

**Listening as a Labor of Love:
Commerce, Community, and Little Saigon Radio**

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On Saturday, June 13, 2009, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., this is what was on KVNR-AM (1480) Little Saigon Radio: an infomercial for ABC Supermarket in media res (“Filet mignon is \$3.88 per pound! All you have to do is put some butter on it. And you can buy potatoes, boil it, mash it, and buy a packet of instant gravy”¹); a 9-minute infomercial for My Kim Jewelry (“I know we’re having terrible weather but it’s Saturday! Giving gifts to your wife will make your lives together really happy. Jewelry is forever, so your happiness will be forever”); a 14-minute infomercial for Donnaken Furniture (“Saturdays are great days to change your home décor”); and numerous 30- to 120-second commercials for area businesses including Lifestyle Home Entertainment & Appliances, Four Seasons Pure Water, Huong Vy Restaurant, E Mobile Solutions, T&K Market, the Chiropractic Office of Trung Pham, Thuy Nga Productions (the preeminent Vietnamese diasporic

music production company), and the Law Office of Nguyen Quoc Lan. In total, the above three hours of radio broadcasting contained 117 infomercials and commercials (most of the short commercials were repeated two to four times each hour); six station identification announcements; nine instances of “bumper music,” partial songs placed between radio commercials and between station identification (including Vietnamese pop star Linda Trang Dai’s rendition of “Coco Jambo,” Aretha Franklin’s “Freeway of Love,” Tuấn Ngọc and Thái Thảo’s duet of Englebert Humperdinck’s “Quando Quando,” and several instrumentals that were either imperceptible or unknown to me); one full-length performance of Elvis Phương’s hit song “Không! Tôi không còn yêu em nữa” (“No, I don’t love you anymore”); a three-minute reading from the local registry of the recently deceased; a personal request by a woman named Ms. Tu for a nanny for her two children (“must know how to speak English and drive on the freeway”); and fifteen continuous seconds of dead air.

Such programming is paradigmatic of any given block of weekend broadcasting for this pioneering Vietnamese-language radio station based in Little Saigon in Orange County, California.² Although the content, order, and duration of the infomercials, commercials, bumper music, and public announcements vary each weekend, what is consistent is the overwhelming predominance of advertising that has become a well-known characteristic feature of Little Saigon Radio’s weekend format. How the configuration of this distinct programming schedule produces a Vietnamese-American listening public constituted by the interarticulation of commerce and community is the central concern of this essay.

In focusing my attention on the construction of a *listening public*, my understanding of this radio station is quite different from previous studies that articulate radio as a tool for producing an imagined community of listeners. Supplementing Bertolt Brecht’s utopian prediction that radio might function as a national “apparatus of communication,” notable radio histories such as Michele Hilmes’ *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922–1952* and Susan J. Douglas’s *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* have connected radio to the production and maintenance of nationalism and to the ideas of the United States and US citizens. For Hilmes and Douglas, the “radiating” processes constituting the aurally imagined nation operate

within private and domestic sites. For example, in *Listening In*, Douglas writes that whether US citizens listened to the radio with their families (before television, in the 1930s and 1940s) or by themselves in bedrooms and in cars (from the 1950s to the 1990s), “listeners had a deeply private, personal bond with the radio.”³ Douglas notes that radio sounds could “[transport] listeners from their private, domestic realms into the teeming public sphere,” but such a move is only virtual.⁴ Private and public domains remain discursively and physically discrete for Douglas. This echoes Hilmes’s formulation that “radio promised simultaneity of experience without direct contact, exposure to the public in the privacy of one’s home.”⁵ Whether intentionally taking up Benedict Anderson’s brief suggestion that the invention of the radio “summon[s] into being an aural representation of the imagined community” or not, such studies of radio nationalism are clearly modeled after Anderson’s germinal concept.⁶ As such, they formulate an experience of radio that is as interiorized as the collective act of newspaper reading, which Anderson argued was “the embryo of the nationally imagined community.”⁷

Communion and nationalism are key organizing elements in Little Saigon Radio’s listening public as well. Indeed, the facilitation of an Andersonian imagined community is the expressed *raison d’être* for Little Saigon Radio. To quote its mission statement, Little Saigon Radio intends to “bridg[e] the bond among the Vietnamese Americans [sic] communities across the United States through radio airwaves and world-wide-web medium.”⁸ However, the fundamental element of human contact and interactivity (already discernible even in the brief synopsis above) is missing in conceptualizations of print and aurally imagined communities as well as in Little Saigon Radio’s statement about its social function. By emphasizing Little Saigon Radio’s listening public, I intend to highlight what Michael Warner calls the “feedback loops” of self- and stranger-reflexivity that he asserts are the constitutive elements of publics.⁹ Little Saigon Radio’s listening public is shaped not only by private auditory interactions with radio sound. Through its numerous commercial inducements to physically come to and consume in Little Saigon, its listening public is realized through actual and, as I will discuss here, intimate interactions and transactions between people (radio hosts and radio guests, radio hosts and callers, and callers and other callers) and between people and goods (both the material and immaterial commodities, services,

and affective relationships of businesses whose advertisements dominate and are internal to Little Saigon Radio's programming).

Right Listening, Good Living

In 2009, Arbitron, Inc., the largest media and marketing firm in the United States, concluded a two-year study of the current state of radio listening habits. Confirming the fears of many radio stations since the advent of user-controlled, mostly commercial-free digital audio technologies, Arbitron found that the "optimum ratio of talk to music" is widening, and the number of "commercials a listener can bear before switching the dial" is decreasing.¹⁰ Nevertheless, radio remains a prominent part of US citizens' everyday lives—reaching 91 percent of people twelve years of age and older each week, despite the adoption of MP3 players and the growth of Internet-only stations. However, it is the commercial-free and almost-commercial-free programs that listeners favor.¹¹ Arbitron further projected that radio advertising would consequently "fall 14 percent to \$16.46 billion" by the end of 2009.¹² The results of the study have forced local and national radio stations to dramatically readjust their programming. The global media and entertainment company Clear Channel has begun phasing out sixty-second ads and replacing them with fifteen- and thirty-second ads as well as working to reduce "ad clutter" to ten-minute segments (grouped together at the end of an hour block of programming) from the customary twenty-minute segments that were found to "[drive] listeners away."¹³ Even the most commercially successful radio programs have been subject to modification. In September 2009, celebrity radio DJs Ryan Seacrest, Kevin Ryder, and Gene Baxter (of CBS radio's "The Kevin and Bean Show") complained on-air of pressure to change their formats. Seacrest grumbled about Clear Channel's assertion (the owner of his nationally syndicated morning radio program) that "he could sustain higher ratings if 'you actually play some more music'" and in commiseration, Kevin and Bean told Seacrest "that their own bosses said, 'Maybe you guys should shut up and play more Red Hot Chili Peppers.'"¹⁴

No equivalent statistical data on Little Saigon Radio's listenership is available. As a minority-owned and -operated radio station with a very limited

operating budget, Little Saigon Radio is unable to afford Arbitron's exorbitant fees (which begin at around \$200,000). Indeed, Arbitron's undercounting of ethnic and linguistic minority radio stations is a persistent problem, especially as it relates to the distribution of government funding determined by the documented size and demographics of an individual station's listenership.¹⁵ Nonetheless, Arbitron's prediction that advertising revenue across local and national radio stations will drop has been realized at Little Saigon Radio. In order to lower operating costs and reconcile losses in advertising revenue resulting from the recession, on June 1, 2009, Little Saigon Radio cut back their round-the-clock programming to fourteen hours per day Monday through Saturday (4 a.m. to 6 p.m.).¹⁶ The rest of the airtime is now programmed by New Saigon Radio, whose schedule is even more crowded with advertising than Little Saigon Radio's. That is to say, even with Little Saigon Radio's reduced schedule, Vietnamese-language programming on 1480 AM continues to be dominated by advertising and radio banter on the weekends. (Excised in the leaner schedule are the bulk of the religious and children's programs.) At a time when listeners have an unprecedented intolerance for commercials and most varieties of on-air talk as well as an unparalleled number of commercial-free Internet and satellite radio options, it is striking that Little Saigon Radio, and now New Saigon Radio, maintains its weekend talk and advertising format. The changes to Little Saigon Radio's airtime undoubtedly reflect the general economic uncertainty of print and electronic media in the digital age, but its unrelenting fidelity to a largely information-based weekend programming of infomercials, commercials, and public announcements that, according to research evidence, makes little economic sense suggests that its programming choices are shaped by something more than economic logic.¹⁷ (It should be noted, too, that relative to other linguistic minority radio stations in which "popular music [is] far and away the dominant format," Little Saigon Radio's format is also unique.¹⁸) An economically determined analysis of radio listening habits and experiences such as Arbitron's can provide only a partial understanding of the machinations of Little Saigon Radio. It misses the temporal and affective logics of commerce and community that, I am arguing, are constitutive elements producing Little Saigon Radio's listening public.

