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DISTANCED FROM DIRT

Transnational Vietnam in the U.S. South

In *Dirt and Desire: Reconstructing Southern Women's Literature, 1930–1990*, Patricia Yaeger stakes a claim for continued inquiry—which in the year 2000 may have been necessary—into the literary production that has emerged from the U.S. South. Although it may seem that “[t]o revisit the white texts spawned in the Jim Crow South . . . is to exit from the contemporary excitements of African, Asian, or Latin American studies, to go South to a very Old Place” (61), Yaeger convincingly argues for the ongoing relevance of southern literature by both white and black authors. I want to redirect, however, this affirmation of her archive in the face of U.S. ethnic studies’ transnational commitments, a turn in the 1990s that injected new interest into the study of communities of color in the United States. Might the concerns that have preoccupied southern studies exist in closer proximity to contemporary U.S. ethnic studies than we have previously thought? Might the South have anything to tell us about histories of imperialism and the coerced or forced migrations spurred among racialized subjects?¹ My answer is a resounding “yes,” particularly when we pay heed to the legacies of the Vietnam War.

Yaeger posits that for those who do not fit neatly into the South’s rules about proper racial, gender, and sexual comportment, dirt is hermeneutically transformative. For us as readers, looking closely is key to understanding “what happens to the body within a culture of neglect” (67) that refuses to recognize the corporeal integrity of those who are thrown away. The Vietnam War has provided yet another set

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of regulatory mechanisms to consider in addition to those that *Dirt and Desire* addresses. Supplementing the structuralist binaries that Yaeger troubles between black and white or man and woman, the war's long wake has blurred the lines between Vietnamese national and diasporic subject. Yet, the filmic narrative I consider, set in the U.S. South, suggests that despite the erosion of this one boundary, the war has solidified another in a global economy greased by neoliberal capital—that between rich and poor.

Scholars of southern literature such as Doris Betts and Michael Kreyling have observed that as of the late twentieth century, a soul searching about one's complicity in a morally bankrupt war is no longer regionally specific (Betts 5; Kreyling, *Inventing* 121–122). What the Vietnam War did was to transpose the subjectivities of those living in the former Confederacy onto the nation at large. Kreyling claims that contemporary southern narratives that address the Civil War use this nineteenth-century military conflict to articulate memories of the Vietnam War “by exchanging a ‘safer’ martial memory for one still dangerous” (*Postsouthern Memory* 114). What remain hidden in the discourses of the Vietnam War's aftermath—be they at the level of the reckoning that Americans perform amongst themselves or at the level of restoring international diplomacy between formerly warring nations—are the class divisions within the Vietnamese transnation. Gestures of healing and reconciliation, even when they involve actual Vietnamese subjects, ultimately benefit the most structurally privileged. The interests of those closest to dirt, as Yaeger might put it, are shuttled into obscurity in a politics complicit with neoliberal capital. These manifestations and elisions are poignantly conveyed in a feature-length film produced and released shortly after the normalization of U.S.–Vietnam diplomatic relations in 1995.

Mai's America (2002) is an account of a Vietnamese teenager's stint as an exchange student at a high school in Mississippi. The subject of the documentary is from a well-to-do family in Hanoi and is of the generation born after her country's war with the United States. Upon her arrival in the small Mississippi town, Mai stays with a working class white family. Her attempts to bond with her initial hosts fail, and she asks her agency for another placement whereupon she moves into the home of a middle class African American couple. Over the course of her senior year, Mai interacts with a mix of students at her school, meets a group of Vietnamese American youth and their parents, and befriends a local

white drag queen. Documentarian Marlo Poras follows Mai post-graduation as she remains in the United States for a year afterwards. Mai enrolls at Tulane University on a half tuition scholarship while working at a Chinese restaurant to make ends meet. However, she withdraws after one semester when the financial strain becomes untenable. The final scene of the film shows her, very dejected, having relocated from the U.S. South to Detroit where she has accepted a job in a nail salon owned by a family friend. She remains in that position for six months before returning home to Hanoi.

