

## **Southeast Asian American Studies Special Issue: Guest Editors' Introduction**

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We live, according to Rey Chow, in the age of the world target.<sup>1</sup> The United States' ascendancy as supreme world power in the mid-twentieth century, as Chow pointedly observes, rests upon the rise of increasingly devastating technologies of destruction simultaneous with new disciplines of knowledge and information retrieval.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, *Southeast Asia* names a geographic region first conceived as a geopolitical concern by the post–Second World War development of the military-intellectual complex, and subsequently reimagined by various Cold War and post–Cold War strategies of foreign policy, including catastrophic campaigns of bombings and regime changes that promised to resonate for decades to come. As an epistemic formation, Southeast Asia currently encompasses over ten different nation-states, including Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Burma/Myanmar, the Philippines, Brunei, and East Timor.

Less clearly, it further includes stateless Southeast Asians who trace their ancestry to additional ethnic minority groups, such as the now nomadic Mien, Hmong, and Cham, as well as varying degrees of naturalized ethnic Chinese and Indians throughout Southeast Asia, many of whom are secondarily, trebly, or multiply located in yet other regions throughout the rest of the world.

But Southeast Asia is also a postcolonial imaginary, a marketizing economy, a tourist destination, a dream of homeland or sometimes nightmare, a neoliberal state, a war or series of wars or a series of images about war, and more. The stratum of colonial histories and geopolitical economic realities of Southeast Asia continue to compound and confound in unfolding queries, whether focused on rapid and complex regional “development”; the knotted nature of racial, ethnic, cultural, economic, and inter-Asian relations; or questions of travel for the multiple categories of transnational migrants moving through, or removed from, circuits of traffic. Given the rise of US power in Southeast Asia during but also after the Cold War, escalating both intellectual and imperial ambitions to contain or capture these countries, many emerging scholars are focusing on the traffic in bodies, images, and capital, coming to and from Cambodia, Laos, and Viet Nam (and the other nations included in Southeast Asia, if to a lesser extent) as scenes for a multiply postcolonial imaginary and neoimperial geography. The particular presence of wartime refugees and migrants in the United States, further proof of the postcolonial truism “we are here because you were there,” as well as their changing connections to their so-called homelands, necessarily draw our inquiries into new methodological and epistemological configurations. Entering this “zone of awkward engagement,” to borrow a phrase from Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing,<sup>3</sup> new critical inquiries about Southeast Asia must necessarily move from the historical to the historiographic, from the anthropological to the ethnographic, and from past frictions to lingering fictions.

In 2005 and 2008, the coeditors of this special issue organized two national conferences with the hope of creating and contributing to an emerging dialogue and debate about Southeast Asian American studies. The first found its funding and footing primarily at the intersection of Southeast Asian area studies and Viet Nam studies, more specifically, grappling with (and issuing challenges to) those fields of inquiry most constitutive of already

existing epistemes about Southeast Asia. The second conference shifted its interdisciplinary identification toward ethnic studies and Asian American studies, with an emphasis on transnational cultural studies informed by critical theories of gender and sexuality. Together, these conferences and their intellectual momentum mark a significant leap forward in this emerging field. Both events saw a critical mass of often younger scholars engaged with the last decade's turn toward theories of neoliberalism and renewed sovereignty, circuits of popular culture, haunted memory and trauma, cultural geography, alternative archives, and the political work of feelings. As this new body of scholarship begins to move away from descriptive efforts to "witness" the presence of Southeast Asians in the United States, and toward a fresh transnational analytic informed by recent critical theoretical and political interventions, Southeast Asian American studies turns to address more complicated inquiries about assemblages of nations and states, refugees and residents, migrations and returns.

This emerging scholarship is especially indebted to recent critical moves in Asian American studies and US ethnic studies toward interdisciplinarity and transnationality as necessary to the study of historical formations, and their ongoing renewal, of US empire. Since its inception, Asian American studies has had to grapple with the theoretical shortcomings lodged within its epistemic histories that privilege, for instance, certain Asian migrants in the story of "Asian America," or hew too closely to problematic orders of importance, or otherwise naturalize or reproduce the nationalist basis of modernist knowledge structures. It is as such that recent scholarship, especially informed by poststructuralist theory and postcolonial studies, hopes to render more unstable those theoretical grounds and more clear (or to be precise, more complex) their genealogies in Cold War cultural and political knowledges.<sup>4</sup> In this same vein, each of these essays can also be read as methodological and epistemological inquiries, exploring both differences and correspondences with other analytics of race and nation in order to deepen our understanding of empire's workings. In focusing our critical lens on the particular resonances of secret wars, refugee archives of feeling, and the recursive traces of both of these through circuits of culture and capital, as editors we hope to enact another "worlding" of Asian American studies and Asian studies. That is, to borrow from Caren Kaplan and Inderpal

