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Vietnamese Perspectives on the War in Vietnam

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AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY
OF WORKS IN ENGLISH

John C. Schafer
Humboldt State University



Lạc Việt 17 • 1997

Dan Duffy, Editor

Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies

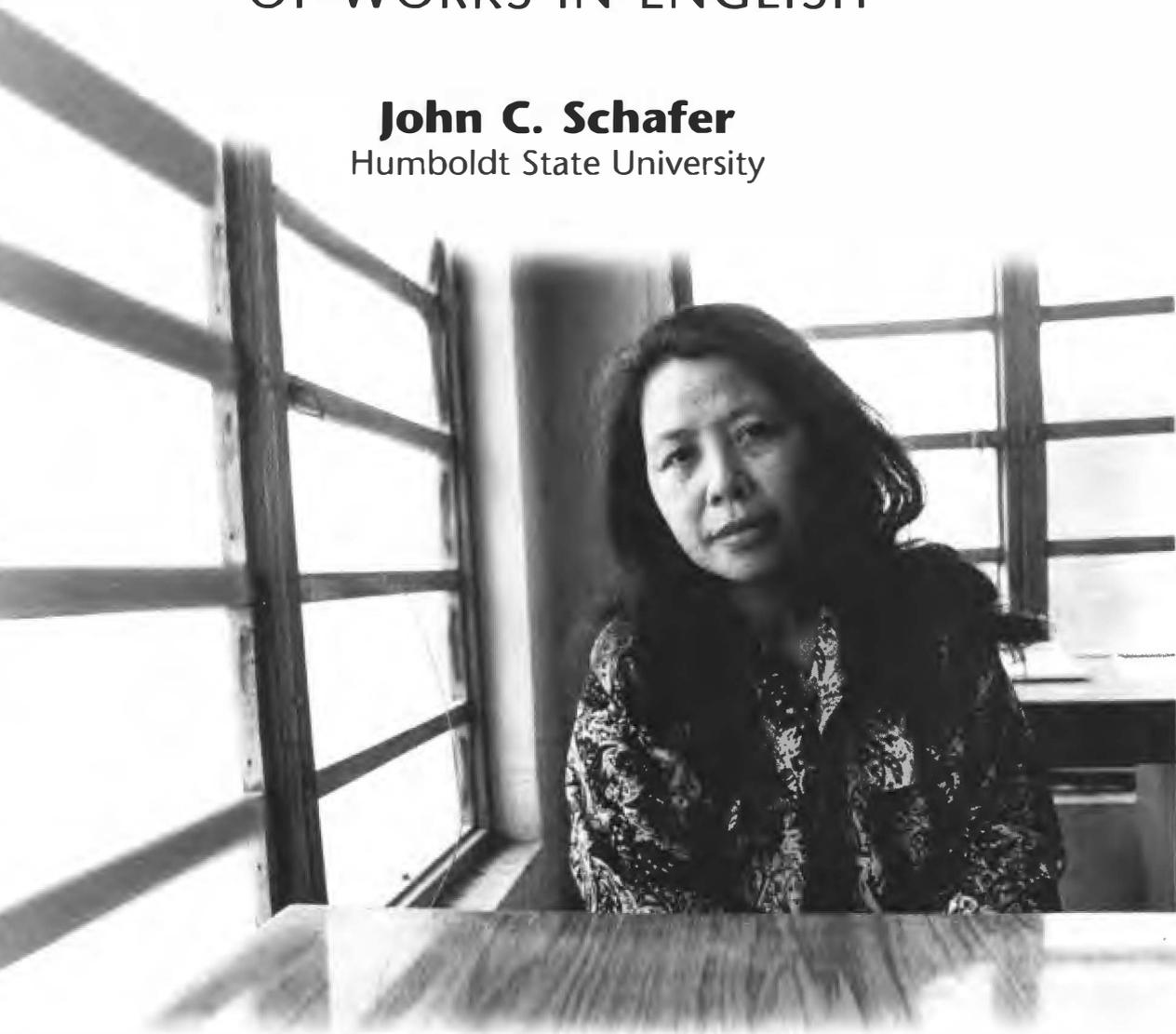
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Lạc Việt

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**Vietnamese Perspectives
on the War in Vietnam:
An Annotated Bibliography
of Works in English
by John C. Schafer**

Lạc Việt 17

Dan Duffy, Editor

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by grants from the Ford Foundation.

J. Joseph Errington, Chair

The Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies

Yale Center for International and Area Studies

Cover photo of author Lê Minh Khuê, People's Army of Vietnam veteran
of the American War, in her office at the Writers Union Publishing House
in Ha Noi, winter 1996, by Tim Karr.

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Introduction

[A] still more implicit and powerful difference posited by the Orientalist as against the Oriental is that the former writes about, whereas the latter is written about.¹

— Edward W. Said

The U.S. lost the shooting war, but, so far, it is winning the meta-war.²

— Renny Christopher

Rationale

In universities in the U.S., works about the war in Vietnam are taught most commonly in history and political science courses but also in special topic courses in English departments and sometimes as part of programs that address conflict resolution and issues related to war and peace. Rarely are works by Vietnamese assigned in these courses. History textbooks on the war present American perspectives, often suggesting, as David Hunt points out, that the Vietnamese victory was a result of American mistakes and had nothing, or at least precious little, to do with actions by Vietnamese.

In courses on Vietnam War literature, courses proposed in many instances as alternatives to the traditional canon of U.S. literature, a new canon has developed of personal memoirs and fiction by privileged white American men. Philip Caputo's *Rumor of War*, Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, and a work by Tim O'Brien (*Going After Cacciato* or *The Things They Carried*) are usually present. The absence of Vietnamese voices in courses on the war has, as Christopher points out, produced the reverse of the adage "Winners write history; losers live with it." Euro-Americans are winning the meta-war that will determine how people (Americans, at least) will remember the war (2, 4).

Why have Vietnamese works been ignored? Based on her reading of Vietnamese

¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978) 308.

² Renny Christopher, *The Viet Nam War/The American War: Images and Representations in Euro-American and Vietnamese Exile Narratives*, p. 4. See bibliography for full citation. Works mentioned in this introduction or in an introduction to one of the sections will not be footnoted if they are listed in the bibliography.

exile narratives, Christopher suggests one reason: Euro-American ethnocentrism. She approvingly quotes Timothy Lomperis: "Most of the literature of the Vietnam War is an exercise in American cultural narcissism" (11). According to Christopher, most Euro-American narratives about the war are de-politicized stories characterized by a "mythologizing and valorizing of personal experience" (2). Vietnamese exile narratives, with their emphasis on communality and bi-culturalism (loyalty to both Vietnam and the U.S., for example), challenge this dominant discourse. They force American readers to look at an exotic "other" as they look at themselves, a double perspective that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Although I think there is some truth in Christopher's explanation, she is talking only about works by Vietnamese living abroad, and even in regard to these my own view for their being neglected is somewhat less accusatory. Some teachers of courses on the war have been eager to assign works by Vietnamese but haven't known how to locate suitable texts. Until recently not many works by Vietnamese were available in English. Euro-American ethnocentrism may in part explain the scarcity, but it is certainly not the only cause. Works by communist writers were translated and appeared in editions published by the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Hanoi, but most of these were stories in the socialist realism mode, a mode that many American readers, even those not afflicted with Euro-American ethnocentrism, would find boring or repugnant or both. Moreover, these editions were not sold in bookstores in the U.S.; they were available only in some academic libraries and through Movement outlets. Before the cold war thawed in the late 1980's, some teachers hesitated to assign these works for fear of being accused of spreading communist propaganda.

