Feminist Collaborations: In Conversation with Lan Duong

Lan Duong

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In academia, Lan Duong is mainly known as a feminist scholar of diasporic Vietnamese literature, art, and cinema. An Associate Professor in Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Southern California, USA, she is the author of *Treacherous Subjects: Gender, Culture and Trans-Vietnamese Feminism* (Temple University Press, 2012) and has published essays in *Signs, MELUS, Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, Journal of Asian American Studies, Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, Amerasia, Asian Cinema, Discourse, Velvet Light Trap,* and the anthologies, *Transnational Feminism in Film and Media, Southeast Asian Cinema, Recollecting Vietnam,* and *Gendering the Transpacific*. She is also co-founder of the Critical Refugee Studies (CRS) collective, a California-based group of scholars whose research is committed to centering the perspectives of refugee communities (https://criticalrefugeestudies.com/).

Duong is also a poet and a community arts organiser, having curated art exhibitions and put together film festivals that explore Vietnamese American culture and history. In this wide-ranging conversation, we speak to her about the relationship between writing poetry and academic scholarship, how her family's refugee journey from Saigon to Pennsylvania to Southern California and her subsequent visits to Vietnam shape her creative and critical work, what it means to both theorise and practise collaboration, collective organising in the Trump era, and the importance of situating refugee narratives within broader histories of imperialism and settler colonialism. The conversation below took place online in early August 2021, with Duong in Pasadena, California, USA and Lee and Tong in Sydney, Australia.

Fiona Lee (FL): I assume that your creative activities inform your scholarship in some way and vice versa. Could you tell us about the different kinds of work that you do and how you came to do all these things?

Lan Duong (LD): My first book, *Treacherous Subjects*, put forth a gender and sexual analytic—what I called "trans-Vietnamese feminism"—for analysing 20th-century Vietnamese film and literature. One of the things that I examined is how familial structures dictate the ways in which Vietnamese subjects—both in Vietnam and the diaspora—have seen themselves within history. For example, a lot of political discourse is about family and how we need to keep this family-as-nation cohesive, bounded and bonded together. I'm critical of that because women, non-binary people, and those who are marginalised by society are often excluded. In being marginalised and in outing themselves—or ourselves—as traitors to that national family, there is a dynamic of betrayal in speaking out, in writing, or in expressing oneself.

I now work mainly in cinema and with the Critical Refugee Studies (CRS) collective, which I co-founded in 2016 with Yến Lê Espiritu (Distinguished Professor of Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego). The kernel of it all was her book, *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)* (University of California Press, 2014), which is about the Vietnam War and what she calls "the good refugee." Having read that, I thought it'd be great to have a kind of [critical] formation that looks at refugees—not only Vietnamese refugees and Southeast Asian refugees—from all over the world throughout significant historical periods to think through how the refugee is a social actor, a figure of critique, and a figure who is also full of imagination and creativity. The impetus for the collective was to rethink and reformulate how we understand refugees, who are often seen by academia and mainstream culture as suffering, traumatised masses of people who do not have much agency.

This turn in my critical attention made me rethink my own poetry. I've recently completed a poetry manuscript about refugees and girlhood. As you mentioned, my research and creative writing inform each other. They co-constitutively help me think through my academic inquiries into Vietnamese refugee histories, and also my own memories, my family's immigration history. And what that means for me as a writer, a

feminist, and how I see myself as an archivist in that I'm trying to archive all these different types of communal and personal memories. My first book is about feminist writing, collaborative work—or, collaborative acts—and the transnational, and these interests are carried over into my creative writing. I'm at that juncture in my career and in my writing life where it's coming together really nicely.

FL: You suggested that your more recent work with the CRS collective made you reflect on poetry; yet, your earlier published poems suggest that creative writing has been something that you've been doing all along.
LD: About 20 years ago when I started writing poetry, I was less ambitious. I thought I would be a writer and not be an academic. Then I became inspired by Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*—on the back cover of the novel, I read that she was both a teacher and writer and so I thought, "I could do this. I could get my PhD and still write." You know how we have those ambitions? During grad school, I couldn't write because we were so busy learning another language (i.e. theory). While I was reading the dryness that is Derrida, I was going to poetry readings and I was writing here and there, and I think that just helped me continue to cultivate an appreciation for language, its power, and remembering the ways words helped me organise and put away the grief, the sadness, and the fear.