Grewal, “by questioning the distinctness of ‘areas’ presupposed by the comparative framework, and by respecting the specificities of historical and cultural conjectures,” we hope to present new insights into the workings of wartime operations and peacetime machinery through our formulation of Southeast Asian American studies.<sup>5</sup>

As Lisa Lowe and Elaine Kim note in their special issue for *positions* on new directions in Asian American studies, many of the important pressures that are brought to bear upon the field implicate those colonial and neocolonial histories of the United States in Southeast Asia that have given rise to this emergent project. Like Lowe and Kim, we locate our volume in *positions* because we hope to “foster and facilitate new critical discussions” between Southeast Asian studies and Asian American studies.<sup>6</sup> That is, these histories of United States empire and its pursuit elsewhere, as well as those Cold War antagonisms that informed regional conflicts and produced dire consequences (genocide, for some), now inspire our inquiries about the resulting traffic in images and agendas, refugees and soldiers, culture and capital.

In our efforts to thus create an alternate genealogy for Asian American studies, here we take particular note of the fact that the increased presence of Southeast Asians in the United States dates to the emergence of Asian American studies in the late 1960s. Southeast Asia as a political imaginary, and a rallying cry, is constitutively crucial as a political impetus for the interdisciplines of US ethnic studies, especially as the US war in Viet Nam “over there” resonated deeply for those engaged in “Third World liberation” and other radical movements “back here.” The field of Asian American studies as such formed coincident with the wars in Southeast Asia, both hot and cold, so crucially informed by the logics of area studies in concert with geopolitical strategies, and contemporaneous transformations in US immigration policy, which dramatically altered the landscape of “America” as well as claims made about its scope beyond contemporaneous reckoning. A succession of transformative legislative acts—including the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, noted by Lowe and Kim, but also those that followed, including the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975, the Refugee Act of 1980, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, the Hmong Veterans’ Naturalization Act

of 1997, and the USA Patriot Act of 2001—radically altered not only the demography but also the range of relations and orientations political, economic, social, and emotional, of Asian migrants to the United States and its state apparatuses and to the imaginary of what Inderpal Grewal calls “transnational America.”<sup>7</sup>

But those Southeast Asian refugees and immigrants entering the United States through various channels found that the much-lauded “gift of freedom” required their cooperation with both existing and emergent disciplinary regimes, suggesting forms of violence other than war.<sup>8</sup> For instance, we might note that much of the earlier scholarship on Southeast Asian American populations is constituted by sociological studies or psychiatric knowledges about internal migration, difficulties with resettlement and degrees of assimilation, “epidemics” of gang violence, rates of delinquency, and other dire straits, which sought to regulate and otherwise “correct” these populations through forms of liberal governance and epistemic taxonomy.<sup>9</sup> These studies subsequently articulated discourses and also practices of comparable measures of “healthy” adjustment and “unhealthy” pathology, founded upon and contributing to other racializing epistemes.<sup>10</sup> It is as such that prior to their dispersal into the “heartland,” Aihwa Ong observes, Southeast Asian refugees undergoing transitional programming at temporary camps located across the Pacific archipelago of US military bases were subjected to biopolitical imperatives linking personal well-being with smooth absorption into the capitalist workforce: “The transforming myth of the Overseas Refugee Training Program was to instruct refugees to ‘speak good English, be employable, be unwilling to accept welfare, and be happy’ in America.”<sup>11</sup> These efforts to reduce welfare dependency, as Eric Tang notes, are entangled in longer, “domestic” histories of racialized “cultures of poverty” dating from the 1960s that continue to inform shifts in policy and popular opinion about Southeast Asian refugees long after resettlement.<sup>12</sup>

