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## The Asiatic and the Anti-Asian Pandemic

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*On Paradise Killer*

recognition is the misrecognition you can bear

—Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*

THE EGO MUST BE SEEN!

APPLY YOUR MARK TO EVERYTHING YOU OWN!

—*Paradise Killer's* Starlight Computer

**T**here are moments in the game *Paradise Killer* when I incidentally recognize pieces of myself. The game's large public housing architecture places me in the apartment blocks I once occupied in Nanjing, Gimhae, and Hong Kong (see figure 2.1). The game's City Pop-inspired musical score moves me from Korean bars to Hong Kong cafes to the lo-fi study beats on YouTube that feature anime-styled students at work. The game's whodunit mystery told in an over-the-top visual novel format brings me to the Japanese games of *Danganronpa* and *Ace Attorney*, while its slow and open world movement feels directly inspired by the early "F.R.E.E." games of Yu Suzuki's *Shenmue* (2001) and Suda51's *Flower, Sun and Rain* (2001). Yet despite all these recognitions of my Asian/American self, there is not one

Asian-identified face in *Paradise Killer*, even though its cast is dizzyingly diverse: the characters' biographies reveal origins in England, Kenya, Turkey, Scotland, and Romania, and some have Japanese names (e.g., Akiko, Yuri, and Kiwami). The only character with an explicitly Asian background—the fanatical “Witness to the End” from Persia—conceals his face behind a mask and speaks through an echoing ventilation grate. This absence of Asian faces and histories compels me to, almost uniformly, toss the pieces of myself I’ve found in *Paradise Killer* up as misrecognitions, though perhaps not *mere* misrecognitions. Perhaps, I can bear them just about as well as I can bear Asian American identity itself.

*Paradise Killer* is a hard game to explain. On one hand, it combines the already-hybridized genre of open world exploration/detective adventure game with the already-hybridized genre of visual novels (as combinations of adventure, romance, eroge). As a low-budget indie game spearheaded by a small British company with a Japanese name,<sup>1</sup> *Paradise Killer* features a queer and campy aesthetic that shows its manufacture everywhere, with its two-dimensional character portraits in three-dimensional environments, and with the player’s ability to see multiples of the same recurring character (the demon Shinji) or to happen on major plot points completely at random, sometimes far too early or far too late in the game. Like its vapor-wave soundtrack,

### 2.1. The Asian-inspired Citizen Housing in *Paradise Killer*. Screenshot by author.



there is something hazy about *Paradise Killer's* ability to be both retro and refreshing, both recognizably Asian in its mood and setting and Western in its characters, designers, and language, both queer in its campy tone and beach sunset color palette, while its narrative focuses sharply on cis-hetero relationships and biological reproduction. These divisions among categories speak volumes about the categories themselves. As I have argued in earlier work, games break many rules of literature and film, where style and content are imagined as both separable and meant to correlate.<sup>2</sup> *Paradise Killer*, like many games, upsets categories, explodes binaries, and proliferates new frames of experiencing a game, so that all recognition becomes misrecognition. But more to the point, *Paradise Killer* also makes me ponder to what extent its Asian and queer forms might either remind players of an other, or as in my own experience, present players with a portal to an open world where they can reminisce upon their many selves.

This chapter will use *Paradise Killer* as a vehicle to revisit and reshape the word *Asiatic*, a troubled term that I attempted to reanimate in my 2020 book, *Open World Empire*, where I used it to characterize games for their “forms, spaces, and personages that many players will find similar to Asia, but that are never exclusively Asian, or are obscured from any other recognizable racial genre, or are not foreclosed to other given identity tropes.”<sup>3</sup> Working through theories of erotics, racial embodiment, and virtual otherness from Anne Cheng, Audre Lorde, Lisa Nakamura, Wendy Chun, and others, I conceived of the Asiatic as “a style rather than substance, a technology rather than an essence,” as well as a politically charged aesthetic that “shapes the interactions in video games as neither Asian nor Asian American, but as an unrepresentable blend.”<sup>4</sup>

Besides the release of *Paradise Killer* in 2020, other events have compelled me to revisit this term: the unexpected capacity of the term to spread across disciplines; the reemergence of yellow peril anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic; the book talks where I was often confronted with questions about the term that were not well answered within the book itself: Is *Asiatic* appropriate only to games? How is the term divided from *orientalism*? Is the Asiatic always queer and/or nonserious and/or racist? *Paradise Killer* offers a sideways gaze into these inquiries that allows me to explore these questions lowly, as in, to voice how this term emerged from particular circumstances and experiences, and has continued to grow in my current present.

