

Social Death with Nature: A Comparative Analysis of the Cambodian and Canadian Settler
Genocides and Life-Death Worldings

By

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Abstract

To date, genocide studies has maintained certain asymmetric typologies that demarcate physical from cultural forms of destruction and gendered violence as distinct from homogenous narratives of mass physical violence. In this dissertation, I argue that assumptions underlying these binaries are rooted in anthropocentrism. In genocide studies this translates into a narrow focus on physical human existence and destruction that overlooks the complex and multiple ways through which an ethnic or cultural group imagines itself, maintains collective identity, and renegotiates its social relations in and through genocide, as part of a human-ecological assemblage. Furthermore, this limited focus obscures the gendered embodiment of genocidal violence and the depth to which gendered bodies harbour pain and trauma. To date, if gendered violence is noted, most often it is relegated as secondary to the preservation of human life. I transverse these asymmetries to examine the dynamism of group life and the ecological and gendered materialities and social relations that give meaning to the individual and group's existence. Protecting human life will always be a significant focus of genocide studies and prevention. However, when we isolate human beings from the multiple relations that bring meaning to their lives, we miss the opportunity to more fully grasp what makes genocide possible, what genocide destroys, and the complex harms it leaves in its wake.

In this dissertation, I examine Khmer Cambodian and Anishinaabeg and Cree collective identities as dynamic and evolving relational assemblages. By doing so, I open genocide studies to several insights from Indigenous and settler colonial studies and feminist new material theories: 1) An understanding of the group and its attempted destruction beyond anthropocentric terms; 2) A non-linear and dynamic genocidal temporality; 3) A more expansive understanding of and response to gendered and relational harms in genocide. Importantly, the key argument that

I make in this dissertation is that genocidal destruction operates on multiple fronts; ecological and gendered materialities and social relations are mutually targeted in genocide—at times conjointly, at other times, unevenly. Therefore, this dissertation provides insight into an assemblage (rather than yet another asymmetric typology) of genocidal destruction.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to myself, Ena, and Myla: we three Junes

The Warrior Song, by Quo-Li Driskell

This is a Warrior song
 From one poor Skin to another
 And I don't know what I'm lookin' for
 But I know I've found you

These worlds will shuffle across concrete
 Will float across the Rockies
 To the Smokey Mountains
 We were stolen from
 We were stolen from

We were stolen from our bodies
 We were stolen from our homes
 And we are fighters in this long war
 To bring us all back home

And this is a Warrior Song
 From one poor Skin to another
 And I don't know what I'm lookin' for
 But I know I've found you

U-ne-la-nv-hi U-we-tsi
 I-ga-gu-yv-he-yi
 Hna-quo-tso-sv Wi-yu-lo-se
 But I know I've found you

Chapter 1

Introduction

To date, genocide studies has maintained certain asymmetric typologies that demarcate physical from cultural forms of destruction and gendered violence as distinct from homogenous narratives of mass physical violence. In this dissertation, I argue that assumptions underlying these binaries are rooted in anthropocentrism. In genocide studies, this translates into a narrow focus on physical human existence and destruction that overlooks the complex and multiple ways through which an ethnic or cultural group imagines itself, maintains collective identity, and renegotiates its social relations in and through genocide, as part of a human-ecological assemblage.

Furthermore, this limited focus obscures the gendered embodiment of genocidal violence and the depth to which gendered bodies harbour pain and trauma. To date, if gendered violence is noted, most often it is relegated as secondary to the preservation of human life. I transverse these asymmetries to examine the dynamism of group life and the ecological and gendered materialities and social relations that give meaning to the individual and group's existence. Protecting human life will always be a significant focus of genocide studies and prevention. However, when we isolate human beings from the multiple relations that bring meaning to their lives, we miss the opportunity to more fully grasp what makes genocide possible, what genocide destroys, and the complex harms it leaves in its wake.

In this dissertation, I examine Khmer Cambodian and Anishinaabeg and Cree collective identities as dynamic and evolving relational assemblages. By reframing group life as a multi-layered and multi-dimensional composition of ecological and gendered materialities and social relations, I open genocide studies to several insights from Indigenous and settler colonial studies and feminist new material theories: 1) An understanding of the group and its attempted

destruction beyond anthropocentric terms; 2) A non-linear and dynamic genocidal temporality; 3) A more expansive understanding of and response to gendered and relational harms in genocide. Importantly, the key argument that I make in this dissertation is that genocidal destruction operates on multiple fronts; ecological and gendered materialities and social relations are mutually targeted in genocide—at times conjointly, at other times, unevenly. Therefore, this dissertation provides insight into an assemblage (rather than yet another asymmetric typology) of genocidal destruction.

I opened this dissertation with Quo-Li Driskell's "Warrior Song," a moving piece which also demonstrates the complexities of genocidal destruction. In particular, the second and third stanzas aptly describe how genocide is a multi-faceted and enduring ecological and bodily displacement:

These worlds will shuffle across concrete
Will float across the Rockies
To the Smokey Mountains
We were stolen from
We were stolen from

We were stolen from our bodies
We were stolen from our homes
And we are fighters in this long war
To bring us all back home

Yet genocide studies tends to obstruct an analysis of this kind of complex, embodied, material, and relational sense of loss and reclamation, particularly beyond the discreet purview of Indigenous and settler colonial studies. Throughout this dissertation, I demonstrate how genocide studies has followed in an ontological and epistemological tradition that maintains asymmetric typologies and obscures relational violence in and through genocide.

That is not to say that building typologies and distinguishing between cases of genocide is necessarily counterproductive. Indeed, in distinguishing the different ways that genocide is

justified, how violence is deployed, and the impact of its destructive force genocide scholars have developed a rich body of work that collaborates with other established disciplines such as political, post-colonial, and gender studies (Theriault, 2012). These studies have elucidated how policies of famine, such as the Holodomor under the authoritarian rule of Joseph Stalin, also result in genocidal destruction, while not necessarily as a result of “hot conflict” such as what took place in the one-hundred days of the Rwandan genocide (Naumenko, 2021). Comparative and multi-disciplinary studies have also identified common progressive discursive and material stages of dehumanization, persecution, and polarization, among others, that lead to mass physical annihilation and that allow for possible identification of a means to interrupt and avoid genocidal destruction (Stanton, 2013). Where dualistic typologies become problematic, however, is when they are used to emphasize certain forms of violence to the exclusion of others, cultivating a hierarchy of suffering.

In this regard, genocide studies’ ontological and epistemological tradition of hierarchical categorization requires critical examination. Raphael Lemkin is credited with coining the term genocide and its introduction to the United Nations. His early work to develop the concept incorporated political, social, cultural, economic, biological, physical, religious, and moral techniques of annihilation (Card, 2010; Lemkin, 1944; Woolford, 2015). This is particularly relevant to Indigenous peoples whose worldviews often understand human social and cultural worlds as intertwined with the natural world. Depending on a group’s distinct cultural practices and territories, certain natural world or non-human entities are understood as teacher and kin or are revered as sacred and essential to the group’s spiritual sense of being. Disruptions to these relations by settler colonial regimes, through displacement, resource extraction, forced

assimilation, or ecological toxification act as a direct assault on a group's existence (Hubbard, 2014; Moses, 2000; Wildcat, 2015; Wolfe, 2006; Woolford and Hounslow, 2018).

However, cultural forms of destruction that include acts intended to eradicate a group's cultural activities, traditions, or languages, were strongly contested by settler colonial nations such as Canada and ultimately removed from the *United Nations Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (1948). While progressive debates and discussion have evolved over time in the discipline of genocide studies, the historical, political, and colonial context in which the Convention was adopted has also resulted in the development of genocide studies, as an academic discipline, that at best marginalizes and at worst overlooks Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world and the forms of violence that threaten their existence (Hubbard, 2014; Moses, 2000; Wildcat, 2015; Wolfe, 2006). Despite immense progress and diversification in genocide studies over time and across disciplines, more broadly, it still distinguishes between the severity of canonical physical cases of genocidal mass destruction versus supposedly lesser forms of cultural or ecological destruction most often associated with settler colonialism and Indigenous genocides.

The exclusion and marginalization of Indigenous insights in genocide studies has resulted in the lost opportunity to incorporate more complex understandings of cultural relations as intricately connected to the natural world. While not homogenous, many Indigenous peoples have shared the understanding of their worlds and knowledge systems *in relation with* the lands, waters, and all of Creation — the natural and more-than-human world are frequently understood in dialectic relation with their own existence. Through pragmatic respect for the natural elements and seasonal cycles, Indigenous peoples learned how best to survive over thousands of years. These “original teachings” (Clarkson et al., 1992, p. 21) have translated into sacred and distinct

relationships with all of Creation and have informed the ways in which Indigenous peoples developed and organized their social, political and institutional systems. (Anderson and O'Brien, 2016; Battiste et al., 2002; Clarkson et al., 1992; Debassige, 2010; Fox et al., 2017; Hart, 2010; Kovach, 2010; Kovach, 2015; Lavallée, 2009; Ormiston, 2010; Smith, 2013; Starblanket, 2018; Strega and Brown, 2005; Tuck and Yang, 2010; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008). For example, for Anishinaabeg and Cree whose home territory includes Lake Winnipeg on Treaty One Territory (Northern Manitoba), kinship with the lake has carried their distinct knowledges and traditions through pre-and-post settler colonial invasion (Cave and McKay, 2016). Lake Winnipeg is located on what is now known as the Canadian Shield. For these communities, its igneous rock outcroppings make up the shell of Turtle Island and the lands surrounding the lake are home to food and medicine producing forests, bogs, and marshes and their rivers and streams feed into the life-sustaining waters of the lake (Anderson et al., 2011; Bedard, 2021; Chiblow, 2019; Craft, 2014; Luby, 2020; McGregor and Whitaker, 2001; Szach, 2013).

Indigenous and non-European cultures also provide insight into non-linear understandings of cultural relations and temporality (Coleman, 2014; Hinton, 2017; Sellberg, 2019; Stephens and Sellberg, 2019). Many cultures are less informed by linear temporalities and favour dynamic and uneven engagements between life and death. For example, in many Indigenous and non-European cultures, funerary and birthing practices frame death as a natural progression in a circular model of life-and-death; the progression of one soul into the spirit world is intimately connected with the birth of another in the world of the living. For example, Cambodia's Festival of the Dead (*Pchum Ben*) is an annual fifteen-day Buddhist celebration through which families and communities come together in ceremonies and rituals to connect with the spirits of ancestors (Davis, 2009; Holt, 2012; Ledgerwood, 2012). During the genocide,

Khmer Cambodians were prevented from participating in this ritual and for many, this severed their relationships with both the living and the dead and resulted in a much more complex sense of loss than physical death alone. For Indigenous peoples in Canada, the disruption of spiritual rituals that are also connected to distinct lands, territories, and waters, act as a form of annihilation that may not necessarily result in physical death, but that severs relationships with ancestors which are essential to the ongoing transmission of cultural identity. In contrast, the majority of genocide studies focuses on linear temporalities of life-then-death and the assumption that physical death is the exclusive indicator of destruction in genocide (Ledgerwood, 2012).

This linear model, of life-then-physical-death is also evident in genocide studies' discourses of prevention, which normally suggest that genocide (physical death) can be averted if the process can be interrupted in one of the earlier and progressively more stages, such as dehumanization and polarization (see for example Stanton, 2013). This linearity results in a narrow focus on mass physical annihilation that obscures certain forms of gendered violence that may result in death, but that also result in other forms of bodily, material, and relational destruction. For example, dehumanizing discourses often liken the victim group to non-humans and act as legitimizing frameworks for genocidal destruction (Stanton, 2013). Yet these discourses also deploy distinctly gendered and sexual materialities that simultaneously dehumanize and interrupt the reproductive capacities of women through forced sterilization to manage "undesirables" or the act of rape and forced pregnancies to further the cause of racial dilution (Ephgrave, 2016; Stern, 2021). Particularly useful in understanding these equally destructive gendered harms is Claudia Card's use of Orlando Patterson's (1982) notion of social death which describes how gendered dehumanization or sexual violence may spare a woman's

physical life, but her sense of individual and collective identity is altered to such an extent that she exists in a sort of life-with-death.

Building on feminist and gender studies and informed by Indigenous and settler colonial studies, this dissertation is concerned with elucidating how all groups are formed and maintained as ecological, gendered, and cultural assemblages. This is a drastic shift for genocide studies where ecologies, the natural world, and non-human entities have traditionally been framed to denote their lesser and strictly instrumental value in relation to human life. Terms such as dehumanization, non-human, and other-than human are used to describe tactics employed by perpetrators to reduce the victim group to a less-than-human status and legitimize their need for eradication (Stanton, 2013). In this dissertation, I employ the term more-than-human, which more closely resembles Indigenous understandings of human and natural world relationships as mutually co-constitutive (Barta, 1987; Moses, 2008; Tauri and Pouru, 2014; Wolfe, 2006; Woolford, 2015). Feminist new materialisms also break away from such hierarchical dichotomies to argue that human social relations are formed through ecological and more-than-human materialities and that their disruption or alteration results in uniquely gendered forms of embodiment (Alaimo, 2010; Asberg et al., 2014; Barad, 2003). By drawing on these insights, my research contributes a more expansive understanding of violence and destruction that attends to the complexities of relational harms in the Cambodian and Canadian settler genocides.

This research is situated in a broader project directed by Dr. Andrew Woolford. Our project involves a multi-national comparative analysis that illustrates how human groups consist of multiple relationships with natural world entities. The study re-examines canonical cases of genocide (Armenia, Rwanda, and Cambodia) alongside Canadian settler colonialism. Our focus on ecological-cultural group relations underscores the complex sources of belonging that make

up the collective identity of a group and their disruption in genocide (Woolford and Hounslow, 2020; Woolford, June and Um, 2021). These ecological-cultural group relations are the starting point of my analysis; however, my research more specifically advances a gendered analysis that draws from feminist new materialisms in the Cambodian and Canadian settler genocides.

In particular, I emphasize how Khmer Cambodian cultural and gendered relations are deeply imbricated with rice and its associated practices such as rice agriculture. For the Canadian case, I examine how Anishinaabeg and Cree cultural and gendered relations are intimately intertwined with waters and their associated materialities such as lakes, streams, and fish. The goal is not to isolate rice and waters as the only ecological-social relation associated with Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree collective identities. Rather, the intention of my analysis is to demonstrate how rice and waters are one of many multi-dimensional gendered and ecological materialities and social relations that are all enmeshed in relational assemblages that co-produce cultural and collective identities. Therefore, this dissertation is an exploratory entryway, or initial starting point, into a developing area of genocide studies.

Before introducing the Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree cases in greater detail, there is a matter of importance that needs to be addressed. When centering cultural relations in genocide studies, one runs the risk of implying that all groups are at risk of genocidal destruction if aspects of their cultural identity are interrupted or forcibly altered. However, not all groups are ethical and in need of preservation. For example, some might argue that attempts to dismantle the slave trade in the United States could constitute cultural genocide—are the plantation owners, as a group for which its cultural and material existence and collective identity rely on ideologies of white supremacy, vulnerable to cultural genocide? To answer this question, I provide the following caveat regarding the ethical philosophy of collective rights and a group's existential

right to exist. For a group to exist and be afforded a normative intent to protect, their identity cannot be based on oppression, hatred, or harm toward others. In saying this, it should be noted that internal inequalities, such as unequal gendered relations, are not akin to collective identity based on oppression and hatred. What distinguishes the two is whether or not the group possesses the capacity to adapt or redress injustices, as is the case for cultural groups (including Khmer, Anishinaabeg, and Cree) and gendered inequality, or whether the group would cease to exist, as is the case for white supremacist plantation owners. In the latter, injustices are foundational to the group's existence and therefore elimination of injustice effectively eradicates the group. A group such as white supremacists, then, is not a cultural but rather parasitic collectivity. In other words, it only exists at the expense of another group.

Returning, then, to the cases in this dissertation, for each I reviewed archival testimonies, interviews, and oral histories and, through comparative analysis, draw out their underlying nexus. For the Cambodian case, I begin by highlighting how Khmer cultural and collective identity is formed and maintained as an assemblage of rice and rice agriculture (ecologies), dating as far back as the 9th century and the rise of Angkor Wat through water irrigation and rice production and exportation. Khmer is a linguistic, cultural, and religious Cambodian ethnicity reproduced through an amalgamation of Indigenous belief systems, Buddhist and Hindu religions, and Southeast Asian languages, arts, and civilization. Relationships with rice have organized Khmer familial and community roles and work relations (gendered materialities), and social, cultural and spiritual celebrations, traditions, and rituals (social relations). In my analysis, I draw out the ways in which this assemblage of relations was disrupted during the reign of the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979. To date, the canon of genocide studies has focused on the physical annihilation that resulted from the reign of the Khmer Rouge regime, when

approximately 2 million Khmer Cambodians perished from a combination of deprivation and starvation, overwork, and mass executions in the regime's forced work camps. There is a dearth of literature that addresses the relational violence that also occurred as a result of the regime's reign of terror and the long-lasting implications of relational violence that impede healing and restoration (see Hinton, 2018 and Ledgerwood, 2012 as two examples).

For the Canadian case, I examine Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages consisting of waters and their entanglement with gendered, cultural, and spiritual relationships, and their disruption by the Indian Residential School system (IRS). A distinction between the Cambodian and Canadian cases is the unique structure of settler colonial genocide. For this reason, I offer a brief caveat for my framing of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree group destruction that I refer to as “during the genocide and residential school experience” throughout the remainder of the dissertation. As I will discuss in greater detail in my literature review, settler colonial genocide plays out differently than other modalities of genocide because of its situatedness in the very construction of settler society. Therefore, it operates through more expansive techniques and timeframes. In the Canadian case, between early contact in the 17th century to contemporary Indigenous/settler relations, multiple techniques have been deployed through settlement and the development of a settler society through the destruction, displacement, and erasure of Indigenous societies. Suffice it to say, for this reason, I focus on the residential school system as one analytical category of genocidal destruction. Therefore, while I differentiate between the Cambodian genocide and the residential school system, it is not done in such a way as to further entrench asymmetric typologies, but rather to distinguish the particular assimilationist genocidal technique of the residential schooling system from the Khmer Rouge regime's deployment of genocidal violence between 1975 – 1979.

It is also important to foreground that, although I examine both Anishinaabeg and Cree water relations, their Nations, territories, and languages remain distinct. Common between the two, however, are their close and spiritual relationship to water and their original territories that span across the great plains of Turtle Island (what we now call North America). Anishinaabeg also includes several distinct Indigenous peoples that are nevertheless culturally and linguistically related; they include Ojibwe, Saukteaux, Anishinew, Odawa, Potawatomi, Mississaugas, Nipissing, and Algonquin Peoples. Cree peoples include several linguistic and regional sub-groups that share the broader Cree cultural and spiritual belief systems including Innu, Atikamekw, East Cree, Moose Cree, Swampy Cree, Woods Cree, and Plains Cree. Both Anishinaabeg and Cree worldviews, familial and community work relations, social and cultural organization, and spiritual belief systems are drawn from an intimate kinship with waters.

In my study, I examine the attempted destruction of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages in and through genocide. The dissertation is structured as follows. In chapter two, I provide a brief introduction to each case study. In this second chapter, I introduce the ways in which Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages consist of gendered family, community, and cultural roles, relations, traditions, and celebrations. Ecological materialities of group life, such as subsistence rice farming or living near lakes, rivers, and streams, overlap with gender in, for example, family care or divisions of labour, personal or familial standing within the community, or responsibilities and expectations when participating in religious or traditional ceremonies. This brief introduction how demonstrates ecological and gendered materialities and social relations are ongoing, dynamic, and evolving negotiations that co-produce Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree collective identities.

Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages highlight a gap in genocide literature. In chapter three, the literature review outlines how the dominant genocide literature engages with ecological materialities using terms such as attrition, geography, spatial organization, and dehumanization, and how they emphasize techniques of destruction in a linear sequence of events that result in mass physical death. This narrow focus overlooks the relationship between victim groups and the natural world and how they can be disrupted or altered in ways that destroy their sense of collective identity on multiple fronts including but not restricted to mass physical annihilation. In chapter three, I also demonstrate how Claudia Card's use of social death challenges the discipline's obfuscation of gendered material and social dynamics and how genocidal techniques of sexual violence, for example, are still marginalized in homogenized narratives of genocide and prevention. The chapter closes by highlighting the necessity of an additional ontological and epistemological shift in genocide studies that learns from Indigenous and non-European understandings of human and more-than-human relations and temporalities that span across generations in life and death, and as central to forming and sustaining group life and collective identity. I close chapter three by introducing how I will build on Claudia Card's use of 'social death' and insights from Indigenous and settler colonial studies to conceive of group life beyond anthropocentric terms, to employ a genocidal temporality that understands destruction as operating on multiple fronts and timelines, and to develop a more expansive understanding and response to gendered and relational harms in genocide.

In chapter four, I lay out the theoretical foundations for my analysis and elaborate on feminist new material theory. In this chapter, I draw on Karan Barad's conceptualization of assemblages to elucidate how individual and collective identity is coproduced through entanglements of ecological and gendered materialities and social intra-action. *Intra-action*

versus *interaction* is a key distinction in feminist new material thought. *Interaction* describes discrete entities that are formed independently and at times come into contact with one another. *Intra-action* more aptly reflects how individual and collective identities are formed in an assemblage of relationships and activities; entities such as rice or water are equally engaged in the formation of cultural identity as are human social relations through activities such as rice farming, fishing, or cooking. For feminist new materialists, it is the “doing” and “performing” of these intra-actions that co-produce gendered identity as well as the ecological, material, and discursive social world. These performative practices—making, forming, and generating of their worlds through ecological and gendered material and social realities— is termed “worlding.”

Spanning across chapters five through seven, archival and comparative analysis reveal both patterns and distinctions between Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree narratives. In their descriptions of themselves, their families, communities, and social worlds — before, during, and after the genocide and residential school experience — ecological and gendered material and social relations are evident as symbionts in the development, maintenance, and reclamation of cultural and collective identity. The analysis builds a fulsome representation of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree cultural identities that are formed through entangled relations that are disrupted or severed in genocide—disrupted and altered, yet ongoing practices of worlding that must now contend with the impact of genocidal phenomena, or life-death worlding.

I use the term unmaking to describe the ways in which genocidal phenomena simultaneously unmake Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages while altering, disrupting, and rearranging them to make them genocidal. For example, by removing Khmer rice farmers from their families, lands, and communities and displacing them in forced work camps to grow and harvest rice for the Khmer Rouge regime, relations are both unmade

and remade during the genocide. Additionally, unmaking describes how genocide operates to forcibly disrupt or alter a group's ability to engage in traditions, rituals, or ceremonies that connect present generations with ancestors and future descendants through natural world relations.

Importantly, my analysis elucidates the different ways that gendered bodies absorb or act as conduits for unmaking processes. Understanding gendered violence as both material and relational violence is a more holistic approach that is not exclusive to women, sexual violence, or the individual act of rape. Rather, this reframing incorporates gendered material and relational violence that is a deeply embodied assault on the individual as well on a group's cultural and collective identity. Relational violence through gendered bodies includes disruptions *of* gendered bodies that may include sexual violence and the disruption of bodily processes such as amenorrhea or sexual desire as part of broader processes of genocidal unmaking (e.g., in the Khmer Rouge rice work camps). This form of violence may also result in the disruption of gendered identity such as the suppression of two-spirits in residential schools. Unmaking through gendered bodies also extends beyond the genocide's supposed aftermath. In other words, gendered bodies carry and harbour relational violence that, in turn, inflicts pain or divisions in the family or community, and interferes with healing and the maintenance or reclamation of cultural identities through natural world relations—a form of social death with nature.

In the final chapter of my analysis, acts of resistance and reclamation describe the ways in which storytellers try to ward off physical violence or resist unmaking as well as how they attempt to maintain or reformulate social relations and cultural identity through ecological and gendered materialities and relations during and after the genocide and residential school experience. Here is where the term life-death worlding is advanced. Narratives of resistance, at

times, a process of unmaking when attempts at resistance are thwarted. Attempts at reclamation or reformulation may also extend the genocide's unmaking when they may their sense of self as part of a relational assemblage has been forcibly altered to such an extent that neither are possible. At other times, during and after genocide, Survivors may actively reformulate their identities through ongoing or reformulated practices of worlding but in a way that must contend with their attempted destruction. This is where the term life-death worlding is advanced. Life-death worlding describes the ongoing renegotiation of group life (as an evolving and dynamic assemblage) that must now contend with their attempted mutual destruction in and through genocide.

The dissertation, in full, is an innovative and decolonizing approach to genocide studies. Human groups, which are the focus of genocide studies' normative intent to protect, are redefined as complex entanglements of ecological and gendered materialities and social relations. Furthermore, genocidal temporality is reoriented to align with group life and destruction as it spans across generations, travels through and across gendered bodies, overlaps with material outcomes, and reverberates between life and death. By framing ecological and gendered materialities and social relations as central to collective group identity, one can draw out the multiple ways that genocide destroys and the loss it leaves in its wake. I propose that this reorientation can be understood as a form of social death with nature that is enacted through life-death worlding.

A Note on Reflexivity and Terminology

I come to this research as a non-Indigenous settler on the great plains of Turtle Island. In this positionality, I occupy multiple spaces of both privilege and oppression, which has impacted the direction my research has taken through the years. As a settler, I acknowledge my

responsibility as witness to the genocidal violence of Canadian settler colonialism and the ongoing damage to Indigenous peoples and their ecological kin. I situate my research as a challenge to historical narratives and dominant knowledge production that have actively worked to erase Indigenous peoples from these lands and suppressed Indigenous knowledges in historical and academic discourses. I align my work with scholars such as Radomska et al. (2020) who are actively engaged in “reontologising the linear temporality of modern Western conceptions of history. Reclaiming instead an Indigenous cosmology and philosophy, in which the dead are not left behind in a temporally inaccessible and forever congealed past, but are present and potentially active in the here and now” (Radomska et al., 2020, p. 92). I take up my role as ally and “companion” to their stories and testimonies and hope to share them in a way that honors them and that affects change.

As a decolonizing methodology, situating myself as a companion to Survivor stories avoids the all-too-common pitfall of non-Indigenous scholars who, by way of misappropriating Indigenous ways of knowing, recolonize Indigenous knowledges and experiences in their retelling. However, as a companion, I do not situate myself as a mediator for Indigenous experiences but as a witness to their stories and as an active participant in the work of decolonization. I carry out this work by decentering Eurocentric anthropocentrism in my genocide research while remaining reflexive of my positionality by ensuring that, to the best of my ability, I defer to Indigenous peoples’ voices and explanations of their own culturally unique and distinct perspectives. As well, whenever possible throughout the dissertation, I work to avoid language that resembles colonial homogenizing narratives. When appropriate, I bring in specific examples from Anishinaabeg and Cree scholarship as well as clarifications and insights from interviews with members of Anishinaabeg and Cree Nations including Elders Betty Ross and

Rudy Okemaw and experts Aimee Craft and Daniel Gladu Kanu. I do so with the understanding that I am a non-Indigenous scholar and settler who can never fully understand Anishinaabeg and Cree worldviews as well as Indigenous understandings of group relations with the natural world more broadly.

It is important for me to do this work since we are all treaty people and I see decolonizing scholarship as part of that work. Therefore, while I draw, specifically, from feminist new material theory in my analysis, I do so in a way that is sensitized by Indigenous understandings of group life in relation with the natural world. What I mean by that is I acknowledge the ways in which genocide studies has been steeped in Eurocentric anthropocentrism and has much to learn from Indigenous worldviews—in particular, those that emphasize the natural world as a symbiont in cultural and group life. However, I am also reflexive that each Nation's understandings of and cultural practices in relation with lands, waters, and natural-world entities are distinct. Therefore, when I refer to a feminist new materialism that is sensitized by Indigenous worldviews, I am foregrounding that I am not attempting to co-opt or homogenize Indigenous knowledge or cultural practices but that I am seeking to decolonize and decenter Eurocentric anthropocentrism.

Additionally, I intentionally use the pronouns they/them whenever appropriate. A feminist new materialist approach both identifies distinct forms of gendered embodiment and attempts to move away from essentialist conceptualizations of gender, sexuality, and biological sex and reorient identity as part of an assemblage. Therefore, when I cite authors in my literature and theory chapters, I use they/them pronouns since it is widely considered grammatically correct and I do not make assumptions about their gender identity or biological sex. Additionally, when I quote Survivors' testimonies, I generally use they/them pronouns unless their gender

identity, sexuality, or biological sex are relevant to understanding the Survivor's distinctly gendered embodiment of genocidal violence.

Chapter 2

Khmer & Anishinaabeg and Cree Relational Assemblages

In this chapter, I highlight complex, gendered, material and relational composites of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree collective identities. Before I do so, it is worth mentioning how I define the term gender relations for the purposes of my research. The term refers to socially constructed and situated traits of femininity and masculinity that are associated with being male, female, transgender, two-spirit or non-binary as well as how one chooses to adopt, subvert, or reconstitute these traits as gendered identity. As well, while sexuality differs from gender identity, for the purposes of this dissertation, when I refer to gender relations more broadly, I am also referring to one's sexuality as straight, gay, lesbian, queer, or bi-sexual. Additionally, the broad term gender relations refers to one's sexual and reproductive biology; cis-gendered individuals are those whose sexual and reproductive biology matches their gendered identity. Lastly, gender relations signify certain roles, relations, and power dynamics in any given society and its cultural and historical context. Gender relations are incorporated into the ways that families, communities, and cultural traditions are organized that vary across time and between groups (Mohanty, 1984; Ogawa, 2004; Resurreccion et al., 2008; Wilson, 2015).

Throughout this chapter, I demonstrate how ecological and gendered materialities and social relations actively co-produce Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree collective identity. However, a limitation of my study is its lack of diverse gendered representation. The primary reason being there is a lack of diverse gendered representation in archival testimonies, interviews, and oral histories. This is due to, on the one hand, heteronormative ideologies that were also reinforced through the very nature of the violence perpetrated during each genocide and on the other hand, heteronormativity in research and academia where diverse gendered

experiences of genocide are underrepresented in existing archival data and the literature. Therefore, I briefly mention the diversity of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree gendered identities and relations but focus primarily on cis-gendered men and women and their entanglement with ecological materialities and social relations. This is a limitation I hope to address in future research.

Additionally, it is not in the scope of this chapter, nor in this dissertation, to analyze the impact of gendered inequalities. Rather, my focus is to understand how Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree incorporate these relations into their collective identities. I certainly make mention of uneven gendered work and responsibilities, but my focus is on how these are dynamic and changing negotiations even in, or despite, genocide's attempted destruction. Therefore, this dissertation affirms that like all cultural and collective identities, Khmer, Anishinaabeg, and Cree gendered relations are not, nor have they ever been, static; what makes their disruption genocidal is the forced and sudden rupture of these relations as one of many techniques of group destruction.

Lastly, I offer one additional caveat. As noted in my introduction, it is not in the scope of this dissertation to identify each composite in Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages. I offer this chapter, and the examples of rice and waters, as some of many complex materialities and relations that co-produce individual and collective identities. The purpose of this chapter, and my analysis, is to demonstrate how gendered rice and water relations are demonstrative of the diverse and dynamic assemblages that make up collective identity and the multiple fronts upon which genocide, then, operates.

Khmer Ecological and Gendered Materialities and Social Relations

Cambodian institutional, social, and cultural development has occurred through thousands of years of rice production and irrigation. Rice agriculture played a key role in the historical development of Angkor Wat and its rise in power between the 9th and 15th centuries. Angkor Wat is a temple complex in Cambodia that spans across just over 400 acres; it originated in the 12th century as the capital of the Khmer empire. A key driving factor that enabled the Khmer empire to gain vast territories was their development of water irrigation and reservoirs which established their economic power based in rice agriculture, which has endured until present day (Nesbitt, 1997; Tong, 2008). The complex of temples was originally built as the King's state temple and dedicated to the Hindu god, Vishnu, and has, throughout the centuries only grown in cultural and spiritual significance for Hindu and Buddhist Khmer Cambodians (Tong, 2008).

Rice agriculture in Cambodia is primarily rainfed, although irrigation systems maximize rice production during dry periods as well. Its adaptability means that rice can grow in low coastal lands with flood plains and basins, amongst rolling hills, or in mountainous regions (Adams, 1950). In Cambodia, these terrains are subject to rains and natural seasonal flooding – conditions that support wet rice paddy farming. Wet rice strains are harvested from flooded rice paddies that are drained for harvesting. Once dry, the plants are threshed and seeds are collected before milling (Resurreccion et al., 2008; Woolford et al., 2021)

Rice's adaptability to environments from dry conditions to monsoon rains and flooding make it a staple for most of Southeast Asia and Cambodia is the world's third largest rice exporter (Heng et al., 2015). Over time, rice production in Cambodia has shifted to a commercial oriented enterprise; however, while paddy rice farming is changing, most rural Cambodians are

still subsistence farmers who make up approximately 80% of the population (Resurreccion et al., 2008). Most Cambodian subsistence farmers produce one crop per year and are in a “rice-deficit” for three to six months. This means they rely on purchasing commercial rice and on other forms of subsistence such as animal farming, migrant work in urban areas, or migrant work on other farms (Resurreccion et al., 2008). In the years after the genocide, Cambodians have increasingly needed to migrate to urban centers to supplement their incomes when rice agriculture is insufficient (Resurreccion et al., 2008).

Rice and rice farming have adjusted according to its peoples and farming methods and Khmer Cambodians have adjusted to rice — it has shaped their daily lives, social institutions, and cultural traditions. As Resurreccion et al. (2008) state, “agriculture in Cambodia is embedded within a changing social and economic landscape” (p. 4). Even those who live in urban centers still engage in rice relations as their society writ large depends on rice export and is culturally situated in rice relations (Resurreccion et al., 2008; Takahashi, 2005). In fact, rice is so central to Khmer life that the English phrase “to eat,” in Khmer (*pisa bei*) means “to eat rice.” (Adams, 1950; Helmers, 1997; Nesbitt, 1997).

For example, rice and rice farming are deeply spiritual for most Khmer Cambodians (Im and Lloyd, 2012; Van Thanh, 2019; Woolford et al., 2021). The temples of Angkor Wat are an important and spiritual landmark for Khmer Cambodians; as well, many villages are situated on, or clustered around, ancient rice and irrigation infrastructure that facilitated the rise of Angkor Wat. Surrounding the villages and rice paddies, many forests house local spirits (*neak ta*). Villagers maintain relationships with these spirits through rice-food offerings and in return they are blessed with good health and plentiful harvests (Im and Lloyd, 2012; Woolford et al., 2021).

Khmer cultural pride and community cohesion also revolve around Cambodia's history of rice agriculture. For example, the Royal Ploughing Ceremony takes place twice a year and features the King's representatives ploughing a field with sacred cows to honour the coming rice-planting season (Lloyd and Sokrithy, 2013). Likewise, Cambodia's Festival of the Dead (*Pchum Ben*) is an annual fifteen-day Buddhist celebration through which family and community cohesion is restored. The festival occurs during the lunar month of *Photrobot* (September – October) where relatives travel back to home communities and come together in ceremonies and rituals to honour the spirits of lost loved ones (Davis, 2009; Holt, 2012; Ledgerwood, 2012). The ritual has existed for centuries but, as Ledgerwood (2012) explains, it has become particularly significant following the genocide: "The ritual is an act of mourning, a demonstrative activity expressing grief, and a process to restore the disrupted social relations between the living and the deceased ancestors, especially those who died during war and the reign of the Khmer Rouge" (Ledgerwood, 2012, p. 191).

The Festival of the Dead is one of the largest festivals in Cambodia; it is also imbricated with rice. Rice is imbued with spiritual and relational significance because of its centrality in daily and cultural life and it is, therefore, the primary offering to ancestors (Davis, 2009; Holt, 2012; Revelles-Benavente, 2009)). As Holt (2012) explains, "The giving of rice [is] symbolic of the giving of life, its nurturance, its sustenance. Rice is life's vital principle and so the giving of rice to ancestors, which is precisely what occurs during the [festival] is not only symbolic of regenerating the life of the lineage or family, but it also a fundamental mark of respect" (p. 39 – 40). During the festival, the gates to the spiritual world are opened and the spirits of ancestors (of up to seven generations) return to earth to receive rice-food offerings from their descendants

(Davis, 2009; Holt, 2012; Ledgerwood, 2012). Ledgerwood (2012) describes the whirlwind of activity leading up to and during the festival:

Temples clean up their grounds and hang out flags and banners to attract donors [rice-food gift givers]: women are particularly busy cooking food to offer, and planning the production of the rice cakes (*ansam*) that will be offered on the last day of the festival. [...] The most exciting part of the *Pchum ben* festival is anticipating the return of relatives who no longer live in the village (p. 195).

This depiction demonstrates how social, spiritual, cultural, and ecological worlds all intermingle as part of Khmer collective identity. It also illuminates how gender factors into these ecological relations. Gendered relations in Cambodian society are intimately linked to rice and agriculture. Historically, most families and communities were organized according to daily patterns and economic systems in relation with rice subsistence farming (Brickell, 2011; Garikipati et al., 2017; Kuksakabe and Prak, 2019; Lee, 2006). Traditionally, land was divided equally between children when they married. Those children who lived closest to the parents usually inherited the house and cattle. Daughters were more likely to live close to their parents and took on a caring role as they aged (Holt, 2012; Takahashi, 2005). As Holt (2012) explains, these familial relations are deeply engrained in Khmer culture and its history in agriculture: “In Khmer culture, the bond between parents and offspring is perhaps even deeper and stronger than between husband and wife. The importance of this relationship likely has been a staple of Khmer society since the days of the great Angkor civilization” (p. 17).

Brickell (2011) notes how the centrality of rice in family relations has resulted in the Khmer cultural metaphor of the rice pot as a symbol of familial cohesion; this metaphor, they elaborate, has also defined women’s traditional roles in Cambodian society. Historical and

contemporary Cambodian society is rooted in gendered hierarchies. Women have little power in politics, lack access to education, and are expected to be submissive in marital relations (Brickell, 2011; Frieson, 2001; Ogawa, 2004). However, women are also expected to have a dominant position in the workings of the family as well as in the family's agricultural work. In traditional households, men and women share many of the agricultural tasks such as harvesting, uprooting, and transplanting the rice. Traditionally, male family members perform what is considered to be the work that is more physically labour intensive, such as tilling and plowing the field with cattle force, while women engage in tasks such as seed preparation and weeding (Frieson, 2001; Garikipati et al., 2017; Resurreccion et al., 2008; Takahashi, 2005). These gendered divisions of labour have remained relatively stable over centuries of subsistence farming. Although, as Resurreccion et al. (2008) explain, with the modernization of farming equipment "the volume and heavy labor components of uprooting and seedling preparation have lightened, and as a result, have provided women more time for domestic work, paid work on other farms and backyard livelihoods." (p. 5).

For many Khmer women in traditional households, equal participation in agricultural labour and a dominant role in tending to domestic responsibilities such as the management of familial finances and childcare provides them with a sense of power and a prominent role in their community (Garikipati et al., 2017). For those who wish to operate outside of, or renegotiate, these gendered systems, traditional men's and women's roles act as a source of oppression, marginalization, or violence (Brickell, 2011b; Gormen et al., 1999; Ogawa, 2004). Assisting mothers with household and agricultural duties is generally considered more important for young girls than acquiring an education. As well, the related training and economic opportunities of modernized farm work is made much more readily available to men than to women (Gormen et

al., 1999; Ogawa, 2004). Educational and economic disadvantages mean that women are unlikely to have the means to leave situations of domestic violence (Brickell, 2011b; Brickell, 2020). As Ogawa (2004) elaborates, “the education gap between women and men [is] both a result and a cause of women’s lower position in society (p. 375).