Nor do the wars in Southeast Asia cease to be divisive and repoliticized, decades later. Controversies about memorializing the South Vietnamese veterans erupt into arguments about the volatile relationship of the United States with the former South Vietnamese republic; about the “fitness” of the South Vietnamese forces to stand with US forces (literally so, in the case of erecting markers in veterans memorial parks, in heatedly negotiated

degrees of proximity); or about the relative weight of their sacrifice against US loss and its just reward. As Ma Vang traces in this volume, the ambivalent language of “honoring” those Hmong veterans who fought as proxy soldiers on behalf of the US cause, and who found themselves refugees in the aftermath, is shot through with continuing geopolitical anxieties. Soo Ah Kwon, also in this volume, follows the devastating impact of new memorandums of understanding between the United States and Southeast Asian countries as they normalize relations after wars there, and while pursuing new wars elsewhere post-9/11. The increased deportation of Cambodians (all of them former refugees) in the name of homeland security finds that there is, ironically, little security anywhere—either here in America or in Cambodia, where the deportees, most young men with little memory of this other homeland, are marginalized once again.

These inconstant interventions point to some of the specific concerns to which Southeast Asian American studies are addressed, including the continuing pressures and new violence that might meet the Southeast Asian refugee upon arrival. Significantly, the ways in which the essays in this volume approach these concerns themselves point to some important changes in the scholarship around Southeast Asians in the United States:

1. This moment marks a shift toward a transnational cultural studies analytic that attempts to resolve the tensions in a field of inquiry that initially emerged from state-sponsored area studies and sociological reports, but that has recently moved into ethnic studies and related interdisciplines that organize knowledge much differently. As this new body of scholarship begins to move away from descriptive efforts to “witness” the presence of Southeast Asians in the United States, and toward a transnational analytic informed by recent critical theoretical and political interventions, Southeast Asian American studies turns to address more complicated inquiries about assemblages of nations and states, refugees and residents, migrations and returns. Thus new directions in Southeast Asian American studies suggest we must rethink our given constellation of concepts, including citizenship and exile, dependency and freedom, for their measures of sovereignty and selfhood; and its economy of affects, including happiness and sorrow, for their somatic and psychic resonances, holding out as a possibility, or impossibility, a “good life” after war.

2. It follows that we are also seeing changes in approach to the Southeast Asian refugee, an object of sociological study and psychiatric correction to an analytic for critical inquiry. Targeting the familiar narrative mechanisms of the tragic refugee, which too often assume the good will of the United States' gift of freedom, Yen Le Espiritu calls for the interruption of "existing notions of 'rescue and liberation,' as it calls attention to the discarded who emerge from the brutal dislocations produced by war, colonization, and globalization, as well as by the persistence of racialized discourses and practices in the United States."<sup>13</sup> Both humanist and antihumanist inquiry in Southeast Asian American studies extend the analysis of the refugee figure as a strategy to open, rearticulate, and enable new lines of questioning across and sometimes against disparate but not disconnected forms of power emanating from the usual suspects—state apparatuses, for example—and also from less studied quarters, such as aesthetics or sex.

3. These critical inquiries about war, empire, and their aftermaths—including those rendered stateless and only partially reinstated—occur in the context of renewed war, empire, and the unknown possibilities of *their* aftermaths. It is these politics that give this special issue its urgency and timeliness—the wars in Southeast Asia have become the barometer of success or failure in Iraq; the Cold War is rearticulated anew as a precursor to the contemporary "clash of civilizations"; and the provisions of this new war making, including the USA Patriot Act, are authored by (former Assistant Attorney General Viet D. Dinh is credited as the Patriot Act's primary architect) and addressed to Southeast Asian migrants. Our various inquiries about these refugees in the United States and elsewhere and the horizons they figure imaginatively, affectively, and politically, are in conversation with renewed concerns about war and trauma, but also with the broader investigation of transnational cultural studies about the biopolitics, geopolitics, and the instrumental rhetorics of humanitarianism. Into this matrix a neoliberal political rationality also emerges through both domestic and global imperium, achieved through intensified administrative, regulatory, and police powers both "at home" and abroad; the state ceding welfare concerns to both mantras of "personal responsibility" and an increasingly corporatized and privatized civil society; and the creation of what Wendy

Brown calls prudent subjects alongside the detention and ejection of presumably imprudent others, whether “criminal aliens” or “terror suspects,” in the name of national security. It is our hope, but also our belief, that Southeast Asian American studies can push new questions about the circulation of, the compromise with, and challenges to the knowledge regimes of US empire. What negotiated nationalisms, political attachments, or affective economies might emerge from these encounters and exchanges to open or shut lines of affiliation across borders, across histories, and across transformed selves relocated to some entity called “Southeast Asian America”?