Before we begin, one context should be clarified: that “the Asiatic” as a term came along within a second book project, after my first book, *Transitive*

*Cultures*—a book not about games at all, but about the growth of multiculturalist identities out of Southeast Asian colonial governance—had brought me into a particular way of thinking about identity and race. As a mixed-race Filipino/Chinese/white American with a Hawai‘i-based mixed family and even more mixed origins, I’ve had an ambivalent relationship to Asian American identity, but one I’ve been able to bear, as I wrote in *Transitive Cultures*, “through active and aggressive imaginative work aimed at reinvigoration, reframing, and remaking.”<sup>5</sup> “Asiatic,” then was an attempt to remake and to better understand race as transnational processes of racialization that circulate and localize through particular forms of media. To speak of race in this way accounts for how racialization processes both seek to include racialized subjects into socioeconomic systems of neoliberal value, and to leave populations at risk and restriction of life chances in zones of border crossings, incarceration, capitalist exploitation, and healthcare restrictions. “Asiatic” thus sees race as relational processes tied to geopolitical imaginaries, influenced as I am by Kandice Chuh’s epistemic shift from thinking about Asian American identities to asking how we can trace Asian racializations, that is, “the production of ‘Asian American’ as a political and social and racial identity,” particularly as they reference other racial forms of whiteness, Blackness, Indigeneity, Latinx, and others.<sup>6</sup> The Asiatic characteristics of games has come to provide one such gateway to remake race, to see otherness otherwise.

### Rule #1: *Show Me Your Truth!*

The facts and the truth are not the same. They never were. Perception is reality. Reality is tangible. Reality is intangible. Change a life, change the world. Welcome to paradise.

—*Paradise Killer* marketing byline

For the most part, *Paradise Killer* is a trippy open world adventure game based on vaporwave listening, sauntering exploration, and shit-talking gossip. That is, until the player decides to visit “The Judge” and initiates the ending courtroom scene. In an instant, after the player has become attuned to the queer and colorful Asiatic world of the game’s paradise island, the game’s mood, tone, and gameplay transform into a courtroom drama that demands their utmost seriousness. The player—as Lady Love Dies—picks up

her gun, collects her facts, and must consider who they are going to accuse of a crime. The punishment for any association whatsoever to the “crime to end all crimes”—murdering the leaders of the island, “the council”—results in execution. Stuck in a room together, the suspects will likely end up betraying each other, especially once one has been condemned to the gun. If the player has collected enough facts about the case, they can use them to expose conspiracies and implicate multiple actors, potentially executing every character in the game. Or the player can select particular masterminds to execute, sparing the low-level criminals. Or the player can just execute those lackeys. Or the player can choose to go along with the most convenient story—that it was all Henry Division, the unfortunate civilian scapegoat. Whatever decision, whatever facts, it is up to the player to create the game’s “truth.”

Throughout *Open World Empire*, I make the case that the Asiatic is a nonserious, campy, and queer space opened up by the aesthetic forms of video games. However, it is also my truth that the overtly serious mood and consequences of *Paradise Killer*’s trial still exemplifies the Asiatic in the way it conceives of truth itself. Why is this?

To answer, let’s turn to the context through which “the Asiatic” emerged in 2020—during a very serious global pandemic in which residual racial formations of yellow peril rose like Goku from the grave for yet another afterlife, and racist attacks on Asian North Americans became too high to reliably establish data (in my own province, British Columbia, racist attacks against Asians were said to have risen over 700 percent).<sup>7</sup> These attacks were buttressed by scientific discourses of public health that held the appearance of objective truth. As Nayan Shah has pointed out, scientific discourses around public health can create firmly held logics “of normal and aberrant” especially when they correlate with “the racial logic of superior and inferior and their reconfiguration over time.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, it was during the 2020 moment of public health reconfiguration, soon after the US president started calling COVID-19 “The China Flu,” and just before eight women were killed in Asian-owned spas—six of whom were Asian—by a white man who was reported to be having “a bad day,” that I gave a series of book talks about how Asiatic forms of race in video games were “nonserious.” This vastly serious moment of racist consolidations and new interethnic collaborations (alongside the resurgence of Black Lives Matter) troubled the ground between “the serious” and “the nonserious.” Yet the racism around the COVID-19 pandemic did not seem to me at all “Asiatic.” It was, rather, a question of truths.