Similarly, Salas and Sorn (2013) argue that gendered roles and relations, as primary forms of Khmer social and economic organization, have resulted in the exclusion and marginalization of LGBTTTQ+ peoples. While diverse sexual orientations and gender identities are not criminalized in Cambodia, high levels of social stigma and discrimination still impact the LGBTTTQ+ community. For example, the majority of participants in Salas and Sorn’s (2013) study reported being rejected by family when they disclosed their sexuality or gender identity. Some also described being treated as though they were “crazy,” “sick” or “possessed by a spirit” and subjected to conversion therapy (*kru khmer*) (p. 9). They were also likely to be kept home from school to prevent the community from learning of their supposed sickness. Lack of education and being excluded from traditions such as marital land and property acquisition is compounded by additional discrimination in the urban workforce. These overlapping forms of marginalization and economic disadvantages also make the LGBTTTQ+ community disproportionately vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence (Brickell and Springer, 2016; Hoefinger and Srun, 2017; Salas and Sorn, 2013).

Gendered agricultural roles are shifting as some families diversify their sustenance strategies to incorporate migratory work. In these cases, men are more likely than women to travel to urban areas for employment, leaving the primary agricultural work in the hands of women (Ogawa, 2004; Resurreccion et al., 2008). While the number of women migrating to urban areas to work in textile production has increased, it has not done so at the same rate as

men; mothers with young children are less likely to be migrant workers than men and fathers in the community. These changing dynamics have resulted in what Resurreccion et al. (2008) refer to as “housewifization” and the “feminization of agriculture” (p. 6). In contrast to traditional agricultural work that was organized according to gendered divisions of labour yet shared equally between men and women, in some communities with high rates of male migration, women now carry out the majority of the agricultural labour.

Additionally, older women are more likely to be heads of households now than they were before the Cambodian genocide, whether by displacement, abandonment or the death of a spouse (Takahashi, 2005). They are also less able to travel for migrant work and are, therefore, part of a rising demographic of female farmers (Resurreccion et al., 2008). Young women, while in fewer numbers than men, are increasingly moving to urban centers to work in textiles, older sedentary farmwomen are emerging as a group that is primarily responsible for rural agriculture in many villages (Ogawa, 2004; Resurreccion et al., 2008; Takahashi, 2005). As Resurreccion et al. (2008) conclude, “these occurrences demonstrate the fluidity of the workings of gender as power relations within which new definitions of appropriate gender roles are shaped and reshaped in the everyday work practices of women and men” (p. 47).

Rice is entangled with Khmer history, cultural identity, and community organization. It is also part of Khmer Cambodians’ historical and contemporary cultural and gendered negotiations, resistance, and change. For example, the historical importance of rice agriculture as a contributing factor in the rise of Angkor Wat and the cultural and spiritual significance that rice still imbues in rituals and celebrations such as *Pchum Ben* demonstrates how, over time, rice agriculture has contributed to Khmer social and cultural identity (Holt, 2012). Furthermore, Khmer cultural and social relations are ongoing in an uneven temporality that connects ancestors

with present and future generations, as *Pchum Ben* also demonstrates, and the use of rice as the primary offering to ancestors demonstrates how rice and rice agriculture facilitate ongoing social cohesion and cultural transmission. Lastly, the traditional and evolving gendered divisions of labour and familial and community roles in relation with rice agriculture, as well as the ongoing negotiations of gendered power dynamics that are intertwined with rice agriculture, demonstrate how rice is also imbricated in gendered negotiations, resistance, and change. In sum, rice has consistently yet unevenly acted to co-produce Khmer gendered, material, social, and cultural identity (Ledgerwood, 2012).

Anishinaabeg and Cree Ecological and Gendered Materialities and Social Relations

Anishinaabeg and Cree world views are grounded in their Creation stories in which waters¹ are the foundational source of life. Their understandings of kin or relatives include all inhabitants of the natural world because the latter's existence is entangled with that of humans. Human birth is synonymous with the birth of all of Creation, for which waters sustain life (Bedard, 2021; Chiblow, 2019; Craft, 2016; McGregor, 2014). For this reason, water relations have guided the development of Anishinaabeg and Cree institutional, political, and legal systems (Chiblow, 2019). Their understanding of co-constitution with the natural world has successfully informed their social and economic development through policies that ensure responsible engagement and care for waters. As McGregor (2014) explains, this understanding goes “far beyond what dominant society relies on (that is, science and technology) to inform the development of policy, legislation, regulations and programmes” (p. 495). Where Western development has relied on resource extraction for economic growth, Anishinaabeg and Cree

¹ Chiblow (2019) stresses the use of “waters” to acknowledge the different types of water as well as their unique importance to their Nation and territory.

water knowledge has informed sustainable governance models for centuries that act as “exemplars for learning how life can be sustained today in the Anthropocene” (Bignall et al., 2016, p. 472).

While all Anishinaabeg and Cree share close relationships with waters, these relations are unique and specific to place and Nation (Chiblow, 2019). As Rosiek et al. (2019) state, Anishinaabeg and Cree water relations are particular to their territories “as the only place where particular insights become possible, as the only place where certain words and concepts can be understood, or as a relative that teaches future generations essential lessons about life” (Rosiek et al., 2019, p. 9). Furthermore, as the above quote demonstrates, since waters impart knowledges, for Anishinaabeg and Cree, waters are sentient and have a spirit; they act as kin to humans, providing knowledge, healing, and teachings (Anderson et al., 2011; Chiblow, 2019; McGregor and Whitaker, 2011; Wilson, 2015). For Anishinaabeg, *nibi* (waters), also often referred to as grandmother, lay out the foundational principles for natural laws through deep, spiritual, and reciprocal relationships with the natural world (Blackstock, 2001; Chiblow, 2019; McGregor, 2015). These laws dictate “how people will relate to the Creator and all beings in Creation” (McGregor, 2014, p. 495). Similarly, Cree engage in reciprocal relationships with land and waters that shape governing and cultural practices (Chiblow, 2019; Parlee et al., 2012; Restoule et al., 2013). As Chiblow (2019) explains, “*akinomaage* (teaching from the earth) means to draw *giikendaaswin* (knowledge) from all that is around us — the sun, the moon, the animals, the waves, the winds, the plants, and the stars” (p. 7). Similarly, Wilson (2015) describes how ecological knowledge has founded several Cree principles:

Kakinow ni wgomakanak (we are in relationship with the land, waters, plants, animals and other living creatures), *a-kha ta neekanenni miso-an* (we are all equally important),

sakihiwawin (a commitment to act in ways that express love), and *mino pimatisiwin* (we are responsible to live in conscious connection with the land and living things in a way that creates and sustains balance) (p. 1).

Anishinaabeg and Cree women and two-spirit peoples embody a unique eco-cultural position in their communities. Creation stories that revere waters as life also define their sacred relationship with women. This relationship honours women as symbiogenetic water carriers and givers of human life. Therefore, women are responsible for water's care and governance and the transmission of these knowledges to future generations (Anderston et al., 2011; Bedard, 2021; Benton-Benai, 1988; Cave and McKay, 2016; McGregor, 2015; Szach, 2013). Traditional gendered practices include a sacred balance between men and women. For Anishinaabeg, men are symbiogenetically associated with fire; their role in ceremonies is to tend to the fire and this translates into their roles in the community to care for and protect life (Blackstock, 2001; Chiblow, 2019; McGregor, 2015). Likewise, in Cree, these relations are described as Father Sky and Brother Sun; Cree men are taught to live in balance with women's roles — to support women's sacred connection to water and their ability to give life (Dorion, 2010; Szach, 2013; Wilson, 2015).

Two-spirit peoples also embody an important position in traditional Anishinaabeg and Cree gendered balance and practices (Wilson, 2015). Two-spirit peoples are those who have been gifted with both water and fire spirits, often understood as a third gender (although many Indigenous languages do not traditionally differentiate between gendered pronouns). Depending on the Nation's distinct cultural practices, their roles may be unique or they may participate in both traditionally male or female activities (Hunt, 2012; Fiola, 2017; Wilson, 2015). Historically, they were often revered as mediators, visionaries, healers, or ceremony leaders. In contemporary

Anishinaabeg and Cree cultures, two-spirit peoples may identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or gender queer. As Wilson (2015) notes, while settler colonial oppression attempted to destroy two-spirit identities through several assimilationist projects, two-spirit peoples are vital to Indigenous healing and resurgence and are actively engaging in their traditional practices to bring balance back to their communities.

Anishinaabeg and Cree gendered water relations are evident in cultural practices, ceremonies, and celebrations. For example, girls' transition into womanhood and motherhood are celebrated as their transition to water carriers and givers of life. As water carriers, young women are responsible for care of waters and the transference of water knowledge to younger generations. They are also required to learn about themselves and how to foster life (Bedard, 2021; Dorion, 2010). As Bedard (2021) states, "being pregnant and carrying a baby in the womb is one of the most sacred times in the life of an Anishinaabe woman (p. 68). The *te madoodiswan* or *madoodoowgamig* (women's sweat lodge) ceremony is one way that Anishinaabeg women carry out these responsibilities. It is a purification ceremony in a lodge built with saplings bent to form a dome that is covered in layers of blankets or canvas; in its centre, a fire-pit heats rocks. As part of the spiritual experience, women gain "maternal ecological knowledge [and women's] life-giving gifts, her gifts of female energy, fertility, pregnancy, birth, and motherhood" (Bedard, 2021, p. 107). During the ceremony, depending on the Nation's specific practices and the purpose of the ceremony, participants say or sing prayers, dance, or drum. The springtime ceremony incorporates singing and drumming to replicate a beating heart; it honours the melting waters as they cleanse and purify the earth after a long winter, bringing new life into the world (Bedard, 2021; Dorion, 2010). As Bedard (2021) explains: "In the spring, the sap runs and the ground grows moist and full with water. The rivers, lakes, and streams swell with spring runoff.

Springtime is when the earth bathes itself clean, but also nourishes the land like a mother's breast milk feeds her baby" (Bedard, 2021, p. 95).

Birth and childrearing are also done in accordance with natural laws and in relation with waters. Grandmothers in the community oversee ceremonies that welcome the arrival of a new child (Dorion, 2010; Ireland et al., 2014). Cree traditions compare the breaking of the mother's water during labour to "a 'great shining pure lake' that transports human consciousness from one realm to the other" (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 13). Similarly, Anishinaabeg traditions, birth, and mothering practices are called "grandmother teachings" (Bedard, 2021, p. 68). Grandmother teachings "guide expectant mothers to understand that the gravity of the womb acting as the first maternal space that cradles new life" (Bedard, 2021, p. 68). Additional grandmother teachings include guidance on eating healthy foods during pregnancy, natural medicines that care for the mother and fetus during pregnancy, and how to develop a connection between the mother, child, and natural world (Bedard, 2020; Dorion, 2010; Ireland et al., 2014). According to Cree traditions, grandmothers are also responsible for bringing the newborn into the world; water and tea are given to the mother to give her strength and healing and when the child is born, they take the placenta and "offer it back to the earth" (Dorion, 2010, p. 101). Grandmothers also bring newborns to a sweat lodge where children are given their Cree names.

Water relations also inform parenting and childrearing practices. As part of grandmother teachings for both Anishinaabeg and Cree, one of the first acts of motherhood is to reach down when the child is born, take the child to her breast, and give the child "access to life sustaining breast milk (Bedard, 2021, p. 68). As Bedard (2021) elaborates, "Mother Earth gives her waters to nourish all-of-Creation. As such, women are a direct reflection of the earth...Water is life and women are the life givers and the carriers of water" (p. 68). Cree traditions of parenting

according to natural laws (*Opikinawasowin*) refer to children as a sacred bundle from the spiritual realm; “parenting bundles” are sacred objects, stories, and knowledges that are passed down through each generation, symbolically carried forward on parent’s backs (Dorion, 2010, p. 47; Wolfart & Ahenakew, 1998). *Opikinawasowin* consists of thirteen teachings including “the gift of parenting”, “the gift of natural laws and nature”, and “the gift of learning”, among others (Dorion, 2010, p. 50). Each gift contains ecological knowledges that relate to childrearing as a lifelong process through which interconnections between waters and natural laws transmit love, cultural knowledge and practices, material and relational life skills, and respect for all of Creation (Bedard, 2010; Dorion, 2010).

In Anishinaabeg traditions, the birth of a child (*binoojiinh*) represents a “precious gift of life and as a sign of gratitude to Creation we are expected to sustain it, nurture it, protect it, teach it, and support that life” (Bedard, 2021, p. 67). The stories of Elders, grandparents, and parents teach children respect for natural laws; stories about animals, foraging, and survival in the natural elements teach children practical skills as well as relational tools. For example, Dorion (2010) cites one grandmother’s teachings of childcare through tales of coyotes and beavers. As this grandmother describes it, natural world storytelling provides children with a “deeper exploration into the knowledge of the very self” (quoted in Dorion, 2010, p. 97).

As sentient beings, natural world entities are also teachers that engage in childrearing. Children are taught to observe nature, but also how to learn from natural world entities as teachers. Waters in particular assist in childrearing because they have “a very kind and nurturing spirit” (Dorion, 2010, p. 79). Through these teachings, children learn practical skills such as independence and self-sufficiency as well as how to *be* Anishinaabeg and Cree. In other words, a sense of self as part of family, community, and culture in relation with natural world entities. For

example, as part of Anishinaabeg worldviews, the teachings of *Mino-bimaadiziwin* (how to live the Good Life) involve *Gidakiiminaan* (relations and teachings from lands and waters) (Bell, 2016; Debassige, 2010; Dorion, 2010; Wilson, 2008). Anishinaabe scholar Nicole Bell (2016) describes *Mino-bimaadiziwin* as holistic teachings that encompass the physical and spiritual well-being of the individual self, as well as respect and identity relations with land and all of creation. *Minobimadazwin*, like *opikinawasowin* include teachings that describe how entities in the natural world are kin and teachers. Similarly, in Cree traditions, holistic relationality is described as: “We, the land, the water, and all living creatures are related and, as relatives, we are meant to love and care for each other” (Wilson, 2015, p. 255).

Waters are entangled with Anishinaabeg and Cree history, cultural identity, and community organization. It is also part of Anishinaabeg and Cree historical and contemporary cultural and gendered relations. Waters also connect life with death. In Cree understandings, “life is viewed as a natural process and death is a new beginning of the next journey since our spirit never dies. In *Opikinawasowin* parenting children were taught to embrace the cycle of death and dying which creates a greater appreciation as life as an ever-changing cycle” (Dorion, 2010, p. 52). As well, for Anishinaabeg, “water connects generations over time” (McGregor, 2015, p. 72). Much like the Khmer *Pchum Ben* (The Festival of the Dead), where gifts of rice connect the living on earth with ancestors and loved ones in the spirit world (Holt, 2012; Ledgerwood, 2012), waters connect Anishinaabeg and Cree with past and future generations and are an integral part of individual and collective identity formation (McGregor, 2015). In sum, like Khmer rice relations, water relations co-produce individual and collective Anishinaabeg and Cree identities in a dynamic and ongoing relationships between nature, gender, and culture.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has demonstrated how ecological, material, and social relations are key symbionts in Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree collective identity, and how gender is necessarily imbricated in these relational assemblages. In chapter three, the literature review, I summarize the ways in which genocide studies, to date, imagines and deploys the concepts of natural and more-than-human worlds in relation to physical, cultural, and gendered processes of genocidal destruction. I conclude chapter three with a review of Indigenous and settler colonial studies and an explanation as to how these studies will inform the analysis in this dissertation, alongside feminist new material theories. The literature review, in full, will provide an overview of the key themes in genocide studies that, I argue, maintain a narrow focus on physical human existence and destruction that overlooks the complex and multiple ways through which an ethnic or cultural group imagines itself, maintains collective identity, and renegotiates its social relations in and through genocide, as part of a human-ecological assemblage. Furthermore, the limited focus on physical destruction obscures the gendered embodiment of genocidal violence and the depth to which gendered bodies can harbour pain and trauma. I argue that my analysis of Khmer rice relations and Anishinaabeg and Cree water relations opens up opportunities to explore the impact of genocidal processes on human-ecological assemblages and the gendered implications of their attempted mutual destruction.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

Legal scholar Raphael Lemkin originally coined the term genocide which was adopted by the *United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (1948, hereinafter UNGC) following the Second World War. In his book, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944), Lemkin defines genocide as a complex process involving multiple techniques of genocide that, over time and through coordinated action, are aimed at “the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves” (Lemkin, 1944, p. 79). Article II of the UNGC is primarily referenced in genocide studies as the attempted physical and biological annihilation of a group:

...genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a nation, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

There are certain limitations to the legal definition of genocide. Some have argued that establishing perpetrator intention of group annihilation in “hot conflict” obscures genocidal processes and effects that occur in slower processes of politically induced famine and mass starvation (Rosenberg, 2020). Others argue that members of the United Nations General Assembly deliberately removed cultural forms of destruction, a core component of Lemkin’s

original definition, at the behest of settler colonial nations such as Canada that wanted to avoid potential liability for their treatment of Indigenous peoples. Early drafts of the Convention, influenced by Lemkin's contributions, defined genocide as a coordinated plan that involves cultural, biological, and physical techniques of annihilation (Card, 2010; Lemkin, 1944; Woolford, 2015). Cultural destruction, contested most strongly by settler colonial nations, includes acts intended to eradicate a group's cultural activities, traditions, or languages. Contemporary debates about cultural techniques of genocide have evoked progressive discussions in genocide studies and have generated conversations across other established disciplines such as political, post-colonial, and gender studies (Theriault, 2012).

There remains a gap in the literature. First, genocide studies tend to employ terms such as geography, resources, and the non-human Other which are distinguished from the human body and the cultural group. Geographies and resources are used to elucidate how ecologies factor into the group's physical (in)ability to survive. In this regard, scholars have examined how starvation, geographic spatialization, and ecological destruction have acted as tools of human physical violence and annihilation. Furthermore, Genocide studies has also engaged with the term dehumanization to describe how the victim group is often depicted as something other-than-human by the perpetrator group. In this case, discourses that frame the victim group as a parasite, disease, or cockroach are deployed as one of several earlier stages toward their final material eradication. Discourses of prevention are often interwoven with studies that discuss dehumanization, suggesting that genocide (physical death) can be averted if the process can be interrupted in one of the earlier stages, such as dehumanization. I argue that this emphasis on ecological and bodily materiality perpetuates the Eurocentric anthropocentrism, which is reflected in the removal of cultural destruction prior to the United Nation's adoption of the

Genocide Convention, and asymmetry, which prioritizes physical destruction over ecological-cultural destruction. Furthermore, the linear temporality employed in models that chart increasing dehumanization and persecution that result in the final act of genocide—physical destruction—also draw on European temporalities rather than diverse relational temporalities, such as those evident in *Pchum Ben* ceremonies in Cambodia or birthing and funerary practices for Anishinaabeg and Cree.

Feminist and gender scholars have troubled aspects of anthropocentrism in genocide studies—in particular, noting how ecological materialities also facilitate gendered sexual violence. Especially useful is Claudia Card's use of the term social death, which describes how genocidal rape may spare a woman's physical life, but her social vitality has been disrupted to such an extent that she exists in life with death. Further complicating this issue is when genocidal rape results in pregnancy and childbirth. In these instances, women bring life into the world *through* death. Feminist and gender studies also illustrate a more complex account of discourse and dehumanization, particularly in regard to sexuality. The linear timeline may not necessarily end in physical death but with sexual violence or other bodily interruptions, such as forced sterilization. Here again, social death is able to incorporate what could be more aptly be described as a gendered material and relational violence. Yet social death obfuscates how the natural world is entangled with the gendered materialities and social relations that contribute to individual and collective social vitality.

Indigenous and settler colonial studies offer a more complex understanding of the group and group destruction in genocide beyond anthropocentric terms. Therefore, I begin this literature review with a review of the genocide literature and the ways in which feminist and gender studies have integrated gendered and relational violence in their analyses. Throughout I

describe how the Cambodian genocide and Canadian settler colonial genocide have been incorporated into this body of literature. I conclude the literature review by highlighting the ways in which Indigenous understandings of group relations with the natural will sensitize the ontological, epistemological, and methodological approach that guides this dissertation's analysis of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree assemblages, consisting of ecological and gendered materialities and social relations, and how genocide operates to forcibly destroy, disrupt, or alter these relational assemblages.

Genocidal Discourses and Dehumanization

In genocide studies, one of the most frequently cited early warning signs of genocide is dehumanization. The denial of the victim group's "essential humanness" (Neilsen, 2015, p. 84) acts as a coping device for both military and civilian participation in mass atrocities that are considered morally reprehensible in any other circumstance (Ephgrave, 2016; Fisk, 2009; Hagan and Rymand-Richmand, 2008; Landry et al., 2021; Savage, 2013; Stanton, 2013). Discourses of dehumanization denote the victim group's non-human or other-than-human status. Researchers in genocide studies and prevention have often noted the use of dehumanization as a tactic that is employed early in the genocidal process, so that each stage of increasing polarization and violence is palatable to potential perpetrators. In Stanton's (2013) "Ten Stages of Genocide" model, stages one through six begin with classification and symbolisation, in which the victim group is identified and singled out based on ethnicity or race, which then leads to social, political, and legally sanctioned discrimination. Propaganda, as a tool of dehumanization, further entrenches the victim group's lower status. When the dominant group organizes a military strategy, they can incite further polarization between the groups. During this progression, the victim group is often likened to something that is other-than-human such as cockroaches,

diseases, or parasites that are plagues upon human society and that must be eradicated. Stage seven, preparation, is the stage in which victim groups are often forced to flee their territories or are isolated from the rest of society (e.g., in ghettos or concentration camps) while further preparations are made for the final solution. In these final stages, persecution leads to extermination (recalling that the victims are seen as something other-than-human) when mass executions are carried out and their existence or any form of wrongdoing is denied (Stanton, 2013).

The logic here is that each stage allows for a more extreme assault on the victim group in order to facilitate their eventual and complete physical annihilation. Removing the victim group from any form of moral obligation that guides civil rights and human interaction allows the dominant group, both civilian and military, to justify the victim group's increasing persecution and eventual fate of complete destruction (Ephgrave, 2016; Fisk, 2009; Hagan and Ryman-Richmand, 2008; Landry et al., 2021; Savage, 2013; Stanton, 2013). Reframing the victim group as a threat to the dominant group's continued existence, as a parasite, virus, or dangerous other-than-human, reframes genocide, an unimaginable atrocity, as a rational choice for survival (Ephgrave, 2016; Hiebert, 2008). For example, Ephgrave (2016) describes dehumanization in the Holocaust as "quintessential" (p. 15) and as the "hallmark of Nazi rule and of life in the camps" (Rylko-Bauer, quoted in Ephgrave, 2016, p. 15). Propaganda leading up to Jewish deportation and mass execution relied on descriptions of Jewish people as parasites and vermin that were a threat to German bloodlines, culture, and morality (Landry et al., 2021; Landry et al., 2022; Smith, 2016).

At the same time, dehumanizing discourses also employ contradictory depictions—the victim group is depicted as both non-human and feeble as well as scheming masterminds or

cunning predators who will wipe out the perpetrator group if they are not wiped out first (Ephgrave, 2016; Fisk, 2009; Smith, 2016; Steizinger, 2018; Theriault, 2017). Therefore, media in the form of news, flyers, and broadcasts on radios, televisions, and cinema portrayed Jewish people as animals and diseases preying upon German civil society while simultaneously depicting them as greedily and skilfully plotting to destroy Aryan Germany's economic power (Ephgrave, 2016; Fisk, 2009; Smith, 2016; Steizinger, 2018). Theriault (2017) explains this as a complex process of both dehumanization and humanization that contributes to the brutality of violence in genocide. In the case of the Armenian genocide, for example, it helps to explain the brutality of the violence inflicted on Armenians and the seeming pleasure the perpetrators derived from it. As Theriault states, "the suffering of victims is a function of their humanity and, thus, the pleasure derived from their suffering is directly proportional to the level of humanity perpetrators ascribe to the objects of their violence" (p. 30).

Nielsen (2015) argues that dehumanization is an insufficient indicator for the onset of genocide and uses an ecological term, toxification, to better describe how a victim group's symbolization, dehumanization, and persecution is synonymous with a form of environmental toxin. They argue that dehumanization occurs in most societies, including those that are not genocidal. For example, in many societies, homelessness is framed through a lens of dehumanization that dampens the personal and political empathy towards those living on the streets. Thus, they argue, toxification provides a better understanding of the extreme persecution that results from genocidal Othering. Toxification implies a form of contamination that necessitates a "specific response of extermination" (p. 86) while a non-human or dirty Other simply evokes "a yuk response" (p. 86). As Nielsen (2015) elaborates,

For instance, medical rhetoric, metaphors and discourse encompassing pathology, terminal cancerous growths, blood-sucking parasites, diseases, viruses, bacilli, leprosy, syphilis, tuberculosis and microbes used to describe the victim group is demonstrative of such toxification (p. 87).

Williams and Neilsen (2016) enlist the term toxification to describe how Khmer Rouge authorities and propagandists gained support for their cause. They conducted interviews with former Khmer Rouge cadres and argue that toxification operated as a “legitimizing framework” (p. 2) so that previously “ordinary Cambodians” (p. 1) would participate in the violence. Therefore, while individual reasons for joining the Khmer Rouge varied and explanations for violent participation were wide-ranging — from sadism, group conformity, and self-serving status or power — the overriding ideology of toxification ultimately legitimized their participation in micro-level violence against their fellow Khmer (Williams and Neilsen, 2016). The distinction Williams and Neilsen (2016) make, between dehumanization and toxification, certainly has relevance in discussions focused solely on how best to define or conceptualize its utilization. However, for the remainder of this literature review, I use the term dehumanization (to mean both dehumanization and toxification) for the sake of clarity as it applies to my research. Both describe how discourses *reduce* certain human groups to that of other-than-human, indicating the lesser value of the latter and maintaining a certain anthropocentrism that hierarchically order humanity over more-than-human entities. Furthermore, I aim to expose the limitations of genocide studies and prevention literature that draw on discourses of dehumanization (or toxification) as one of many stages in a linear progression of increasing genocidal violence.

Other-Than-Human Discourses of the Cambodian Genocide

On April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge, a dissident regime formed by members of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) under the dictator Pol Pot, entered the capital city Phnom Penh and declared victory in the Cambodian civil war. Shortly after, they began evacuating the city centre, ordering citizens into rural areas where work and irrigation projects would commence their “Super Great Leap Forward.” The new regime quickly banned and removed all money from circulation and undertook a massive reorganization of Cambodian society (Defalco, 2014; Hiebert, 2017; Hinton, 2004; Tyner, 2017). Khmer Rouge policies and their four-year plan relied on a classless society where all members would equally work toward and benefit from the plan’s results. This required that family units be abolished and replaced by one collective family under the parental guidance of Angkar (Tyner, 2018; Tyner and Molana, 2020). The Khmer Rouge also banned all acts of individual or private ownership of property, agricultural implements or cattle, and individual belongings (Defalco, 2014; Hiebert, 2017; Kiernan, 2002; Tyner, 2020). The regime predicted that these newly collectivized work teams and an unwavering commitment to the revolutionary agenda would replace traditional familial structures and result in a more productive work force. Over the course of nearly four years, between 1975 and 1979, approximately 2 million people perished from a combination of genocidal ecologies and materialities including deprivation and starvation, overwork, and mass executions in the Khmer Rouge work camps.

However, while claiming to reject capitalist class systems, the regime simply forged a new “three-tiered caste system” (Defalco, 2014, p. 64). Educated and urban Cambodians were framed as most closely associated with capitalist society and ideals. Since they were new to agricultural labour, they were termed “New People” or “17 April people”, which referenced the

day they were emancipated from the bonds of capitalist society and evacuated from the Phnom Penh. New People were deprived of housing, medical care, and sanitation — relocation was often an arduous journey through which they lacked necessary shelter, food, clothing, and medical supplies so they arrived in work camps already in a state of deprivation (Defalco, 2014; Hiebert, 2017; Frieson, 2001; Um, 2021). They were also routinely suspected of working with capitalist enemies to undermine the revolution and were therefore more likely to be imprisoned, tortured, and executed (Defalco, 2014). The Khmer Rouge described suspicious New People as “internal enemies” who were planning to “rot us from within” (quoted in Williams and Neilsen, 2016, p. 19).

Citizens who already resided in rural areas were initially praised for their existing peasant and agricultural lifestyle that was more in-line with Khmer Rouge ideals. They were called “Base People” or “Old People” and were given additional rations and treated with less suspicion. Tensions existed between New People and Old People due to their differential treatment. This is not to say, however, that Base People were afforded full rights; those were reserved only for Khmer Rouge party members (Defalco, 2014; Hiebert, 2017; Frieson, 2001; Williams and Neilsen, 2016; Um, 2021). Both Base People and New People who were suspected of undermining the revolution in any way were considered toxic. It was believed that, given the opportunity, they would spread like a disease, killing the perpetrator group and their vision for society if they were not eliminated first (Williams and Neilsen, 2016).

Actions interpreted as undermining the revolution became increasingly convoluted. The slightest misstep or suspected enemy collusion, from faltering in their work due to exhaustion or stealing a single grain of rice to colluding with the United States Central Intelligence Agency, meant interrogation, torture, and execution for Base People and New People alike (Defalco,

2014; Hiebert, 2017; Frieson, 2001; Williams and Neilsen, 2016). Whether a minor offence or suspected international conspiracy, each was considered to carry the same weight, threatening to destroy Angkar's "ideal" and "pure" society. A Khmer Rouge slogan that illustrates these discourses of dehumanization states, "What is infected must be cut; what is rotten must be removed; it isn't enough to cut down a bad plant, it must be uprooted" (cited in Williams and Neilsen, 2016, p. 9). Similarly, a Khmer Rouge bulletin issued the following warning of potential Vietnamese (Yuon) enemies within:

Khmer society has become eroded and rotten. Continual unity leads to peace for us Khmer people and being able to defend our Khmer race and territory which today is threatened by the false patriots selling the nation and territorial integrity to the Yuon communists...false patriots would be able to turn into a nationality of the Yuon in the next decade.' And a further example of the fear of racial contamination: "The Yuon are an infectious invading germ. The infected sore is already expanding in a big way to the west. The Yuon are poisoness to living things, both plant and human. Therefore, all Khmer brothers and sisters who love their national resources, their territory, their culture and their rights and who love social truth, must help in seeking the key to all this and all measures for the preservation and defense of the territory belonging to our race" (quoted in Frieson, 2001, p. 15).

The discourses of dehumanization in Khmer Rouge policies and propaganda legitimized the extreme violence that, at times, cadres seemed to derive pleasure from. Terms such as "contamination" and "infection" necessitated extermination, which was also framed to protect oneself and preserve the lives of the pure and equal Khmer race (Defalco, 2014; Hiebert, 2017; Frieson, 2001; Williams and Neilsen, 2016). Furthermore, the language of dehumanization,

specifically relevant to Khmer cultural analogies of rice and farming (e.g., uprooting rather cutting down a bad plant) aided in their uptake as a legitimizing framework for the Khmer Rouge regime (Hinton, 2005). In sum, existing literature in the dehumanization of Khmer Cambodians, as part of their escalating persecution by the Khmer Rouge, demonstrate how non-human Othering can be a persuasive tactic for genocidal participation. However, a gap in the literature remains. The relevance of discourses of dehumanization to Khmer cultural and collective identity, by drawing on analogies of rice and farming, requires further exploration beyond their deployment as a dehumanizing discourse, to one that demonstrates how relationships with rice are integral to Khmer identity and whose mutual destruction results in distinct forms of relational violence; this is the first gap in the literature that my analysis of Khmer relational assemblages will attend to.

Other-Than-Human Discourses of Settler Colonial Genocide

European imperialists first arrived on the Eastern shores of Turtle Island (what we now call the Canadian province of Newfoundland, North America) in the 11th century in exploration missions. In the 1500s, Europeans returned to establish British settlements and to take advantage of the wealth of resources these “undiscovered” lands offered. Early colonists allied with Indigenous peoples and used their trading routes; these early relations were generally equally advantageous as the fur trade benefited both First Nations and colonists alike. However, the fur trade’s profitability led to increasing conflict between European and Indigenous peoples’ interests; increasing Indigenous resistance to growing attempts by European authorities to establish their dominance on Turtle Island during the 16th and 17th centuries laid the way for settler colonial policies of genocide (Furniss, 1995; TRCC, 2012; Woolford, 2015).

Canadian settler colonial genocide relied on discourses of savagery and civilization to enforce policies of Indigenous eradication for land dispossession and settlement purposes. The settler colonial project rested on the notion that Turtle Island's lands and waters were *terra nullius* — an empty, untamed, and unoccupied territory open for the taking (De Leeuw, 2009; Harding, 2006). Indigenous peoples who had inhabited these territories for thousands of years, with complex political systems, economic institutions, and social organization in close relationship with their natural environment, were framed as a less-than-human, savage component of this untamed frontier (De Leeuw, 2009; Harding, 2006). As this quote from a middle school history textbook, published in 1927, tells students: “When the white man first came to our country [it] was impossible to separate the life of the Indian from his surroundings. He was, as it were, a part of the landscape” (quoted in Carleton, 2011, p. 109-110). Such dehumanizing portrayals of Indigenous peoples and their territories were used as justification for ecological, geographic, and spatialized genocidal techniques of physical destruction and assimilationist policies implemented by settler colonial authorities.

By framing Indigenous peoples as uncivilized and as part of the natural world, settlers were able to frame their goals as benevolent (Carleton, 2011; Woolford, 2015). Western concepts of superiority were closely linked to agricultural settlement and domestic cleanliness, which was also closely associated with godliness. Indigenous peoples, in contrast, were framed as barbaric and dirty, roaming aimlessly with few skills, and with a violent “blood thirsty” disposition (quoted in Carleton, 2011, p. 112). Carleton (2011) refers to an excerpt from a history text, written in 1920, that describes how Indigenous peoples often raided French and English settlements from the perspective of French commander Louis-Joseph Montcalm:

It filled [Montcalm] with disgust to see them swarming in the streets of Montreal, sometimes carrying bows and arrows, their coarse features worse disfigured by war-paint and a gaudy headdress of feathers, their heads shaven with the exception of one long scalp-lock, their gleaming bodies nearly naked or draped with dirty buffalo or beaver skins...It was a costly burden to feed them. Sometimes they made howling demands for brandy and for *bouillon*, by which they meant human blood. Many of them were cannibals. Once Montcalm had to give some of them, at his own cost, a feast of three oxen roasted whole. To his disgust, they gorged themselves and danced around the room shouting their savage war cries (quoted in Carleton, 2011, p. 112).

The above citation makes evident the use of other-than-human depictions of Indigenous peoples, as “swarming”, “dirty”, “howling”, and “savage.” These dehumanizing discourses, depicting insects, animals, and primitive humanoids, justified settler colonial policies that clearly intended to eradicate Indigenous peoples. Even in their earlier, more amicable fur trading relations, the distinction between civilized and uncivilized was entrenched; while Indigenous peoples, as part of the landscape themselves, certainly played an important role in navigating these vast and “undiscovered” lands, the dominant settler narrative framed these skills as an exception to their otherwise animalistic nature (Jasen, 1995; Thorpe, 2012). Therefore, discourses promoted “the view that the forced separation of Indigenous peoples from their lands and savage practices and the gradual creation of a settler society were inevitable and natural parts of the history of British imperialism and the progress of humanity” (Carleton, 2011, p. 114). A 1926 text describes this benevolent project: “one of the duties of Empire is to bring civilization, enlightenment, and progress to the backward peoples of the earth” (quoted in Carleton, 2011, p. 114).

Benevolence was incorporated into displacement and assimilationist policies that were meant to expand colonial dominance across Turtle Island (Furniss, 1995; TRCC, 2012; Woolford, 2015). As the fur trade began to wane in the 18th century the settler government turned its attention to Westward expansion, resource extraction, and agricultural development — all projects that would be impeded by Indigenous claims to sovereignty, land, and territory. The *Gradual Civilization Act* of 1857 was one of many in a succession of “civilizing” missions that would facilitate settler dominance and expansion (TRCC, 2012; Woolford, 2015). The Act was meant to encourage Indigenous peoples to integrate themselves into European civilization. Colonial and religious training, the Act specified, would result in an “educated Indian” of “good moral character” (Campbell, 2008; Lawrence, 2003; Tobias, 1983).

The *Indian Act* took up these efforts in 1876 since the *Gradual Civilization Act* was met with increasing resistance and largely deemed a failure (Furniss, 1995; Harding, 2006; Milloy, 1999; TRCC, 2012; Woolford, 2015). The *Indian Act* also mobilized paternalistic discourses while simultaneously legislating discriminatory politics, human rights violations, and genocidal policies of assimilation. Along with defining and homogenizing distinct Nations and peoples as “Indian,” additional legislation integrated into the *Indian Act* outlawed certain cultural and traditional practices and codified into law the Indian Residential School system (IRS) and enforcement of Indigenous children’s removal and placement in the schools. (Furniss, 1995; Harding, 2006; Milloy, 1999; TRCC, 2012; Woolford, 2015).

Throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th century, Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in the residential schools. Since, it seemed, adults were too stubborn to voluntarily engage in enfranchisement, the most reasonable alternative was to assimilate children who were less set in their ways and perceived to be more malleable (Boksa

et al., 2015; Milloy, 1999; TRCC, 2012; Woolford, 2015). While earlier discussions surrounding assimilatory aims of the *Indian Act* deployed paternalistic and benevolent discourses that would “aid the Red man in lifting himself out of his condition” (quoted in Boksa et al., 2015, p. 363), as this 1876 Indian Affairs Report puts it, the explicit purpose of the *Indian Act* was complete annihilation of Indigeneity. The report cites Indian Affairs Minister Duncan Campbell Scott who, in 1920, proclaimed,

I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone...Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the object of this Bill (quoted in Boska et al., 2014, p. 364).

Assimilationist functions of the residential schools included instruction on Western cultural practices, citizenship, domesticity, and Christian moral philosophies. Through this process Indigenous children were removed from their families, cultures, and languages that are intimately intertwined with their territories, waters, and their natural world kin (Cunneen, 2008; Miller, 1999; TRCC, 2012; Woolford, 2015). These techniques of genocide overlapped with genocidal ecologies and materialities, all of which relied on discourses of dehumanization or qualifications when humanity is acknowledged such as reference to “savage” or “backwards” peoples. Yet here again, further exploration of these natural world relationships, specific to distinct cultural practices and relationships between, for example, waters and Anishinaabeg and Cree, will deepen genocide studies’ understanding of group relations and their vulnerability in genocide.

Gender and Dehumanization

Dehumanizing euphemisms and analogies often distinguish between men and women, whether or not they are the target for physical annihilation. Adam Jones (2006) coined the term “gendercide” to describe how men and boys of fighting age are usually targeted for mass execution when dehumanization frames the victim group as a disease or parasite that, if not eradicated, threatens the lives of the perpetrator group in a “if we don’t kill them, they’ll kill us” scenario. Alternatively, “root and branch” killing describes another form of dehumanization that is meant to eradicate entire populations including women and girls. In this sense, women are framed as roots who embody the potential to produce additional offspring, or branches. And branches, of course, have the potential to create future offspring of their own, thus their necessary extermination as well (Jones, 2006; Stanton, 2003). Each of these result in unique materialities of dehumanization; as entire victim populations are subject to increasing persecution, their physical bodies and material conditions reflect their decreasing “human-ness”. For example, as part of dehumanization associated with gendercide and root and branch killing, businesses or homes owned by members of the victim group are raided or burned; withholding of food and medical supplies also transforms victims’ bodies into something less-than-human as they become thin, weak, unwashed, and sick (Burleson and Giordano, 2016; Stanton, 2003).