Vietnamese in the South produced a variety of literature between 1954-1975, but even to this day only a very few works have been translated. It is puzzling why more works by our allies have not been translated. In Saigon during the war there was no equivalent to Hanoi's Foreign Language Publishing House to translate and publish stories for distribution abroad. Recently commercial publishers in Europe and the U.S. have published works by Renovation writers (See below) from the North, but they haven't been interested in publishing works by our allies, perhaps because works by former enemies are thought to be more exotic and marketable than works by those who were comrades in arms. As for exile narratives in English, not many have been published. Christopher finds only nine, and most of these were published by small, obscure publishers. But again, one shouldn't be too quick to cite Euro-American ethnocentrism as the cause. Until recently, most older Vietnamese refugees were too busy surviving economically to write in any language. If they were writing in Vietnamese, which usually was the case, they didn't know how to get their works translated and published in English. Many younger Vietnamese could speak Vietnamese but, educated in U.S. schools, their Vietnamese writing skills were underdeveloped. They were busy struggling to become proficient in English.

The situation is changing, however. After the Sixth Party Congress in 1986,

Vietnamese writers achieved some freedom to publish works that broke with government demands, dictates that had stifled creativity and frustrated writers and editors at least since 1975. Although Party officials apparently became alarmed, particularly when the iconoclastic writer Nguyễn Huy Thiệp began publishing stories that portrayed famous Vietnamese historical figures unfavorably, the genie was out of the bottle and a variety of works were produced and published in Vietnam or in some cases smuggled out of the country to be published first in Vietnamese and then translated into English. Vietnamese exiles, given time to adapt economically and socially to the U.S., and to learn English, have produced more works.

Great gaps remain: not all perspectives are adequately represented. As mentioned above, very few works written in Vietnamese in South Vietnam have been translated. There is now, however, a substantial body of work by Vietnamese available. This bibliography is designed to introduce this literature to readers. I've prepared it primarily with teachers in mind, but I hope students and other interested readers will find it useful as well.

Contents

Works are categorized under eleven different headings. At the start of each section I explain the category and offer some teaching suggestions relating to the works in it. Here is a list of the sections:

- Introduction
- I. Bibliographies
- II. Works from the Colonial Period (1867-1945)
- III. Historical Accounts, Memoirs
- IV. Literary History and Criticism
- V. Autobiographical Accounts, Personal Memoirs, Reportage, *Tùy Bút*
- VI. Cultural Background: Religion, Language, Myths, Legends
- VII. Works of Socialist Realism from the North and "Liberated" South
- VIII. Fiction from the Non-Communist South
- IX. Accounts of Imprisonment and Reeducation
- X. Vietnamese Exile Narratives
- XI. Contemporary Literature, *Đổi Mới* (Renovation)
- List of Works Annotated

Organization

Though not every category is a literary period, the arrangement is roughly chronological, moving from accounts of colonial Vietnam to recent works that discuss post-war Vietnam and the life of exiles abroad. Since my arrangement is primarily chronological,

I haven't created a separate category for works by or about women, but these works are well-represented in the bibliography. Many works, particularly those in Section V (Literary History and Criticism), clearly fit into more than one category. My approach has been to put a full listing for a work—citation plus annotation—under the most appropriate, usually more specific, heading and place only a citation with a cross-reference under other possible headings. For example, full listings for the articles by Quí-Phiệt Trần on Vietnamese exile literature are found in Section X (Vietnamese Exile Narratives); partial listings (citations only) appear in Section IV (Literary History and Criticism). As an additional aid in locating works, an alphabetical (by author) "List of Works Annotated" appears at the end. Each citation on this list ends with a roman numeral that indicates the section where the annotation for the work is found.

In my title I mention the "War in Vietnam." In preparing this bibliography I sought out works that dealt primarily with the period from 1954-1975 which Hanoi historians refer to as the "Second Resistance," the first, of course, being the one against the French that culminated in the French defeat at Điện Biên Phủ. But since it is impossible to understand the second war without going further back in history (Vietnam did not begin with the arrival of the Americans!), I've included works relating to earlier periods.

Although war has been a fact of life for Vietnamese for generations, one must realize that Vietnam for Vietnamese is a place, not a war or a metaphor for waste and violence. To encourage readers to realize that Vietnam is more than a war, I've listed works about Vietnamese culture that relate only peripherally to recent armed conflicts. It was the war that brought and still brings—literally and figuratively—many of us to Vietnam. My hope is that readers will find other reasons to stay.

My Own Thematic Interest

In my introductions to the different categories of works I occasionally call attention to those that relate to the theme of Society vs. the Individual, a theme that I think can be usefully highlighted in a course emphasizing Vietnamese perspectives. I suggest this theme because many works on this bibliography reveal authors struggling with the question nicely phrased by Neil Jamieson: "How [can] individualism and its associated notions of romantic love and personal freedom be reconciled with filial piety and the primacy of family obligations?"³ This question suggests another: What is the relation of political loyalties to both individualism and family obligations? A third related question is this one: What is the relationship between politics and art? (Are they separate spheres? Should one dominate the other?)

In dealing with anthologies I always provide a general annotation for the entire work, and sometimes, to highlight texts that I think are particularly valuable, annota-

³ Neil Jamieson, "Relata, Relationships, and Context: A Perspective on Borrowed Elements in Vietnamese Culture," *Borrowings in Vietnamese Culture*, ed. Trương Bửu Lâm, Southeast Asia Paper No. 25 (Manoa, HI: University of Hawaii, 1987): 131.

tions for individual selections as well. Readers are encouraged, however, to study these collections themselves and make their own choices.

Teaching Vietnam

I would like now to move from details relating to the bibliography to some general comments about the benefits and difficulties of teaching works by Vietnamese in courses on the war. To start with the difficulties, one is the problem of making room in one's syllabus for more reading. In history courses most teachers feel pressed to give their students a basic understanding of the war; they may discover that assigning works by Vietnamese and comparing interpretations of key issues, while nice in theory, is not so easy to pull off in practice. Teachers who focus on literary texts may be reluctant to leave out powerful Euro-American narratives in order to make time for Vietnamese works that, at least at first glance, may strike students as strange, unexciting, or difficult to understand.

Teachers who wish to solve the time problem by including only one or two Vietnamese texts as comparison pieces to some Euro-American narratives may discover that this is not always so easy. The Vietnamese text may raise questions that they can't easily or quickly answer; or—and this is a real possibility—it may raise no questions because neither they nor their students have enough background knowledge to give the text a meaningful reading. Unfortunately, some editions of Vietnamese writing include little background information on the text or the author, sometimes all one finds is a one or two-line biographical sketch of the author, and so all teachers and students can do with the text is give it a close reading—analyze it with an eye for internal patterns and contrasts.

In my view, however, there are solutions to most of these problems; and I'm convinced that the benefits of including Vietnamese perspectives make the struggle to work them in worthwhile. I personally prefer a course in which at least three or four Vietnamese works are included. If only one is read, students may accept the view of this author as the Vietnamese view of the war. It's important for students to understand something of the rich variety of views and styles of discourse. Much depends, however, on one's course and what one hopes to achieve. In a history course, for example, one built around one of the standard histories (like Herring's *America's Longest War*),⁴ one can assign Vietnamese texts at certain junctures. In discussing the Ngô Đình Diệm period, for example, one could read Nguyễn Thị Định's memoir *No Other Road to Take* (See Section V); in discussing the final defeat of the Saigon forces, one can assign Cao Văn Viên's *The Final Collapse* (for the view from Saigon) and Văn Tiến Dũng's *Our Great Spring Victory* (for the view from Hanoi) (See Section III). Some collections of historical documents on the war include a fair number of Vietnamese texts for purpos-

⁴ George Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1996).

es of comparison (See, for example, the one edited by Gettleman et al. that is annotated in Section III).