To date, the most extensive analysis of *Mai's America* appears in Leslie Bow's *Partly Colored: Asian Americans and Racial Anomaly in the Segregated South*. In her insightful reading, Bow invokes transgender theory to shed light on the liminal space that Mai occupies, one neither black nor white. Without making facile comparisons between race and gender, Bow shows how Mai's status as an outsider to the South's racial taxonomies mirrors her drag queen friend Christy's position external to the poles of man and woman. The point, Bow argues, is not to stake an inclusionist claim for non-binary subjects in the existing order but to destabilize these categories altogether. Moreover, Bow claims that "[e]xploring the relationship between a Vietnamese woman and a cross-dressing white man—and its facets that defy representation—signals the need to understand alliances that are not singularly based on ethnic community, nationality, political coalition, or even erotic intimacy" (224–225). What I want to direct attention to, however, is not the theoretical work that can be accomplished once we put Mai and Christy, raced and gendered differently from each other, into proximity, but what is lost when the seemingly less provocative comparisons *within* ethnic groups are glossed over. Mai and Christy may express similar sentiments about not fitting in where they have landed, but the conclusion to Mai's story, which takes place extra-diegetically, actually shows a very enabling fit with the logics of neoliberalism that is unavailable to some of the other Vietnamese subjects we see in the film.

Mai's America hints at the topic of disparities within the Vietnamese transnation but drops it without adequate examination. The specter of the Vietnam War, along with the intraethnic conflicts it wrought, is never very far from mind. However, any sentiments expressed about post-war reconciliation take for granted a peacemaking occurring between the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. This leaves

unaddressed the ongoing fractures within the Vietnamese transnation: between nationals and diasporans, among diasporans on opposing sides of the political spectrum, and ultimately between the most economically mobile and the working poor.

DUAL MILITARY LOSSES

At the film's beginning, Mai speaks of the pride with which Vietnamese history books have depicted the "country of poor rice farmers who were able to win against the richest, the most powerful country in the world." Meanwhile, the camera focuses on a setting in Hanoi that seems at odds with that triumph. Mai strikes up a conversation on the street with two young boys who shine shoes. They tell her that they are too poor to attend school. Meanwhile, Mai comes from an affluent family, even acknowledging that she is "rich," because her father owns a hotel. If North Vietnam's victory marked an ideological ascent on the part of communism over the United States' democratic capitalism, the scene where these two disparate economic classes in Hanoi come into contact makes an implicit statement about communism's failure to achieve class equality. We see that the wealth gap as it exists globally in turn-of-the-twenty-first-century Hanoi permeates everywhere despite the historic military triumph referenced right before these boys are presented.

The film's narration skips over Mai's travel to the United States such that in the next scene, Mai has already settled in Mississippi and is being introduced to the other students at school. She delivers a message to her new classmates from her father, a veteran of the army of North Vietnam. "The war is over," Mai recites solemnly. "Let's let it go. And we Vietnamese want to build a bridge from our country to your country." This moment reveals that, as Leslie Bow puts it, Mai is "an ambiguous former adversary: she is on the side of the victors who conspicuously lack global leverage in a world system dominated by the United States" (214–215). In response to this message, history teacher Mrs. Dunnam opines, "[y]our father's a very wise man. In America, the Civil War ended. Yet, we have people who still want it to go back to the way it was. And there is still hatred. I hope that the young people today are putting the past in the past and are building a bridge in America." This explicit convergence of the two military defeats invokes Michael Kreyling's aforementioned argument about the cultural work that memories of the Civil War perform in the post-Vietnam-War era. In Mrs. Dunnam's words, however,

both losses exist side-by-side, and the former does not occlude the latter. Here, the South operates as a vicarious substitute for the United States in sum as the latter grapples with the legacies of the Vietnam War. The hope of restoring prevailing pre-war conceptions of the United States' place in the world as benevolent superpower, Mrs. Dunnam suggests, is as dubious and misguided as bringing back the old Confederacy.

The irony of Mrs. Dunnam's reference to Vietnam's "young people" comes, first, from our prior knowledge that the youth of Mai's generation do not actually have animosity toward the United States. They see the country as a welcomed source of popular culture. An early scene jump cuts among several posters displaying U.S. celebrities—Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Marilyn Monroe, and Mel Gibson—in Mai's home in Vietnam while she reports in a voiceover that "America is all the movies I grew up with." The fact that one actor in that montage, Stallone, is especially known for his starring role as a Vietnam veteran in the *Rocky* franchise attests to how much the war's memory has been neutralized in the process of these cultural productions' global circulation and consumption. Second, if there is any lingering hostility harbored in the war's aftermath, it is not apparent among any of the U.S. subjects portrayed in the film but with the older Vietnamese diasporans whose refugee subjectivities are still very palpable, as can be observed in a scene I will discuss later.