Yet gendered bodies signify different points of dehumanization or other-than-human attributes. Discourses of dehumanization commonly evoke gender and sexuality to heighten the supposed threat the victim group represents. For example, women are commonly framed as sexually depraved and animalistic, posing a danger to the men in the perpetrator group. Leading up to the Rwandan genocide, for instance, ethnic Tutsi were broadly referred to as cockroaches that required eradication. However, Tutsi women were also described as predatory and sexual

animals that may lure Hutu men into the enclaves of the enemy (Ephgrave, 2016). Gender and sexuality have also been used as a justification for eugenics measures that further the dehumanization process. For example, eugenics became law in Nazi Germany in 1933 to manage “undesirables.” Women and peoples deemed racially or otherwise inferior by the Nazi state, such as LGBTTQ+ peoples, were targeted for scientific experimentation, sterilization, or involuntary abortion (Ephgrave, 2016; Stern, 2021). As a result, by targeting one’s sexuality or removing reproductive abilities, Nazi eugenics policies removed an important element of gendered human relations that resulted in a distinctly gendered material dehumanization as well.

Gendered and sexualized dehumanization is also enacted using public nudity and deindividuation. For example, Ephgrave (2016) describes how public head shaving and nudity upon arrival at Nazi concentration camps were used to substantiate the escalating violence of the genocide. Yet men and women experienced this dehumanization differently. Cultural norms of gendered modesty at that time heightened the shame of public nudity for women (Ephgrave, 2016). In contrast, but along similar lines, men’s public nudity is described as emasculating and humiliating. For example, Sivakumaran (2007) notes how men’s dehumanization through nudity will also often include a sexually explicit act such as being forced to undress in front of the women and then also being forced to masturbate themselves.

Public head shaving and nudity also result in gendered dehumanization through deindividuation. For example, Ephgrave (2016) examines the distinct impact of Nazi concentration camps on women’s sense of gendered, bodily, and social sense of self; the testimonies of female survivors also described how women’s hair was a significant source of pride, beauty, and femininity; its loss, accompanied with public nudity, resulted in a complex and embodied loss of gendered identity. As this Survivor explains, “What is a woman without her

glory on her head, without hair? A woman who doesn't menstruate? We had lost our dignity in Auschwitz. We had no clothes that looked feminine and no desire to act like ladies...Some said that we would lose our womanhood completely" (quoted in Ephgrave, 2016, p. 21). An excerpt from a Survivor's memoir also illustrates this deindividuation process:

The haircut has a startling effect on every woman's appearance. Individuals become a mass of bodies, height, stoutness, or slimness. There is no distinguishing factor – it is the absence of hair that transformed individual women into like bodies. Age and other personal differences melt away. Facial expressions disappear. Instead. A blank, senseless stare emerges on a thousand faces of one naked, unappealing body (cited in Ephgrave, 2016, p. 22).

Gendered dehumanization was an element in the Khmer Rouge's "impossible fantasy of the erasure of the individual in Cambodian society" (Collucci et al., 2021, p. 4). As one family, united under the banner of Angkar, women and men were required to dispose of their individual possessions and gendered appearance. In the work camps, their hair was cut in the same short fashion and they were given identical sets of clothing to wear. During the regime, families were separated into different camps and work teams and communal meals replaced family meals (Tyner, 2018; Tyner and Molana, 2020; Ye, 2011). As Tyner and Molana (2020) note, the regime's deindividuation was discursively codified as a means to achieve their revolutionary utopia. They cite an article published to inform "revolutionary youth" of "the matter of family building" (quoted in Tyner and Molana, 2021, p. 178). The article describes in great detail the necessities of deindividuation and the elimination of familial relationships, replaced by one family under the parental rule of Angkor. The main thrust of the message in the article can be summarized in the following excerpt:

Therefore, in order that our families may know true happiness, peace, and prosperity, our entire nation and people must first be liberated and freed from every type of exploitation by the reactionary imperialist-feudalists-capitalists. So, building our revolutionary families is not just for our personal interests or happiness or to have children and grandchildren to continue the family line. Importantly, it is so that the revolution may achieve its highest mission, to liberate the nation, the people, and the poor class and then advance toward socialism and communism (quoted in Tyner and Molana, 2021, p. 180).

While the above quote does not specifically speak of gendered dehumanization, it never-the-less describes the necessary loss of individual autonomy while simultaneously demanding that familial relationships be eliminated for the success of the revolution. Recalling that families and gendered roles in caring for elderly and young family members is a staple of Khmer society “since the days of the great Angkar civilization” (Holt, 2012, p. 17), the impact of the regime’s reorganization of family structure inevitably resulted in reverberating gendered consequences; the loss of gendered caring roles also results in a lost sense of human-familial identity.

In the Canadian case, gendered discourses of dehumanization framed Indigenous women and two-spirit peoples as both sexually depraved and sexually exploitable (Bourgeois, 2015; Gibson et al., 2017; Smiley, 2016). Indigenous women were described as squalid and immoral, and as a threat to the moral character of the (settler) nation, both by luring settler men into their depraved lifestyle, as well as their ability to reproduce said “savagery” (Collier, 2017; de Gregorio-Godeo, 2014; Pegoraro, 2015; Smiley, 2016; Stote, 2012). They were said to have poor moral character that resulted in promiscuity, the spread of venereal diseases, and poor parenting skills. For this reason, Indigenous women were disproportionately subjected to forced and coerced sterilization. In the same era that Nazi eugenic measures were written into law, the

provinces of Alberta and British Columbia also enacted formal sterilization legislation (Stote, 2012). However, as Stote (2012) explains, “eugenically minded doctors” (p. 124) in provinces without sterilization legislation, yet who still performed such operations, were largely protected from legal action. In Alberta and British Columbia, the legislation was loosely defined which meant individual doctors were mostly free to decide the characteristics of those deemed undesirable and eligible for sterilization. However, they *did* make use of the very same discourses used to frame the depravity of Indigenous women. Therefore, although sterilization in Canada did not specifically apply to Indigenous peoples, Indigenous women were the majority of those deemed eligible for the procedure (Collier, 2017; Pegoraro, 2015; Stote, 2012; Stote, 2015). Stote (2012) references a report that makes the case for one woman’s sterilization whose “rehabilitation through the auspices of the Indian Affairs Department, is most problematical.”

The report elaborates:

Miss [D.] is being referred for sexual sterilization because of her very limited intelligence, her lack of social judgment, and her lack of possible social supervision. While she will undoubtedly continue to be a social problem on discharge from this hospital, sexual sterilization would prevent her from having further children who might become social problems because of possible inherited mental deficiency, congenital or acquired venereal infection, and lack of healthy parental controls (quoted in Stote, 2012, p. 123).

Those who were designated as being a drain on society — lazy, lacking appropriate work ethic, and relying instead on government handouts — were also eligible candidates for sterilization. For this reason, Indigenous men, while in lesser numbers, were also targeted for the procedure. Stote (2012) estimates that approximately 3 thousand Indigenous people were

sterilized (approximately a third of those men) between 1930 and 1970. Furthermore, recent reports have uncovered that this practice continues to the present day (Collier, 2017; Ryan et al., 2021; Stote, 2012). As Ryan et al. (2021) state, “between 2015 and 2019, over 100 Indigenous women from six provinces and two territories have come forward to say that they were forced or coerced to undergo a sterilization procedure in Canada” (Ryan et al, 2021, p. 275).

In conclusion, dehumanizing genocidal discourses were used as legitimizing frameworks in both the Cambodian and Canadian settler colonial genocides. These discourses of dehumanization are usually framed as one of a series of progressive stages leading up to mass physical extermination in canonical cases of genocide. Feminist and gender studies have troubled anthropocentric and linear temporalities, noting how gendered dehumanization results in certain materialities that are discursive and genocidal. For example, forced sterilization acts on the gendered body but also operates to further the group’s dehumanization toward the end goal of physical human annihilation. To follow, I expand on the ways in which genocide studies has, to date, imagined more-than-human worlds as ecological, geographic, and spatialized tools of destruction deployed by perpetrators to facilitate that end goal. Lastly, I elaborate on Claudia Card’s use of the term ‘social death’ and its relation to Indigenous and settler colonial genocide studies as a means to explore additional implications of dehumanization and destruction that troubles genocide studies’ narrow focus on physical mass annihilation.

Genocidal Ecologies and Materialities

Genocide By Attrition

Ecologies, in terms of land and resources, are frequently referred to as tools of genocide through deprivation. This form of physical persecution, by withholding or destroying resources, is also referred to as genocide by attrition, or as a slow death (Rosenberg, 2012; Silina, 2008).

For example, during the Armenian genocide, victims were led on “death marches” to the Syrian Desert. Along the way, they were deprived of food and water, and most did not survive the journey. Those who did survive were starved in concentration camps, resulting in approximately one million deaths between the spring of 1915 and autumn of 1916 (Miller and Miller, 1993). The Holodomor, or Ukrainian Famine, was primarily the result of human-made conditions under the communist regime of Joseph Stalin (Naumenko, 2021). Between 1932 and 1933, it is estimated that between three and four million ethnic Ukrainians were starved to death. While low harvest and grain yields were part of the broader Soviet famine between 1931 and 1934, discrimination that saw farming equipment, lands, and rations withheld from ethnic Ukrainians, resulted in their targeted destruction.

Likewise, many studies highlight the deprivation and starvation that resulted from Khmer Rouge policies of rice production (Fein, 1997; Heibert, 2017; Sysyn & Theriault, 2017). The regime’s “Super Great Leap Forward” was a four-year plan that intended to carry out their totalitarian agenda as a self-supporting Democratic Kampuchea. Since rice exportation was key to the nation’s renewal, the plan included the impossible goal of producing three tons of rice per hectare. Yet with no machinery or oxen available to the labourers, and meager portions of rice provided to many of them, often only once per day, masses perished due to overwork and starvation.

Canadian settler colonialism also deployed deprivation and starvation to dampen mounting Indigenous resistance (Daschuk, 2013; Wakeham, 2021). As such, the colonial state employed overlapping tactics of displacement, assimilation, and the politics of famine. As the fur trade declined in the 18th century, the government turned its attention to Westward expansion, resource extraction, and agricultural development. At this same time, widespread famine

conditions were also developing across the country. However, as Daschuk (2013) notes, much like the Holodomor, Indigenous peoples perished in masses due to willful policy decisions made by the Canadian settler government. Rations were withheld from Indigenous peoples who refused to relocate to reserves; yet reserve rations were themselves meager compared to that of settler Canadians. On reserves, Indigenous peoples were restricted from engaging in traditional hunting and foraging practices to supplement their diets. Malnutrition compounded the effects of diseases, such as tuberculosis, that were also rapidly spreading across the nation. As Daschuk (2013) explains, policies of starvation served to weaken resistance so that the settler colonial government could “meet its development agenda” (Daschuk, 2013, p. xix).

Women’s experiences of starvation and deprivation overlap with their experiences of pregnancy, childbirth (and loss) and amenorrhea (lack of menstruation due to deprivation), as well as caregiving duties (Ephgrave, 2016; Totten, 2017). Women who are pregnant or giving birth under conditions of deprivation are susceptible to additional vulnerabilities such as miscarriages and malnutrition. As well, giving birth in conditions of deprivation can result in the death of the mother and the child (Ephgrave, 2016; Totten, 2017). Women who need to care for young children may be unable to breastfeed infants; they may also give their own (meager) food rations to their children.

These gendered implications were certainly present in the cases of Cambodian and Canadian genocidal policies of starvation (Daschuk, 2013; Denov et al., 2022; TRCC, 2012). In the Cambodian case, it is only recently that reports of women’s distinct experiences are surfacing (Anderson, 2004; De Langis et al., 2014). In part, this is due to social and cultural norms that stigmatize discussions around sexuality (Anderson, 2004; De Langis et al., 2014). While scant literature is devoted specifically to women’s experiences of starvation, studies have noted the

ways in which amenorrhea due to deprivation negatively impacted birth rates in Cambodia (Ea, 2017). My analysis will contribute to this growing body of work as I also noted these as common themes in Khmer women's testimonies and oral histories.

In the Canadian case, famine policies also overlapped with the force of assimilation policies and the increasing numbers of Indigenous children forced to attend residential schools. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police were employed to forcibly remove Indigenous children from their homes, often as young as three or four years old. Additionally, Indigenous mothers were coerced into handing their children over to authorities when it seemed the only other option was for them to starve at home (TRCC, 2012). Furthermore, children in residential schools were subject to a lack of food and overcrowding; diseases ran rampant in these conditions (Milloy, 1983; Milloy, 1999; Woolford, 2015). It was estimated that approximately 4000 Indigenous children perished in the schools when the Truth and Reconciliation of Canada published their report in 2012. Yet it is difficult to know exactly how many children died because many were buried in unmarked graves and records in the schools were fragmented at best, and non-existent at worst. As recent developments have revealed, there may be many more unmarked graves that are yet to be discovered (Deer, 2021).

Genocidal Geographies and Spatialization

Genocide and critical geography studies are closely associated with starvation and attrition; they examine the broader impact of genocide to include human interactions with their environments (Colucci et al., 2021; Danielsson, 2018; Tyner and Rice, 2016, Tyner, 2012). Colluci et al. (2021) describe how geographical studies draw out the genocide's "anthropogeomorphological traces" (p. 8). In simpler terms, these studies examine how human societies or groups (anthropologies) are changed along with changing (morphing) geographies.

For example, they might examine how irrigation projects coincided with rice production policies orchestrated by the Khmer Rouge and how these projects changed the landscape and lives of Cambodian society (Colluci et al, 2021; Defalco, 2014). Geographies are also employed in genocide through territorialization. Nazi Germany, for example, justified the eradication of whole populations as a necessary means for the acquisition of territory or *lebensraum* (living space) (Danielsson, 2008; Herwig, 1999). These studies are concerned with connecting changing ecological uses with their social and cultural significance that, as Colluci et al. (2021) argue, contributes a more holistic understanding of genocide.

Genocidal geographies are also related to the idea of spatialization and material understandings of genocidal organization (Clegg et al., 2013; Giaccaria and Minca, 2011; Minca, 2015; Pina e Cunha et al., 2014). These studies examine the socio-material organization of genocidal regimes such as their use of ghettos or concentration camps. For example, the use of isolation from the rest of society provides the necessary geographies to kill without witnesses. In the camp or ghetto, segregation is also used to isolate victims from one another to interrupt victim cohesion and resistance. Additionally, these studies note how material objects facilitate genocidal destruction such as the fashioning of devices for torture and extermination and the use of administrative materials to organize, document, and legitimize the functioning of the regime. As Clegg et al. (2013) put it, these socio-materialities “help to create the contexts in which acts of genocide unfold” (p. 327).

Geographies, spatialization, and socio-materialities were used in both the Cambodian and Canadian settler colonial genocides. The Khmer Rouge evacuated major city centres and transported their populations to forced agricultural labour camps where additional techniques of separation and isolation facilitated mass executions (Colluci et al., 2021; Tyner, 2017). While the

regime's purported purpose was a communist revolution toward pure equality, critical geography scholars argue the project was primarily material rather than ideological (Clegg et al., 2013; Colucci et al., 2021; Rosenberg, 2012; Tyner, 2020; Tyner and Rice, 2016; Tyner, 2012; Tyner 2012). As their four-year plan for the "Super Great Leap Forward" proclaimed, "He Who Has Rice Possesses All!" (quoted in De Falco, 2014). As Colluci et al. (2021) argue, "to understand the genocide, then, is to understand [the regime's] plans for rice, their plans to irrigate that rice, and their efforts to violently inscribe that irrigation into the surface of the earth" (Colucci et al., 2021, p. 4).

The Khmer Rouge also incorporated material spatialization and organization. Prisons and work camps were spatially organized to facilitate torture, mass killings, and starvation (Clegg et al., 2013). The Tuol Sleng S-21 prison, a repurposed school in the evacuated city of Phnom Penh, utilized administrative equipment and processes to carry out the housing, torture, and execution of prisoners. Upon arrival, prisoners were escorted by personnel and guards, clad in uniforms that legitimated their presence, through a series of documentation processes such as taking statements from the prisoners as well as their photographs. To extract confessions, prisoners were separated into rooms that were outfitted with objects fashioned into torture mechanisms such as beds with handcuffs (Clegg et al., 2013; Pina e Cunha et al., 2014). Similarly, work camps were spatially organized to separate workers by age, ability, and sex and facilitated communal rather than familial living. Additionally, tools were fashioned, and work teams were organized for manual rather than cattle-powered labour in the rice fields (Colluci et al., 2021; Tyner, 2017).

Canadian settler colonial authorities also enlisted geographies, spatialization, and socio-materialities. While earlier fur trade relations were advantageous for colonists and Indigenous

peoples alike, relations became strained as colonial authorities turned their attention to expansion, development, and settlement efforts. The latter were met with considerable Indigenous resistance. In response to these rising tensions, King George III issued the *Royal Proclamation of 1763* which recognized Indigenous rights over all unceded lands (Borrows, 1994). This made the British Crown the sole agent in land transfers and established the need for treaty making in order for colonists to secure Indigenous territory (Clinton, 1989; Havemann, 1999; Leslie, 2002; Miller, 2009; Paul, 2000; Woolford, 2009). Treaties between colonial authorities and some Indigenous nations (often made under false pretenses) relinquished lands in exchange for certain annuities. It became increasingly evident, however, that settler authorities had little intention of holding up their end of the agreements and Indigenous resistance grew. In response, the Canadian government initiated a series of displacements (Miller, 2009; Paul, 2000; Woolford, 2009; Woolford, 2015).

The Proclamation also established the reserve system, promoted as a means to “protect and minimize disruption to Indians and their lands” (Shewell, 2004, p. 7). Established in tandem with the politics of famine, it was intended to separate Indigenous peoples from colonial settlements temporarily, and through assimilative policies and programs, facilitate their “civilized” integration into mainstream (settled) Canadian society (Harris, 2011; Leslie, 2002; Shewell, 2004). The *Indian Act* was introduced in 1876 as a means to further formulate displacement into genocidal policy. Under the Act, Indigenous peoples became wards of the federal state. Indigenous peoples who wished to maintain their Indian Status were confined to reserves, requiring a pass from Indian Agents to leave. The pass system was later abandoned, yet the reserve system has maintained Indigenous segregation from the rest of Canadian society to this day (Bartlett, 1988; Leslie, 2002; Milloy, 1983; Titley, 2004; Woolford, 2009).

The *Indian Act* also acted as material context for the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities. Throughout the 19th century and into the 20th century, Indigenous children were forcibly placed in residential schools to “civilize” the Indigenous populations and ready them for subsumption by Canadian society (Grant, 1996; Woolford, 2009). Residential schools themselves also utilized various forms of spatialization. Siblings were often sent to different schools; even if they were placed in the same school, relatives were frequently separated because the children were segregated by sex and typically barred from associating with one another (Milloy, 1983; TRCC, 2012; Woolford, 2015). The schools also maintained colonial architecture and organizational methods that facilitated assimilative goals; settler colonial ideologies of domesticity and civilization were materially incorporated by having children work in the school’s kitchens, laundry facilities, stables, and agricultural lands. When they were not working, children slept in dorms with beds lined and stacked in rows; the schools in general created conditions of overcrowding and extreme isolation and loneliness simultaneously (Woolford and Gacek, 2016; Woolford, 2015).

Genocidal geographies, spatialization, and organization also result in distinctly gendered consequences and forms of violence (Anderson, 2004; De Langis et al., 2014; Eisenbruch, 2018; Tyner, 2018; Tyner and Molana, 2020; Ye, 2011). In the Cambodian case, for example, the Khmer Rouge enforced a policy of forced marriages in which men and women, often complete strangers to one another, were married in mass ceremonies (Anderson, 2004; De Langis et al., 2014; Eisenbruch, 2018; Ye, 2011). The newly formed couples were expected to consummate their relationship and bear children as future comrades (rice field workers) for Angkar (Tyner, 2018; Tyner and Molana, 2020). Couples were regularly monitored and often held at gun point to ensure that they would engage in sexual activities for procreation. While both men and women

suffered the consequences of forced marriages and consummation, as De Langis et al. (2014) note, even when the threat of physical violence was removed, women were often repeatedly raped by their assigned husbands.

Furthermore, the regime imposed a strict moral code that banned sexual activity outside of marriage that also banned rape by civilians and military personnel alike; in fact, both the perpetrator and victim were subject to punishment or execution if an act of rape was committed. Despite this, both men and women were subject to rape and sexual violence by Khmer Rouge cadre — women disproportionately (Tyner and Molana, 2020). As Anderson (2004) points out, “the Khmer Rouge policy [against rape] had the perverse effect of encouraging sexual crimes” (p. 790). Since policies forbidding rape detailed punishments for both the perpetrator and the victim, both went to great lengths to conceal the crime.

Geographies and spatialization can also produce conditions in which gendered violence is used as a public display of shame and terror; for example, rape was used to terrorize Armenians into fleeing their lands as a precursor to the death marches to the Syrian desert. Or they can be used to create conditions of isolation where women are held and subjected to repeated rapes and pregnancy; in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, both were employed (Ephgrave, 2016; Harrelson, 2009; Totten, 2017). Geographies and spatialization can also create conditions of isolation where rape goes unnoticed. Isolation in the Khmer Rouge rice fields, for example, facilitated conditions for mass rapes by cadre despite the regime’s strict policies forbidding the act. Meanwhile the communal nature of the work camps meant that married couples could easily be monitored when they were expected to be consummate their marriages (Anderson, 2004; De Langis et al., 2014; Eisenbruch, 2018; Morag, 2020; Tyner, 2018; Tyner, 2020; Ye, 2011).

Settler colonial geographies and spatialization also produce gendered violence. Vast, expansive, and remote lands offered conditions of isolation that placed Indigenous women and two-spirit peoples at risk of sexual violence, rape, and murder (Bourgeois, 2015; Gibson et al., 2017; Smiley, 2016). Displacement and isolation on reserves further removed Indigenous peoples from the prying eyes of settler law, also manufacturing conditions where sexual violence went unnoticed. Furthermore, the poverty and deprivation caused by policies of famine, used as a coercive measure to force Indigenous compliance and settler development, also left many Indigenous women and two-spirit peoples vulnerable to sexual exploitation (Razack, 2018; Razack, 2000; Ward, 2014). Lastly, children who were kept at residential schools, geographically isolated from family and community, were subject to sexual violence at the hands of staff and clergy. On the one hand, children's communal showers and sleeping quarters did not afford any privacy but gave staff unlimited access to the children. On the other hand, isolated and private enclosures, such as priests and nuns' quarters or closets, provided the necessary seclusion for perpetrators of sexual violence (De Leeuw, 2007; Fontaine, 2010; TRCC, 2012).

Ecocide

Ecocide studies bring a more capacious understanding of ecologies into the genocide discussion. Ecocide is defined as the “extensive damage to, destruction of, or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory, whether by human agency or by other causes, to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been or will be severely diminished” (Higgins et al., 2013, p. 257). A law of ecocide was first proposed by Professor Arthur W. Galston in 1970, at the Conference on War and National Responsibility in Washington. In his presentation he argued that both natural and human-made environments are essential to well-being and that their willful destruction should be added as the 5th crime against

peace (Higgins et al., 2013; Mehta and Mertz, 2015). But like the cultural aspects of the genocide convention, crimes against peace overlooked ecological destruction and were defined in primarily human-material terms (Higgins, 2016; Higgins et al., 2013; Mehta and Mertz, 2015). In 2010, another proposal was submitted to United Nations Law Commission by Polly Higgins, which outlined two key categories of environmental harm. Primary harms are actions that negatively affect the environment such as water or air pollution, and that result in harms against humans, such as starvation due to climate-induced drought. Secondary harms are those that result from the fallout of primary harms, such as illegal food markets in times of drought and starvation (Higgins et al., 2013).

Crook and Short (2014) elaborate on the concept of ecocide to describe how ecological harms overlap with militarization or result in ecological conditions in which a social group's ability to subsist is threatened. They term this ecological-human destruction as the genocide-ecocide nexus. Studies that enlist the genocide-ecocide nexus highlight the environmental damage wrought by war (Zierler, 2011), criminal and genocidal repercussions of capitalism and resource depletion (Crook and Short, 2021), and global resource extraction and its impact on Indigenous populations (Lynch et al., 2021). Generally, these studies highlight the extent of environmental damage that renders an area unviable for human existence.

Feminist scholars also highlight the multiple and gender-specific barriers that place women at greater risk in the event of ecological crisis and dislocation (Ganeshpanchan, 2005; Terry, 2009). Globally, women are still more likely than men to live in poverty and as single heads of households, which can limit their movement before and during natural disasters, and hinder their chances of recovery in the aftermath. These structural inequalities are pronounced in the Global South and often result in forced migration and displacement in refugee camps. In

either case, women and girls are disproportionately vulnerable to economic devastation, exploitation, and sexual violence as a result of gendered social relations and the chaos and dislocation generated by ecological crisis (Ganeshpanchan, 2005; World Health Organization, 2014).

While the genocide-ecocide nexus can be applied to ecological harms against Indigenous peoples as those who are disproportionately affected by resource extraction and climate change (Crook et al., 2018), critical Indigenous and settler colonial studies draw particular attention to Indigenous peoples' unique ecological relations and how settler colonial disruption of these relations operates as a technique of genocide (Hubbard, 2014; Moses, 2000; Wildcat, 2015; Wolfe, 2006; Woolford and Hounslow, 2018). As such, I reserve this discussion and elaborate on it, in its own right, following the discussion of social vitality and social death.

To conclude, genocidal ecologies and materialities, such as attrition, evacuation, labour camps, and residential schools facilitated distinct forms of physical and gendered violence. Yet a more multifaceted understanding of the relational impact of genocidal violence along a uneven temporality is still lacking in the genocide literature. Genocide by attrition challenges certain models of genocidal materiality and temporality that focus on direct "hot conflict" (Burleson and Giordano, 2016; Fein, 1997; Miller and Miller, 1993; Prunier, 2008; Silina, 2008). However, while denoting a slow and indirect form of killing, most genocide studies of attrition still rely on a linear approach where "progression and escalation" (Burleson and Giordano, 2016, p. 42) result in mass physical extermination. Geography and spatial organization studies likewise follow a linear progression by which the research pinpoints the "continuity" and "acceleration" (Colucci et al., 2021, p. 21) of policies that result in mass death. As well, these approaches maintain certain distinctions between nature and culture—in particular, the ways in which the

natural world is maintained as distinct from culture and as a tool to “devalue human life” (Colucci et al., 2021, p. 21) to the extent that it results in mass physical death. Lastly, ecocide and the genocide-ecocide nexus seem promising starting points to examine Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages. Yet the concept of ecocide maintains certain European anthropocentric tenets because ecologies are primarily framed as resources meant to sustain human lives, not as co-actants in material and cultural collective identities. The group is still defined, then, in anthropocentric terms in which the natural or material world is distinct from human relationality and culture.

To follow, I will elaborate on Claudia Card’s use of the concepts of social vitality and social death, and how they connect genocidal violence with relational harms. However, these concepts still leave a gap in the literature. Returning to Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages described in chapter two of this dissertation, group life is more aptly understood as a dynamic and evolving compilation of ecological and gendered materialities and social relations. Relational assemblages describe how more-than-human entities co-produce the group’s cultural and collective identities. Furthermore, the group is understood in an uneven temporality that spans across generations, facilitated through ecological and gendered relations. The Festival of the Dead, as part of Khmer group life and imbricated with rice, exemplifies a kind of trans-temporal relationships with ancestors and descendants *with* nature. Indigenous and settler colonial studies more aptly attend to these complexities since Indigenous worldviews have always understood group life as enmeshed with more-than-human worlds that also overlap with ancestral and future relational connections. Therefore, I conclude the literature review with a discussion of how Indigenous understandings of the group and temporality sensitize this dissertation’s theoretical and methodological approach.

Social Vitality and Social Death

Claudia Card (2003; 2010) argues that social vitality constitutes a group's existence rather than the presence of physical bodies. They define social vitality as all the social ties that bind an individual, community, and nation and that result in a sense of collective identity. This perspective reorients the study of genocide and its consequences, shifting the focus from body counts to relationships that give meaning to the group. Therefore, Card (2003) argues, differentiating between cultural and material genocide is not meaningful. Yet this distinction persistently troubles genocide studies, limiting our understanding of each and generally cultivating a hierarchy of suffering. Furthermore, as Card (2003) argues, these distinctions suggest "that some genocides do not include cultural death" (p. 63).

Card uses the term social death to shift the focus of genocide in several ways. First, the term describes how all groups, and therefore all cases of genocide, are cultural. By removing this distinction, studies are able to consider the multiple ways that genocide destroys. For Card (2003; 2010), the central defining feature of genocide is the loss of social vitality, or a sense of cultural heritage, meaning, and belonging. Therefore, techniques of genocide may include but are not restricted to mass physical annihilation. Genocidal techniques may also include any one, or a combination of, the following: forced sterilization, forcibly separating and assimilating children from one group to another, rape, and forced impregnation (Card, 2010). As Snow (2016) explains, emphasizing body counts to measure and compare the severity of cases of genocide limits scholarship in the field: "It risks marginalizing the voices and experiences of victims who may not succumb to biological death but nevertheless suffer the loss of family members and other loved ones, and suffer the destruction of relationships, as well as the foundational institutions that give rise to and sustain those relationships" (p. 607).

Card's conceptualization of genocide as social death is particularly relevant to markedly gendered experiences in genocide, yet without narrowing the analysis to the physical impact of the act itself. In the case of sexual violence, those who survive are "spared" their physical lives yet suffer another form of slow death. For example, women who have borne a child of rape are often stigmatized as having given life to the offspring of their genocidaires. These women are frequently rejected by husbands (if they survived), extended family, and their wider community. In other words, they experience social death as life-with-death: the loss of social identity, cultural heritage, and sense of belonging through dislocation, isolation, banishment, and alienation from community (Card, 2010; Schott, 2011). "The soldier invades the woman's body just as he invades her country; he crushes her body as well as her right to autonomy and control over her life" (Levenkron, 2010, p. 38).

Social vitality and social death also offer a more expansive approach to gendered harms in genocide. Narratives and collective memories of genocide are often homogenized, producing a distinction between "women's" experiences of genocide, and the broader, collective (masculinized) experience. Yet policies of mass rape have several aims beyond the individual that have far reaching consequences that disrupt the social vitality of a group by force. Rape can be used to terrorize and dislocate a group, to degrade and divide a targeted population, to destroy a group's morale and sense of future, or as a biological weapon (Card, 1996; Card, 2010; Ephgrave, 2016; Snow, 2016). As one example, public acts of rape during the Rwandan genocide were used to terrorize communities, sometimes as a prelude to murder. Rape was also deployed to dislocate communities, causing them to flee in terror (Card, 2010; Weitsman, 2008). For those who physically survived the Rwandan genocide, the trauma of experiencing rape, bearing a child

from rape, or having witnessed family members being raped, has disrupted familial and community cohesion.

Rape and forced impregnation resulted in another drawn out and agonizing form of social death for individual women and the group. Due to Rwandan social norms and institutions, rape victims are often stigmatized, abandoned, or rejected from their families and communities (Card, 1996; Schott, 2011; Weitsman, 2008). Due to additional structural inequalities in which women are heavily dependent on husbands or male family members for subsistence, abandoned women and the children born from rape suffer from extreme isolation and poverty; some women have died by suicide, others have abandoned their babies after giving birth, while others live in conditions of extreme marginalization and poverty (Card, 1996; Schott, 2011). These consequences speak to a much more complex, embodied, and relational form of destruction that would be overlooked by narrowing the focus on rape and murder as distinct categories of physical violence. As Ephgrave (2016) articulates, “rape in wartime is not an anomalous act of sexual violence committed by a solitary soldier against a female victim in a defeated country. Wartime rape has much wider social and cultural implications for the woman and the social groups to which she belongs” (p. 18).

It follows that, since all genocides include acts that are gendered, including but not restricted to sterilization, public nudity, rape, amenorrhea, deindividuation, and familial disruption, (like culture) all cases of genocide are gendered. Therefore, social death is always cultural *and* gendered.

Social death more aptly describes the genocidal complexities of the Cambodian and Canadian settler colonial genocides than frameworks that isolate cultural destruction from physical destruction. While physical death certainly factored into the genocidal techniques

deployed in each case, the social and bodily relations that were destroyed, along an uneven temporality, are more aptly explored using the concept of social death. However, while gendered social disruptions factor into social death's explanations of genocidal outcomes, it still obscures the relationality between culture and gender with ecological relations and materialities.

Indigenous understandings of group relations with the natural world provide additional necessary insights to examine Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages and their destruction, disruption, or alteration, or social death *with* nature.

Indigenous and Settler-Colonial Genocide Studies

Indigenous studies draw particular attention to Indigenous and more-than-human relations and how their disruption operates as a technique of genocide (Hubbard, 2014; Moses, 2000; Wildcat, 2015; Wolfe, 2006; Woolford and Hounslow, 2018). Indigenous ontologies challenge existing knowledge frameworks including those operating in genocide studies. Indigenous knowledges were historically and explicitly represented as “uncivilized” and “savage” and, as Wilson (2008) argues, “the notion that empirical evidence is sounder than Indigenous cultural knowledge still permeates western thought and alienates many Indigenous scholars” (Wilson, 2008, p. 58). Indigenous knowledges are primarily represented as grounded in metaphysics and spirituality while western knowledge is framed as scientific and rational (Clarkson et al., 1992; Moreton-Robinson, 2016; Smith, 2013; Starblanket, 2018). Yet, as Moreton-Robinson (2016) argues Western “empirical research” is underpinned by worldviews that are no less metaphysical and no more rational than Indigenous cosmologies and knowledges:

Western methodologies also have metaphysical origins in Greek mythology and Judeo-Christian beliefs, which privilege human hierarchical centredness and disconnection through otherworldliness. This metaphysical thinking was operating during the

Enlightenment, informing Western research methodologies and their pre-conceptual schemata of differentiation, categorization, and classification. Classification in particular was the key scientific epistemological driver (p. 74).

Assumptions of scientific rationality have informed the ways in which genocide studies have historically dismissed Indigenous and more-than-human relations and their attempted destruction. Even in contemporary literature, their interruption is represented as “cultural genocide,” a lesser form of destruction that is measured against physical mass extermination (Barta, 1987; Moses, 2000; Woolford, 2015). However, as I will go on to argue, Indigenous understandings of group life beyond anthropocentric terms can enrich how genocide studies define the group, understand genocidal temporality, and respond to gendered harms in genocide.

Indigenous studies elucidate how, while not homogenous, Indigenous peoples have always shared the understanding of their worlds and knowledge systems *in relation with* the lands, waters, and all of Creation — the natural and more-than-human world are understood in dialectic relation with their own existence (Clarkson, et al., 1992; Strega and Brown, 2005; Tuck and Yang, 2010; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008). Through pragmatic respect for the natural elements and seasonal cycles, Indigenous peoples learned how best to survive over thousands of years. These “original teachings” (Clarkson et al., 1992, p. 21) have translated into sacred and distinct relationships with all of Creation and have informed the ways in which Indigenous peoples developed and organized their social, political and institutional systems. (Anderson and O’Brien, 2016; Battiste et al., 2002; Clarkson et al., 1992; Debassige, 2010; Fox et al., 2017; Hart, 2010; Kovach, 2010; Kovach, 2015; Lavallée, 2009; Ormiston, 2010; Smith, 2013; Starblanket, 2018; Strega and Brown, 2005; Tuck and Yang, 2010; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008).

For example, Anishinaabeg and Cree natural world relations inform policy and legislative development as sustainable models of ecological governance as well as natural world teachings (*Gidakiiminaan*) that describe how to live a good life (*Mino-bimaadiziwin*) (Bell, 2016; Bignall et al., 2016; Dorion, 2010; McGregor, 2012; Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2015). Anishinaabe scholar Nicole Bell (2016) describes *Mino-bimaadiziwin* as holistic teachings that encompass individual and community relationships with their territories and their natural world inhabitants. Similarly, Cree scholar Alex Wilson (2015) describes Cree traditions that are co-produced with each Nation's distinct territories, waters, and natural world kin: "We, the land, the water, and all living creatures are related and, as relatives, we are meant to love and care for each other" (Wilson, 2015, p. 255).

In contrast to the broader field of genocide studies, which primarily defers to human physical destruction to describe genocidal outcomes, the study of settler colonial genocide defers to Indigenous studies and understandings of the group and genocidal destruction *with* nature (Barta, 1987; Moses, 2008; Tauri and Pouru, 2014; Wolfe, 2006; Woolford, 2015). In addition to genocidal ecologies and materialities of famine, mass executions, and ecological destruction, genocide also destroys the group's natural world kin and their relations with them (Daschuk, 2013; Hubbard, 2014; Wolfe, 2006). For example, Cree filmmaker, writer, and scholar Tasha Hubbard (2009) discusses kinship between buffalo and plains Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island (what is now called North America). The decimation of buffalo to satiate settler desires in the 19th century amounted to physical genocide of the buffalo themselves. It also resulted in the attempted genocide of plains Indigenous peoples whose physical sustenance and cultural identity are intimately intertwined in their kinship with buffalo. In relation to my study, waters across Turtle Island sustained Anishinaabeg and Cree for centuries. Kinship with their waters inform

their distinct knowledges and traditions and their disruption threatens the group's physical, spiritual, and cultural existence (Cave and McKay, 2017; Sinclair and McLeod, 2014).

Additionally, Indigenous understandings of more-than-human relations often rely on an uneven temporality that contradicts Eurocentric notions of linearity and progress. Indigenous peoples frequently maintain relations with their ancestors through their relations with the spiritual and natural world (Dorion, 2014; McGregor, 2015; Wilson, 2015). Wilson (2015) describes how this impacts their understanding of temporality, stating, “everything is connected by spiritual energy, joining us in a limitless circle that encompasses the past, present and future” (p. 1). Woolford's (2013; 2015) model of the settler colonial mesh is useful when conceptualizing how settler colonial genocide also operates according to an uneven temporality. The settler colonial mesh is conceived as dynamic and crisscrossing nets, intersecting over and through one another. They represent various geographic and temporal events that operate on various fronts, within multiple institutions, and through various forms of governance.

For example, macro level governing practices that operated through the “politics of famine” were intertwined with the ways in which the residential school deployed additional meso and micro level techniques of destruction through assimilation and sexual violence — while each school deployed their own unique methods, many overlapped despite their vast geographical separation from one another. Furthermore, these supposedly past events also interact with contemporary Indigenous/settler relations — ebbing, flowing, and swirling in, around, and through the structure of settler colonial society—in ways that interrupt Indigenous peoples' ability to maintain cultural identity through relations with past and future generations (Woolford, 2013; 2015). For example, As McGregor (2015) states, for Anishinaabeg and Cree, “water connects generations over time, and can do so in both healing and destructive ways” (p.

72). Settler colonial policies of destruction that displace communities, removing them from significant bodies of water or that regulate or disrupt cultural practices facilitated through relations with waters, also sever ties with human kin in the spirit world.

Concluding Remarks

To date, genocide studies have made important inroads with genocidal ecologies and materialities. Scholarship in this area has highlighted the slow violence of genocide by attrition, the ways in which geographies and human cultures overlap, and the socio-materiality of genocidal organization. These studies have opened up areas of research that elucidate how genocidares are able to legitimize their destruction of the victim group by increasing their persecution through a series of stages, including dehumanization. Feminist and gender studies have further bolstered the discipline with additional insights into the gendered implications of starvation and geographical and spatialized techniques of destruction and how distinctly gendered discourses of dehumanization contribute to physical violence. There are certain gaps in this literature to which social vitality and social death attend. In particular, scholarship on social vitality and social death explores how all groups are made up of social, cultural, and gendered relations that are destroyed as part of genocidal destruction.