I personally prefer courses that focus on literary texts, some by Euro-Americans, some by Vietnamese. I prefer this focus in part because I am in an English Department and have been trained to read and appreciate literature. But it is also because I have found that memoirs and fictional accounts about the war engage students more powerfully than “straight” history. Once engaged, once their curiosity has been aroused, then I refer them to histories. In choosing Vietnamese literary works, I prefer translations to works written in English, often with the help of a ghost writer, for Western readers. So instead of Trương Như Tảng’s *Vietcong Memoir* I might select Nguyễn Thị Định’s *No Other Road to Take* (See Section V); instead of Lê Lý Hayslip’s *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, I might choose Võ Phiến’s *Intact* (See Section X). I say “might” because problems of availability enter in. *Intact*, for example, is out of print.

If available, I prefer translations because I think students can learn a great deal as they listen in on conversations not intended for them. Overheard conversations, however, are more difficult to understand than face-to-face communications: the speakers use a language that may sound strange to the person listening in; and they leave things unsaid, confident that their listeners know what they are talking about. In many translations Americans are referred to as imperialists and their allies as puppets or lackeys. Some works contain a great deal of Marxist-Leninist jargon. Some stories are, at least by standards of the U. S. college classroom, extremely sentimental. I think it’s valuable for students to encounter this discourse in the raw, so to speak, before it’s carefully adjusted for consumption by Western readers. As they struggle, aided by the teacher, to deal with their reactions to this unusual discourse, they will be doing the hard intellectual and emotional work that makes the course worthwhile. Vietnamese perspectives do not exist apart from the discourse in which they are encoded. By preserving the flavor of the original text, good scholarly translations make Vietnamese perspectives accessible to students.

Teaching Literature

I mention my preferences because they are reflected in this bibliography, most clearly perhaps in the teaching suggestions I make in my introductions to the different sections but also in my choices of works to include. Though I have a section on history, this bibliography concentrates on literature, primarily prose texts—autobiographies, memoirs, fiction. (Little poetry is listed primarily because so little has been translated.) My teaching suggestions, perhaps most obviously the ones I make in Section VI (Cultural Background), are quite ambitious, probably much too ambitious for many courses on the Vietnam War. My suggestions reflect my belief in the value of reading works within a historical and literary-cultural context. There are many levels of reading. One can encounter a short story by a Vietnamese in an anthology and with no background infor-

mation read it and enjoy it and learn from it. But if one knows something about the author and his world, one can give the same text a deeper and in my view more satisfying reading.

Again, much depends on the goals of one's course. In a history or political science course, one might wish to bring in a Vietnamese document to give students information and facts not available in Western sources. The rationale for use of the Vietnamese text in this case could be to ensure that all the evidence was in, that witnesses from both sides were heard from, before a verdict was rendered on some historical or political event. This is a completely sensible use of Vietnamese texts. In my courses based on literature, however, I want to do more than simply give students facts and information not available in Western sources. I want to enable them to appreciate different ways of thinking, feeling, and writing both because I think gaining this appreciation is worthwhile in itself and because once achieved it will enable students to read Euro-American works on the war more intelligently. If the course succeeds, students will see that the Euro-American works which before struck them as natural and universal are just as culture-bound as the works by Vietnamese. To achieve these insights, contextualized readings are necessary.

The good news is that teachers and students have many resources that will help them achieve more contextualized readings of Vietnamese sources. One good result of the war is that it added to the number of Vietnamese scholars who know English and Western scholars who know Vietnamese. These scholars—people like Công Huyền Tôn Nữ Nha Trang, Huệ Tâm Hồ Tai, Huỳnh Sanh Thông, Neil Jamieson, Greg Lockhart, David Marr, Ngô Vĩnh Long, Quý-Phiệt Trần, and Peter Zinoman—have written excellent articles and books that provide the literary and historical background to many of the works that a teacher might want to assign. Some translations have been published with excellent scholarly introductions. See, for example, David Marr's introduction for Trần Tử Bình's *The Red Earth*; Mai Elliot's for Nguyễn Thị Định's *No Other Road to Take*, and Greg Lockhart's for his translations of stories by Nguyễn Huy Thiệp. In addition to critical studies written originally in English, there are also translations of critical studies written in Vietnamese. Võ Phiến's study of literature from the South, now available in a translation by Võ Đình Mai, is an excellent introduction to works by non-communist writers. In terms of Vietnamese exile narratives, Renny Christopher's *The Viet Nam War / The American War* includes critical discussions of works written by Vietnamese abroad. For reasons mentioned above, teachers of courses focused primarily on Euro-American narratives may be reluctant to assign a Vietnamese work to all students in the class. Using this bibliography, however, they could prepare special assignments on Vietnamese authors that included suggestions for background reading. Students could then prepare written or oral reports to share with the rest of the class.

In my experience, students are quick, sometimes quicker than their teachers, to insist on reading works by Vietnamese in courses on the war. The last time I taught my course, students asked me to suggest additional reading by Vietnamese authors. Perhaps this is

because I live in California, an ethnically diverse state where most students have been taught to value different cultures. (One of the students who asked for more reading by Vietnamese was a Vietnamese American.) I think, however, that it is not only sympathy for multiculturalism which makes students want to understand Vietnamese perspectives. The war remains controversial in American society. Students, most of whom have an innate sense of fair play, like to hear from all the parties involved. Usually the two sides emphasized in U.S. history textbooks are the Hawks, who felt that the U.S. had no business being in Vietnam if we weren't willing to do what was necessary to win; and the Doves, who felt that the U. S. had no business being there at all. Students appreciate having this debate opened up to include Vietnamese views. Introducing Vietnamese perspectives complicates the debate, enlivening it.

Another argument for including works by Vietnamese is that in this literature war takes place at home—in the country and sometimes in the villages in which the writers live. In this literature we see how war affects not only soldiers but also families, villages, houses, crops, and animals. Even in stories designed to glorify revolutionary heroism and encourage readers to “Oppose the Americans, Save the Country” (Chống mỹ, cứu nước), war's capacity to destroy village life is often revealed. Including works by Vietnamese helps us convey a picture of war that is truer than the one we convey if we assign only Euro-American narratives. In part because for American soldier-authors Vietnam was a long way from home, many of these narratives leave the impression that war occurs only in distant unreal places and that the only victims are soldiers. “Where are you from back in the world?” U.S. soldiers in Vietnam used to ask each other, a habit of expression that suggests the pervasiveness of this American notion that Vietnam was an unreal place, not the home of ordinary people with human hopes and fears.

What is at stake here is the definition of “war literature”: is it only stories by soldiers about soldiers? Lynne Hanley blames Paul Fussell, author of *The Great War and Modern Memory*, for canonizing a small group of male soldier-writers (Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen, for example) who remember the First World war as occurring only at the front and with only soldiers as victims. Fussell's book, Hanley maintains, “has largely determined what we in America call our literature not only of that war [World War I] but also of all our wars since.” It “still reigns as the paradigm in this country for thinking literarily about war.”⁵ Hanley sees the influence of this paradigm in Tim O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato* and in other novels and movies about the war in Vietnam.⁶

⁵ Lynne Hanley, *Writing War: Fiction, Gender and Memory* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991) 21, 37.

⁶ Though Hanley doesn't mention Philip Caputo, this influence is particularly evident in his narrative *Rumor of War* (New York: Ballantine, 1977). Many chapters in this work begin with quotations from poems by the First World War poets discussed by Fussell, and Caputo draws parallels between their experience and his own. “I had read all the serious books to come out of the World Wars, and Wilfred Owen's poetry about the Western Front,” he says (76).