I tell students that poetry saved my life; after the long days, years, of writing—for me, almost a decade of dissertating—the well-crafted line in poetry made me think about the beauty and economy of language. After I wrote my book, I returned to it because I thought I hadn't heard that voice in a long time and it was really important for me to bring it out. Gaining tenure helps you free yourself from the constraints of academic writing. I'm at a point in my life where I can say, "Screw it, I don't want to write this way anymore and I want to do something else." That something else for me has been poetry.

FL: The association of poetry with feelings and of theory with the intellect can reinforce a gendered division of labour, with the former deemed feminine and the latter, masculine. Yet, the trajectory of your career shows how both feed each other and the importance of thinking against conventional gender roles.
LD: That's a really good point. It's not as if poetry and academic criticism are separate kinds of discourses. In fact, the best kinds of writers can do both: be critical and creative and have a political vision that holds power and meaning. In retrospect, the only way I was able to push through the first book was to think creatively about how to write academically.

There are people who do both well—I'm thinking about Trinh T. Minh-ha who is just a polymath. She's able to write poetry, write theoretical criticism, and is also a filmmaker. That kind of dexterity is something I strive for. So, in my second academic book, which is about the archive and Vietnamese cinema, I am injecting the personal and my recollections of being in an archive in a way that's more poetic.

FL: *Treacherous Acts* explores the double meaning of collaboration, i.e. how refugees who left Vietnam were perceived by the Vietnamese government as working with the enemy and how, in the wake of the 1980s economic reforms, they were seen as diasporans who could aid in the country's advancement. Collaboration is also a key practice in your academic as well as creative pursuits. Could you tell us about the poem you wrote in collaboration with the *She Who Has No Masters* collective?

LD: The poem, "Love|Object|Treason," is a melding of feminist voices to critique and comment on how Vietnamese women and non-binary subjects are often seen and not seen by those in the mainstream, mostly by men, and how we're sexualised and objectified. The collaborative poem deals not just with Vietnamese women as objects; it is also about a love for oneself, for one's culture and country, and also about being seen as treasonous or traitors.

The idea was thought out by Dao Strom, a poet who lives in Oregon. She's a dear friend of mine and she was thinking about my book, in which I talked about the importance of feminist collective work and the idea of collaboration, which was the kernel of the poem. We—a collective of womyn and non-binary writers—came together through her prodding. We gathered at a retreat on the island of Corse and it was wonderful, because I've never been a part of a writing retreat or group formation where all we did was eat, drink, talk about poetry, and write together. It was amazing and so freeing. I understand now how important it is for us to have our own space to breathe, to think, and to write. Dao chose certain lines from each of our poems and put them together loosely around certain associative images and ideas. What came out of that collaborative space was a reading that we did at the American Library in Paris where we all assembled to read our parts and, behind us, were the Vietnamese, French, and English translations of the work, which were also reproduced in print in the journal, *AJAR*. We emphasised an orality to the reading, but also a visuality that helped to complement the ways in which we were thinking about images, languages, and the different types of world-making that we were all invested in.

Since then, there has been another retreat and other events, but I think that first retreat was really formative for me because I was able to see this as a potential art practice. I have theorised about collaborative work and been part of a community organising different art exhibits and film festivals, but this was something completely born out of the desire to be a poet. It was during that time in Corse and Paris that I was able to reclaim that identity of a poet, which was huge for me, because I didn't see myself as a poet for so long. It was revelatory and empowering.

FL: There are indeed several common threads that run through both your scholarly work and poetry. The subject of family is another one. Do the different genres of writing perform distinct functions for you in your thinking? What, for example, does poetry do for you?

LD: When I started writing poetry, being the family archivist was very important for me and telling that refugee history of fleeing Vietnam right after Saigon fell and being the daughter of a Lieutenant Colonel, who served in both the French and American armies, and what that meant for us to leave Vietnam. I think I've carried that from Vietnam to the US and back to Vietnam again, since I'm travelling between the two countries a lot. That was the impetus for writing poetry years ago.

FL: It's interesting that it's through poetry that you perform the role of family archivist. A recurring image I've noticed in your poems is the image of the speaker giving massages to different family members: father, mother, and sister. I was thinking that the act of massaging might serve as a trope for your scholarly work, in the sense that you're trying to feel out the tensions, the knots, and the pressure points. The aim is not to reveal and expose, but to heal and bring relief.