Mrs. Dunnam goes on to lecture about the faulty logic by which U.S. soldiers were conscripted for the wars in Southeast Asia in a way that places them in geopolitical kinship with the Vietnamese soldiers in the Cold War's imperialist workings.

People, our young men were drafted straight out of high school. They were too young to buy a beer. They were too young to vote for the president who sent them, and yet, they were drafted to go to a place that they could not even locate on a map. Ok? Why were we there? They didn't declare a war. They didn't declare a war against the United States. Oh! [sarcastic tone] We said we *had* to contain communism, not let it spread. Should we have been there? [A student off camera says "no."] In my opinion, it was a mistake. You have to form your opinion yourselves.

She astutely links the U.S. federal government's ability to impel civically powerless American draftees into multinational war with its concurrent appropriation of the land and militarized labor of South Vietnam.

At this moment, Mai's thoughts exist in voiceover format. She speaks of her realization that the U.S. soldiers who fought against her country were not bloodthirsty or evil. Rather, they—many of them the same age as the students in the classroom—fought because they were subjected to their nation-state's abuses. In this connection between the United States' treatment of its domestic underclass and the damages the nation wreaked through imperialistic ventures abroad, a case emerges for a comparative critique of the subjugations visited upon dispossessed populations globally.

Mai's subsequent declaration of relief that her classmates are living at a time of peace rather than in a past marked by war is unsettling given the delay between when Poras shot the footage and when the film first aired on PBS on August 6, 2002. "I can't imagine the kids in my history class as aggressive killers," Mai says. "It makes me feel lucky that all of us were born after the war." Since the storyline takes place over two years and because there is a time lag after filming to complete the labor-intensive task of editing, we know these words were uttered no later than 1999. With the first Gulf War in the recent but eagerly forgotten past and the Iraq War of 2003 still unimaginable for most people, Mai expresses a gratitude only possible within a very small temporal window. Her words discomfit the viewer upon hearing them at a time freshly informed by fervent militarism after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Thus, Mai's thoughts about the good fortune of her peer group dwelling in peacetime are spoken in a context different from the one in which the film's audience ultimately receives them in 2002. This dissonance lays bare the chasm between the false sense of calm with which most Americans lived in the late 1990s and the paranoid fear of the early 2000s. It is not inconceivable that in this lower middle class and working class Mississippi town, some of the students we see in Mai's classroom will eventually find themselves in Iraq or Afghanistan several years later.

INTRAETHNIC TENSIONS

There has been a fair amount of recent work in Vietnamese American studies on the structural and cultural changes stemming from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's increased openness to global exchange. Immediately after the war, the country entered into a state of isolation—the result of a combination of its dogged exercise of sovereignty after decades of multiple colonialisms and sanctions imposed by the international community in response to its invasion of Cambodia. The

Vietnamese economy struggled under these conditions until 1986 when it enacted a series of market and government reforms known as *doi moi*, which facilitated the transmission of capital and culture in and out of the country. Similar to the Soviet Union's *perestroika*, these changes were meant to allow Vietnam to bring itself onto more equal footing with the world's most-developed economies. One surprising facet of this change was that the government began reaching out to the Vietnamese diaspora, those very South Vietnamese citizens it exiled in the wake of war, to contribute to its economic vision.

Many class-privileged Vietnamese Americans who return migrated to Vietnam in the period following *doi moi* did so with mercenary objectives. There was much profit to be made by investing in real estate and other forms of development, and the Vietnamese government eagerly welcomed these envoys of capital at a time when they were desperately needed. However, there were also nonmaterial dimensions to Vietnamese Americans' growing transnational affiliations. Certain cultural critics have pointed out that in the arts and entertainment industries, the influx of diasporic talent into the homeland has facilitated unexpected and dynamic forms of cultural syncretism.² This has enabled an alternate history of the U.S. war in Vietnam to develop and complex affective attachments to take hold that challenge American exceptionalism. While the Vietnamese state benefits from this injection of fresh capital, returning Vietnamese American migrants can mount a critique of their status as war traumatized refugees in need of protection from a purportedly benevolent U.S. nation-state. However, in this mutually advantageous exchange, the key players—the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and wealthy diasporans—are always those with a greater amount of leverage and agency than the global poor. It is in this context that the nonfictional protagonist of *Mai's America* functions as an informal ambassador between the formerly warring countries, but the divides between the Vietnamese rich and poor remain intact.