The articles collected for this special issue approach Southeast Asian American studies as a unique site for crucial engagements with US empire and its professions of liberal humanism as well as its practices of neoliberal violence. In these and other inquiries, our authors examine those formulations of subjects and objects and the relations between them and with the public sphere, property, rights, religion, commerce, and popular culture, all of which have variously circulated questions of representation; the efficacy of memory; the rhetoric of rights and obligation; institutions of law and citizenship; the impact of new technologies; affective attachments and imagined affinities; and the content of the political.

In doing so, our authors pursue increasingly interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methods to answer these and other provocations. They represent a new generation of scholars, some of whom are themselves migrants and refugees, who bring a wealth of also-new frames of inquiry to the epistemological project of knowledge formation about these populations and their diasporas. It is as such that in our concluding essay, “Refugee Memories and Asian American Critique,” Viet Thanh Nguyen offers a series of theoretical field notes and methodological provocations for Southeast Asian American studies to reconsider the multiple connections and conflicts between Asian area studies and Asian American studies, and how Southeast Asian American studies both illuminates and challenges the epistemological gaps and political imperatives that emerge from this encounter. In each their own way (and sometimes in valuable tension with each other), our contributors productively engage the analytic conventions of area studies, American studies, ethnic studies, and Asian American studies, pursuing the intellectual and political promise of what Kandice Chuh imagines as “studies in com-



parative racialization and intersectional projects that deliberately unravel seemingly stable distinctions among identificatory categories and disciplinary divisions.”<sup>14</sup>

While earlier scholarship often focused on describing the damage of disruption, recovering “lost” or “unheard” voices, or heralding refugee resilience, in an effort to return selfhood to the Southeast Asian migrant, some of our authors seek to bear new pressures upon liberalism as well as neoliberalism and its foundational premises emanating from modernist ideas of subjecthood, agency, rights, and other routes to social justice. It is as such that, in response to the recent arrest of several Hmong migrants under terrorism charges, Ma Vang examines the historical production of the refugee-soldier figure of the “secret war” in Laos in the transnational US body politic. In tracking the legislative efforts to parse official US recognition of this refugee-soldier, Vang untangles the rhetoric of US exceptionalism woven through these debates about the Hmong fighter’s “sacrifice,” the measure of his racial character, and his consequential “eligibility for citizenship.”

In “Exile of Freedom,” Anh Thang Dao examines the category of exile through her reading of the francophone novel *Slander*, by Linda Lê, in order to upend its reliance upon the order of the nation-state for its resonance. For Dao, modernist and masculinist investments too often define the conventional discourses of the exilic imagination. The novel’s outcasts—an incestuous madman who spurns a familial pact, and his differently wayward niece who denies belonging to any family, any country, at all—suggest for Dao another, if dangerous, route to radical freedom. Skeptical of discourses of belonging and the sacrifices these demand, both Vang and Dao caution against the traps that circumscribe possible personhood as contingent upon adherence to the disciplinary powers radiating from the nation-state in the guise of freedom. At the same time, Dao’s outcasts are unavailable for recuperation through the nation-state structure, as Vang’s refugee-soldier figure might be, because of his more or less legible martial masculinity, and because he can be named a (even if failed) state agent. The cultural emotions and national attachments that adhere to each figure and their possibilities for radical disruption differ strikingly.

Thusly skeptical of the failed promise of freedom’s gift, these important new projects continue to link epistemological critique to social justice initia-

tives, especially for those new Southeast Asian immigrants and refugees to the United States. As new wars focus at least part of our attention on older conflicts, those remnants and refugees from earlier wars become the focus of efforts to revise and “resolve” the US state’s failures. In this moment, a paranoid interval bridging multiple administrations, the stranger is a renewed target of suspicion and surveillance—and crucially, preemptive and prolonged criminalization. Soo Ah Kwon offers a fascinating ethnography of Southeast Asian American youth and their activism around post-9/11 transformations in national security policies, including the United States’ pursuit of memorandums of understanding with multiple Southeast Asian countries, including Cambodia, which allowed for the repatriation of Cambodian residents convicted of frequently minor and long past infractions. Painting a portrait of these youth in a critical moment of often-anguished confrontation with the imperial state, Kwon surveys those neoliberal schema that undergird changes in welfare reform and criminal codes, producing immigrant and refugee subjects through the political rationality of *personal responsibility*, as the context for both deportation and the youth’s campaign against it. Kwon also follows the Southeast Asian youth through the processes of their politicization, as they discover the geopolitics of their families’ personal histories and run aground of the bureaucratic nature and imperial attachments of so-called democratic institutions. Critiquing the presumptions of national security and neoliberalism, Kwon and the youth she studies together argue that the US promise of democracy is systemically suspect.