Indigenous understandings of human life as always enmeshed with more-than-human worlds can enrich genocide studies' understanding of group life and destruction beyond anthropocentric terms. As well, both Indigenous and settler colonial genocide studies trouble dominant models of genocidal temporality as a linear progression. Feminist new materialisms also understand human and more-than-human worlds as intertwined in dynamic relations along uneven flows of time, yet they have rarely been applied to the study genocide and its outcomes. I argue that a theoretical and methodological approach that uses feminist new materialisms,

building on social vitality and social death, and sensitized by Indigenous understandings of the group, can provide new insights for genocide studies when used to re-examine canonical cases of genocide alongside Canadian settler colonial genocide. In doing so, this dissertation will introduce additional insights for how genocide studies can understand group formation and destruction beyond anthropocentric terms, an uneven genocidal temporality, and the complexities of gendered and relational harms in genocide. In particular, when examining ecological materialities of genocidal destruction, my analysis will go beyond human material dependence on ecological resources for physical sustenance and survival; rather, I argue that ecological materialities are also entangled with gendered materialities—both of are symbionts in a relational engagement with social and cultural relations and identity formation.

Chapter Four

Theory and Methodologies: Feminist New Materialism

Feminist new materialisms argue that social and more-than-human worlds are always engaged in relational entanglements; human agency and cultural meaning do not exist independent of but are rather formed in *relation with* the natural and material world (Alaimo, 2010; Asberg et al., 2014; Barad, 2003; Fox and Alldred, 2020; Jackson, 2013; Rogowska-Stangret, 2017; Shomura, 2017). This approach acknowledges the agency of matter; that is to say, more-than-human entities (e.g., animals, plants, objects, or technologies) act *with* humans. For example, consider how a motor vehicle, and all its related matter (engine parts, oils derived from the earth, and so on), act with humans to get them where they want to go. Donna Haraway (2006) refers to this blurring of human, ecological, and technological matter as a sort of agential cyborg.

To suggest a uniform agency among all forms of matter has been described by some as a “flat ontology” (see for example, Conty, 2017) most often associated with the philosophies of immanence put forward by Gilles Deleuze (Doel, 2002; Hein, 2016). For Deleuze, all matter exists on an immanent plane without a fixed identity in space and time. All matter is always in the process of becoming and is therefore never truly material (Deleuze, 1968/1994). For those who adopt flat ontologies of immanence, an apple is no different from an orange, and an orange is no different from a human since all are simply matter without fixed identity in the process of becoming in an endless line of flight (Hein, 2016). This is referred to as pure or positive difference: “Difference is behind everything, but behind difference is nothing” (Deleuze, 1968/1994, p. 57).

While some feminist new materialisms summon Deleuzian immanence and pure difference (see for example, Ringrose et al., 2020), others retain certain forms of human identity and agency. As Asberg et al. (2015) explain, “The feminist insistence on a feminism — an embodied, perspectival way of knowing and being in the world — is the nuance that keeps feminist claims of immanence situated, agnostic of what lies beyond its limits, differentiated and differentiating in relations of co-becoming” (p. 151). Therefore, this latter approach, which I draw on in my analysis, is *not* a flat ontology precisely because it is both a feminist ontology and epistemology, that is necessarily concerned with praxis. While matter is always in the process of becoming and cannot pre-exist human/more-than-human relations, gendered identity becomes both through bodily and social materialities and ongoing, or immanent, relational dynamics (Barad, 2003; Barad, 2007; Hein, 2016; 2017). As Asberg et al. (2015) state, “this situated and materialising speculation implies both the envisioning of a different world and a challenge to taken-for-granted knowledges by way of situating them in specific historical, sociocultural, material and bodily contexts” (p. 153). In essence, feminist new materialisms avoid endlessly flat ontologies by performing a feminist and humanist ethics (Fox and Alldred, 2020; Renold, 2018, Revelles-Benavente et al., 2019; Rosiek et al., 2019; Stark, 2017).

Feminist New Materialism and Relational Assemblages

Feminist new materialisms examine relationalities and dynamic entanglements that are material and relational (Barad, 1996; Barad, 2017; Coleman, 2014; Hinton, 2014; Revelles-Benavente et al., 2019; van der Tuin and Dolphijn, 2010). Karen Barad’s (1996; 2017) conceptualization of these entanglements as an assemblage enables a more complex analytic approach to understanding cultural identity and destruction as a co-production of ecological and gendered materialities and social relations. For Barad, human agency and social meaning can

only exist through intra-action and assemblage relations; human individuals or groups are in constant co-production, or intra-action, with each other, with systems of power, meaning, and identity, and with material, natural, and more-than-human entities in the world.

Intra-action as opposed to *inter-action* is an important distinction. *Intra-action* assumes that matter and meaning act upon one another within the same apparatus (assemblage) rather than as independent elements that exchange action between one another (which *inter-action* describes). All elements within the assemblage possess affective capacity through relation with one another. In other words, our embodied and social positions are entangled with multiple and overlapping relations and with the ecological and more-than-human entities of our world, always intra-acting and becoming with one another (Barad, 1996; Barad, 2017). This dynamism of always becoming-with, through embodied and embedded identity, relations, and difference-making, is termed by feminist new materialists as practices of “worlding”; in essence, worlding describes the ways in which our human and natural worlds are never static and are always in relation (Fox and Alldred, 2015; Lury and Wakeford, 2012; Mason, 2011; Ulmer, 2015).

This is a drastic shift for feminist understandings of agency because it “changes the very concept of the body” (Rogowska-Stangret, 2017, p. 63). A defining feature of feminist research has been its attention to female bodily and subjective difference (Doucet and Mauthner, 2006; Olesen, 2005; Smith, 1987). Early feminist research corresponded with the increasing prominence of the women’s rights movement. As such, it opposed male hegemony and power using a standpoint epistemology that relied on women’s experiential knowledge — an approach in which “epistemic privileging is located in the standpoint of the marginalized or disadvantaged, and all women, regardless of social location, occupy this position” (Doucet and Mauthner, 2006, p. 37).

However, while the aspiration of standpoint epistemology was to include “all women,” post-structural feminisms have exposed the challenges and contradictions that accompany such a claim (Butler, 2009; Christensen and Jensen, 2012; Carbin and Edenheim, 2013; DeVault, 1996; Doucet and Mauthner, 2006; Olesen, 2005; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Post-structural thinking emphasizes power as exercised through language, discourse, and knowledge production. Where standpoint feminism takes as its starting point “an embodied, perspectival way of knowing and being in the world” (Asberg et al., 2015, p. 151) (subjective agency situated in a gendered social order), post-structural feminism focuses on the ways in which dominant discourses and institutionalized power relations construct a gendered subject (subjectivity constructed by a gendered social order) (Carbin and Edenheim, 2013; DeVault, 1996; Doucet and Mauthner, 2006; Doucet and Mauthner, 2008; Olesen, 2005; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). From the latter perspective, standpoint feminism’s prioritization of “all women” (as a category that only measures biological sex) fails to acknowledge the ways in which femininity and masculinity are socially constructed and how the binary between feminine and masculine traits overlooks diverse, fluid, queer and non-binary gendered subject identities (Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Carbin and Edenheim, 2013; DeVault, 1996; Doucet and Mauthner, 2006; Doucet and Mauthner, 2008; Olesen, 2005; Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002).

The debate between standpoint and post-structural feminisms has resulted in a more broadly inclusive feminist project and a rich body of theoretical literature. Nevertheless, as new materialists point out, whether attending to gendered experiences as *situated in* material realities (standpointism) or gendered subjects as *constituted by* discursive power relations (post-structuralism), both are still patently human-centred with the cultural condition removed from the natural or more-than-human entities in their world; neither account for the ways in which

more-than-human agency contributes to the process (Alaimo, 2010; Asberg et al., 2015; Hird, 2004; Rogowska-Stangret, 2017; Van der Tuin, 2014).

In contrast, feminist new materialisms that draw on Barad's work prioritize relational assemblages: gendered bodily and material existence in relation with the natural world and more-than-human agential existence (Barad, 2003; Grosz, 2020; Rogowska-Stangret, 2017). While feminist new materialisms are concerned with women's subjective and material position in a patriarchal order, as Barad (2003) clarifies, "all bodies, not merely 'human' bodies, come to matter the world's iterative intra-activity — its performativity" (Barad, 2003, p. 823). Additionally, feminist new materialisms share post-structuralism's concerns with non-binary gendered representation and discursive power inequalities. However, discursive practices are not a purely human phenomena and more-than-human matter is not merely a passive object awaiting significance through human spoken or written language (Barad, 2003; Braidotti, 2013; Rogowska-Stangret, 2017). Rather, discursive practices and their meanings intra-act with human, material, ecological, and more-than-human performativity, or worlding (Barad, 2003).

In essence, both standpoint and post-structural feminist traditions lack *material force*. Human bodies, materialities, relations, discourses, and practices are produced *with* more-than-human worlds. The gendered body is immersed, embedded, and intra-acting with discursive and material practices that result in the reproduction and rearrangement of assemblages — ecological, bodily, material, social, and cultural entanglements (Asberg et al., 2015; Barad, 1996; Coleman, 2014; Jagger, 2015; Rogowska-Stangret, 2017). As Fox and Alldred (2020) aptly explain feminist onto-epistemologies of relationality:

...from essentialism to relationality, and from human agency to material affectivity. [It] rejects notions of pre-existent, fixed entities such as bodies, animals, plants, bacteria,

diseases, fossil fuels, atmospheric conditions, climates, coastlines, economic and political systems, consumers, motor vehicles or governments. Rather, these myriad materialities are relational, gaining form and continuity through their engagements with the other material relations with which they assemble, and through the emergent capacities or ‘becomings’ that they gain in these interactions (p. 122).

Gendered relations are, thus, both embodied and situated in materiality and embedded in social discourse and relations (Asberg et al., 2015; Barad, 1996; Barad, 2003; Coleman, 2014; Grosz, 2017; Grosz, 2020; Haraway, 2006; Haraway, 2016; Hickey-Moody and Willcox, 2019; Hinton, 2014; Jagger, 2015; Revelles-Benavente et al., 2019; Stark, 2017). Stark (2017) refers to this sense of inner bodily and outer material relations as “situated bodies” (p. 72) while Barad (2003) describes it as “intertwined practices of knowing and becoming” (p. 812). Fundamentally, natural, ecological, non-human, social, cultural, discursive, object, and bodily affectations all co-produce the materialization of the world — an ongoing dynamism of assemblage remaking and rearranging through practices of worlding.

Using the gendered body as a starting point for feminist new material analysis is more than using a standpoint epistemology of bodies situated in material realities of oppression. Rather, the body challenges the very core of dualistic thinking because the body is neither flesh or mind and it is neither nature or culture; it is always both and always fluid — there is always an inside and an outside as part of this entanglement. The Mobius Strip is useful to illustrate the ways in which bodies and relations within assemblages are in constant intra-action with external nature-culture relations that flow across and through inner bodily and relational materialities (Chaput, 2020; Rogowska-Stangret, 2017). In mathematics, the Mobius Strip is used to describe a single yet continuous curvature that, when traced along the surface, is impossible to

consistently define whether the contact is on the outside or the inside, or whether the tracing is travelling clockwise or counterclockwise (see figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Mobius Strip (Dymitrow, 2017, p. 156)



Another way to conceive of this dynamism is Alaimo's (2010) use of the term 'transcorporeality.' Bodily materialities and relations, such as sexuality and gender, or bodily processes, such as menstruation and emotional reaction, are embedded in the material and natural world (corporeality) and are also an embodiment of material, natural, and social relations (relational assemblages). Similarly, as Barad (2016) posits, "the world is an ongoing intra-active engagement, and bodies are among the differential performances *of* the world's dynamic intra-activity, in an endless reconfiguring of boundaries and properties, including those of spacetime" (p. 326).

Barad's (2016) sentiment above clarifies how feminist new materialisms incorporate ecological and gendered materialities as a composition of social and cultural intra-active relations. Culture is "resituated as part of nature" (Jagger, 2015, p. 322) and both are intra-acting in an assemblage with gendered bodies. Gender is accordingly understood as embodied,

embedded, and performed — as material, natural, relational, and discursive. All matter, entities, and relations have affective capacity through which identity is reclaimed (Barad, 2003; Bray and Colebrook, 1998; Coleman, 2014; Fox and Alldred, 2020; Hickey-Moody and Willcox, 2019; Rogowska-Stangret, 2017; Wilson, 1998). As Stark (2017) concludes, they are all “agents operating together to make self” (p. 74). This is a necessary departure from the essentialist problematics of standpoint feminism where women’s biological essence is the starting point of all difference. As van der Tuin (2014) states, worlding is a way to understand “difference as a relation or, rather, as relatings, [which] has nothing to do with essences (Being), but it does not shy away from understand[ing] diffraction patterns – as patterns of difference that make a difference” (van der Tuin, 2014, p. 235).

For example, Neimanis and Walker (2014) describe human intra-active relationships with weather and environmental degradation. They argue that human bodies are more than just “situated in” climate change, but rather, they intra-act with climate change as a process of “weathering” *with* bodies (p. 560, emphasis added). They draw on feminist new materialisms to argue that the nature versus culture divide has obfuscated the ways in which the changing climate flows through bodies, affecting bodily relations and, in turn, bodily intra-actions re-engage with the climate — a cyclical, rather than linear, ongoing entanglement (Neimanis and Walker, 2014). Neimanis and Walker elaborate on this bodily and ecological entanglement, stating,

Weathering, then, is a logic, a way of being/becoming, or a mode of affecting and differentiating that brings humans into relation with more-than-human weather. We can grasp the transcorporeality of weathering as a spatial overlap of human bodies and weathery nature. Rain might extend into our arthritic joints, sun might literally color our

skin, and the chill of the wind might echo through the hidden hallways of our eardrums.

[...] At the same time, neoliberal ‘progress narratives’ of human-directed salvation jockey for position in the dominant climate change imaginary with environmental ‘sustainability narratives’ of holding onto or even reverting to a pristine almost-past (the incompatibility of these temporal orientations most often going unremarked)” (p. 560).

Neimanis and Walker’s (2014) depiction of ‘weathering’ as a transcorporeal entanglement demonstrates the entanglement of bodily and ecological materialities as operating in an assemblage in which social-economic relations, in the form of neoliberalism, are also relationally engaged. Climate change and “weathering” demonstrate how the Anthropocene, our current age of ecological deterioration, is experienced through and with human materialities and cultural narratives.

One can also note how notions of time and space are troubled in the ‘weathering’ entanglement or assemblage. Neoliberalism’s reliance on narratives of progress and sustainability, as Neimanis and Walker (2014) point out, serves only to protect Western “life,” keeping at bay the consequences of climate change as an abstract discourse where “death” happens elsewhere. Environmental sociologists, green criminologists, ecocide scholars, Indigenous peoples and allied scholars have long and often insisted that the politics and economies of the Global North operate at the expense of other lives (Gaard, 2015; Hubbard, 2009; Hudson and Hudson, 2003; South, 2017; Short, 2016; Thorpe, 2011). Ecological breakdown and climate disasters are in large part due to the excessive resource depletion and CO₂ emissions that sustain Western culture and indeed Western “life.” Meanwhile, the “dying” is done by the human Other — impoverished nations of the Global South and Indigenous peoples world-wide (South, 2017). The preservation of life is a privilege retained by humans on a

hierarchical scale where the lives of those whose cultures are entangled with the natural world, such as Indigenous peoples, are less valued and thus less likely to survive.

Furthermore, the more-than-human world is designated as a resource for exploitation, whose destruction as part of a relational assemblage, hardly registers in discussions of genocide prevention. Yet Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages demonstrate how group life consists of social relations with ecological and gendered materialities that also connect present, past, and future generations. For example, the Khmer festival of the dead, facilitated through rice agriculture and its gendered relations and Anishinaabeg and Cree water-birthing traditions exemplify a material and relational assemblage with nature. I argue that feminist new materialisms that draw insight from Indigenous understandings of natural world relations across time and space can provide a theoretical inroad to examine Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblage and their attempted destruction, disruption, or alteration in genocide.

In closing my discussion of feminist new material theory, it is worth reaffirming that post-humanism as proposed by feminist new materialisms is not a flat ontological approach. It is not intended to equate, with equal gravity, the death of an orange with the death of a human, or the “natural” death of a human (by old age or illness) with death on the scale of genocidal annihilation. Rather, it is a relational and holistic reframing that will encourage genocide studies to account for gendered social-ecological material *and relational* co-dependency. I argue that genocidal destruction may not always result in physical death, but may also be embodied and experienced as a sort of social death with nature. I propose this reframing of genocide to elucidate the engagement between the living Survivors and lost victims and the ways in which living (gendered) bodies carry the material and relational loss. Hinton (2017) eloquently

describes the distinction between a post-humanist sensibility that from an anti-humanist approach that flattens human death to the extent that it is nearly rendered inconsequential:

Instead, and in line with its post-humanist disposition, [life] is broadened to that of a ‘mutual codependence’ that both exceed and include the human. Life engenders an ethics that forges a different sense of community through hybrid forms of kinship with the more-than-human, and this attests to the vulnerability that is life and the tendency towards dissolution that life involves (p. 230 - 231).

Reflexivity and Relational Accountability

I would be remiss to gloss over my discomfort with feminist new materialism’s lack of engagement with, or acknowledgement of, Indigenous perspectives and their contribution to relational thinking. To assume that understandings of ecological social relations are unique to this field risks another colonial erasure of Indigeneity. Indigenous Traditional Knowledge Keepers, Elders, activists, and scholars have always resisted colonial/imperial imposition, including Western academic assumptions of the “metaphysical essentialism of Enlightenment man” (Jackson, 2013, p. 670). Indigenous relational worldviews necessarily challenge these dominant knowledge frameworks and thus research guided by relational philosophies become a “highly political activity” (Smith, 2013, p. 141).

Rosiek et al. (2019) argue that feminist new materialisms must incorporate respectful engagement with Indigenous relational worldviews without coopting, misrepresenting or appropriating the uniqueness of Indigenous and ecological relations. Relationally accountable research, therefore, requires a critical reflexivity that locates the research process as a challenge to historically produced politics and ideologies that undermine Indigenous worldviews (Kovach, 2010; Strega and Brown, 2015). For example, Thorpe et al. (2017) suggest that archival data can

also be sites to decolonize knowledge production. By shifting the way that we view these source materials away from human only histories, we decolonize historical research. I ally myself and my research with this challenge.

As a woman and mother, I embody certain forms of violence and oppression enmeshed with kinship, care, and commitment that I have carried with me and that intra-act with the research. These relations inform my firmly rooted politics of praxis and social justice as inseparable from myself as they are from my research. As a cis-woman, I am also aware of the privileges I am afforded in a society that remains primarily heteronormative and all the ways in which that translates into structural, physical, and emotional violence. Here too I take up my position as ally and witness and commit myself to further research endeavors that more concretely address the gap in this current study, which does not do justice to the complexities of LGBTTQ2S+ gendered violence as part of genocidal violence.

Lastly, to affirm my commitment to Indigenous relational accountability I refer to the insights of Daniel Gladu Kanu, who cautioned myself and Dr. Andrew Woolford, as part of our broader project, to take care in in our research to connect with and learn from Indigenous worldviews, rather than coopt or colonize them:

I think the problem you get into with a word like symbiosis is that it's, it's a concept that I really love, I just want to put that out there, but I think it's like, there's a, I think the concept is even richer among Anishinaabe and I think Cree thinkers as well, just of the reciprocal relationship that we have with the land, and with water, in that sense too. I think that, the idea of symbiosis works really well. I need to separate a couple of points here. One, in that symbiosis is kind of a colonizing word in some ways. It's a word that is trying to explain something that has already been explained really well by Indigenous

people in our language. So, you can get into a situation where symbiosis feels like it's trying to, call it like mansplaining or the equivalent of that to Indigenous people, so I think that there's a thing there that's not very charitable. But on the other hand, I think that the same concept exists in both places in both biology and Indigenous world views and it's pretty central, right, the idea of relationships is very key to how we think about the land and it's really it's like many interwoven relationships on top of each other. And none of them have any hierarchy, there's no real hierarchy there either, right? The intent is, that as you, influence something else you are influencing other things around you and you have a responsibility to that.²

I intend to honour Daniel Gladu Kanu's cautionary message by learning from Indigenous worldviews, such as group relations with the natural world, and centering those relations in my analysis. This dissertation reorients the focus of genocide studies from European anthropocentric concerns that tend to overlook or marginalize Indigenous worldviews, to one that centers human and more-than-human relationships.

Methodology

For my analysis, I enlist a version of thematic and comparative case study analysis. I draw on archival testimonies, interviews, and oral histories to provide a sample of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree processes of assemblage-making in relation with rice and waters (i.e., worlding), rather than as a complete historical representation. As with most qualitative methods, truthful representation is less about objective and observed evidence as it is about ensuring that the "findings reflect the truth as known, experienced, or deeply felt by the people being studied"

² Interview with Daniel Gladu Kanu, December 9, 2021.

(Leininger, 1994, p. 105). The analytic process involves identifying themes in the respondents' narratives that produce a representation of their shared social realities (Strega and Brown, 2005). Leininger (1994) refers to this as 'meaning in context'; similarly, 'lifeworld' is a term that encompasses the multi-faceted dimensions of human experience (Karin et al., 2007). Comparative case study analysis, along with thematic analysis, is particularly well suited for complex and cross-national analysis and theoretical reconstruction or development (Baskarada, 2014; Flyvberg, 2006; Kaarbo and Beasley, 1999). Case studies produce a breadth of narrative that is able to reflect "the complexities and contradictions of real life" (Flyvberg, 2006, p. 237) while its comparative component enables the research to shed light on their underlying nexus (Kaarbo and Beasley, 1999).

While methods may vary, the general process of thematic and comparative analysis in qualitative research involves identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns and relationships, or networks, among themes in order to reconstruct a theoretical or conceptual framework (Belotto, 2018; Morse, 1994). Generally, thematic analysis involves several readings of the text in order to identify codes, categories, and themes. The multiple readings include constant comparison as the researcher further refines the categories and themes that are beginning to take shape. They also involve returning to the theoretical literature that is guiding the research process in order to verify or situate the emerging themes, or to note how themes may bring new insight to existing theoretical frameworks or contradict dominant paradigms (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; Morse, 1994).

These dynamic and iterative processes reflect criteria of "qualitative goodness" as defined by Tracy (2010). For researchers who apply a variation of thematic analysis, qualitative goodness is demonstrated through research that creatively pieces together data, links significance

and facts, categorizes and organizes groupings, and ultimately engages in iterative and dynamic processes and theoretical reconstruction (Daly, 1999; Lamont and Swidler, 2014, Mason, 2011; May, 1994; Morse, 1994; Tracy, 2010). Tracey (2010) defines these elements as rigorous research that uses “sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex theoretical constructs” and makes a “significant contribution theoretically and methodologically” (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). As well, they refer to the principles of resonance, credibility, and meaningful coherence as research that moves readers, is accompanied by thick description of the participants’ perspectives, and is coherent to those being studied — all elements of qualitative thematic and comparative analysis (Tracy, 2010).

For my purposes, thematic and comparative methodologies provide the scaffolding necessary to organize my research into a coherent analysis. However, I am also examining the data with the goal of explicating their human and more-than-human relationalities. This involves what many new materialists refer to as post-qualitative methods. As Fox and Alldred (2015) explain, “methods such as interviews must be treated *not* as means to obtain subjective representations of the world but as evidence of how respondents are situated *within* assemblages” (p. 409, emphasis added). This translates into practices that challenge conventional qualitative research methods (Fox and Alldred, 2015; Lupton, 2019; Rotas, 2016; Smith and Monforte, 2020; Van der Tuin, 2014). What this means is that, when examining the interview or testimony transcript, I will be drawing out participants’ descriptions of themselves and their relationships, but also how they describe those relationships as situated in a gendered and ecological assemblage of intra-acting relationships. For example, Anishinaabeg and Cree depictions of their lives before residential school in relationship with family and community, that also includes gendered roles and expectations through their relationship with water (e.g., water birthing

ceremonies), are all components of gendered and ecological assemblages of cultural relations and materialities. These assemblages also connect present generations with ancestors and future generations through ecologies. For example, Anishinaabeg and Cree water birthing ceremonies are temporally circular — grandmothers responsible for water knowledge usher in both new life and the living back into the spirit world.

Simply put, the research has a lot of moving parts which makes it challenging but with transformative and radical potential. Drawing from feminist new materialist practices, sensitized by Indigenous understandings of the group and temporality, will provide the necessary analytical complexity to encompass the manifold objectives of my research.

Research that utilizes feminist new materialist methodologies generally start with a proposition rather than a definitive research goal. The nature of new materialism as dynamic and relational means that the research and researcher become part of the phenomena that are intra-acting and being intra-acted upon. This means that the research may take an unexpected turn, which the researcher should not resist, but explore (Revelle-Benevente et al., 2019; Rotas, 2016). As such, one can never truly know how the research will take shape until they have allowed it to unfold as one of many relational intra-actions (Renold, 2018; Revelles-Benavente et al., 2019; Rotas, 2016; Smith and Monforte, 2020). That being said, to follow, I provide a few guiding principles for feminist new material research that I employ in this dissertation.

If engaging in established qualitative methods such as thematic and comparative analysis, the research must reflexively avoid static and fixed research frameworks that privilege human-centric voices. Rather, the researcher must be “attentive to both narrative and material forces” (Smith and Monforte, 2020, p. 6) within the oral history as well as through their own entanglement in its retelling (Barad, 2014; Clark and Thorpe, 2020; Fox and Alldred, 2015;

Jackson, 2017; Smith and Monforte, 2020). This is done through re-readings of the transcripts with a relational focus, noting entanglements and difference through and across human and more-than-human materialities and relations (Barad, 2014; MacLure, 2013; Rosiek et al., 2020; Smith and Monforte, 2020). Such re-orienting of ontology and epistemology avoids the analytical pitfalls of “illustration and representation [that is] coded for linear interaction” (Rotas, 2016, p. 189).

Smith and Monforte (2020) utilized feminist new material methodologies to reimagine narrative analysis — an approach that has historically been informed by philosophical and theoretical assumptions of static, human-centric constructionism. In reorienting narrative analysis with a relational focus, however, narratives and stories become active agents with the storytellers: unfinalized and changing over time, and retold through bodily affectations (e.g., hand gestures, gut feelings, and with others). As they explain: “what this means is that narrative, far from being passive, has the capacity to *do* things: narratives act on, in, and for people. They shape the beliefs, feelings and actions of those who are caught up in them, thus affecting their lives” (Smith and Monforte, 2020, p. 2). They go on to highlight the multiple ways in which narrative analysis can be recast from a static representation of results into a dynamic process that highlights what “stories do” (Smith and Monforte, 2020, p. 2). A common thread throughout is that one must shift their thinking toward assemblages: intra-acting elements that connect and disconnect, are always in flux, and are constantly redefining their boundaries.

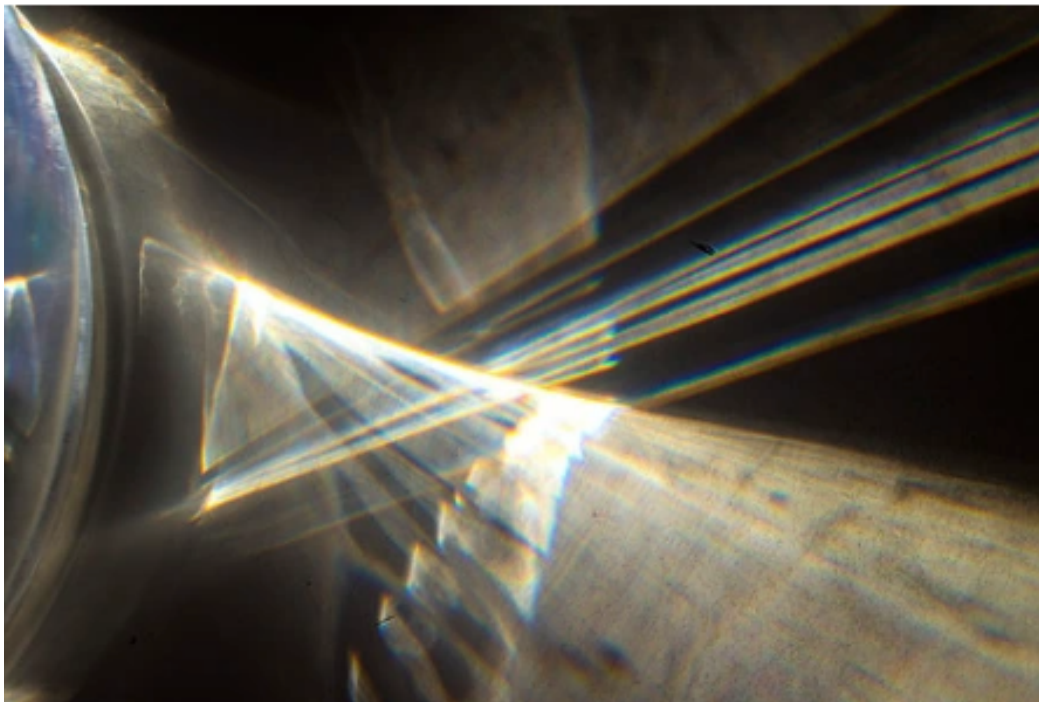
When using a post-qualitative approach, one examines the intra-actions within the assemblage, paying attention to the ways in which the storyteller situates themselves in and with ecological and bodily materialities and social relations (Barad, 1996; Barad, 2014; DeLanda, 2016; Feely, 2020; Fox and Alldred, 2020; MacLure, 2013; Pierre, 2016; Smith and Monforte,

2020). By centering the storyteller's own understanding of their situated-ness, the research is meant to represent meaning-making processes, rather than evidence of the participant's actual situation. As with most qualitative feminist methods, truthful representation is less about objective and observed evidence as it is about ensuring that the "findings reflect the truth as known, experienced, or deeply felt by the people being studied" (Leininger, 1994, p. 105). In my case, I draw on oral histories and testimonies to examine speakers' descriptions of themselves, their families, and their communities to understand the ways in which rice and waters and their related matter (e.g., farmlands and fish) and gendered materialities and social relations (e.g., gendered roles and cultural traditions) are reflected in people's memories of the past prior to the genocide and their memories during the genocide, descriptions of their present life, and how they envision their future. In essence, a post-qualitative methodology is a way of reading transcripts and oral histories that captures more than human-only histories and narratives and that also emphasizes how the story functions as part of intra-actions within an assemblage (Caddick et al., 2015; Feely, 2020; MacLure, 2013; Pierre, 2016; Smith and Monforte, 2020).

Concurrently, one must pay attention to exterior relations - phenomena that disrupt or rearrange the composition of the assemblage in some way. This is also referred to as diffractive reading. Diffraction is a term applied by feminist new materialisms to describe difference as a "dynamic processes of shaping, reshaping, and unshaping" (Ulmer, 2015, p. 1101). It was coined as a conceptual and analytical tool by Donna Haraway as a way to identify how affective blockages and flows alter or reorganize the composition of an assemblage (Barad, 1996; Bozalek and Zembylas; Geerts and Van der Tuin, 2016; Haraway, 1992; Murriss and Bozalek, 2019; Van der Tuin, 2014.). The term is borrowed from quantum physics and it describes how waves such as light or sound are altered when they bend around or through an object (Geerts and Van der

Tuin, 2016; Renold, 2018; Revelles-Benavente et al., 2019). Examples of diffraction include the ways in which sound waves travel, how light flows through water droplets or bends around a cloud (to produce the silver lining), and the way that water flows through or around porous or solid objects (see figure 2 below) (Barad 1996; Stark, 2017).

Figure 2: Diffracted Light (Fass, 2018)



Feminist new materialisms use diffraction to focus on a “non-dualistic, non-separational model of identity and difference, in which identity categories, identified groups, and even identified single entities, diffractively crisscross, interfere, and co-establish one another” (Geerts and Van der Tuin, 2016, p. 174). This approach differs from common models of linear causality because it attends to details and specificities of reciprocal and dynamic relationalities and how a phenomenon affects these relations through blockages or flows. Affective blockages are affectations that suppress, cut or alter intra-actions or worlding practices (DeLanda, 2016; Fox and Alldred, 2020; Smith and Monforte, 2020; Ulmer, 2015). Affective flows refer to the

disruptions that travel through gendered bodies or assemblages, at times “slowing down or accelerating the speed and intensity of flows across bodies-environments” (Rogowska-Stangret, 2017, p. 63).

Diffraction as methodology makes note of patterns of difference to the composition of an assemblage that are caused by a phenomenon’s affective blockages and flows. In other words, diffractive readings parse out how relations and materialities may be disrupted, how others may be altered, and how the assemblage is altered in the process (DeLanda, 2016; Fox and Alldred, 2020; Smith and Monforte, 2020; Ulmer, 2015). For example, Ulmer (2015) utilizes a diffractive reading of policy development to better understand educational reform, departing from traditional policy and discourse analyses that frame documents and organization as inanimate objects and policy makers as the only “actors who act upon political systems” (p. 1100). Rather, by applying diffractive reading methods, Ulmer (2015) notes the ways in which policy and institutional material documents, political and organizational discourses, and technological deployments, all *intra-acted with* human interests. Ulmer (2015) reframed policy reform as an assemblage of “vibrant, material, political ecosystems that are very much alive [and an] intra-active phenomena [that] give, take, and destroy form” (p. 1100 - 1101).

Diffractive methodologies also take note of how blockages and flows are embodied, altering relations through gendered and bodily materiality. As part of this process – through doing, enacting, absorbing, and affecting – gendered bodies and identities are also made, unmade, and remade (DeLanda, 2016; Fox and Alldred, 2020; Smith and Monforte, 2020; Ulmer, 2015). For example, Renold (2018) also examines affective phenomena within educational policy meant to promote student gendered well-being, foster student voice, and support healthy relationships; their performative art study invited six female students to engage

in art projects while discussing their experiences of living in gendered bodies that engage with school policies, objects, staff, and classmates. These sessions produced an eclectic and exciting array of representations of the ways in which girls' experiences of schooling were enmeshed with gendered and bodily relations and materialities. For example, one session revealed how rulers, a seemingly mundane and inanimate tool for human use, were in fact an actant in sexual harassment (rulers used by boys to lift girls' skirts, resembling and extending a phallus), gendered monitoring (rules that dictate the appropriate length of skirts), and gendered identity (feeling "ruled" by policy, harassment, and sexuality). The vitality of the discussions also affected through their bodies and into art projects; the art projects became entangled in the assemblage as further representations and materialities of gendered violence, oppression, agency, identity, and change. As Renold (2018) explains,

From a ruler-poster to a ruler-monster to ruler-bunting, the girls discussion turned to embodying and wearing the rulers: first a jacket, then a cape, the gladiator style ruler-skirt was born. What had once been a phallic object used to violate girls' bodies was now pulsating with the capacity to change and transform. Crafted from experience, the ruler-skirt became a d/artiphact [both data and artifact] that in its multiplicity (there are over 20 rulers in the skirt), returned fluidity and movement to the stiff reality of enduring and normalized sexual violence. And with each step, as the rulers glisten in the light, and swish and slap together, they call us into action. The skirt seemed to become a d/artiphact that simultaneously tells the world something has happened/is happening (p. 44) (see figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Ruler Skirt (Renold, 2018, p. 44)



In my case, I examine genocidal affective blockages and flows as disruptions to bodily and ecological materialities and social relations that result in disrupted, altered, and rearranged gendered individual and collective identities. To follow, I expand on how I will apply these methodologies to my own analysis of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree narratives.

Methods

When noting themes, patterns, and distinctions in narratives, Smith and Monforte (2020) recommend building a typology that captures the “essence of each narrative” (p. 5). For example, a “quest narrative” might describe storyteller narratives that describe life as an adventure,

whereas a “chaos narrative” might describe how their lives seem meaningless or lost (p. 5).

Typologies then act as an ideal type that can help guide the researcher to categorize themes while maintaining the storyteller’s quintessence. As well, to maintain the open and non-prescriptive aspect of feminist new material methodologies, Smith and Monforte (2020) recommend “revising and editing along the way to help ‘discover’ further the types of narratives used” (p. 5).

As I applied these methodologies to the oral histories and testimonies in my research, I paid particular attention to several broad themes that I identified in my earlier scan of the documents for the broader project with Dr. Woolford. In the initial scan I identified relevant thematic categories that demonstrate the centrality of ecological and gendered materialities and social relations in Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree worldings. These include: i) The historical and ongoing relationship between ecological and social practices and cultural identity; iii) The disruption or re-ordering of eco-social-cultural practices and relations to facilitate genocidal policies; vi) Engaging in eco-social-cultural practices and relations as an act of resistance and as a form of healing in genocide’s aftermath.

For my analysis, I returned to the transcripts with a distinctly feminist new materialist lens to ascertain their gendered implications. For the purposes of my study, I noted how storytellers situated themselves within an ecological and gendered assemblage and the ways in which these materialities and relations contribute to the group’s social vitality and collective identity. Here, I noted their descriptions of themselves, their families, and their communities and the ways in which ecological and gendered materialities were reflected in these narratives as part of a relational assemblage. I made use of a diffractive lens as well; I examined disruptions and difference caused by genocidal affective blockages and flows. As part of this discovery, it became evident how genocide’s affectations unmake, remake, or alter relational assemblages.

For example, removing Khmer Cambodians from their homes and farmlands unmade their rice agriculture relations, yet at the same time made Khmer Rouge rice agriculture relations in the work camps. Additionally, I paid attention to gender as embodied and embedded; I noted how gendered ecological and bodily materialities (embodied) and social relations (embedded) intra-act with the implications of diffractive genocidal affectations. In this regard, I noted how genocidal affective blockages influenced individual bodily relations, such as disruptions to menstruation or sexual identity. As well, I drew out the ways in which genocidal affective flows travelled across assemblages through individual bodies; for example, how disruptions to sexualities or gendered identity flow through an individual gendered body, against ones will, to further disrupt or affect family and community relations, and further still, Khmer or Anishinaabeg and Cree collective identity.

Data Sources

For the Khmer case, the data for my analysis includes archival materials from Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center, Kdei Karuna Organization, the Documentation Center of Cambodia, the Jorng Jam Project, and the archival repository for the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. For the Anishinaabeg and Cree case I reviewed transcripts housed by the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, supplemented by interviews with two Elders and two experts in Anishinaabeg and Cree water relations. In total, I reviewed 130 archival documents for the Khmer case and 244 documents for the Anishinaabeg and Cree case.

To begin, I reviewed 31 archival videos from the Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. These videos consist of various documentary style videos, interviews with Survivors and former Khmer Rouge Cadres conducted by Thomas Weber Carlsen and Jan Krogsgaard between 2002 and 2003, as well as archival Khmer Rouge Propaganda footage.

These documents are only available for viewing in person, which Dr. Woolford and I were able to do when travelling to Cambodia for an international genocide conference in the summer of 2019, prior to COVID 19 pandemic restrictions.

Second, Kdei Karuna is an organization that has, as described on their website, “established itself as a leading peacebuilding and reconciliation NGO in Cambodia. Through participatory and community-engaged approaches, [Kdei Karuna] has implemented truth-telling and memorialization initiatives between a number of groups, including former Khmer Rouge cadres and victims, ethnic minorities, and youth” (n.p.). The analysis includes the interview report of ten Khmer Survivors of forced marriages during the reign of the Khmer Rouge (eight women and two men) available through the Kdei Karuna website at: <https://www.kdei-karuna.org/>.

From the Documentation Center of Cambodia, I reviewed four interview transcripts conducted by researchers at the Center and that were translated as part of their “Promoting Accountability” project between 2000 and 2007. Their website also provides 51 short Survivor oral histories, which I reviewed for my analysis and which are available through their website at: <http://dccam.org/Survivor-stories>. Fourth, Jorng Jam is a contemporary art and history project described on their website as one “which remembers, reclaims and reinterprets Cambodian social history from before, during and after the Khmer Rouge era” (n.p.); I accessed six interview transcripts with Khmer Survivors available through their website at: <http://www.jorngjam.com/>.

