severing of ties between Popusnokar and Prah Kèt Mealea—that supports the construction of Khmerness. After the completion of Angkor, the newly crowned king orders Popusnokar to forge a sword as a symbol of his power. Upset at the small size of the sword, the king accuses the architect of Angkor of stealing the iron designated for the construction of his sword. Following this accusation, the legend closes with Popusnokar's dramatic exit, with his exclamation, "Je ne reste pas au Cambodge, je vais retourner en Chine!" (151).

Il s'éloigna, traînant derrière lui l'épée dont il avait tourné le tranchant vers le plancher.

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[296] Popusnokar's "half" status is particular, as he inherits his father's Chinese "race," and his mother's *devi*--not *deva*—blood. Considering the fact that his conception occurs during Dibsodacan's six-year sentence to earth, one could argue that Popusnokar is the product of two humans. In contrast to this, Prah Kèt Mealea is a hybrid god-king—the son of not just any *deva*—but the son of Indra, "le Roi des *devas*"—and the Queen of Cambodia. *La fondation d'Angkor,* 135.

[297] *La fondation d'Angkor,* 142; 147.
[298] *Ibid.* 137; 146.

> Lorsqu'il fut sorti, on s'aperçut que les planches sur lesquelles avait passé l'épée étaient toutes sectionnées. Prah Kèt Mealea envoya aussitôt appeler Popusnokar et lui fit demander l'épée. Popusnokar refusa et la jeta dans le Grand Lac. Ensuite, il s'embarqua sur une jonque et mit à voile. Il alla se fixer en Chine, son pays natal, et instruisit les hommes. (151)

The sword's blade that cuts and divides the Cambodian palace's floorboards marks the end of Popusnokar and the king's relationship. More importantly, though, it results in the removal of the architect's hand in creating the king's palace. The legend closes with the following note: "Telle est l'histoire de Popusnokar; peu d'hommes la connaissent et, parce qu'ils l'ignorent, ils parlent à tort et à travers, prétendant que ce sont les *deva* qui ont construit Angkor" (151). In addition to recognizing the *deva* for the foundation of Angkor, Popusnokar's departure from Cambodia and his return to his Chinese "homeland" can be read as an expulsion, which begs the question: Who is "Khmer-enough" to stay in Cambodia?[299]

Returning to the description of *Sophat* as "100% Khmer," it must be noted that Smith stresses that it is so "in the way that the Khmer culture and mores were conceived of the author's time," from 1911 to 1959.[300] Considering this, the first (100%) Khmer novel coincides with the peak colonial, nationalist Khmer, and Independence movements in Cambodia. Moreover, the first Khmer novel alludes to its matrilineal history, and indirectly addresses the French education reforms that replaced the precolonial Buddhist traditions making up Khmer culture and identity. Before the French schooling reforms, Cambodia had entertained a Buddhist tradition of sending young boys to pagodas for education. Yet, the difference between Khmer Buddhist and French

[299] The final note of miscredit of the construction of Angkor is suspect, as Popusnokar remains inscribed in the legend, from the start to the end.
[300] Smith, i.

schooling was more cultural than scholastic. In the pagodas, Cambodian parents expected the monks to act as parents, instilling early on in their children Khmer morals and discipline.

> The *Vatt* or Buddhist monastery in Cambodia, like in other Buddhist societies in South East Asia, had been the centre of learning and culture for hundreds of years. […] As instruction provided by the Buddhist monks was the only type of public schooling in the country before the French protectorate was set up, the practice of sending boys to monasteries to gain literacy, as well as merit and the basic principles of Buddhism, had been observed for centuries by people of all classes from royalty down to poor peasants.[301]

In addition to receiving a moral education and the transmission of Khmer values through monks, Cambodian boys were encouraged—or obligated—to learn Khmer. In 1911, King Sisowath enforced Khmer to be "taught in all pagodas of the kingdom," demanding that "all parents should send their sons to a pagoda school, as soon as they reached the age of 8 years."[302]

Considering the tradition of sending Khmer sons to the pagoda for instruction, Sophat's upbringing in the pagoda—years before the age of eight—reads as a return to the precolonial Khmer way of life.

> Quelques mois plus tard Sôya quitta pour toujours ce monde. Les voisins qui étaient des personnes charitables observant la Loi de Bouddha, veillèrent son incinération et élevèrent Sôphat, chacun dans la mesure de ses moyens. L'enfant vécut ainsi, grâce à la générosité des gens du quartier. Quand il eut six ans, les villageois le conduisirent à la pagode. Tous

[301] Amratisha, 50.
[302] Amratisha, 56; footnote 20, The Royal Decree of 10 November 1911, quoted in Charles Bilodeau, *Compulsory Education in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.* Paris: UNESCO, 1955, p. 63.

> les moines acceptèrent avec joie d'assurer sa subsistance et son éducation. L'enfant d'ailleurs était doué du meilleur caractère de tous les élèves.[303]

Sophat's adoption by the village and monks following his father's abandonment and his mother's death reflects the author's political and social hopes of Khmerization. Even though the French protectorate of Cambodia was established in 1863, Cambodia's education reform under the French colonial administrators did not occur until far later. The declaration that "all children in Indochina, whether French or Indochinese were to have instruction identical with that available in France," was a myth, as "the second cycle of secondary level [of schooling] was not available in Cambodia until the 1930s" (Amratisha 57).[304] The Buddhist environment in which Sophat is raised determines his identity, early on, as he receives his first education in the pagoda. It must be noted that in addition to being a modern Khmer novel, *Sophat* is a commentary on Khmer morals. It is no surprise then that "it was read by virtually all Khmers educated in the Cambodian school system from the 1950s up until the present (excepting of course the mid to late 1970s)", as *Sophat* "served as a means of *transmitting* cultural mores and ideals to [one's] parents and possibly older siblings" (Smith ii). In other words, Sophat is the Khmer model citizen to whom Cambodian readers can aspire. With the decline in formal Buddhist education at the pagoda, modern Cambodian readers

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[303]The addition of *Sôphat* cited here is the most recent French translation (translated by René Laporte et Pech Thinh, with annotations by Hoc Dy Khing), Ed. ANGKOR, 2015.

[304] The French colonial education reforms in Cambodia were indeed ambitious, considering Cambodia's "School Life Expectancy" (https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook). While the 2008 SLE rate for Cambodia is 11 years (10 years for girls), the 1918 school plan goals included 13 years of education (6 years of primary curriculum and 7 years of secondary curriculum—divided into two cycles: Cycle 1 lasting four years; Cycle 2 lasting three). At the end of the 13 years, students, who successfully passed the *baccalauréat*, had the possibility of gaining admission into an international university in either Hanoi or France (as there were no universities in Cambodia at the time). See Amratisha, 57.

Also note: "Collège Sisowath was upgraded into the fully-fledged lycée" with full instruction in French, becoming the only school to offer "secondary education up to the Baccalauréat until the late 1950s" (60).

could treat the Khmer novel as a pedagogical tool to absorb the traditional moral education of the past.[305]

Gender Tribulations. How Sophat, the Orphan Emerges as a Khmer Hero.

The conflation of the birth of *Sophat*, the novel, and Sophat, the protagonist mirrors the metaphor of Khmer precolonial origins and the colonial metaphor of adoption. In a novel that focuses on the Father-Son drama of Lok Suon and Sophat, Sophat's birth mother (Soya), appears to be a minor character. However, the protagonist's origin story begins with Soya, thus complementing the Khmer Empire's matrilineal history. From the very beginning, *Sophat* opens with a presentation of Lok[306] Suon [Monsieur Suon], before introducing Soya into the novel. Though Lok Suon is not revealed to the reader as Sophat's father until Chapter 5, the novel begins with the hero's birth father, followed by a portrait of his birth mother.[307] Technically, the reader meets Sophat upon meeting Soya, as he sits silently inside her womb. The novel begins with the following passage :

[305]The first generation of Boston Khmer who fled the Khmer Rouge in the late 20th-century can be seen to carry on certain Khmer traditions, namely in the realm of education. In the chapter, "Schooling in America," Anthropologist Nancy Hefner-Smith writes that Cambodian parents expected American teachers to provide their children with "moral education." Like the monks in the pagoda, teachers were expected to act as a "second mother" or "second father" to their children. She states: "Khmer parents expect schooling not to be value-neutral or ethnically relativistic but to reinforce the moral training children receive at home. Parents view teachers not primarily as inculcators of knowledge or skills but as honored partners in the project of moral education. Thus, parents often comment that they "give" (*aoy*) their children to the teacher, which makes the teacher a "second mother" (*mae chong**) or "second father" (*ov* chong*). Elders exhort children to view the teacher not as an equal but as a moral superior who deserves the respect and obedience. In line with this view, parents expect that teachers will deal firmly with their children if they misbehave in school. Parents themselves may severely discipline children who skip school or behave badly in class." *Khmer American: Identity and Moral Education in a Diasporic Community.* Berkeley: U of California, 1999. pp. 123-150.

[306] While "Monsieur Suon" is an appropriate translation, it does not carry the same honorific meaning as "Lok" in Khmer.

[307] In Cambodian culture, Soya would be considered his "wife" (in Khmer), outside of the law, based on the implications of her living with Lok Suon. In a "western" reading of *Sophat,* this isn't clear, nor is it translatable, since Lok Suon and Soya are not married in the legal sense.

> M. Suon, chef du district de Sérei Sôphôn (Sisaphon), était un jeune fonctionnaire au physique agréable et qui avait fait de solides études. Il n'avait que 23 ans, et pourtant il était en poste depuis deux ans déjà dans ce district. Il était célibataire et n'avait jamais demandé une fille en mariage ; mais les habitants du district savaient fort bien qu'il avait, depuis sept mois une liaison cachée avec une jeune orpheline appelée Sôya.[308]

In this way, Sophat's misfortunes may be read as a result of Buddhist influences, from his inescapable "kaam" (ក្ម), and the Khmer heritage derived from matrilineality.[309] Additionally, Sophat's genesis relates to the precolonial problem of Cambodia's problem of autonomy. The pre-colonial history of Cambodia, described as "wedged between the nation-states of Thailand and Vietnam," included its bordering nations' desire to acquire the Tonle Sap, "the Great Lake, the richest freshwater fishing ground in the world" (Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History,* 3). The Tonle Sap thus characterizes Cambodia's vulnerability and desirability. Knowing this historical information, it must be noted that the colloquial expression for "giving birth" translates to "crossing the river" (ឆ្លងទន្លេ pronounced "chlohng Tonlé").[310] Sophat—the child and the novel—thus intermix with the ancient Khmer history tied to conquest.

Moreover, the orphan figure appears in three different forms and people—from Rim Kin, to Soya and Sophat. Rim Kin, orphaned at the age of seven, produced a novel in which the protagonist's history begins with abandonment.[311] While Sophat inherits his destiny *maudit* as an

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[308] See p. 25 of *Sophat* (Editions ANGKOR 2015). Gérard Groussin's translation, *Sophat, ou, les surprises du destin. (*Editions L'Harmattan, 1994).also refers to Soya as an orphan.

[309] Understood in "western" culture as "karma," ក្ម is an integral part of Khmer culture. It should be noted that Cambodians and other Buddhist societies saw their social status as part of their fate. While the royals used *kaam* as a means of justification for royal inheritance, it motivated the Khmer Rouge to destroy hierarchies and social classes. See Chandler, p. 4. See "Additional Khmer Terms" for full translation of ក្ម.

[310] See Ch. 1, p. 11, footnote 1 of *Sophat*, 2nd ed., Smith.

[311] Khing 8.

orphan from his mother, his gender allows him to transcend his mother's tragic destiny. Within the first page of the novel, Lok Suon and Soya's relationship is written in history. Though Lok Suon is presented as a single bachelor, he is also described as having a not-so-clandestine relationship with Soya. What is difficult to translate, however, is the difference in Cambodian and "western" cultural aspects of marriage. Soya is not his legal wife, but by living with Lok Suon, she is considered his "wife," unofficially. In "Development of Legal Norms on Marriage and Divorce in Cambodia," Teilee Kuong distinguishes the Old Civil Code from the New Civil Code (2007) in Cambodia.[312] It must be noted that the legalized and "western" concept of marriage was introduced under the French protectorate in the Old Code, and that the New Code was implemented as a Japanese-Cambodian collaboration.[313] Kuong remarks: "Codified under the French colonial rule in 1920, the old Civil Code reflected certain aspects of Cambodian society under the monarchial regimes up until the early 20th century."[314] Even with the introduction of the Old and New Codes,

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[312] Kuong, Teilee. "Development of Legal Norms on Marriage and Divorce in Cambodia." *Nagoya University Asian Law Bulletin* 1 (June 2016): 69-81. *Http://cale.law.nagoya-u.ac.jp*. Center for Asian Legal Exchange, Nagoya University, 2016.
For the official Khmer and unofficial English translation of the Civil Code of Cambodia, see:
The Civil Code of Cambodia. Phnom Penh. Council of Ministers of the Royal Government of Cambodia. 2007. *Sithi.org*; Cambodia. *The Civil Code of Cambodia. Tentative English Translation.* Phnom Penh: Council of Ministers of the Royal Government of Cambodia, 2008. Sep. 172, 2008. *Cambodia Department of Intellectual Property Rights.* Council of Ministers of the Royal Government of Cambodia, 2008. Web. 28 May 2018.

[313] "Codification of the civil law in Cambodia started during the French colonial period and has since gone through changes from almost one century. Throughout these changes, there has been obvious reception of foreign legal thoughts and normative standards, the latest being through the drafting of the new Civil Code in 2007 with technical assistance from Japan." P. 70.

[314] Kuong, 73. See Footnotes 4 and 5. "The old Civil Code was promulgated in different stages. The first Book related to 'Person' was promulgated in 1912 by a Royal Decree signed on Nov. 20, 1911, whereas the remaining parts were promulgated in 1915 but did not come into force until the issuance of a Royal Decree to that effect on February 25, 1920." See: Jean Imbert 'Histoire des Institutions Khmères', *Annales de la Faculté de Droit de Phnom-Penh,* vol. 2, Phnom-Penh, 1961, p. 173.
"It is generally argued that evidence of social and legal practices in pre-modern Cambodian society is weak and under-documented. This research does not intend to argue otherwise but will mainly be based on finding reported by French and other researchers since the 1960s." See Jean Imbert, 'Histoire des Institutions Khmeres', p. 26; Jean Morice, 'Le Mariage et le statut familial de la femme au Cambodge', *Annales de la Faculté de Droit et des Sciences Economiques de Phnom-Penh,* vol. 4, 1962, pp. 137-138.

many Cambodians find the registration process to be difficult, and continue to pursue pseudo-marriages. In the DC-Cam's academic journal, *Cambodia Law and Policy Journal,* Dorine Van der Keur presents the cultural and societal issues in regards to pseudo-marriage and pseudo-divorce in Cambodia.

> In Cambodia many couples do not register their marriage at the civil registry because they find the registration procedure too cumbersome. Couples usually only go through the first stages of the registration procedure […] but do not bother to actually register the marriage at the commune council. Many Cambodians, especially in the countryside, do not understand the value of registration, and attach more value to the Buddhist marriage ceremony. (16) [315]

Kuong also addresses the complications of the civil registration of marriage: "This has become a serious conceptual challenge for the traditional Cambodian society, as most of married couples during the previous regimes did not go through the legalization process" (77-78).[316] Though "*de facto* cohabitation of a couple is now referred to as [an] illegitimate marital relationship," many couples continue to ignore the civil code.[317]

Considering the legal history of marriage, Soya and Lok Suon's cohabitation must be considered in the context of the Civil Code, put into effect during the French colonial period, and the conflicting Khmer traditions at this time. Even though an unlawful marriage was deemed

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[315] Van der Keur, Dorine. "Legal and Gender Issues of Marriage and Divorce in Cambodia." Ed. Heather Anderson. *Cambodia Law and Policy Journal* 2 (July 2014): 1-22. *The Cambodia Law and Policy Journal*. Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2014.

[316] See Kuong, 77-78. Also, Footnote 31, on the Khmer Rouge regime and "*de facto*" relationships between ["unofficial"] husbands and wives.

[317] *Ibid.* 77-78; Footnote 32. See also, Article 958(2) of the new Civil Code. See also *The Civil Code Part 6,* a textbook in Khmer prepared in March 2012, by the working group of legal professionals including potential trainers at the Royal Academy for Training of Judges, supported by JICA and the Japanese Ministry of Justice, p. 26.

illegitimate, Kuong notes that "a socially legitimate marriage was a wedding ceremony to be organized under the name of the parents, guardians or elderly parents standing as the patron(s) of the couple, and the subsequent *de facto* cohabitation of the couple" (77-78). The combination of her gender, age, and orphan status, places Soya in an extremely vulnerable position: The reader infers that by cohabiting with Lok Suon, Soya is without any family—immediate and extended.[318] The specifics of the old Civil Code included making the marriage public, in addition to civil registration.[319] A public marriage served as proof—in front of one's parents and social circle.[320] In Soya's case, being an orphan without any family to look after her meant the impossibility of obtaining a witness, let alone the consent to a legal marriage. Thus, her cohabitation with Lok Suon could never occur subsequently.

Lok Suon's exploitation of Soya is evident in the juxtaposition of their literary portraits. The reader learns through his reception of a letter that he is actually a "city boy" from Phnom Penh, ready to return "home."[321] Excited to return to his hometown and his birth mother, he forgets about Soya, who is revealed to be pregnant with Sophat. In the 2016 French edition of *Sophat*, Lok Suon laments the following:

> 'Mon Dieu,' pensa-t-il, 'je suis arrivé dans ce district il y a deux ans déjà et depuis cette époque je suis séparé de Phnom-Penh, qui est ma ville natale. Je n'ai pas pu y retourner

[318] In a lecture on *Sophat*, Linda Pheng states that Soya and Lok Suon are considered married by Khmer standards. Noting Lok Suon's gender, age, and superior social class, Pheng notes that Lok Suon takes advantage of Soya's vulnerability. Pheng, Linda M. "Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute. Intermediate Khmer." Wisconsin, Madison. 27 July 2017. Lecture.
[319] *Ibid.* 77-78. "The old Civil Code attempted to draw a technical line separating this social or cultural legitimacy of a marriage from the concept of legal legitimacy. Any marriage which had not been notified to the public and not been filed to the local registrar for registration was considered invalid under Articles 138 and 159." See footnote 36 on Article 138. "Marriage is not the ceremony in conformity with religious rules or tradition, but the only fact of a man and a woman declaring in public that they both agree to conclude a contract of husband and wife."
[320] Kuon, 78; footnote 36.
[321] See, p. 25 (Laporte and Thinh); p. 13 (Groussin)

> encore, et ma mère qui est veuve[322] est restée seule et je pense à elle chaque jour. C'est merveilleux de pouvoir retourner à Phnom-Penh, pour y prendre mes nouvelles fonctions !'
>
> Et à cette pensée, le visage de jeune fonctionnaire s'éclaira. Mais tout d'un coup la joie qu'il éprouvait à l'idée de bientôt retrouver sa mère s'évanouit et sa physionomie s'assombrit, car une image venait de la frapper brusquement : 'O Soya, mon cher amour ! Elle est enceinte de cinq mois maintenant, et si je l'abandonne ainsi, ce sera bien mal de ma part. Et pourtant je ne puis songer à l'emmener avec moi. Quand je suis parti pour rejoindre mon poste, ma mère m'a bien recommandé de ne pas chercher à me marier, car elle a des projets en ce qui me concerne. Elle a déjà choisi la jeune fille que je dois épouser, et s'est engagée vis-à-vis de ses parents. O Bouddha, je ne sais que faire. (24-25)

In the first half of this passage, the reader learns in the following order that: Lok Suon's hometown is Phnom Penh, the capital; his mother is widowed and alone; he dreams of returning to his widowed mother and *ville natale*, Phnom Penh. At this point, Lok Suon had been dreaming of Phnom Penh and his widowed mother, and had forgotten about Dear Soya. Upon remembering Soya and his unborn child, he snaps back into reality, and his joy is immediately replaced by grief. The hypothetical likeliness of abandoning Soya leads him to call out to Buddha in despair. Based on his internal monologue, Lok Suon's intentions are clear. Though never explicitly stated, the difference in their social standing allows Lok Suon to justify his abandonment of Soya and their future child. While Soya is orphaned without family, his betrothed's family in Phnom Penh can be assumed to be of a similar social class to Lok Suon. These obvious differences in status must be noted, as they reflect the Khmer traditions of hierarchy and social relations which would shape the

[322] The figure of widows and orphans consistently (re)appears throughout the novel

Khmer Rouge ideology of the 1970s. Soya and Sophat's class difference, the abundance of *veuves* in the novel, and the distinction between urban and rural Cambodia, represent the hybrid identity of Cambodia in the 20th century. Even in a novel which attempts to exclude and efface non-Khmer characters from the text—the social, cultural, and historical landscape of Cambodia fused of French and Khmer elements cannot be unwritten. The widowed mother and Phnom Penh, presented together as one entity, illustrate the mixed-identity of the French protectorate. Moreover, Lok Suon's association of Phnom Penh with Home and work reveal the meeting-point of modernity and tradition in colonial Cambodia.