The war in South Vietnam often lacked clear fronts. American soldiers could not always distinguish civilians from enemy soldiers, and sometimes, as in the massacre at Mỹ Lai, they did not try. Small arms, bombing, and artillery fire drove millions of people from their homes. It was, in other words, a war that is not easy to remember as one in which the only victims were soldiers.

In fact, Euro-American narratives do include civilians as victims: in many the climactic event is an atrocity committed by an American against a civilian—the rape of a girl, the torturing of an old man, or the shooting of unarmed villagers to revenge the deaths of comrades. I question Hanley’s assertion that in Euro-American narratives the victims are always soldiers.

These works, however, evoke terror in a way that places primary emphasis on the moral wounds of the American soldier, not the suffering of the victim. As Tobey Herzog points out, the recurring motif of the typical Vietnam War novel is that of “a John Wayne figure confronting a modern heart of darkness,” with the heart of darkness being that capacity for evil that Americans discover in themselves.⁷ Many Euro-American narratives are painful and powerful descriptions of how young Americans committed acts that left them tortured by moral anguish.

Vietnamese works offer an interesting contrast to these Euro-American narratives. Many stories do not take place on the battlefield but in the rear. Many authors were not soldiers. The victims are typically the soldier and his or her family and village, not the soldier alone. In Nguyễn Ngọc’s *The Village that Wouldn’t Die* the victims are Bahnar (an ethnic minority) villagers who are forced to move again and again to avoid French troops (See Section VII). In Nhã Ca’s *At Night I Hear the Cannons*, a Saigon family waits for a son and his friend, the fiancé of the son’s sister, to come home on leave from the front. The mother prepares a special meal, but all in vain: her son and his friend have been killed (See Section VIII). In Võ Phiến’s *Intact*, the victim of the war is a young girl whose dreams for a rather ordinary happiness are shattered by the war (See Section X). These may not be the kind of war stories our students expect, and they may at first disappoint some students, but these works have the potential to enlarge our students’ conception both of war and of how war can be remembered in literature.

Perhaps the most important benefit of having students read works by Vietnamese is that it will free them of the notion mentioned by Edward Said, the idea that Asians do not write but only are written about. Courses on Vietnam War literature, by excluding works by Vietnamese, have perpetuated this notion of Asian silence and passivity. By introducing Vietnamese perspectives a teacher may project a truer image of Asians and, somewhat paradoxically, by teaching students about this terrible war, move beyond its memory to peaceful understanding.

⁷ Tobey Herzog, *Vietnam War Stories: Innocence Lost* (London: Routledge, 1992) 31.

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John C. Schafer
Arcata, California 1997

1. Bibliographies

Indochina Chronology.

A quarterly newsletter formerly published by the Institute of East Asian Studies of the University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720. Edited by Douglas Pike, this newsletter surveys political events in the region and lists new publications. Send all correspondence to: Professor Douglas Pike, The Vietnam Center, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 79409-1013.

Marr, David G. *Vietnam*. Vol. 146 of World Bibliographical Series. Oxford, England: Clio Press, 1992.

The “Cadillac” of reference works on Vietnam. Surveys works not only on language, literature, history, and politics but also on travel, flora and fauna, cuisine, science and technology, and other topics. Excellent annotations by the most widely qualified Western scholar in the field of Vietnamese studies.

Moise, E.E. *Bibliography of the Vietnam War*.

Extensive bibliography with some works by Vietnamese. This bibliography has circulated via e-mail and is now available on the World Wide Web at <http://grunt.space.swri.edu/edsbib.htm>.

Nguyễn Đình Thâm. *Studies on Vietnamese Language and Literature: A Preliminary Bibliography*. Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell U., 1992.

Lists works in Western languages on Vietnamese language and literature and also on the language and literature of Vietnam’s ethnic minorities. No annotations.

Vietnam Web.

The best gateway for information on Vietnam is a site maintained by Vern Weitzel of Australian National University and his wife, Khuất Thị Thanh Sơn, a Vietnamese national. Called the Vietnam Virtual Library, it can be reached at <http://coombs.anu.edu.au/WWWVLPages/VietPages/WWWVL-Vietnam.html>.

Wittman, Sandra M. *Writing about Vietnam: A Bibliography of the Literature of the Vietnam Conflict*. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1989.

Lists mostly Euro-American works but includes some works by Vietnamese. Be careful in using this bibliography. John Baky has pointed out that it contains errors and inadequacies. See his "Literary Resources of the Vietnam War," *War, Literature, and the Arts* 5 (Spring-Summer, 1993): 15-24.

11. Works from the Colonial Period

Discussion

Realism, Reportage, Romantic Fiction, and the Question of the Individual

I have begun a course I teach on Vietnam War literature with Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*. The trouble with doing so is that it encourages students to look out on Vietnam and the Vietnamese from the weary eyes of the main character, an aging Englishman who when confronted with the new American imperialism becomes nostalgic for the older forms. This perspective, the imperial gaze, is thus set at the start and becomes difficult to adjust for later. By beginning instead with Vietnamese accounts of the colonial period, with accounts that feature Vietnamese as main characters, we convey the idea that Vietnamese will be major actors in the story that the course will tell. Because many of these narratives expose the evils of colonial society, they help our students understand why there was a revolution, why people rallied to leaders like Hồ Chí Minh.

Realism and Reportage

Oversimplifying somewhat, we can say there are two different literary treatments of life under French rule: a realistic treatment of social conditions by writers most of whom later joined the communist-led anti-colonialist movement and a more individualized and romantic vision presented by others who later joined non-communist nationalist parties. Writers in the first group are well-represented in Ngô Vĩnh Long's two collections, *Before the Revolution* and *Vietnamese Women in Society and Revolution*. These collections contain samples of what Ngô Vĩnh Long calls "documentary fictions" (phóng sự tiểu thuyết) and essays in "realist literature" (văn chương tả chân) that expose the evils of colonial society—cruel mandarins, excessive taxation, monopolies on alcohol and other products, and prostitution, for example. By "documentary fictions" Ngô Vĩnh Long means works that document social ills but feature characters who, though they may be typical, are not real people. By essays in "realist literature" he means non-fiction essays, first-person accounts by writers who are reporting on events (usually the suffering of poor people) they have heard about or witnessed. Some Vietnamese critics use the general word "phóng sự," usually translated as "reportage," for both these genres. "Phóng sự" is used by Vietnamese to refer to a kind of writing that resembles, in some ways, what in the U.S. is called "new journalism." Like Tom Wolfe, Truman Capote, George Plimpton and other American new journalists, Vietnamese writers of *phóng sự* use many of the techniques of the novelist—full description of scenes and dialogue, for example—to embellish their reports. Like some American new journalists, they also immerse themselves in their subject, sometimes donning disguises to experience fully the life of the people they investigate. Though American new journalists, by

using the techniques of the novelist, blurred the distinction between fiction and journalism, they did not set out to write fiction: most American new journalism consists of first-person accounts about real people. In Vietnam, however, fictional reportage or documentary fiction narrated from a third-person point of view is more common than essays in the first-person about real people.

Ngô Vĩnh Long's collections, which contain mostly the fictional variety of *phóng sự*, reflect this preference for fiction. Few essays were allowed to circulate, Ngô Vĩnh Long suggests, because in Europe the essay was the preferred vehicle for political commentary. Hoàng Đạo's long essay *Mud and Stagnant Water* [Bùn Lầy Nước Động], a fairly moderate report of the suffering of peasants (excerpted in *Before the Revolution*), was immediately banned when it appeared in 1938. Ngô Tất Tố's fictional treatment of the same topic, *When the Light's Put Out* [Tắt Đèn], however, a more radical attack on the colonial system, was allowed to circulate after it was published in 1939 (Ngô Vĩnh Long, *Revolution*, pp. xxvi-xxvii). In this latter work, Ngô Tất Tố describes a peasant family so poor that it must sell a daughter and a dog and her four puppies to a high official to pay a head tax. When the mother brings her daughter and the dogs to the official, he treats the dogs better than the daughter.