Similarly concerned with the particular racialized criminalization of Southeast Asian “others” and its consequences, Louisa Schein and Va-Megn Thoj with Bee Vang and Ly Chong Thong Jalao have collaboratively written “Beyond *Gran Torino*’s Guns: Hmong Cultural Warriors Performing Genders” as a critique of the standing range of media representations of masculinities available to Hmong men, and as one stage in an ongoing process to understand Hmong agency as actors in *Gran Torino* (2008, dir. Clint Eastwood). Centering Clint Eastwood’s film, in which the iconic “tough guy” portrays a Korean War veteran encountering his Hmong American neighbors, the authors query the construction of Hmong masculinity against white heteronormative masculinity and Hmong femininity. Complicating the picture, this essay also follows the untrained Hmong actors who

share the screen with Eastwood as cultural producers in their own right, whose portrayals of seemingly limited caricatures might nonetheless carry the potential to express more complex subjectivities. In doing so, the authors examine intertextual references to *Gran Torino* via independent Hmong media, as well as less formal sites of information distribution such as YouTube and Internet letters, where the young Hmong actors of the film provide meta-commentary about their roles and their relationship with Eastwood, and argue that *Gran Torino* has been key to constructing a Hmong “countervoice” that has spurred Hmong cultural production.

Several contributors pursue strategies variously informed by media and visual culture studies and critical autoethnography to query the resonance of connections to the past—and often to our dead—without necessarily offering a final “truth” or closure, instead pressing open the wounds as a reminder, or as a resolution, to never forget. In her portfolio of black-and-white images of the Cham, a now ethnic minority in Viet Nam that once ruled the large Champa empire colonized by Viet Nam, Julie Thi Underhill’s elegiac photographs gesture toward the identifications, the desires, and the love that often underline the encounter with the ruins of past wars in the present. Underhill documents an intensely personal journey, returning twice to Viet Nam for her maternal grandmother’s funeral rites, a journey that nonetheless carries the almost unbearable weight of documenting a “disappearing” population. Remembrance is of course a particular problem after the devastation wrought by colonialism and war, and as such is less a recovery than a refusal to move on, which is to say, to leave behind. Indeed, to re-place the Cham and their haunting presence in Viet Nam is to press not only against the seams and sutures of United States’ amnesia but also against other histories of forgotten empires in Laos and Cambodia as well.

Moving us toward an ethics of memory, Khatharya Um offers a poetic call to consider just what it is we do when we remember the past in the present. For Um, Southeast Asian exilic remembrance is a necessary disruption of the too-early foreclosure upon the wounds of war and dispersal; such burdensome memory must place itself in the path of the arrow of linear time, to block history’s tendency to relegate to the past the sensate knowledges accrued from pain and injury. Cathy Schlund-Vials examines the painful project of memory work of Cambodian American cultural production,

through which acts of remembering powerfully illuminate the contours and the conflicts in defining and pursuing individual and collective notions of justice in the aftermath of genocide. As Schlund-Vials insists, personal healing and national reconciliation are not commensurate: “Within Cambodian American memory work, because of the contested terrain of remembrance, to forgive is not to forget.”

Another concern of this volume’s essays is the creation and circulation of images and stories within popular cultures about Southeast Asia and about “America,” moving across these histories, affinities, and disruptions (sometimes in fits and starts, sometimes losing something in the translation). In “Reporting on Madame Nhu,” Diem-My Bui tracks the figure of this “first lady” of Viet Nam in the American imaginary to reflect upon the instrumental uses of her image as a strange, seductive other in both prowar and antiwar discourses. Creating a useful new archive that demonstrates so well Chow’s warning about the simultaneity of world-as-target and world-as-picture, Bui registers Madame Nhu as a dense transfer point of racial unease and sexual anxiety about the Vietnamese woman as a troublesome outsider to modernity’s promise, and as a canny manipulator of these fears for her own, not-at-all transparent ends.