The figure of the *veuve,* the widowed mother in Phnom Penh, may also be read as a symbol of Khmerness bordering on the extinction. Though the capital is progressive, urban, and more marked by foreign influences than the Cambodian countryside, the capital symbolizes and represents the entirety of the Khmer Kingdom.[323] Thus, the desire to return to Phnom Penh and look after *la veuve* reflects a need to preserve Khmer culture and identity.

Rim Kin could not have imagined, though, the dangerous forms of Khmerization to come in the decades after the publication of *Sophat.* The distinction between rural and urban Cambodia, visible in the novel, presages the Khmer Rouge's division of Old and New Khmer. Lok Suon's privileged position as urban (a city boy from Phnom Penh), and a loyal *fonctionnaire* of the government of the Kingdom of Cambodia under the French Protectorate, would place him in the most vulnerable position as an enemy ("new people") in Democratic Kampuchea. Though being classed as part of the "old people" did not guarantee one's survival, it should be noted that Soya's family background and orphan status may have extended her chances of survival in Cambodia—

[323] Based on Lok Suon's excitement and anticipation of his "nouvelles fonctions," the reader can infer that the capital city is full of more excitement and challenges than Sisophon.

in theory but not in practice—as the Khmer Rouge killed the educated and elite members of society, as well as members of the peasantry, and the CPK.[324] Though Rim Kin did not know this at the time, the class distinctions in *Sophat* would forebode the mass extinctions of the Khmer Rouge.

Soya, l'orpheline, ou Soya, *kohn kat* [កុនកាត់]?

While both French translations present Soya as an *orpheline*[325], the Khmer version does not start by referring to her as such. Rather, it is implied by use of the expression: "srey menerk" (ស្រីម្នាក់), which literally translates to: a "woman (or girl, lady) alone", thereby implying her abandonment.[326] To add to this description, she is now depicted as five-months pregnant,[327] and soon to be abandoned, again. Soya's physical entrance immediately follows Lok Suon's "lamentation" over his ill fate. This particular passage is important, as her phenotypical description with ethnic implications varies significantly among the two French translations (Groussin, and Laporte and Thinh), and the Khmer version. Here, I will present the two portraits of Soya, as well as my translation of the original Khmer into English. The Khmer text presents a beautiful portrait

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[324] See Smith's 2nd edition of *Sophat,* Ch 2, "Soya's Story" offers a brief background of her family history. Her parents are described as farmers with "possessions", implying that they were middle-class landowners, or part of the more privileged tier of members of the peasantry.
Kiernan notes in *The Pol Pot Regime* that two types of peasantries existed in Cambodia. Most were small landowners. Therefore, the fact that Soya's parents were landowners does not imply that they were affluent or extremely privileged. Also note that the Khmer Rouge saw the peasants *without* land as the most appealing group for CPK recruitment. They targeted "teenage children"—in particular the ones "who had no enduring ties to land or traditional village community." Pp. 6-7.

[325] The Khmer term for "orphan", "komprir" (កំព្រា) does not appear until Chapter 2. While it is used to refer to both Soya and Sophat, it remains inseparable from Soya's identity and name. In the French translations, she is referred to as "Soya, l'orpheline"; in the Khmer text, "komprir" remains attached to her hip and name: "Soya komprir" (សុយាកំព្រា). See Ch. 2 of *Sophat*.

[326] See Smith, p. 1

[327] It must be noted that their relationship began 7 months before. This adds to Soya's stigma as a vulnerable, young orphan girl in 20th-century Cambodia. Based on the descriptions provided in Chapters 1 and 2 of *Sophat*, we can infer that Soya has no one to look over or take care of her, which is also a marker of her class. With this in mind, Lok Suon—though respected by most Cambodian audiences—can be viewed as taking advantage of a young girl, who remains "alone."

of Soya, and alludes to her "mixed" background. The following is the description of Soya, in Khmer, followed by my translation:

> វេលានេះស្ត្រីម្នាក់ចូលមក។
> នាងនោះមានរូបឆោមលោមពណ៌ល្អភាពជាស្រីថៃ[328]ពាក់កណ្តាលស្រីខ្មែរ[329]ពាក់កណ្តាល
> ពោះជ៉ោងបន្តិចឲ្យសំគាល់ដឹងថានាងមានផ្ទៃ។[330]
>
> [At this moment, a woman, alone, enters. This young girl has a pretty picture, a nice color with the qualities of a Thai woman, a half-Khmer woman. Half of her stomach is slightly inflated, indicating that she is pregnant.]

Though her physical traits--described as "half-Khmer"--do not necessarily prove her inter-Asian "blood," they are worth observing and exploring, particularly in relation to the history of the precolonial Angkor Kingdom and the colonial Kingdom of Cambodian under the French Protectorate.[331]

> From the second half of the thirteenth century that the powerful kingdom of Kambuja began to weaken and had to face the growing power and threat of the Siamese kingdom of Ayutthaya. Siamese attacks were stepped up around 1350 and they continued until the capital city of Angkor Thom was sacked in 1432. The following four centuries from the abandonment of Angkor to the establishment of the French protectorate in 1863 were considered to be the 'dark ages' in the history of the country. Cambodia had to defend

[328] "A Thai girl/woman"
[329] ពាក់កណ្តាល ("perrkahdaal") translates to "half", "halfway", "at the middle", or "part". Here, it precedes ស្រីខ្មែរ ("srey Khmer"), or "Khmer girl/woman".
[330] See Smith, p. 3 (line 6, Ch. 1)
[331] See Amratisha, 33.

herself against both Siamese and Vietnamese expansion; the capital city was moved time and time again.

The centuries of ongoing war with invasions and interactions with the Siamese, Vietnamese, and French, among others, define Cambodia's history and mixed identity. Thus, Soya's ambiguous physical appearance can either be read as the complex history of precolonial border wars between Cambodia and its neighbors, the colonial presence of the French in the late 19th and 20th centuries, or simply, the mixed-ness of *Khmer,* itself. From the description, we can infer that Soya's "beautiful" skin color is of a lighter complexion, implying that she is of "mixed-blood," perhaps of part Thai (or even Sino) descent. Her facial features aren't defined; she is nonetheless portrayed as having the qualities—or essence—of a "half Khmer woman." The most striking aspect of this passage is the *halfness*, explicitly mentioned. Groussin's translation of *Sophat* into French alludes to Soya's ethnic "impurity," but he cuts out the "half" that defines Soya: "À ce moment, une femme arriva. Elle présentait la jolie silhouette et le beau teint des Khmères qui ont du sang siamois et son ventre légèrement gonflé indiquait qu'elle était enceinte" (Groussin 14). Interestingly enough, he preserves the author's portrayal of her ethnic ambiguity and possible Thai roots—and if anything, he *highlights* it and uses it to justify her beautiful skin color and figure. Referring to "le beau teint des Khmères qui ont du sang siamois," he also implies that there are others like Soya in Cambodia, which contradicts the idea of *Sophat* as a purely Khmer novel.

The excess of the language of "halfness" takes over Soya to point of effacing her personhood. While Soya's ethnic and/or racial ambiguity defines her, the "half" that juts out from her stomach exceeds her. Political theorist Iris Marion Young—borrowing from literary critic Julia Kristeva—considers how the pregnant body experiences a "splitting of the subject" and a "redoubling up of the body" (Kristeva 31; Young 48). Adding to the abundance of halves, Soya

is 5-months pregnant—a little over midway through gestation. The half that "exceeds" Soya can be read as where her narrative ends, and where Sophat's history begins.[332] In addition, the "splitting" that occurs in pregnancy must be considered in parallel to the *défigurement* of the body. Groussin's translation refers to Soya's stomach as "légèrement gonflé," but Laporte and Thinh identify it as "peu arrondi."[333] Yet, the word, *gonflé,* is used to describe the body found in the water, which is mistaken for Sophat's corpse: "En réalité Sôphat n'était pas mort. Le noyé qu'on avait trouvé était un autre jeune homme qui, désespéré s'était jeté à l'eau pour se suicider. Le grand mandarin et sa famille n'avaient pas reconnu le cadavre car il était gonflé et défiguré."[334] The association of *gonflé* to a state of disfigurement in the most recent edition of *Sophat* complements "the tendency of medical conceptualization to treat pregnancy as disease," which according to Young, further alienates the pregnant woman (Young 57). The physical manifestation of Sophat in Soya's expanding uterus, at the five-month mark and the second trimester of her pregnancy, can arguably be considered her first death. The visibility of Sophat, from her "rounded" stomach signals both a conclusion and a beginning; Sophat's arrival and her departure: The splitting of her "self" occurs at the moment of her visible bodily transformation. Thus, Sophat's existence overrides and overwrites Soya's narrative. Following her death, Soya's name only returns in conversation upon Lok Suon's "discovery" of his son. Sophat is able to conquer his orphan status—becoming the first Khmer hero in a prose novel—and avoids being classified as an "impure" *komprir* (កំព្រា).[335]

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[332] See Young, "Pregnant Embodiment: Subjectivity and Alienation." 49; 54.
[333] Not only is Soya's stomach described as "peu arrondi," but all of Khmer women's stomachs are: [Soya] "était très jolie, avec un teint éblouissant, et portait un corsage court et lâche, ce genre de corsage que revêtent les femmes khmères lorsqu'elles sont enceintes, même et leur ventre n'est encore que peu arrondi." Khing, 26.
[334] *Ibid.* 58. The discovery of the body occurs on the night of Mann Yann's intended wedding day. Believing the body to be Sophat, she attempts to drown herself. She is saved, by good fortune, by a fisherman who brings her to Sophat.
[335] Orphan; *orphelin*.

Soya's potential status as "kohn kat" (កូនកាត់),[336] is literally *erased* from the history of *Sophat*, in the 2016 French Edition (Laporte and Thinh). In this translation, there is no mention of her resemblance to a "half-Khmer" or "part Thai" woman.

> Sur ses entrefaites une jeune femme entra dans la maison. Elle était très jolie, avec un teint éblouissant, et portait un corsage court et lâche, ce genre de corsage que revêtent les femmes khmères lorsqu'elles sont enceintes, même et leur ventre n'est encore que peu arrondi. (26)

Whether or not she is of Thai-Khmer descent, her phenotypical uncertainty renders her incomplete: Both halves would never make her full Khmer, *Khmer suht* (ខ្មែរសុទ្ធ) or *Kohn Khmer* (កូនខ្មែរ).[337] Though Soya's parents are presented in Chapter 2 as farmers, and assumed to be Khmer, the superfluous symbol of *halves* extends beyond the Khmer novel and colonial reality of the 20th century. If the modern novel is a true reflection of Cambodian society, then it would reveal the social and political tensions between Cambodians and non-Cambodians. Yet, it would go beyond that, in presenting Cambodian anxieties of *classement* and *métissage.*[338]

In *Les Enfants de la colonie,* Historian and Sociologist Emmanuelle Saada addresses the colonial fear of growing *métissage,* specifically in Indochina. Referring to Indochina as the "laboratoire pour la question métisse," she emphasizes the colonial fear of the thousands of illegitimate and abandoned children.[339] She notes the following: "C'est en Indochine que la 'question métisse' a été formulé le plus tôt et avec le plus d'intensité. C'est là aussi qu'ont été

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[336] The author never refers to Soya as "kohn kat" ["mixed-race"; *métisse*], but he refers to her appearance as "half-Khmer". In Khmer, s/he would be considered "kohn kat", or "mixed-race". "Race" in Khmer, សាសន៍ ("saah"), does not convey the same meaning in English, as it can also refer to nationality, religion, and ethnicity.
[337] Both, *Khmer suht* (ខ្មែរសុទ្ធ), and (កូនខ្មែរ) refer to "pureblood" Khmers. See "Glossary of Khmer Terms."
[338] P. 29. Saada, Emmanuelle. *Les Enfants de la colonie.* Paris : La Découverte, 2007.
[339] P. 15, Indochina is described as "le lieu d'une formulation très précoce et très appuyée du 'danger' que représentait pour la colonie l'existence de milliers d'enfants illégitimes et abandonnés"

élaborées les premières solutions, à la fois sociales et juridiques, exportées ensuite au reste de l'Empire français."[340] Indochina was thus the place in which a) The *Métis* Problem posed the biggest threat, b) solutions for the problem were proposed, c) the 1928 decree treating the status of *métis* was created.[341] Although the information presented refers specifically to the French colonial perspective in relation to their colonies, and the definition of "*métis*" is restricted to the colonial European and indigenous encounters, I consider "*la question métisse*" on the other side—from the (male) indigenous perspective.[342]

The prevalence of "mixed-race" encounters in colonial Cambodia, for example, is useful in interpreting the literary and political Khmerization efforts by Cambodians in the early-mid 20th century. Noting that to be "*métis*" is to be both "hybride et bâtard," Soya's status as potentially half-Thai, half-Khmer *and* her orphaned status make her *almost métisse.*[343] Situating *la question métisse* with the literary-political Khmerization efforts of the colonial period allows us to interpret *métissage* from the Cambodian nationalists' point-of-view at the time. In particular, it would be most useful to consider the Khmer equivalent of the modern-day usage of the term *métis* [mixed-race]. The Khmer audio language dictionary, Kheng.info, defines the Khmer term, *kohn kat* (កូនកាត់), as a "person of mixed parentage, half-breed, Eurasian." The term, which can either

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[340] Saada, 35-36.

[341] Saada, p. 15, 35. See also, p. 13. The decree was published on Nov. 8, 1982 in the *Journal official de la République française.* "Il s'agit d'un décret, publié le 8 novembre 1928 au *Journal official de la République française,* 'déterminant le statut des métis nés de parents légalement inconnus en Indochine." This was also the first time that the word, "race", appeared in a legal text. See the specific articles 1 and 2, p. 13.

[342] Not only did the definition of *métis* restrict itself to colonial European and indigenous relations—it also required being *bâtard.* Saada, p. 15. "Les métis posent problème. Mais qu'est-ce qu'un *métis* ? Dans les usages coloniaux, le plus souvent, le mot renvoie aux individus nés d'un « Européen » et d'une « indigène », hors des liens du mariage », comme on dit à l'époque. La plupart du temps, ils ne sont pas reconnus par leur père et finalement abandonnés par lui : le métis colonial est à la fois un hybride et un bâtard."

[343] *Ibid.* Definitions of "métis", pp. 15; 29.
I emphasize her *almost métis*se identity based on her being a hybrid-orphan. However, her racial/ethnic ambiguity implies interAsian origins; *métis*, here, requires being born of a "union légitime d'un colonial et d'une indigène ou bien, phénomène encore plus rare, du mariage d'une Européenne et d'un autochtone, ne posent pas problème. Ils sont même rarement désignés comme 'métis'" (29).

be translated into French or Englsih as "*métis*" or "mixed-race," is composed of the Khmer noun for "child" (កូន) and verb for "[to]cut" (កាត់).[344] More precisely, the second half of *kohn kat* is defined as follows:

> កាត់ (*v.*) to cut, slice, slit; to divide, detach; to penetrate, pass through, cut through/across, take a short cut; to interrupt; to solve, untangle; to settle (a matter to a legal case)

Soya's orphan and possible hybrid status can be interpreted through the dissection of *kohn kat*. Removing the "child" from its other half of itself, *kohn kat*, is left with the "cut." Soya's orphan status thus reads as a child *cut* off from any family—but also from society—as a subaltern. Whether or not she is *kohn kat,* in the sense of being *métisse*—interethnically or interracially—she symbolizes the growing concerns of what can be called "The Non-Khmer Problem." In other words, Soya's misfortune and severed ties with society—upon the death of her parents—reflect 20th century Khmer fears of Otherness, or that which is not purely Khmer.

The surge in modern Khmer publications in the 20th century, born out of the fear of Khmer cultural extinction, was soon destroyed by the extremists of Khmerization: The Khmer Rouge.[345] The misfortune of Soya, the orphan and illegitimate widow, forebode the atrocities of the Khmer

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[344] កាត់ is also defined as "(*adj*) to be hybrid, of mixed blood or ethnic origin." However, this would be like defining the "part" in "part French" as "mixed" (race).
It is also defined as "to ignite, catch/start (of a fire)."

[345] Sociologist and demographer Patrick Heuveline estimates that "between 1.2 million and 2.8 million – or between 13 percent and 30 percent" of Cambodia's population were killed during Pol Pot's regime. According to UCLA Newsroom, Heuveline's project—which "[evaluates] the methodology behind the 12 most cited estimates of the death toll" in Cambodia—attempts to produce a trustworthy measure of deaths in order to reduce genocide doubt. Sullivan, Meg. "UCLA Demographer Produces Best Estimate Yet of Cambodia's Death Toll under Pol Pot." *UCLA Newsroom*. UCLA, 16 Apr. 2015.
For the original report, see Patrick Heuveline's published study, "The Boundaries of Genocide: Quantifying the Unvertainty of the Death Toll during the Pol Pot Regime in Cambodia (1975-79)", in *Population Studies: A Journal of Demography*. 69.2 (2015): 201-18.

Rouge. Upon the withdrawal of its colonial mother, and the reign of Pol Pot and his brothers, late 20th century Cambodia transformed into a country of widows and orphans.[346] Cambodians can thus be considered to be the descendants of widows and orphans. Cambodian identity, today, is even more difficult, if not impossible, to define due to the unforeseeable Khmer exodus. If the Khmer language is still a determining factor of Khmerness, then today's language barriers, nationality, and interethnic-interracial marriages threaten the traditional conceptions of Cambodian identity. Re-Khmerization efforts are resurfacing in the 21st century, in an attempt to define who and what is Khmer (ខ្មែរ). Unlike the previous movements, however, today's Khmerization attempts are founded on collective recovery—in the form of archiving, passing on the Khmer language and culture, and in healing—as well as an attempt to push beyond the past in the form of a Khmer Renaissance.

Glossary of Khmer Terms[347]

[346] Dy, p. 64. "Democratic Kampuchea was one of the worst human tragedies of the 20th century. The regime claimed nearly two million lives and left tons of thousands of widows and orphans. Several hundred thousand Cambodians fled their country and became refugees." For a report on the Khmer Rouge's island of women/widows, see also, pp. 44-48, "Koh Khsach Chunlea: An Island of Widows" (Kalyanee Mam), in "Searching for the Truth. Number 5, May 2000."