In Edward Said's original framing of orientalism, establishing one hegemonic truth as The Truth was foundational to orientalist racisms. As a discourse given validity by academics, proliferation through capitalism and media, and enforcement through the state, orientalism relies heavily on authenticity, essence, and expertise, traits that Said himself sought to resist by framing himself (and the organic intellectual) as an amateur who "refus[es] to be tied down to a specialty."<sup>9</sup> Pivoting from Said, in *Open World Empire*, I describe the Asiatic characters of global games like *Street Fighter II*, *League of Legends*, and *Overwatch* as campy racial depictions that could certainly be called racist and that invoke orientalist tropes but also refuse "the gaze of mastery, expertise, and certainty."<sup>10</sup> Later, I discuss the power of the virtual other or the "Asiatic blur" to resist the production of work "construed as authentic, objective, backed by pedigree and expertise."<sup>11</sup> Similar to Julietta Singh's *Unthinking Mastery*, and Jose Muñoz's and Amber Jamilla Musser's conceptions of Brownness as an already-obscured presence, the Asiatic establishes and helps us confront the obscured digital forms of race where, as John Cheney-Lippold writes, we often presume the presence of air quotes to "emphasize an ironic untruth."<sup>12</sup>

Unlike the racism of the COVID-19 pandemic, and like the end-game trial of *Paradise Killer*, the Asiatic, though often campy and queer, is not entirely "nonserious," though its "truth" *does* differ from the truth-telling of scientific, anthropologic, or state and capitalist discourses that rely on authenticity and essence, whether it is racial or masked through culture or nation. "Asiatic" operates within a realm of divided truths that eludes expertise as facts and figures remain unverifiable. As *Paradise Killer's* courtroom scene can be triggered at any time during the game, and the all-infallible and objective Judge will agree with whatever the player presents as "your truth" (so long as they can make a strong case), there is always the possibility of "your truth" becoming "the truth," just as there is always the inevitable case of amateur untruths becoming what Stephen Colbert famously called "truthiness," a playful art of not-quite-truth-telling that has become all too common in twenty-four-hour news and social news media. Indeed, *Paradise Killer's* acceptance of "your truth" is an all-too-tempting premise for the player to present truth through their own biases, and to downplay the presence of contradictory facts. In my final playthrough, I chose not to accuse the game's sympathetic married couple, Lydia and Sam Day Breaks, whose main motivations to collaborate with the conspirators was their desire to free themselves

from the island. In effect, I hid facts from the Judge, made a conspiracy look like the fault of a single actor, and denied knowledge. It was no truth at all. Yet my truth became, in the eyes of the state and its citizens, *the* truth. As the game ended there, I could only ponder the potential long-term effects of showing and honoring my truth.

Rule #2: *Oh Baby, Worship Me, Baby!*

**Shinji:** You guys are the bad guys.

**Lady Love Dies:** What do you mean?

**Shinji:** The syndicate worship dying gods that want to rule the world and drown it in a sea of war and blood.

**Lady Love Dies:** I don't see how that makes us the bad guys.

*Paradise Killer's* Asiatic realm of multiple truths, unbelievable coincidences, and contradictory facts take place within the insular realm of an island, one masked as a paradise to keep its enslaved citizens happy and forgetful of the "real world." Indeed, the plot of *Paradise Killer* clashes with its Asiatic forms, as well as its queer sun-drenched beach aesthetic and over-the-top sexual mystery. To briefly summarize: ancient gods once ruled the world and controlled mankind until mankind rose against them. Then, sometime around 1000 CE, the Syndicate, a group of radicals who still worshipped these gods, became immortal and, in an effort to entice the gods back to Earth, created islands in an alternative reality, then kidnapped and enslaved people from the real world—"citizens"—and forced them into psychic worshipping rituals. However, as such worship can invite other supernatural forces, one by one, each island was infected by demons, and each had to be ritualistically sacrificed, then replaced by another island. *Paradise Killer* takes place on Island #24. All of its characters, besides the scapegoated Henry, are part of the evil, lunatic cult of the Syndicate.