Two years before Little Saigon Radio was founded, there was an hour-

long radio call-in show called *Sống trên đất Mỹ* (also called, *STĐM* and in English, *Living in America*) on KORQ-AM (1190), based in Anaheim, California. It was created by Van Vo, an Orange County businessman and member of the Vietnamese Business Association in southern California. As its title indicates, the program was dedicated to helping Vietnamese immigrants adjust to life in the United States. From 9 p.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday nights, its hosts answered questions about an array of issues concerning domestic, civic, and social life. Today, *STĐM* is much more than a call-in show. It is an Internet radio program (now based in Las Vegas) that streams audio content categorized by subjects, including current events, daily news, music, and one focused on the crimes of the Viet Cong. *STĐM* provides an early example of how radio has been a technology for producing a Vietnamese-American listening public shaped by temporal, affective, and political terms and conditions of belonging. (Indeed, a category such as crimes of the Viet Cong recruits a very specifically situated listener.)

When Little Saigon Radio was founded in 1993, then broadcasting nine hours per day on KWIZ-FM (96.7), it was the first Vietnamese-language radio station in the United States. Although other stations such as Radio Bolsa (California) and Radio Saigon (Texas) have since emerged in the Vietnamese diasporic media sphere in recent years, the stability and loyalty of Little Saigon Radio's audience is immense since it was, until recently, the only Vietnamese-language radio station to broadcast twenty-four hours per day and seven days per week in the United States. Further, the sonic reach of this minority radio station far exceeds a local market. Although its radio signal is only accessible to listeners in the counties of Orange and Riverside in southern California and to listeners in Houston where Little Saigon Radio is syndicated, its DirecTV audio feed and webcasting technology enable Vietnamese who, as a result of the dispersal policy of refugee resettlement programs, live in peripheral sites in Vietnamese America such as Portland, Atlanta, and Minneapolis to tune in to Little Saigon Radio wherever they are. The extra-local impact of this Vietnamese-language radio station can be gauged in another way as well. The weekend consumerism the radio station promotes generates revenue totaling about \$50 million in sales annually, netting the City of Westminster approximately \$500,000 per year in sales

tax revenue, which goes to help finance redevelopment projects that benefit Westminster residents in general.

In addition to its longevity, Little Saigon Radio's popularity among Vietnamese-American listeners is due also to the centripetal pull that "Little Saigon" — specifically Orange County's Little Saigon — has on the Vietnamese diasporic imaginary. Little Saigon names more than an ethnic enclave; it signifies what has been called "the cultural and economic capital of the Vietnamese free world."¹⁹ Its cultural and economic power is indicated in the various Vietnamese-owned commercial and retail businesses outside Orange County as well as outside California that appropriate "Little Saigon" and its main street "Bolsa Avenue" for their business name, marketing, and promotions. In so doing, these businesses link to and benefit from associations with the presumed nucleus of the Vietnamese diaspora.²⁰

But Little Saigon is more than a site of economic and cultural transactions; these transactions are contingent on and articulated through carefully temporalized affective transactions. Consider, for example, the significance placed on Saturday as a day of family time by the representative of My Kim Jewelry and Donnaken Furniture and implicitly by the representative of ABC Supermarket in the earlier mentioned radio commercials. I will discuss these and other advertisements more fully later in the essay. But first, I want to explore a bit further how the discursive construction of "Little Saigon" depends on the interarticulated and temporalized exchanges of affective and capital economies by turning to a curious but edifying example in Timothy Linh Bui's fiction film *Green Dragon* (2001).

Green Dragon is the only feature-length film on the refugee camp experience of Vietnamese Americans. The film is set in Camp Pendleton during the final days of the Vietnam War in April 1975 when approximately 130,000 Southeast Asian refugees — mostly Vietnamese — were evacuated to one of four relocation centers or refugee camps in California, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, and Florida. There, they were to await sponsorship by US families and churches that volunteered to help provide them with clothes, food, and housing until they became self-sufficient. *Green Dragon* chronicles the experiences of several refugees at Camp Pendleton in southern California, the first refugee camp to open. In it, Duc, a young man with an entrepreneurial spirit, fantasizes about a future place called Little Sai-

gon: “Hey, I tell you what. I’ve got big dreams in this country. . . . Maybe I could start something called Little Saigon. Imagine a little community with shops and restaurants. A home away from home.”²¹ In Duc’s fantasy, Little Saigon is a utopian site of commerce and community. It names the “future-orientated intentions of expectant emotions and . . . of expectant ideas” that Ernst Bloch asserts is the principle of hope. Duc’s positive expectations, as Bloch would explain, “extend into a Not-Yet-Conscious . . . into a class of consciousness which is itself to be designated not as filled, but as anticipatory.”²² The anticipatory but not yet fulfilled emotion of utopian hope is a driving force that encourages Vietnamese to travel the real and imaginary distances away from Camp Pendleton (an exemplary site and signifier for refugeeness) to make new homes away from home in innumerable locations across the diaspora.

Duc’s hopefulness exemplifies the possibility of Vietnamese refugees’ adaptation and acculturation (an underlying goal of development-oriented programs created for refugees).²³ More importantly, though, hope conditions the possibility of his agency. His fantasy about Little Saigon is an example of a dream-construct that Bloch asserts is necessary for historical action. Quoting the Russian writer Dmitry Pissarev, Bloch contends, “If a person were completely devoid of all capability of dreaming in this way, if he were not able to hasten ahead now and again to view in his imagination as a unified and completed picture the work which is only now beginning to take shape in his hand, then I find it absolutely impossible to imagine what would motivate the person to tackle . . . practical life.”²⁴ What Bloch via Pissarev formulates is a map of the affective and temporal coordinates of historical agency in which hope, futurity, and life are naturalized as coextensive.

The temporalization of hope, especially in relation to refugees, functions as a device that transforms refugees from objects of humanitarian care and concern to historical subjects. Again, *Green Dragon* provides a useful illustration of this point. In the same scene in which Duc hopes for a future place called Little Saigon, Quang Hai, a former soldier about ten years older than Duc, sits nearby listening to a small portable radio. Upon hearing a broadcast about the retreat and evacuation of US troops out of Southeast Asia and the Khmer Rouge’s subsequent “exodus of death,” Quang Hai announces his desire to return to Vietnam to continue fighting with his brothers in

arms. Quang Hai's desire for a temporal-spatial return to Vietnam, to a time and place "back there" (where he apparently remains emotionally) is in stark contrast to Duc's future-oriented hopeful fantasy. While the other men urge Quang Hai to let go of the past ("forget about it—it's over"), they also have deep reservations about a future life in the United States.²⁵ "How do you know we can even make it out of here?" But Duc is resolute. "What do we have to lose?" he demands of them. "We lost everything already."