[347] The translation of the words from Khmer into English and French, is based on my own understanding of the terms in the three languages shown. The pronunciation column includes Kheng.info's pronunciation and spelling

English	Original (Khmer)	Pronunciation	French Translation
mixed-race	កូនកាត់	IPA: /koonkat/ “kohn kat”	*métis*
Purebred (Khmer)	កូនសុទ្ធ	/koonsot/ “kohn suht”	*pur-sang*
Pure Khmer	ខ្មែរសុទ្ធ	/kmaesot/ “khmaï suht”	*Khmer pur ;* *Khmer de pur sang*
Purebred (Khmer)	កូនខ្មែរ	/koonkmae/ “kohn khmaï”	*enfant khmer*
orphan	កំព្រា	/kɑmprie/ “komprir”	*orphelin*
woman, alone (on her own)	ស្ត្រីម្នាក់	/strəymneak/ “suhtrey menerh”	[Translated into *orpheline* in Ch. 1]
blood	ឈាម	/c^{h}iem/ “chieehm”	*sang*
race (also nationality)	សាសន៍	/sah/	*race*

using the International Phonetic Alphabet, followed by my phonetic spelling. The application of the terms presented in this table has been verified by my SEASSI (Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute, University of Wisconsin-Madison) Khmer language instructor (អ្នកគ្រូ) Linda Marie Pheng, and my parents, Kenneth Thay So (សោ ឌុង ថៃ) and Theany Kim Chandabot So (សោ គឹម ចាន់ដាបុត ធានី). The Khmer orthography and definitions were derived from Kheng.info. Though these Khmer terms are not directly used in *Sophat,* and are compiled based on the prevalence of their use in quotidian social settings, I find that they are pertinent to the study of colonial and blood-related familial relations in this chapter.

		“saah”	
flesh and blood	សាច់សរសៃ	/sacsɑɑsay/ “saick sahsawhy”	*chair et sang*
to mix; to accumulate	ប្រមែប្រមូល	/prɑmaepraɑmool/ “brahmai bramohl”	*Mêler, entasser*
mother	ម្តាយ	/mdaay/ “madaï”	*mère*
Khmer	ខ្មែរ	/kmae/ “Khmaï”	*Khmer*
half; in the middle of; halfway	ពាក់កណ្តាល	/peakkɑndaal/ “perrh kuhndaowl”	*moitié; à mi-chemin*
wife	ប្រពន្ធ	/prɑpʊən/ “brahpohn”	*femme*

Cambodian Familial Glossary
Compilation of popular terms in Khmer used to address family, friends, strangers (i.e. merchants, acquaintances)

Khmer word	**Pronunciation (mine**	**Kheng.info definition(s)**
បង	/bɑɑŋ/ "bong"	(*n*) **Elder sibling**; (*adj*) to be older, elder; (*pron*) I/me/my (husband to wife, older sibling/ friend to younger sibling/ friend); you/your (wife to husband, younger sibling/ friend to older sibling/ friend).
ពូ	/puu/ "pou"	(*n*) **Uncle** (younger brother of either parent); (*pron*) you/ your (respectful term of address to older men)
លោកពូ	/lookpuu / "lok pou"	(*n*)**Uncle**; (*pron*) you / your (addressing a male in one's parent's generation; used to show respect) Derived from the combination of: លោក (*n*) monk; man (esp. one who is respected); (*n*) world, sphere of existence; universe; (*pron*) you/ your (used in addressing adult males who are of approximately equal rank with the speaker and Buddhist monks); he/ him/ his (used in referring to adult males who are of approximately equal rank with the speaker and to Buddhist monks); sir, mister (commonly used before a title or given name) + ពូ (*n*) Uncle
អ៊ឹម or អ៊ំ(Preferred spelling in Phnom Penh)	/om/ "om"	(*n*) **Elder sibling of one's parent**; (*pron*) you/ your (to **uncle or aunt older than one's parent** or to older non-relatives in one's parents' generation)
មា	/mie/ "mihr"	(*n*) **Uncle (younger brother of one's father or mother)**

		(More common outside of Phnom Penh, especially in Battambang and western Cambodia)
បងប្អូន	/bɑɑŋpʔoon/ “bong puhown”	(*n*) **Brothers and sisters; siblings; relatives** Derived from the combination of: បង (*n*) elder sibling + ប្អូន(*n*) younger sibling
(កូន)ប្អូន	/koonpʔoon/ “(kohn) puhown”	**Younger sibling** កូន (*n*) child (of someone); offspring, progeny + ប្អូន(*n*) younger sibling
បងប្រុស	/bɑɑŋproh/ “bong pruhh”	**Elder brother** បង(*n*) elder sibling + ប្រុស(*adj*) to be **male** (of humans); (*n*) man, male
ប្អូនប្រុស	/pʔoonproh/ “puhown pruhh”	**Younger brother** ប្អូន(*n*) younger sibling + ប្រុស(*adj*) to be male
កូនប្រុស	/koonproh/ “kohn pruhh”	**Son** កូន (*n*) child (of someone); offspring, progeny + ប្រុស (*adj*) male
បងស្រី	/bɑɑŋsrəy/ “bong srey”	**Older sister** បង (*n*) elder sibling

		+ ស្រី (*adj*) to be female; (n) woman
កូនស្រី	/koonsrəy/ “kohn srey”	**Daughter** កូន (*n*) child + ស្រី (*adj*) female
បងថ្លៃ	/bɑaŋtlay/ “bong thlaaï”	**Older sibling-in-law** បង (*n*) elder sibling + ថ្លៃ (*adj*) to be expensive, dear, valuable; beloved; (*n*) an in-law of one’s own generation, the spouse of one’s sibling; also: (n) cost, price; value; (*v*) to cost, be worth
កូនបង	/koonbɑaŋ/ “kohn bong”	**First child, oldest child** កូន (*n*) child + បង (*adj*) older, elder
បងបង្អស់	/bɑaŋbɑŋʔah/ “bong bunawwh”	**Eldest sibling** បង (n) elder sibling + បង្អស់ (*adj*) to be the most, extreme, highest; the best/ most/ last/ first of all; (*n*) end, tip, peak, extremity, (*v*) to complete, conclude; (*v*) to consume, use up, exhaust, waste; to spend
ប្អូនបង្អស់	/pʔoonbɑŋʔah/ “puhown bunawh”	**The *youngest* sibling** ប្អូន (*n*) younger sibling + បង្អស់ (*adj*) the most, extreme (the very last)

កូនកណ្តាល	/koonkɑndaal/ "kohn kuhndaowl"	**Middle-child** កូន (*n*) child + កណ្តាល (*n*) center, middle; mean, medium; (*prenp*) between, in the middle of
មាសបង	/miehbɑɑŋ/ "mieh bong"	**Darling (wife to husband)** មាស (*adj*) to be dear, beloved, precious; (*n*) gold; (*adj*) to be gold (colored), golden; made of gold + បង (Wife addressing husband)
បង្កើត	/bɑŋkaət/ "bongkaowt"	(*adj*) **To be related by blood**; to be of one's own (flesh and blood), to be native; (*v*) to create, found, establish; to produce; to invent; **to give birth (to**), beget; to set up Colloquially, one often shortens this "*bongkaowt*" to "*kaowt*", and says "*kaowt kohn*" [(កើត) + (កូន)], to refer to "giving birth."
កូនបង្កើត	/koonbɑŋkaət/ "kohn bongkaowt"	**One's own child** កូន(*n*) child; offspring + បង្កើត (*adj*) to be related by blood; to be of one's own (flesh and blood); to be native
បងប្អូនបង្កើត	/bɑɑŋpʔoonbɑŋkaət/ "bong puhown bongkaowt"	**Brothers and sisters having the same parents** បងប្អូន(*n*) siblings + បង្កើត (*adj*) to be related by blood; to be of one's own (flesh and blood); to be native

ម្តាយបង្កើត	/mdaaybɑŋkaət/ “madaahy bongkaowt”	**Birth mother, real mother** ម្តាយ(*n*) mother + បង្កើត (*adj*) to be related by blood; to be of one’s own (flesh and blood); to be native
សាច់បង្កើត	/sacbɑŋkaət/ “saichk bongkaowt”	**Siblings (of the same parents)** សាច់ (*n*) flesh + បង្កើត (*adj*) to be related by blood; to be of one’s own (flesh and blood); to be native
ឪពុកបង្កើត	/ʔəvpukbɑŋkaət/ “apuk bongkaowt”	**One’s own father** ឪពុក (*n*) father + បង្កើត (*adj*) to be related by blood; to be of one’s own (flesh and blood); to be native
ក្មួយបង្កើត	/kmuəybɑŋkaət/ “khmuuy bongkaowt”	**Nephew or niece** ក្មួយ (*n*) child of one’s sibling, nephew, niece; affectionate term of address for young people of one’s children’s generation + បង្កើត (In this case—when paired with *bongkaowt*—it refers to blood-related nephews/nieces)
កូនបន្ទាប់	/koonbɑntoap/ “kohn bonthorp”	**The next child/following kid** កូន (*n*) child; offspring + បន្ទាប់(*adj*) to be next, next to; (*conj*) then, after that; (*v*) to come immediately after / behind.
កូនទីមួយ កូនទីពីរ	/koontiimuəj/ “kohn ti mouy” /koontiipi:/	**First child** (literally, “child, position 1”) **Second child** (“child, position 2”)

កូនទីបី	"kohn ti pee" /koontiɓəj/ "kohn ti bey"	**Third child** ("child, position 3")

Additional Khmer Terms [348]

Khmer	Pronunciation	English transl.	Add'l notes
ឥណ្ឌូចិន	/ʔɑŋ.doocən/ "awnhg-doh-chen"	French Indochina	*Indochine* (fr.)
ខ្មែរក្រោម	/kmaekraom/ "khmaï kraowm"	Ethnic Khmers of Southern Vietnam	ក្រោម , "under" or "beneath" (French: *sous*), modifies "Khmer." It refers to the geographic location of the ethnic Khmers in the *southern* region of Vietnam.
បរទេស	/bɑɑrəteeh/ "bah-roh-theh"	Foreign; foreign country; foreigner	*Étranger* (fr.) Listed as a noun in Kheng.info, but it can be used as an adj. to modify a noun. I.e.: Colloquially, one

[348] Khmer-English translations/definitions were derived from Kheng.info. "Additional notes" are either my own, or attributed to the historical source listed.

			may say, “សាសន៍បរទេស” (combination of “race”/ “nationality” + “foreign”), to refer to foreigners, especially “white people.”
អក្សរ	/ʔaksɑɑ/ “aah-sawh”	Script (as in Khmer script) (*n*) letter (of the alphabet); script/alphabet; written language; writing	អក្សរ may also refer to “handwriting”
សាស្ត្រ	/sah/ “saah”	(*n*) study, studies, learning, science, knowledge; the study of; explanation; rule; law or (*n*) text, book, document, manuscript; code of laws	
អក្សរសាស្ត្រ	/ʔaksɑɑ/ “aah-sawh-saah”	Literature	អក្សរ refers to an alphabet letter, a written language, and/or (hand)writing
ខ្មែរដើម	/kmaedaəm/ “khmaï daowm”	Native Cambodia, Cambodia by birth	“ដើម” means “original” or “first.” The expression, “ពីដើម” means “ago” (as in “long ago”). Ben Kiernan transliterates this into

			"*Khmaer da'em*" and translates it into English as "Original Cambodian." He notes that the pseudonym appeared "in his handwritten contribution to a Khmer student magazine in Paris. *Khemara Nisit,* no. 14, August 1952. Keng Vensak." (*The Pol Pot Regime,* 1st ed., p. 11).
ច្បាប់	/cbap/ "chbaap"	(*n*) law; rule, regulation; (legal) code; custom; moral precept, code of conduct; gnomic poem	
កម្ម	/kam/ "kaam"	(*n*) action, act, deed; activity; object; consequence / result (esp. of a past deed), karma (the doctrine that good conduct brings good results in this or subsequent lives), fate; action / thoughts (esp. of an evil nature in a prior existence which produce effects in a subsequent existence)	
ទេវី	/teivii/ "tey-vee"	(*n*) female deity, goddess, nymph, divine female creature	Present in Buddhism, as well as Vedic Hinduism; Sanskrit origins

ទេវ	/teiveaʔ/ “tey-veh”	(*n*) god, deity (masculine)	“ ”
ទេវតា	/teiveaʔtaa/ “tey-vuh-daa”	(*n*) deity; angel; supernatural being; benevolent spirit (male or female)	“ ”
ទេវរាជ	/ teiveaʔriec/ “tey-veh-riehch/	God-king; epithet of Indra	“ ”

Chapter 3. Cambodian Family Albums: Tian's *L'année du lièvre* and Cambodian "New Aesthetics"

> *The children of exiled survivors, although they have not themselves lived through the trauma of banishment and forcible separation from home and the destruction of that home, remain marked by their parents' experiences: always marginal or exiled, always in the diaspora.*
>
> Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* [243]

The previous chapters have looked at family metaphors in French Indochina—from the French-collaborationist attempts to "fix" Annamite daughters into the role of wives and mothers in Chapter One, to colonial family metaphors, sibling rivalry, and fratricide in Chapter Two. This chapter focuses on Franco-Cambodian artist Tian's three-tome graphic novel, *L'année du lièvre* (2011-2016), as well as on the "new aesthetics" movement underway in the Cambodian Diasporic community. The returning themes of my dissertation—family and inheritance—weave their way into this chapter, in the form of transmitted histories and memories enclosed within what I call a "Cambodian family album," passed on to the successive generations of Cambodian genocide survivors.

The conceptualization of the Cambodian family album derives from a) the creation and history of *Yizkor* books by Holocaust survivors, b) Postmemory proponent Marianne Hirsch's

reading of family photographs, c) the translation of "photo album" into Khmer [សៀវភៅសូម្រាប់បិទរូបថត], and its literal translation from Khmer to English: "book designated for sticking pictures," and d) my reading of Tian's *L'année du lièvre* as a personal and historical photo album.[349] I argue that Tian's graphic novel is a family album: Combining Hirsch's notion of postmemory, and James E. Young's reflections on monuments and memorials, I interpret Tian's graphic novel as, what I call, a "postmemorial family album" or a "postmemorial book."

If we are to take Hirsch's notion that a "picture described verbally is the same whether it 'exists' or not," then Tian's verbal and hand-drawn pictures must be considered as a collection of memories transmitted from one generation of Cambodians to the next, in the form of a family album.[350] The overlap of the year of Tian's birth, 1975, Year of the Hare, and the historical association of 1975 with the Khmer Rouge takeover of Phnom Penh and Cambodia reveal the impossibility of separating the author's personal-familial history from the larger History. The belated capturing of these personal-familial histories in *L'année du lièvre* should thus be read as a (Cambodian) family album. Like the *Yizker bikher,* the pre-, inter-, and post-Khmer Rouge histories of Cambodian communities—inside and outside of Cambodia—are pasted in the pages of the graphic novel, and passed along to second- and third-generation Cambodians. The creation and transmission of the Cambodian family album extends the notion of family, as it transforms

[349] *Yizker bikher* refers to the "memorial books" that "contain historical accounts of community life before the destruction as well as detailed records of the genocide that annihilated those communities. They contain photographs as well as texts, individual and group portraits evoking life as it was *before.* They contain accounts of survivors' efforts to locate the remains of their family members in order to give them a proper burial, and they detail the acts of commemoration devoted to the dead." Hirsch 246-247.

[350] Referring to Marguerite Duras' 1984 novel *L'Amant,* originally titled "La photographie absolue," Hirsch states: "The novel actually originated with a box of old photographs." What I mean by a "verbal picture" alludes to Hirsch's interpretation of Duras' "[la] photographie absolue," which she suggests is "composed in direct opposition to formal portraiture." Adding to this, she remarks: "As Duras verbally describes a picture that was not taken she bypasses the technical properties of photography and reappropriates the process of 'touching up,' taking it to an extreme." Hirsch 199-202.

into a transnational book, in which members of the Diaspora partake in inscribing their own memories and ascribing their own meaning to the album. The literal translation, from Khmer into English, of the term "photo album" [សៀវភៅសម្រាប់បិទរូបថត] – "book designated for sticking pictures" – emphasizes the fragmentary and creative nature of postmemory. While it would be problematic to conflate the individual and collective experiences of the Cambodian genocide and the Shoah—Hirsch's notions of "new aesthetic" and "postmemory" can nonetheless be applied to the present Cambodian literary-arts movement. I argue that, like Jewish *Yizkor* (memorial) books, Cambodian family albums resist victim narratives and oppose the dominant modes of historicizing genocide. In addition, I turn to the field of memory studies, Asian American studies, as well as the history and resurgence of the literary and visual arts scene in Cambodia in the late 20th and 21st centuries, in order to refute the characterization of second- and third-generation survivors as inactive and passive recipients of first-generation memory.

Yizkor books, in Michlean J. Amir and Rosemary Horowitz's article, "*Yizkor* Books in the Twenty-First Century: *A History and Guide to the Genre*," are defined as "texts written primarily by Holocaust survivors in their countries of resettlement, in conjunction with individuals who left their hometowns before the war" (39). The memorial books are typically divided into pre-, inter-, and post-war periods, and their purpose serves to "commemorate the life and the death of Eastern European Jewish life."[351] Similar to the *yizkor* books, which "memorialize their relatives and neighbors" and "describe the world in which they lived prior to the Holocaust," *L'année du lièvre* commemorates the life and the death of Phnom Penh in three volumes, and recounts pre- and post-Democratic Kampuchea life.[352] Tian's three-tome graphic novel personifies Phnom Penh, and in

[351] Amir and Horowitz, 43, 53.
[352] *Ibid.* 40, 41. Amir and Horowitz note that while each book tends to focus on one town, "there are books for particular countries," as well.

doing so, mourns a life, a community, and a nation that *was*. In particular, the Phnom Penh memorialized in the album is the Phnom Penh of Tian's postmemory—an imaginary city.[353] What Hirsch refers to as an "elegiac aura of the memory of a place" can be applied to child survivor Tian's postmemory of Phnom Penh (244). Postmemory, "distinguished from memory by a generational distance and from history by deep personal connection," is not simply a transmission of memory from one generation to the next, but an "imaginative investment in creation."[354] Hirsch notes that while the notion of postmemory was developed "in relation to the children of Holocaust survivors," postmemory "may be useful to describe other second-generation memories of cultural or collective traumatic events and experiences" (22).

> Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can neither be understood nor recreated. (22)

While postmemory applies to second-generation survivors who "remain marked by their parents' experiences," Tian straggles the line between first and second generation.[355] As a child survivor – born in 1975, Year of the Hare – he would be part of what Susan Rubin Suleiman refers to as the "1.5 generation," having been "too young to have had an adult understanding of what was happening […] but old enough to have *been there*."[356] Suleiman coins "1.5 generation" with child

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[353] Referring to her parents' past hometown, Hirsch states: "The Czernowitz of my postmemory is an imaginary city, but that makes it no less present, no less vivid, and perhaps because of the constructed and deeply invested nature of memory itself, no less accurate. The deep sense of displacement suffered by children of exile, the elegiac aura of the memory of a place to which one cannot return, do not create, in my experience, a feeling of absence." Hirsch 243-244.
[354] Hirsch 22.
[355] Hirsch 242.
[356] See Susan Suleiman's article, "The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust," *American Imago* 59.3, 277; 283.

survivors of the Holocaust in mind, but like Hirsch's "postmemory," the concept could be applied to other cases of ethnic, racial, and religious persecution. The specificity of the "1.5 generation" in the Cambodian context, and its overlapping with certain first-, and second-generation traits, will be discussed further on in this chapter.