When in the early 1930's leftist critics in the Soviet Union struggled to define a new "socialist realism," they contrasted this new brand of realism with what they called "critical" or "bourgeois" realism, the realism of Balzac, or of Russia's great nineteenth century novelists Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. Both Gleb Struve (See Section VII, note 19) and Huệ-Tâm Hồ Tài (Section XI) discuss these terms. Critical realism, although considered useful in exposing the evils of pre-socialist society, was judged to be too morbid and negative, too loaded with victims and too bereft of heroes, to be useful in building a socialist mentality. Vietnamese Marxists, who have been influenced by these debates in the Soviet Union, consider works like *When the Light's Put Out* and Nguyễn Công Hoan's *Impasse* to be works of critical realism.

Most of the stories collected by Ngô Vĩnh Long reveal Vietnamese mandarin officials oppressing their own people. Writers made Vietnamese officials the villains in part because stories with French villains would probably be censored but also because, as Christine White points out in her article "French Colonialism and the Peasant Question," the French system of exploitation involved the use of Vietnamese as intermediaries. For an account of unmediated French cruelty and exploitation, see Trần Tử Bình's memoir of life on a rubber plantation.

The Light of the Capital, Greg and Monique Lockhart's translation of two works of reportage (*phóng sự*) and one autobiography (*tự truyện*) from the 1930's, nicely complements the collections by Ngô Vĩnh Long. Most of the selections in Ngô Vĩnh Long's two collections are examples of fictional reportage. The Lockharts, however, have selected two intriguing examples of the rarer first-person type of reportage (Tam Lang's *I Pulled a Rickshaw* and Vũ Trọng Phụng's *Household Servants*) and an even more unusual autobiography (Nguyễn Hồng's *Days of Childhood*). While most of the stories

collected by Ngô Vĩnh Long describe suffering in the countryside, the works in the Lockhart collection take place in urban areas (two in Hanoi, one in Nam Định). All three selections reveal how the lower classes—rickshaw pullers, servants, orphans—suffered during the late colonial period when modern urbanization began. G. Lockhart's very useful scholarly introduction explains why first-person narration using "tôi" (I) was a new development in the 1930's, one that is related to larger political and social changes. Teachers who wish to emphasize the Society vs. the Individual theme can read this essay which chronicles the arrival of the "I" in prose with Neil Jamieson's account of its arrival in poetry. See his "Shattered Identities and Contested Images: Reflections of Poetry and History in 20th Century Vietnam."

Romantic Fiction

The other literary treatment of life under the French rule, the one I have labeled romantic (because it encouraged a less realistic, more condescending attitude toward peasant life), is represented by Nhất Linh and other writers of the Self-Strength Literary Society. Writers from this group are represented in James Banerian's collection *Vietnamese Short Stories*. Nhất Linh's "Two Beauties," for example, describes a French-educated painter, an adopted son of a rich woman, who tries to bring into harmony his love of art and his compassion for the poor people he paints. This semi-autobiographical story will help readers understand how Nhất Linh and his circle worried about social injustice in colonial society but found it difficult to escape their upper class perspective. This story was part of an international debate occurring in the 1930's over the social responsibility of writers. Maxim Gorky in the Soviet Union and André Gide in France were key participants and their pronouncements were avidly read in Vietnam (Nhất Linh begins "Two Beauties" with a quotation from Gide's *Les Nourritures terrestres*). Huệ Tâm Hồ Tai's "Literature for the People: From Soviet Policies to Vietnamese Polemics," which summarizes this "art for art's sake" vs. "art for life's sake" debate, will help readers understand the literary-political context of Nhất Linh's story.

The Question of the Individual

In *Understanding Vietnam* Neil Jamieson describes a battle of the novels that was carried on by these two groups, the nascent communists and bourgeois nationalists. In their novels, writers belonging to the second group attacked Confucianism and the traditional family and championed a Western-style individualism. Nguyễn Công Hoan, a representative of the first group, admitted in his novel *Miss Minh, the Schoolteacher* [Cô Giáo Minh] that there were problems with traditional society but warned that an uninhibited individualism would lead to selfishness. Jamieson carefully summarizes these novels and translates long excerpts.

This Society vs. the Individual theme is played out even more dramatically in the

lives and works of poets like Lưu Trọng Lư, Xuân Diệu, Chế Lan Viên, and Huy Cận, poets who in the 1930's led self-absorbed lives and wrote romantic poems glorifying individual love and then later became communists and began writing poems glorifying the revolution. Hoài Thanh, a critic who described and experienced himself this transformation, talks of a "miraculous resurrection" that led his group to "realize how little our individual life means in the immense life of the community" (quoted in Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc, p. 145). Jamieson discusses these poets in the essay mentioned above ("Shattered Identities") and also in *Understanding Vietnam*. In both his essay and book Jamieson translates some pre-war romantic poems by these writers and also their revolutionary poetry, examples of which can also be found in the anthology *Vietnamese Literature* edited by Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc.

Modern Western culture glorifies individualism; in traditional Vietnamese culture, however, the individual is enmeshed tightly in a web of social obligation. Though embraced by revolutionaries, Marxist-Leninism with its stress on political and social issues may have been accepted in Vietnam because it was, in certain respects, less revolutionary than other political philosophies. Reading this pre-war fiction and poetry will make students aware of the variety of viewpoints that existed as Vietnam struggled to become a modern society. It will help them understand that in the wars that followed Vietnamese were fighting for ideas as well as power.

Sources

Banerian, James, Editor and Translator. *Vietnamese Short Stories: An Introduction*. Phoenix, AZ: Sphinx, 1986. See Section VIII for annotation.

Huệ Tâm Hồ Tai. "Literature for the People: From Soviet Policies to Vietnamese Polemics." *Borrowings and Adaptations in Vietnamese Culture*. Ed. Trương Bửu Lâm. Southeast Asia Paper No. 25. Manoa, HI: University of Hawaii, 1987. 63-83. See Section VII for annotation.

Huỳnh Sanh Thông, ed. and trans. *An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems from the Eleventh through the Twentieth Centuries*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996. See Section VI for annotation.

This collection contains many poems written during the colonial period, including anti-French poems by nineteenth-century patriots like Nguyễn Đình Chiểu and romantic poems composed by the New Poets of the 1930's.

_____. "Main Trends of Vietnamese Literature Between the Two World Wars." *Vietnam Forum* 3 (Winter-Spring, 1984): 99-126.

Describes three literary movements that existed prior to World War II: a pro-French group associated with the French-financed journal *Nam Phong* [Southern Ethos]; the anti-French, non-communist or anti-communist Self-Strength Literary Group; and leftist and Marxist writers.

Jamieson, Neil L. "Shattered Identities and Contested Images: Reflections of Poetry and History in 20th Century Vietnam." *Crossroads* 7.2 (1992): 71-134. See Section IV for annotation.

_____. *Understanding Vietnam*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993.

A valuable work generally (See annotation, Section VI) but especially good on the late colonial period. In "The Battle of the Novels," Jamieson summarizes key works and translates long excerpts. This "battle" reveals the different opinions regarding Confucianism and family relationships, including the extent of freedom to choose marriage partners, that existed in pre-war Vietnam. Contains a great deal of biographical information on Nhất Linh (Nguyễn Tường Tam), the most important pre-war novelist. Jamieson also discusses an interesting group of pre-war poets who wrote romantic love poems in the 30's and then joined the communists and began to produce revolutionary poetry.

Lockhart, Greg. "First Person Narratives from the 1930s." Introduction to *The Light of the Capital*. Trans. Greg Lockhart and Monique Lockhart. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1996. 1-49. See Section V for annotation.