Lastly, for the Khmer case study, I reviewed 34 Civil Party Testimonies for Case 002 of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. In total, I reviewed 130 archival documents for the Khmer case. These transcripts are publicly available through the ECCC website: <https://www.eccc.gov.kh/en/case/topic/119>.

For the Anishinaabeg and Cree case, I reviewed 300 testimonies given to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC) and housed at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. Of these, 60 were removed as irrelevant, meaning that the witness was not Anishinaabe or Cree, or had not attended residential school. The remaining 240 testimonies were reviewed for my analysis. I also co-conducted (with Dr. Woolford) interviews with Elders Betty Ross and Rudy Okemaw and experts Aimee Craft and Daniel Gladu Kanu. These interviews were intended as supplemental to the archival testimony analysis as a way to co-interpret and explain information presented in the Truth and Reconciliation testimonies.

Elder Betty Ross from Pimichikamak Cree Nation is a Survivor of the St Joseph's Residential School in Cross Lake and the Assiniboia Residential School in Winnipeg. Elder Rudy Okemaw is a Survivor of two residential schools and is currently an Elder at the Children of the Earth School in Winnipeg. Aimee Craft is an Associate Professor of the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa, and the University Research Chair of Nibi miinawaa aki inaaakonigewin: Indigenous governance in relationship with land and water. Professor Craft's role as Research Chair is described in the University of Ottawa website as such: "to support her continued work on Indigenous water law, policy, and sustainability; the reclamation of Indigenous birthing practices as catalysts for wellness and the re-affirmation of territorial sovereignty; and the recognition of Indigenous understandings of treaties as part of the Canadian reconciliation imperative" (<https://commonlaw.uottawa.ca/en/news/professor-aimee-craft-receives-university-research-chair-indigenous-governance-relation-land> , n.p.). Daniel Gladu Kanu is the Director of the Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective whose mandate is described on their website as such: "Our vision is that our sacred waters are healthy, traditional livelihoods are restored and Indigenous perspectives are influential in leading the protection and sustainability of

Lake Winnipeg as a source of life for all future generations” (<https://parrot-bear-bjd7.squarespace.com/about> , n.p.).

The number of supplemental interviews for the Anishinaabeg and Cree case was hampered by COVID 19 restrictions and challenges. Four requests for interviews with Elders were originally arranged but, due to pandemic arrangement difficulties, only the two were available for interviews via Zoom. The interviews were recorded in Zoom and I transcribed them. Since the interviews were conducted via Zoom, Dr. Woolford and I were not able to follow traditional protocols of offering gifts of tobacco in-person. Rather, we sent gifts by mail. As well, three requests for expert interviews were reduced to the two that we were able to conduct. These interviews were also conducted and recorded via Zoom, and I also transcribed them. While the interviews conducted were fewer than we had initially expected, combined with the interview and testimony transcripts, they were sufficient for the purposes of the project; they allowed for sufficient examples to help clarify how symbiogenesis connects with Anishinaabeg and Cree relationships with water.

For the Anishinaabeg and Cree case, ethics approval to review the TRCC testimonies was gained through the National Center for Truth and Reconciliation Ethics Committee. Ethics approval to conduct the four interviews was approved through University of Manitoba Research Ethics and Compliance. In total, I compiled and reviewed 244 transcripts for the Anishinaabeg and Cree case.

Lastly, it should be noted that the research conducted for this dissertation entailed readings of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree archival testimonies, transcripts, and oral histories. For the Khmer case, transcripts were transcribed into English and may contain spelling or grammatical errors. I have taken care to ensure that any grammatical errors were not done so

in my reproduction of them and that I am keeping Survivor's testimonies as true to their original intent as possible. For the Anishinaabeg and Cree case, testimonies to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were primarily in English; however, there are numerous instances throughout the transcripts when Survivors are only able to convey a thought or feeling through their traditional Anishinaabe or Cree language. I approached my research process with reflexivity and relational accountability, sensitive to the ways in which language conveys layers of meaning. In using feminist new material methodologies, I attempted to convey the essence of Survivor's narratives as a witness or good companion to their stories, rather than as an objective observer and mediator of knowledge. However, each approach will still have its limitations, and certain nuances, context, or meanings may still have been missed.

Concluding Remarks

Using feminist new material theories and methodologies, this dissertation will contribute to genocide studies by expanding on the manifold relations that constitute a group and the gendered implications of material and relational genocidal destruction. This approach will render new and transformative research practices for genocide studies that captures the ways in which gender, ecologies, and cultural collective identity are enmeshed and are impacted in genocide. My analyses include relational and diffractive readings of the transcripts to explore the ways in which genocidal affective blockages and flows interfere with or alter Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages. I will go on to argue that ecological and gendered materialities and social relations bring meaning to a group's existence. The destruction, disruption, or alteration of relational assemblages, as part of a complex, non-linear, multi-directional, and multi-layered genocidal process, I argue, can be understood as a form of social death with nature—what I term life-death worlding. Life-death worlding describes the ways in which victim

groups are impacted by genocidal violence in both material and relational ways, and that the process of healing and reclamation must always necessarily contend with the group's multifaceted attempted destruction.

Theriault (2012) cautions against a “kind of vulgar postmodernism [or pluralism]” (p. 130) in genocide studies that harkens a flat Deleuzian approach to new materialism; they argue that pure relativism and flat ontologies result in a theoretical approach to genocide that, in a sense, contradicts or ignores the realities of genocide. I heed Theriault's advice and approach my study with the aim of contributing to the rich body of work that the discipline has produced thus far, using a post-humanist (not anti-humanist) lens. Reading oral histories and testimonies with a relational and diffractive lens reimagines genocide as an affective flow that alters or interrupts bodily processes and relations that also, in turn, rearrange family, community, and cultural relations situated in and performed with ecologies across time and space. A genocide studies that is sensitized by feminist new materialisms is not meant to overlook the horrors of death and violence in genocide. Rather, it is meant to acknowledge the multiple and complex relations that make up the “we” of collective and group identity as a way to protect those relations and incorporate them into justice mechanisms. It is “the process of transmuting negative passions into productive and sustainable praxis” in a way that “does not deny the reality of horrors, violence, and destruction. It just proposes a different way of dealing with them.” (Hinton, 2017, p. 230 – 231). My analysis aims to explicate the diffractive genocidal blockages and flows that alter Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages. Through comparative analysis I aim to discover their underlying nexus. In doing so, I will contribute post-humanist understandings of group life and destruction beyond anthropocentric terms, a more dynamic

understanding of genocidal temporality, and a more complex understanding of gendered and relational genocidal harms.

As an ongoing dynamic assemblage, materialities and relations are in constant motion between time and space and life and death. Relations and materialities are at times maintained during the genocide or reclaimed in its aftermath; they are also embodied and re-enacted as ongoing genocidal disruptions even as transitional justice mechanisms proclaim peace and reconciliation. Challenging linear temporality with an ethics that attends to life-death worlding will contribute to the discipline's normative purpose to protect the group, but in a way that moves beyond anthropocentric and narrow temporal limitations. Indeed, "as the unjust deaths of the past, those deemed ungrievable by the social order of the time, come to haunt us in our present time, [we are asked]: how can we learn to live well with the dead and respond appropriately when 'the dead refuse to stay silent'?" (Shildrick, cited in Radomska et al., 2020, p. 90- 91).

The key argument that I make in this dissertation is that genocidal destruction operates on multiple fronts; ecological and gendered materialities and social relations are mutually targeted in genocide—at times conjointly, at other times, unevenly. Therefore, this dissertation provides insight into an assemblage (rather than yet another asymmetric typology) of genocidal destruction. This is an under represented reality of genocide that my study aims to address, thereby contributing to the discipline rather than simply deconstructing it. As Rogowska-Stangret (2017) states, feminist new materialisms "not only allow us to advance a nuanced theory open toward unthought-of, unknown, unforeseeable futures — but also to elaborate on the notion of death itself, destruction, harm, its meaning and sense" (p. 65).

Chapter 5

Analysis: Memories Before and Worlding

The goal of this analysis is to decipher the components and workings of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages and their destruction or disruption as part of broader processes of genocidal violence. The comparative analysis between the case studies reveals both patterns and distinctions in which ecological and gendered materialities and social relations are conveyed as interwoven intra-actions that co-produce Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree collective identities. Through these patterns and distinctions, three broad thematic narratives emerged: 1. Memories Before and Worlding 2. Unmaking; 3. Resistance and Return: Life-Death Worlding

In ‘memories before and worlding’ patterns include those that reflect storytellers’ sense of self as part of a dynamic material and relational assemblage before the genocide or residential school experience. These memories describe an assemblage consisting of place (associated with rice and waters), family, community, and social-cultural relations. Within this broad theme, several additional sub-categories further decipher the workings of relational assemblages. The first sub-category is ‘familial relations.’ This sub-category consists of narratives of everyday life that demonstrate how childhood learning, identity formation, and socialization as well as how gendered work, roles, and care are part of ecological, gendered, and social intra-actions. The second subcategory is ‘cultural relations’; as part of this sub-category, narratives emerged that demonstrate the ways in which familial relations are intertwined with community and how social-cultural celebrations and traditions are often facilitated through gendered practices and through ecological materialities and relations—a process of worlding through intra-action. In essence, the theme ‘memories before and worlding’ describe social vitality *with* nature— a

situated sense of self in a material place that intra-acts with other ecological and social materialities and relations that, at times, overlap with gendered roles and expectations, in an assemblage. Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree worlding is described as the ‘doing’ and ‘performing’ of relations, materialities, and identities — an active and dynamic process that substantiates cultural identity as part of an assemblage that has yet to intra-act with genocidal phenomena.

Narratives of “unmaking” depict the affective blockages and flows of genocidal processes through Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages. Within this broad typology two-subcategories also emerged: ‘unmaking through familial and cultural relations’ and ‘unmaking through gendered bodies.’ Unmaking through familial and cultural relations is described by storytellers as blockages of (or cuts to) ecological materialities such as removal from their home, farmlands, or community near water. As well, this sub-category depicts blockages of gendered materialities and relations such as separation from family and the interruption of gendered care roles that are also in relation with ecologies such as rice farming or water carrying—an unmaking of worlding practices.

The second sub-category, ‘unmaking through gendered bodies,’ refers to the ways in which gendered bodies signify porous boundaries between material and relational worlds. Genocidal destruction through gendered bodies is a more holistic understanding of gendered violence that is not exclusive to women, sexual violence, or the individual act of rape. Rather, this reframing incorporates gendered material and relational violence that is a deeply embodied assault on the individual as well on a group’s cultural and collective identity. In these narratives, blockages and flows are described as interruptions to gendered bodily relations and processes, such as a loss of menstruation or replacing healthy sexuality with sexual violence. As part of my

analysis, this is understood as an unmaking *of* gendered bodies: unmaking gendered bodily relations and materialities and making of genocidal violence in gendered bodies. As well, these narratives describe gendered bodies as a conduit for ongoing material and relational violence; as part of these narratives, storytellers describe how natural bodily flows, such as menstruation or tears from crying, were used by perpetrators to inflict shame or punishment. Further, gendered bodies become a conduit for ongoing unmaking as genocidal violence flows through bodily materialities and relations and impacts their broader cultural relations, even in the aftermath of the genocide or residential school experience. In my analysis, this is understood as unmaking *through* gendered bodies; this refers to the ways in which gendered bodies carry and harbour both material and relational violence that, in turn, inflicts pain or divisions in the family or community, and interferes with healing and the maintenance or reclamation of cultural identity. In summation, unmaking reflects social death *with* nature.

The last broad narrative theme, ‘resistance and return: life-death worlding,’ highlights the complex intra-actions of genocidal unmaking. Narratives of resistance convey the importance of assemblages of material and relational intra-actions that co-produce Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree collective identities. Acts of resistance describe the ways in which storytellers try to ward off physical violence as well as how they attempt to maintain or reformulate social relations and cultural identity through ecological and gendered materialities and relations during and after the genocide and residential school experience. Here is where the term life-death worlding is advanced. Narratives of ‘resistance and return’ represent, at times, a process of unmaking when attempts are thwarted or their sense of self as part of a relational assemblage is destroyed, disrupted, or altered while they are simultaneously and actively reformulated through ongoing practices of worlding—practices that reform or renegotiate a sense of self and collective

identity that must now always contend with their attempted destruction. In other words, the *doing* and *performing* practice of worlding while intra-acting with genocidal phenomena, even in its supposed aftermath.

A key distinction between the Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree cases is evident in recollections of “memories before” and “resistance and return.” For Anishinaabeg and Cree Survivors of residential schools, familial relations tend to focus on early childhood memories of life before the residential school experience, since it is only the children in these communities who were forcibly removed. As well, because Anishinaabeg and Cree Survivors of residential schools were children (often very young), their ability to engage in resistance was limited. This is not to say that children in the schools did not resist; rather, their forms of resistance were often internal and less evident, and they often came later in life in their return to water relations as a form of resistance and healing. For Khmer individuals, recollections of “memories before” are not limited to childhood memories, as the Khmer Rouge forcibly removed entire populations to rural work camps, not just the children. Furthermore, since all age ranges were deported to rural work camps, certain forms of unmaking are distinct for Khmer Survivors, for example parents who were unable to care for their children or pregnancy from forced marriages.

These broad categories and their sub-categories demonstrate both common patterns and distinctions between the two cases. The ways in which ecological and gendered materialities and social relations were described as central to their memories before the genocide demonstrate how they are integral to cultural cohesion and collective identity. As well, their targeted destruction and recalibration as a form of violence demonstrates how genocide destroys on multiple fronts and the complexities of gendered and relational harms that it leaves in its wake.

Familial Relations

For Anishinaabeg and Cree Survivors, familial relations are prevalent in their memories of life before the residential school experience. As part of Survivors' oral histories and testimonies, familial relations were relayed as memories of growing up on the land or near water. For some Survivors, who were removed from their communities at a young age, they have no clear "memories before" per se, rather just a sense of belonging as embedded in place. As one Anishinaabeg and Cree Survivor states, "I don't remember anything, that's all I got to say at the beginning about life. I just kind of had this feeling that I was home. That's all I remember that I was where I was supposed to be."³ For others, memories before were intertwined with place and family—in a sense, a grounded sense of love and safety that is rooted in both family and ecologies. For example, a Survivor of residential school describes their family life before being taken to residential school as "life was home." They state,

And my parents, all of my family lived in the bush in most of the years prior to entering the residential school. There are 12 of us. I have 12 siblings in my family, six girls and, and six boys. And my life was home, before the residential school, was free. My mom and dad love me, loved all of us a lot. They took care of us the best that they knew how, and I felt so comfortable being at home.⁴

Similarly, another Survivor links their memory of having a "close knit family" with a natural world counterpart – waters. This excerpt also highlights the ways in which home, family, and ecologies co-produce a childhood sense of safety and love:

³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-18JU10-048, June 18, 2010, p. 3, accessed May, 2021.

⁴ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-16JU10-131, June 16, 2010, p. 2 – 3, accessed May, 2021.

We lived along the Hudson Bay line with my, with my parents, and it was good, because when we lived along the Hudson Bay line, my dad did a lot of trapping, a lot of fishing, and we lived off the land, so it was good, I found that really good. And there was, because we were secluded from the outside, like I thought we were a close-knit family. We didn't have no modern, like, things to use. Everything was from the creek. Our water was from the creek, fishing. We ate off the water. We ate off the land. We eat the berries.⁵

The narratives of home and family, as ecological materialities and relations, also include those that are less idealistic, such as recollections of home as impoverished, unsafe, or abusive. Regardless, the narratives still demonstrate a sense of self that is intra-acting with ecological materialities. As one Survivor recalls in their “memories before” residential school, they had very little economical wealth, yet their sense of *being* was inseparable from home as near the waters – Anishinaabe identity in relation with family, home, and waters. They state,

I was so happy, so, so happy, so proud to be Anishinaabe. And then we built a little log house on the reserve, and that was my pride and joy that little log shack. I just loved that place. Right by the river, we drank the water from the river. No hydro, no nothing. It was a beautiful place. I loved that place.⁶

Similarly, a former Khmer Rouge officer recalls their childhood as punctuated by times of poverty and hunger due to insufficient rice harvests. While their extreme poverty was a motivating factor to join the Khmer Rouge, their narrative also expresses a sense of family

⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-18JU10-033, June 19, 2010, p. 2, accessed May, 2021.

⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-19JU10-043, June 19, 2010, p. 23, accessed May, 2021.

relations as an ecological materiality “I worked, looked after cows, oxen, carried water, sought firewood, cooked. That was how I could help my family.”⁷

For Anishinaabeg and Cree Survivors, “memories before” are usually of very young childhood, as most were forcibly removed from their homes between the ages of three and seven. Therefore, memories of life before their residential school experience are part of an assemblage in which family, home, and ecologies all contribute to their sense of situated self and therefore are also agents in their learning and development. One such teaching, evident in both an Anishinaabeg and Cree worldviews, is the sacredness of all beings to which waters give life; this ecological relationality is foundational to Anishinaabeg and Cree understandings of identity and provides guidance for how all beings should move through life in a reciprocal relationship with the natural world. In an interview conducted with Aimee Craft, a legal scholar and activist whose work centers on asserting Indigenous natural law and jurisdiction in Canada, describes this relationship with the natural world as such:

You don’t talk about anything without talking about everything in creation and you would say, instead of saying everything in this room, you would say, only these things in the room, in Ojibway, you flip sort of the conceptual understanding, you don’t put the parameter, and I think this is important when we’re talking about water, is you don’t put human parameters on things. Everything is integrated from an Anishinaabe worldview. The English language would tend to say everything in this room, whereas in the Anishinaabe language you would say, only the things in this room. So, putting them in relation to everything that is part of creation.⁸

⁷ Carlsen and Krogsgaard, *Voices of Khmer Rouge*, interview 29, reference no. (VOK)VI_002702., accessed July 2019.

⁸ Interview with Aimee Craft, December 15, 2021.

These relational worldviews are evident in Survivor testimonies as they recall their “memories before” residential school. For example, despite being forcibly removed from their family at a very young age, this Survivor clearly articulates how their core understandings of *being* Anishinaabeg, or worlding, is established through intra-action with family and ecologies:

I enjoy the teachings my dad and my mom gave me when I was a young kid. I enjoyed everything, the sacredness of the land, the sacredness of the animals, the sacredness of the water and the sky, and the sun and the moon as sacredness. They taught me that. Sacredness of *being* (emphasis added).⁹

The excerpt above also highlights a key element of Anishinaabeg and Cree familial relations – that of knowledge transference. A pattern amongst “memories before” for IRS Survivors are their recollections of ecological teachings and family life as one in the same – as intra-acting within the same assemblage. As this Survivor states:

My dad was a seasonal guide for the area. He was one of the best in our area, so he did that to provide for us. And on the other hand, he also taught us to do all the things that, that native did a long time ago, like learning how to pick rice, pick blueberries. We all participated in providing for our household. It wasn't, a lot of things were taught by observation, I guess. You know he just, you were just part of the family and you knew what you needed to do, right, without being told.¹⁰

This quote speaks to the process of learning and what it means to be part of a family as well as the transfer of ecological knowledge.

⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-18JU10-031, June 18, 2010, p. 7, accessed May, 2021.

¹⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-18JU10-009, June 18, 2010, p. 23 – 24 accessed May, 2021.

Memories of family roles and care work before the residential school experience are intimately intertwined with ecologies and gender. For example, a Survivor expresses the ways in which roles were gendered in such a way as to facilitate both ecological childhood care and knowledge transfer. For Anishinaabeg and Cree, grandmothers play a significant role in caring for expectant mothers, water-birthing ceremonies, and childhood teachings of family, community, and natural world relations (Dorion, 2010; Ireland et al., 2014). Likewise, for this Survivor, memories of family life before attending residential school are lively accounts of spending time with their grandmother, who practiced many traditional forms of care and ecological knowledge, including gathering food, beadwork and clothing, and preparing the fish caught by other family members. The story weaves together memories of joy, knowledge, sustenance, and tradition all of which are imbricated with the more-than-human world. They state:

I was with my grandma whenever I wasn't in school. I loved my grandma very much. She taught me a lot. She taught me how to do beadwork, how to do crafts, make moccasins, mitts. Used to watch her make jackets, vests. She made blankets. She made me clothes. And we would go out on the land. When I was smaller, I remember she said, "The berries are gonna be ripe in a few days, we have to go." And we would get up about four or five in the morning, a whole bunch of us, maybe five boats, and go out to go blueberry picking, before the geese all, before the geese eat all the berries, and these old ladies would say. So, me and my friends, that's what we did out in the fields, and they'd be crawling around with their little baskets, and at the end of the field the geese would be landing in. We would have to run over there, you know, chase them away, yell. We'd be

on the outlook, you know, see if they land anywhere. We had to run over there to chase them away. It was a lot of fun. She used to make blueberry jam, that she put away for the winter, and then the fish she smoked, and then she made, she made nokaka, fish flakes.¹¹

Cultural Relations

Narratives of familial relations, care work, and gendered roles are also intertwined with community and social-cultural relations and traditions. For example, gendered caring roles as mother and grandmother also translate into ecological roles and responsibilities in their communities, as well as spiritual care for community members. Recall that Anishinaabeg and Cree women's roles as water carriers hold a great deal of respect and responsibility in their families and communities (Anderston et al., 2011; Bedard, 2021; Benton-Benai, 1988; Cave and McKay, 2016; McGregor, 2015; Szach, 2013). As this Survivor notes, clan mothers embody this cultural relationship:

The clan mothers, spiritual clan mothers, I have to reinforce that, it's not clan mothers, it's spiritual clan mothers, 'cause they were all given spiritual gifts, being able to procreate, to create, to have children, the clan mothers. Why they have the last say, the final decision in our lives is really simply. You see why I honour the clan mothers myself is because, and it's because of the fact they are able to give birth to life when men can't.¹²

It is also in this thematic sub-category, of cultural relations, that Khmer narratives of “memories before” become more prominent. Transcripts and testimonies uncover the ways in which social relations are deeply impacted by historical and deeply rooted gendered and

¹¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-066, June 17, 2010, p. 2, accessed May, 2021.

¹² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-087, June 17, 2010, p. 6, accessed May, 2021.

ecological traditions that reveal themselves in social-cultural euphemisms, analogies, and celebrations. Recall that the history of Cambodia and the rise in power of Angkor Wat is rooted in irrigation development and rice agriculture (Nesbitt, 1997; Tong, 2008). This historical connection with rice organized Khmer society according to rice subsistence farming and exportation – an organization that stretches from the micro (e.g., familial relations and roles) to macro (e.g., international economic trade) levels of society. Rice is so deeply and intimately a part of Khmer Cambodian life that depictions of love, marriage, familial, and community harmony draw on rice-related euphemisms, analogies, spiritualities, and celebrations (Brickell, 2011; Ledgerwood, 2012). For this reason, Khmer “memories before” include portrayals of rice relations that draw from these long-standing traditions.

The Tampeuns are an Indigenous ethnic group that live in northern Cambodia. While they have their own language and cultural practices, they are in the Mon-Khmer language and cultural grouping that also share Khmer rice relations. The Tampeuns from Kachon Village of the Veun Sai district, organize a ceremony every year dedicated to the rice fields.¹³ The majority of those living in the village rely on subsistence farming. More than that, for Tampeuns, rice and their surrounding natures have spirits that require care and respect and that also provide for their community in the form of bountiful rice harvests and healthy families. In a series of interviews conducted with community members in Kachon Village, the ceremony is described as one where relatives gather to offer clothes and food for the rice field spirits, make rice wine, and serve traditional sticky.

As part of the Tampeun rice ceremony, young men from the community build a “spirit house” with the skills taught by elders and bamboo trees freshly cut from the forest. During this

¹³ Hongkiri, *Forest Mountain Voices*, reference no. CFI_VI_001597, accessed July 2019.

time, young women pick vegetables and boil rice cakes with bananas. As well, as part of the days-long ceremony, and hosted on the fields of many rice farmers, community members share traditional rice wine while blessing each other. The ceremonies are meant to “invite the land spirits to eat” as well as the “rice sprit [that stays] in the land and skies.”¹⁴ As well, by participating as a community, the ceremony is meant to foster knowledge transference to younger generations and the health and prosperity of future generations. As a young boy participating in the rice ceremony states, “this work, making the spirit house, is very important so we must complete it together, and believe in our spirits.”¹⁵ Another villager who participated in the ceremony states,

We didn’t design this ceremony ourselves – it came from the tradition and culture of our ancestors, there will be problems if we don’t make this ceremony, our families will become ill, this is why we continue making this ceremony for the next generation, so we don’t lose it, because if we don’t celebrate the ceremony, our family will be ill, the rice won’t be good and will be ravaged by buffalos, and our children won’t be happy, really we can’t lose this tradition.¹⁶

These excerpts demonstrate the centrality of rice in Tempeun community and social relations, as well as the intra-actions of Tempeun life as part of a relational assemblage. Rice, and the natural world that hosts and supports rice agriculture, operates in Tempeun life beyond its use by humans. Rather, rice and the forests have spiritual significance for the community members, and they intra-act in the development and maintenance of their cultural identities as individuals, family members, and as a collective. Importantly, this is more than the natural world simply

¹⁴ Hongkiri, *Forest Mountain Voices*, reference no. CFI_VI_001597, accessed July 2019.

¹⁵ Hongkiri, *Forest Mountain Voices*, reference no. CFI_VI_001597, accessed July 2019.

¹⁶ Hongkiri, *Forest Mountain Voices*, reference no. CFI_VI_001597, accessed July 2019.

being used by humans for subsistence and meaning-making because the description above reflects a reciprocal relationship between humans and more-than-humans—humans care for natural world entities and in return, the natural world cares for humans by providing sustenance and through that intra-action, cultural and collective identity is co-produced (Tempeum worlding). Indeed, as one member of the Tempeum community states, the natural entities around them “have spirits to live.”¹⁷

Gender is also a significant factor of cultural rice traditions in Khmer narratives. In particular, due to the number of individuals who were forced to marry under the rule of the Khmer Rouge, recollections of life before the genocide centre on marriage ceremonies. Most often these recollections contrast traditional wedding ceremonies with the forced marriages performed by the Khmer Rouge. For example, a female Khmer Survivor of forced marriage recalls the practice of arranged marriages prior to the genocide, which were grounded in family and community trust, support, and tradition through which the couple would always be cared for. She compares these marriages to the forced ones dictated by the Khmer Rouge, which often resulted in violence perpetrated against the wife, a lack of extended familial support, as well as abandonment following the fall of the regime. In fact, she states, even if their traditional arranged marriage resulted in violence perpetrated against the wife, they would still be cared for by their extended family members. She uses the phrase, “[rice] cake can’t be bigger than its basket” to describe this weaving together of family and community support.¹⁸

Another common theme in Khmer ‘memories before’ in relation to arranged marriages is the depiction of traditional marriage ceremonies as deeply intertwined with gendered social-

¹⁷ Hongkiri, *Forest Mountain Voices*, reference no. CFI_VI_001597, accessed July 2019.

¹⁸ Kdei Karuna, oral history of Chan Phay, *Thinking of the Future*, p. 90, accessed, May, 2021.

ecological intra-actions. As part of a different series of interviews, another Khmer woman forced to marry a second time during the regime describes her “memories before” and her traditional marriage ceremony at length. Her story includes the process through which the families of the bride and groom came together and prepare to support the life of the married couple to be — a process that took in her case approximately seven years. During this time, the families built a house for the couple, while the couple themselves got to know one another. The wedding ceremony lasted many days, and traditional foods were prepared and shared between the families and the guests. When the ceremony was completed, the couple was gifted the house built by their extended families and a farm or rice field. Her story is punctuated by moments of laughter as she recalls her wedding; her father adds to the story and the laughter, unseen but heard from another room in the house. She concludes her story with: “We started farming rice. This is my wedding story.”¹⁹

In its entirety, the wedding story is much more than just a simple tale of a wedding ceremony – more than just a memory of a point in time. The wedding story evokes joy and laughter from the storyteller and her family through its retelling and reimagining. The wedding story has been reshaped by her experiences since, as have her relations with family and community. The wedding story, then represents a performance in worlding—active engagement between ecological and gendered materialities and social relations. In doing so, the wedding story illustrates the significance of multiple intra-actions as part of relational assemblage.

Now I tell you about my wedding ceremony in the old time. First, the parents of the groom came and asked for my hand in marriage. They came along with elder people, a

¹⁹ Carlsen and Krogsgaard, *Voices of Khmer Rouge*, interview 23, reference no. VOK_VI_002696, accessed July 2019.

middleman asking my parents for consent or wanting to know if I was free. After getting an agreement from the bride's parents they considered dates of birth. If the dates were good, they arranged an engagement and ate betel nuts. Eating betel nut was different from wedding ceremony nowadays. It took place for only one morning, preparing foods, inviting elder persons to join. That was called "eating-betel-nut service." There was no need to play music. There was an offer of gold and silver jewelry, and clothes, up to the ability of the family. I was fourteen years old when they requested for marriage. That was an arrangement of my engagement.

After that, the parents of the groom began cutting timbers to construct a house as big as this house. They had already built one house. I married when I was nineteen. It was a long time before the wedding was celebrated. The families from both sides helped each other, while the bride and the groom never touched or made love with each other. We conducted ourselves properly as a good man and woman, listening to the parents according to the Khmer traditions. My parents had educated me not to be arrogant, not to have a boyfriend. I obeyed them for good. I was also a good daughter. Six or seven years later, I got married. I conducted myself properly.

It was an ancient tradition.

Till the house was already constructed, we checked the date, to arrange the wedding ceremony. My parents bought many items and so did the groom's parents. We erected a wedding hall behind the house. We had a cook respectively. My cook made food in front of my house, while the groom's cook did it behind the house. We started to inform our guests. Originally, we did not use letters requesting the honor to join wedding ceremony. We used only banana leaves, wrapping three betel leaves and three pieces of betel nuts

and put them in a basket and invited guests from house to house. We did not use letters [laughs]. I told you this was an old tradition. That's all [laughs again].

Guests brought gifts to the newlyweds according to their side, the groom's side or the bride's side, respectively. Each side had different dishes, and sat at different places. The wedding took place for two days and two nights. There was no modern music. There was only wedding music.

[Father, unseen, pipes in: "My house was full of guests"]

[She laughs] Both bride and groom put on old-style clothes, Chang Kbenn Phamourng.

We also put on the same clothes at the haircut ceremony. When we salute during the wedding ceremony in the morning, we wore traditional silk clothes and loose long shirts, tight collars and necklaces. It was much different from now. It was an ancient tradition.

Guests took the seats at the wedding hall according to which party they were invited. The amount of wedding gifts that we got, depended on the guests we had invited. There were not many gifts. We got only about 3,000 or 4,000 riels. The money we got, were just enough for the wedding ceremony arrangement. Parents cared mainly for a peaceful wedding ceremony for the newlyweds. The parents divided property to the wedding couple. The parents provided one buffalo or cow, one ox-cart and household appliance, rice field or farm to their children.

We started to earn a living, counting on our own capacity. The house that already had been built was given to us. They did not take it back. They also provided some more property. All the property we got from both sides was substantial.

We starting farming rice. It was my wedding story.

Other newlyweds experienced the same as I did at that time. That's all [laughs].²⁰

The wedding story is a poignant way to end the discussion of “memories before and worlding.” It demonstrates the importance of ecologies, community traditions, and gendered social relations. Social and collective identities are often expressed through intimate relationships as well as community celebrations whose disruption has the potential to have far-reaching consequences. As the wedding story demonstrates, it is not only physical human existence that guarantees a group's existential right to exist; nor is cultural and collective identity separate from certain materialities. Rather, it is an assemblage of relations between human and more-than-human entities that co-exist as part of a whole and that frame memories before the onset of genocide. It is one's sense of a self within a complex and multi-dimension assemblage of materialities and relations that form a sense of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree through intra-active worlding.

Concluding Remarks

In this first of three analysis chapters, narrative themes evident in Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree memories before the genocide and residential school experience demonstrate how collective identities are actively produced through intra-active worlding. These memories describe an assemblage consisting of a material place as well as family, community, and social-cultural relations and the ways in which gender and ecologies are both demonstrated in material and social relations. In other words, Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree worlding describes an active and dynamic process of identity production as part of a relational assemblage, or social vitality with nature.

²⁰ Carlsen and Krogsgaard, *Voices of Khmer Rouge*, interview 23, reference no. VOK_VI_002696, accessed July 2019.

Chapter 6

Analysis: Unmaking

While many Survivors relate the physical pain, torture, and death toll of the Khmer Rouge regime and residential school experience, the impact of the genocide is often narrated in ways that depict the ongoing relational and embodied forms of genocidal destruction that also denote aspects of social death. A Khmer female Survivor explained upon hearing that her family members were killed in the rice fields, she lost familial relations as well as any sense of future social vitality. She states: “I myself upon hearing that almost fainted. All my hopes and expectations disappeared.”²¹

Yet more than that, narratives of unmaking reveal a much more complex sense of destruction and loss that reveals how genocide operates to destroy or disrupt, by force, a multitude of material and social relations as an assemblage. Unmaking through familial and cultural relations disrupted networks of ecological and bodily materialities and social relations, most often described in comparison or opposition to how things should have been or how they were in their “memories before.” As this Khmer Survivor states: “If I had to compare the living conditions that I lived before and after the three-years, eight-month period, it was like the sky and the earth. It was completely different. Under the Khmer Rouge I could not attend school, I did not enjoy the comfort of my parents and I had to live separately from my parents.”²²

Unmaking narratives also depict how genocidal blockages and flows disrupt and travel through gendered bodies. In summation, narratives of unmaking depict the affective blockages and flows

²¹ Testimony of Chao Lang. Witness Acronym 2-TCCP-992. Case File No. E1/339.1, September 1, 2015, p. 61, accessed July 2019.

²² Testimony of Ms. Seng Sivutha, witness acronym TCCP-141, case file no. E1/200.1, June 4, 2013, p. 112, accessed July, 2019.

of genocidal processes through Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages—an unmaking of worlding practices, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, through ecological and gendered materialities and social relations as a form of social death with nature.

Unmaking Through Familial and Cultural Relations

In both the Cambodian genocide and Anishinaabeg and Cree experiences of residential school, the process of unmaking began with the unmaking of ecological materialities — the forced removal from their home and community that, for many, also meant a disruption to materialities related to rice agriculture. Yet as the first analysis chapter demonstrated, ecological materialities are intricately intertwined with a sense of self, belonging, care, and love. Therefore, the unmaking of place is also an unmaking of gendered materialities and social relations. Narratives of dislocation and relocation illustrate how closely place is associated with familial and cultural relations. For example, a Survivor of residential school describes their first unmaking as being taken to residential school in a fish plane with many other children. They remember crying and wanting to wave goodbye, but their grandparents were not even aware that they were being taken since they were out fishing at the time.²³

Many residential school Survivors recount how water relations were transformed into a technique of relational violence as part of their removal from place. For many, their first memory of the schools is being washed upon arrival. They describe how, even though they were young, confused, and often couldn't speak or understand the English language, they were still painfully aware of how this initial washing procedure implied that their Indigeneity was the source of their

²³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-19JU10-057, June 19, 2010, p. accessed May, 2021.

perceived uncleanness. This Survivor of residential school describes a sense of unmaking in their wash upon arrival:

See, and one of the things that happened, and I remember that, the nun used to tell us God punished you, that's why you're brown, and, and, and you start to believe that after a while, you know. So, I used to, when I used to take a bath or a shower, I used to get a brush, and I used to try to rub the brown off, off myself, trying to be white, you know.²⁴

Another Survivor of residential school connects their unmaking through being washed upon arrival and gendered roles and family care. Recall that for most Anishinaabeg and Cree, women share a unique relationship with waters and are responsible for its care as well as its use to care for others (Anderson et al., 2011; Bedard, 2021; Benton-Benai, 1988; Cave and McKay, 2016; McGregor, 2015; Szach, 2013). As such, it is the mother or grandmother's exclusive role in the family to wash, braid, or cut children's hair. By being washed upon arrival, children were targeted by settler colonial destruction in multiple ways. The washing was often physically painful and frightening as it was done with extremely hot or cold water, but it was also a shameful and relational experience as it disrupted gendered social interactions with family and practices with ecologies—waters—that were fundamental to their sense of safety and cultural identity.

And I had, I had never been naked in front of anybody ever before, except my mom, who would give us a bath in, in the bathtub at home, in a, in a round tub, you know the old round tubs that they had, the steel tubs, that's the kind of, you know, that's where. And so that was hard to, they told us before, when we went down to the bathroom, we all had to

²⁴ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-18JU10-083, June 18, 2010, p.14, accessed May, 2021.

strip... And so you know when, and then when I went to school and I, I was made to feel dirty, that was, year, I just didn't feel good right, right when I got there, right away, you know, they do all this to you.²⁵

During the reign of the Khmer Rouge, the entire population of Phnom Penh was evacuated and directed to rural work camps. Likewise, rural villagers were displaced from their communities in this process. As part of the regime's revolutionary agenda, the entire population had a role to play in the "Super Great Leap Forward." Work camps were divided by age and sex, separating children from their parents and the elderly from their extended kin (Tyner, 2018; Tyner and Molana, 2020; Ye, 2011). This unmaking also entailed a making of Khmer Rouge rice relations that acted as a blockage to Khmer identity. Khmer populations were told to reject traditional family ties and to adopt Angkar as their parents; this unmaking was meant to serve the regime's vision of rice production by ensuring that all workers would devote their entire selves to this vision. As this Khmer Survivor states:

For the first swear, they let us say "Cheyo (victory)! The Great Party! Super Great Leap Forward!" the second, "Cheyo (victory! Angkar is our parents." The third, "swear to serve the Angkar, follow the line of Angkar, and swear to reproduce the next generation for Angkar". They wrote it for us to read. When we arrived there, they handed a piece of paper to us to read. If [we] were unable to read, they would read for us to repeat after them. They let us swear all together, both men and women.²⁶

This Khmer Survivor recounts how she was taken from her parents and was explicitly told that they were now her enemy:

²⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-18JU10-049, June 18, 2010, p. 8, accessed May, 2021.

²⁶ Kdei Karuna, oral history of Choem Saroem, *Thinking of the Future*, p. 146, accessed, May, 2021.

My siblings were sent to work units. Because I was the youngest of the nine children in our family, I worked in a rice field near the village and studied Khmer Rouge ideology with other children. They taught us that we should view the Angkar as our parents and that our own parents were enemies. They told us to gather information on our families. Some children informed on their parents, who were sent for re-education or killed. I never told them anything about my mother.²⁷

Similarly, this Khmer Survivor describes how the making of Khmer Rouge rice relations required both the unmaking of kin and familial relations and the making of Khmer Rouge relations in their place. Recall that a key revolutionary tactic of the Khmer Rouge was the destruction of familialism and in its place, a total and unwavering commitment to “The Super Great Leap Forward”. In addition to separating families into separate work camps, the regime deployed a policy of forced marriages to ensure the reproduction of young new comrades for the rice field work force (Anderson, 2004; De Langis et al., 2014; Eisenbruch, 2018; Ye, 2011). As this Survivor explains, she was forced to re-marry within a few months of her husband’s disappearance in 1975. Although the new couple tried to avoid consummating the marriage, militiamen held torches on them and forced them at gun point. As she states, she ended up getting pregnant through this unmaking, at which time she was then separated from her husband for lengthy periods of time:

At that time, for my couple, he made a commitment that we would take care of each other for the whole life and that we had to strive to work hard to produce three tonnes of rice yield per hectare. In addition, he said that we would produce more children for Angkar in order to serve Angkar. As for me, I said similar things I made my speech. I said that I

²⁷ Documentation Center of Cambodia, oral history of Doeun Kim Sier, August 7, 2019, accessed April, 2022.

would strive to work harder to produce three tonnes of rice per hectare in a great leap forward fashion. I also committed to reproduce more children in order to serve in the revolutionary army for Angkar. [...] Later on, I got pregnant and then they separated my husband from me and he was allowed to visit me once every two months.²⁸

Another Khmer woman forced to marry and have children describes having to give birth alone and its impact saying, “I was so angry [...] I didn’t want to live [...] I cut the umbilical cords myself. Then I walked to the spring, about 100 meters. In the night 3 tigers came and sneaked around me, I was very scared.”²⁹

The above two quotations demonstrate an additional layer of bodily and relational complexities and entanglements that are unmade in genocide. As feminist new materialisms argue, while assemblages are never static, gendered materialities and relations are always embodied and embedded within it, intra-acting with the other elements that make up its compositions in some way. Thus, Khmer women’s experiences of unmaking were also distinctly embodied as these assaults flowed in and through their bodies. However, I will say more on unmaking through gendered bodies in the following sub-section.