Cambodian family albums, like *Yizkor* books, are "acts of witness and sites of memory," as well as "acts of public mourning" (Hirsch 246-7). Young notes that memorial books serve as "symbolic tombstones" for "a murdered people without graves" (7).[357] In contrast with Judeo-Christian, funerary traditions, however, which usually consist in the placing of a headstone or monument, the acts of a) burning incense, and b) cremating [the dead] more accurately represent Cambodian postmemory. It should be noted that the Theravada Buddhist funeral rites practiced by most Cambodians include cremation, followed by the burial of the ashes of a corpse, rather than the burial of a corpse. A few components of these Buddhist funeral rites must be noted, in order to demonstrate the specificities of Cambodian mourning and postmemory: 1) Death, which is central to Buddhist religion and philosophy, differs from the "western" concept of death, as it is not marked by finitude. As Anthropologist Anne Yvonne Guillou remarks in her article, "An Alternative Memory of the Khmer Rouge Genocide: The Dead of the Mass Graves and the Land Guardian Spirits [*Neak Ta*]": "The Khmer system of mourning and memory is not based on a linear principle, which would suppose that suffering and loss would be gradually lessened by the work of time and rituals of death. It is based on a circular principle that can be called a 'switch on/switch off'" (218).[358] Moreover, death in Buddhism signals a transitory stage; the preparation for a rebirth.

[357] Hirsch also notes that the *yizker bikher* "contains accounts of survivors' efforts to locate the remains of their family members in order to give them a proper burial, and they detail the acts of commemoration devoted to the dead." Hirsch 246.

[358] What Guillou refers to as "switch on/switch off" entails the dead visiting the living, in the form of dreams, for example: "The dead burst forth again from time to time into the world of the living, especially via dreams." Guillou 218.

2) Two particular moments in Cambodian Buddhist funeral rites should be stressed: a) the third or seventh day following one's death b) the 100th day following one's death. Cambodian Buddhist funeral rites include the cremation of the body on either the third or seventh day after death. It is, however, the 100-day ceremony, which serves as a memorial service, that is usually attended by a larger audience of Cambodian family and friends, held either at a local Cambodian pagoda, or the family's home.[359] Cremating the body is a part of the process of releasing the spirit from the living world, in order to prepare for the next cycle of life. It is not the lack of a burial, then, that causes the spirit to disturb or haunt the living on earth, but the lack of proper funeral rites—entailing a proper cremation, and a 100-day commemorative ceremony. 3) In addition, family funeral rituals determine whether or not the dead can move on, and prepare for reincarnation.[360] What Guillou refers to as "normal death" refers to the Buddhist funeral rites practiced before Cambodia's transformation into Democratic Kampuchea: "Usually, the rituals performed during 'normal death' begin with religious assistance to the person who has died by reminding him/her of the principle of impermanence and helping him//her to leave the material world" (216). In juxtaposition to "normal death," Guillou describes "'bad' and 'collective' deaths" as the mass graves, or the corpses that "were abandoned in unknown places, away from home" (216). In particular, the lack of a *bangskol* ritual [បង្សុកូល]—a significant part of the Buddhist funeral rites, in which monks cover "the corpse or the ashes" with the *bangskol* — may contribute to the

[359] The following information is based on my own personal and familial experiences of Cambodian Buddhist funeral rites—particularly the 100-day ceremony for my paternal grandfather, So Bun Hor, in Northern California in 2008, and the 100-day ceremony in *la pagode Munisikkharam* in Couilly Pont-aux-Dames, France, for my *Lok Ta* [លោកតា], Eap Chin Bun, whom I consider my Grandpa. For more information on Cambodian funeral rites, see Adhémard Leclère's *Cambodge; la crémation et les rites funéraires*, 1906. See also, Paul Williams and Patricia Ladwig's *Buddhist Funeral Cultures of Southeast Asia and China,* 2012.
[360] For more on "Family Funeral Rituals," see Guillou, 216-218.

interference of restless corpses in the land of the living (216).[361] It should also be noted that during the Cambodian Festival of the Dead, *Pchum Ben* [ភ្ជុំបិណ្ឌ] – also known as "Festival of the Hungry Ghosts," and "Ancestor's Day" – the dead roam free and join the living during the two-week period.[362] Guillou notes the particularities of the festival following the Democratic Kampuchea period: "The festival was particularly relevant to paying tribute to the dead whose bodies were missing and had not received proper funerals, because the *phchum ben* is essentially a collective ritual that aims to help all the 'souls' to reincarnate" (218). 4) Finally, *kaod* [កោដ្ឋ], the cremation urn, "used to hold the ashes of cremated humans after the cremation ceremony," represents the limits of externalized forms of memory, particularly in the case of transnational commemorative practices.[363] In particular, the (post-)1970s Cambodian exodus, has impacted the process of burying remains. To illustrate the transnational issues of the disposition of remains, I turn to medical anthropologist Gay Becker's study of first-generation Cambodian refugees' reflections on death and on their homeland. I also examine the ways in which the cremation process has changed following the Democratic Kampuchea period. Becker describes in detail the funeral rites practiced by Cambodian Americans, and notes the transnational and transcultural issues that have interrupted the mourning process.

> One reason people express the wish to die in their homeland is the question of how their remains will be kept. Traditionally in Cambodia, people were cremated and their ashes kept

[361] Kheng.info defines បង្សុកូល [/baŋskool/] as a) a "discarded rag (esp. one which was wrapped around a corpse and which was later picked up and reused by a monk), b) a "piece of cloth placed over a casket and removed by a Buddhist monk; the act of removing this cloth; funeral service where monks offer prayers for the soul of the deceased", c) "(pile of) dust, litter, rubbish; discarded rags," d) "to chant a funeral service, perform funeral rites; to transfer merit to the spirits of the dead." See also, Guillou 216, Footnote 31. For more on the *bangskol,* see Erik W. Davis' "Weaving life out of death: the craft of the rag robe in Cambodian ritual technology" in *Buddhist Funeral Cultures of Southeast Asia and China,* 2012.

[362] Kheng.info defines the 15-day festival ភ្ជុំបិណ្ឌ [/pcumbən/] as "the major annual Buddhist festival held to honor the ancestors; somewhat similar to Memorial Day or All Souls' Day."

[363] See "A Brief History of Urns." *The Urns. Nothing is Permanent.* See also, Young 5.

> at the temple. But the temples in the United States are too small to store people's ashes. […] Because the temple lacks space, families kept ashes at home, creating a shrine by placing a Buddha and flowers around the container. Some families were afraid of ghosts, however. They wanted to send their loved one's ashes back to Cambodia and place them at the temple. When a person dies in the United States, a family member tries to eventually take the ashes to Cambodia, to store the ashes at the temple in the family's village.[364]

In addition to the issue of space, hauntings, and tradition, "the cost of storing ashes in U.S. cemeteries is considered to be […] unaffordable for most families."[365] The same financial constraints interfere with many first-generation Cambodians' desire to "return to Cambodia to die."[366] Concerning the disposition of remains of Cambodian Americans abroad, the U.S. Embassy of Cambodia notes that, "most families choose to have their loved one's remains cremated in Cambodia, and to have the urn shipped back to them in the U.S."[367] Despite a desire to properly commemorate the dead, post-1970s Cambodian displacement has transformed the burial process by containing the ashes in U.S. cemeteries alongside a headstone or a cremation monument, thereby offering the impression of providing closure for the families of the deceased. Yet, as noted earlier, death in Buddhism is central and circular. Considering this, I argue that the cremation urns, or *kaod* [កោដ្ឋ], in the post-1970s period, have much like public monuments become memorialized, removing "the obligation to remember" (Young 5).[368] In particular, I am thinking

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[364] In her 2002 study, Becker examines elderly Cambodian American, as well as Filipino American, immigrants' reflections on death and on the question of homeland. See "Dying Away From Home," S86.
[365] *Ibid.*
[366] Becker S85.
[367] See "Disposition of Remains." *U.S. Embassy in Cambodia*.
[368] Building off of Pierre Nora's postulation of the negative correlation between the externalization of memory – in the form of physical constructions of memory-sites and monuments, for example – and one's own experience of memory, Young notes: "In this age of mass memory production and consumption, in fact, there seems to be an inverse proportion between the memorialization of the past and its contemplation and study. For once we assign monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember. In shouldering memory-

of the public unveiling of the stele in Parc de Choisy, in the 13th arrondissement of Paris, on April 17, 2018, to commemorate *la chute de Phnom Penh* on April 17, 1975, and to those who perished under the Khmer Rouge regime. In addition, the discovery of hundreds of unclaimed cremation urns [កោដ្ឋ] in 2015 at Wat Langka (Phnom Penh), that were abandoned during the Khmer Rouge occupation of Cambodia, illustrates how the physical collection and containment of ashes "rigidifies [memory] in its monumental forms."[369]

> Before the fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge, hundreds of urns—known in Khmer as *kaod*—were hidden in a brick alcove behind the main hall of the pagoda on Sihanouk Boulevard. In the years afterward, more urns were added to the collection as the monks in the pagoda used the alcove as a place of safekeeping for valuable urns made of silver or bronze.
>
> A handful of people returned to the pagoda to reclaim their families' remains, with limited success. Apparently, a majority of the family members had perished before passing on information about the location of the urns of their loved ones. Many of the labels have deteriorated to the point of illegibility and it is believed that bad luck will ensure if one opens another family's *kaod.*[370]

While cremating the corpse is necessary in order to free the spirit from its body, the process of finding the ashes a home may interrupt the cycle of rebirth, and cause the living to be visited by

work, monuments may relieve viewers of the memory burden." Young 5. See also Pierre Nora's "Entre mémoire et histoire," *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 1, xxvi.

[369] Young 15.

[370] 464 "uncovered urns" were "rediscovered by Sleuk Rith Institute Chairman Youk Chhang" in 2015 at Wat Langka, Phnom Penh's "second largest pagoda." Chhang, Youk, Savina Sirik, Ouch Makara, and Demy Reyes, 8-9.

the dead.[371] It should be noted that the continued practice of Cambodian funeral rituals stems less from a need to eulogize a life, and more from a desire to prevent the visitation of ghosts and spirits, or *kmaoc* [ខ្មោច]. Postmemorial Cambodian family albums—or the creative art forms used to commemorate personal and family histories—are useful in activating memories, burying the ghosts of one's, or one's family's past, and *burning* one's own demons. While postmemorial albums conflate private and public memory, they primarily serve second-generation survivors. Unlike the physical cremation process, Cambodian family albums invite the successive generations to contribute to the endless memory-work, by a) transforming the postmemorial text/album itself through active participation, and b) constructing their own family albums, in literary and art forms, such as film, graphic novel, essay, poetry, and music; what Cathy Schlund-Vials calls "Cambodian American memory work."[372] In particular, I consider how the Cambodian family album is a postmemorial text, much like how Young reads the memory-site as a malleable and interactive text. The reader, like the visitor of a memory-site or memorial, contributes to the reconstruction of the text, through her or his own presence and experience of the site/text.

In order to illustrate the creative and active aspect of postmemory, I turn to two Khmer expressions involved in Buddhist funeral rituals, and national and cultural celebrations—such as *Pchum ben* and Cambodian New Year: 1) *duht tuup* [ដុតធូប] and 2) *duht kmaoc* [ដុតខ្មោច]. The word, *duht* [/dot/], which appears in both expressions, means "to burn" or "to light [a fire]." The first term, *duht tuup* [/t^{h}uup/], translates to "to light/burn incense"; the second term, *duht*

[371] While some Cambodians build shrines and keep their loved one's ashes in an urn at home, most prefer to place the urns in a pagoda, so that they can be looked after by monks. It should be noted that in the case of the unclaimed urns at Wat Langka, the monks are responsible for looking after the urns.

[372] See Young xii; 15. Working with Young's notion of "memory-work," Schlund-Vials defines "Cambodian American memory work" as a "reimagination of (via cinema, literature, hip-hop, and performance) alternative sites for justice, healing, and reclamation. See Schlund-Vials, *War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work*, 16-17.

kmaoc [/dotkmaoc/] translates to "to cremate." However, *duht kmaoc* literally means "to burn ghosts" or "to burn spirits." Reading the Cambodian family album as one intended for the postmemorial generation, I reapproriate the terms, *duht tuup* and *duht kmaoc*, and apply them to the ritual and mourning process involved in facing, or burning, the familial ghosts of the past. Burning ghosts, or cremating the dead, in postmemorial albums does not seek an end goal of full recovery—but seeks to develop new processes of mourning reflective of postmemory, which is both fragmentary and "full."[373]

The belated form of creating memories can be understood as a part of what Hirsch refers to as the "new aesthetic" of the diasporic community – "one which assembles and reconstructs personal and domestic images that are individual yet collective, fragmentary yet continuous, revealing both breaks and interconnections" (215). I apply Hirsch's "new aesthetic," or "the aesthetics of postmemory"—"a diasporic aesthetics of temporal and spatial exile that needs simultaneously to (re)build and to mourn"—to the Cambodian context (245). What I call the "Cambodian New Aesthetics" complements Schlund-Vial's notion of "Cambodian American memory work." Additionally, the "Cambodian New Aesthetics" includes the transnational works produced within and beyond Cambodia and America, including productions by French and Canadian artists of Cambodian heritage.[374] With this in mind, I consider how Tian, a French

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[373] "Postmemory—often obsessive and relentless—need not be absent or evacuated: it is as full as empty, certainly as constructed, as memory itself." See Hirsch, *Family Frames,* 22.
Jennifer Cazenave's analysis of Franco-Cambodian filmmaker Rithy Panh's 2013 film *L'image manquante* may be useful for visualizing Cambodian postmemory. Reading the burial scene of the filmmaker's father (depicted in the form of a clay figurine), Cazenave interprets the repetitive gesture of tossing dirt over his body as a "never-ending burial." See Cazenave, "Earth as Archive," 45. See also, Rithy Panh's *L'image manquante,* 2013.

[374] What I refer to as the "Cambodian New Aesthetics" involves the reimagination of traditional Khmer art and performance. For example, Long Beach, California-born choreographer Prumsodun Ok has recently formed Cambodia's first all-male and gay dance production, *Prumsodun Ok & Natyarasa*. In January 2019, during my research trip in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, I attended *Prumsodun Ok & Natyarasa*'s performance, "*Vajramala: Spirit of Khmer Dance.*" Ok's transnational production reflects the hybrid aspect of Cambodian identity, as he reimagines the Khmer royal ballet: Dancers perform to traditional Khmer music, as well as "foreign" and popular contemporary music, such as UK singer-songwriter Sam Smith's 2014 hit song, "Lay Me Down." Also worth noting is that the

illustrator and child survivor of the Cambodian genocide, contributes to the "Cambodian New Aesthetics" movement through the genre of the *bande dessinée.* While *Impasse et Rouge* (1995) by Franco-Cambodian artist and child survivor Séra (Phouséra Ing) was the first graphic novel to visually narrate the personal and collective traumas of the Cambodian genocide, this chapter investigates Tian's *L'année du lièvre,* the first Franco-Cambodian *bande dessinée* intended as a trilogy.[375] *L'année du lièvre* invokes family lineage and ancestry in the form of family trees, hand-drawn maps, and pre- and post-Democratic Kampuchea family albums. In the three-volume album, Tian builds a fragmented archive of his own family history, which also reflects Cambodian collective memory across at least three generations – from direct survivors of the genocide, to the children and grandchildren of the first-generation. The Cambodian family album thus merges private and public memory, and serves as both contemporary and public art.[376] As noted earlier, Tian—who spent the first five years of his child hood in displacement—was able to access his family histories through the creation of *L'année du lièvre.* Yet, even before the production of his

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Khmer classical dance is traditionally comprised of a predominantly female cast. One of Cambodia's most renowned Khmer dancers is Princess Buppha Devi. See *Atlas Obscura's* coverage of Ok's dance company, "Meet Cambodia's First LSBTQ Dance Company," 2018: https://www.atlasobscura.com/videos/cambodia-first-lgbtq-dance-company

Also, refer to Ok's Ted Talk, "The Magic of Khmer Classical Dance. Prumsodun Ok," 2017: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEIYHTlbeLA

[375] Cambodian genocide survivor and French artist and novelist Séra has published graphic novels detailing the horrors of the Cambodian genocide, including *Impasse et rouge* (1995), *L'eau et la terre* (2005), *Lendemains de cendres* (2007), and most recently, *Concombres amers* (2018). The Khmer edition of Tian's *L'année du lièvre.*was released in 2016 (*Editions* Sipar). According to the artist's blog as of March 2019, the English edition, *The Year of the Hare,* will be released next. See, "Bientôt une version anglaise de l'année du lièvre...", *L'année du lièvre*, 19 Mar. 2019, Blogger, Web, 1 April 2019.

[376] I refer to the conflation of contemporary and public art with Young's juxtaposition between Holocaust memorials and contemporary art, in mind: "Where contemporary art is produced as self- or medium-reflexive, public Holocaust monuments are produced specifically to be historically referential, to lead viewers beyond themselves to an understanding or evocation of events." In addition, he suggests that "the performance of the Holocaust memorials" is dependent on "the conflation of private and public memory." Young 12; 15. In addition, in his article, "On Photography, History, and Affect: Re-Narrating the Political Life of a Laotian Subject," Panivong Norindr presents an alternative Laotian history, in the form of a memoir-essay to mourn his father. In what he calls a "public eulogy to mourn," Norindr breaks down the "divide between private and public spheres," and "between family and official histories." Norindr 89; 102.

graphic novel, one particular text activated his memory and *re-naissance*: Roland Joffé's *The Killing Fields* (1984). In his podcast interview with *France Culture,* Tian remarks:

> Mes parents parlaient très peu de ce qui s'est passé au Cambodge. Je ne connaissais même pas le Cambodge. Je ne savais pas du tout ce qui s'y était passé, et je crois que le film *La Déchirure* a été une ouverture, un petit peu, à la discussion. Puisque j'ai été intrigué par tout ça, je voulais y aller, et mes parents me disaient que j'étais trop petit… Et certaines personnes me parlaient du Cambodge parce qu'ils connaissaient le pays, et j'ai trouvé ça étrange que moi-même, qui suis né là-bas, n'a aucune référence, aucun souvenir. Et donc, par rapport à ça, je me suis vraiment identifié au personnage, parce qu'il est un petit peu en quête de ses origines, de son passé, et il essaie de déterrer un peu des choses. Donc, mon enfance était inconsciemment liée à ce parcours-là.[377]

Like Pran, Tian's wish to "deterrer un peu des choses" can be interpreted as a desire to unearth, little by little, and bring to the surface dormant memory traces. The film *La Déchirure* lanced Tian's personal and family *quête*, and particularly served as a tool to start a conversation with his family, as well as within the Cambodian Diaspora. In addition to unearthing private and shared memories, he reveals that the film medium allowed his parents to discuss what happened, and to grieve. In addition, *La Déchirure* faciliated the process of his retrieval of memories, and connected him to his Cambodian heritage and his past. When asked how, without having any memory of the first five years of his life, he was able to craft a graphic novel "stupéfiante de précision" and "quasi-documentaire," Tian states: "Alors, mes parents ne m'en parlaient pas quand j'étais petit, mais

[377] The character to which Tian refers is most likely the main subject/character of Roland Joffé's 1984 film *La Déchirure* [The Killing Fields], Dith Pran, a Cambodian photojournalist in Khmer Rouge-occupied Cambodia.

suite à la sortie de *La Déchirure,* je voyais bien qu'il y avait quelque chose qui n'allait pas…"[378] Regarding the absence of memory before his arrival in France in 1980, he relays the following:

> Je les ai découverts petit à petit parce que je crois que mes parents ont aussi entrepris un travail un petit peu… comment dire… Ils m'ont donné de petites anecdotes, des choses comme ça qui m'ont permis un petit peu… qui m'ont permis de retrouver des souvenirs, des odeurs, des sensations, des choses qui étaient vraiment oubliées… Et, euh, suite à la sortie de ce film, je voyais bien que mes parents pleuraient… Euh, entre eux, ils discutaient sur ces événements-là, et [de] temps-en-temps, ils me parlaient des petites anecdotes sur les Khmers Rouges, mais liées à mon enfance. Donc, quelque part… Euh, je pense inconsciemment pour eux, c'était une envie de… de transmettre des souvenirs. Et euh, j'ai longtemps cherché, moi-même, des souvenirs… poser des questions—mais liées à mon enfance, surtout. Et puis, euh, après, j'ai découvert ce que c'était le Cambodge, dans son aspect général, en fait, pas forcément lié à cette histoire tragique, mais ce que c'était le Cambodge sous [le] Protectorat français… puis, encore avant, c'était un empire qui avait, euh, dominé toute l'Asie du Sud-Est. Donc, quelque part, au départ, j'avais très honte d'être cambodgien, car je voyais toujours des reportages sur la misère liée au pays, et je [ne] comprenais pas pourquoi il y avait cette misère-là, et à chaque fois, on parlait du Cambodge comme un pays qui [était] vraiment très pauvre, qui avait besoin d'aide. Donc, il y avait quelque part une gêne. Et puis, après, quand j'ai découvert que c'était vraiment une grande civilisation avant, et puis que, par la force des choses, il a eu cette tragédie-là, je commençais quand même à réfléchir sur l'histoire de mes parents. Donc, il y a eu au départ

[378] See Roland Joffé's *The Killing Fields,* Warner Bros, 1984.