LD: The girl figure in my poems is often the person who touches the different family members and feels their pain in order to try and help them relieve their knots and tensions. One such poem is "The Healing," which deals with coining, but I wanted to talk about how it was a healing gesture on the girl narrator's part. Also in other poems such as "In This House," "Brother 2," and "My Mother is Bui Doi," I wanted to talk about the healing that comes from being within this family and talking: the kinds of words that the sisters would relay to the narrator about their mother and their father that really nourish the narrator and let her put the pieces together—that is one of the resonant threads that underline the manuscript. This goes with the duality or dialectic that I wanted to show in my academic book, that there is both inclusion and exclusion, a feeling of being a part of something but then also being a traitor to something. So, the flip side of feeling nourished—and I have a lot of images of voracious eating—is that the narrator feels full, sick, and tired of eating, of feeling too much and seeing too much. There is that underside to being an archivist, feeling too much, and understanding the histories that collide together within this small familial space.

FL: What is your poetry manuscript about?

LD: It's called "Girlhood and Other Dirty Stories". I'm thinking through girlhood as well as refugeehood. I call it memoiristic poetry: it's a collection of work that aims to document our arrival in the US in 1975, the multiple migrations that have occurred since then, and the multiple displacements that I felt or felt through the family.

It begins in a small, working-class town called Butler, Pennsylvania, where a Catholic congregation sponsored our Catholic family's arrival as refugees. It was in that milieu that I learnt about whiteness as being married to a working-class identity. I understood whiteness to be small town; I understood whiteness to be racist; I understood whiteness as Catholic rigour because I was taught by white nuns throughout most of my childhood there. Compellingly, I also learnt about the whiteness of snow and it was a revelation for me to be

in snow. But, because of the weather, our family decided to move to California and it's a kind of migration story that a lot of Vietnamese refugees experienced because the US government had placed us in all these different states in order to not burden the state's social welfare networks.

So, from Arkansas to various parts of Texas and Georgia, many Vietnamese families migrated to California and part of that migration was because of the tech boom of the 1980s, and this was before the Silicon Valley exploded. The conditions by which we tried to make a living were what feminists would argue were "third-world conditions." We worked at home, we worked on the weekends, we worked 24/7—that's how we got by. I wanted to document all that, because this particular moment in Vietnamese refugee history and migration had shaped the relatively high rates of Vietnamese American participation in the high-tech industry and also the kinds of popular culture that came out of California. I'm talking about New Wave and our celebration of Eurotrash music—it was a style and an aesthetic to which I wanted to pay homage.

FL: On that note, I'll now pass it over to Amy.

Amy Tong (AT): Hi Lan, I wanted to say that your academic work as well as that of your colleagues, like Yến Le Espiritu, really helped me to engage with my family's refugee history. In particular, I'm really interested in the work that you do for CRS and I was curious as to how concepts such as decolonisation or the transpacific—current buzzwords in academic discourse—translate into your work at a community grassroots level, if they do at all. How do these abstract concepts play out in practice outside of academia?

LD: With the CRS collective, we are very much invested in tracking across the transpacific geography the ways in which refugees migrate and move because of militarised history. Part of our lexicon is to specifically talk about refugees situated within the transpacific regions and to consider the transpacific activities of landlocked refugees, as well as the boat passages that refugees take to countries like Australia. How can we think about refugee journeys and migration histories differently? That is the main axis of our work. We also deal with African histories of refugeehood and refugee consciousness, as well as refugees travelling throughout Latin America to North America, for example. So on the one hand, some of us are talking about transpacific subjectivities and histories and on the other hand, some are not – it's not as geographically bounded.

Another part of what you said that does resonate with our methodology is a decolonial methodology, not exactly decolonisation. Decolonisation here speaks to the formal processes by which a colonised country gains independence and enacts self-rule in the wake of its coloniser's withdrawal. Decoloniality, per Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, is "a praxis of doing and undoing." I regard the imperative to think of decolonial methods as a way to decentre Western forms of knowledge and to uplift Indigenous epistemologies and experiences. In our forthcoming book, *Departures: An Introduction to Critical Refugee Studies* (University of

California Press), Yến and I draw from and often are inspired by the work of Eve Tuck, Maile Arvin, Angie Morrill, Audra Simpson, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Lisa Stevenson, who are looking to decolonise the way that we understand sovereignty, subjecthood, and national territories. It has really been enabling for us to think about how refugees can offer critiques of these kinds of bounded notions.