_____ and Monique Lockhart, trans. *The Light of the Capital: Three Modern Vietnamese Classics*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Two examples of non-fiction reportage and one of autobiography from the 1930's. The translators selected non-fiction because they feel it provides a more direct access than do novels to the social issues stemming from the rise of the modern Vietnamese city in the pre-war period. According to the Lockharts, these accounts prefigure changes in urban life that are now occurring as a result of Vietnam's adoption of a market economy. The authors of the first two accounts don disguises to gather material. Tam Lang becomes a rickshaw driver to research his *I Pulled a Rickshaw* [Tôi Kéo Xe], an account of what it is like to ply this profession. Vũ Trọng Phụng masquerades as a servant to gain information for his *Household Servants* [Cơm Thầy Cơm Cô]. In the third selection, Nguyễn Hồng's *Days of Childhood* [Những Ngày Thơ Ấu], usually described, according to G. Lockhart, as "the first fully-fledged modern 'autobiography'" (2), the author describes how his parents' loveless marriage drove his father to opium and his mother into the arms of a lover. Includes a useful 49-page introduction by G. Lockhart (See Section V for annotation).

Ngô Tất Tố. *When the Light's Put Out* [Tắt Đèn]. Trans. by Phạm Như Oanh. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960.

Originally published in 1939. According to David Marr (*Vietnam*, p. 305), "probably the best-known novel of the realist literary movement of the late 1930's." Describes the misfortunes that descend on a peasant couple who can't pay their taxes. Excerpts from this novel are included in both of Ngô Vinh Long's collections.

Ngô Vinh Long. *Before the Revolution: The Vietnamese Peasants under the French*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Analysis of the evils of colonialism and translations from novels and nonfiction that reveal these evils, particularly excessive taxation and monopolies that led to starvation. Contains two rare nonfiction pieces (Usually writers exposed colonial evils under the protective guise of fiction).

Ngô Vinh Long. *Vietnamese Women in Society and Revolution*. Vol. 1: The French Colonial Period. Cambridge, MA: Vietnam Resource Center, 1974.

Commentary by Ngô Vinh Long and short stories and excerpts from novels from the late 30's and early 40's that reveal the suffering of women under French colonialism.

Nguyễn Công Hoan. *Impasse* [Bước Đường Cùng]. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963.

Originally published in 1938. Like Ngô Tất Tố's *When the Light's Put Out*, describes the suffering of peasants under colonialism. Main character is Pha, a poor peasant who at first accepts his fate but after being enlightened by a friend becomes defiant. He is led away in chains at the end. Novel emphasizes how local landlords and officials cooperated with officials at higher levels to exploit the peasants. Three chapters are included in Ngô Vinh Long's *Before the Revolution*. This novel was banned soon after it was published.

Nhất Linh. *Breaking the Ties* [Đoạn Tuyệt]. Trans. by James Banerian. Forthcoming.

Originally published in 1934. Probably the most important novel in the "Battle of the Novels" (See entry for Neil Jamieson's *Understanding Vietnam*) above. A fictional attack on traditional, primarily Confucian, family structure, it tells the story of Loan, a woman with modern ideas who suffers when forced to marry a man she does not love. Nhất Linh (real name: Nguyễn Tường Tam) was the leading writer of the Self-Strength Literary Group. Write to the translator for ordering information: James Banerian, 5816 Trojan Ave., San Diego, CA 92115.

Trần Tử Bình, as told to Hà Ân. *The Red Earth: A Vietnamese Memoir of Life on a Colonial Rubber Plantation*. Trans. by John Spragens, Jr. Athens, OH: Center for International Studies, 1984.

Originally published in Vietnamese in 1964. Account of life on a rubber plantation by a man who later became a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Villains here are not, as in many translated accounts of this period, Vietnamese officials who cooperated with the French but the French themselves, particularly the cruel manager and the foreman of the rubber plantation who beat the workers and treated them like slaves. Introduction by David Marr.

White, Christine. "French Colonialism and the Peasant Question." *Vietnam Forum* 7 (Winter-Spring, 1986): 127-155.

Describes how the French colonial administration operated during the final decades of colonial rule. Usually the villains in the stories that Ngô Vĩnh Long includes in his collections are Vietnamese mandarins and officials, not the French, who remain in the background. By explaining how the French used Vietnamese officials, who were enriched by their collaboration, as intermediaries in their exploitation of Vietnam, White helps us understand the system that is being attacked in the fictional reportage excerpted in the Ngô Vĩnh Long collections.

III. Historical Accounts, Memoirs

Discussion

Supplementing a U. S. History Textbook

Even in courses focused on fiction and personal memoirs, teachers find it necessary to assign historical accounts of the war. In addition to American accounts one could assign Nguyễn Khắc Viện's *The Long Resistance*, which describes Vietnamese history from the loss of independence to the French in the late 1850's to the reunification of the country in 1975. This book gives a Hanoi point of view—Americans are neo-colonialists, ARVN officers are “adventurers and outcasts thirsty for dollars”—but it is a coherent, readable survey. Having students first read Nguyễn Khắc Viện's treatment of a key period or event and then compare it to a discussion of the same period or event in their American textbook is one way to reveal different viewpoints.

Another approach is to analyze American accounts with our students. David Hunt, who is researching American survey texts on the Vietnam War, illustrates how this analysis can be made. Hunt has looked at how the National Liberation Front and the southern guerilla soldiers are represented in the most commonly used textbooks on the war, considering questions such as the following: How much space is devoted to the NLF? How much narrative coherence is given to accounts of this movement? For example, do the guerrillas serve as framing devices and appear at the beginning and end of chapters? In other words, do they merit a sustained account or do they get a more episodic treatment? What do these textbooks encourage us to assume about the attitude of ordinary Vietnamese in the South toward these revolutionaries? Are we led to assume that Vietnamese regarded them as alien invaders or as indigenous leaders of a popular uprising? Or is the predominant image one of citizens caught in a crossfire, owing allegiance neither to the NLF or the GVN? Does the textbook contain statements that suggest that NLF successes are the result of American mistakes—statements like this one by Stanley Karnow: “[General Westmoreland] refused to recognize that the communists might represent a tempting alternative to a rural population eager for political, economic, and social change.”⁸

Hunt focuses on the NLF but one could also question how the ARVN troops are portrayed both in textbooks and popular accounts such as Sheehan's *Bright Shining Lie*. In Nguyễn Mạnh Hùng's view the ARVN is treated shabbily in Sheehan's best seller. American soldiers and advisors are invariably “well-intentioned and courageous” and the Vietcong and North Vietnamese troops are always “heroic, well-trained, and well-led” (19). ARVN soldiers in Sheehan, on the other hand, are all cowards and their leaders corrupt and incompetent. We hear nothing from Sheehan about the fragging and drug use among American troops nor of dissension within the communist forces, though these things existed. Nor does Sheehan mention ARVN achievements such as the suc-

⁸ *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Viking Press, 1983) 464.

successful defense of An Lộc in 1972.

Criticizing American accounts is probably not as effective as having students read historical accounts by Vietnamese. Quite a few are available. The U.S. Army Center of Military History has published a series of monographs by Cambodian, Laotian, and South Vietnamese military leaders. These are instructive to read. These men are now living in the U.S. and they are unfailingly polite to their American readers; their accounts are powerful often because they are so persistently understated. In his contribution to the volume on *The U.S. Adviser*, for example, Colonel Chu Xuân Viên observes that if US advisers could have stayed with their ARVN units longer than six months, perhaps they would have been more successful at building "the kind of working relationship conducive to steady progress and improvement" (190).