In the other direction, Viet Le and Long Bui investigate how “quintessentially” US popular forms travel to Southeast Asia and suggest that little that is quintessential or original about these forms remains the same. Toward this end, Le brings to his portfolio a sense of the wayward erotics of Asian diasporic cultural production, featuring campy images of faux pan-Asian boy bands. While the pop cultural phenomenon of the boy band is understood variously as uniquely American, broadly global, and popularly regional—consider the cascading waves of Korean pop and Japanese pop—Le urges us to reconsider all these iterations of a desirable modernity, its production and consumption, queerly. In doing so, we are invited to engage these photographs and their palimpsest of Asian masculinities, both as tongue-in-cheek performance and as reproducible commodity, to query the distinctions or lack thereof between the “imaginary” fan or “real” art patron, and the perverse genealogies of these photographs’ layered references.<sup>15</sup> In his essay on the translation of the massively popular *American*

*Idol* (itself a “copy” of the British reality show competition) into Vietnamese, Long Bui queries the measures through which the *Idol* franchise establishes a “baseline for global culture,” and the complications and contradictions that arise in their application within the specific cultural imaginaries but also national ambitions of each country. Following *Vietnam Idol* through the structuring of its competition and the shaping of its contestants, Bui also draws our attention to fleeting moments within the show and its performances that are nonetheless key to the improvisational nature of our affective economies of recognition and refusal.

The essays in this volume offer new grounds for investigation in Asian, Asian American, and American studies. While pursuing the epistemological and ontological implications of the histories and locations of Southeast Asians in America, they also resituate and redirect our analytic attention toward questions that bear broader importance for critical inquiry. As coeditors and long-time collaborators, we feel that *this* moment—full of the intellectual promise of these latest interventions but also rife with the threat of endless war and terrible injustice—calls for efforts such as ours to reconsider the enduring effects of the wars of the last century to illuminate what is new, and what is achingly familiar, about the wars of the contemporary era.

## Notes

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1. Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality, Theory, and Comparative Work* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
2. See also Tani Barlow on area studies' implication in Cold War knowledge productions. Tani Barlow, “Colonialism's Career in Postwar China Studies,” *positions* 1, no. 1 (1993): 224–67.

3. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).
4. Kandice Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
5. Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal, "Transnational Practices and Interdisciplinary Feminist Scholarship: Refiguring Women's and Gender Studies," in *Women's Studies on Its Own*, ed. Robyn Weigman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 70.
6. Elaine H. Kim and Lisa Lowe, "Guest Editors' Introduction," *positions* 5, no. 2 (1997): viii.
7. Inderpal Grewal, *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
8. For an extended reading of the concept of the "gift of freedom," see Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).
9. For an insightful reading of "disease" metaphors for Southeast Asian gangs, see Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).
10. For more on the intersections of disability studies and refugee studies, and specifically blindness as both a metaphor and a malady afflicting Cambodian women survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime, see Fiona I. B. Ngô, "Sense and Subjectivity," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 26, no. 1 (2011): 95–129.
11. Aihwa Ong, "Making the Biopolitical Subject: Khmer Immigrants, Refugee Medicine, and Cultural Citizenship in California," *Social Science and Medicine* 40, no. 9 (1995): 1245. Ong also interviewed a teacher from the Overseas Refugee Training Center (ORTC) in the Philippines who notes that refugee training was tailored "to the needs of economic restructuring at home" in the United States. He further argues that "policy and ideology underlying the ORTC ensure that refugees serve the same economic functions as African Americans and Latinos." Aihwa Ong, *Buddha Is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, The New America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003): 83–84.
12. Eric Tang, "Collateral Damage: Southeast Asian Poverty in the United States," *Social Text* 18, no. 1 (2002): 55–79.
13. Yen Le Espiritu, "Toward a Critical Refugee Study: The Vietnamese Refugee Subject in U.S. Scholarship," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 1, nos. 1–2 (2006): 410–32, 426.
14. Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise*, 151.
15. For a reading of another "fake" queer Asian musical superstar, see Mimi Thi Nguyen, "Bruce Lee I Love You: Discourses of Race and Masculinity in the Queer Superstardom of JJ Chinois," in *Alien Encounters: Popular Culture in Asian America*, ed. Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 271–304.