Yến and I have also talked about decolonial methodologies through the concept of Feminist Refugee Epistemology by way of looking at Vietnamese and Syrian art. This methodology entails not looking at masculinist, nationalist spectacles of refugees. Instead, we turn towards the quiet, the domestic, the interior—to what we think might be an archive or a space for feminism and queer potentiality. We began by looking at how dominant representations of refugees were structured by a colonial way of looking. For example, refugee suffering is, I argue, a colonial way of looking at the Other, at Third World subjects and natives. That way of looking is something we inherited from Western colonialism and US imperialism. It was important for us to connect all these larger paradigms of power and then upend them by putting forth a decolonial way of looking, which requires focusing on the unspectacular as a result. One of the things that I've also tried to emphasise is a different way of hearing and listening to refugee stories.

So, that's where the decolonial and the transpacific come into play. I understand they have a lot of traction in academic discourse but for us, they are very practical and political ways of using these terms and concepts. We're invested in making meaning from these concepts and having that meaning translate to communities and not just other academics. So to your second question then—how do these practices translate to community organising?—that's the hard part. For example, I'm part of VSAN, a virtual media group that arose because of the Trump era and the pandemic in 2020. It emerged in response to the growing concern among left and progressive Viets that the more conservative and reactionary voices of the Vietnamese American community were dominating the political discourse. It was 3,000+ people strong when it started and was the space for us, I believe, to think collectively and seriously about the Vietnamese Left and what this formation would look like. We came together virtually and we talk a lot about decolonisation and militarism; yet to actually act on these concepts or implement them as practices in real life is so hard, because we're all over the country. Part of the problem is that we haven't had the opportunity to meet in person, to have a lot of skin in the game and take collective action. I think it can be done but right now, with the group that I'm in, we don't have that kind of infrastructure in place to put this together.

One of the things that I've tried to emphasise to this particular group is the importance of having radical compassion and that was so important for me during the 2020 US elections, because we would hear about Vietnamese Americans who supported Trump and who would do horrendous things, such as participate in the January 6th riots at the US Capitol, for example. I try to emphasise how important it is to understand our refugee histories and our diasporic formations as a radical practice of empathy for our elders and political

others. That has been very hard for me, because I have family who are Trump supporters, so it was something that I had to practise not only outside of family, but definitely inside the family as well.

AT: How do we come to terms with that? In terms of the Vietnamese American community and the growing right-wing support for conservative governments that push for anti-immigration policies, how do we make sense of that?

LD: Right, that is such a loaded question. Orange County, California is a hotbed of anti-communist activity and so is San Jose, where I'm originally from. There's been so much anti-communist activity, sentiment, and violence that I've witnessed, experienced myself, and seen throughout our history here since 1975. But, what can we do besides practise radical empathy? I think we still need to try to mobilise those who are within the same group. For example, I gave a presentation to a group of young activists and I talked about my own experience of being branded a traitor to the Vietnamese American community for doing an art exhibit that showed images of Ho Chi Minh. I talked about being outed and marginalised, and how painful that was, but also how resolute I became as somebody who will critique the same community I belong to. I think it behooves us to understand where they're coming from—it's not just elders but a younger generation of Vietnamese diasporans as well who have experienced communist persecution and who have migrated in more recent years—those feelings of persecution are historically situated and also very real; in fact, the Vietnamese state is still intent on turning its back on the Vietnamese diaspora and on cleansing itself of its refugee history. There is so much importance in understanding that, as well as why the elder generation would want us to continue preserving South Vietnamese histories and legacies.

On the other hand, I also don't agree with the anti-Black politics, racist stances, or patriarchal nationalist modes of showing love for pre-1975 Saigon amongst the elder generation of Vietnamese diasporans. Their ways of marginalising and constantly teaching what Vietnamese history is and emphasising what it is that the younger generation don't know or understand, I find to be very patriarchal and patronising. So I tell these young activists that we need to stop trying to talk to them. At some point, we have to gather our energies and efforts towards something bigger than this refugee community and history that we come from and that we're a part of. It's so important for us to mobilise across cultures, across formations, and historical relationships.

AT: One thing that I've started to notice is that contemporary discourse, particularly the perceived rise of China and decline of the American Empire, almost echoes 20th-century Cold War discourse. From your observations, how has this new Cold War discourse shaped community politics in the trans-Vietnamese context?