The temporal representation of Quang Hai (as well as others in the film who can't quite move forward with Duc) reflects popular and scholarly representations of Vietnamese refugees' temporality. Such depictions emerge from and reinforce a familiar temporal discourse about refugees and refugee experience as lagged, stalled, and frozen in time. An exemplary scholarly portrayal of refugee time is found in an article by Kwok B. Chan and David Loveridge about Vietnamese refugees in a Hong Kong camp where they describe refugee time as "an empty interlude between two acts."²⁶ Such an understanding is framed by a state-centric ordering of time and space that reproduces the category of the nation form as the only legitimate site of historical activity and nationness as the only recognizable configuration of identity. Such constructions of refugee time as stalled in a historically meaningless liminality subsequently work to naturalize understandings of refugee subjectivity as both frozen in time—out of pace with the normative time of modernity that is adamantly forward moving and future oriented—and, as a consequence of this temporal immobilization, historically dead. It is in this way, as Liisa Malkki so incisively demonstrates in her foundational work, that the territorial displacement of refugees is simultaneously rendered a temporal and political displacement.

The "empty interlude" to which Chan and Loveridge fix refugees describes a temporal distance and difference that Johannes Fabian has identified as allochronism or a "denial of coevalness . . . a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse."²⁷ Elsewhere, I have discussed the operations of refugee temporalization in the archive of audio-racial representations of Vietnamese refugees wherein the dehistoricized constructions of Vietnamese as voiceless, silent, and deaf by humanitarian, journalistic, and governmental agencies are rendered as afflictions symp-

tomatic of premodern subjectivities. The reproduction of refugee temporal distance and difference is hardly limited to official sites. As evidenced by *Green Dragon*, processes and practices of temporalization are also enacted in popular arenas. Within the context of Hutu refugees, Malkki finds that their televisual representations “tend actively to displace, muffle, and pulverize history” with the effect of “hid[ing] . . . connections that link television viewers’ own history with that of ‘those poor people over there.’”²⁸ Cultural and humanitarian formulations of refugee subjecthood as *poor* and *over there* are reminders that the temporalization of refugees relies on a constitutive element of affect. “Those *poor* people over there” entwines affective and temporal discourses in the production of refugee otherness. “Over there” becomes a category of spatio-temporal difference that names the despair and hopelessness of not belonging to the here and now of the ostensibly modern West. Such bad feelings function hegemonically as both the symbol and symptom of refugees’ social and political death.

While Quang Hai is drawn, through the radiocast, to a past that should he go back to will almost certainly kill him (this is precisely the definition of melancholia for Walter Benjamin), Duc is attached to a future that promises good living through community and commerce.²⁹ (“Imagine a little community with shops and restaurants. A home away from home.”) By imagining and embracing a capitalist future in the United States, Duc consents to normative socioeconomic processes of modernization. His mode of radio listening—an inattentive level of listening, to be sure (he is heard urging Quang Hai to turn the radio and its depressing news off)—nevertheless resets the tempo and temporality of the present by transforming the political feeling of despair (of losing one’s home) to hope for a future home away from home called Little Saigon. Duc’s political and affective affiliation with the future—with hope—compels him to defend his entrepreneurial dreams despite the bad news of the radio broadcast and the reservations of the other men. In fact, it is the radio’s announcement of the military failure in Southeast Asia and the collective, if private, crisis of the refugees that signal for Duc the timeliness of political hope. (“What do we have to lose? We lost everything already.”)

Further, Duc’s formulation of Little Saigon in terms of endearment—as

a home—reveals his emergent “political love” for the United States. By partaking in the national feeling of hope that is intrinsic to the idea of the United States (“the land of hope and dreams”), Duc’s good feelings effectively begin his assimilative transformation from Vietnamese refugee to modern US subject, transporting him from the brink of historical and political death to the starting stalls of the future and its promise of historical and capitalist agency.³⁰

Although the fate of the refugees, within the diegetic temporal coordinates of *Green Dragon*, is unsettled, film audiences know that Duc’s fantasy of a future home has been realized. The “dissynchronous” polity of refugees who are shown throughout the film as being outside liberal democratic time (by virtue of their being stuck in a time lag) as well as running out of time (vis-à-vis their housing in the refugee camp) is readjusted and restored to the historical time of the (US) film viewer.³¹ Employing a cinematic postscript, Bui accelerates history to conclude the film with a happy (and hopeful) image of simultaneity: “Today, the community of Little Saigon in southern California is home to more than 200,000 Vietnamese Americans, making it the largest gathering of Vietnamese in the world outside of Vietnam.”³² Resetting the temporality of Vietnamese refugees to an eternal present—to the *today* of the viewer—the postscript brings Vietnamese refugees into the here-and-now of an intrinsically Western modernity. This is what Little Saigon, as a future home away from home, as a utopian site and symbol of Vietnamese-American community and commerce, stands for. In so doing, the film validates Duc’s political optimism in the United States and positions Duc’s mode of listening as an example of politico-sentimental pedagogy. His affective and temporal orientation toward a positive future, one that has been historically organized, as we know from David Harvey and Judith Halberstam, according to the pace and logic of capitalist accumulation and heteronormative social reproduction is the basis of his right listening.³³ Rather than the bad feelings of anger, resentment, and regret that dig Quang Hai deeper into the dead zone of melancholic refugee subjecthood, Duc’s political optimism locates him on the side of a future-oriented modern life constituted at the intersection of commerce and community. Duc’s right listening and his good feelings (indications of a well-adjusted subject)

pay off since the promise of the good life that Little Saigon names, as audiences know, exists. Thus the film constructs right listening and good living as inextricably connected.

Right listening—a sensory perceptual orientation toward a utopian future—operates within the logic of linear time. The transformation from refugees to Vietnamese Americans in *Green Dragon* is plotted on a time line that moves unidirectionally from 1975 to today and inexorably from premodernity to modernity. Indeed, “Little Saigon” is itself a taxonomy of linear time; it names a future stretched as if uninterrupted from an authorizing past (one in which “Ho Chi Minh City” does not exist). As such, Little Saigon is a future place that, to quote Robyn Wiegman, “bring[s] the past to utopic completion.”³⁴ But it is in the normative and biopolitical conditions of futurity that we can begin to see the limits of political hope. The perception and promise of unbroken continuity from past (Saigon, pre-1975) to future (Little Saigon, post-1975) are forged within the horizon of linear and thus straight time, the contours of which are shaped by interarticulations of heteronormative relationality and capitalism or what some have theorized as heteronormative capitalism.³⁵ It is precisely the temporality of heteronormative capitalism that frames Duc’s futural fantasy of community and commerce (galvanized by his right listening in relation to the bad news of the radio).

But what is the tempo and temporality of right listening and good living in the ordinary lives of real Vietnamese Americans, and how are they calibrated to function as technologies of subject- and world-making? An examination of the configuration and effects of one site of collective listening produced, shaped, and scheduled by Little Saigon Radio offers a critical point of departure. In the remainder of this essay, I focus on how Little Saigon Radio produces, shapes, and regulates a listening public that is temporally and affectively synchronized to powerful and interconnected national fantasies of capitalism and heteronormative love. I argue that Little Saigon Radio listening, particularly weekend radio listening when its airwaves are inundated with advertising, operates within and reproduces US national temporal and affective logics. As we shall see, the timing and content of the commercials—or, in some cases, extended infomercials—secure links between capitalist time and heteronormative love that give a particularly

hegemonic familial form to this listening public. Further, the regimes of listening that Little Saigon Radio produces through its programming schedule encourage Vietnamese Americans to demonstrate their emotional and economic investment in this form in a timely way. It is as such that, as the anthropologist Uli Linke insists, politics “materializes itself in our corporal habitus, social activity, and conduct.”³⁶ As we shall see in the following section, power does not simply operate in the course of daily life; it conditions the tempo, temporality, and terms of daily life.