Accounts by Vietnamese communist military leaders are, not surprisingly, more self-congratulatory. After all, they won. The two accounts of the final victory are fairly well-known, one by General Văn Tiến Dũng and one by General Trần Văn Trà. An account by General Trà of the Tet Offensive has also been translated. There is Võ Nguyên Giáp's *How We Won the War*. Assigning these works will present other views for discussion. For example, many American accounts suggest the war was lost in Washington and not on the battlefield. General Trần Văn Trà has this to say about the popular American view that the Tet Offensive for the communists was a political victory but a military defeat: "In fact there is never an easy 'political' victory won by the grace of Heaven or through an enemy's mercy without first having to shed blood and scatter bones on the battlefield. . . . One never suffers a military defeat yet wins a political victory" ("Tet," pp. 58, 59).

Sources

Bùi Diễm and David Chanoff. *In the Jaws of History*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

An account of political and diplomatic events by Bùi Diễm, South Vietnam's ambassador to the U.S. from 1967 to 1972 and later an ambassador at large. Emphasizes the interaction between leaders in Saigon and Washington.

Đoàn Bích. *Famous Men of Vietnam*. Third Ed. Vietnam Council on Foreign Relations, 1970. Reproduced by California State Department of Education, Office of Bilingual-Bicultural Education, 1981.

The original title was *Saigon Streets*. Current title is misleading: famous women (the Trung sisters, Hồ Xuân Hương, Đoàn Thị Điểm) are included. Short (about 3 pages) accounts of the heroes for whom Saigon streets are named: Trần Hưng Đạo, Nguyễn Huệ, Nguyễn Đình Chiểu, etc. Some but not all streets have been renamed since 1975: Phan Thanh Giản St. is now Điện Biên Phủ Street, Tự Do [Freedom] St. is Đồng Khởi [General Uprising] Street. Possible project: Have students investigate a street and its name and suggest why it has been or has not been renamed.

Gettleman, Marvin E., Jane Franklin, Marilyn B. Young, and H. Bruce Franklin, eds. *Vietnam and America: The Most Comprehensive Documented History of the Vietnam War*. 2nd ed. New York: Grove Press, 1995.

A collection of sixty-five historical documents and articles relating to the war, fifteen from Vietnamese sources. Covers the pre-World War II struggle for independence and the war with France as well as the period of intense American involvement. Two useful essays by Ngô Vĩnh Long ("Vietnam's Revolutionary Tradition" and "The Franco-Vietnamese War, 1945-1954: Origins of U.S. Involvement"). Writing and correspondence by Hồ Chí Minh, Võ Nguyên Giáp, and other Vietnamese leaders and also the texts of treaties and position papers. The editors were all active in the teach-in movement of 1965. Gettleman edited *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis* (1965), a best-seller that became required reading for those in the anti-war movement.

Hunt, David. "Images of the Vietnamese: A Review of Survey Texts on the Viet Nam War." Paper presented at the Conference "The United States and Viet Nam: From War to Peace." Notre Dame, IN, December 2-4, 1993. To appear in *The United States and Viet Nam: Reconciliation Issues*, ed. by Robert M. Slabey.

Hunt shows how survey texts commonly used in courses on the war can be analyzed to reveal the perspective from which they are written. To illustrate his approach, he suggests questions we could ask about how the National Liberation Front and the southern guerilla soldiers are represented.

Indochina Monographs. Washington, D. C.: U. S. Army Center of Military History.

A series of books, written after the war, by high-ranking officers in the armies of South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. These writers were provided support for their writing by the General Research Corporation under a U. S. Army contract with the Center for Military History. They are printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office. One could have students read sections or chapters from:

Gen. Cao Văn Viên. *The Final Collapse*. Washington, D. C.: U. S. Army Center of Military History, 1983.

Analysis of the final collapse of Saigon forces by the last chairman of the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff. Among other causes of the collapse, General Viên identifies the disadvantageous Paris Agreement of 1973, the breaking by the U.S. of its pledge to assist if the agreement were violated, the cut in U.S. military aid, President Thiệu's ill-advised withdrawal from the central highlands, and the inability of South Vietnamese leaders to detect the U.S.'s shift toward "appeasement and accommodation."

Gen. Cao Văn Viên et al. *The U.S. Adviser*. Washington, D. C.: U. S. Army Center of Military History, 1980.

An analysis of the U.S. military advisory mission in Vietnam by seven high-ranking ARVN officers. Advising effort is evaluated in various areas: at the highest command levels, tactical advising at ARVN battalion and corps (military region) levels, and advising in intelligence, logistics, pacification, and training. The U.S.'s advisory effort receives a polite but mixed review. U.S. advisers had a tendency to "overtake and patronize" their ARVN counterparts, these officers point out, and advisers to combat units stayed only six months.

Lt. Gen. Ngô Quang Trưởng et al. *The Easter Offensive of 1972*. Washington, D. C.: U. S. Army Center of Military History, 1980.

Describes the largest offensive launched by communist forces before the spring offensive in 1975. In early May, General Trưởng was made commander of I

Corps and directed the counteroffensive that re-took Quảng Trị. Describes battles in the three major areas of the offensive: Quảng Trị near the DMZ, An Lộc (north of Saigon), and Kontum (central highlands). Attributes the successful ARVN counteroffensive to improved leadership by ARVN commanders, the reliability of ARVN units, the effectiveness of U.S. airpower, and tactical blunders and poor use of tanks by the other side.

Lâm Quang Thi. *Autopsy: The Death of South Viet Nam*. Phoenix, AZ: Sphinx, 1986.

Memoir by a former Lieutenant General in the ARVN who was in the thick of the fighting and planning until the final collapse in 1975. One chapter is a case study of the Battle of An Lộc, an ARVN success. Book is based on his own experiences and on interviews with former officers. Blames the "Death" of South Vietnam on poor leadership, corruption, and the U.S. decision to end bombing and logistical support.

Marr, David G. *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995.

A 602-page analysis of the August Revolution of 1945 when Viet Minh communist forces took control and declared Vietnam's independence. Based on archival collections in France and communist party histories and revolutionary memoirs (hồi ký cách mạng) only recently made available to foreign researchers. The first five chapters cover events from 1940-1945 from the point of view of different actors in the drama: the French (Free and Vichy), the Japanese, the Vietnamese (Viet Minh and royal government forces), China, the U.S., and Great Britain. The last three chapters describe events in August and the first days of September, 1945. An impressive, in some ways overwhelming, work of historical scholarship.

_____. *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971.

Describes anticolonial efforts of Vietnamese, most of them scholar-gentry educated in the Confucian classics, who were active before the generation of Hồ Chí Minh. Excellent accounts of Phan Bội Châu and Phan Chu Trinh, two men active during the first quarter of the century. Marr bases his account on Vietnamese language materials.

_____. *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981.

An exhaustively researched intellectual history, based primarily on Vietnamese language sources, of the period preceding the August Revolution and the first Indochina war. Unfortunately Marr does not discuss popular fiction or poetry. He admits the former “exerted considerable influence in Vietnam during the period” but modestly says he felt unqualified to work with literary materials (ix). This is, however, a rich work with useful chapters on “Ethics and Politics,” “Language and Literacy,” “The Question of Women,” and other topics. Perhaps too dense in detail for use in some undergraduate classes.

Nguyễn Cao Kỳ. *Twenty Years and Twenty Days*. New York: Stein and Day, 1976.

A rather self-serving account by an important military and political figure in the Saigon government. Nguyễn Cao Kỳ was a commander of the air force and later prime minister and vice president. He suggests that the war’s outcome would have been different if the Americans had listened to his advice. Sets forth the views no doubt shared by many in the Saigon regime.

Nguyễn Duy Trinh et al. *In the Enemy’s Net: Memoirs from the Revolution*. Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962. See Section IX for annotation.