> une petite… euh, une petite discussion. Puis, après, ça s'est enchaîné… euh… des souvenirs, et donc, voilà.[379]

In addition to facilitating discussion, and initiating his parents' grieving process, the creative medium of film allows Tian to recollect and reclaim his own memory – little by little – through the belated discovery of his family history. The pre-1984 family silence, before the release of *La Déchirure,* can be read as characteristic of adult survivors. Suleiman notes this particularity inherent in first-generation survivors: "The phenomenon of decades of silence (or some version of silence) and the unconscious transmission of traumatic memories to children born after the war may perhaps be considered as 'forms of collective behavior that characterize the adult survivor generation" (285). It should be noted, however, that while Tian is the child of two adult survivors, he is also a child survivor, born during the war—not after the war. Tian's albums are more than memorial books that capture life before, during, and after the Khmer Rouge takeover of Phnom Penh, though. Rather than recollecting and narrating his parents' anecdotes, Tian actively reimagines them. While Tian may be considered a 1.5 generation child survivor, the way in which he transforms memory into an art form complements Hirsch's notion of postmemory; particularly the creative aspect of it, which is always in movement: "Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment in creation" (Hirsch 22). Tian's method of retrieving and sticking memory fragments may therefore be read against the notion that what is remembered is left in the past. Rather than simply translating his parents' anecdotes,

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[379] All of the quotes from Tian's interview with *France Culture* are my own transcription. For the full podcast interview, refer to Caroline Broué and Hervé Gardette's podcast episode, "Cambodge," *France Culture*, 2011. See https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/la-grande-table-1ere-partie/cambodge

recounted at least four years after escaping Democratic Kampuchea, Tian transforms them into hand-drawn photographs—bringing to the foreground his family's, and his lived experiences. The postmemorial album is thus brought to life through the collaborative efforts of his parents' belated anecdotes, the medium of film that provokes memory recall and discussion (Joffé's *The Killing Fields*), and his own "imaginative investment in creation."

L'année du lièvre, A Postmemorial Album.

Like the survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime, photos, memories, and keepsakes pre-existing the 1980s outlasted their intended destruction, and continue to act as tools to recount fragmented histories within Cambodian family album [សៀវភៅសូម្រាប់បិទរូបថត]. The translation of "photo album" into Khmer, *sierhpuhl sumraap buht ruuptawt* [សៀវភៅសូម្រាប់បិទរូបថត], or "book designated for sticking pictures," thus suggests an invitation to *enclose* memories in the book—rather than to close the book. The Khmer term for "photo album" [សៀវភៅសូម្រាប់បិទរូបថត] may be broken down into several words, 1) *sierhpuhl* [សៀវភៅ], or "book," 2) *sumraap* [សូម្រាប់], or "[designated] for," 3) *buht* [បិទ], either "to close," "to stick/to glue" [*coller*], or "closed"/ "blocked off" [*fermé; bloqué*], 4) *ruup* [រូប], or "portrait," or "photo," 5) *tawt* [ថត], or "to record" (i.e. record/document on camera), 6) *ruup tawt* [រូបថត], or photograph (reversing the words, *tawt ruup*, would mean "to take a picture" [*photographer*]). The specificity of Cambodian postmemory may be illustrated through the term *buht* [បិទ] in the photo album, or the family album. While *buht* refers to the act of gluing or sticking here, its additional meaning, to close—or to be closed, contradicts its intention of

binding.[380] Its function in the expression "photo album" emphasizes the creative act of assembling and fastening memories in a "book." The duel meaning of *buht* to mean either "to glue/to stick," and "to close" or "closed off/shut down," complements Young's criticism of "collective" and "common memory." Young states: "One of my aims is to break down the notion of any memorial's 'collective memory' altogether. Instead, I prefer to examine 'collected memory,' the many discrete memories that are gathered into common memorial spaces and assigned common meaning" (xi). His remarks on collective memory match the national and common memory shared by Cambodians of the diaspora. In other words, to be Cambodian – regardless of the familial generation – is to be a survivor, and to inherit the history of Democratic Kampuchea. Returning to the notion of *buht* and the Cambodian family album, second-generation Cambodians inherit a common memory of genocide and trauma, but are partially blocked off from the history.[381]

> They share instead the forms of memory, even the meanings in memory generated by these forms, but an individual's memory remains hers alone. By maintaining a sense of collected memories, we remain aware of their disparate sources, of every individual's unique relation to a lived life, and of the ways our traditions and cultured forms continuously assign common meaning to disparate memories.[382]

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[380] In Khmer, the word, *buht* [ប៊ិទ], is commonly used. It can mean "to close" or "to be closed." Used imperatively, "buht tvir" [ប៊ិទទ្វារ] translates to "close/shut the door." "Buht plurhng" [ប៊ិទភ្លើង] translates to "turn off the light." Or, it can be used to signal that something is closed or unable to be accessed: i.e. "haahng buht" [ហាងប៊ិទ], "the store is closed"; "pluwhl buht" [ផ្លូវប៊ិទ], "the road/street is closed/inaccessible/blocked."

[381] Regarding the illusion of a national common memory, Young notes: "Individuals cannot share another's memory any more than they can share another's cortex" (xi-xii). This notion is relevant, particularly within the Cambodia Diaspora: Many second-generation Cambodians learn through their parents the history of past Khmer grandeur, and learn about the Cambodia genocide, through either their family or the news. Cambodian national identity and heritage is also reduced to the event of genocide: For example, the first suggestion in the Google search bar for "Cambodian" is "Cambodian Genocide;" the first suggestion in the Google drop-down list for "Khmer" is "Khmer Rouge."

[382] Young xi-xii.

It is then, the act of collating and gluing the fragments of "disparate sources" that generates and produces memory.

Tian's family album, whether done consciously or not, counters the linear narration of Cambodian history that fixes the Cambodian genocide to the four-year span of 1975-1979. *L'année du lièvre* is an autobiographical album that captures the events of the Cambodian Genocide from 1975-1979, addresses the initial hearings against Khmer Rouge leaders in the 2009 Tribunal, and illustrates Tian's personal and familial *souvenirs* prior to, during, and following 1975-1979. The album, comprised of three volumes, contests the notion of 1975-1979 as a past history and buried memory. In addition to enclosing within the album the narrative of his own family's survival in Democratic Kampuchea, Tian communicates where his family members settled after 1980 (France and Canada), within a supplemental family album, at the close of the trilogy. In doing so, Tian transmits to the reader the history of the Cambodian exodus, and the Cambodian Diaspora, in the three tomes, published in 2011, 2013, and 2016. Within *L'année du lièvre*, the reader witnesses the narrator's birth, near-death, and symbolic rebirth in France. The overlap of the year of the author's birth, 1975, with the historical association of 1975 with the Khmer Rouge takeover of Cambodia, reveals the impossibility of separating the personal-familial history from the larger History. In particular, the figure of *le lièvre*, alludes to the trickster rabbit in Cambodia's oral and written folktales.[383] Additionally, the rabbit's wit—used to escape death countless times—reflects Tian's survival story. Much like Br'er rabbit and trickster tales from Africa, the Caribbean, and the U.S. South, Cambodian folktales are inundated with the cunning hare that uses its wits to outsmart others. Khmer linguist Chhany Sak-Humphry stresses the importance of the hare as hero

[383] Also worth noting is the representation of Jews as mice in Art Spiegelman's *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale. My Father Bleeds History* (1980) and *Maus II. A Survivor's Tale. And Here My Troubles Began* (1991).

in Cambodian culture, and includes the following stories, in her compilation of Khmer folktales titled, *Tales of the Hare:* "How the Hare, Caught in a Snare, Escape (and Rescued Some Fish!)," "How the Hare Escaped the Jaws of the Crocodile," "How the Hare Punished the Crocodile for Seeking Revenge," "How the Hare Rescued a Man and Punished the Crocodile," "Judge Hare and the Fish Trap in the Tree," "How Judge Hare Helped a Man Get His Wife Back," and "How the Hare Tricked a Spirit."[384] Judith Jacob also notes that the rabbit is "Brer Rabbit in a different setting," emphasizing his ability to "[escape] from death over and over again."[385] Thus, Tian's postmemorial album not only reproduces but, as I would argue, creates and reconstructs Cambodian memories—including the literary and oral histories preceding 1975-1979—and reimagines the trickster rabbit in the form of repeated survival tests depicted in his family album. Even for survivors of the genocide, the repetition of an escape from death follows them in the form of survivor's guilt, or in what Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub call a second holocaust, upon re-experiencing a traumatic event.[386]

The title of the trilogy, *L'année du lièvre* [The Year of the Hare], is engraved in the Cambodian collective memory as the beginning of the Cambodian Genocide. The takeover of Phnom Penh starts the three-tome narrative, and precedes the author's birth in the *bande dessinée.* The very first page of the trilogy depicts a framed, full-page panel. Beneath "chapitre 1," a representation of faceless men standing on a tank with raised fists, guns, and flags, is accompanied with the caption, "LE GLORIEUX 17 AVRIL 1975." The family album thus begins with a familiar illustration of The Fall of Phnom Penh – which appears similar to the historical recounting of the Cambodian genocide. In particular, the album opens with the monumentalization of "1975" as a

[384] For an exhaustive list, see *Tales of the Hare: 27 Classic Folktales from Cambodia.*
[385] *The Traditional Literature of Cambodia. A Preliminary Guide,* 16-17.
[386] See *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History.*

historical event. The caption, which is written in capital letters, "LE GLORIEUX 17 1975," mimics the inscription of tombstones, and commemorative plaques. Moreover, the Khmer Rouge takeover mirrors the domination of Tian's personal history and memory by 1975. 1975 -- the start of the erasure of time and the entry into the Year Zero -- also overshadows Cambodians' celebration of the New Year.[387] The flashbulb memory of the Cambodian Genocide -- synonymous with the fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge, April 17, 1975 -- nearly overlaps with the three-day celebration of the Cambodian New Year. In Khmer, "Chaul Chnam Thmey" [ចូលឆ្នាំថ្មី], "to enter the new year," refers to the beginning of the (Lunar) New Year, typically celebrated on April 13-14th. The New Year comprises an important part of Cambodian culture, and Cambodians of the Diaspora associate the date with the New Year. Yet, the commemoration of the Fall of Phnom Penh, and the Khmer Rouge takeover of Cambodia on April 17th overshadows April 13-14th, as well as the other cultural and historical traits of Cambodia that precede and follow 1975-1979. The historical date of *la chute de Phnom Penh* thus affects how future New Year celebrations will be shaped by the memory of the genocide. In particular, the overlapping events come to resemble the cyclical nature of a traumatic repetition compulsion: The birth of a (new) year is also synonymous with the death of a city and nation; the beginning of genocide. Time and chronologizing history is further complicated considering the Khmer Rouge's erasure of time and restarting of the clocks to Year Zero.[388] 1975 thus marks the start of its own erasure.[389] Though Tian cannot separate "1975" from his own history, the creation of the H/historical Cambodian Family Album can be read as a conscious attempt of reclaiming his and Cambodia's history beyond the containment of 1975-

[387] See also: Séra, *Impasse et Rouge,* Albin Michel, 2003, p. 24. Séra refers to the New Year, *l'année du lièvre*, on Monday, April 14, 1975, and alerts the reader that the Khmer Rouge are approaching.
[388] See François Ponchaud's *Cambodge, année zéro,* 1977.
[389] The pre-Democratic Kampuchea form of keeping time would not return to Cambodia until 1979. Thus, *L'année du lièvre* belatedly writes into history the erasure of historical records prior to 1979.

1979. Moreover, *L'année du lièvre* represents "the conflation of private and public memory" (Young 15). What appears as crystalized and an illustration of a historical record transforms, by volume 3, into a postmemorial album that finds itself in-between private and public art; past and present memory. Young's reflections on the memory-work from the Holocaust context may be applied here, to Tian's postmemorial album.

> Instead of allowing the past to rigidify in its monumental forms, we would vivify memory through the memory-work itself—whereby events, their recollection, and the role monuments play in our lives remain animate, never completed. In this light, we find the performance of the Holocaust memorials depends not on some measured distance between history and its monumental representations, but on the conflation of private and public memory, in the memorial activity by which minds reflecting on the past inevitably precipitate in the present historical moment. (15)

By the close of Volume 3. *Un nouveau départ,* the album re-opens itself, through the inclusion of a supplemental family album, entitled "Un nouveau départ après 1980." Rather than closing the three-tome album with a linear recounting of the Khmer Rouge history, the narrative moves forward, and beyond, with Tian's family's *re-naissance.* In a 2011 podcast interview with *France Culture,* Tian—who spent the first five years of his life in displacement from 1975 to 1980—notes that he has few memories of his childhood. His creation of *L'année du lièvre* enabled him to trace his forgotten history: "J'ai eu très peu de souvenirs de mon enfance. Je les ai retrouvés en réalisant cette bande dessinée, *L'année du lièvre*. Et du coup, quand j'étais petit, j'avais beaucoup de

souvenirs en France. Donc, j'avais l'impression que ma naissance a commencé dès que je suis arrivé en France."[390]

The desire to forget and to begin anew is a common and shared experience in first and 1.5 generation survivors. Tian's association of his birth with his arrival in France is comparable to filmmaker Rithy Panh's experience as a child survivor.[391] In particular, the graphic novel, like film, offers the possibility of freeing oneself of the weight of past and lingering unconscious memories. More importantly, however, Tian and Séra's graphic novels, and Panh's films, reconstruct and reframe history, from the point of, and for, members of the Cambodian Diaspora. In his article, "The Sounds of Everyday Life in Rithy Panh's Documentaries," Norindr remarks that the traumatic "incidents in history may have facilitated the discharge of affect, but more importantly, they have been translated into a film form that the filmmaker hopes will become the foundation onto which a new collective history can be built" (183). It should be noted, however, that these forms used to communicate memory are not fully accessible by the first-generation, and are therefore more useful for members of the second-generation. In "Un nouveau départ après 1980," Tian inscribes into the sub-album the following encounter with his mother. Turned towards his mother, Tian asks, "Alors, maman, tu l'as lu?," to which she responds, with the album in her hands: "J'ai essayé, mais je n'ai pas réussi à dépasser le 3^{e} chapitre. Ça doit correspondre à ta naissance…" Tian's mother thus closes the album prematurely, before her son's belated rendering

[390] See Caroline Broué and Hervé Gardette's interciew with Tian. "Cambodge," *France Culture,* 14 July 2011, France Culture, Web, 15 Jan. 2018.

[391] In his article, "The Sounds of Everyday Life in Rithy Panh's Documentaries," Norindr notes that Panh "resorts to cinema almost in desperation after struggling with his own despondency." Norindr also cites Halberstadt's interview with Panh, in which Panh remarks: "Quand je suis arrivé en France, après quatre années sous le régime khmer rouge, je voulais vivre simplement et tout oublier, jusqu'à ma langue maternelle. Il n'y avait plus de passé. Plus rien. Je faisais comme si je venais de naître. […] J'ai essayé d'écrire, mais rien n'arrivait à me guérir. […] Alors, j'ai commencé à faire des petits films en super-8, pour me calmer." See Norindr 183; 190, footnote 5. For the interview with Panh, refer to Michèle Halberstadt's "Les Gens de la rizière," *L'Avant Scène* 435 (1994), p. 3.

of his own birth. The seemingly contradictory overlap between prematureness and belatedness reflects Tian's status as being a member of the 1.5 generation, who experiences second-generation postmemory.[392]

The "Khmer Rouge Family Album" makes a brief appearance within the greater Cambodian Family Album. Situated at the halfway point of Volume 1, *Au revoir Phnom Penh*, and immediately following the chapter dedicated to the memory of the author's birth, Chapter 4: "Angkar," the "Khmer Rouge Family Album" emphasizes its place within the Cambodian common memory without becoming the dominant narrative. The juxtaposition of the two albums is observable through the titles, Chapter 3: "Veasna", and Chapter 4: "Angkar." The reader witnesses the birth of Chan Veasna – the author known as Tian – in the village of Ta Prom. The Chan tree, to which the author owes his name, reappears throughout the chapter, and stands over Chan and his family as a protector. His name reveals his family's attempt to merge his past and future destiny: "Chan Veasna, Chan c'est le nom de cet arbre qui pousse tout près de la cabane et Veasna veut dire destin, en espérant que sa vie sera heureuse."[393] Chan's birth in 1975 occurs on Democratic Kampuchean soil – the site of mass murder and destruction – but the Chan tree, deeply rooted in the soil and watching over Chan Veasna's family, pre-dates the Communist Party of Kampuchea.[394] Chan's parents attempt to override their misfortune by naming their child after the

[392] "Unlike the second generation, whose most common shared experience is that of belatedness […] the 1.5 generation's shared experience is that of premature bewilderment and helplessness. This characterization may appear inadequate […]. The operative word, however, is 'premature'—for if all those who were there experienced trauma, the specific experience of children was that the trauma occurred (or at least, began) before the formation of stable identity that we associate with adulthood, and in some cases before any conscious sense of self." See Suleiman 277.

[393] *L'année du lièvre,* vol. 1, p. 42.

[394] The first two pages of *Tome 3. Un nouveau départ* open with Tian's depiction of a literal killing machine, titled "La Machine Khmère Rouge," accompanied by the following text: "Animée par la perfection de l'idéologie, la machine khmère rouge s'enraye. Angkar continue à éliminer tous ceux qui s'opposent au régime. Après le nouveau peuple, les proches du pouvoir sont aussi visés. C'est la purge. 191 prisons politiques ont ainsi été découvertes depuis les événements, les plus connues étant Thma Kup (M-13) et Tuol Sleng (S-21)." The adjacent page,

tree. Moreover, Chan's shared birth place and time with the historical event of 1975 indicates that his personal-family album is also a survival tale in which generation occurs from destruction.[395] Moreover, the author's birth, which occurs alongside the Chan tree, on Democratic Kampuchean soil, functions as a part of the endless Buddhist life cycle of life-death-rebirth.