In describing Little Saigon Radio’s structures of listening as regimes, I do not mean to suggest that its Vietnamese listeners are passively and unknowingly being integrated into the emotional and economic logics that organize the radio station’s aural systems. Little Saigon Radio itself is an expression of the agency and hope of Vietnamese refugees. Agency, however, is not free and clear of the structures and processes of existing institutional structures. To quote from Richard Butsch’s essay, “Leisure and Hegemony in America,” “the organization and form of [leisure] activity [in this case, weekend shopping and listening to the radio] operates to constrain us and also . . . is shaped by our very participation.”³⁷ In other words, Little Saigon Radio’s construction of a hegemonic mode of listening is enabled by the *consensual* participation of the very subjects it enlists to secure its hegemony.

Love in the Time of Late Capitalism

Little Saigon Radio’s programming schedule seems to be a study in contrasts. While its weekend programming of advertising is adjusted to an amiable tempo of conversation and consumption, its weekday programming is arranged by a vigorous pulse of productivity. Although not nearly as precise as the audio programs the Muzak Corporation began tailoring for US businesses in the late 1940s that were attuned to “workers’ mood swings and peak periods as measured on a Muzak mood-rating scale ranging from ‘Gloomy-minus three’ to ‘Ecstatic-plus eight,’” Little Saigon Radio’s weekday programming nevertheless borrows from Muzak’s sonic sequencing and synchronization of the ideal worker’s daily routines.³⁸ That being said, I want to underscore that it is not my intention to suggest that Little Saigon Radio’s temporal logic is absolutely unique in relation to other Ameri-

can radio stations or that it produces a distinctly temporalized *Vietnamese* listening public. Indeed, it is precisely Little Saigon Radio's imbrications with dominant temporal systems that bear out the ways in which ethnic and linguistic-minority radio in general and this radio station in particular functions as everyday assimilative sound technologies. Such convergences underscore the larger point of my study that the production, negotiations, and transformations of nationalism and national subjectivity are routinely and oftentimes unspectacularly undertaken in sites that are ethnically and temporally local.

Like many other radio programs, Little Saigon Radio's weekday programming begins early Monday morning with weather and traffic reports that are cycled between music; financial reports; local, national, and international news; and events bulletins. The rest of a typical weekday schedule includes more music, more news, various children's programs, and several infomercials by local businesses such as Magic Mattress, Crown Dental Implant Center, and Sunny Auto Repair that are strategically aired during the sluggish morning and evening commute when southern California's traffic congestion leaves little else to do in the car but listen to the radio. A typical Friday schedule begins like any other weekday until 10 a.m. when Little Saigon Radio's airwaves begin to be saturated with the kind of advertising described in the opening paragraph of this article. Tune in to KVNR-AM (1480) any time between Friday late morning and Sunday evening and chances are you will hear not music but a constant cannonade of phone numbers and prices in Vietnamese for everything from bridal gowns to *bánh mì* (a popular Vietnamese hoagie-style sandwich) to bank loans available at any one of the estimated three thousand businesses in Little Saigon.

The normative cycle of labor and leisure that rationalizes what counts as good living in a modern consumer capitalist society is audible in the differing tempos that structure Little Saigon Radio's weekday and weekend programming. The morning weather and traffic reports, for example, are timed to coincide with and regulate listeners' morning routines as they prepare for their workday. The frenzied and periodic succession of morning news, traffic, and weather reports—in intervals as brief as one-minute long—sonically establish a weekday tempo of living and listening that encourages alert and attentive behaviors ideal for capitalist productivity.

After all, getting to work on time in southern California's car-based culture often means taking care not to miss a traffic or weather report. During business hours, music, news, and call-in programs accompany listeners as they work, providing just the right balance of sonic variety and ambient monotony that the Muzak Corporation found best motivates worker efficiency and productivity. After work, when many southern Californians, including Vietnamese Americans, are stuck in traffic, Little Saigon Radio broadcasts several infomercials between music and call-in advice programs that are suited for the uneven and inattentive listening of car radio listeners. Prior to June 1, 2009, its late evening schedule included children's programs, literary programs, and call-in advice shows that encouraged family togetherness through family listening.

Protracted blocks of infomercials beginning late Friday morning and continuing through Sunday evening provide listeners with an auditory break from the short and rapid weekday cycle of news, weather, and traffic reports. In the programming of infomercial clusters is an audible downshift from the swift and ascending tempo that has come to represent and determine the pace of labor in a period of late capitalism (whether one is employed in the manufacturing or informational sectors) to a more leisurely pace appropriate for the weekend. Thus the drawn-out weekend commercials and infomercials auralize a temporal break from daily workaday life, giving sonic expression to the modern and modernizing concept of "leisure time."

Thorstein Veblen, a founding figure in leisure studies, defined leisure as "time [that] is consumed non-productively (1) from a sense of unworthiness of productive work, and (2) as an evidence of pecuniary ability to afford a life of idleness."³⁹ Not surprisingly, Veblen's strict delineation of consumption and production is figured in gendered terms: "While one group produces goods . . . another group, usually headed by the wife or chief wife, consumes for him in conspicuous leisure; thereby putting in evidence his ability to sustain large pecuniary damage without impairing his superior opulence."⁴⁰ Conspicuous consumption particularly of, what he calls, "elegant dress" is "the insignia of leisure."⁴¹ French high heels, skirts, long hair, and corsets all figure in Veblen's theory as significations of a tradition of women's unproductive consumerist predispositions: "The wearer cannot

when so attired bear a hand in any employment that is directly and immediately of any human use.”⁴² As a result, the production/consumption dyad at the core of Veblen’s theory articulates a spatialization of gender that ties women to the “nonproductive” spaces of the home (among the very commodities that signify her privileged social class). While Veblen’s gendered distribution of occupational space is still familiar and influential, feminist labor histories, consumer histories, cultural studies of fashion, and cultural anthropologies reveal much more complex geographies of gender and class that have been tracked to sites as ephemeral as “a space on the side of the road” (Kathleen Stewart) and even the “non-places” (Marc Augé) of transit and transportation.⁴³ Leisure time, though, continues to be associated with social mobility. The sociologist Herbert Gans recently argued that participation in “more typically American leisure activities” is vital to immigrants’ assimilation and acculturation.⁴⁴

In this neoliberal moment, perhaps the most typical of US leisure activities is consumerism. The freedom to shop is intimately connected to liberal freedoms of self-expression and of self-determination in the national imaginary, as we saw with the patriotic consumerism campaigns that emerged in the United States soon after the September 11 terrorist attacks. The discursive links between political rights and material resources articulate consumerism as an emblem and an enactment of American modernity. George W. Bush’s calls to US citizens, who were still reeling from the terrorist attacks, to “get down to Disney World” acutely demonstrate the institutionalization of this link between consumerism and what it means to be a US citizen.⁴⁵

Little Saigon Radio’s weekend format of commercials and infomercials produces a listening public that is temporally and ideologically in sync with consumerism-based conceptualizations of US modernity. Such a temporalization is politically contrary to the temporal political structure of communist Vietnam in which Western consumer values are a recognized “social evil.” The organizing logics of Little Saigon Radio’s programming aurally interpellate Vietnamese listeners as neoliberal consumer citizens. As I’ve already mentioned, the assimilative function of radio is not new. Throughout the brief media history of Vietnamese America, as illustrated by the *STDM* example, the radio has always been an everyday sound technology of acculturation and assimilation. And before that, radio played a critical role

in the socio-ideological wars in Southeast Asia and the Pacific in the mid-twentieth century. The establishment of Western-run Vietnamese-language radio programming (which included segments of English-language instruction) by American Forces Vietnam Network (AFVN), Voice of America, and Radio Australia during the Vietnam War were imagined to be crucial to “the survival of a non-Communist Government in South Vietnam.”⁴⁶ So embedded is radio’s social function within the history of the Vietnamese diaspora that even with its recently reduced programming, Little Saigon Radio continues to host call-in advice shows that help listeners interpret and navigate the complicated and sometimes confounding terrains of the US medical, legal, financial, and social networking systems.