For Anishinaabeg and Cree children, separation from place and family also meant an interruption of childhood learning and socialization in waters are also imbricated. Family and community cohesion is centered on learning from and living with traditional ecological teachings and cultural practices such as getting and carrying water, swimming, fishing, and cooking with relatives. Yet, as this quotation demonstrates, once at residential school, children were separated

²⁸ Testimony of Ms. Mom Vun, witness acronym 2-TCCP-283, case file no. E1/475.1, September 16, 2016, p. 56, accessed July, 2019.

²⁹ Carlsen and Krogsgaard, *Voices of Khmer Rouge*, interview 20, reference no. (VOK)VI_002701., accessed July 2019.

by biological sex and were no long able to practice that intra-action of ecological-familial worlding:

When I was in residential school, they kept the girls and the boys apart, boy's side, girl's side, allowed to see them once a week. [...], play together, able to see each other every day, you know, fish, hunt, swim, we learned how to swim really good. Can't do that.³⁰

Similarly, for Khmer families, rice materialities and relations also reinforce family cohesion through gendered work and caring roles. This female Khmer Survivor talks about the reverberating impact of Khmer Rouge rice-family ideologies. She describes the back-breaking labour and the deeply relational sense of unmaking associated with not being able to care for her children and feed them rice. In particular, her words, "And when you get back to your children, in fact, they aren't your children anymore" describes how genocidal violence and starvation are both a material and relational form of violence. While the mother and child are (barely) able to stave off starvation, their familial relations have been severed. The quotation at greater length situates the storyteller in an assemblage of dynamic intra-actions upon which genocidal phenomena operate to forcibly destroy or disrupt:

But in addition to back-breaking work, you are laughed at, you're made a mockery of, your children are taken away from you, without even telling you where they're going. They were – they simply told you, "Angkar are looking after your children; they're no longer your children, don't worry about them." And when you get back to your children, in fact, they aren't your children anymore because they've been completely indoctrinated and changed. When you see your daughter dying of hunger, and she says, "Mommy, can

³⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-16JU10-159, June 16, 2010, p. 13, accessed May, 2021.

I have a bowl of rice?”, and I was never able to give her that bowl of rice before she died.

Then I can tell you I have undergone harm.³¹

Khmer familial and cultural relations also incorporate the honour of caring for older parents and extended family as primarily the role of daughters (Holt, 2012; Takahashi, 2005). As well, recall the centrality of extended family units in Khmer culture, that is also entangled with rice agriculture dating back to the historical development of Angkor Wat (Holt, 2012).

Therefore, the following statement from a female Khmer Survivor accentuates why the impact of the genocide has reverberating consequences that are both an unmaking of material place and the disruption of gendered and social relations (Holt, 2012). She describes the relocation to rural worksites and the resulting blockage of family care for older parents as a defining feature of the violence perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge: “and children were forced to leave their parents behind and you know that we worship our parents. Parents are very sacred to us and when we saw parents separate from their children, it was something that was extremely, extremely hard for Cambodian children.”³²

Khmer Rouge violence also resulted in a making of Angkar as family by rearranging the order of family care. Mothers were restricted from caring for young children as they were deemed more useful as workers in the rice fields. Rather, and contrary to traditional practices, elders were tasked with caring for small children, and elders did not receive the care they were accustomed to receiving from adult children. As this Khmer Survivor states,

³¹ Testimony of Ms. Denise Affonco, witness acronym TCCP-1, case file no. /E1/152.1, December 12 & 13, 2012, p. 104, accessed July, 2019.

³² Testimony of Ms. Chheng Eng Ly, witness acronym TCCCP-13, case file no. E1/198.1, May 20, 2013, p. 6, accessed July, 2019.

Kids who were aged at two or three years old were completely separated from their mothers. They were taken care by grandmas while the mothers' task was to go to work without bothering to take care of their children. In the evening after work, the mothers went to have dinner before coming to take their children to sleep with and brought them back to the grandmas who would take care of everything. When they were sick, the children were sent to hospital; some kids had their mother to look after, while others did not have their mothers and sometimes died along at the hospital. No one was responsible for anyone else, at all. Children were asked to cut Tonreang Khet [A small plant grows in forests and it is made as useful fertilizer]. Old people were made to take care of children; to plant wax grounds, pumpkins, beans, cucumbers; or to pull and transplant seedlings. For me, I was taken away from my parents and my siblings, and was made to work a mobile unit, which I had to dig canals, build farming dikes and so on.³³

These caring restrictions applied even when small children were ill or dying. A Khmer Survivor and mother recounts how she desperately wanted to be there for her child when she died due to starvation. She took the risk of abandoning her duties in the rice field, for which she knew there could be various repercussions including loss of rations, imprisonment and torture, or death:

In the cooperative, my one-year-old daughter hardly ate anything and had dysentery non-stop, so I took her to the hospital. My mother Im Pok took turns staying with her. The medical cadres gave my daughter an injection; my mother said she died horribly. She wanted to bury her granddaughter, but a teenage nurse took her body away and did not

³³ Kdei Karuna, oral history of Ry Hun, *Thinking of the Future*, p. 15, accessed, May, 2021.

allow my mother to go along. When I heard that she had died, I ran to the hospital, but I was too late. That day, my portion of rice soup was given to other people.³⁴

The above quotation touches on the multifaceted nature of genocidal unmakings. In the making of Khmer Rouge rice and Angkar family relations, Khmer family bonds are unmade; the materiality of Khmer Rouge rice production resulted in the death of a young child as well as the disruption of mother-child relations and care work, and the deprivation of the mother in missing her single daily portion of rice. Furthermore, recall that Khmer traditions require appropriate funerary practices in order to participate in traditions such as *Pchum Ben*; these are deeply meaningful traditions, that are facilitated through rice offerings that are a practice of worlding that also maintains connections with lost loved ones (Ledgerwood, 2012). The mother and grandmother were denied appropriate burial of the child, and therefore, were denied that future ability to connect with her in the spirit world while they remained in the world of the living.

Unmaking processes in residential schools also resulted in blockages to gendered and extended family roles and care work. As this Survivor states, the traumatic experience of being washed upon arrival and the ongoing and incessant washing of children by nuns in the schools, interrupted their relationship with their grandmother and aunt. For Anishinaabeg and Cree families, young women and mothers, as well as older women and women who cannot have children, maintain a sacred role in the community as teachers and caregivers who are charged with bringing new life into the world, catching and washing the newborns, caring for and teaching children as they grow, and assisting those in transitions out of the world and back into spiritual realm (Dorion, 2010; Ireland et al., 2014). Therefore, being washed by the nuns in

³⁴ Documentation Center of Cambodia, oral history of wife of Huy Mann, August 7, 2019, accessed April, 2022.

residential school constituted a form of violent disruption of intra-actions between waters, gendered identities, and familial and cultural relations. As this Survivor explains, turning water into violence acted as an unmaking of gendered family and cultural traditions and interrupted the transmission of water knowledge. As they state,

They make me, the nun make me take a bath, and then she said, she said that she had to cut my hair, and I told her, "I'll tell my grandma when I, when I see her." And she said she, she's gonna do it. But I told [...] nobody's supposed to touch my hair, except my grandma or my mom, my aunt. And she's, she's it's okay. She says she knows how to do it, and I told her you're not my grandma, you're not my aunt. You're not supposed to touch my hair. So, she is gonna cut my hair. I ran out of the bathroom, stark naked, running down the dark hallway, yelling for my grandma. She caught up with me, and bring me back there, but I wouldn't let her touch my hair. So, she rolled me up in a white bed sheet, and chopped off my hair. And I was kind of scared because my grandma said nobody's supposed to touch my hair. She's the only one that touched our hair, fixed our hair, braid it, wash it. She even did that to my uncles. She did their hair. It's not something that's somebody else is supposed to touch.³⁵

I closed my first analysis chapter with a Khmer wedding story. The story encapsulated the importance of ecological and bodily materialities and social relations as essential in the co-production, or worlding, of a Khmer relational assemblage. As I close my discussion of unmaking through familial and cultural relations, I return now to the second part of this wedding story. Here, the same Khmer woman details her forced marriage during the reign of the Khmer

³⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-066, June 17, 2010, p. 3 - 4, accessed May, 2021.

Rouge regime. Where the first Wedding Story detailed complex worlding practices that contributed to her sense of self, this second Wedding Story describes a complex and multifaceted unmaking entangled with ecological and gendered materialities and social relations of Khmer Rouge remaking of rice agriculture and familial relations:

Now I go on to describe from the old regime to the Khmer Rouge time. This time I describe briefly. During Khmer Rouge time, I also arranged the wedding ceremony. Men and women lived in the same working site. I had issued letters to them. There were five pairs or ten pairs each time sitting separately, in two lines of men and women. Angkar called their names, Example: “Comrade A and comrade B come to the forum to speak out”. Angkar instructed them in living and working. There was no traditional offering. And they shook hands to show their love. They pledged that they really loved each other. That was enough and they went back to their places. The called the next pair to come and do the same. That was just shaking hands and instructing them. They also had cooked food and after the ceremony they all ate together. There was no wedding gift, no salutation during the wedding. It was very quick. Everything was under Angkar’s responsibility.

[...]

they also asked something like: “Comrade A, do you love Comrade B?”. If one side said: “I do not love him or her.” Angkar would say: “If you love each other or not, you must marry, because Angkar see you have a good capacity and good conduct. You must follow Angkar’s decision. Angkar loved seeing comrade A marry with comrade B. They could not refuse. They could say something like: “Let me think about it for one or two days”. And later Angkar asked them again: “Will you marry him or her?”. So Angkar had one

pair to marry. It was up to Angkar, because Angkar was our parents. Then Angkar asked every unit for communes or districts, to set dates for the wedding ceremony. Each time Angkar married many couples at the same time. Five or ten couples. During the wedding, they talked only about the commitment. “Do you marry him or her or not?”. The wedding took place under Angkar who organized it. The wedding could be of one couple, two or three couples. They also had some food and sweets, but there were no elder persons, to join the wedding ceremony. It was only Angkar and its senior cadres who were present in the wedding.

[...]

they wanted to create more families and they built houses, for five or ten couples to live in.

Their general objective was to generate more people during five to ten years. To get about five million people. It was their plan to increase the population.

After weddings there were some disputes between newlyweds. They did not love each other. There was no harmony. Some had their real love in the working site. But they did not dare to show it.

Wedding in the Khmer Rouge regime was too simple, and not happy.³⁶

Unmaking Through Gendered Bodies

Unmaking through gendered bodies describes how genocidal violence acts on relational assemblages but also how that violence is embodied and interrupts gendered and social relations that contribute to worlding of cultural and collective identities. In essence, at times gendered

³⁶ Carlsen and Krogsgaard, *Voices of Khmer Rouge*, interview 23, reference no. (VOK)VI_002696., accessed July 2019.

bodies act as conduits for, or absorb, genocidal violence. Narratives of unmaking through gendered bodies depict blockages that interrupt or alter a sense of gendered bodily self or identity; this unmaking is described as gendered bodily fluids or processes, such as breast milk, menstruation, sexual desire or gendered identities that are interrupted due to broader genocidal processes. Narratives also describe unmaking through gendered bodies as shame or violence as a result of gendered bodily flows or processes; for example, punishment for bed wetting due to sexual violence, shame from untended menstruation, or retribution for crying all contribute to a deeply embodied sense of loss.

Importantly, unmaking through gendered bodies clarifies how genocide operates to forcibly disrupt on multiple fronts. Unmaking through familial and cultural relations describes how genocidal phenomena are experienced through physical and material violence that also forcibly disrupt social relations that often intra-act with gendered roles and care work. Unmaking through gendered bodies demonstrates how gender is embodied through and embedded in complex and dynamic assemblages, as a key aspect of worlding cultural and collective identities. Understanding gendered violence as relational violence is a more holistic approach that is not exclusive to women, sexual violence, or the individual act of rape. Rather, this reframing of gendered violence enacted on an individual who is also part of a dynamic relational assemblage, demonstrates how gendered violence is a deeply embodied assault on the individual as well on a group's cultural and collective identity.

One way that genocidal blockages are enacted through gendered bodies is by monitoring sexual relations. For example, most Survivors of forced marriage during the reign of the Khmer Rouge describe being monitored by militia to enforce consummation. If they refused to engage in sexual intercourse, they were threatened with physical violence, torture, and death. This

monitoring of sexual relations resulted in strict guidelines against sexual relations outside of forced marriages; sexual intercourse was restricted to procreation as a way to increase the workforce for greater rice production (Tyner, 2018; Tyner and Molana, 2020). For example, a male Khmer Survivor describes how the Khmer Rouge policies that regulated sexual activity overlapped with policies of rice production, stating,

I saw another man who had an affair with a woman, who had to be arrested and executed right in front of the meeting. The meeting was convened every late afternoon, and the topic of the meeting would just be business as usual, for example, about the rice production, about how many hectares of rice per hectare; things like that. And I was also asked to express my sincerity and loyalty of being honest and commitment during the meeting.³⁷

Survivors of residential school describe how the girls' bodies were being monitored while showering, observing breast growth and menstruation for maturity. These observations were used to gauge whether or not girls had become pregnant in order to arrange an abortion³⁸ or to know when to stop sexually abusing them to avoid pregnancy. As this Survivor recounts,

I remember when I was, well hitting puberty. And that like, you get your periods [...] the worst part of that was, the principal [...] he would be the one to sign us our bra's and he'd check us out and say, "Well this year you're into say 32A or 34B," and he did all of that. And then we'd have our, we'd go and have our showers, and when we were in the shower, he'd come there, walk around, check us out, and as we try and hide ourselves, we'd crouch into a corner of the shower and try and hide, and he'd be walking around

³⁷ Testimony of Mr. Meas Saran, witness acronym TCCP-82, case file no. E1/145.1, November 14 & 22, 2012, p. 17, accessed July, 2019.

³⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-004, June 19, 2010, p. 19, accessed May, 2021.

there, check, just back and forth, checking us out. And he'd have this funny look or something on his face and all of us would be trying to hide; that was a hard time.³⁹

Gendered monitoring is also expressed as a blockage of gendered identity, including the loss of gendered identity. Recall that Khmer Rouge ideologies purported pure equality between men and women and one way to enact that ideology was for everyone to have their hair cut in the same way. For many women who prided themselves on their beautiful long hair, have their hair cut also felt like a cutting off of their individual sense of femininity. As this female Khmer Survivor explains, she experienced an unmaking of her gendered identity through this enforced policy of “equality” and hair cutting:

Before we were allowed to wear a sarong, but after we were sent to mobile work unit, we had to wear black clothes and had our hair cut, and we were given with scarf to cover our necks. I cried as I felt sad for my hair. My hair was very beautiful when it was long, and the unit chief cut it for me. She said I had to have my cut and I could no longer have long hair. I begged her not to cut, but she said it was impossible to leave it like that. I had to have it cut. After having my hair cut, I was given with clothes and a scarf and was sent to mobile work unit, so I had to leave the cooperative and be apart from my parents.⁴⁰

Khmer policies of gendered equality were also grounded in binary ideas of gender; Khmer Survivors were viewed as only men or women which meant that transgendered identities were forbidden. While only one openly transgendered woman testified in the ECCC, her statement aptly conveys the impact of binary gendered “equality” in the Khmer Rouge work camps. When asked if she had to hide her gender identity she states,

³⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 2011-2514, November 23, 2011, p. 7, accessed May, 2021.

⁴⁰ Kdei Karuna, oral history of Sot La, *Thinking of the Future*, p. 105, accessed, May, 2021.

Yes, I had to, because I was very worried that I would be killed. I had to force myself to have my hair cut so that I looked like a man and I had to mingle with men and I was forced to get married. It was a great pain, indeed.⁴¹

Blockages are also conveyed as disruptions to gendered bodily processes like pregnancy and morning sickness in a way that overlaps with ecological materialities, demonstrating the gendered embodiment of genocidal physical and material violence. Female Khmer Survivors recount being pregnant yet still required to engage in excessive labour in the rice fields — an ecological materiality that is embodied in pregnancy. Some describe not being able to eat their meager daily portion of rice because of morning sickness and vomiting but still being forced to work excessively.⁴² Others describe being very hungry and forced to eat unappetizing gruel that made them even more nauseous, but then were not allowed to vomit. As this Survivor states, she was forced to eat rice and fish soup with leeches because she was so hungry and needed strength because she was pregnant. The nausea associated with her pregnancy was compounded by the repulsive gruel and she wanted to throw up but was not allowed to. She states,

I was seven months pregnant, they assigned me to grind the rice, that was considered as a light task. I did not receive any health care; I did not have enough food. They produced a lot of rice, tonnes of rice, but when they gave us food to eat, they gave us porridge mixed with water lily, morning glory and potato skins. And for the soup, they even cooked fish soup mixed with leeches. The leeches actually clung to the morning glory, which the cook did not wash it before cooking and we ate the soup because we were really hungry.

⁴¹ Testimony of Ms Sou Sotheavy, witness acronym TCCP-151, case file no. E1/197.1, May 27, 2013, p. 18, accessed July, 2019.

⁴² Bhopana Archives, interview of Suy Kimseng, reference no. CP 2, accessed July, 2019.

After we finished the soup, we saw at the bowl, at the bottom of the bowl there were two leeches. We could not vomit although we wanted to.⁴³

Blockages of bodily processes are both an unmaking *of* gendered bodies as well an unmaking *through* gendered bodies. This is relayed as a disruption of gendered bodily processes that also forcibly disrupt familial relations. For example, a female Khmer Survivor describes the entangled unmaking of Khmer Rouge rice labour, forced marriage, pregnancy, and then not being able to breastfeed her baby — a composite unmaking of bodily and ecological materialities and relations:

I delivered my baby. I was not allowed to take any maternity leave at all. I had to work. I had to follow their order. When my child was around four months of age, I was asked to prepare fish, dry fish, and then when my child was about six months old, I was assigned to work very hard. They did not allow us to be free even if we had just delivered the baby. At times, they asked us to transplant rice for many hours before we were allowed to come back home to breastfeed our kid.⁴⁴

A female Survivor of residential school recounts how sexual violence perpetrated by staff disrupted her bodily materialities and relations. She describes how the experience of having her breasts fondled disrupted her understanding of breasts and breast milk. Her testimony contrasts the sexual violence with her “memories before”, stating that it was in opposition to how she understood breasts as a source of nutrition and love when feeding babies with breast milk. Here

⁴³ Testimony of Ms. Mom Vun, witness acronym 2-TCCP-283, case file no. E1/475.1, September 16, 2016, p. 67, accessed July, 2019.

⁴⁴ Testimony of Ms. Huo Chantal. Witness Acronym TCCP-198. Case File No. 002/19-09-2007-ECCC/TC, May 29, 2013, p. 75 – 76, accessed July, 2019.

too, an unmaking through gendered bodies is evident in violence that is done to the body and through the body to unmake familial and cultural relations. As she states,

When somebody rubs your breast you don't know what it's supposed to be, my mom had breasts, I didn't. My mom fed her baby with those breasts, to me they were not sexual objects. They were a source of love, nourishment, bonding. I wanted to hear, "I love you." I wanted to hear "Nitanis, Kisakitin. My daughter, I love you." I would say this to my mom, I would say this to my dad, it never came back, it hurts so much to want to hear, "I love you my baby." "I love you my dear," "Thank you." "Your're beautiful." Instead it was "Awas, kiminatsin, get away from here. Nakisinin, sipwete".⁴⁵

Additional Khmer narratives describe the loss of breast milk due to starvation in the rice fields, which also means mothers are unable to feed their children. In some instances, the child then dies from starvation. These narratives describe an experience that is much more than the physical loss of a child. It becomes a deeply embodied experience of multiple and temporally zigzagging genocidal blockages and flows. The genocide is unmaking their sense of being in place, displaced in the Khmer Rouge rice fields, as well as an interruption of gendered bodily processes, being unable to produce breast milk due to a lack of rice, and also the severing of gendered family care responsibilities because she is unable to feed her child. All of these experiences overlap with the final material and relational loss of their child and demonstrate how genocide produces multiple forms of violence that both physically and ecologically destroy and relationally sever or forcibly disrupt cultural and collective identities. As this mother and Survivor states,

⁴⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-058, June 17, 2010, p. 8, accessed May, 2021.

In late 1976, the Angkar transferred us and other people who had lived in Phnom Penh before the regime to Por Village in Pursat Province. There was no one living where they sent us, but they were planning to make a cooperative there. Por was a remote area; It didn't have any plantations, but the land was good and we soon began growing rice. I planted rice and pulled out seedlings, while my husband working in the plowing unit. Even though we grew plenty of rice, we did not have enough to eat. I became thinner and thinner, and when my first child was four months old, he died because I didn't produce enough milk for him.⁴⁶

Another Survivor tells how she lost her three children due to starvation during the reign of the Khmer Rouge. She then experienced a blockage to gendered bodily flows through amenorrhea, loss of menstruation due to deprivation. Her ongoing post-traumatic stress has further blocked this flow as a permanent loss of menstruation. This further interrupted her sense of gendered identity. As she explains in her testimony to the ECCC, she feels she has been forced into "living like a man." The loss of her children and gender identity is compounded by her ongoing inability to have more children. Here again, we see how genocidal violence is able to reverberate from the present, back to the past, and into the future. Her story depicts a sense of loss that is also carried by her body into the present and future as both an embodied sense of loss that is also embedded in social relations within an assemblage:

Whenever I recall that moment, I felt traumatic, I could not hold my tear. My tear runs now immediately whenever I recall the past sorrowful experience in our family, particularly the tragic death of my children during the Khmer Rouge period. [...] I do not have – I do not have any children, following the collapse of the regime. And as I said, my

⁴⁶ Documentation Center of Cambodia, oral history of Mam Bun Lorn, August 8, 2019, accessed April, 2022.

health got – deteriorated during the Khmer Rouge regime. As a woman, I did not have any haemorrhage and I was living like a man. I did not have – my sexual health did not allow me to have any other children.⁴⁷

A transgender woman who testified at the ECCC also described the harms she embodied, carrying the loss of displacement in her evacuation from Phnom Penh and the loss of her gender identity, that are enmeshed with the ongoing and present loss of her familial bonds. She describes being forced into marriage with a woman during the reign of the Khmer Rouge and from this marriage a daughter was born. Although she and her wife did not love one another and separated in 1979, she developed a loving bond with her child, whom she has not seen since their separation. She describes the complex embodied experience of being forced to marry as well as how that complex form of unmaking involves ongoing relational loss including that of time — her inability to remember certain events of the past due to the trauma experienced in the rice fields of the Khmer Rouge:

I lost everything. I lost the warmth of the family and there is nothing else important than that. I had wept for a long time until my tears dried up. And what happened under the regime of 3 years 8 months and 20 days period, I cannot forget about it. Everybody knows what happened during the regime, but for me I suffered the most. I was looked down upon. I was forced to get married. I was sexually abused due to my transgender nature. I have had memory loss issues. I had physical injury. And this is just what I remembered and still more that I might have lost count of what happened.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Testimony of Mrs. Bay Sophany, witness acronym TCCP-4, case file no. /E1/200.1, June 4, 2013, p. 36, accessed July, 2019.

⁴⁸ Testimony of Ms. Sou Sotheavy, witness acronym TCCP-151, case file no. E1/197.1, May 27, 2013, p. 69 – 70, accessed July, 2019.

Unmaking through gendered bodies also results in a blockage of sexual desire. For example, the rice policies that required forced marriages and punished sexual relations outside of marriage did not mean that rape was non-existent. Indeed, as with all genocide cases, rape was a regular part of the oppressive regime. In fact, the sexual propriety rules actually meant that Survivors were more afraid to speak about it because both the perpetrator and victim would be subject to punishment if it were revealed. For this reason, rape resulted in a lasting shame that resulted in a diffractive cut between their bodily gendered self and sexual desire. For this female Survivor, who was held at gunpoint and raped by five men before being forced to marry and consummate the marriage—a deeply felt and embodied experience that has had reverberating consequences: an unmaking of her sense of being “in this life.”

After that day I felt humiliated. I felt the pain. I wanted to protest but I did not dare because I was afraid, I would be killed. And I just pretend that it was my bad luck, the only humiliation that I face in this life.⁴⁹

Similarly, for this male Khmer Survivor, an outcome of multiple rapes by a female cadre resulted in a blockage of internal bodily relations (sexual desire) as well as the loss of future relationships with women. He states,

She caught my arm and made me lay down, and she started to abuse (rape) me. She abused me three times, but it was not only on that one day, but many days. For the second and third time [she] also used scraping therapy as an excuse. The second time was still by force because I did not have any feeling for her. At that time, I thought this woman was very bad, lustful, and shameless. For me, at that time, I had bad judgement on women

⁴⁹ Testimony of Ms. Mom Vun, witness acronym 2-TCCP-283, case file no. /E1/200.1, September 16, 2016, accessed July, 2019.

because I myself had such experience. Later, when any women came to talk to me, I did not want to talk to them.⁵⁰

A male Survivor of residential school talks about how his relationships with sexuality and women has been blocked through molestation in the residential schools when Nuns were menstruating. He retells his experience as one which makes evident the intra-action of inner biological bodily fluids (menstruation) with his own bodily inner and outer biological materialities and relations. He describes the revulsion he felt when forced into sexual acts with the nun while she was menstruating, and how he, in present day, feels nauseous when he smells blood. He then goes on to describe how these blockages and flows have also disrupted his relationship with his family, making it difficult for him to bond with his sisters, as well as his ability to have healthy romantic relationships with women. His depictions of unmaking highlight an uneven temporality through gendered embodiment — how he carries these experiences in his gendered body in present day and into the future. As he states, “It’s a part of our lifestyle, it’s a part of us that’s always here, that never goes away, will never go away, it’s how we live with it.” He further describes how this has been a complex embodied experience in which he draws on memories before the residential school experience— the past teachings of his female elders — along with unmade gendered bodily materialities and social relations, as a way to “live with it.” In summation, his retelling describes a process of genocidal unmaking that impacts one’s physical and relational sense of self and that reverberates through his gendered body to disrupt familial and cultural relations against ones will:

I was, I was molested and not just sexually abused, I was molested by that nun. She did terrible things to me. That’s why I don’t know how to do anything with a woman. ‘Cause

⁵⁰Kdei Karuna, oral history of Choem Saroem, *Thinking of the Future*, p. 142, accessed, May, 2021.

I, I didn't trust her. I didn't trust women anymore. I thought that's all they did was hurt men, hurt people, and I didn't like her. There's one smell that I don't like all the time, and I always remember that smell. It's the smell of blood. And I can't, and I can't stand the smell of blood today, 'cause she used to bleed sometimes, eh, and she used to make me do awful things. Like, it's, I still remember like it was yesterday.

[...]

All I can do is tell it from what I saw, and that hurt me, and that really hurt me. I didn't think it did, but it did, cause like, I don't see my sister in the same way, eh, today. Like, I have a hard time hugging her. I have a hard time telling her I love her. I don't know. It just does something to you. I can't explain it. It just, like you're just, like, numb, you're getting numb. That's how I fell, like, it's sometimes I just feel numb, and other times I feel really hurt, you know. And I believe anyhow that we never really forget these things. It's a part of our lifestyle, it's a part of us that's always here, that never goes away, will never go away, it's how we live with it.

[...]

And the other thing that I always say, too, about our ways is that I grew up learning a lot of women's teachings. You know why I say that? Because a lot of our teachings are from women. Our drum teachings, our ceremonies, don't begin until grandma speaks, or Midewiwin lodge doesn't begin 'til our elder, our elderly women speak. That's the old way, eh, that's the old way of doing this, and I don't mind being that, because my grandma was the one that taught me, taught me many good things, and so I lived with, I lived with that.⁵¹

⁵¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-028, p. 23 – 36, June 17, 2010, accessed May, 2021.

The last sentiments in this retelling touch on the third broad narrative theme in my analysis: “resistance and return: life-death worlding”. The Survivor’s resistance of a total unmaking by returning to traditional ceremonies and the teachings of his grandmother – gendered ecological relations with waters – also demonstrates the ongoing process of worlding. I will return to this discussion in the next chapter, but as a brief prelude, the narrative represents an embodied and embedded experience of unmaking that co-exists and cycles back through practices of worlding by remembering traditional ceremonies and teachings and reclaiming and returning to gendered water relations, or gendered ecological and bodily materialities and social relations.

Unmaking through gendered bodies is also described as shame or violence as a result of biological bodily flows. For example, a male Survivor of residential school describes his pattern of bed wetting as a result of regular sexual violence at the hands of clergy. In his retelling, he explains how the shame from the molestation flowed through his nightly bed wetting. He was then made to feel shame for those flows and bathed by nuns, which also further transformed waters into a tool of ongoing sexual violence; what should have been a form of family care also becomes an unmaking of familial and cultural relations through his gendered body and bodily flows. He states,

There was a lot of pain, every day we had to bath and ‘cause I’d [...] wet my bed. I bed wetted my bed all the time and I had to take a bath and shower and all the, I didn’t get to take a shower ‘cause I was still small and it was all the bigger boys that got to take showers. Smaller boys we had to take, well, I don’t know a bath in a great big tub and there was a bunch of nuns always washing us and I thought that was really, I didn’t, I didn’t feel good about that. ‘Cause it was all these, these females always washing us up

and they were always there, all of them would always be in there, just buzzing around saying that they're helping us wash ourselves.⁵²

Many children in residential schools were as young as three and four years old yet were not permitted to leave their beds during the night to use the washroom. As punishment, some children were made to carry their wet bedding through the full cafeteria in the morning to be washed in the laundry. For some Survivors, public shaming transferred the genocidal and bodily flows in witnessing the event. As this Survivor explains, while he himself did not wet the bed, as an observer he absorbed the pain of public shaming, further contributing to his own relational unmaking. He states,

And the, the thing that, the memory that I have about what went on there was, like, some kids would wet the bed at night, and you, you were made to walk through the cafeteria with your dirty linens, if, to, to show other, other kids an example of, of what, of what you did. I think. I myself, might have wetted the bed once or twice, but I was never, I didn't go through that experience too much. But I know some of the kids, that I, that first time that they go there. I guess being away from home, it was hard for them to, like you weren't allowed to get out of bed at night for one thing. If you needed to use a washroom then you would have to, you would have to wait til in the morning when everybody else got up. And then, then you were made to go through all the kids, like, boys and girls going the cafeteria, to the laundry, laundry, laundry room area, was just, which I found was very degrading.

⁵² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-080, June 17, 2010, p. 13 – 14, accessed May, 2021.

And but as time went on, as I grew older, I didn't, I was much more, I was able to, like, look after myself better. But as a young child it was very, it was very hard.⁵³

Children's bodily flows are also enmeshed with the affect of crying. While tears are meant to be a bodily flow that heals, in many instances they became another current of genocidal material and relational violence. As this female residential school Survivor states, her ongoing victimization through sexual violence resulted in nighttime bed wetting and fecal incontinence. As punishment, she was not allowed to leave her bed until morning when other children had already filed by, forced to lie in the mess. She recalls crying in pain and being overcome by shame:

I remember McIntosh too, always being sick. I remember always, always, always laying in the bed, I had to lay in my poops 'cause the nuns wouldn't let me get up at night time to go to the bathroom and I peed the bed and lay in my poop and pee. Sometimes when I was really, Like I used to be really sick all the time, they wouldn't let me get up, they wouldn't let me change my bedding. I remember laying in my poop. The girls that use to come and clean the dorm, use to say, "Oh, that bed stinks, whose is that"? Oh that little girl who's always sick and I remember crying under the sheets.⁵⁴

This same Survivor also describes being physically punished for crying. In this instance, she recalls being moved to a second residential school. Despite her traumatic experiences at her first school, she was also afraid of leaving her sister behind — yet another unmaking of place and relations. She recalls crying and attempting to get to the door to go back to her sister. In response, a nun physically assaulted her. The bodily flow of tears that would have been met with

⁵³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-16JU10-090, June 17, 2010, p. 7, accessed May, 2021.

⁵⁴ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-003, June 17, 2010, p. 10, accessed May, 2021.

tenderness in her community, was transformed into a cause for violence. In her retelling as part of her testimony, she shows her physical scar as an embodied memory:

I remember that day though ‘cause I was crying and crying and I wanted to go to my sister and I kept trying to go to the door and she kept blocking me saying no. Anyways she start shaking me, telling me “stop crying, stop crying”. And I got scared ‘cause she was shaking me she actually picked me up and said “shut up” and she threw me, she threw me against those square columns and I guess she hit me, she threw me so hard I had a cut on my forehead and there was a scar there. The scar is still there, but I remember that.⁵⁵

She further describes how she has carried this embodied experience with her. She tells of becoming physically ill when returning to the residential school after spending the summer break at home. As well, even as an adult, long after leaving the school, she frequently became nauseous when thinking or talking about it. Only recently, she explains, through the help of therapy, has she been able to retell her story without becoming physically ill:

I remember being dragged to the principal’s office and again I got [sexually abused]. Priests. I remember I had diarrhea, always, beginning of the school year, always had diarrhea. I think it was because they were always dragging me down there.
[...]

My sickness was because of that. Anyways. I don’t feel sick talking about it so much because I’ve been going to therapy for five years. And I finally when I’m talking about it, I’m able to say that without throwing up or feeling really sick or sore.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-003, June 17, 2010, p. 16, accessed May, 2021.

⁵⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-003, June 17, 2010, p. 16 - 17, accessed May, 2021.

Unmaking through gendered bodies is also a disruption of bodily flows linked to maturation. For example, untended menstruation often resulted in shame or confusion and thus a disruption of the natural course of bodily relations. As this Khmer woman explains,

During KR regime, most women in the country did not know what menstruation was like. Most of those who had children were those base people with enough foods to eat and were the wives of KR comrades. I got married in Pol Pot regime before I had my first period. I did not know what menstruation was like. My first period was when I was 18 or 19 years old. When I had my first period, I went to my mother and asked her, ‘mother, look, why am I bleeding so much?’ During that time, parents did not tell their children about this as it is thought that it is a secret and mysterious thing.⁵⁷

Similarly, this Survivor describes the confusion of her first menstruation in residential school:

So, but you know, so I had my periods, and nothing of that was ever explained, nothing. Everything was shame based and I didn’t know what to do with myself. You know I was all bloody and all that. And one of the, my girlfriend said to me, “Oh, go see the nun.” So, I went to see the nun. She gave me all the things that I needed, you know, pads, and it felt so strange having to wear pads in between your legs. I mean something that, you know, I wasn’t used to.⁵⁸

For Khmer women who did not experience amenorrhea, menstruation was both a source of shame and increased their vulnerability to physical punishment. Women were not provided appropriate sanitation when menstruating; as well, difficult or painful menstruation cycles

⁵⁷ Kdei Karuna, oral history of Ry Hun, *Thinking of the Future*, p. 42, accessed, May, 2021.

⁵⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-16JU10-131, June 16, 2010, p. 21, accessed May, 2021.

compounded their lack of energy due to starvation, which reduced their work output in the fields and increased the punishment meted out by Khmer Rouge cadre. As this Khmer woman states,

The situation was rather arduous. We did not have enough food to eat. And as I said the situation was extremely difficult and for us women. [W]e need proper sanitation but on the contrary we only had a pair of clothes on ourselves. We had to work day and night and even when we were sick, we were not allowed to rest. And they said that if you are sick, you still have to go to work and if you fall on the ground at the worksite then would not be allowed to rest. If we were considered to be inactive or lazy, that person would disappear and there were many workers from where I worked disappeared. For that reason despite my illness, I didn't dare to rest.⁵⁹

A female Survivor of residential school aptly describes the genocidal disruption through bodily processes and relations related to gendered maturation. She recounts experiencing her first menstrual cycle at home where it was celebrated and reinforced her relationship with her mother. It was a rite of passage into womanhood that was guided by her mother — a bodily and relational experience of bonding and gendered knowledge transference. In contrast, she explains how the process of menstruation was altered by genocidal phenomena; the interference of settler colonial ideologies at the residential school flowed through her gendered body to interrupt bodily and familial relations:

There was one time my, know what I remember too, periods. Our first periods, I'm lucky my first period was at home, I was twelve years old and I had my, I remember bleeding and I can remember at school how the nuns use to just rape the older girls and tell them they're little, unclean, you're dirty they use to call them names. So, when I was at home

⁵⁹ Testimony of Ms. Chao Lang, witness acronym 2-TCCP-992, case file no. E1/339.1, September 1, 2015, p. 12, accessed July, 2019.

for the summer that time. I was twelve years old. I remember being in the bath, in the outhouse, my mom, we use to have outhouse and I was in the outhouse with my older sister kept pounding, “What are you doing in there?” and I didn’t want to come out. Finally, my mom comes over there, she says, “Open the door” so I had to open the door then she says, then she asks me in Indian, “What’s wrong? How come you’re in here?” and I started crying and then she looked she says “Oh my” and she says this in English. “Oh, my daughter, you’re a woman now” and she started crying and she grabbed me and hugged me and she took me inside and then she showed me how to make pads the old way. Remember how we use to take a cloth and put moss in there. That’s how she, she took me out and she spent the whole day with me and she talked to me about being a woman. That was so cool. So I felt really good about being having my first period. But anyways that’s cool. In Fort Frances, the nuns, that’s all they did was, they use to tell everybody who had their periods that they were unclean, dirty, little savage, they say it in French, the prostitute word, whore or whatever. It’s a trans, that’s what they use to, “You’re going to become a whore now” they use to say that in French. Anyways, wasn’t very nice. But I guess I was blessed when I had my first period at home because I never felt like when the nuns after that when they use to tell that to me. I use to look at them and I use to say in my head, “Your full, you’re lying, I know what my mom told me” I’d start rebelling against their teachings, their spiritual teachings, they use to tell us if you lie, you’re gonna go to hell. If you’re dirty, you’re gonna go to hell. If you don’t wash, you’re gonna go to hell. If you don’t wash, you’re gonna go to hell.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-003, June 17, 2010, p. 23, accessed May, 2021.

The above passage demonstrates how genocidal violence crossed through bodily materialities and relations, altering the course of gendered maturation (i.e., menstruation) and multiple associated familial care and relations. In other words, it elucidates how genocide is simultaneously a material and relational phenomenon that is embodied by gendered bodies and travels through gendered bodies. The nun's use of settler colonial ideologies that equate Indigenous cultural relationships with the natural world as uncivilized provided a legitimizing framework to perpetrate a multi-faceted form of genocidal violence that resulted in gendered embodiment and ecologically relational disruptions.