The visual and verbal play on cultivation -- in the form of the Chan tree in volume 1, and the family trees in volumes 2 and 3 -- and the visual and verbal depictions of Khmer Rouge ideology of *déracinement* in volumes 1-3, speak to the themes of survival and destiny. The subsequent chapter following the birth of Chan Veasna must be considered in regards to its symbolic and literal meaning. Chapter 4, "Angkar" [អង្គការ], or "organization," immediately follows the preceding chapter, "Veasna" [វាសនា], or "destiny." The Angkar, which refers to the leaders of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, can be interpreted in at least two ways: The political organization controlling Democratic Kampuchea (The Khmer Rouge), and the structured act of "organizing," ordering, and arranging. What I refer to as "The Khmer Rouge Family Album" occurs at the start of Chapter 4, "Angkar."

The "Khmer Rouge Family Album" reads as a separate narrative a part of the trilogy-Album: It interrupts the reading process, visually and narrative-wise. The uniformed panels, minimalistic design, and use of gutters -- which appear for the first and only time throughout the trilogy -- complement Angkar's [អង្គការ] fixation on organization and structure. The "Khmer Rouge family album" is limited to two pages, in which each page includes clearly defined gutters

captioned "Tuol Sleng (S-21) in Phnom Penh, 1978, depicts a group of Khmer Rouge officers surrounding the detention center. The first panel includes a balloon with the exclamation, "Bienvenue à Tuol Sleng!"

[395] Referring to the creation of generations, Suleiman notes that the Holocaust created a new generation; the particular act of "*surviving* the Holocaust—was a shared experience that created a generation, indeed, more than one" (280). The Cambodian Genocide, and the act of "surviving" under the Khmer Rouge, can also be interpreted as the source for producing new generations.

used to separate three tiers of two panels. In the two-page spread, Khmer Rouge propaganda is succinctly exclaimed in each panel; the outline of Angkor Wat, and dramatic red shading, is repeated to symbolize Democratic Kampuchea, blood, and communism. Remaining true to The Angkar's "faceless" organization, the Khmer Rouge members are featured without any facial features, aside from the mouth – which is either represented by a single line in the form of a smile or a neutral expression, or a left- or right-angle bracket used to indicate a mouth agape. While it is tempting to separate it from the rest of the whole of Tian's Cambodian Family Album, the history of destruction must be read as a part of the History of family memories and survival.

Volume 2, *Ne vous inquiétez pas*, expands on the Khmer Rouge's attempts of suppressing genealogical family ties under The Organization (Angkar). The recurring appearance of trees throughout the volume stands against Angkar's intentions of uprooting and eradicating Cambodian genealogy, culture, and identity. Like the "Khmer Rouge Family Album" in Volume 1, Tian demonstrates the CPK ideology by inserting into the narrative an organizational chart of Angkar's classless hierarchy. At first, the organizational chart appears to contest the author's family trees -- which the reader encounters in a two-page spread at the start of Volumes 2 and 3 – yet, after reading the organizational chart in relation to the Khmer translation of "organizational chart" and "destiny," the Khmer Rouge and Cambodian Family Albums merge together.[396] The top of the chart, "Angkar," represented by a monstrous and watchful eye, replaces the protective Chan tree represented in Volume 1. The redundancy of the "organization" appears in the Angkar's translation ("The Organization"): it also sprouts from the tentacle of the watchful eye ("Tout est organisé […]"), and manifests itself in the form of an organizational chart.[397] Translating the Khmer

[396] Vol. 2, Ch. 3 opens with worker ants, representative of Angkar. The Khmer Rouge's eradication efforts are depicted beneath the image: "ANGKAR PREND GRAND SOIN DE VOUS! TOUS FRÈRES, SOEURS, PÈRES, MÈRES! LE PEUPLE EST LE CERVEAU D'ANGKAR!"
[397] Vol. 2, Ch. 3, p. 34.

expression for "organizational chart" reveals the Khmer Rouge's inability to rid itself of "Veasna": "Destiny", as well as Chan Veasna's genealogy. The combination of the words, "Angkar" [អង្គការ], "organization", and "leik" [លេខ], which means "number", or indicates a position or rank, forms "angkar leik" [អង្គការលេខ], or "organizational chart." Yet, "leik", also refers to what could be translated into English as "destiny", "chance," or "fortune." For instance, in colloquial Khmer, to have a "big" or "tall" *leik* (i.e.: "leik thuum" [លេខធំ]; "leik khpuurh" [លេខខ្ពស់]) means "to be lucky", or to be blessed with a good destiny. Thus, the organizational chart that represents Angkar in Chapter 3 could be read as an unintentional, or inevitable, return to "destiny" – "Veasna" [វាសនា]. Despite the Khmer Rouge's attempt of writing over Khmer genealogy and suppressing familial ties, the Chan tree persists despite its ordered destruction.

Throughout the trilogy, Tian juxtaposes the Khmer Rouge slogans and Angkar's organized massacres with Cambodian proverbs, symbols of cultivation, "Veasna," and survival. Reading the Khmer Rouge slogan -- "COUPER UNE MAUVAISE HERBE NE SUFFIT PAS, IL FAUT LA DÉRACINER" -- against the Khmer proverb -- "Il faut planter le kapokier puis le palmier" – the Cambodian Family Album offers an alternative memory of persistence, and escapes typical victim narratives.[398] The Khmer Rouge slogan in capital letters highlights the extremism of Angkar's ideology. Reading the plant metaphor in the DK context reveals that *élagage,* and the removal of weak and damaged branches in order to promote the general health of the tree, is insufficient to the rebuilding of Kampuchea. Angkar's role as the "mother and father" to the Khmer people under the Khmer Rouge regime would thus entail a radical uprooting, rather than pruning. The *déracinement* by the Khmer Rouge would result in damaged roots, and decades of trauma to the

[398] The Khmer Rouge slogan and the Khmer proverb serve as the titles and/or captions to the images of Vol. 2, Ch. 7 and Vol. 1, Ch. 5. See Vol 2, p. 103; Vol 1, Ch. 5, p. 64, 75, 76.

people and the nation. The Khmer proverb, "Il faut planter le kapokier puis le palmier," embraces the process of rooting anew, and rebuilding after destruction. In particular, the proverb refers to survival, as one must feign ignorance in order to survive.[399] The figurative and literal meaning of the proverb implies the protection of Cambodian genealogy through the act of cultivation of the Kapok tree, the (sugar) palm tree, and eventually the rebuilding of Cambodia's culture and nation. Tian's family album—a survival tale of re-rooting— represents Cambodia's past and present traumas, and its regenerative identity.

The Khmer Rouge slogan and the old Khmer proverb reveal Cambodia's complex national identity, which may be defined by its (auto)destructive and self-preserving tendencies. First, it should be noted that under the Khmer Rouge, trees were converted into weapons and tools. The use of trees was deemed "a technique cheaper than using bullets," according to population geographer James Tyner: "During the genocide, the Khmer Rouge simply smashed infants and small children against trees—a technique cheaper than using bullets."[400] The transformation of the national tree of Cambodia, the sugar palm tree, *daom thnaot* [ដើមត្នោត], into a killing machine is rendered on the cover of Volume 2. *Ne vous inquiétez pas.*[401] Palm trees, alternated with the bright red Democratic Kampuchea flags, align the background of the cover. Two speakers are fastened to each palm tree, which represent how the trees now serve as an extension of Angkar's

[399] The Khmer proverb, "il faut planter le kapokier puis le palmier," is familiar to a "western" audience, as it translates to: "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil." See p. 76. The narrative notes that if one wants to live, then one must "plant Kapok and palm trees around the house." See 74-75.
[400] See Chapter 1, "Journeys from the Killing Fields," *War, Violence, and Population: Making the Body Count,* 2.
[401] Abel Meeropol's 1937 poem "Bitter Fruit," and 1939 song "Strange Fruit," performed by Billie Holiday, illustrates the US South's history of lynching ["Southern trees bear strange fruit/ blood on the leaves and blood at the root"], and can be compared to Cambodia's landscape, which bears witness to the mass murders under the Khmer Rouge regime. The overlap of life and death is also exemplified through the current cultivation of life over the mass graves from the Democratic Kampuchea period.

eyes, ears, and mouth. The Khmer Rouge slogans which are integrated into the album, in capitalized letters, can thus be read as the diffusion of Khmer Rouge propaganda, slogans, songs, and orders, through the nature-turned-machine sound systems. Moreover, the Khmer proverb, "Il faut planter le kapokier puis le palmier," which translates to the Three Wise Monkeys' maxim, "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil," may be read in parallel to the Khmer Rouge slogan, "L'Angkar a les yeux de l'ananas"; the watchful eye of Angkar. In other words, the trees, which serve to amplify and transmit Angkar's orders, also become *chlops* [ឈ្លប], or informants, to watch over and listen in on the Khmer people.[402]

Moreover, the kapok tree—which is well-known in Ta Prom [ប្រាសាទតាព្រហ្ម], Siem Reap, for its impressive and invasive roots that weave their way into and over the historic temple—illustrates the cyclical and circular notion of death, which converges psychoanalytic theory and Buddhist philosophy.[403] The resilience of the Cambodian root systems also matches the survival story of Chapter 5, Volume 1, "Il faut planter le kapokier, puis le palmier," as well as the three-tome Cambodian survival tale. The kapok's roots, which simultaneously devour and maintain the structure of Ta Prom, illustrate Edouard Glissant's anti-genealogical notion of the *rhizome*, borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.[404] In her book, *Orphan Narratives. The*

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[402] During the Khmer Rouge regime, *chlops*, or child informants, were used to eavesdrop and spy on Cambodians, and to report back to Angkar. Often times, the *chlop* would catch someone "stealing" fruits or vegetables, and turn her/him in to the Khmer Rouge leaders.

[403] I have in mind psychoanalyst Cathy Caruth's reflections on trauma, in which she asks, "Is trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it?" Post-1970s Cambodian identity, which is based largely on survival—or *survivals,* complements, what Caruth describes as, an "oscillation between a *crisis of* death and the correlative *crisis of life*," and the Buddhist life cycle (birth-death-rebirth). See *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, and History*, 7. ប្រាសាទតាព្រហ្ម or *Prasat* [temple] *Ta Prom* refers to the ancient temple of Ta Prom, which forms a part of Angkor. The large, snakelike roots that adorn, and grow through the structure, make it a popular site for tourists. It is worth nothing that the release of the 2001 film, *Tomb Raider*, starring Angelina Jolie, has also added to Ta Prom's popularity, making it one of the most visited and photographed Angkorian temples.The Strangler Fig and Banyan trees' root systems also wrap around and make up the structure of Ta Prom in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

[404] See Glissant, "L'Errance, l'exil", *Poétique de la relation.* See also, Valérie Loichot's *Orphan Narratives: The Postplantation Literature of Faulkner, Glissant,Morrison, and Saint-John Perse.*

Postplantation Literature of Faulkner, Glissant, Morrison, and Saint-John Perse, literary critic and Caribbean specialist Valérie Loichot describes the development and movement of the rhizome, remarking: "Its chaotic development can go from left to right, from up to down, and transversally all stimulated by cuts and ruptures."[405] Characterized as "a battle between nature and architecture in the Cambodian jungle," Ta Prom serves to concretize the grandeur of the Khmer Empire.[406] "Unlike the other monuments of Angkor, [Ta Prom] has been swallowed by the jungle, and looks very much the way most of the monuments of Angkor appeared when European explorers first stumbled upon them."[407] Rather than simply recycling the Khmer origin myth of past grandeur, however, Ta Prom and its root systems depict the inseparability of past, present, and future histories. The superimposition of life and death further illustrates the intertwining of histories and family relations, in the form of the cultivation of crops over the human remains from the Khmer Rouge regime.[408] The Chan tree, which shares the author's site of birth and name, also shares a history with the kapok's root system that symbolizes and defines Ta Prom—Chan's *village natale.* Furthermore, the kapok's complex root systems complement the mangrove forests in Cambodia, which are also under threat, and demonstrate how Cambodian identity cannot be configured in the same way as a European family tree system.[409] The association of the sugar palm tree, *daom thnaot* [ដើមត្នោត], with Cambodia, and the California desert palm tree with California, represents Cambodian rhizomatic identity, which is largely shaped by displacement.[410] Since the first wave

[405] See Chapter 1, "A Plantation Family Portrait," *Orphan Narratives,* 17, 36.
[406] See "Ta Prohm," *Atlas Obscura,* 06 Aug. 2009, 18 June 2019.
[407] See "Ta Prohm." *Lonely Planet,* 2017, 18 June 2019. It should be noted that Ta Prohm is now referred to as the "Tomb Raider Temple." In addition to the endangerment of the trees and the temple from the invasion of roots and decay, tourism also presents a problem to the preservation of the Ta Prohm.
[408] "After the trauma of the Khmer Rouge regime, people gradually became more involved in making a living and rebuilding their lives. Rice fields and fruit trees were planted again over the mass graves, which symbolically meant that the life-cycle was starting again". Guillou 216.
[409] See also, "Cambodia's Forests are Disappearing," *NASA Earth Observatory.*
[410] The sugar palm tree (*Borassus flabellifer*) is the national tree of Cambodia. While Tian's family immigrated to France, California is largely associated with Cambodian displacement. Cambodians nationals and Cambodians of

of Cambodian immigration to America, the palm tree has doubled as a symbol for the Cambodian nation—as well as for Cambodian Californians.[411] Considering the complex root systems of the kapok tree, and the Cambodian mangroves, as well as the displacement of Cambodians in the U.S., Canada, France, and Australia—*déracinement* proves to be a difficult, if not an impossible, task.

Chapter 5, "Il faut planter le kapokier puis le palmier," of Volume 1, *Au revoir Phnom Penh,* offers a vignette of one of the many near-death encounters escaped by Tian's family.[412] The narrative juxtaposes the inside and outside of a temple: In a single full-page panel, the reader looks straight on to the center of the page. The focal point, which takes up nearly half of the page, is the back of Buddha's head, which is recognizable by the etchings of carved stone and his long ear lobes. The reader takes on the perspective of Buddha, becoming his eyes and ears, and looking over the characters in the scene: The only ones that appear in color—in hues of purple—are the members of Tian's family, including baby Tian, lying in between his parents. Directly across from Buddha are the open doors that lead to two Khmer Rouge officials in all black. The faceless Khmer Rouge leaders are framed by the doors, in front of them, and by the two ends of the *Pont des nagas* in the background. Upon closer observation, small splashes of red frame the photograph. To the upper left and upper right hand, red and white striped cones adorn the columns. A pair of small Buddhas is placed in the foreground—one to the left of the larger Buddha; one to the right. What

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the diaspora are familiar with Long Beach, California. In this way, Long Beach, CA, has formed a part of the Cambodian collective memory.

[411] Long Beach, California is home to "the greatest concentration of Cambodians outside of Cambodia." See UCLA's 2013 report on Long Beach, California's Cambodia Town. Adebiyi, Alimat, et al. *2013 Report on the State of Cambodia Town*, 8.

To supplement the demographics study, I have in mind my father's remarks from 2008, while driving down the tree-lined streets in Los Angeles. When he first arrived to California in the 1970s, the palm trees, water, and warm climate reminded him of home (Battambang, Cambodia).

[412] By the end of Chapter 5 of volume 1, the reader witnesses how Tian's family passes one of many survival tests--by refusing to board a boat destined towards death. Upon their near-death encounter, the Khmer proverb—"Il faudra planter du kapokier et du palmier autour de la maison"—appears over a kapok tree, a small house, and a palm tree.

nearly goes unnoticed appears in the foreground, to on the left and right shoulder of the Buddha overlooking the temple, and in-between the two smaller Buddhas. Despite being in the foreground, the following four characters appear hidden, due to the focus on Buddha, and the movement in the midground and the background: A silent prayer ritual takes place, with the burning of incense. A man to the larger Buddha's left meets his eyes as he walks by, while three others—to Buddha's right—pray in silence. A man, and a woman in a *sampot*, with her legs to her side, are in the middle of praying, while the other woman is knelt over facing the floor, indicating that she is either at the start or the end of her prayer. Upon closer inspection, small touches of red appear in between the larger Buddha, and the four characters. The straight lines, evenly spaced out between red specks, represent incense sticks, and the process of *duht tuup*—to call on one's ancestors, to ask for protection, and/or to ask for forgiveness. In juxtaposition to this scene, the panels on the adjacent page depict the faceless Angkar, represented by the two Khmer Rouge officials at the edge of the entry and doorway, whose voice appears in the form of *bulles* shooting out from palm tree-audio systems. The funeral ritual depicted in this scene confronts the Khmer Rouge's takeover of Cambodian value systems and symbols. While the color red in the Cambodian context is often associated with the Khmer Rouge, its pre- and post-DK connection to traditional marriage ceremonies counters its symbol for communism, blood, and mass murder.[413] The association of red with tradition and protection also appears in the form of offering incense, in the form of red batons, at the pagoda. Its subtle inscription within the middle of Tome 1. *Au revoir Phnom Penh* can thus be interpreted as an attempt to commemorate and protect Cambodia and its survivors. Moreover, the scene of prayer in the pagoda serves to reclaim the color red, which has since the

[413] What Cambodians refer to as a "Knot-Tying Ceremony" is an important step in Cambodian marriage rituals, in which family members and guests tie a red string ("blessing string") around the bride's wrist, and the groom's wrist. The red string "blesses" the couple with good health and fortune, and must not be removed, as it protects the couple from bad luck.

Khmer Rouge regime become associated with communism, mass murder, and blood, through the association of the following: the red and white *krama* worn with the all-black uniform during the Khmer Regime; the red and yellow Democratic Kampuchea flag; and the *Khmer Krahaam*, or the Khmer Rouge [ខ្មែរក្រហម].

Up until the last chapter of Volume 2, Tian narrates the events of the Khmer Rouge as they unfold, starting from 1975. By dividing what feels like a series of never-ending and impossible tests of survival in the span of four years—into three volumes of seven chapters each—the text allows the reader to experience how time drags on, and also witness the impossibility of surviving each test. This is why the *"album-souvenir*" at the end of Volume 2 is so surprising: Time equal to, or exceeding the amount, recounted in the three volumes collapses to a two-page spread selecting moments from a course of four years before 1975. What Tian labels an "*Album-souvenir avant 1975,*" at the close of Volume 2: *Ne vous inquiétez pas*, includes a scrapbook of his *unframed snapshots* that were lost and/or never taken, arranged out of order, and meant to be offered and passed on to the next generation. The "*album-souvenir*" illustrates what life was like in Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge takeover of Phnom Penh: He presents a collage of his parents' marriage in Phnom Penh in 1974, his grand-uncle strumming an acoustic guitar, a snapshot of a traditional Khmer dance at the marriage ceremony, and his grand uncles in the middle of a game of hacky sack--*le seï*. Unlike the square-framed panels within the chapters, and *like* the family portraits in the family tree, the recreated photographs in the "*album-souvenir*" take the shape of an oval, resembling portraits intended to be framed as keepsakes. The photos pre-exist 1975 – the event of his birth and the historicized start date of the Cambodian Genocide. The "*album souvenir*" defies both the categorization of Tian's family history to the period of 1975-1979, and the reduction of Cambodian identity to the history of the Khmer Rouge regime. A couple of factors are useful

towards reading the a-chronological organization of pre-1975 family photographs—Tian's age at the time of the takeover of Phnom Penh and his family's escape to France; and Tian's role as both a child survivor, and a child of adult survivors. As noted earlier in this chapter, in an interview with *France Culture,* Tian reveals that he recalls little of his childhood, and that the 1984 film *The Killing Fields* enabled his parents to talk about the Khmer Rouge regime. Four years after having immigrated to Lyon, Tian's parents presented him with anecdotes linked to his childhood, and Tian asked for answers relating to his childhood.[414] Tian's reflection on "l'histoire de [ses] parents" and Cambodia can be interpreted as a desire to remember and to understand what happened during the first few years of his life.[415] Rather than being read as "out-of-order," the photos in the pre-1975 album may actually follow the order in which the histories were received.[416] In other words, the graphic novel represents a "truer" historical account of non-linear oral narration. Returning to Hirsch's notion of postmemory, we can read Tian's graphic novel as a photo album, much like Spiegelman's *Maus. A Survivor's Tale*, and particularly *Maus II. A Survivor's Tale II: And Here*

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[414] Broué, Caroline and Hervé Gardette. "Cambodge." Twice in the interview, Tian repeats, "mais liées à mon enfance," to modify the types of anecdotes he receives from his parents, and the types of questions he asks his parents. When asked how he was able to construct a graphic novel from an absence of memory, Tian remarks that after the release of *The Killing Fields* in France, his parents gave him little anecdotes about the Khmer Rouge, linked to his childhood: "Ils me parlaient des petites anecdotes sur les Khmers Rouges mais liées à mon enfance." Shortly after, he notes that he had for a while been searching for memories, and started to ask his parents questions, "mais liées à mon enfance surtout." Afterwards, he remarks that shortly after, he discovered the history of Cambodia – "dans son aspect général, en fait, pas forcément lié à cette histoire tragique mais, ce que c'était le Cambodge sous [le] Protectorat français, puis encore avant. […]"

[415] Referring to his discovery of Cambodia's rich history, which was not only "linked to this tragic history," he states: "Quand j'ai découvert que c'était vraiment une grande civilisation avant, et puis que, par la force des choses, il a eu cette tragédie-là, je commençais quand même à réfléchir sur l'histoire de mes parents." See Broué, Caroline and Hervé Gardette. "Cambodge."