Little Saigon Radio’s programming produces a listening public whose everyday modes of conduct are organized not only around capitalist arrangements of time but of space as well. The radio station’s weekend programming routinely broadcasts commercials and infomercials shaped by a spatio-temporal listening regime that trains listeners to associate the physical space of Little Saigon with weekend consumerism and other temporally related leisure activities. For example, previously-mentioned commercials for Donnaken Furniture, ABC Supermarket, and My Kim Jewelry identify these businesses as three spatio-temporal sites within Little Saigon in which it is not only desirable but appropriate to visit on a Saturday. My Kim Jewelry’s location in the popular Phước Lộc Thọ mall (Asian Garden Mall)—often described as “the heart of Little Saigon”—adds to the store’s affective value, making the economic and emotional discourses deployed by this particular business an especially compelling element of Little Saigon Radio’s listening regime. (I expand on this point later in the essay.) Commercials for Huong Vy Restaurant, Seafood Cove, Thang Long Restaurant, and Nhu Y Restaurant (to name several I heard in the three-hour block of programming described above) entice listeners to get out of their kitchens and come to Little Saigon by advertising an array of *weekend-only* menu specials and special offers including free soda and discounted foot massages (with orders over \$50). In another commercial for ABC Supermarket that aired on June 6, 2009, at about 10:30 a.m., the store representative describes “a lovely and happy Saturday with your family” as ideally spent at “the corner of Bolsa and Magnolia Avenues” (the location of ABC Market). Minutes later,

another of My Kim Jewelry's many infomercials—this one, about twenty minutes long—suggests a full weekend itinerary of consumption contained to/within Little Saigon: “The weather is so overcast . . . but don't stay at home. Come out to Little Saigon, eat out, go to the market, and go to My Kim Jewelry. Tell your husband!”

Little Saigon Radio's programming schedule bifurcates life into spatio-temporal categories of appropriate behavior. Weekdays are for work, and weekends are for leisure (ideally, in Little Saigon). This spatio-temporal system interpellates listeners into capitalist forms of living and listening that are presented as natural and inevitable. But the opposition of labor and leisure, as we know from Marxist scholars of time, is not as clear-cut as it seems. Leisure and labor are reciprocal processes in capitalist societies. Henri Lefebvre describes this relationship succinctly in his essay, “Work and Leisure in Everyday Life”: “We work to earn our leisure, and leisure has only one meaning: to get away from work. A vicious circle.”⁴⁷ And in his study of the leisure industry, Theodor Adorno argues that compulsory forms of “organized freedom” are created to renew and sustain the spirit, energy, and morale of laborers so that they can continue to do the necessary work of capitalism.⁴⁸ Thus leisure is not the opposite of labor but its linchpin. Little Saigon Radio entwines labor and leisure not only at the level of the economic but also of the emotional. The interarticulation of emotions and economics in Little Saigon Radio's capitalist temporality is key to the production of Little Saigon as a utopian site that holds the promise of political hope imagined by Duc. And as this article intends to show, it is through a careful study of Little Saigon Radio that we might track, in the parlance of Blochian scholars, “the traces of utopia in the . . . details of everyday life.”⁴⁹

The timeliness of renovating the home, cooking for the family, eating out, and buying jewelry on the weekend articulates leisure activities as temporally appropriate forms of what Michael Hardt calls affective labor, “laboring practices [that] produce collective subjectivities, produce sociality, and ultimately produce society itself.”⁵⁰ I turn to two exemplary infomercials in order to closely detail the interarticulations of economic and emotional logics in the listening regime of Little Saigon Radio. Both are by My Kim Jewelry, a fixture in Little Saigon Radio's weekend programming and thus a significant factor in its rules of engagement. The first infomercial I discuss

aired on Saturday, March 28, 2009, at about one o'clock in the afternoon and the second one, as mentioned in the opening paragraph of this essay, aired on Saturday, June 13, 2009.

Given the lengthy running time of both My Kim Jewelry infomercials—15:11 minutes (March) and 9:08 minutes (June)—it is impossible to transcribe them in their entirety here. And indeed, because reception practices in relation to radio and especially radio advertising are inherently partial and often inattentive (broadcasters and advertisers frequently describe radio as a tertiary or secondary media; listening to the radio is something people do when they're doing something else), it is in keeping with the everyday experience of radio listening that this essay is less concerned with the details of any particular infomercial.⁵¹ Instead, I focus on the formal and substantive repetitions as well as sonic strategies of emphasis (musical, verbal, and alinguistic) that are likely to register for the partial and peripheral reception practices radio typically invites.

A segment of the March infomercial is transcribed below:

My Linh (radio host): Today, I have the opportunity to speak briefly with Nina Nguyet, the representative for My Kim Jewelry. Hello, chi [sister] Nina?

Nina (jewelry store representative): Hello, yes, I want to say hello to you. It's chi My Linh, right?

My Linh: Yes, this is chi My Linh.

Nina: Hello, how are you?

My Linh: Yes, I'm fine. Today is such a beautiful day, isn't it, chi Nina?

Nina: Yes, today is such a beautiful day, chi My Linh! Today is the first time I've gotten to speak with you, chi My Linh. Oh, and I want to say hello to all the radio listeners. My Linh, when you come into the My Kim store, you'll see all kinds of items that are really "fashion" [in English], really cute, really pretty. . . . For us women who now live in the US where everyone wants to look good and everyone is beautiful, we have to take responsibility for making ourselves stand out. Being beautiful on the outside will make us feel better on the inside. I invite everyone to My Kim Jewelry store. My Linh, you have to come visit us.

My Linh: Oh, I'm definitely coming. It's a guarantee.

Nina: We have small and large pieces of jewelry that you can wear to someone's wedding or to a big party.

The entwined circuits of personal communication, commodities, and good feelings that this infomercial enacts are exemplary of the ways in which public spaces—radio airwaves and retail spaces—are constituted through multiple forms of intimacies. It is as such that as Lauren Berlant observes, “intimacy builds worlds.”⁵² Through this infomercial, Little Saigon Radio aurally connects women who identify with Nina and My Linh’s mode of address, language, experiences, and desires. The informal banter between the radio host and the guest is typical of most infomercials on Little Saigon Radio, which are seldom rebroadcast as recordings. The intimate and immediate form of the live infomercial, the caring inquiries between the host and the guest and, at times, listeners calling in, as well as the duration resembles something more like a telephone conversation between close friends or even family members, blurring the line between public/private and business/family that give meaning to the utopian idea of “Little Saigon” represented in *Green Dragon*.⁵³

The honorific Nina and My Linh use (*chi*) is a kinship pronoun that means “older sister.”⁵⁴ While it is beyond and irrelevant to the scope of this discussion to catalog the numerous socially situated Vietnamese pronouns that are used in daily conversation, it is important to know that although kinship pronouns are not compulsory among strangers, they are regularly used in exchanges of polite discourse. Although the unscripted spontaneity and immediacy of Little Saigon Radio’s infomercial form inadvertently discloses the constructedness of diasporic kinship (“Today is the first time I’ve gotten to speak with you, chi My Linh”), public and diasporic feelings are no less deeply felt because they are shared between strangers. Indeed, diasporic intimacy, as Svetlana Boym points out in her studies of Russian exilic communities, is constituted in uprootedness and defamiliarization.⁵⁵ It is “the common experience of dislocation that makes intimacy possible” when immigrants discover in each other “the fragile coziness of a foreign home . . . a pang of intimate recognition, a hope that sneaks in through the back door.”⁵⁶

Little Saigon Radio routinely advertises products and services through

scripted and unscripted familial conversations such as the one between Nina and My Linh rather than, say, customer testimonials that might give radio listener-consumers more direct representations of goods advertised. The dialogue form of the radio commercials and infomercials are significant, I suggest, because they advertise a second order of goods—immaterial goods including recipe ideas, temporalized family values, and social performances of kinship—not available in mainstream sites of commerce. This is not to suggest that emotional transactions prevail over economic transactions in Little Saigon Radio but that such an affective logic conditions the possibility for the economic practices and decisions of businesses in Little Saigon, including Little Saigon Radio. Beauty and, associated with it, happiness, the desires for which Nina imagines all female listeners share, are just some of the immaterial goods that this infomercial is advertising. It is upon the transactions of this collective and gendered affect among women as modeled by My Linh and Nina that economic transactions are contingent. The desire to be “beautiful on the outside,” which is linked in this infomercial to “feel[ing] better on the inside” (a familiar formulation of makeover discourse) is realized through and made possible by gendered calls to consumerism (i.e., “diamonds are a girl’s best friend”). Thus the public and the private, the affective and the economic, are thoroughly integrated.