LD: From what I can see in the Vietnamese trans-American community today, there is a patriotic celebration of US nationalism and masculinity that is embodied in a figure like Trump. From their perspective, this figure

is able to browbeat China. So there is that interplay of feeling that China needs to be punished, because of the history between China and Vietnam—it's over a thousand years long, and more recently, there is the Chinese state's appropriation of Vietnam's Spratly Islands. There is anti-Chinese sentiment that is legitimate and justified, but also a kind of Sinophobia that is an overlay from the Cold War and has just found a resurgence in the ways in which Trumpism addresses China in the contemporary moment.

I think the Cold War discourse that you talk about has profoundly shaped the diasporic formations of the Vietnamese refugee community, not only in the US but also in Australia, France, and other countries where the Vietnamese diaspora find themselves. In speaking of that, I'm a co-editor with Isabelle Thuy Pelaud of the book manuscript, which we hope to publish next year, *On Being a Writer: Vietnamese Diasporic Writers in Dialogue*. In it, we bring into dialogue various writers from the Vietnamese diaspora including Ocean Vuong from the US, Kim Thúy from Canada, Vaan Nguyễn from Israel, and Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai from Indonesia. So, the Vietnamese diaspora has in fact been formed and informed by the Cold War and its discourses; our academic study has also been informed by that, so we can't separate out these different strands.

AT: On that note of creating opportunities for dialogue between diasporic Vietnamese communities across the globe, there is, however, little awareness within the Vietnamese Australian community of the ongoing legacies of Indigenous displacement and dispossession, and I'm curious to see whether this is the same for other settler colonial countries. Particularly in the Australian context, refugees risk reproducing colonial logics in their attempts to assimilate and integrate. In your opinion, is the refugee a settler?

LD: Oh, yeah. The logical conclusion that we as scholars, writers, and artists often come to or are trying to understand in that decolonial framework, is that we are settlers, whether in North America, Australia or other similar countries. It is a history that the Vietnamese diaspora don't really talk about and I trace it all the way back to the Vietnamese appropriation and settler colonialism of the Cham territory in the historical origins of Vietnam. To this day, settler colonialism is a mode of managing ethnic minorities in Vietnam like the Cham. It is a history that isn't discussed enough in academia, in community discourses, in mainstream discourses either in the diaspora or in Vietnam. I think you're absolutely right in that it is an unspoken history that we have yet to really explore.

AT: How would we even go about bringing this unspoken history to the table?

LD: I think this is a very important strand for me to follow through too. Vietnam is an imperial power historically speaking and contemporaneously as well. From the radical leftist point of view, we often think of Vietnam as a victim of US imperialism and as the US's first failed war, so there is a sense of failure or tragedy that hovers over how Vietnam is understood. However, Vietnam has also been an imperial power and it wants to have its own empire separate to China—with the collaboration of the US ironically. We need to pay

attention to these imperialising moments, to name them as such, and to disclose these kinds of histories that have really been submerged. They are submerged not just by imperial powers, but by the Vietnamese diaspora, which is mainly composed of the ethnic Kinh majority. There isn't a model for understanding and articulating race relations within the Vietnamese community in Vietnam and in the diaspora so as a result, we continue to reproduce the prejudices and discriminations that are with us today.

FL: I'm curious to learn from your perspective as a CRS scholar about the ongoing refugee crisis in Southeast Asia today and what the Vietnamese experience teaches us. Refugee-hosting countries like Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia have not signed the UN Refugee Convention and their policy for dealing with refugees is to not have a policy, i.e. to refuse to acknowledge the problem (the Philippines is an exception). This particular stance has its roots in the region's response to the Indochina refugee crisis in the 1970s and 1980s. Given the refusal to grant official recognition to refugees and asylum seekers in these places, the arts has become a key arena for seeking and promoting visibility of this issue. What are your thoughts about the affordances of art and culture as sites of visibility and recognition? Are there also limitations about which we should be critically aware?

LD: That's an important question to ask. I've mostly been talking about a US-Vietnam relationship and other major powers. In thinking about the refugee exodus from Vietnam very specifically, there were a whole host of Southeast Asian countries that were involved, because of the US's militarist relationship with the Philippines, for example, or military occupations of other countries, such as Guam. The routes in which Vietnamese refugees travelled in order to migrate were in place even before 1975, but other Southeast Asian countries were definitely involved.