[416] The different experiences of memory and trauma in child survivors of the Holocaust can also be applied to child survivors of the Cambodian genocide. Suleiman creates "three discrete groups" of child survivors, from 0-14 years: "Children 'too young to remember' (infancy to around three years old); children 'old enough to remember but too young to understand' (approximately age four to ten); and children 'old enough to understand but too young to be responsible' (approximately age eleven to fourteen)." Considering the fact that Tian was born in 1975, and that he immigrated to France in 1980, he falls under the first category of being "too young to remember," and on the threshold of being "old enough to remember but too young to understand." Suleiman 283.

My Troubles Began.[417] It is worth briefly revisiting Suleiman's distinction between the second-generation experience of "belatedness" and the 1.5 generation's experience of "premature bewilderment and helplessness," and her subcategorization of 1.5 generation child survivors into three age groups. As stated earlier, Tian's role as both a child survivor of the Khmer Rouge regime—and the son of two adult survivors— allows him to experience "belatedness" and "prematureness," at the same time. If we are to take seriously Hirsch's notion that postmemory, or the second generation's experience of belatedness, "is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection," then the distance between his, and his parents' (first generation) memories and experiences, is even shorter. While Suleiman's insight on the diverse experiences of child survivors is useful, Hirsch's concept of postmemory, which is not "beyond memory," counters a boundary between past and present, life and death, and perhaps, even the divide between "belated" and "premature." Considering this, Tian's graphic novels should be read as a postmemorial book; a family album composed of photographs that serve as connectors between generations, histories, and lives. Referring to Spiegelman's *Maus II*, Hirsch notes that Art Spiegelman's family photographs inscribed into the graphic novel transform into *lieux de mémoire*:

> The picture of the survivor Vladek Spiegelman in a starched camp uniform came to focus for me the oscillation between life and death that defines the photograph. These photographs connect the two levels of Spiegelman's text, the past and the present, the story of the father and the story of the son, because these family photographs are documents both of memory (the survivor's) and of what I would like to call post-memory (that of the child of the survivor whose life is dominated by memories of what preceded his/her birth). As

[417]See Suleiman 277. See also Hirsch, "Family Pictures: *Maus*, Mourning, and Post-Memory," 8.

> such, the photographs included in the text of *Maus,* and, through them, *Maus* itself, become what Pierre Nora has termed *lieux de mémoire.* 'Created by a play of memory and history,' *lieux de mémoire* are 'mixed, hybrid, mutant, bound intimately with life and death, with time and eternity, enveloped in a Möbius strip of the collective and the individual, the sacred and the profane, the immutable, and the mobile.' Invested with a 'symbolic aura' *lieux de mémoire* can hope to 'block the work of forgetting.'[418]

Tian's graphic novel serves as a family album that more a/effectively communicates Cambodia's complex history and identity to the second-generation. While useful for social memory and justice, many of the participatory tools dedicated to stitching up wounds from the past do not assist those directly and indirectly affected by the genocide.[419] Like Spiegelman's *Maus* and *Maus II*, which presents an alternative account of the Holocaust and survivor experience—Tian's *L'année du lièvre* offers a "different media" that conflates hand-drawn photographs, maps, statistical and historical documentation, and autobiography.[420] While Tian's family album is "purely" a creation and reconstruction of verbal and hand-drawn photographs—it must be remembered that "a picture described verbally is the same whether it 'exists' or not.'"[421] The role of the photographs in Tian's family album should thus be considered in a similar light as Spiegelman's narrative: Spiegelman's *Maus* "recounts the story of father and son in the 1980s," as well as his father's survival tale during the Holocaust.[422] In addition, the overlapping histories present a disharmonious, or a "fractured"

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[418] See Hirsch, "Family Pictures: *Maus*, Mourning, and Post-Memory," 8. To refer to Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, see "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989), 19.

[419] In particular, I am thinking of the ongoing Khmer Rouge tribunal's attempts to resolve past and present atrocities in Cambodia through a "western"-based system of justice and healing. According to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) official page, "In 1997 the government requested the United Nations [UN] to assist in establishing a trial to prosecute the senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge."

[420] Hirsch notes that the role of photography in Spiegelman's graphic novel does more than present an alternative representation of the Holocaust; it demonstrates "how different media—comics, photographs, narrative, testimony—can interact with each other to produce a more permeable and multiple text." See Hirsch, "Family Pictures," 11.

[421] See Hirsch, *Family Frames,* 199-201.

[422] Hirsch, "Family Pictures," 12.

narrative: Photographs—"the product of both the aesthetic and the documentary/technological"—convey more accurately the experience of disjointed testimony.[423]

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

In order to analyze the album(s), I will turn to Lucien Dällenbach's reading of André Gide's concept of "mise en abyme" and the role of mirrors in texts, and compare the function of the tape recorder in Tian's graphic novel to its depiction in Spiegelman's *Maus.* Like Volumes 1 and 2, Volume 3 holds a 7-chapter narrative that sequentially elaborates on the 1975-1979 saga. Volumes 2 and 3 share the same layout; both are framed within family portraits and albums either preceding or following 1975-1979. Volume 3, in particular, offers an alternative account of "post"-1975-1979 life. In other words, the Cambodian family album transforms into a postmemorial book, and offers the reader a glimpse of 1.5- and second-generation postmemory. Initially, the family tree inscribed at the beginning of Volume 3 appears to be a replica of Khim and Lina's genealogical tree at the start of Volume 2. Upon closer inspection, however, Volume 3's tree signals to the reader who survived the genocide – and who did not – through the subtle fading out of certain family portraits juxtaposed with colored individual portraits hanging from the adjacent branches. Upon this discovery, the reader receives the residual affective hauntings transferred over from Tian and his ancestors. In addition, the post-Narrative scrapbook that closes Volume 3, "Un nouveau départ après 1980," differs from the "album-souvenir" in volume 2, and the 7-chapter narratives

[423] *Ibid.* 16; 21-22. For Laub's notion of "the testimonial chain," see Felman and Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* 71-73.

of the trilogy. For the first time, the family appears in motion. Left unframed, the family members – depicted in the bonus family album within the larger three-volume album – appear in conversation.[424] Moreover, the transmission of histories occurs in the form of various mediums drawn by Tian, including a tape recorder, telephone, the exchange of family photos, direct oral transmission between characters, and even a replication of *L'année du lièvre.* In addition to recording his father's narration of family history, Tian depicts his very own book, *L'année du lièvre,* being passed down and shared with those depicted in the narrative. The expression, "mise en abyme," is attributed to Gide in 1893. While Dällenbach dissects Gide's literary concept in depth and offers a close analysis of its entry into the French *nouveau roman,* I refer to Tian's use of the *mise en abyme* as a representation of his *oeuvre, L'année du lièvre,* within the trilogy. For the purposes of this chapter, the term "*mise en abyme*" alludes to what Dällenbach refers to as "the general agreement on a definition of *mise en abyme*"—or the generalized "Gidean definition of the procedure": "the repetition within a work of 'the subject of the work' 'on the level of the character.'"[425] In order to illustrate Tian's album, which is placed into abyss, to literally translate the French term referring to the figure of style, I will present a verbal photograph of its insertion into the post-1980 album, "Un nouveau départ après 1980." On pages 2 and 3 of the book, the appearance of the "physical" album is passed along, in the hands of three family members: 1) Tian's mother, Lina, whom he addresses as "Maman," 2) One of his maternal uncles, or one of Lina's brothers—either Uncle Koliane, or Uncle Samay, and 3) Tian's maternal grandmother,

[424] To download the cover art for volumes 1-3 of Tian's *L'année du lièvre*, and virtually browse selected pages of volumes 2 and 3 (including the family trees of Vol. 2 and 3, and selected parts of "Un nouveau départ après 1980" in Vol. 3), refer to *Gallimard*'s website:

http://www.gallimard.fr/Catalogue/GALLIMARD-JEUNESSE/Bayou/L-annee-du-lievre

[425] See Dällenbach, "Reflexivity and Reading," 436. See also, Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*.

Vanny, whom he addresses affectionately as "Yeay" [ញាយ]. The first replication of Volume 1. *Au revoir Phnom Penh* occurs on the second page, in which Tian, now an adult, stands to the right of his mother. Dressed in a bright red, long sleeved and collared shirt, he asks, "Alors maman, tu l'as lu?" Lina, dressed in a patterned lilac shirt, and what appears to be – from the half of her body depicted – a Khmer *sampot*, replies: "J'ai essayé, mais je n'ai pas réussi à dépasser le 3e chapitre. Ça doit correspondre à ta naissance…". Upon closer inspection, the mother-and-son portrait captured by the author resembles the cover of Volume 1, itself. The "original" cover depicts Lina in the same patterned lilac shirt, which ends above her hips and slightly surpasses her biceps on the cover. Yet, now that Lina, and the shirt has aged, the sleeves reach her lower biceps. Though Tian is depicted as a baby in his mother's arms on the front cover, he resembles his father, Khim, in the hand-drawn photograph of him in conversation with his mother. On the cover of Volume 1, his father is turned away, looking off to the right. The reader thus receives a still frame of his family on the day of the takeover of Phnom Penh, and a profile shot of his father's right side. Tian, in conversation with his mother, is also turned to the right, presenting the reader with a view of the right side of his face. He shares with his father a prominent nose, from his profile, as well as the same noticeable bangs swept upward, in the direction of his gaze. Like Tian, his father is dressed in "European-style" clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt—which is left unbuttoned at the neck, forming a V-neck shirt, and tucked into blue jeans, like Tian in the post-1980 photograph. The subsequent page in "Un nouveau départ après 1980" depicts, in the upper left-hand corner, a scene in which Tian presents his maternal grandmother and uncle each with a copy of *L'année du lièvre*. Though the cover is difficult to decipher in the snapshot, it appears to be Volume 1, based on the silhouette of smoke drawn in on the cover of the book held between his grandmother's hands. Tian stands in the middle of one of his uncles (Uncle Koliane or Uncle Samay), and his grandmother,

who is seated partially upright in a reclining bed. In addition, he finds himself between two of the replicas of *L'année du lièvre,* pointing to a picture in the album that his *Yeay* holds in her hands. While the reader does not see the picture, it is implied that the photo is self-referential, and one from the "*album-souvenir avant 1975*," as Tian remarks: "Yeay, je t'ai dessinée avec ta* dans votre maison…".[426] Dällenbach's examination of the role of the *mise en abyme* in a text is useful here in order to interpret the reader, and the author's, active participation in the creation of a postmemorial album.

> Far from being a complacent and unpleasant case of a narcissistic author returning to his product in order to adjust it to the taste of the day, the present reflections must be understood as positive self-criticism, an effort to move beyond positions once held, to reconsider the aspect of the problem which now seems to me most important: the function(s) of the *mise en abyme* in the reader's actualization of the text and, more particularly, the type(s) of readability(ies) and reception(s) entailed in *mise en abyme.*[427]

The *mise en abyme* of the album illustrates the active and creative quality of postmemory. In addition to the replication of albums depicted in the pages of *L'année du lièvre,* the author circulates and transmits the family narrative that he received from his parents in the 1980s. The act of transmitting the narrative(s), in the form of the graphic novel, back to the original "actors" of the history, serves first to confront the family silences and to prevent perpetuating the unconscious transmission of family trauma, then to demonstrate how first-generation testimony is

[426] The asterisk appears in the original text. Under the hand-drawn photograph, Tian adds a key/footnote for the reader, in which he defines *Ta* as "*Grand-père*."
[427] Dällenbach and Tomarken, "Reflexivity and Reading," 436.

a collaboration of first and 1.5 or second generation encounters.[428] The collaborative memory work between Tian and his family begins with a family discussion, which occurs after the release of *The Killings Fields* in 1984. Yet, the discussion is endless—described by Tian as coming one-after-the-other; linked to one another [s'échaîné]: "Je commençais quand même à réfléchir sur l'histoire de mes parents. Donc, il y a eu au départ une petite, euh, une discussion, puis, après, ça s'est enchaîné…"[429]

The endless production of memory work extends to include those unfamiliar with the Khmer language, Cambodian history and geography. In addition to providing a key for the reader to decipher familial terminology in the photo album, Tian reproduces maps to situate the reader: "C'est vrai que les cartes permettent vraiment de situer les choses, mais c'est pour les lecteurs un ensemble de se situer."[430] By guiding the reader, Tian invites the reader to situate her/himself within the family narrative, and to assist in the transformation of private-public art; private-public memory.[431] Finally, the role of the tape recorder represents the conflation of past and present, and of first- and second-generation memory. The Franco-Cambodian tape recorder mirrors the shared history between father and son in Spiegelman's *Maus.* Hirsch notes the following: "Vladek talks into a tape recorder and Art asks him questions, follows up on details, demands more minute descriptions. The testimony is contained in Vladek's voice, but we receive more than that voice; we receive Art's graphic interpretations of Vladek's narrative."[432] In Tian's case, the tape recorder

[428] I am thinking in particular of Vietnamese American graphic illustrator GB Tran's family saga and graphic novel, *Vietnamerica. A Family's Journey* (2010), in which Tran opens and closes the family graphic memoir with family trees, and presents the members of the genealogical trees and memoir as "actors" of a cast.
[429] Broué, Caroline and Hervé Gardette. "Cambodge."
[430] *Ibid.*
[431] The active participation of the reader and constant animation/movement of the text and memory can be seen as "animate" and "never completed" memory work. See Young, 12-15.
[432] Hirsch, "Family Pictures," 12.

appears after the 1975-1979 narrative.[433] Yet, the trilogy closes with the post-1980 album, which *begins* with a visual-verbal, or photographic, reproduction of the start of his family's oral narrative. The simple display of the recorder, and the conversation between father and son in the 1980s represented by speech bubbles without lines, represents the fragmentary nature of testimony. Moreover, the recording, which is "played" and/or shared with the reader decades later in 2016, within the third volume of *L'année du lièvre,* is closer to the structure of Cambodian storytelling, which is characterized by non-linear narration, "digressions," and repetition. Moreover, the narrative style in the album follows the circular and cyclical aspect of Cambodian storytelling, as the graphic novel closes with a verbal-visual photograph of a return to oral narration. By the end of the trilogy, and on the last page of "Un nouveau départ après 1980," the reader witnesses a still frame of Tian and his son, and the transmission of history, orally, from father to son. Tian (Chan Veasna) indicates to the reader: "Chan est devenu papa à son tour et pour transmettre son histoire, il parle du Cambodge à son fils."[434] With their eyes locked, his son exclaims in a speech bubble, "Papa! Un jour j'irai dans ton pays, le Cambodge!". The album thus closes with the intersection of first-, 1.5-, second-, and third-generation memories and dialogues. Tian's postmemorial album does not attempt to replicate memory, nor does it attempt to (re)produce the past.[435] Rather, *L'année du lièvre* seeks to break the cycle of the unconscious transmission of trauma by enabling

[433] Referring to Spiegelman's transformation of the recorded history onto paper, Hirsch remarks that "the tape recorder captures Vladek's story *as he tells* it, and the texts at least give us the impression that Art has transcribed the testimony verbatim, getting the accent, the rhythm, the intonation just right." Tian's graphic novel is different, as the recorder appears only once, at the end of the trilogy, within the surplus album, "Un nouveau départ après 1980." Moreover, the three-tome novel includes more than his father's direct testimony, but also his mother's. *Ibid.*
[434] The pages of the album, "Un nouveau départ après 1980," are unnumbered. In total, they form six pages.
[435] Young notes that Spiegelman's *Maus* is "not about the Holocaust so much as about the survivor's tale itself and the artist-son's recovery of it." See Young, "The Holocaust as Vicarious Past: Art Spiegelman's 'Maus' and the Afterimages of History," 670.

the recipient of the story to establish her or his own personal "relationship to the memory of events."[436]

Like the creative medium of the film that serves to break family silences through the *déterrement* of the past—the mixed-media form of the *bande dessinée* activates memory in second-generation survivors, and serves as a form of private and public art. *L'année du lièvre,* a postmemorial family album, calls on the duel participation of the author and reader. In doing so, readers confront and mourn their family ghosts. Indeed, the process allows for a productive cremation ritual, in which second-generation Cambodians *duht kmaoc,* and bury and burn the inherited ghosts of the first-generation. By representing Cambodian artists of the diaspora, Tian instills a sense of pride, rather than shame, in being Cambodian.[437] By archiving his family's history into an album of multiple albums, he offers an alternative *postmemory* of survival built on creation and destruction. Moreover, his son's last words allude to two things: 1) the stress on the possessive adjective, "ton," paired with the substantive, "pays," subtly reveals the complexity of second- and third-generation identity. While many second- and third-generation Cambodians of the diaspora are immersed in their parents' culture, language, and history – a distance and gap remains, and a desire to "know the world of [their] parents" dominates. 2) The fact that Chan's (Tian) son has the last say in the trilogy alludes to the Cambodian diasporic literary-arts and new aesthetics movements, in flux, and in the process of being created and recreated. This endless movement of memory, and postmemorial work, is evident on the cover of Volume 3. *Un nouveau*

[436] *Ibid.* See also, Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 1. Tian's transformation of the audio recording, and the tape recorder (pictured on page 1 of "Un nouveau départ après 1980"), into a three-tome transgenerational survival tale calls for a personal engagement with the medium. The creative and active component of the *BD* "frees" itself from being monumentalized/memorialized.