Male maturation is also subject to genocidal unmaking through gendered bodies. This male Survivor of residential school describes going through maturity and the fear, confusion, and shame associated with uncontrolled erections. He describes being monitored in the shower in the mornings and punished if he unintentionally had an erection. His narrative demonstrates the interruption of internal bodily relations as result of this type of monitoring and punishment—he describes feeling disconnected from his natural bodily processes and its impact on his sense of self and how it also disrupted familial and cultural relations. I close this chapter with his retelling as it so aptly expresses how genocidal unmaking flows through the core of one's sense of self—the destruction of inner bodily relations (“I have no control over something like this, that's part of me”) and how, even though he was spared his physical life, his connection to the world has been severed (“Well then what's the difference if I end it now, 'cause they're going to take it anyway”).

You don't know why and when that [erection] happens the nun will take the stick and beat it and beat it so hard that it burns, you can't even [urinate] for a long time and again you're asking questions, why? What have I done wrong? I have no control over

something like this, that's part of me. And what I see now is the lessons that I'm being taught is to hate. But I cannot hate. I cannot hate because somebody is telling me hate will kill you. So, I'm trying to put this into some kind of perspective and say "Why don't they kill me? I'm dead anyway?" But I can't take my own life because those things are still in my mind that life is sacred, that life is not mine. What's given to me. Well then what's the difference if I end it now, 'cause they're going to take it anyway.⁶¹

Concluding Remarks

Narratives of unmaking depict the impact of genocidal processes that operate on relational assemblages as a kind of social death with nature. Unmaking through familial and cultural relations is described by storytellers as the disruption of place such as removal from their home, farmlands, or community near water. Gendered familial, community, and cultural relations are embedded in place and are also, at times, unmade as part of this process. The disruption of familial divisions of labour in rice fields and familial and community care work demonstrate how genocide purposefully disrupts intra-actions within human and more-than-human relational assemblages.

Genocidal processes also operate through gendered bodies; this refers to genocidal violence that disrupts an individual's bodily and gendered sense of self such as amenorrhea, rape and pregnancy, the natural progression of maturation and sexuality, or the suppression of sexuality or gender identity. As well, unmaking through gendered bodies is an embodied phenomenon that travels through time to assault a group's cultural and collective identity. These narratives describe gendered bodies as a conduit for material and relational violence to impact

⁶¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-050, June 17, 2010, p. 10 – 11, accessed May, 2021.

broader familial and cultural relations, even in the aftermath of the genocide or residential school experience.

Unmaking through familial and cultural relations and through gendered bodies demonstrate the complex ways that genocidal destruction is deployed. Genocidal destruction operates on multiple fronts; ecological and gendered materialities and social relations are mutually targeted in genocide—at times conjointly, at other times, unevenly. The process of unmaking describes how genocide is perpetrated to destroy, disrupt, and alter relational assemblages in which intra-actions between humans and more-than-humans co-produce Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree collective identities.

Chapter 7

Analysis: Resistance and Return: Life-Death Worlding

In chapter five, term “worlding” is used to describe narratives that reflect a situated sense of self in a material place that intra-acts with other ecological and social materialities and relations in an assemblage. Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree worlding is described as an active and dynamic process that substantiates cultural identity as part of an assemblage that has yet to intra-act with genocidal phenomena. In chapter six, narratives of “unmaking” depict the affective blockages and flows of genocidal processes through Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages. Unmaking is described as active disruption or alterations of familial and cultural relations through imposed ecological materialities such as removal from their home, farmlands, or community near water as well forceful interventions upon gendered materialities and relations such as separation from family and the interruption of gendered care roles that are also in relation with ecologies such as rice farming or water carrying. Furthermore, unmaking describes the unique gendered implications of genocidal violence. Unmaking through gendered bodies is a more holistic understanding of gendered violence that is not exclusive to women, sexual violence, or the individual act of rape. Rather, this reframing incorporates gendered material and relational violence that is a deeply embodied assault on the individual as well on a group’s cultural and collective identity; in essence, how gendered bodies carry and harbour both material and relational violence that, in turn, inflicts pain or divisions in the family or community, and interferes with healing and the maintenance or reclamation of cultural identity.

“Resistance and return: life-death worlding” highlights the ways in which genocidal violence is experienced as a complex form of destruction that continues to enact its destructive

forces in the supposed aftermath of the genocide or residential school experience. Acts of resistance describe the ways in which storytellers try to ward off physical violence or resist unmaking as well as how they attempt to maintain or reformulate social relations and cultural identity through ecological and gendered materialities and relations during and after the genocide and residential school experience. Here is where the term life-death worlding is advanced. Narratives of “resistance and return” represent, at times, a process of unmaking when attempts are thwarted or their sense of self as part of a relational assemblage is forcibly destroyed or altered. At the same time, during and after genocide, Survivors actively reformulate their identities through ongoing or reformulated practices of worlding but in a way that must contend with their attempted destruction. Therefore, life-death worlding describes the ongoing, uneven, and reciprocal intra-action between destruction and practices of worlding even in the genocide’s supposed aftermath.

Resistance

Recall the female residential school Survivor who was able to draw on her memories and her mother’s teachings to resist the nun’s reinterpretation of menstruation as a transition into sexual depravity. She drew on these relations to resist internalizing that degradation of her bodily sense of self and maintained her understanding of menstruation as a sacred rite of passage into adulthood. Likewise, recall the Survivor who utilized his memories and teachings from his grandmother as a way to “live with” his embodied sense of unmaking in residential school. It is narratives such as these that signify how acts of resistance are also intra-actions that preserve elements of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages.

Similarly, another male Survivor recounts how he used his teachings from his grandfather to find the strength to withstand sexual violence in residential school, and to fall asleep as a way

to cope with fear. He recounts how his grandfather would take him out on the lake to go blueberry picking and learn about medicines out in the bush. The technique his grandfather taught him was to crouch and to be very still and quiet in order to track animals or catch fish. The Survivor describes how he used this same technique as a way to listen for the nuns at night in his attempt to avoid sexual abuse. He states,

You sleep in a crouching position like this, okay, and then you hear [...] the nun walking around, and there's, like, 200 of us in one big dorm, and walking around [...] but I kept track of her, you know, I kept track of her. It was just like being in the bush, you know, and then you just listen to the sounds of how my grandfather used to talk to me and be real still, and then you could hear certain sounds, but that's all I heard was just that walk, and then all of a sudden, I would see her grab one of the kids, okay, wake up one of the kids, and then take him somewhere, and then into her dorm.⁶²

Attempts to maintain relations by caring for a family member is a powerful form of resistance that also denotes an ongoing attempt to maintain a sense of self and familial and cultural relations. For example, during the reign of the Khmer Rouge, Survivors would sneak away from their work camp to steal food in order to feed a loved one. In one such narrative, a female Khmer Survivor recounts how she longed for the comforts of home as described in her memories before the genocide. She recalls how her husband was “wearing a grin” as he returned from stealing rice to provide those comforts to her — a daring act of resistance that could have resulted in imprisonment, torture, and death. He did, in fact, go to work in the rice fields on another occasion, never to return. Yet, it is narratives such as these that demonstrate how acts of

⁶² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-17JU10-059, June 17, 2010, p. 11, accessed May, 2021.

resistance are attempts at physical preservation as well as maintaining relations. The husband's act of stealing rice grains to concoct a version of "coffee" was not only intended to stave off hunger; rather, his actions demonstrate an intention to restore a sense of familial relations. As she states,

When I was hungry, my husband was the only one who tried to find food for me. I remember telling him that I wanted to have coffee. Without saying a word, he walked outside. A while later, he returned home wearing a grin. He made a fire and fried two handfuls of crispy rice until they were burned, and added a spoonful of palm sugar. Then he washed about five bulbs of *kravanh root*, pounded them, and added them to boiling water. After pouring the mixture into a coconut shell, he gave me my 'coffee'.⁶³

Similarly, a Khmer Survivor of the Tuol Sleng S-21 prison recounts how prisoners were executed for the slightest offence, such as breaking a spoon. But this seemingly slight offence was actually a grave transgression because a prisoner's single spoon and plate were the only possessions they had and provided their only way of consuming their meager rations of "watery rice soup." He recounts how his father gave his sister, also both prisoners, a spoon after hers was stolen. The following day, she stole another spoon to give to him, but he had disappeared. The brother states,

Of my five siblings, it was my oldest sister who saw our father for the last time. During the lunch break one day, people were being served watery rice soup. My father saw my sister looking for a spoon. "Where is your spoon?" he whispered to her. She replied, "I lost it last night. I don't know who took it...". "Take mine, and eat as quickly as you can," he said, handing his spoon to my sister. "What about you?" my sister asked. "That's

⁶³ Documentation Center of Cambodia, Oral History of Heng Sokphanna, August 7, 2019, accessed April, 2022.

all right! You keep it for yourself,” answered my father. Then he headed back to the dining place hall for older people.

My father certainly understood that a plate and spoon were substantial personal belongings, and they were the only personal possessions allowed under the Angkar’s policy. Every individual had a small bag containing nothing but a spoon and a plate.

That evening, my sister stole a spoon from the communal dining hall, thinking she would return my father’s spoon to him. She looked for my father the next morning, but could not find him. She approached an older people’s group during the lunch break and asked about my father. Moeun, who was in my father’s canal digging group, rushed to my sister and asked: “Are you coming to see your father?” “Yes! I want to give him his spoon,” my sister replied. “There’s no need to find him. He has been sent to work far away,” replied Moeun with a sad face. My sister understood Moeun’s words.

My sister kept the spoon she stole for my father and still has it today. She placed it next to my father’s picture and worships it as one of our family’s most precious possessions.⁶⁴

The spoon, although a material object, extended the sister and father’s agency and enabled them to materially care for one another and also resist a relational unmaking. She has kept that spoon as reminder of her father to this day. Thus, it is also an entity that can retell the story and reclaim their relations in doing so. In other words, as part of broader genocidal practices, familial relations have also been disrupted—that interruption of family relations can be described as a form of social death. Yet social death does not accurately describe Survivors’ practices of worlding in and through genocide, intra-acting with ecologies and materialities, like the spoon

⁶⁴ Documentation Center of Cambodia, Oral History of Taing Hang Meng, August 7, 2019, accessed April 2022.

and rice, and relations while also intra-acting with broader genocidal processes; these practices are more accurately described as life-death worlding (social death with nature).

Narratives of “resistance and return” are also recounted as an experience of unmaking when a Survivor’s attempt to resist, care for loved ones, or reclaim relations is obstructed or altered to such an extent that these relations are permanently unmade. For many, while physical punishment or the physical loss of the human life is certainly impactful, for many, it is the unmaking of gendered familial and social relations that compound the destructive force of genocide and loss. As this Khmer Survivor recalls, when her mother requested to see her and her siblings after working in the rice fields, she would suffer detention and starvation as reprisal for engaging in familialism, which was interpreted as a lack of commitment to Angkar: “As for my mother, she would work the whole day from dawn until dusk and when she came home, she would wish to see her children, but by doing that she was accused of – she was detained for one week and she was deprived of her food rations.”⁶⁵ Later in her testimony, she recalls how she attempted to visit her mother after they had been separated into different work camps. Despite the possibility of death, she makes the arduous trip at night in order to see and feed her mother:

No, I wasn’t allowed to come to my mother to share the food with her. But because I really missed her clearly, I knew that I would be killed by going and see her but I had to do that because I had to see her. My mother upon seeing me said that I should never come to see her because it was so risky. And I said that I missed her – I would like to be with her. And it was – the trip to see her was at late – or midnight so no one could see

⁶⁵ Testimony of Mme Or Ry, witness acronym TCCP-105, case file no. E1/146.1, November 22 & 23, 2012, p. 10, accessed July, 2019.

that – and indeed my purpose of seeing is to share the food with her. Because I knew that she would not have enough to eat.⁶⁶

The narrative, thus far, demonstrates acts of resistance, in maintaining certain relations, despite the possibility of physical harm. However, as she continues, she expresses an unmaking through resistance and return — an altered sense of self and relations that she is unable to reclaim. She later describes how her family was executed — their physical relations cut, including the connection with her mother, which she had so desperately tried to maintain, and is a significant to in Khmer familial and cultural traditions and gendered roles: “The whole family was executed. The family was killed and planted into a pit. I was pleading, begging for the life of my mother. But they would never listen to me.”⁶⁷ This Survivor’s recollection demonstrates how “resistance and return” can maintain relations while simultaneously furthering the unmaking processes of genocide. As she concludes her testimony, she is invited by the ECCC to make an impact statement. As she does so, it becomes poignantly evident how the genocidal affective flows and blockages have disrupted her sense of self, as part of a relational assemblage. In her statement, she describes an unmaking of self through ecological and gendered materialities and social relations:

What I wish to say is that, after leaving Phnom Penh, I have lost everything, including my house, property. And along the road, I was not given enough food, and I had lived a very difficult life until I reached my hometown. When I got there, I thought I would be in peace. [...] I have lost all my last members of the family. I am now a complete orphan. I live a very lonely life; very desperate for food. I had to pick up food left over from others

⁶⁶ Testimony of Mme Or Ry, witness acronym TCCP-105, case file no. E1/146.1, November 22 & 23, 2012, p. 16, accessed July 2019.

⁶⁷ Testimony of Mme Or Ry, witness acronym TCCP-105, case file no. E1/146.1, November 22 & 23, 2012, p. 19, accessed July 2019.

to make my meals, and I had to ask people for food. [...] I still live with this very bad trauma all along. And recently, we met – I just found my sister. She survives the ordeal, but she got injured and the injury makes it impossible for her to live a normal life. And we feel – I feel that my life is very miserable.⁶⁸

Similar accounts of unmaking are evident in Anishinaabeg and Cree Survivor testimonies of resistance and return. The following reflects a similar process of attempted resistance through relations; the Survivor describes the violence of being showered using a high-pressure hose by nuns in the residential school, who did the same to her very young sister, and who was frightened and in pain. The Survivor is ultimately restricted from shielding her sister and, as she describes, this resistance obstructed becomes a profound sense of self and relations unmade — a more intense form of agony than the physical pain of having the hose turned on herself:

Anyway, we were in the shower, it was once a week we had to have a shower. They'd put us all in 'cause there were sprinklers. That horrible nun, horrible, horrible, person, trying to protect her, standing in front of her, my sister and she's so scared, trying to hold her. And the nun says "get away from her" so I did. Then full force, that hose, she had it in her hand right on her [crying]. It wasn't bad when she turned the hose on me 'cause I was so busy worrying about her and I remember her just opening her mouth and all I don't want to think about it. I don't want to think about it.⁶⁹

Another Survivor recalls trying to run away from the residential school in the frigid cold temperatures of winter. This was a defiant act of resistance that was obstructed both by the

⁶⁸ Testimony of Mme Or Ry, witness acronym TCCP-105, case file no. E1/146.1, November 22 & 23, 2012, p. 38 - 39, accessed July, 2019.

⁶⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-17JU10-030, June 17, 2010, p. 9 – 10, accessed May, 2021.

ecological elements as well as his father when he finally made it back to his home. His retelling of this experience is also demonstrative of life-death worlding—an uneven and reciprocal process between destruction and worlding. As a child, he was so impacted by residential schooling that he was willing to risk death in order to resist this disruption of place and relations. Yet, as with most experiences of resistance, return, and unmaking, his is a story of both destruction and worlding. In his resistance, he successfully returns to place and to relations; his father cares for his frostbitten hands, feet, and ears with cold water even after he reprimands his son for having run away. This story demonstrates the ways in which the genocidal affective flow continues to operate in the Survivor’s assemblage as an ongoing sense of relations unmade:

And at Christmas time, you know, my dad was supposed to come, but there was a blizzard, so I snuck out from the [residential] school. I didn’t have proper shoes, mitts or toque. I end up about freezing to death. You know I had frostbites on my ears, frostbites on my hands, frostbites on my feet, and I, I went home. I cut through a field and everything like that. I walked for about two hours in the storm. There’s no, no snowploughs, no, no traffic, nothing, and I, I went home. And first that happens when I come to the house, my father takes my clothes off and he spansks me for getting out of school, then he let me thaw out with some cold water on my hands and feet and my ears. Then I returned home two days later, back to the school two days later. I walked back.⁷⁰

Return

Narratives of ‘return’ depict how people return to place and reclaim or reinterpret relational assemblages. Thus, for many, return is also a demonstration of resistance to their

⁷⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-011, June 17, 2010, p. 5, accessed May 2021.

attempted destruction adding yet one more dimension to the complexity of life-death worlding. For example, a Khmer Survivor describes returning to the lands and forests with which they farm and how this is central to the reclamation of collective identity for future generations: “This history of our village is that we have been living here for a long time like our forefathers. We were born, we live and we use the land and forest for farming here. [We] keep the land and the forest for the next generation. [If] we have no land and we have no life.”⁷¹

Similarly, a residential school Survivor describes returning to the lands and waters while simultaneously recalling their memories before the residential school experience. Here, they describe returning to ecological and material place and human and more-than-human relations as they return and relearn trapping, hunting, and fishing by following the same “route” that his parents showed him:

The good times I had was when, when we were out on the land, trapping, fishing and hunting with our parents. And me and my mom going out into the bush, showing me how to set snares, and telling me that next morning you have to come alone here to, to check up on the snares. So, early in the morning, what, maybe five I go, eh. [And] when we were trapping, too, you know I remember my dad, my dad used to take me out, too, and he would show me, and I still use it today when I got out in the spring, when I go spring hunting, or, you know, when I go on a, when I go out in spring, I, I follow the route that he had showed me, eh.⁷²

Returning to place is both material and relational. For many, returning to place means that Survivors are reclaiming cultural identity. As the above discussion establishes, returning to

⁷¹ Yoen & Hongkiri, *Forest Mountain Voices*, interview with Lady from Krowla Village, reference no. CFI_VI_001593, accessed July, 2019.

⁷² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-16JU10-147, June 16, 2010, p. 19, accessed May, 2021.

place is a way to reclaim familial and cultural traditions and knowledge. Likewise, this Survivor of residential school states, “so, what I find is that everything that's good in me, everything that I do to better myself is the result of what my mom has passed down, what she learned from her grandmother, from our, our traditional cultural ways, and our values, and what we believed in.”⁷³ Another Survivor, now a mother of daughters, describes how returning to place has enabled her to pass down the eco-knowledges that she nearly lost during her time in residential school, and is now no longer able to participate in due to her age:

So, I only have girls that were alive. So, I had, I mean they're the ones that had to learn to live off the land to feed me. [Laughs] I can't go out hunting anymore, so my girls are the ones that go geese hunting, moose hunting, or beaver, whatever wild food, fish like, the ones that put the fish net out. My oldest one and my youngest ones are like that. They love living off the land, going out and getting whatever we can eat, and their kids like the wild food, except for the middle one. For some strange reason, she, everything that I taught to her, she, it didn't kick in. She hates to go fishing. She doesn't go camping. She just likes to stay in her little house. [Laughing].⁷⁴

Others may not be able to physically return to place, as was the case for this Khmer Survivor who was permanently displaced by the genocide and is now living in Australia. However, they describe a return to cultural-ecological materiality using traditional Khmer cooking and a diet based on rice rather than bread:

Khmer culture has always been in my heart. Though since we are living with others, we must also go with the flow. Though, in my heart, I always loved Khmer best. Our Khmer

⁷³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-18JU10-029, June 18, 2010, p. 3, accessed May, 2021.

⁷⁴ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-17JU10-066, June 17, 2010, p. 37 – 38, accessed May, 2021.

culture. I still think of me as Cambodian. [...] When we got to Australia, we still ate Cambodian food, we didn't switch to bread.⁷⁵

Returning to place and reclaiming relations, traditions, and knowledges is also a form of healing for many Survivors. For this residential school Survivor, it was only when he was able to return to place and traditional natural laws taught by his grandfather that he was able to heal and reclaim “how it is that we are”:

Most of my life in residential school is just a big blank and every once in a while, I have flashbacks and I come back and new things pop into my head and I could see things and that was one of the things that really traumatized me was the sexual abuse. So, I just wanted to free myself from that pain, that anger and my elders really helped me a lot with that. I just wanted to say our people, [...] we still understand the natural laws and how it is that we are. I still remember my grandfather telling me you already have that life he says, take care of it, it's pure. You are the truth already, so live that truth and speak that truth and that really helped me out even the older I got. It really kept me focused about letting out those things that happened at the residential school.⁷⁶

For Anishinaabeg and Cree, waters are the source of all life and therefore, are the source of healing (Bedard, 2021; Chiblow, 2019; Craft, 2016; McGregor, 2014). Water's ability to heal is also embodied in the form of crying and the release of tears. Recall that for many children in residential schools, tears as a source of comfort (from physical or sexual abuse or due to loneliness) were often forbidden and met with additional violence. Thus, genocidal affective flow through gendered bodies is evident in the disruption of traditional healing through bodily

⁷⁵ Jorng Jam, Interview of Sam Sarm, June, 2015, accessed May, 2021.

⁷⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-17JU10-080, June 17, 2010, p. 12 – 13, accessed May, 2021.

flows. In other words, genocide is experienced through embodied relations unmade. Returning to relations as healing, then, can also mean attending to bodily relations once disrupted. A Survivor of residential school explains how his return to place and to relations with Elders also helped him to reclaim tears as a source of healing:

When that Elder was talking about healing, and how we have to try to understand, like, what, what is needed to heal, I took care of this, this sore here, you know. You wash it with water. Water is the sacred time that heals, eh, that's all. So that's what that Elder was talking about, just things like that, that we need to be, to tell our young people, too, that. I know a lot of our young people don't want to cry. The other story is about crying, and she said, "Don't be shy to cry. Don't be ashamed to cry. Crying is healing. When you look, look where your tears fall, they fall on your chest" she says, "and what's there? Your heart." And water is healing. Water, the plants, the trees need that, they grow. "When you look at crying," she says, "you grow your heart. So, all those things that I hear, I keep in mine, and you share."⁷⁷

Reclaiming materialities and relations is also a way to reclaim gendered identities situated in relational assemblages. As this Survivor of residential school notes, returning to her traditional role as water carrier is an embodied transmission of water relations and a proclamation of her role in collective identity reclamation:

We hear of all the war, and the devastation, like the oil spills, the impact it's having on our environment, and we're talking about recognizing and having, water, and doing water ceremonies, that has to continue, and our women are doing it. They're the ones who are, you know, bringing that water and the purification of water, and that it's a life force, you

⁷⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-16JU10-086, June 18, 2010, p. 23, accessed May, 2021.

know. And we had one of our women in Ontario walk around all the Great Lakes just to bring that awareness. So, individuals are doing it, and they are the women.⁷⁸

Resistance and return may not necessarily be a straightforward process of reclaiming relations that directly resemble their memories before the genocide and residential school experience. It may also entail a process of renegotiation. For some, this renegotiation may challenge gendered roles and responsibilities that also produce gendered inequalities. For example, education was not readily available or considered appropriate for many Khmer women and girls before the genocide. These unequal gendered relations were entangled with the ecological materialities of rice agriculture that was also entangled with familial gendered roles. As this Survivor recalls:

I had been to the sea with my father since I was ten years old. That was why I am illiterate. My father made the gill nets. My brother and I went to the sea every day. I dared not miss it because we did not have enough rice, so we need fish to sell, so that we can buy rice. I really wanted to study and when I saw people going to school, I egged my father that “daddy, I want to study with them. My father blamed me “now you choose, go to school and have nothing to eat. Which one do you prefer?” I then thought that I could not live without rice, so I would rather not go to school. It was a terribly poor period. If I went to school, how could I have rice to eat? My parents went to sell fish in order to be able to buy rice. Sometimes they bought a sack of rice, and sometimes half of sack before going back to the sea. I cook for my youngsters, like fish soup, grilled fish and so on. My elder brother did not bother with these women’s work.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-17JU10-016, June 17, 2010, p. 21, accessed May, 2021.

⁷⁹ Kdei Karuna, oral history of Tae Ry, *Thinking of the Future*, p. 70 – 71, accessed May, 2021.

Therefore, resistance and return can also mean a renegotiation of gendered materialities and relations that may or may not produce gendered inequalities. For example, this Khmer woman describes how she was able to get an education during the reign of the Khmer Rouge, something that would not have been available otherwise. What may seem like a contradiction — the production of greater gendered equality through processes of unmaking — is, in fact, a renegotiation of relational assemblages through ongoing intra-actions, or life-death worlding. She recollects,

They wanted to teach us then. It was called Region 5. It was in Battambang, Region 5. I don't know for sure why they wanted to teach us. Maybe those people were good people. I don't know. I was taught one hour a day, so I just went with the flow. I was glad because I hadn't learnt anything when I was little. I learned the alphabets and got deeper and deeper spelling. There were maybe 10 students. Yes. I can write. [Yes} I can write and read.⁸⁰

As with any group's culture, relational assemblages are never static; they are always intra-acting and reshaping themselves and their relations are always evolving. Genocidal affective flow through an assemblage of intra-acting agential elements means that relations are constantly being renegotiated to some extent. Recall the Khmer Survivor who told her two Wedding Stories — the traditional practice of arranged marriages versus the forced marriages dictated by the Khmer Rouge. Others refer to the phrase, “[rice] cake can't be bigger than its basket” to describe the practice of traditional arranged marriages and parental authority over children's marriage, and how this practice is also a weaving together of family and community

⁸⁰ Jorng Jam, Interview of Sam Sarm, June 2015, accessed May, 2021.

support.⁸¹ Many Survivors, such as these, grieve the loss of traditional Khmer wedding ceremonies.

Others have undergone a renegotiation as part of the process of returning to material place and social relations after the genocide and residential school experience. For example, this Khmer Survivor recounts her daughter's wedding — one which did not follow the tradition of arranged marriage but still contained elements of traditional Khmer wedding celebrations. She too evokes the analogy of “[rice] cakes are not bigger than the basket” but in the sense that this younger generation is unlike her memories before the genocide while at the same time engaging in practices of worlding through a renegotiated Khmer tradition:

In our children's generation, we did not force them to get married. Now, children will not marry someone they do not like. Unlike before, people said “cakes are not bigger than the basket”. Now, people are opened to choose a man or woman they love. I felt very sad when I heard the Khmer traditional wedding song and the wishes from the wise man, and saw the wrist tying ceremony and throwing of Phka Sla during our daughter's wedding. I felt so touching. I could not imagine how happy I would be if I could get this kind ceremony in my wedding. Our daughters were not forced to do anything. They got a job they wanted and married the person they loved, and their wedding was arranged with traditional ceremonies.⁸²

During initial settlement in (what we now call) Canada, various types of destruction were enacted including massacres, dispossession, starvation, disease, and the residential school system (Tauri and Pouru, 2014; Woolford, 2015). Furthermore, as Aimee Craft explained in an

⁸¹ Kdei Karuna, oral history of Chan Phay, *Thinking of the Future*, p. 90, accessed, May 2021.

⁸² Kdei Karuna, oral history of Oem Sameth, *Thinking of the Future*, p. 33, accessed May, 2021.

interview conducted by myself and Dr. Woolford, Indigenous Nations were restructured, including their family and leadership composition. While attempts at assimilation were resisted, some were also internalized, one of which is male dominated leadership in band councils. In some cases, women's water knowledge and leadership has been undermined by both settler colonialism as well as by internalized patriarchal inequalities. As a result, what has come to be defined as "Indigenous" has been framed as men's roles in their communities (e.g., fishing and hunting), while women's and two-spirit peoples' roles (e.g., water knowledge and relational work) have been overlooked. Aimee Craft elaborates stating,

And so, who is Indigenous is defined by, often, hunting and trapping and fishing. What is an Indigenous activity is framed in that way, that is a part of patriarchal values that are built into how the relationship is developed between European powers and Indigenous people in Canada and also perpetuated through the Indian Act and other mechanisms imposed on Indigenous people and I think that that has significance in terms of some Nations' relationships with land and water. So, Anishinaabe women have a particular responsibility to water, and they've generally been excluded from decision making in relation to water, it's been lumped in with land. Whereas if you were making an informed jurisdictional decision, you would have women sitting at the table in relation to making decisions about water.⁸³

For this reason, part of reclaiming is also a renegotiation of gendered roles and power for Anishinaabeg and Cree. In another interview conducted for our broader project, Daniel Gladu Kanu discusses this process of renegotiation as a complex and necessary gendered engagement toward the reclamation of Indigenous sovereignty. He explains his role in the Lake Winnipeg

⁸³ Interview with Aimee Craft, December 15, 2021.

Indigenous Collective, as a man, is to ensure that he is creating space for the important role that Indigenous women must play in water's care and in policies of reconciliation:

Where I'm from too that's true, well certainly around Lake of the Woods, I think throughout Treaty Three, yeah, so, removing women's leadership from discussions is very evident [...]. So one of the ways that we see that is how commercial fishers, which are mostly men, are the de facto leaders when it comes to talking about water, and have been for many years [...] certainly with fishing and also with hunting and things like that, which is a little bit more problematic too because a lot of the work was still being done by the family, by women, but the sort of head of that was the men, and then, the Elders that come from that are men as well, and it used to take more work to get women to speak about things, like no one had been asking them, certainly outside of their family, um, but I do think that's changing a lot, like through the work of Aimee as you mentioned, but I mean just broadly, every Indigenous organization I work with is really attuned to this now, and is spending more time highlighting Indigenous women, in particular. I am, of course, a man and I try to bring in women more than, as much as I can, because, yeah, because of that history, to try and just bring back some of that equity.⁸⁴

A male Survivor of residential schools provides this touching example of gendered renegotiations in his marriage. Sadly, he was unable to learn many of the water traditions related to becoming Cree, including fishing and hunting. Yet here he describes how his wife has renegotiated those relations as a way of reclaiming Cree identity with water relations:

She does all the native stuff, filleting fish, cleaning animals, chopping up animals, doing beadwork. She's, but it's embarrassing to me because I can't do any of those things. She

⁸⁴ Interview with Daniel Gladu Kanu, December 9, 2021.

can chop wood, cut wood, yeah. She's being my salvation because she insists on staying in the, on the reserve, eh, and I'm more geared toward living in the town. So, she's been a real big help for me, 'cause she's patient and tolerant, and I'm very grateful to her for that.⁸⁵

Cree Elder Rudy Okimaw, in an interview, described such a renegotiation at a recent gathering to honour children recently discovered in unmarked graves outside of a former residential school. He describes how women's traditional role of water healing had been overlooked. He goes on to detail how he invited several women to engage in the ceremony in order to allow the souls of the lost children to heal and be released from their graves. His story is deeply moving and demonstrates the significance of women's water knowledge and roles in the healing process:

I noticed that water is a healing for us, I remember this summer, we were at the ceremony with our Grand Chief and all the people, they were at the Elkhorn where that residential school was, there were seventeen or eighteen kids that were buried there, the one down there, and we had a ceremony there and then, those ceremony people there didn't have that much experience, they were men ceremonial people, but I noticed that, I told them, our way of life a long time ago, our Kokum will help welcome people with water or tea and Bannock this is the welcoming, the way of saying Kokum, or Grandmother, of saying you are welcome in my house, you are welcome on my land [...] but I noticed that there was no water ceremony during that time when I was there, that important ceremony, and I told, there were four women there, and I told them, we have bottled water, we brought

⁸⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-16JU10-132, June 19, 2010, p. 32, accessed May, 2021.

bottled water in that ceremony at Elkhorn, on that residential school lawn, that was gone now, it's just a cemetery, seventeen crosses in there, and then I said, you know, Grandmothers used to do this, they used to give tea, and water, and Bannock with a person that comes into the community, and communities are welcome, anybody is welcome, into their house is welcome, but now, look at these crosses. You see those crosses, I told them, those are young children that was taken, they can never have a chance to go home, they were taken by, either they were sick, they were killed, let's do this water ceremony because I know, some of my best friends, the lady, the water carriers, and I told them, you go down after the men had performed their ceremonies, and you go down and pour it, every water into that seventeen children that are laying, that are laying down, well I guess in the graves there, pour down, give them water, for healing, and so they can go and they can go out, let em go, those children that are there. Pour some water there, all seventeen of them, all four ladies went down and were giving life water to the children. And I noticed that was just peaceful there, just peaceful, and after that ceremony between, maybe in the middle, the Eagle flew over, it came like this, it flew by, and I noticed that part of the ceremony, and I'm part of the Eagle clan, and I noticed that Eagles were flying to South and East, and I felt so peaceful there [...] The ladies did all the jobs, and I told those guys that are doing ceremonies, we give water, you're welcome, and we give tea, that's water, and we offer Bannock. [...] You feel that they have given you nourishment, these people, that seventeen graves there and that's beautiful. That's part of healing for me, that water.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Interview with Elder Rudy, November 25, 2021.

In many narratives a return to place can become an extension of genocidal unmaking. Particularly when they return to a place that is ecologically and materially altered, or when relations are unmade to the extent that place no longer has meaning. As an example of the former, a Survivor of residential school depicts their ecological and material return as immensely altered through physical and legal obstacles to fishing, to the extent that Anishinaabeg traditions have been lost. They state, “They’re losing their traditions, not because they want to but because they are taking it away from them because of their laws. In order to go fishing now you need to have a fishing license. You go on the road; you need to have a driver’s license in the back roads. You go out anywhere.”⁸⁷

As an example of the latter, this Khmer Survivor describes the impact of returning to their village and how genocidal unmaking continues to forcibly operate on their relational assemblage even in the genocide’s supposed aftermath: “Since the regime, I have felt so much pain because when I returned to my village, I lost everything. I lost my house, land, cattle, family members and relatives. Only the pain and suffering remain with me.”⁸⁸ Similarly, a female Khmer Survivor explains how their return to place no longer has meaning without relations. Recall that for many Khmer women, rice agriculture and domestic roles and responsibilities enable a sense of gendered self within familial and cultural relations (Garikipati et al., 2017; Kuksakabe and Prak, 2019; Lee, 2006). The following quotation reflects that lost sense of gendered self, even upon her return to her home community and farm lands, as part of a material and relational unmaking:

⁸⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-16JU10-159, June 16, 2010, p. 5, accessed May 2021.

⁸⁸ Testimony of Ms. Chea Dieb, witness acronym 2-TCCP-286, case file no. E1/466.1, August 30, 2016, p. 80, accessed July 2019.

I was advised by my uncle, who was the head monk [of the village], to try to forget and forgive but I could not and I am now alone. When I do farming alone I am telling myself, “Why should I work with the farming again, because I have no-one left to work hard for?” For example, why do I need to do the farming, because my husband and children already died?⁸⁹

The quotation above also demonstrates the ways in which, for some, a return to place has little meaning without relations reclaimed — a common narrative of unmaking throughout the broader narrative theme of ‘resistance and return’. These statements describe a need to survive ecologically and materially through rice farming, but more than that, they also portray the loss of relations that are co-produced with rice, agriculture, and social relations. As this Khmer Survivor explains, the loss of their oldest brother and father during the genocide is echoed in their loss of family structure and indeed, their loss of hope:

For me and the family, the great loss of my older brother, Chau Seng, as well as my father, means the loss of core people in my family and we suffered great from such a loss and nothing can compare to our loss. We became poor. We lost our hope. We lost our future and we did not have someone to be in charge of our family.⁹⁰

Thus, the physical loss of family members results in certain unmakings of familial relations, and the loss of hope describes how their performances of worlding must now always contend with the impact of genocidal phenomena—life-death worlding. In the following quotation, a Khmer Survivor also describes the physical loss of family members and its negative impact on their

⁸⁹ Testimony of Ms. Bou Thon, witness acronym KW-29, case file no. E1/62.1, August 12, 2009, accessed July 2019.

⁹⁰ Testimony of Mr. Chau Khim, witness acronym 2-TCCP-1050, case file no. E1/457.1, August 15, 2016, p. 71, accessed July 2019.

ability to participate in cultural celebrations that connect living with ancestral and future relatives. For this Survivor, the loss of their family members also prevents them from participating in *Pchum Ben* which, as discussed in previous chapters, is a national Cambodian festival at the end of the Buddhist Lent. It is a fifteen-day-long religious festival in which relatives come together to pay their respects to their ancestors and provide offerings of rice to benefit their deceased relatives (Davis, 2009; Holt, 2012; Ledgerwood, 2012). Yet, as they explain, without any surviving relatives to bring together, she is detached from the yearly and deeply meaningful Khmer tradition:

I miss them. I think that if all of them were still alive, it would be very great for us to have a reunion during the Pchum Ben ceremony. But every time during Pchum Ben ceremony, we feel very lonely because we don't have any relatives coming for the reunion during the festivals, unlike other houses who have relatives coming to join the festival.⁹¹

For some Survivors, lost human relations also result in the loss of gendered ecological relations, knowledges, and traditions. This Survivor of residential school describes how his time at residential school separated him both physically and relationally from his father as well as from the knowledges his father was unable to pass on to him. This Survivor's father had been a medicine man and the physical loss of his father also meant the loss of medicinal knowledge and cultural relations associated with the practice. All of which is to say, physical death also results in a complex and ongoing loss of gendered and ecological familial relations that further unmake

⁹¹ Testimony of Ms. Ros Chuor Siy, witness acronym 2-TCCP-1049, case file no. E1/455.1, August 11, 2016, accessed July, 2019.

cultural and collective identity as an ongoing intra-action between relational assemblages and genocidal destruction:

But other times when somebody was sick, well he'd you know he'd use medicines from the bush or, you know, wherever to treat us. But you know what? He left with that. He never told us what it was and of course we didn't ask. You know so when you talk about, I don't know, like that's a part of culture [...] he had something, but he never passed on to us, and so, well we never asked him to teach us, you know, because being in boarding school, well, we spoke to dad only when you had to, and it was vice versa. He only spoke to us when he had to. There was none of that, you know, that close relationship that I thought we should have had but didn't.⁹²

For Anishinaabeg and Cree, women as water carriers are responsible for the care and stewardship of waters as kin, as well as relaying water knowledge to future generations. As part of these historical and ongoing traditions, women bring their water knowledge to birthing and midwifery practices and to community celebrations that welcome a new child (Anderston et al., 2011; Bedard, 2021; Benton-Benai, 1988; Cave and McKay, 2016; McGregor, 2015; Szach, 2013). For many Survivors, it is the loss of these traditions that punctuate their narratives of relational unmaking that prevents them from returning to place and reclaiming certain familial and cultural relations and traditions. For example, this female Survivor describes the role of women's ceremonies in birthing traditions and the naming of a new child as integral to being accepted into the communal fold and how this practice was integral to her and her family. She recalls it as a good memory, but, as she concludes, "that's lost now":

⁹² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-16JU10-157, June 16, 2010, p. 10, accessed May, 2021.

When a child is born, when I had my first born, I went and gave the basket to an Elder and I told her I want you to name my boy. And she just told me, just get water and a little bit of soup and just that it doesn't have to be a big feast, he said, he told me she'll come and next morning she came. I made some tea and I made some Bannock and I made some soup early in the morning and we all sat around in a circle and she did her ceremony and she named my boy Leading Buffalo. The Leading Buffalo and then after she named him, we all sat in a circle and her husband and her grandmother and my, some of our uncles and aunts were sitting in a circle and we all held him and said his name we gave it to him and we said his name to all in the circle, and that's lost now.⁹³

The quotation above highlights the importance of ecological and gendered materialities and relations and the ongoing relational impact of broader genocidal processes. Similarly, this male Survivor of residential school talks about the loss of traditional ecological knowledge from his family and in his community. Discussing this loss of he asks: “then why am I still alive, you know?” I conclude this chapter with his retelling that summarizes the complexities of life-death worlding as an ongoing negotiation between destruction and worlding practices—relational assemblages disrupted and altered yet always engaged in dynamic intra-actions that now must contend with the destructive force of genocide:

So, if people don't want to listen to what I'm gifted with, what my grandfather had and my grandmother, or my dad's dad and dad's mom, if people don't want to listen to things

⁹³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-18JU10-024, June 18, 2010, p. 26 – 27, accessed May, 2021.

like that, sometimes, I just feel like saying, well, okay, if nobody don't want to listen to our ways no more, you know. If they're old, why am I still alive then, you know?⁹⁴

Concluding Remarks

Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree narratives of resistance and return convey the complex intra-actions between relational assemblages and genocidal phenomena. The movement through genocidal violence toward reclamation and renewal does not take place without challenges and narratives of resistance and return attest to how genocide's unmaking continues to operate even in genocide's supposed *aftermath*. As narratives of resistance and return interlace between destruction, resistance, and reclamation, they represent how genocide destroys along an uneven temporality, often linking the present with the future, rebounding to the past, and reverberating between destruction and practices of worlding: life-death worlding. In summation with chapters five and six, the analysis in full has produced a rich representation of the underlying nexus between the two case studies which I turn my attention to in the following discussion and conclusion to this dissertation.