The Philippines' refugee policies have been open but also repressive. Speaking of diasporic cultural forms, Duc Nguyen is a director whose films, *Bolinao 52* (2008) and *Stateless* (2013), deal with Vietnamese refugees in the Philippines and how those who are stateless or asylum seekers are still there 45 years on. They basically cannot go back to Vietnam, but they also can't move out of the Philippines.

There has also been work dealing with refugee camps in Malaysia and how refugee communities have erected their own memorial sites in order to commemorate the refugees that have been there. Binh Danh has a series of photographs of refugee camps in Pulau Bidong and I think the purpose of these photographs is to remind viewers of this moment when Vietnamese refugees and other Southeast Asian refugees were encamped there. The camps have been razed and destroyed, but there is a memory trace that his photographs try to reconstruct. I find them really powerful.

Another artist whose work I include in that article I wrote with Yến is Tiffany Chung, who talks about the refugees who found themselves in Hong Kong. She looks at the archives in Hong Kong and re-visualises the ways in which refugee encampments are placed on a map. She reconfigures the way their trajectories have

been narrated and visualised by other artists and academics, bringing into historical focus the relationships that refugees have with other countries outside of that US-France-Australia dynamic. Again, they're such powerful works that resonate within the diaspora because of the kinds of refugee histories that the West tends to forget or not have any desire to talk about. I think art is a powerful space to explore these untold histories.

FL: As you noted, Malaysia, where I'm from, has a history of being a transit point for refugees from Indochina. It is now a prolonged transit point for many refugees from Myanmar and the Middle East given the extended processing times for asylum seekers seeking entry to countries like Australia and the US due to the rise of right-wing politics in these destination countries. In response to the continuing refusal of governments to acknowledge refugee rights, well-meaning (and sometimes exploitative) social enterprises and humanitarian organizations present refugees as victims in need of rescue. The artists you mention challenge and complicate this narrative.

LD: If I could talk about another project dealing with the populations or geographies that you just mentioned—the CRS collective, in collaboration with the University of California Press, is also interested in academic work that explores these different histories that are deemed not spectacular enough. So, when you talk about in-transit sites, we're particularly interested in academic writing and research that looks deeply into the way asylum seekers are processed and the kinds of transitional states that refugees undergo at different points of crossing. Your mention of Malaysia as one such site reminded me of the exciting work coming out from scholars who are intervening in refugee studies and in Cold War discourse to chip away at how state agencies and countries of the Global South are processing and containing asylum seekers in myriad ways. There are many scholars I admire, but to name just a few: Olivia Quintanilla, who works on climate refugees and the Pacific Islands; Lina Chunn, who writes about trauma and the Cambodian genocide; and Loubna Qutami, who focuses on Palestinian and diasporic Palestinian youths and their political activism. There's a lot of good work being done creatively and culturally, but another area that the CRS collective aims to nurture, with the funding we've received from the University of California, is academic research inquiry as well.

You'd said earlier that the refugee crisis is ongoing and that is absolutely true. But one of the things that I would like to emphasise is that the state of emergency that often heralds the visibility of refugees in the global media needs to be understood in the context of the ongoingness of displacement. That displacement has been with us for a very long time and these states of emergency have been placed upon refugees and the refugee condition. But, in fact, it has always been there. I would caution against seeing this crisis as urgent. Not that it's not, but it fractures our long view of connecting these contemporary moments of crisis to longer standing histories of colonialism, settler colonialism, and imperialism.

FL: Thank you for the important reminder. In light of that and by way of wrapping up our conversation, what kind of critical, creative, and collaborative work is really needed right now? What role do and can artists, writers, filmmakers, and scholars play?

LD: I think about it in terms of the story and how important it is to get our stories out. The responsibility does rely on a great number of people and not just a select number of elite writers or artists who get invited to speak and represent the larger group. I think it's so important for refugee artists and scholars to create a community of storytellers and be able to distribute, translate, and circulate our own stories. One of our efforts at the CRS collective is to think about the archive virtually. On our website, we archive the creative works of artists from all over the world and the reason we wanted to do that was to create a space for refugee art to be visible, accessible, and to inspire others, but also to be used as a pedagogical tool. There are a lot of different ways I'm trying to think about creating an infrastructure that will allow us to circulate our own stories and an infrastructure that is outside the usual, dominant structures of power. I think it's very important for us to continually create or build on our stories.

Duong's published works of poetry and her scholarly works mentioned in the interview are listed below.

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