Slowly unraveling the narrative of *Paradise Killer* can be jarring, as the player only learns of these facts as they are inundated with cute and kitschy symbols of heart shapes, phallic "blood crystals" currency, gorgeous half-naked flirts, and nostalgic references to cassettes and flip phones. Despite your freedom of choice and freedom to roam throughout the island, nothing you do can even remotely affect the cycle of kidnapping, enslavement, and

slaughter. Indeed, the ludological dissonance of the game's campy gameplay, with its narrative of enslavement and religious fanaticism, is a revisitation of the cognitive dissonance that classifies Lovecraftian horror, where a person's state of mind will also deteriorate into madness when faced with the harsh, indifferent, and incomprehensible cosmos. But *Paradise Killer* is no horrifying experience. In fact, one could argue that its Asiatic attunement allows the game to present real-world horrors in a way that is comprehensible and approachable, without necessarily being domesticated or gentrified into the palatable and the censored. How, we might ask, does the Asiatic allow such a revisioning?

When *Open World Empire* went in print in late 2019, there was an episode of the Netflix television show *Black Mirror* that seemed to encapsulate the Asiatic's ability to revise the horrors of the world into a queer and approachable media. The episode, "Striking Vipers," follows two old friends, Danny and Karl, two masculine, straight, Black men, who reconnect after eleven years apart by playing a newly released virtual reality version of *Striking Vipers*, a fighting game they once played as college roommates. In previous episodes of *Black Mirror*, virtual and augmented reality appears as a militaristic technology symbolizing techno-paranoia. In the episode "Playtest," augmented reality devices create an actual horror game that can kill the viewer through signal interference. Similarly, in the 2016 episode "Men against Fire," augmented reality technology forces American soldiers to visualize refugees as monstrous terrorists.<sup>13</sup> In "Striking Vipers," though, VR technology is portrayed through the softer forms of video game play and Asiatic cuteness, as Danny and Karl revisit their childhood through inhabiting the virtual characters Lance and Roxanne (see figure 2.2). The game nevertheless remains a threat, not to refugee lives or to technological breakdown but to heteronormative forms of futurity and family, as the Asiatic form of the game permits the two friends to act out their erotic desires for each other by having passionate and repeated virtual sex.

Even as the game *Striking Vipers*—like the real games *Street Fighter* and *Tekken*—features typical racial stereotypes for the purpose of enacting violence, the game's Asiatic associations with bizarreness, silliness, and Asia itself, allow new erotic relations to emerge. The game's homoeroticism feels more taboo when seen from the point of view of the episode's Black male leads, who, since their time apart, have incorporated further into the norms of hetero-patriarchal and capitalist success. As studies have shown, the fighting game community is one of the most diverse in gaming, and its players of





2.2. Danny and Karl play as Lance and Roxanne in the fictional game *Striking Vipers*. Screenshot by author.

color often gravitate to Japanese-made fighting games that so often depict racial stereotypes.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the episode's poster patterns the same slash effect and bisexual lighting of the Oscar-winning film *Moonlight*, a text that is also famous for portraying Black male queerness through an Asiatic form, as the film borrows heavily from the visual styles and cinematography of the Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar Wai. Through its imperial and Asiatic designation, the fictional *Striking Vipers* video game provides a space for new erotic practices to emerge not against but through practices of a militarized technology.

The Asiatic characteristics in games have often represented an alternative means of approaching new technology that departs from the fears of Western militarism, as well as the techno-orientalist fears of surveillance and control. As Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter argued in *Games of Empire*, the shift from American to Japanese games in the 1980s is often narrated as a political and historical "reclamation" where "video games were rescued not by the military-industrial complex from whence they had sprung but by the victims of its atomic bomb."<sup>15</sup> Indeed, video games as a medium continue to represent the erotic and Asiatic form of the digital as a whole; where social

media portrays accountable, transparent, exposed, and meticulously drawn selves, games are envisioned as islands, places of digital anonymity with no direct real-world impact. Through the Asiatic forms of games like *Striking Vipers* and *Paradise Killer*, the “horrors” of the real world’s asymmetrical power relations are not merely made approachable but are erotically reanimated into other only-just-imaginable possibilities.

### Rule #3: *Breathe Life Back into Paradise!*

I grew up without a dad on a synthetic island in a different reality, forced to worship gods that want to rule the world. I needed something to do.