The affective logic in Little Saigon Radio’s listening regime in particular and the emotional capitalism instrumentalizing Little Saigon as a commercial district in general is a sharply gendered one. The socioeconomic power of these two businesswomen who have attained, as radio personalities, a nominal level of celebrity is circumscribed and clipped by the biopolitical discourses that define self-adornment and beauty practices as women’s work. The management and care of the female self is thusly politicized. The conspicuous consumption of jewelry that Nina advocates is a question not simply of economics but civic duty for Vietnamese women “who now live in the US.” These commodities are consumerist instruments for publicizing a modern US subjectivity that values the core principles of US political liberalism: individuality, self-expression, and self-determination. “We have to take responsibility for making ourselves stand out,” Nina says. Jewelry shopping is a mode of (re)productive leisure or a labor of political love for one’s

new home—one that is, as we shall see in the next infomercial I examine, a heteronormative formation.

In brief, the June My Kim Jewelry infomercial is organized around two rituals of family celebration: (1) Father's Day, which, in 2009, falls on the second Sunday following the broadcast of this infomercial and (2) the store's one-year anniversary sale, which, we are told, begins in two months. To celebrate both events, Nina, the same store representative, tells the radio host, Julie, and radio listeners that the store is offering tremendous sales. In articulating together individual listeners' emotional lives (as experienced on Father's Day) with the commercial life of the store, Nina inadvertently but constructively demonstrates the logic of heteronormative capitalism. (Of course, straight as well as queer families celebrate Father's Day, but the father Nina invokes in this infomercial is decidedly heteronormative.)

Nina (jewelry store representative): For Father's Day, we've prepared in our inventory so many rings for men . . . and these rings have a special sale price. . . . A man, as you know chi [sister] Julie, only needs one ring and that one ring is like a "power" [in English] for men. Men don't have to wear a lot of jewelry like women do. . . . One ring on a man is enough to signify "power" [in English] and strength that is very stylish and beautiful. . . . For just \$350—\$350!—when you put this ring on your man's hand, you will see the power of our Vietnamese men and wearing it will also make them more handsome too. . . . Wherever they go, they can look down at their hand and remember, "oh, this is what my wife gave me to symbolize our life together." . . . And just because it is Father's Day doesn't mean that husbands shouldn't buy their wives anything. . . . Giving gifts to each other—"I surprised you with a ring or a pair of earrings!"—will maintain the warmth and closeness of your family home, right chi Julie?

Julie (radio host): That's for sure. Such a gift that memorializes your life together, something that won't tarnish or deteriorate over time like a pair of pants or a shirt or whatever . . . but a ring on your hand will last forever.

Nina: That's so true, chi Julie! . . . And we have $\frac{3}{4}$ carat diamonds on sale just for today. On sale for \$1350—just \$1350 for $\frac{3}{4}$ carat diamonds!

The infomercial deploys a trite marketing strategy that promotes jewelry as tokens of marital affection; however, it also invokes another, slightly different, meaning. The store representative suggests that purchases of jewelry are equivalent to acts of (heterosexual) marriage maintenance. Minimizing the bad spring weather (“I know we’re having terrible weather but it’s Saturday!”), she coaxes home radio listeners to Little Saigon by insinuating a more urgent and temporalized logic of emotional responsibility that is apparently so obvious it needs no explanation — “but it’s Saturday!” The weekends are not a time for nonproductive leisure but in fact a time to reproduce and secure the family form, across biological and ethno-national registers. In the context of capitalist time, around which Little Saigon Radio’s entire programming revolves, this utterly casual and breezy proclamation — one of countless many during Little Saigon Radio’s weekend broadcast — is overdetermined with commonsense affective knowledge that produces and is in turn reproduced by the temporal logic of straight time. Capitalist time and straight time are in sync.

Representations of the heterosexual couple like the one centralized in the second My Kim Jewelry example is a familiar trope in many of Little Saigon Radio’s commercials and infomercials. Note that the heterosexual couple is invoked in the first infomercial as well when Nina suggests weddings as another appropriate weekend activity that is connected to jewelry shopping. The heterosexual couple is a significant social formation that is at the core of the nuclear family form and as such is the locus of heteronormative social reproduction. Thus it is not uncommon for companies to suggest that their products have a social value. Much like the My Kim Jewelry infomercials, commercials for Magic Mattress, ABC Supermarket, and Teletron Home Appliances and Electronics, to name a few, claim that their products assist somehow in the daily acts of heterosexual marriage maintenance. Magic Mattress commercials, for instance, promise that a better night’s sleep on one of their beds will ensure harmony between husbands and wives throughout the day. Other commercials such as those for Mission Equity, 1 Auto Compressor, Seafood Cove Restaurant, and Danjo Windows and Doors — which sell very different kinds of products — all use skits involving husbands and wives. (Overwhelmingly, the husband is heard offering the wife sage advice,

which leads her to one of the many local businesses.) But heterosexual couplings are not intrinsically heteronormative formations. To understand Little Saigon Radio's production of heteronormative capitalism, it is necessary to consider not just the coincidence of the emotional and the economic in these ads but the ways in which they are mutually constitutive formations.

The economic and emotional value of the jewelry Nina promotes in the second infomercial in particular, like other marital gifts (the engagement ring, the wedding ring, or in Sara Ahmed's constructive example, a fondue set), is measured by their function as souvenirs of successful heterosexual coupling⁵⁷: "Oh, this is what my wife gave me to symbolize our life together." In this statement, commodity and conjugal coupling are intertwined, supplementing what Geeta Patel aptly describes as proprietary heterosexuality or "heterosexuality that accumulates and is bolstered by rights over property, personhood, and social/political and financial capital."⁵⁸ In other words, the social value of the heterosexual couple formation is reflected and reaffirmed in the economic value of these marital/material gifts and then further reinforced in the ritual of "showing off" the ring (to name one exemplary custom). These objects of public sentiment work to publicly recognize the couple as such and in so doing impart on the heterosexual couple form the added value of normativity through public recognition.

The commoditization of longevity (of the store's commercial life vis-à-vis the one-year anniversary sale and of the married couple: "a ring on your hand will last forever") also privileges a normative relation to linear time in which the future and futurity are affectively and commercially desirable and profitable. Moreover, the pursuit of heteronormative reproductive futurity is rendered as natural. Linear time, as numerous feminist and queer scholars have powerfully demonstrated, is the temporal structure of heteronormativity. Thus the temporal and discursive logic of the My Kim Jewelry infomercial in which the production of feelings and families is mutually constituted with the consumption of goods operates within the horizon of heteronormative capitalism, a temporality at the conjunction of straight time and capitalist time. The concept of longevity is intrinsic to the normative life story, which, as Judith Halberstam has observed, is scheduled by "paradigmatic markers of life experience — namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" that are charted on a unidirectional trajectory of maturation that

has futurity as its ideal terminal point.⁵⁹ Thus, when children inherit their mother's jewelry and household goods—a conventional route for objects of public sentiment—capitalist time enjoins with the “time of inheritance,” and the heteronormative life story acquires value again. And because the passing down of these objects of public sentiment to one's progeny includes the “values, wealth, goods, and morals” of the normative family form, “it also connects the family to the historical past of the nation, and glances ahead to connect the family to the future of both familial and national stability.”⁶⁰ Here, it is not the value of the gift but the relay of material and affective gifting that, as Ahmed explains, “gives form to the couple [and] makes the couple a given and a gift.”⁶¹

What is revealed by the example of these radio infomercials is the ways in which weekend shopping in Little Saigon is made into a *perceptible* social demand, a call to affective labor that is imagined to secure not only the particular marriages of listeners but also the nuclear and diasporic family forms central to the social reproduction of hegemonic formations of home. In this way, the concept of the family home and the utopian vision of Little Saigon as a home away from home (a home space for the ethno-national family), or the emotional and the economic, are made coextensive.