⁹⁴ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-059, June 17, 2010, p. 24, accessed May, 2021.

Chapter 8

Discussion and Conclusion

Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages and worlding practices illustrate the dynamism of group life. Ecological and gendered materialities and social relations give meaning to the individual and group's existence and co-produce collective identity. However, to date, relational harms in genocide have received scant attention in the literature. A narrow focus on physical human existence and destruction obscures the complex and multiple ways in which a group imagines itself, maintains collective identity, and renegotiates its relations in and through genocide. By reframing genocide as a multi-layered and multi-dimensional intra-action with the group's ecological and gendered materialities and social relations, I have opened up genocide studies to three insights: 1) An understanding of the group and its attempted destruction beyond anthropocentric terms; 2) A non-linear and dynamic genocidal temporality; 3) A more expansive understanding and response to gendered and relational harms in genocide.

In the second chapter of this dissertation, I demonstrated the ways in which Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages consist of ecological materialities of group life that overlap with gendered, familial, and cultural roles, relations, traditions, and celebrations. Ecological materialities of group life, such as subsistence rice farming or living near lakes, rivers, and streams, overlap with gender and social relations in, for example, family care or divisions of labour, personal or familial standing within the community, or responsibilities and expectations when participating in religious or traditional ceremonies. The introduction to Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages demonstrated how composites of intra-action within relational assemblages co-produce Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree collective identities.

Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages highlight a gap in the genocide literature. More broadly, genocide studies deploy a narrow focus that overlooks the relationship between victim groups and the natural world and how assemblages that define who they are, as a collective, can be disrupted or altered in ways that include but are not restricted to mass physical annihilation. In chapter three, I demonstrated how Claudia Card's use of the terms social vitality and social death open this narrow focus to include gendered and relational harms that also threaten the group's existence. I closed chapter three with additional insights from Indigenous and settler colonial studies that conceive of group life beyond anthropocentric terms and that employ a genocidal temporality that understands destruction as operating on multiple fronts and timelines; in particular, to include relations across generations.

In chapter four, I explained how feminist new materialist theory will inform my analysis. In particular, I communicated how Karen Barad's conceptualization of intra-active and relational assemblages will help me to elucidate how individual and collective identity is co-produced through entanglements of ecological, gendered, and social intra-action. In chapter four I argued that intra-action and assemblages more aptly reflect how individual and collective identities are formed in an assemblage of relationships and activities; entities such as rice or water are equally engaged in the formation of cultural identity as are human gendered and social relations through activities such as rice farming, fishing, or cooking. From a feminist new materialist perspective, this making, forming, and generating of human worlds through performances with or around ecologies and social relations is termed "worlding." I utilize this terminology to describe Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree collective identities as an active and dynamic process of material and relational intra-actions that are co-produced and that are simultaneously, while at times unevenly, targeted in genocide.

Spanning across chapters five through seven, archival and comparative analysis reveal both patterns and distinctions between Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree narratives. In their descriptions of themselves, their families, communities, and social worlds — before, during, and after the genocide and residential school experience — ecological and gendered material and social relations are evident as symbionts in the development, maintenance, and reclamation of cultural and collective identity across three broad narrative themes: 1) Memories Before and Worlding; 2) Unmaking; 3) Resistance and Return: Life-Death Worlding.

Narratives of “memories before and worlding” include patterns and distinctions that reflect storytellers’ sense of self as part of a dynamic material and relational assemblage before the genocide or residential school experience. These memories describe an assemblage consisting of place (associated with rice and waters), family, community, and social-cultural relations. Khmer and Anishinaabeg processes of ‘worlding’ are described as familial, cultural, and gendered practices and relations associated with ecological materialities; these practices around and through rice and waters co-produce Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree social vitality and collective identity.

In narratives of unmaking, the way that genocide intra-acts with group relations are understood as blockages and flows; in noting diffractive cuts and patterns that result from these intra-actions, I draw out the ways that genocide unmakes worlding practices that co-produce relational assemblages while simultaneously making them genocidal. Narratives of resistance and return demonstrate both unmaking and worlding. When certain materialities or relations are maintained during the genocide, or reclaimed in its aftermath, narratives describe how storytellers resist destruction — an ongoing, while altered (diffracted), practice of worlding in genocide, or life-death worlding. When narratives describe how their attempts at resistance are

obstructed, or their individual or Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree identity has been altered to such an extent that they are unable to reclaim it, these events and their embodiment signify an extension of unmaking — an ongoing intra-action with genocidal violence that extends into its supposed aftermath.

As such, genocide operates with an uneven temporality and through multi-faceted techniques of destruction that cross over and through group relations. As well, individual and collective identities (that are always dynamic and always intra-active composites) are diffracted by genocide but continue to make and remake themselves and do so unevenly, in a way that must now contend with their attempted destruction—also signifying the practice of life-death worlding. Like the Mobius Strip, these intra-actions are always in motion — the genocidal violence flowing through and across ecological and bodily materialities and social relations, making and unmaking, while these relations continually flow through and across one another, an ongoing practice of worlding, thus rearranging the assemblage. It is in the doing and performing of these relations, that are also intra-acting with genocidal phenomena, that life-death worlding is enacted.

As a whole, life-death worlding conveys how Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree identities have never been static; they have been actively formulated and reformulated through intra-actions between multiple materialities and relations, including in and through genocidal destruction. Life-death worlding provides a conceptual framework through which to identify and communicate this ongoing renegotiation of group life that must always *now* contend with their attempted destruction.

Social Death with Nature: A Comparative Analysis of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree Life-Death Worldings

Feminist new materialisms use the concepts assemblage and intra-action to express how gendered bodies and identities are situated in and constituted by assemblages of human and more-than-human actants (Fox and Alldred, 2015; Grosz, 2020; Rogowska-Stangret, 2017). Ecologies and their related matter have material force in these entanglements, and through intra-action they co-produce social relations (Asberg et al., 2015; Barad, 1996; Coleman, 2014; Jagger, 2015; Rogowska-Stangret, 2017). Gendered bodies are thus understood as “situated bodies” (Stark, 2017, p. 72) because they are both embedded in these entanglements and embody their relations – performing, doing, and making their worlds different. This is what feminist new materialists refer to as worlding (Barad, 2003; Rogowska-Stangret, 2017). Fundamentally, natural, ecological, non-human, social, cultural, discursive, object, and bodily affectations all co-produce the materialization of the world — an ongoing dynamism that contributes to individual and collective identity.

Thematic narratives of “memories before and worlding” represent how storytellers express their situated and embodied self in relation with ecological, familial, and cultural relational assemblages. Their sense of self is connected to a material and ecological place in their memories before the genocide and residential school experience. As one residential school Survivor explained, their childhood is simply recalled as knowing “that I was where I was supposed to be.”⁹⁵ Recollections of working on farmlands or fishing in lakes illustrate how their practices of worlding are situated in ecological materialities. Familial and cultural relations are

⁹⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-18JU10-048, June 18, 2010, p. 3, accessed May, 2021.

also connected to the ecological materialities of farmlands and lakes, rivers, and streams. Whether these narratives depict feeling loved or abused, living with poverty or self-sufficiency, or harvesting rice with their siblings or canoeing with their elders, they all emphasize the ways in which a sense of self engages with both ecological and familial materialities (e.g., family subsistence farming or eating rice) and relations (e.g., feeling loved or performing farming duties with family or for family).

These findings affirm earlier studies of the impact of residential schools and their interruption of familial and parenting relations. Dorion (2010), for example, describes a similar typology in Survivor interview narratives where happy childhood memories are titled “trap line memories” (p. 46). In this typology, Survivors describe happy memories of “bush learning” as learning and living with family and with their natural world kin, stating, “as a kid I just loved the trap line, I was so happy” (quoted in Dorion, 2010, p. 46). Similarly, in my study, Survivors recall their memories before residential school in and with place:

I was so happy, so, so happy, so proud to be Anishinaabe. And then we built a little log house on the reserve, and that was my pride and joy that little log shack. I just loved that place. Right by the river, we drank the water from the river. No hydro, no nothing. It was a beautiful place. I loved that place.⁹⁶

The quotation above also validates Dorion’s (2010) findings where participant narratives identify complex “identity struggles” (p. 47) occurring when their natural world relations were disrupted by residential schooling. In my study, storytellers connect their practices of worlding to their sense of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree cultural and collective identity.

⁹⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-19JU10-043, June 19, 2010, p. 23, accessed May 2021.

The Khmer wedding story also demonstrates how making and performing ecological and familial materialities and relations is intertwined with culture and gender. The wedding story depicted a complex entanglement of ecological and gendered materialities and social relations in which daughters are expected to marry through an arrangement between the two sets of parents. The relationship between herself and her future husband was fostered over a great length of time, in which the families came together to build a house and divvy up farmlands and cattle that will be gifted to the newly married couple. The wedding arrangement and preparation were imbricated with centuries old Khmer euphemisms and traditions that rice relations co-produced. Then the wedding itself was a days-long celebration, where families and relatives came together to prepare and eat rice dishes before gifting the home and farmlands to the now, newly-wed couple.

Therefore, the statement, “We started farming rice. This is my wedding story”⁹⁷ also describes a complex and expansive gendered worlding that extends from bodily materialities and relationalities associated with sexuality and marital domesticity, across family subsistence farming and community negotiations, to centuries old cultural traditions and celebrations, all of which are intertwined practices of Khmer worlding.

Genocide studies has well established how genocidal ecologies and materialities have material force — withholding or rearranging resources as physical tools of mass destruction. In the Cambodian and Canadian settler genocides, starvation, dislocation, overwork, and spatial organization all enacted mass sexual violence and death tolls (Anderson, 2004; Daschuk, 2013; Fein, 1997; Heibert, 2017; Tyner, 2016; Wakeham, 2021). These tools of destruction were

⁹⁷ Carlsen and Krogsgaard, *Voices of Khmer Rouge*, interview 23, reference no. VOK_VI_002696, accessed July 2019.

facilitated by a number of progressive stages of persecution including dehumanization, which simultaneously preceded the group's physical and cultural annihilation and operated on gendered bodies in both discursive and material ways; their loss of "human-ness" overlapped with the loss of gendered identity and materialities such as reproductive capacities (Collier, 2017; Stote, 2012; Tyner and Molana, 2020). Claudia Card's use of social death describes the complexities of these progressive genocidal forces, focusing less on physical body counts and more on the destruction of relations that bring social vitality to the group. Social death encompasses the ways in which genocidal violence is deployed against social relations (Card, 1996; Card, 2010; Ephgrave, 2016; Snow, 2016). While genocide may involve mass physical annihilation, its destructive force is not restricted to biological and physical destruction; rather, genocidal violence operates on multiple fronts, assaulting the group's social relations (that are always cultural and always gendered).

Like post-structural feminism and its challenge to standpointism, social death challenged genocide studies to shift its focus away from essentialist understandings of life-then-death as purely material (Card, 1996; Schott, 2011). This perspective has brought a more expansive understanding of gendered violence in genocide as an assault on the group more broadly, which more aptly describes the genocidal complexities of the Cambodian and Canadian settler genocides; as this Khmer Survivor described it in Um's (2021) study, "we had already died once, but we keep this death in us" (p. 5). I follow up Card's challenge with a challenge of my own. Drawing on feminist new materialisms, I argue that genocidal ecological materialities need to be revisited using the concepts of assemblage, intra-action, worlding, and diffraction. This approach, sensitized by Indigenous understandings of the group and temporality, returns to the discussion of life as situated in the material world, but where human and more-than-human

agencies co-produce individual, social, and cultural identities (Radomska et al., 2019; Rosiek et al., 2019; Woolford, 2015; Woolford et al., 2021).

Social death *with* nature is genocidal unmaking that intra-acts with relational assemblages, unmaking them while also making them genocidal. For example, Anishinaabeg and Cree practices of worlding with waters were forcefully unmade as settler colonial genocide transformed waters into techniques of genocide when washing the children upon arrival, using washing as a form of punishment, or exploiting the act of washing to carry out sexual abuse. This intra-action signified a diffractive cut of worlding practices that alter Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages. Waters, once a kind and gentle spirit that acted as healers and as teachers of Traditional Knowledge, were transformed into a tool of physical violence and in that action also become a source of cultural destruction by removing waters' relationality. Unmaking, therefore, describes genocidal violence as multi-faceted, enacting disruptions through materialities and relations. Displacement, starvation, malnutrition, and physical and sexual violence enact violence on bodies but also remake ecological relations into genocidal materialities that unmake relations. As Hodgson (2008) explains, "the destruction of ceremonies was the core of the Canadian government's genocidal policies. It served as a knife cutting into the heart of our culture" (p. 364).

Likewise, narratives of unmaking in my analysis convey a complex severing of ecological and gendered materialities and social relations. For example, for some Khmer mothers, their experiences of the Cambodian genocide suggested a social death with nature when they described the multiple losses of deportation to rural work camps, hunger, and exhaustion while working in rice fields, and the loss of young children to starvation and malnutrition. These narratives described the loss of physical and cultural identity, removed from home and all of the

life-worldings of familial and cultural life. Rice agriculture and its related roles and responsibilities were all disrupted as the Khmer Rouge unmade rice and familial relations in the rural work camps. Women's embodiment of Khmer Rouge unmaking through forced marriage, rape, and pregnancy, overlayed with hunger, exhaustion, and the loss of breast milk. These disrupted and altered gendered materialities, through the disruption and alteration of ecological materialities, coursed through women's gendered bodies to further unmake familial and cultural relations.

In the following quotation, one mother's narrative encapsulates this deeply embodied and relational experience of social death with nature as her one-year-old daughter's life was taken by malnutrition. In this act, multiple layers of unmaking unfolded: She was denied a traditional wedding ceremony through forced marriage and consummation; she was also separated from and unable to care for the child born from this forced union, who died of malnutrition; the family was then restricted from burying the child's body according to traditional Khmer funerary practices, which meant she would be unable to reunite with her daughter's spirit in the future through rituals such as *Pchum Ben*; she then returned to her work camp where she lost her rice portion for the day, carrying this ongoing unmaking in her hungry and exhausted body:

In the cooperative, my one-year-old daughter hardly ate anything and had dysentery non-stop, so I took her to the hospital. My mother Im Pok took turns staying with her. The medical cadres gave my daughter an injection; my mother said she died horribly. She wanted to bury her granddaughter, but a teenage nurse took her body away and did not allow my mother to go along. When I heard that she had died, I ran to the hospital, but I was too late. That day, my portion of rice soup was given to other people.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Documentation Center of Cambodia, oral history of wife of Huy Mann, August 7, 2019, accessed April 2022.

Frieson (2001) clarifies the impact of unmaking, even when women's roles and responsibilities before the genocide may have also been defined by gendered inequalities. As they argue, it is the forced and rapid disruptions to life worlding that defined their sense of genocidal destruction:

With their lives slavishly harnessed in the service of the state, women were cut loose from traditional family structures against their will. From one day to the next, women were deprived of the duties which gave them value and respect in pre-revolutionary society. They were denied the bonds of family kinship, torn away from their homes, and separated from those they loved (p. 11).

Narratives of unmaking reveal a much more complex sense of loss that disrupted networks of ecological and gendered materialities and social relations. Using the concepts of intra-active and relational assemblages, one can explicate how genocidal blockages and flows intra-act with these networks, simultaneously unmaking practices of worlding while making them genocidal. Genocide's violence blocks ecologically material familial and cultural relations such as rice farming and water birthing ceremonies; it flows through ecological materialities and social relations by transforming them from sources of cultural transmission into forces of destruction. Genocide's violence also blocks and flows through gendered bodies act as conduits for material familial and cultural relations such as birthing, feeding, and washing children in ways that transmit love, teachings, knowledge, and collective identity. Unmaking through gendered bodies disrupts one's own bodily materialities and relations, such as amenorrhea, that can also forcibly disrupt familial relations and cultural transmission through childbearing and rearing. Sexual violence is also a disruption *of* the gendered body and *through* the gendered body; the unmaking of gendered identity or sexuality also makes an altered sense of material and

social relations such as family cohesion. For example, the disruption of Anishinaabeg and Cree gendered bodily flows and practices, such as women's maturation and menstruation, also altered cultural relations and traditions associated with water carrying and water knowledge. As Anderson et al., explain, "The relationship between waters within our bodies and waters in our environment is a reminder of how everything is connected, and how life is dependent on these connections" (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 14). Dorion (2010) elaborates on the reverberating consequences of genocidal destruction that reflects a similar understanding to genocide through gendered bodies:

[Residential schools interrupted] different practices, customs, and traditions about how to transition youth into adulthood these traditional practices regarding puberty. [The children] were subject to colonial assimilation efforts because they were viewed as a source of strength for our people which could severely limit the assimilation process. Due to historical oppression of female knowledge in colonial systems expression of Cree cultural practices related to girls spiritual and ceremonial life was severely limited and has resulted in many female Elders not going through these traditional puberty ceremonies (p. 35).

Genocidal unmaking through relational assemblages also disrupts and alters the multiple temporalities that sustain the group. Intra-actions within an assemblage are never a static event situated in a single moment in time since assemblages are always in the process of doing, performing, and worlding. Returning to the earlier depiction of unmaking relayed by the Khmer mother, it is evident how the violence, starvation, and exhaustion in the moment, stretched back to unmake centuries old funerary practices, then rebounded back to unmake the possibility of future family relations through cultural practices and rice rituals such as *Pchum Ben*, where the

reconnection with her daughter's spirit is severed. Ledgerwood (2012) elaborates on this temporal disruption, using Peg Levine's term "ritualcide" to describe:

...the Khmer Rouge's practice of preventing Cambodians from enacting rituals, thereby rupturing their participation in cosmic ordering. Core understandings of time, space and belonging were disrupted by the violence of starvation, forced relocation, forced labour, torture and murder. People were unable to enact ritual forms of protection, or could enact only fragmentary, truncated forms, effectively cutting themselves off from ancestor spirits and protective spirits of particular places (p. 192)

Yet it is also in this material and social genocidal unmaking, or social death with nature, that Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree also engage in practices of resistance and return. Genocidal unmaking brings to the fore the multiple relations that bring meaning to the group's existence that also intensify a group's vulnerability and sense of loss in genocide. Yet, as genocide courses through relational assemblages, practices of worlding also *course through genocide*. When narratives turn to acts of resistance and return, ongoing or renegotiated practices of worlding illuminate the ways in which these meaningful connections also contribute to the group's social vitality and therefore resiliency. Thus, even in the face of their attempted destruction, relational assemblages and the practices of worlding that co-produce them are depicted as acts of resistance despite (or in spite of) potential retribution, or as Survivors draw on teachings or traditions for the inner strength to persist and endure. Narratives also depict their return to place and relations despite (or in spite of, as an act of return *and* resistance) their attempted destruction or as a way to heal in its aftermath. The maintenance and/or reclamation of relational assemblages signify Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree life-death worldings — reciprocal intra-actions between genocide's attempted destruction and practices of worlding.

Maintaining relations in genocide is a powerful form of resistance that demonstrates their profound meaning as part of Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree identity — a practice of worlding through genocide. Narratives of resistance and return relay the ways in which Khmer and Anishinaabeg Cree defiantly perform relations despite the threat of physical retribution. For example, recall the father who gave his rice spoon to his daughter while being held in Tuol Sleng S-21 prison; this was an act of familial care for which he could have been tortured or executed since any acts that demonstrated individualism, including familial care, had been banned by the Khmer Rouge. Additional acts of resistance included secretly drawing on memories before the genocide and residential school experience as a source of strength to survive and persist, or to avoid certain forms of violence. For example, recall the female residential school Survivor who drew on her memories and her mother's teachings to resist internalizing the nun's settler colonial ideologies that reinterpreted Anishinaabeg and Cree girls' maturation and menstruation as a transition into sexual depravity. Similarly, recall the male Survivor who drew on his grandfather's natural world teachings as a way to withstand the fear of sexual violence in residential school by crouching silently in bed, who stated "it was just like being in the bush, you know [...] how my grandfather used to talk to me."⁹⁹

Narratives of return also demonstrate the significance of relational assemblages and practices of worlding when they are framed as a source of healing in the aftermath of the genocide and residential school experience. A return to ecological and physical place, such as their homes and communities situated in or near their traditional lands and waters, is often a declaration that they are reclaiming their Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree familial and cultural heritage — a material return to place as a symbolic act of resistance to their cultural destruction.

⁹⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-17JU10-059, June 17, 2010, p. 11, accessed May, 2021.

As this Survivor of residential school who returned to their home community and teachings of Elders proclaimed, “We still understand the natural laws and how it is that we are.”¹⁰⁰ Another Survivor similarly conveyed their return as resistance by drawing on his grandmother’s natural world teaching as a way to “live with” the ongoing embodiment of settler colonial destruction through sexual violence in resident schools. His return and reclamation of familial and natural world relations is an intra-action with genocidal blockages and flows through which he enacts his being Anishinaabeg. He stated, “I believe that we never really forget these things. It’s a part of our lifestyle, it’s a part of us that’s always here, that never goes away, will never go away, it’s how we live with it.”¹⁰¹

Resistance, return, and life-death worldings also signify an uneven and zigzagging or circulating temporality between the present, past, and future. As McGregor (2015) states, for Anishinaabeg and Cree, “water connects generations over time, and can do so in both healing and destructive ways” (p. 72). Settler colonial genocide destroyed through water relations, but water relations also have the potential to remake and as McGregor elaborates, “Vision for the future directly links us to both our ancestors and our descendants” (p. 73). For Khmer Cambodians, returning and reconnecting with place, relations, and cultural traditions also reconnects them to ancestors and lost loved ones, through the reclamation of the *Pchum Ben* (the Festival of the Dead). As Holt (2012) explains,

As families were reunited and the violence of life under the Khmer Rouge became a painful memory of recent history, the extent of which only became more clear with the

¹⁰⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-17JU10-080, June 17, 2010, p. 12 – 13, accessed May 2021.

¹⁰¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor testimony, case file no. 02-MB-17JU10-028, p. 23 – 36, June 17, 2010, accessed May 2021.

passage of time, many traditional ritual practices of Khmer Buddhist religious culture began to resurface, including weddings, funerals, and other annual rites in addition to Pchum Ben, [which] regenerates family cohesion among the living through pilgrimage, and family reunion through compassion and thus merit-transfer for the dead. In establishing ritual links to the dead, a kind of moral order is re-established unconsciously” (Holt, 2012, p. 28 – 29)

As noted in the second chapter of this dissertation, relational assemblages may also produce gendered inequalities, but these relations are never static. Since all groups, and therefore all genocides, are cultural, gendered, and ecological, it is not surprising that gendered renegotiations are also evident in narratives of resistance and return. In other words, resistance and return is also not necessarily a straightforward process of reclaiming materialities and relations as they once were. For some, as was the case for the woman who received an education during the reign of the Khmer Rouge, this renegotiation may challenge certain gendered inequalities linked to their memories before the genocide. For others, as Aimee Craft explained in her interview¹⁰², life-death worlding involves remaking familial and cultural relations as well as resisting certain forms of gendered discrimination in their own communities, internalized through settler colonial assimilationist policies of destruction. These renegotiations are a present struggle for gendered equality, a reclamation of women’s roles and identities as water carriers from the past, and a vision for the reclamation of their Nation’s sovereignty in the future. As these performances overlap, crisscross through, circulate amongst, and intra-act with one another Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages are simultaneously unmade, made, and remade through life-death worldings.

¹⁰² Interview with Aimee Craft, December 15, 2021.

Narratives where acts of resistance are obstructed reflect another way that genocide unmakes. By disrupting acts of resistance meant to maintain materialities and relations, genocide compounds the assault on the individual and their sense of collective identity. For example, recall the Survivor who tried to run away from residential school despite the winter's frigid temperatures. This act of resistance enacted their sense of self as Anishinaabeg as he narrowly escaped succumbing to the cold and successfully made his way home. There, the father treated their frostbitten skin with cold water (after first reprimanding the child). Yet, this reconnection was quickly unmade again when he was required to return to the school two days later¹⁰³. Their story retold as testimony demonstrates the ways in which the genocide flows through his lifeworld as an ongoing sense of relations unmade.

Other narratives of ongoing unmaking depict their return to place, but the corresponding relations have been altered to such an extent that material place no longer brings meaning to their existence. For example, despite "surviving" the Khmer Rouge regime's starvation, overwork, and mass executions through rice making, the unmaking continues as Survivors attempt to return to a worlding practices such as rice agriculture. The performance of life-death worlding is evident in the question that this female Khmer farmer asked: "why do I need to do the farming, because my husband and children already died?"¹⁰⁴ Another female Khmer farmer similarly conveys this ongoing sense of loss stating, "when I returned to my village, I lost everything. I lost my house, land, cattle, family members and relatives. Only the pain and suffering remain with me."¹⁰⁵ For many Survivors of residential school, it is also the loss of material relations that

¹⁰³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-17JU10-030, June 17, 2010, p. 9 – 10, accessed May, 2021.

¹⁰⁴ Testimony of Ms. Bou Thon, witness acronym KW-29, case file no. E1/62.1, August 12, 2009, accessed July 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Testimony of Ms. Chea Dieb, witness acronym 2-TCCP-286, case file no. E1/466.1, August 30, 2016, , p. 80, accessed July, 2019.

obstructed their ability to return and reclaim their sense of social vitality with nature. As one female Survivor of residential school explained, in her community women and grandmothers, as water carriers and water teachers, were responsible for birthing ceremonies and traditions that would ensure children knew themselves as part of the family, community, and the collective Anishinaabeg identity with nature. She concluded, “that’s lost now.”¹⁰⁶

Life-death worlding challenges common models of linear causality by prioritizing reciprocal and dynamic relationalities that, at times slow or resist genocidal violence and at other times speed up and intensify its destructive force. Life-death worlding also reverberates across time and space, on the one hand, reinforcing or repairing relational assemblages and on the other hand, extending genocide’s violence into its supposed aftermath and in times of “peace”. Quo-Li Driskill’s Warrior Song, which I opened this dissertation with, describes the ecological and gendered and materialities and social relations of life-death worldings, particularly in the second and third stanzas:

These worlds will shuffle across concrete
Will float across the Rockies
To the Smokey Mountains
We were stolen from
We were stolen from

We were stolen from our bodies
We were stolen from our homes
And we are fighters in this long war
To bring us all back home

The Warrior Song is also presented as an opening to their article “Stolen from our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic” (Driskoll, 2004) which

¹⁰⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Survivor Testimony, Case File No. 02-MB-18JU10-024, June 18, 2010, p. 26 – 27, accessed May, 2021.

depicts a similar reframing of genocidal violence that courses across and through acts of resistance and return:

When I speak of a Sovereign Erotic, I'm speaking of an erotic wholeness healed and/or healing from the historical trauma that First Nations people continue to survive, rooted within histories, traditions, and resistance struggles of our nations [...] I find myself obsessed with the notion of "home" on many levels. I have not only been removed from my homelands, I have also been removed from my erotic self and continue a journey back to my first homeland: the body (p. 53).

The reframing of genocide as multiple modalities of destruction and group life in and through genocide as practices of life-death worlding has several implications for genocide studies related to the group, genocidal temporality, and gendered harms.

Life-Death Worldings: Implications for Genocide Studies

The conceptual framework of life-death worlding offers a more complex understanding of the group that is dynamic and resilient, yet comprised of multiple materialities and relations that suggests a more expansive vulnerability to genocidal harms. Ecocide and Indigenous studies have pressed upon the discipline the increasingly urgent need to incorporate ecologies into the genocide discussion, yet asymmetric typologies have prevented the discipline from incorporating these perspectives beyond their discreet purview. Yet, if the group is defined by social vitality with nature — always cultural, gendered, and ecological — genocide studies are alerted to several complexities that have been habitually overlooked.

Attending to relational assemblages offers a more fulsome understanding of the complex ways that genocide destroys and the harms that must be addressed in healing, reconciliation, and justice. A preoccupation on physical materiality alone will do little to address the relational

fissures that genocide leaves in its wake. For example, Um (2021) discusses the “lived realities” that define Khmer Survivors’ sense of loss and reclamation during and after the genocide which are overlooked by global transitional justice tribunals that fixate on identifying perpetrator intention and guilt. Meanwhile familial and cultural relations still lay in waste, actively reclaimed by ordinary Khmer Cambodians as they work to restore their daily lives: “It is these lived realities and the heroism of the quotidian that compel a re-envisioning of agency, not as a demonstration of an extra-ordinary act, a rising above the ordinary, but rather as simply choosing to re-enter and reclaim ordinariness” (Um, 2021, p. 9). Ledgerwood (2012) similarly highlights how the disruption of rituals and traditions imbricated with rice, such as *Pchum Ben*, altered Khmer Cambodians’ sense of self and cultural identity as well as their relations with ancestors and future descendants. Yet they also note the resiliency and agency of the group in attending to this gaping wound that the genocide literature has largely dismissed: “While Cambodian society was not returning to some kind of imagined ideal community of the pre-war years, Cambodians were active agents renegotiating new patterns of social interaction that drew on pre-war social patterns [yet] there is little mention in this literature of Buddhism and Buddhist ritual” (Ledgerwood, 2012, p. 191).

Relational assemblages and life-death worldings reorient genocide studies to the group as dynamic and relational, vulnerable to genocidal destruction on multiple and multi-layered fronts. This reorientation means that the group is not simply comprised of physical bodies or in a static moment in time; the group is always renegotiating its composition in relation with the natural world and across generations. Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree water relational assemblages and practices of worlding bridge present generations with their ancestors in the spiritual realm and their future descendants. As Bedard (2021) explains, waters and ceremony are tools “to

travel between both sides and communicate with relations in multi-realities in order to become better Anishinaabeg” (Bedard, 2021, p. 102). For Anishinaabeg and Cree, then, worlding entails an uneven temporality.

However, worlding practices that transverse generations between life and death are certainly not exclusive to Indigenous ceremony. The Chinese Ghost Festival and Mexican Day of the Dead festivities are also times when the deceased are believed to enter the realm of the living for gifts and food offerings. During the Chinese Ghost Festival, extravagant meals are prepared and places at the table are set for the visiting spirits of their ancestors (Stepanchuk and Wong, 1991). Day of the Dead festivities also include gifts and meals shared with the dead as well as the living (Brandes, 1997). Similarly, Khmer traditions such as *Pchum Ben* challenge dominant temporalities of the group situated in Enlightenment (European) thinking. As Holt (2012) explains, they signify “the reciprocal relationship [between] the living and the ancestral dead. The living need ancestors to function as guardians, markers or symbols of their own moral bases.” (Holt, 2012, p. 17).

However, to date, studies that examine genocidal processes tend to do so in a way that describes group life and genocidal events as though they unfold solely along a linear progression of human life toward death. Pre-conflict society is described as group life, the end result of genocide is generally framed as mass physical annihilation, and framings of transitional justice abruptly pivot toward re-establishing social life, only for the living. What results is a depiction of life and death as binary and bracketed. Yet, as Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages and practices of worlding demonstrate, group life is mediated through multiple co-constituents and are sustained through relations with the spirits of the dead and the spirits of those yet-to-be-born. It follows that genocidal unmaking will also operate in an uneven,

dynamic, and multi-directional movement, implicating destruction that can reach back to ancestral relations and reach forward to intra-act with victims' descendants. Genocidal unmaking, therefore, overlaps with individual and group practices of worlding, a form of violence and disruption that extends across materialities, relations, and temporalities that are co-existing, intra-acting, and over-lapping.

Life-death worlding troubles and extends genocidal temporality as a continually unfolding and reciprocal process, existing in a present-past-future and an ongoing renegotiation of group life-with-death. Um's (2021) description of post-genocide Cambodia echoes diffractive unmakings (i.e., cuts, disruptions, and alterations of group relations) and life-death worlding: "The afterlife is unhyphenated, with the past and the present cohabitating a temporality that has been warped by the violent encounter. [It is] a fracture, mediated and inflected, with the past watermarked onto the present, simultaneously imprinted, filtered yet legible" (p. 5 - 6). This complex, uneven, embodied, and embedded understanding of group life and destruction is rarely emphasized in genocide studies and therefore, rarely addressed in transitional justice mechanisms. As Um (2021) explains, "discourse on historical trauma often focuses on what had transpired in the past as if it is containable to the past, with insufficient attention to the malignant aftereffects that inform the ways in which Survivors think about the past, and prospect of repair" (p. 7). A genocide studies that is enriched by the concept of life-death worlding will be more capable of addressing these complexities of ongoing group life and social death with nature.

Furthermore, feminist and gender scholars have challenged genocide studies to open up the boundaries that bracket gendered harms from homogenous (masculinized) narratives of trauma (see for example Card, 2003; Ephgrave, 2016). Feminist new materialisms extend this reasoning, noting how distinctions often equate difference with dualisms (see for example Barad,

2003). Incorporating both, life-death worlding reframes gendered harms to include genocidal unmakings through gendered bodies: materialities and relations that are not exclusive to sexual violence and cis-gendered women's bodies. Unmaking through gendered bodies includes disruptions *of* gendered bodies that include female and male biological processes and relations, that also constitute disruptions of gendered identities that are not restricted to binary male/female anatomy. Unmaking through gendered bodies is also a disruption that travels across and *through* individual bodies and identities to unmake relational assemblages and practices of worlding. Like social death, that includes but is not restricted to mass physical death, unmaking through gendered bodies include but is not restricted to sexual violence; this is a more holistic understanding of gendered violence that is not exclusive to women, sexual violence, or the individual act of rape. Rather, this reframing incorporates gendered material and relational violence that is a deeply embodied assault on the individual as well on the group's cultural and collective identity that are enacted through multiple and complex composites in a relational assemblage.

As part of this life-death worlding, genocidal violence continues to operate on and through gendered bodies. As Qo-Li Driskoll writes, "Sexual assault is an explicit act of colonization that has enormous impacts on both personal and national identities and because of its connections to settler mentality, can be understood as a colonial form of violence and oppression. My own journey back to my body, and the journeys of other First Nations people back to their bodies, necessarily engage historical trauma" (2004, p. 51). These unmakings of and through gendered bodies are simultaneously and recursively material and relational. Responding to gendered harms, then, means attending to the ways in which gendered relations

are situated in and constituted by the material and social worlds in which they are being renegotiated.

In sum, life-death worlding encompasses the cultural, ecological, and gendered complexities of group life and destruction. To date, each of these elements have been addressed in some way or other in genocide studies, but their enmeshed constitution as symbionts in formulating the group and collective identity have received scant attention in the literature. Furthermore, as mutual agents in group construction, these materialities and relations are also vulnerable to genocidal destruction. This dissertation has demonstrated how Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree relational assemblages and practices of worlding signify these multifarious constituents of individual and collective identity. To gain a better understanding of their attempted mutual destruction in order to prevent future atrocities from occurring, genocide studies requires a more capacious approach to genocidal temporality and gendered and relational harms. Drawing on feminist new materialisms, sensitized by Indigenous understandings of group life and temporality, this dissertation has produced a conceptual framework for such an approach. By drawing out the ways in which group life and collective identity is practiced through ecological and gendered materialities and social relations through and across genocidal unmaking, life-death worlding offers an approach that is able to contend with the complexities of social death with nature.

Considerations, Limitations and Concluding Remarks

The research conducted for this dissertation entailed readings of archival Khmer and Anishinaabeg and Cree archival testimonies, transcripts, and oral histories related to the Cambodian and Canadian settler colonial genocides, using a feminist new material lens. I foregrounded this project in my positionality as a settler and guest on Turtle Island and as a

woman who occupies multiple sites of oppression and privilege. For these reasons, my use of feminist new materialisms is through respectful acknowledgement and engagement with Indigenous understandings of human and more-than-human relations and as a challenge to the ongoing erasure of Indigenous knowledges and worldviews. Furthermore, my positionality in overlapping sites of oppression and privilege mean that my research and this dissertation are necessarily political, decolonial, and praxis driven.

That being said, a limitation of this dissertation is its dearth of diverse gendered representation. Through my analysis of the data gathered for my project, I noted a lack of gendered representation beyond the feminine/masculine binary. There are several explanations for this gap including the suppression of LGBTTTQ2S+ identities by Cambodian and Canadian settler colonial ideologies that were also reinforced through the very nature of the violence perpetrated during the genocides. Furthermore, genocide studies remains rooted in academic traditions that reinforce dualisms between physical versus cultural destruction, mass executions versus sexual violence, and male versus female victimization. Therefore, the unique experiences of sexual violence against LGBTTTQS2+ peoples are under-represented in the literature and existing archival data. This dissertation made important inroads toward a gendered analysis that bridges these systemic issues, but further research is needed to acquire a fulsome understanding of diverse gendered group relations, their attempted mutual destruction in genocide, and their unique enactment of life-death worlding.

Additional potential limitations in this research include language translation that may miss certain nuances in depictions of relational assemblages and practices of worlding and their unmaking. While the research did not entail interviews with the use of a translator, review of the archival data for the Khmer case was done so purely through translated documents. For the

Anishinaabeg and Cree case, testimonies given to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were given in English, however, there are numerous instances throughout the transcripts when Survivors are only able to convey a thought or feeling through their traditional Anishinaabe or Cree language. I approached my research process with reflexivity and relational accountability, sensitive to the ways in which language conveys layers of meaning. In using feminist new material methodologies, I attempted to convey the essence of Survivor's narratives as a witness or good companion to their stories, rather than as an objective observer and mediator of knowledge. However, each approach will still have its limitations, and certain nuances, context, or meanings may still have been missed.

Lastly, I would be remiss to dismiss the impact that the COVID 19 pandemic may have had on my research and writing process. Three of the four years I took to complete my PhD were done in pandemic conditions of isolation. Thankfully, I was able to conduct my archival research for the Cambodian case prior to the pandemic and its resulting lockdowns, as part of the larger project with Dr. Woolford. However, completing comprehensive examinations, researching, and writing during pandemic restrictions compounded what can already be an isolating experience of graduate school. As a single mother, with little room to carve out as my own in my home, being restricted access to campus libraries and offices certainly had an impact on my focus and motivation. The COVID 19 pandemic, along with increasing global temperatures and climate disasters, also acted as a constant and poignant reminder of the ways in which human and more-than-human worlds have always been intertwined and the devastating consequences that can result from the willful ignorance of this fact.

This dissertation, in full, engages in a unique and decolonizing approach to genocide studies. The group, which is the focus of genocide studies' normative intent to protect, is

redefined as a relational assemblage that is co-produced, maintained, and renegotiated through practices of worlding—enmeshed and intra-active practices that enact ecological, gendered, and social relations. Genocidal temporality is also reoriented to align more closely with the realities of group life that span across generations and group destruction that travels through and across relations, time, and space, and between life and death. By framing cultural, ecological, and gendered materialities and relations as central to individual and group identity, one can draw out the multiple ways that genocide destroys and the loss it leaves in its wake, as a form of social death with nature. As well, by capturing the ways in which individual and collective identity is maintained or reformulated through and after genocide, enacting life-death worlding highlights both the enduring impact of relational harms in and through genocide as well as the agency and resiliency of the group with nature.

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