It needs to be stated that Vietnamese Americans' pursuit of economic and cultural opportunities in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam takes place in a context of ongoing communist suspicion among diasporans who are still wary of the country that expelled them. The cases of red baiting within the community, particularly among the older generation, have been thoroughly documented. The aforementioned renewal of connections with the homeland occurs against a continued backdrop

of internal policing within Vietnamese American communities meant to expose and punish those who are presumed to be communist sympathizers. These tendencies should not be relegated simply to an irrational inability to move beyond South Vietnam's loss in the war. To be sure, the horrors of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's re-education camps, for those who survived them, cannot be discounted among the refugee population. However, scholars have argued that Vietnamese American anticommunism is more complicated than it might seem to a casual observer. Anticommunism can take multiple forms and articulate itself in a variety of ways, some of them politically transformative. Thuy Vo Dang, for instance, finds that the display of anticommunism can build rather than divide communities. Additionally, it allows an alternate history to form that can correct the misinformation and erasures prevalent in U.S. discourses about its involvement in Southeast Asia (74). Despite the pall of suspicion under which many Vietnamese Americans continue to live, one that resembles earlier forms of McCarthyism, these connections with the homeland in the wake of *doi moi* have become more socially acceptable. At the same time, many Vietnamese Americans still tend to tread with caution when faced with situations that place them uncomfortably close to the locus of wartime trauma.

These tensions are evident in Mai's interactions with Vietnamese Americans who express homesickness for a country of which they have no memory. At one point, Mai's new friend Tommy ponders how he might be treated if he were to visit Vietnam, which he escaped with his family while still very young. Mai responds, laughing, that he would be charged more as a consumer because the locals believe "foreigners have a lot of money," indicating by word choice that—despite the increased prevalence of return migration and other transnational connections—Vietnamese Americans are still considered alien. While Mai acquaints her Vietnamese American friends with the intricacies of relations between diasporans and nationals, these friends teach her about the nuances of U.S. racial categories. Tommy and Kevin talk about Ku Klux Klan groups in the area and warn Mai to be careful about them. She responds, "But I thought they just kill black people." Kevin utters "no" and proclaims that "they kill any color people," aggregating people of color under the umbrella of white supremacy while not simplistically conflating African Americans and other nonwhite populations. This conversation occurs as the three friends drive to a casino where there is a banquet hosted

by Vietnamese American elders. It is here that the temporary feeling of sameness—cross-racially (between blacks and Asians) and intraethnically (between Vietnamese nationals and diasporans)—conjured by shared vulnerability to hate crime gives way to a palpable divide.

Tommy and Kevin gamble for much of the duration of the party, leaving Mai to fend for herself in the banquet hall among the other Vietnamese Americans. Out of all of the scenes in the film, including those with Mai's first host family, this is the one that portrays those who exhibit the least amount of interest in interacting with her. She wends her way through the large room packed with party guests, and none of them acknowledge her or Poras's camera. The contrast regarding the level of warmth others extend is stark between this moment and the similarly crowded space earlier in the gay nightclub where Mai first meets Christy. In one shot, Mai stoops down to try to engage in conversation two young children seated on the carpeted floor, but even they turn away from her. Throughout this sequence, Mai speaks in a voiceover:

When I walked into the celebration, I felt like I was walking back in time. I should have felt comfortable being around people from my country. Vietnamese people only living in America, they are trying to hold onto the Vietnamese lifestyle. But I think the Vietnamese lifestyle that they're holding onto is Vietnam before the war, before they left, which is very different from the Vietnam that I left when I came to America. So I feel like we're from different countries, from totally different cultures.

It is not clear whether the uncomfortable but nonconfrontational awkwardness in response to Mai's presence stems from her status as a Vietnamese national in a room filled with older refugees nostalgic for a time before the war they lost or to Poras's documenting the event. Mai's observations about the persistence with which the elders cling to an impossible past invokes Mrs. Dunnam's words in history class earlier about the sensibility of some members of the former Confederacy who "want[ed] it to go back to the way it was" before the Civil War. The narration from this scene may suggest that the disconnect between the Vietnamese Americans and Mai is a temporal one; the former live quixotically in a bygone era while the latter occupies a presumably more grounded and realistic present. This explanation, however, obscures the contemporaneous phenomenon of communist panic that is very much rooted in the here and now.