[437] I am referring to Tian's statement ["Au départ, j'avais très honte d'être cambodgien, car je voyais toujours des reportages sur la misère"], quoted earlier in the chapter, in which he expressed feeling ashamed of being Cambodian before learning about the history of Cambodia—which he received upon learning his parents' history. See Broué, Caroline and Hervé Gardette. "Cambodge."

départ, and within the album. The final page of the album presents a panorama of Phnom Penh shot from above with the author's remarks on the present and future of Phnom Penh. In three paragraphs, Tian reflects on the economic development and changes in the capital, commenting on the conflation of tourism and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal in the 21st-century. Returning to the notion of roots—Cambodia's roots may be interpreted as growing endlessly in various directions: The conjunction of Cambodian displacement following the 1970s, the "new" identities born in and beyond Cambodian communities in France, Canada, the U.S., and Australia, and the "new start" and urbanization of Phnom Penh in the late 20th and 21st centuries, emphasize the difficulty of defining and "fixing" Khmer identity. Turning to the cover of Volume 3, which illustrates Tian's family in displacement, the reader notes that what appear to be branches are actually kapok roots. The roots resurface – bursting from the center of the temple and its rubble, and also appearing in Lina's left hand. Lina can be seen sweating, following behind Tian and Khim, and holding the roots for balance. Enveloped by trees, Tian, and his parents—Lina and Khim, and two others are shown walking atop a temple. In juxtaposition to the first album cover, which depicts the family frozen in fear, and turned in the opposite direction of the incoming traffic—the cover of Volume 3. *Un nouveau départ* shows the family in movement, rushing forward towards what is out of frame, and imperceptible to the reader. In addition, Tian is pictured as an infant, *endormi* on Khim's back. The representation of child survivor Tian as asleep and facing forward evokes the activation of 1.5- and second-generation dormant memories. Moreover, the snakelike roots bursting from the temple that provide Lina balance illustrate Cambodian rhizomic identity, which is endlessly transforming itself upon the mixing and merging of the diverse memories of Cambodians across various generations, locations, and experiences.

From Absence to Excess: Cambodian Postmemory as Patchwork.

In recent years, particular attention has been given to the family silences of survivors of the Cambodian genocide, which have contributed to intergenerational trauma, or the unconscious transmission of trauma. Yet, little attention has been given to the experience of second-generation Cambodian survivors who, rather than inheriting trauma through family silences, directly inherit *too much* history. For those who receive an excess of noise – a cacophony of trauma in the form of repeated survival and/or death tales – and who live vicariously through their parents' memories, would the experience of postmemory be any different? Rather than dissecting and distinguishing second-generation "absence" and "excess," I argue that exposure to "too much" history should be given the same attention as exposure to "too little," or an absence of, history. In particular, the absence and excess should be considered in relation to the sudden increase in artistic production by members of the second-generation of Cambodian genocide survivors, who explore their identity in the form of what I call the "Cambodian New Aesthetics." In particular, the surge in postmemorial art serves multiple purposes: to examine and to express one's hybrid identity, in multiple "ethnic" or transnational forms, and to connect and discover one's history through the creative artistic process. If the "aesthetics of postmemory […] is a diasporic aesthetics of temporal and spatial exile that needs to (re)build and to mourn," then the new aesthetics of Cambodian postmemory should be considered as a creative process by second- and third-generation Cambodians seeking to recover the world of their parents (Hirsch 245). Yet, the generational and geographical distance, and the destruction of the "world that has ceased to exist," necessitates an active production of new aesthetic forms and identities. The new aesthetics of Cambodian postmemory, like the Khmer *sampot* [សំពត់] and *krama* [ក្រមា], embody the mixed-ness and intersection of old and new. In particular, their composition and role as cultural and national

symbols vary across time and space, and undergo continual change. In the case of the *krama,* the quotidian accessory transformed into a symbol associated with the Khmer Rouge regime, as depicted in Tian's *L'année du lièvre,* through the black uniforms paired with red and white checkered kramas. Yet, it is the *sampot* – the "national garment of Cambodia" – an aesthetic form, itself – that demonstrates the postmemorial generation's contributions to rebuilding and shaping Cambodian-ness.[438] From its intricate weavings, to its various styles, and the innumerable ways to fold it, the *sampot* represents what Roger Nelson refers to as a "hybrid contemporaneity." Interpreting Cambodian artist Chan Dany's exhibit, "*Sampot: The Collection of Small Things*," Nelson remarks the "multiplicity of contemporaneity in Cambodia," adding: "A vision of Cambodia emerges that is at once old and new, local and global. The articulation of contemporaneity refuses the dominant narrative about nation, centered on the temples of Angkor Wat and the traumas of the Khmer Rouge. Yet it also resists the tendency to overlook or downplay historical continuities."[439] To add to this, I would argue that the notion of "hybrid contemporaneity" does not reside solely in Cambodia, but also travels outside of the borders of Cambodia.

Though Cambodian identity and the Cambodian arts scene should not be limited to the past colonial and Khmer Rouge history, the production of Cambodian comics and graphic novels is inseparable from French and Belgian influences, and the hauntings of the Cambodian genocide. First, it should be noted that "Cambodian comic books appeared in the 1960s," with Uth Rouen being the first Cambodian comic book artist.[440] The introduction of the comic form to Cambodia

[438] Lee and Nadeau, 188. Hirsch, 242-3.
[439] "On the Coevalities of the Contemporary in Cambodia: Review: *Sampot: The Collection of Small Things* by Chan Dany," 201; 206.
[440] Lent, John. *Asian Comics.* See Ch. 6, "Cambodia," p. 120. It should be noted that Uth Roeun's comic and trickster, *Torn Chey,* circulated in the 1980s in Cambodia, and is popular among first-generation Cambodians. Its transmission from first- to second-generation Cambodians occurs in the present, as it is included in the pedagogical

can thus be attributed to Uth Roeun, who, after encountering the French and Belgian *bande dessinée,* began "writing comic books simply because he wanted Cambodia to experience [the] medium."[441] Despite having lanced the *bande dessinée* scene in Cambodia, his advice to Cambodian artists – "Don't write about killing and war" – has been largely disregarded (Lent 122). Franco-Cambodian artist Séra demonstrates the hybrid aesthetics of Cambodian postmemory by remembering and recounting the genocide in the first Cambodian graphic novel, *Impasse et rouge* (1995), while contributing to the development of the literary-arts scene in Cambodia by leading the 2005-2008 workshop project, "[Re]Generations" (Lent 127-8). The 21st-century Cambodian arts scene is thus a creative process born from the intersection of Cambodia's past colonial and DK histories, and the collaborative efforts of "local" Cambodian and diasporic Cambodian communities. Moreover, the continued displacement of Cambodians—including the movement of Cambodian Americans from the U.S. to Cambodia—is contributing to re-building Cambodian identity and shutting down stereotypes of Cambodians as victims. In particular, Cambodian American prison poet Kosal Khiev's deportation to Cambodia demonstrates the unpredictable forms of transnational art—and how these new art forms are speaking up to write over the excess of victim narratives.[442] Other Cambodian American and Franco-Cambodian artists, such as Laura Mam, Denis Do, and Prumsodun Ok, explore their identities through hybrid artistic forms, and counter the idea of a monolithic Khmer identity—from Cambodian American Ok's reimagining of Khmer classical dance, to Cambodian American singer/songwriter Laura Mam's efforts to revive Cambodian pop in Cambodia, and Do's exploration of his "Franco-Sino-Cambodian"

materials for Khmer language instruction at the University of Wisconsin's Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute.

[441] *Ibid.* 122.

[442] See *Cambodian Son*. Dir. Masahiro Sugano, 2014.

identity through animated film.[443] Despite the inseparability of intertwined memories, second-generation Cambodians are constructing alternative narratives, and actively shaping Cambodian identity by moving beyond monolithic narratives of victimhood.

Tian's *bande dessinée*, and the current artistic projects underway in the Cambodian diasporic community, represent the specificity of Cambodian postmemory, which is both fragmentary and full. Moreover, the "Cambodian New Aesthetics" reflects the 21st-century processes of mourning in the Cambodian diaspora, which may be symbolized through the notion of "sticking pictures" [បិទរូបថត] into a postmemorial book: The act of sticking pictures – including verbal and hand-drawn ones – demonstrates how postmemory engages with first-generation memory in order to work through that which is not fully recoverable or understandable. The purpose of the "Cambodian New Aesthetics" is not to fully recover memory; nor does it function to reconstruct the past. Rather, it serves as a testimony to the experience of second-generation Cambodian genocide survivors, and demonstrates how 21st-century Cambodian identity defies national and generational boundaries. In closing, it must be noted that while the Khmer and Buddhist form of mourning is circular – the Cambodian postmemorial album attempts to break the cycle of the unconscious transmission of trauma by actively involving the subsequent generation(s) in the process of mourning. The creative aspect of postmemory – always in movement – allows

[443] Denis Do's semi-autobiographical (Chou, one of the principal characters in the film, is a representation of Do's mother) film, *Funan,* Bac films, 2018, based on the Khmer Rouge regime is arguably more accessible for second-generation survivors: Scenes of graphic violence are never fully visible to the audience. Rather, scenes of rape and murders are implied. For example, gunfire is heard, and reflected in the form of bright flashes on Chou's face. In addition, the film follows a non-linear form, and illustrates how memories are "filled in," in the form of blank spaces which slowly become saturated with pigment. For example, Chou's son, Sovanh, who is separated from his parents, is depicted daydreaming and reminiscing about his birthday. A white space takes over the screen; Sovanh appears smiling in a birthday hat, then one-by-one, his parents are drawn in.
Ok's take on traditional Khmer dance is also more inviting to the second generation – as it includes a mixture of traditional Khmer music and chants, as well as contemporary pop music, and is more inclusive, as Ok's dance production is composed of an entirely male and self-identifying LGBTQ cast. Mam also represents the wave of second-generation Cambodians who either temporarily or permanently move to Cambodia to contribute to the growing art scene.

one to become an active subject, rather than an inactive viewer or listener. Cambodian second-generation survivor representation in the media, and in the literary-arts scene, presents an alternative and much-needed account of Cambodian (post)memory and identity – beyond the externalization of memory in the form of *reportages* by those who have no direct experience of (post)memory.[444]

[444] I am referring to Pierre Nora's postulation of the negative correlation between the externalization of memory and one's own experience of memory. The "*reportages*" to which I refer – and the need for Cambodian second-generation survivor representation – are in relation to Tian's statements from his interview with *France Culture*: "Au départ, j'avais très honte d'être cambodgien, car je voyais toujours des reportages sur la misère." See Young 5; Nora xxvi. See also, Broué, Caroline and Hervé Gardette. "Cambodge."

EPILOGUE

"Il était COMIQUE ET LAID, COMIQUE ET LAID."

– Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal,* 1939

In the 2012 documentary, *Where I Go*, Cambodian filmmaker Neang Kavich follows San Pattica, a "mixed" Cambodian-Cameroonian teenager, on his search for his father – an UNTAC soldier from Cameroon, whom he has not seen since 1993 – and documents Cambodia's social, racial, and class issues.[445] Viewers of the documentary witness Pattica's abuse by other Cambodians on a school bus, in which teenagers shout racial slurs at him, suggesting that his father is a monkey. In an emotional scene with his mother, who also abandoned him – sending Pattica to his grandmother who eventually places him in the care of an orphanage – she attempts to console her son with the following words: "*Yeuhng khmau, ah-cohr mehn."* [We're black; truly ugly, or

[445]UNTAC refers to the period of 1992-1993, following the Khmer Rouge regime and the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, in which the United Nations sought to "assist" Cambodia with its transition to "civil order." "When the United Nations Transitional Authority for Cambodia (UNTAC) went to Cambodia in 1992 and 1993 to organize an election it brought in hordes of sincere young people from western countries, most of whom, having been exposed to years of the anti-Vietnamese, anti-Phnom Penh, press in their own countries, arrived with a missionary prejudice against the existing Cambodian government, and a conviction that the duty of UNTAC was to replace that government by its rivals." See Michael Vickery's *Kicking the Vietnam Syndrome,* xiv. See also, *Where I Go,* Dr. Neang Kavich, Bophana Center, 2013.

We're black, it's true that we're ugly]. The translation of "*Yeuhng khmau, ah-cohr mehn*" into French would nearly replicate Aimé Césaire's infamous tramway scene in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, in which the black man experiences the white gaze: "Il était COMIQUE ET LAID, COMIQUE ET LAID."[446] In other words, *"Yeuhng khmau, ah-cohr mehn"* becomes "C'est vrai qu'on est noir et laid," in which blackness replaces that which is comical or absurd. While she follows up the statement with suggested counter responses, her assertion of identifying with her son as black, and ascribing ugliness to blackness, reveals the effects of Cambodian social issues on self-perception.[447] The complication of race and identity is visible through Pattica's inability to – despite his mother's suggestions – claim his humanity. His uncertainty is captured in the following phone conversation, where Pattica searches for answers regarding his patrilineality: "*Kyum chir khmeng komprir kohn kat Cameroon*" [Je suis enfant-orphelin-métis camerounais]. The colonial anxieties revolving around *la question métisse* – and the link between the *métis* as *bâtard* and *orphelin;* paternity, nationality, and legal status – remain present in 21st-century Cambodia. Moreover, Pattica's documented experiences as a "*khmeng komprir kohn kat Cameroon*" – a "Cameroonian *kohn kat* orphan child" – demonstrate the limits of *métissage*: This is not to say that *kohn kat, métis(se),* or "mixed-race" individuals matter less, nor is it to suggest that they should suppress their "mixed-ness."[448] The emergence of blackness in Cambodia surpasses the "predictability" of *métissage* from the French Indochinese period – in which the

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[446] See Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, 41. See also, Baudelaire's poem, "L'Alabtros," *Les Fleurs du mal*.

[447] Some of her suggested responses include, "*aing chir menooh dai!*" [I'm a human, too!], and "aing mehn chhkaï, nah" [I am not a dog!]. His ontological struggle complements Frantz Fanon's assertion, "L'homme n'est pas un homme," in the introduction of *Peau noire, masques blancs.*

[448] In theorizing *créolisation,* which Glissant links to the *imprévisible,* he suggests that *métissage* follows a mathematical logic that produces predictable categories. In other words, *métissage* – not le/la *métis(se)* – is "formulaic," producing calculable results, while *créolisation* is a *process* in movement — rather than a product. Adding to this, he states: "Le métissage n'apparaît plus comme une donnée Maudite de l'être, mais de plus en plus comme une source possible de richesses et de disponibilités. Mais je crois qu'à mésure que le métissage se généralise, c'est la catégorie du métis qui, elle, tombe." See "Métissage et créolisation" 49-51.

threat posed to the social order in the colony by the "indigenous"-French *métis(se)* could be "resolved" through her/his social integration and the granting of French citizenship.[449] Rather than focusing on the unpredictability of *métissage,* I argue that Cambodian identity depends on "anomalies," especially racial/ethnic differences, in order to close – or "suture" – itself shut. It must be noted that the Khmer word, "khmau" means "black," as well as "dark-skinned." The association of skin color and class is not clear-cut in Cambodia: Light skin, or "whiteness," is typically attributed to wealth and privilege; and dark skin, or "blackness," to a lower class (the stereotype being that those who are darker spend more time out in the field doing manual labor).[450] Yet, in order to be *Kohn Khmer,* one must "look" Khmer, which entails being just "tan enough": Too light – and one risks being "Chen" [Chinese], or worse, "Youn" [Vietnamese (pejorative)]; too dark – and one becomes *khmau.* Despite the complexity of skin color and its association with race, nationality, and class in Cambodia – colorism and social codes are more clearly defined than in the U.S. context.[451] The implications of my research are not limited to Francophone literary studies – but also enrich critical race theory and whiteness studies, especially as they open up an avenue for understanding Asian American, and Southeast Asian American identity, beyond the popular narratives of Asians as model minorities, "whitewashed," and even more recently, "crazy

[449] Pattica's mother is also depicted in the documentary as living on the periphery, away from society. As noted earlier, she refers to herself as *"khmau*," in conversation with her son. Arguably, her social circumstances (pregnant, addicted to drugs, and living outside -- without proper shelter – with her boyfriend), and her "dark skin" illustrate the overlap between race and class.

[450] Peasantry and hard labor now bring to mind the history of the Khmer Rouge. Angkar attempted to transform all Cambodians into "old people," through impossible standards of hard labor in the fields during the period of 1975-1979.

[451] This is not to justify or to support "raced spaces," but to point out the visible social, class, and racial divisions in Cambodia. Rather than a "white space" (in the U.S. context), one could say that "Khmer space" is normative in Cambodia; those who are ethnically, racially, and/or "phenotypically" divergent from Khmerness risk being on the periphery, such as Pattica's mother.

rich."[452] While Asian Americans are perceived as members of "white space," I argue that their identity is not so black-and-white.[453]

While the texts selected for my dissertation reveal the violent treatment of the *métis(se)* through her/his social exile and pejorative titles – attention must equally be given to the dehumanization and exoticization of minorities in the form of a welcoming gesture; an open invitation. What Frank Chin and Jeffery Paul Chan refer to as "racist love" reveals the hidden dangers in being "acceptable," and thus, *accepted* into "white space." "Colored minorities in white reality are stereotypes. Each racial stereotype comes in two models, the acceptable model and the unacceptable model. […] The unacceptable model is unacceptable because he cannot be controlled by whites. The acceptable model is acceptable because he is tractable. There is racist hate and racist love."[454] While blackness is always a threat to "white space" – "an unacceptable model" of a stereotype – Asian Americans are assigned to the category of an "acceptable model" of a submissive and non-threatening stereotype.

The dangers of encroaching on white space, and the invitation to enter it, may be compared in the re-imagination of Fanon's train scene in *Peau noire, masques blancs.*[455] In "Looking at Whiteness" (*Look, a White!: Philosophical Essays on Whiteness,* 2012), George Yancy portrays

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[452] See Kevin Kwan's 2013 novel, *Crazy Rich Asians;* see also, Warner Bros' 2018 film, *Crazy Rich Asians*. The stereotyping of Asians and Asian Americans as wealthy and successful perpetuates, I argue, the "racial divide" between minorities. In addition, the generalization neglects the income and education disparity between East Asian and Southeast Asian Americans. Despite the desire to categorize Asians into "white space(s)," such as Irvine, California, which has a 48.8% Asian and 41.2% white population, according to the 2018 US Census – places such as East Side Long Beach, California, and Lowell, Massachussetts include large Cambodian and Vietnamese populations who share their space with other ethnic and racial minority groups, and whites. See *Demographics. City of Irvine.* City of Irvine, Nov. 2018. Web. 09 July 2019; "Race and Ethnicity in East Side, Long Beach, California (Neighborhood)." *The Demographic Statistical Atlas of the United States…;* and "Lowell, MA." *Data USA,* 2017.
[453] In his 2015 article, "The White Space," Elijah Anderson presents the division of "the city's public spaces" as a "mosaic of white spaces, black spaces, and cosmopolitan space (racially diverse islands of civility)." See "The White Space." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity,* pp. 10-11.
[454] "Racist Love," in *Seeing Through Shuck*, 1972. See p. 65.
[455] See p. 92 of "L'expérience vécue du noir", *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Fanon, 1952)

white fear through the example of the car: As black bodies approach the (white) vehicles, car locks "click." The audible performance of the clicking, paired with "white fear", causes the "black body" to become conscious of reified constructions of parasitic difference.[456] The act of *locking* car doors and *rolling up* windows in the presence of black bodies sends a clear message of white fear, with a message of "Keep out!" that can be read as a form of xenophobia, similar to that of the discrimination practiced towards *métis(se),* Sino-Khmers, and *khmau* in Southeast Asia.

But what message is sent out in the performance of *rolling down* car windows and unlocking car doors in the presence of Asian female bodies? While the Asian woman is invited to *enter* "white space"—she is opened to a *raced* space in order to be *preyed* upon. In other words, she is invited to enter the space *with an exception*: She can enter the predatory space as a submissive and sexually available body. While the space is "open," the Asian woman, like the black man of Fanon or Yancy, "resides in a fixed place, always already waiting for [itself]" ("Looking at Whiteness" 35). In this action that is neither directly hostile nor truly inviting, we enter another "in-between" zone – one that is difficult to define, and exceeds the boundaries of *métissage,* nationality, and geographical space.

[456] See pp. 30-31 of "Looking at Whiteness", *Look, a White!* (Yancy, 2012)

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