Man or Monster?: The Trial of a Khmer Rouge Torturer. By Alexander Laban Hinton. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016. Pp. 350. USD $94.95 cloth / $26.95 paperback.

Alexander Laban Hinton's new book *Man or Monster?: The Trial of a Khmer Rouge Torturer*, is an ethnography of one of the first cases judged by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). This hybrid court deals with those most responsible for the genocide committed during the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) period of Khmer Rouge rule in Cambodia, which led to an estimated two million deaths. The book follows the 2009 trial of Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, who commanded the S-21 prison, now converted into a genocide museum. Over 12,000 people were tortured and killed in the prison. The chronological account of the trial is interwoven with some of the history of Cambodia, through Duch's confession and the testimonies of, and interviews with various witnesses and victims.

This book builds upon Hinton's earlier work, which aims to complement research on transitional justice from an anthropological perspective. Hinton argues that in spite of its long silence on transitional justice, anthropology has important insights to offer, illustrating the complexities of encounters of the global and the local (Hinton 2011). *Man or Monster* shows how globalized views of justice and human rights impact on the Cambodian experience. Hinton demonstrates that the global discourse on justice and its potential for healing sometimes surprisingly coincides with local –Buddhist– views of justice, both being based on the view that evil deeds will return to their doer, restoring the moral balance between good and bad. This can help alleviate survivors' psychological problems. The overarching argument of the book is however that the 'thick frames' used by transitional justice simplify complex situations into a narrow truth, leaving out uncomfortable complexities and editing out historical and geopolitical hierarchies and realities.

The overarching question that this book grapples with is at the heart of Duch's trial. Is the accused, a math teacher by training, a monster who committed inhuman crimes, or an ordinary man who took wrong decisions with devastating consequences – merely a cog in the machine, as Duch himself asserts? That this binary between good and evil, one of the core assumptions of law and transitional justice, can be damaging for both victims and perpetrators has already been argued by different authors (McEvoy and McConnachie 2012; Moffett 2016). Hinton builds upon this problem, criticizing how the rigidity of law and transitional justice reproduces this black and white thinking.

The book's ethnographic style allows for a refreshing view of justice processes, enabling the inclusion of their 'human' and emotional aspects, that often have no place in judicial processes, but are a crucial part of them. Court cases are principally rational processes, since the legal 'truth' cannot be contaminated by emotions, which complicate the black and white decision about guilt or non-guilt that the judges must arrive at. The book's largely chronological order gives a good account of the procedural aspects which represent the rationality and assumed objectivity of justice, supporting Hinton's argument that law is a performance, guiding a transformation from evil to redemption and salvation. 'The Court', impersonated by the judges, gives voice to the victims, who regain their "humanity lost" through the trial, while the ECCC transforms Cambodia from a failed state into a human rights-respecting nation (189-191).

Throughout the book it nevertheless becomes clear that reality is more complex than this good and bad binary. Hinton argues that man and monster are in fact frames that are too narrow to describe complex persons. Duch's role in the serious crimes committed in DK was underpinned by his ideological conviction. So Hinton asks us: if a simple math teacher is capable of committing highly immoral acts, does this not mean that under tragic circumstances anyone might end up like Duch (82)? At the same time, this does not mean that people do not make their own individual choices, as Hinton shows that even those tortured were able to exert some level of agency and resistance through their 'confessions'.

These sometimes uncomfortable complexities of humanity are what Hinton calls "redacted", or edited out of transitional justice discourse. This shows the limits of what law is capable of, since it uses only one legal lens for looking at reality. By being seduced into simplistic categorizations of man or monster, we make the same mistakes as the Khmer Rouge regime. Hinton therefore invites himself and his readers to critically analyze our own biases and the things we ourselves "edit out" of our articulations of reality. He urges us to remain open to alternative framings and question our "gaze" towards countries like Cambodia, and the type of issues we foreground or leave out, which risk reinforcing stereotypes of the savage "other" (263).

The book is written as an "ethnodrama" (35), using literary techniques such as what Hinton calls an "erasure" in which he redacted Duch's apology to his victims in a literary way, and other ways of editing the court documents in order to illustrate the process of framing that takes place. In various instances Hinton explicitly introduces himself in the text, for example by describing how he believes he sees himself on a photograph, in which he is watching himself watching himself on one of the court monitors, thus creating ambiguity about whether we can ever know if what we think is true, even about ourselves, is actually true. Also the photographs included in the book produce an "uncanny" feeling, by showing us the "monsters" we read about in normal human activities like dinner or weddings. These techniques reinforce the attempt to disrupt the black and white thinking that is inherent in transitional justice, showing how taken for granted truths are in reality framed by leaving out inconvenient aspects. Building upon Hannah Arendt's concept of the "banality of evil", Hinton talks about the "banality of our everyday thought", using Duch's case as an example of where the dangerous simplifications and categorizations of everyday thought can lead us.

Perhaps one small shortcoming of the book is its scant attention to aspects as ethnicity and gender. Being of Chinese background explains Duch's choice for his alias, as Duch is a Khmer name. Nevertheless, it remains unexplored whether this desire to become Khmer affected Duch's behavior—performing his duties meticulously in order not to fall out of grace with the regime. Beyond some observations on instances of sexual violence and women being detained with their husbands and children, gender is not analyzed either. It would have been interesting to know how Cambodian society is gendered, and whether this impacted upon the DK regime and survivors' search for justice. Also some additional contextual information, especially useful for those unfamiliar with Cambodian history, could perhaps have shed some further light on the question addressed in the book. In spite of this, Hinton has written an interesting and insightful book, with a critical look at the way justice shapes and "redacts" our understanding of the past, and an invitation for its readers to analyze our own way of seeing the world and overcome

the simple categorizations we all use in our everyday life, which can have monstrous consequences.

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