The footage for this scene in *Mai's America* must have been taken around the time of an event Vietnamese Americans know as the “Hi-Tek incident” in 1999. In California’s Orange County, the owner of a video store named Hi-Tek had drawn the ire of the community after he posted a portrait of Ho Chi Minh and the flag of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in his front window. Thousands of protesters gathered denouncing the store’s owner, and four hundred police officers outfitted with riot gear were dispatched to control the crowd. The unrest lasted several weeks and garnered national attention. Mai’s classmates embrace the perspective she brings as an international student. They are willing learners when Mai teaches them a song the film’s viewers initially heard at Mai’s family kitchen table with her mother singing and her father accompanying on guitar. Its simple, unchanging lyrics are “Viet Nam; Ho Chi Minh” repeated over a sweet melody that sounds either upbeat (as it does in its first appearance) or slow and serene (as in the second). However, given the climate of communist fear among Vietnamese Americans, it is very unlikely that this room full of elders recreating the South Vietnam destroyed by President Ho’s forces would have been amenable to a cross-cultural experience of this sort.

BRIEFLY DIRTY

Not all contact with dirt is equal. Not all time spent in it leads to more. Although the final scene of *Mai's America*, which shows its protagonist working in a nail salon in Detroit, may appear to indicate that she—once “rich”—arrives at a place marked by downward economic mobility, the state is only temporary. The film’s ending resonates with its beginning. Conditioned to stifle their emotions for the comfort of customers and passersby, the boys who shine shoes on the streets of Hanoi assure Mai of their contentedness when she asks, and Mai, whose class location renders her naïve, marvels at how those with so few material resources can be “happy.” Eventually, the film’s end places her—bent over and working at someone’s feet—in the same kinesthetic and affective position as those boys while she tends to a pedicure customer’s inquiries about her opinion of the United States. We have heretofore seen a series of heart-wrenching scenes that depict Mai’s disillusionment with her plans to earn a U.S. college degree; a view of her present living quarters, which is a cramped room furnished with only a futon mattress on the floor; and a long-range shot of her shuffling reluctantly to work as Detroit’s characteristically decaying landscape appears in the background. While

exfoliating the feet of a customer with a pumice stone, Mai responds accommodatingly to her questions.

CUSTOMER: So how do you like living in America?

MAI: Um.

CUSTOMER: You miss your old place, right?

MAI: Yeah.

CUSTOMER: But people are friendly? Do they treat you nice?

MAI: Yeah, people are really nice. . . .

CUSTOMER: Well, very good.

MAI: But, um, yeah I miss—

CUSTOMER: You just miss your friends and family and country.

Everyone here is nice?

MAI: Yeah.

CUSTOMER: No bad things? Everything's been good?

[pause]

CUSTOMER: No bad situations?

MAI: Basically, yeah.

CUSTOMER: Well, that's good. I would feel bad if you had a bad impression of America. . . .

This time, Mai is the one suppressing her emotions to maintain good provider–customer relations, exhibiting what Miliann Kang observes about how nail salon work “disciplines Asian women’s bodies to display deference and attentiveness” (9) toward the women they serve. Mai’s customer, engaging the transnational subject with genuine curiosity and warmth as Mai had done with the boys earlier, is reassured of the United States’ kindness. These well-meaning queries are possible to field only insofar as workers perform the emotional labor of hiding their pain. Yet, I do not want to overstate the extent to which this interaction is unwelcome or one-sided. The film ends with Mai’s words as she affectionately tells the customer that she reminds her of her friend Christy.