—The citizen Henry Division, when asked about his crimes

While the *Black Mirror* episode “Striking Vipers” illustrates the Asiatic in games, I would hesitate to call it, or any episode of the *Black Mirror* series, Asiatic in the way games like *Paradise Killer* are, because it lacks the futuristic, insular, and islandic space of play and experiment that are so crucial to how the Asiatic appears in games. As Colin Milburn has argued, Huizinga’s “magic circle” of experiment and play can better be thought of as islandic, a space that for some invokes a tropical paradise (or a home), and for others the evolutionary insights of Darwin’s Galápagos, and for others the atomic nuclear tests of Bikini Atoll. Islands operate as both spaces of queer Asiatic play, “a place for melodrama as much as alien experimentation,” as well as spaces for experimental world making that offer “discrete space[s] for prototyping the world of tomorrow: a crucible for futurity.”<sup>16</sup> The performance theorist Dorinne Kondo describes world making as the collaborative and productive processes of race and identity making that “evokes sociopolitical transformation and the impossibility of escaping power, history, and culture.”<sup>17</sup> Worlds are imagined through repeated interactions that, in time, establish new norms and conventions, and worlds can be remade so long as they always work with the givenness of language and history. If games are world makers, then these worlds are responding to and refracting the “real-world” genres of race, class, sexuality, gender, nation, and so on. As Kondo stresses, in a world structured by race, world making as a frame allows us to trace “the production of race—racialized structures of inequality, racialized labor, the racialized aesthetics of genre, racialized subjectivities, racial affect.”<sup>18</sup>

*Paradise Killer's* making of a queer Asiatic world can seem utopic, an attempt to grasp the queerness on the horizon, as it rejects the militaristic technology and Western cosmologies of the “real world” to envision a future of racially diverse immortals, welcoming the player as a new inhabitant. But even though it takes place on an island, *Paradise Killer* is in no way insular; in fact, one might see it as a critique of insularity itself, a bare refusal of the logics of island thinking. A final question: How does *Paradise Killer* do this?

The smoking gun to this riddle is the sole citizen left on Paradise Island #24, Henry Division, an easy scapegoat for the Syndicate, which blames him for “the crime to end all crimes.” And like many scapegoats, Henry may in fact be the only Asian face around (see figure 2.3). Though Henry’s face appears East Asian, his racial origins are a mystery, one that the player is never asked to investigate. His father, the immortal councilman Eyes Kiwami, has a Japanese name and lives in a house that mimics a Japanese temple; nevertheless, he is likely not of Asian descent himself, for his other son, Dainonigate, appears totally white. That leaves Henry’s mother, the citizen Rina Division, who, despite the Syndicate’s dogmatic surveillance of its citizens, has no photos or records about her racial background. If we take another look at the housing where the citizens lived and the graveyards where their massacred bodies lie, we notice that the Asiatic architecture of the game seems to have been built solely for the citizens themselves, while the immortals live in ornate Greco-Roman palaces. Perhaps our protagonist, Lady Love Dies,

**2.3.** *Paradise Killer's* Henry Division, “Possessed Citizen Accused of Mass Murder.” Screenshot by author.



could interview more citizens to find *the truth* to the game's mystery of racial origins, but besides Henry, all the citizens—men, women, children—were sacrificed to the gods before she returned to the island. Their presence can only be felt in the whispers of ghosts, in left-behind relics like the diary that complains of “days that go on for months,” the pain pills required by workers who must haul all goods by hand, and in the children's stones painted with hopeful wishes for the next life (but, as stated plainly, “Citizens don't have a next life”).

So here's my truth, culled from a selection of clues: the kidnapped, enslaved, abused, and then sacrificed citizens of *Paradise Killer* are Asian. They are kidnapped from East Asian regions and forced into labor and worship in housing that mimics the lives they were brutally torn away from so that the queer and diverse “main characters” can continue to play their little games of gossip and intrigue. *Paradise Killer* is thus not a game that seeks to create reparative affects or queer and racial solidarities—quite the opposite. It is a game that encapsulates the often cutesy, queer, and Asiatic ways that the world around us reproduces yellow peril, techno-orientalism, and anti-Asian racism, particularly in the form of Asian debt-slavery within the industry of Information Technology (what I call the “Open World Empire”). Rather than a refusal of H. P. Lovecraft's own anti-Asian and xenophobic racism, *Paradise Killer*'s world is a contemporary reimagining of it, awash in Asiatic pink. To be clear, I am not saying that the game, its developers, or its players are racist—again, quite the opposite. In simulating anti-Asian racism within a queer Asiatic setting, *Paradise Killer* allows us to understand how, through the Asiatic itself, we can continue to reproduce racial and imperial violences by obscuring or dismissing the cheapened life and labor of Asian people, legitimated by their supposed “excess” population growth. In other words, *Paradise Killer* is not a celebration of the queer world-making potential of the Asiatic but a condemnation of it.