We know from the traditions of socialist feminism and queer theory that there is a fundamental relationship between capitalist production and social reproduction specifically within the social and economic contexts of patriarchal and heterosexual forms of intimacy. Traditionally, the spheres of capitalist production and social reproduction are delineated by a gendered logic that mirrors Veblen's such that the public domain is imagined as a space to which men belong as producers of capital and the private domain as a space to which women belong as social and biological reproducers. The relationship between capitalist production and social reproduction in the context of Little Saigon Radio is more complex. Because the emotional and the economic are so deeply intertwined, the processes of capitalist production and social reproduction are mutually constitutive, troubling the strict opposition between public and private. Listeners are emotionally and economically called upon to leave their homes and come to Little Saigon to shop as a means of securing domestic and diasporic intimacies. Thus the production of capital that keeps Little Saigon as well as Little Saigon Radio

viable is contingent on what Ann Cvetkovich and Ann Pellegrini call “affective intensities,” public responses of sentiment that drive, in this case, radio listeners to consumerist action in the name of love, for spouses, for fellow Vietnamese Americans, and for this home away from home.⁶²

As we see with both My Kim Jewelry infomercials, Vietnamese women are central to both the processes of capital production and social reproduction, troubling the patriarchal logic of separate spheres and the related gendered spatialities of production and reproduction that have been focal points of feminist scholarship and activism throughout the 1970s and 1980s. However, the roles of Vietnamese women in capitalist production do not necessarily indicate that the concerns of previous generations are resolved but rather show how the affective or immaterial labors of social reproduction that have historically been the assigned domain of women as “the default managers of the intimate” have been integrated into capital production.⁶³ The function of women in particular and the family in general in Little Saigon Radio’s advertising bears out Kathi Weeks’s observation that “reproduction is no longer identifiable with a particular space or a distinctive set of practices and [has become] coterminous with production.”⁶⁴

In this way, Little Saigon Radio is a sound technology of biopower and social reproduction. Its commercials especially interpellate listeners as sentimental listener/consumers whose economic and emotional duty to shop is linked to the future of Vietnamese America as a site of political hope for the future possibility of good living. Little Saigon Radio listening is thus an act of world-making. Its programming schedule—a temporalized structure of listening, feeling, and doing—produces subjects whose timely everyday modes of conduct work to ensure the promise of political optimism Duc imagines: “a home away from home” produced by and located in the emotional and economic transactions happening in “shops and restaurants.” As such, Little Saigon Radio’s programming is not unlike the disciplinary timetables found in schools, hospitals, and prisons to which, as Michel Foucault has demonstrated, “the body is constantly applied to its exercise” through the methods of “establish[ing] rhythms, impos[ing] particular occupations, regulat[ing] the cycles of repetition.”⁶⁵

The public intimacy internal to Little Saigon Radio’s infomercials and

commercials articulates “family” across public and private registers. The family, as an ideal sphere of private relationalities and activities, is consistently affirmed, for example, in restaurant commercials. Especially valorized in these commercials is the nuclear family, that normative formation of middle-class aspirations and respectability that functions in the national imaginary as a site of Western identification and symbol of assimilation. Exemplary is the often recurring two-minute commercial for Seafood Cove Restaurant that begins with a father asking his family if they’re ready to go eat. The narrative continues with the wife asking him where he wants to go for dinner. When he answers, “Seafood Cove Restaurant,” the wife and the daughter enthusiastically agree with him that they like this restaurant too because the prices are reasonable and the food is delicious. Again, these commercials spatialize and temporalize “family time” in ways that link affective and economic activities in Little Saigon as a home away from home with those of the (nuclear) family home. Other commercials like the ones for ABC Supermarket and Teletron Home Appliances and Electronics are implicitly framed by capitalist spatio-temporal family relations. By explicitly addressing special weekend dinner recipes involving food products on sale at the market or kitchenware on sale at the appliance store to women, they reify social reproduction as women’s work even while shifting the location of such work into the public sphere.

In this essay, I examined why Little Saigon Radio, a popular Vietnamese-language community radio station, would maintain its weekend talk and advertising format at a time when researchers have shown that radio listeners have an unprecedented intolerance for commercials and most varieties of on-air talk as well as an unparalleled number of commercial-free Internet and satellite radio options. Its unrelenting fidelity to a largely information-based weekend programming of infomercials, commercials, and public announcements make little economic sense in the digital age, which suggests that its programming choices are shaped by something more than economic logic. Drawing together its economic, temporal, and affective logics, I argued that the listening public the radio station produces is organized by intertwined discourses of heteronormative love and capitalism and thus constituted by economic and emotional transactions. As such, Little Saigon

Radio's programming schedule is a temporalized structure of listening, feeling, and doing that transforms refugees imagined as lagged or frozen in time into liberal subjects whose daily life is calibrated to heteronormative capitalist time.

Notes

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1. For this article, I have translated all radio transcriptions into English without including a corresponding Vietnamese transcription. I take full responsibility for the accuracy and errors in the translation.
2. Little Saigon is a commercial and residential district in southern California. While it is centralized in the cities of Westminster and Garden Grove, it stretches unevenly into Santa Ana, Stanton, and Fountain Valley.
3. Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 5.
4. *Ibid.*, 201.
5. Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922–1952* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 14.
6. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), 54.
7. *Ibid.*, 44.
8. Little Saigon Radio, www.littlesaigonradio.com (accessed June 17, 2009).
9. Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 71.
10. Sarah McBride, "Radio Shows Tune in to Listener Habits," *Wall Street Journal*, September 17, 2009, www.online.wsj.com/article/SB125314774171818133.html (accessed July 1, 2013).
11. Arbitron, *Radio Today: How America Listens to Radio* (Columbia: Arbitron, 2009).
12. McBride, "Radio Shows."
13. Richard Fusco, "Radio Killed the Radio Star," *Madison Avenue Journal*, October 6, 2005, www.madisonavenuejournal.com/2005/10/06/radio_killed_the_radio_star/ (accessed July 1, 2013).
14. McBride, "Radio Shows."
15. A 2005 New California Media survey does provide some general data on Vietnamese US radio listeners. Among Asian Americans, it found that Vietnamese Americans were the