Ultimately, Mai returns home in an act that seems like a defeat, but in an extra-diegetic update posted to the film’s website on the day of its PBS premiere, Mai reports that she has been studying business at a university and working as an English language instructor ever since she resituated herself in Vietnam. She finds that the cultural capital she amassed as a result of her time spent in the United States works in her favor. Her American accent is highly valued in her position as a teacher

even as she cheekily admits that the southern version with which she speaks is opaque to those around her.³ By implicitly revealing that she now understands U.S. regional logics of value and denigration, which had initially seemed mystifying to her, she simultaneously embraces and disavows her previous home abroad. It is worth noting that this manifestation and erasure of the U.S. South takes place in the context of a practice, the teaching of English, meant to facilitate transnational capital. It is doubtful that the boys shining shoes would have had their circumstances change anywhere near enough in the years between filming and the documentary's release to partake in these aspirations. Also, the elective learning of English in early-twenty-first-century Vietnam is different from the imposition of English under duress on South Vietnamese refugees who escaped to the United States in previous decades. Instead of fostering closeness with dirt, *Mai's America* shows that the subject's experiences in the United States—her brief stint at the nail salon notwithstanding—have rendered her ever more distant from it.

I want to be clear that my critiques of the elisions in this filmic narrative are not a personal attack on its nonfictional protagonist or its director. Mai demonstrates an astonishing amount of strength, diligence, and resiliency over the two years she spent in the United States and endures situations that would have vanquished many others, especially those used to the comforts of her economic class. Filmmaker Marlo Poras accompanies Mai with the same kind of tenacity necessary to take footage that eventually resulted in a multidimensional, nuanced portrait of her subject. What I am foregrounding about the exclusivity of voluntary transnational mobility is not any one individual's failure to be radical. Instead, I mean to call attention to the uneven legibility of the stories that can be told and heard. For instance, why is it that we are not treated to a documentary about the shoe shiners who converse with Mai at the beginning of the film? What options might they have that can interrupt the monotony of setting up makeshift work stations on Hanoi's sidewalks from one day to the next? How plausible is global mobility for them? It is due to pre-existing assumptions about narrative viability that we are not witnessing their story—which would entail a non-teleological, non-migratory, episodic, and repetitive focus on dirt.

Patricia Yaeger's discussion of dirt as that which is produced to regulate the social order follows Mary Douglas's iconic claim about matter being out of place, but it also transcends it. Yaegar problematizes

Douglas's structuralist schema by asking, "What do we do with bodies and experiences that . . . refuse the category 'dirty-clean' as a paradigm with a readable political topography?" (66). Whereas Yaeger goes on to articulate her wish for more complexity by revealing how black and white southern women engage dirt in unexpected ways (albeit differently from one another), I argue that—in the context of *Mai's America* and its extra-diegetic revelation—a class-privileged Vietnamese woman's brief stint of "being dirty" neither questions post-*doi moi* transnational circuits nor brings her closer to those on the losing end of its neoliberal reforms. The detritus she possesses at the end of this leave-taking from Vietnam, a U.S. southern accent, is shuttled into unrecognizability in her newly acquired advantage in an Anglophone-dominated global economy. In the end, *Mai's America* does not tell a sobering story about the failure of the American Dream as it might seem at first glance. It rallies the neo-colonial spaces beyond the United States' borders to keep it going but only for a select few.

An intimacy with dirt—or, at least, with the parts of human anatomy closest to it—will allow for a more ethically informed reconciliation to flourish among the different factions of the Vietnamese transnation under the aegis of class critique. The appeal to neoliberal global capital or a strategic top-down cosmopolitanism generated by the Vietnamese state and the diaspora's most socioeconomically privileged subjects will result only in stasis. Contrary to what late-twentieth-century transnational venture capital and culture making promise, the most liberating forms of postwar reunification will only take place through class solidarities on the ground. This return to dirt is unlike the pattern of "reverse autochthony" Yaeger observes among the most vulnerable figures in southern literature, those who "are hurled into water or earth without proper rituals, without bearing witness to grief, without proper mourning" (17). Here, contact with dirt does not confer social death on those whose trajectories take them downward to its location. Rather, it generates possibility for the very opposite, an alternative to the rapidly expanding gulf between the global rich and poor at the turn of the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, this alternative, which is only hinted at in *Mai's America*, never materializes. The blurring of boundaries and positionalities between the Vietnamese national studying abroad and Vietnamese diasporans return migrating shows that these formerly warring factions are one and the same. They all pursue the capital that transnational mobility makes available.

NOTES

- 1 For an important intervention that links hemispheric studies of race and colonialism with southern studies, see Smith and Cohn. For work on Asian Americans in the South, see Joshi and Desai.
- 2 See Duong and Valverde.
- 3 The update can be found here: http://www.pbs.org/pov/maisamerica/film_update.php.

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