

Adelaida Reyes. *Songs of the Caged, Songs of the Free: Music and the Vietnamese Refugee Experience.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999. xix, 218 pp., \$19.95 paper, \$59.50 cloth.

This important book documents two areas, the history of the Vietnamese traumatic emigration to the U.S. from 1975 to the early 1990s and the central role of music in Vietnamese responses to diaspora. Because ethnographic studies of the Vietnamese diaspora are still limited in number, and this is the first focused on Vietnamese expressive practices, *Songs of the Caged* is a major contribution on both fronts. Unlike many accounts of the Vietnamese American experience, Reyes' book is based on extended field research and addresses big issues with attention to history and to real people in real situations often conveyed through intimate portraits. The breadth of Reyes' often difficult research (over many years and thousands of miles) grants this study a remarkable scope. She presents Vietnamese refugees as a diverse group of people with different histories and priorities. Reyes argues that music making is central to the ongoing construction of difference within Vietnamese American communities: she demonstrates how music, particularly singing, looks back nostalgically to pre-1975 Vietnam as well as forward to new Vietnamese American identities and even optimistically to the reclamation of a non-communist Vietnam.

Reyes's main argument is that forced emigration raises different methodological questions than immigration generally. She writes that "the theoretically and methodologically insignificant role assigned to forced migration in studies of migrant adaptation to the United States" has severely limited scholarship and political responses; she suggests that collapsing the plight of forced refugees into immigration generally is driven by an American tendency to romanticize immigration. As she puts it, "It was easy for Americans to believe that everyone came willingly, attracted by the prospect of belonging to a country that took pride in being a nation of immigrants. The image of the voluntary immigrant stood for all migrants and was 'wisely accepted'"(xii(c)xiii).

Furthermore Reyes contends that music and expressive culture generally is an essential channel for understanding the experience of forced migrants. She cites other studies that point to how refugee camps around the world are often “replete” with music, dance, and theater and notes that her study thus opens up the study of forced migration even as it expands the questions asked by the field of ethnomusicology: “As part of expressive culture, music is a mirror that migration studies have yet to hold up to the refugee experience, and forced migration is a key that ethnomusicology has yet to turn to gain entry into another world that music inhabits”(3).

The book covers four different field sites, and the way they contrast is very effective. Just as the two refugee camps (Palawan and Bataan in the Philippines) represent different groups of relocated Vietnamese, the two Vietnamese American communities (Jersey City-Hoboken and Orange County, California) represent different social environments, and Reyes’s careful references back and forth bring out the complexities of Vietnamese/Vietnamese American resettlement. The movement though the book is clear and well crafted, and the final feeling is of good balance filled in with a lot of complicated data (e.g., facts and figures about immigrant populations, musical scores, etc.) that Reyes does not shy away from. She shows how the interplay between folk, classical, ritual (Buddhist and Catholic), and popular Vietnamese musics are central to Vietnamese expressive practices. Importantly she demonstrates that Vietnamese immigrant consumption of music (and participation via karaoke, radio, informal music-making, etc.) is as important a site of study as performers and composers. Over and over again she shows how Vietnamese distinctions between the communist and the non-communist, whether in music, politics, or understandings of history, drive immigrants’ conceptions of their life in diaspora. She moves between Tet celebrations, churches, Vietnamese malls in Orange County, dance clubs, refugee camps, and recording studios as she pursues the question of how communism and cultural nostalgia for a pre-communist Vietnam impel refugees’ musical activities. Reyes’ representation of conflicts within the Vietnamese community is both sympathetic and discerning. Her examination of how the end of American economic sanc-

tions against Vietnam in 1994-95 presented agonizing questions of loyalty and identity to Vietnamese Americans is particularly impressive.

Reyes makes virtually no reference to other work in Asian American studies. She makes a strong argument for her focus on Vietnamese traumatic relocation, but the study is a bit insulated from related work. Without suggesting exact parallels, I wonder if she could have connected her study to similar work on Hmong, Cambodian, and Lao refugees; her section on the psychological toll of traumatic emigration could also have been linked to work on the Japanese American internment and its psychological effect on succeeding generations. Similarly, Reyes' terrific work on the Vietnamese American communities in New Jersey and California would benefit from some reference to recent work in Asian American studies on other Asian American communities, e.g., Chinatowns on the east and west coasts, or Timothy P. Fong's book on Monterey Park. Reyes' central point—that traumatic displacement raises specific issues—would not have been lost by connecting Vietnamese resettlement to the history of other Asian American communities (both voluntary and involuntary); if anything, it would have brought out important differences.

Still, this is a remarkable book, and a remarkably accessible one at that. It will certainly attract the attention of readers in Asian American studies, Asian studies, immigration studies, and of course music, and it makes the point—resoundingly—that expressive culture is an essential site for scholarship in Ethnic Studies.

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America Rodriguez. *Making Latino News: Race, Language, Class*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1999. 168 pp., \$25.95 paper.

This is an excellent book. In the writing of this edition the author has left little to be criticized. The only criticism that