- largest group of ethnic radio consumers. Forty-four percent of Vietnamese Americans in California were at least secondary consumers of Vietnamese-language Vietnamese American radio. See Donald Browne, "Speaking in Our Own Tongues: Linguistic Minority Radio in the United States," in *Radio Cultures: The Sound Medium in American Life*, ed. Michael C. Keith (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 35.
16. The impact of the global economic recession on Little Saigon is undeniable. Since the end of 2008, restaurants in Little Saigon have experienced a 30 percent drop in business, and 10–15 percent of retail stores have closed down. Do Phu Nguyen, a co-owner of Catinat Plaza in Little Saigon and a practicing attorney, remarks that "he has recently seen a sharp increase in the number of people filing for bankruptcy" (Deepa Bharath, "Little Saigon Struggles through Economic Crisis," *OC Register*, December 24, 2008).
 17. Even with a newly reduced programming schedule, Little Saigon Radio continues to fare relatively well in relation to rival Vietnamese-American radio stations such as Radio Bolsa (California) and Voice of Vietnam (Texas), both of which program substantially less airtime at seven hours per day, Monday through Friday. An emerging rival may be found in Radio Saigon (Texas), which broadcasts seven days per week from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. However, the measure of Little Saigon Radio's cultural power is not only substantive but also symbolic. Because Orange County's Little Saigon remains the cultural and political heart of Vietnamese America, the Little Saigon Radio brand continues to have emotional pull with Vietnamese-American listeners.
 18. Browne, "Speaking in Our Own Tongues," 33.
 19. Karin Aguilar-San Juan, "Staying Vietnamese: Community and Place in Orange County and Boston," *City and Community* 4, no. 1 (2005): 52.
 20. In fact, many of the individually owned Vietnamese restaurants are named "Little Saigon Restaurant" (Orlando, Florida; Falls Church, Virginia; Atlantic City, New Jersey; Glendale, Arizona; Fairbanks, Alaska; Winnipeg, Canada; and Canberra, Australia; among other locations) and "Pho Bolsa" (San Diego and Sacramento, California; Boston, Massachusetts; and York and Toronto, Canada).
 21. *Green Dragon*, directed by Timothy Linh Bui (2001); performed by Patrick Swayze, Duong Don, Trung Nguyen, and Hiep Thi Le.
 22. Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 113.
 23. The anthropologist Liisa Malkki finds that "the domain loosely characterizable as 'refugees and development' appears to have by far the largest social-scientific, documentary accumulation . . . [and further, that] it is in the arena of refugees and development that anthropology has been particularly visible." See Liisa Malkki, "Refugees and Exile: From 'Refugee Studies' to the National Order of Things," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 506.
 24. Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, 10.
 25. For an excellent discussion of the refugee-soldier figure as the embodiment of temporal

- alterity, see Mimi Nguyen's *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).
26. Kwok B. Chan and David Loveridge, "Refugees 'in Transit': Vietnamese in a Refugee Camp in Hong Kong," *International Migration Review* 21, no. 3 (1987): 747.
 27. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 31.
 28. Liisa Malkki, "Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 3 (1996): 389.
 29. See Walter Benjamin's notes on method for *The Arcades Project*, published as "N [Re the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]," in *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History*, ed. Gary Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 43–83; and Wendy Brown's essay, "Resisting Left Melancholy," *boundary 2* 26, no. 3 (1999): 19–27.
 30. Hope and the idea of the United States are firmly linked in the popular imaginary, but in recent years, the interarticulation of these terms was reinforced by Bill Clinton's biopic, *The Man from Hope*, which screened immediately before he accepted the Democratic Party's nomination for presidency at the 1992 Democratic National Convention and by Barack Obama's well-known memoir, *The Audacity of Hope*.
 31. Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 8.
 32. Bui, *Green Dragon*.
 33. See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) and Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).
 34. Robyn Wiegman, "Feminism's Apocalyptic Futures," *New Literary History* 31, no. 4 (2000): 807.
 35. Tom Boellstorff, "When Marriage Falls: Queer Coincidences in Straight Time," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13, nos. 2–3 (2007): 227–48; Halberstam, *Queer Time and Place*; and José Esteban Muñoz, "Queerness as Horizon: Utopian Hermeneutics in the Face of Gay Pragmatism," in *Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies*, ed. George E. Haggerty and Molly McGarry (Indianapolis, IN: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 452–64.
 36. Uli Linke, "Contact Zones: Rethinking the Sensual Life of the State," *Anthropological Theory* 6, no. 2 (2006): 218.
 37. Richard Butsch, "Introduction: Leisure and Hegemony in America," in *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption*, ed. Richard Butsch (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 7.
 38. Joseph Lanza, *Elevator Music: A Surreal History of Muzak, Easy-Listening, and Other Mood-song* (New York: Picador, 1994), 49.

39. Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1912), 43.
40. *Ibid.*, 63.
41. *Ibid.*, 171.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (New York: Verso, 1995).
44. Herbert J. Gans, "Acculturation, Assimilation, and Mobility," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 1 (2007): 158.
45. For more on the relations among consumerism, patriotism, and neoliberalism, see my article, "The Right to Fashion in the Age of Terror," *Signs* 36, no. 2 (2010–11): 385–410.
46. Quoted in Errol Hodge, *Radio Wars: Truth, Propaganda, and the Struggle for Radio Australia* (Melbourne: University of Cambridge Press, 1995), 117.
47. Henri Lefebvre, "Work and Leisure in Everyday Life," in *The Everyday Life Reader*, ed. Ben Highmore (New York: Routledge, 2002), 234.
48. Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 190.
49. Jamie Owen Daniel and Tom Moylan, "Why Not Yet, Now?," in *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*, ed. Jamie Owen Daniel and Tom Moylan (New York: Verso, 1997), viii.
50. Michael Hardt, "Affective Labor," *boundary 2* 26, no. 2 (1999): 89.
51. The broadcasting industry describes radio as a "secondary medium," one that captures the full attention of neither consumers nor advertisers. As this essay attempts to show, such a denigrating perspective of radio both misses the complex and significant role radio plays in the everyday lives of some Americans as well as severely underestimates the social and political effects of inattentive listening.
52. Lauren Berlant, "Intimacy: A Special Issue," in *Intimacy*, ed. Lauren Berlant (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 2.
53. Another My Kim Jewelry infomercial I heard on June 6, 2009 (aired from 10:50 a.m. to 11:10 a.m.) began with Oanh Anh (the host) asking Nina about a cough she had been dealing with for the past few days (Oanh Anh did not mention how she knew about Nina's cough) and then continued with both women comparing the overcast weather in Westminster, California, that Saturday with weather they experienced as little girls in Vietnam. A full fifty-eight seconds elapsed before any of My Kim Jewelry's products were mentioned.
54. My Linh and Nina's use of the kinship pronoun *chi* in the context of an infomercial suggests a relation between capital and emotional economies. However, the significance given to these economies is not equal for all Vietnamese. For some Vietnamese Americans, the emotional and ideological investment they have in Little Saigon as an anticommunist utopia far exceeds their significant vested economic interests. When thousands of Vietnamese

Americans jammed parking lots in Little Saigon to protest Truong Van Tran's display of a Ho Chi Minh poster in his Hi-Tek Video store in 1999, business in much of Little Saigon halted. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that "customers are in no mood to shop there and can't find parking spots anyway." Don Lee and Jeff Gottlieb, "Little Saigon Protests Take Economic Toll; Business: Angry Crowds at Video Store Scare Customers Away from Other Shops. City and Merchants Say They're in Trouble," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 24, 1999, <http://articles.latimes.com/1999/feb/24/news/mn-11195>. Since the mid-1980s, there have been approximately 215 Vietnamese-led protests, the majority of which were centered in Orange County's Little Saigon, an officially recognized "no communist zone" since 2004.

55. Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," *Hedgehog Review* 9, no. 2 (2007): 16.
56. Svetlana Boym, "On Diasporic Intimacy: Ilya Kabakov's Installations and Immigrant Homes," in *Intimacy*, ed. Lauren Berlant (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 230, 229.
57. Sara Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 4 (2006): 543-74.
58. Geeta Patel, "Time to Tell: How to Tell the Proper Time? Finance and Cinema," *GLQ* 13, nos. 2-3 (2007): 295.
59. Halberstam, *Queer Time and Place*, 2.
60. *Ibid.*, 5.
61. Ahmed, "Orientations," 559.
62. Ann Cvetkovich and Ann Pellegrini, "Introduction: Public Sentiments," *The Scholar and Feminist Online* 2, no. 1 (2003): sfoonline.barnard.edu/ps/intro.htm.
63. Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), xi.
64. Kathi Weeks, "Life within and against Work: Affective Labor, Feminist Critique, and Post-Fordist Politics," *ephemera* 7, no. 1, (2007): 246.
65. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1995), 151, 149.