This truth was admittedly a revelation to me, who wrote an entire book on the Asiatic. Only after playing *Paradise Killer* was I able to unpack the ambivalences I felt during 2020 at talks, conferences, and laptop surfaces, as I repeatedly confronted my own discomfort with this term. The message that *Paradise Killer* allowed me to conceive was this: yes, the Asiatic can offer new possibilities, more erotic, more queer, perhaps more “woke,” than our current dystopias of real-world militaristic and racist horror. Yet this capacity to make worlds through digital media both requires and helps sustain the vast exploitation, precarity, and death of millions of people, many

of whom are centered within the microprocessor factories of Southeast Asia, the “factories of the world” in southern China—whom Jack Linchuan Qiu calls the “iSlaves” of tech megafactories; who live within an “unfreedom of labor”<sup>19</sup>—as well as the low-level designers and coders across the globe experiencing “crunch.” Like *Paradise Killer*’s Syndicate, we players and academics tend to stay within the game, treating it as its own isolated island, a futuristic Asiatic wonderland rife for experiment and play, recognizing and misrecognizing pieces of ourselves in it, all the while indifferent to the living and breathing subjects who are present in our real-life worlds but who remain unnamed and unrecognized in our open worlds.

The island laboratory is, as Milburn writes, “an incubator for the future,”<sup>20</sup> and what has become clearer in the time of Donald Trump, COVID-19, and *Paradise Killer* is that an Asiatic future does not bode well for the vast majority of Asian people or for Asian Americans. Indeed, the problem with the Asiatic is less the definitional categories of the term and more the fact that the Asiatic itself is so frequently unrecognized and unnamed and thus remains obscured as a default reference for an alternative to Western militaristic technologies, much like the island utopias of Thomas More and Francis Bacon. Like islands, Asiatic games feel totalizing, isolated, perfect spaces for experimental thinking, while in fact the Asiatic itself helps to fuel the well-oiled machines of capitalism and empire as they continue to operate at full throttle (they are more like the colonized islands of the Pacific, outfitted with both tourist beaches and military bases). *Paradise Killer* participates in Asiatic world making not as utopia but as warning sign. As we investigate and explore the game’s series of riddles, accusations, and truths, the real injustices remain in all their evil banality. Games, our islands of paradise, allow us to make new worlds where we feel seen. We recognize ourselves in them because they are built like us: through the logics of capture, control, and death.

... and may you reach the moon!

## Notes

- 1 *Paradise Killer's* UK-based developer is Kaizen Game Works (*kaizen* is Japanese for “change for the better”).
- 2 See Patterson, *Open World Empire*, chap. 5.
- 3 Patterson, *Open World Empire*, 58.
- 4 Patterson, *Open World Empire*, 60.
- 5 Patterson, *Transitive Cultures*, 201.
- 6 Chuh, *The Difference Aesthetics Makes*, 126.
- 7 Pearson, “This Is the Anti-Asian Hate Crime Capital.”
- 8 Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 8.
- 9 Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 76.
- 10 Patterson, *Open World Empire*, 70.
- 11 Patterson, *Open World Empire*, 233.
- 12 Cheney-Lippold, *We Are Data*, 19. See also Singh, *Unthinking Mastery*; Musser, *Sensual Excess*; and Muñoz, *The Sense of Brown*.
- 13 See chapter 4 of *Open World Empire* for my analysis of “Men against Fire.”
- 14 Epps, “Black Lives Have Always Mattered in the Fighting Game Community.”
- 15 Dyer-Witthford and de Peuter, *Games of Empire*, 14.
- 16 Milburn, *Mondo Nano*, 78, 77.
- 17 Kondo, *Worldmaking*, 29.
- 18 Kondo, *Worldmaking*, 25.
- 19 Qiu, *Goodbye iSlave*, 34.
- 20 Milburn, *Mondo Nano*, 77–78.