Nguyễn Khắc Viện. *The Long Resistance: 1858-1975*. 2nd Edit. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1978.

An account from a Hanoi point of view of Vietnamese history from the loss of independence to the French to the “great spring victory” in April, 1975. Though definitely the Party view, it is more readable than historical accounts by many communist leaders. A good choice for teachers looking for a historical account that expresses the view of America’s adversaries. The author, as director of the Foreign Languages Publishing House, was an official spokesman for Hanoi to the West.

Nguyễn Mạnh Hùng. “Journalistic Distortion: Neil Sheehan’s Portrait of the Vietnamese in *A Bright Shining Lie*.” *Journal of Vietnam Veterans Institute* 2.1 (1993): 17-31.

Criticizes Sheehan for praising the Viet Cong and overlooking both the faults of U.S. soldiers and the achievements of the ARVN.

Trần Văn Đôn. *Our Endless War*. San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1978.

An account of political and military events from the Diệm years to 1975 by a prominent general who later served as Vice Premier and Defense Minister in South Vietnam. Trần Văn Đôn was one of the leaders of the coup that toppled Ngô Đình Diệm. Interesting perspective on the coup and its aftermath and on the revolving door governments of Dương Văn Minh and Nguyễn Khánh that followed the coup.

Trần Văn Trà. *Vietnam: History of the Bulwark B-2 Theatre*. Vol. 5: *Concluding the 30-Years War*. Southeast Asia Report No. 1247. Washington, D.C.: Joint Publications Research Service, 1983.

An account of the final communist victory by the general who commanded the “B-2 Theatre,” the southern most part of Vietnam. The original Vietnamese version was confiscated soon after it appeared in 1982, probably, David Marr suggests (*Vietnam*, p. 138), because it revealed secret Politburo discussions and because it disputed assertions made by Văn Tiến Dũng in his memoir *Our Great Spring Victory* (See below).

_____. “Tet: The 1968 General Offensive and General Uprising.” *The Vietnam War: Vietnamese and American Perspectives*. Ed. Jayne S. Werner and Lưu Doãn Huỳnh. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1993. 37-65.

Translation of an account in Vietnamese that was published in Vietnam in 1988. General Trà argues that although the Tet Offensive did not achieve all the goals set by the Party Political Bureau (complete collapse of American and puppet forces, General Uprising), it was “still a great victory, creating the most important strategic turning point of the war, eventually leading us to total victory” (60).

Văn Tiến Dũng. *Our Great Spring Victory*. Trans. by John Spragens, Jr. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977.

The commanding general’s account of the People’s Liberation Army offensive that toppled the Saigon regime on April 30, 1975.

Vietnam: The Anti-U.S. Resistance War for National Salvation, 1954-1975. Springfield, VA: Joint Publications Research Service, 1982.

This is a translation of *Cuộc Kháng Chiến Chống Mỹ Cứu Nước, 1954-1975*), an official account of the war produced by the People’s Army of Vietnam. In

format it resembles the chronologies that sometimes appear in the back of American textbooks on the war. It reads more like an outline than a narrative account. Obtainable for \$38.50 (includes handling and postage) from National Technical Information Service, 5285 Port Royal Rd., Springfield, VA 22161.

Võ Nguyên Giáp. *Banner of People's War, the Party's Military Line*. New York: Praeger, 1970.

_____. "Big Victory, Great Task." New York: Praeger, 1968.

_____. *People's War, People's Army*. New York: Praeger, 1962.

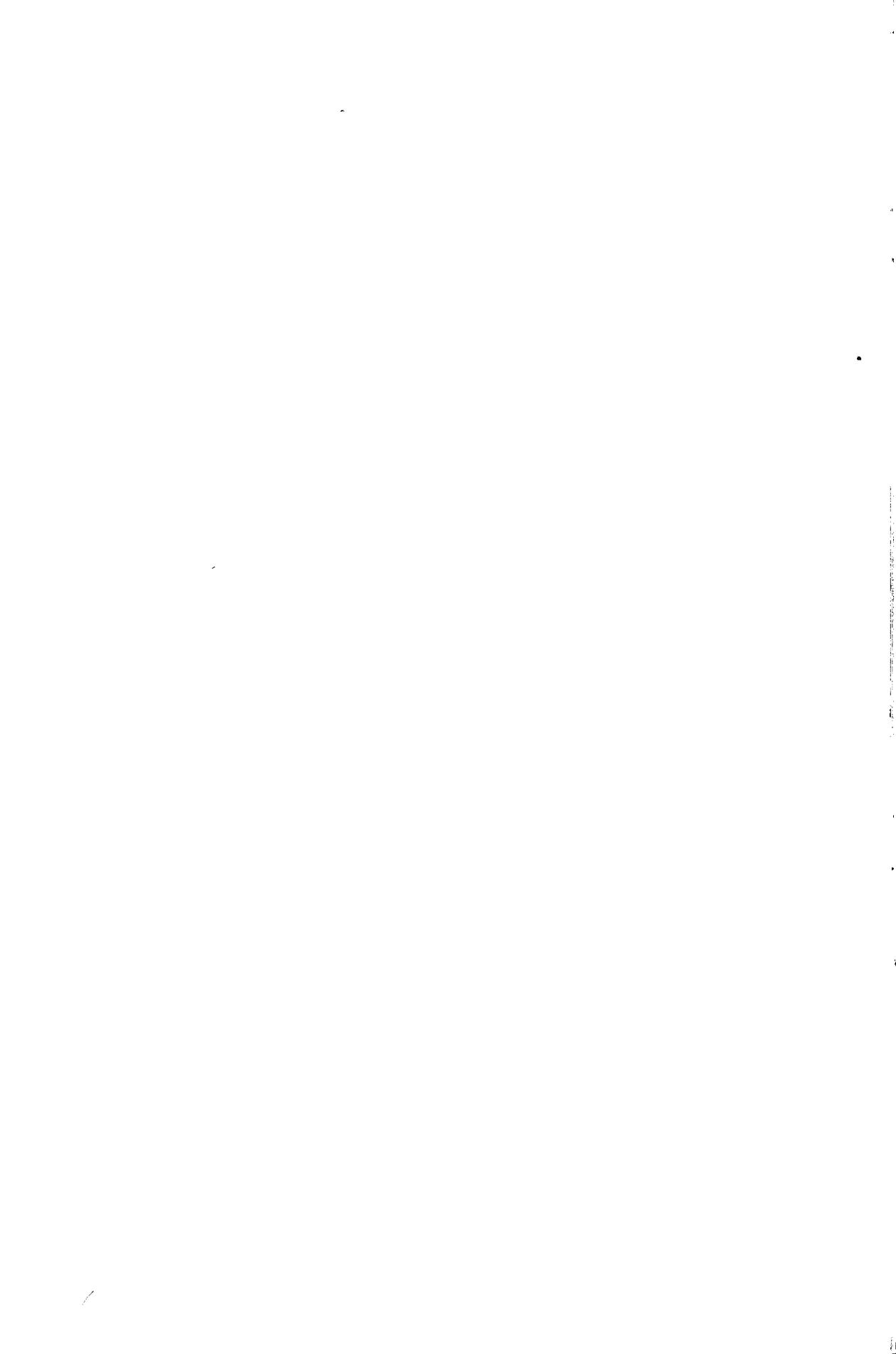
Accounts of political and military strategy by the general who masterminded military victories in both the first and second Indochina wars. Like accounts by other communist political and military leaders (Trương Chinh, Lê Duẩn, for example), these three accounts make for pretty dry reading unless one has a special interest in military/political strategy and the application of Marxist-Leninist principles.

_____. *Unforgettable Days*. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1975.

Describes the period from the August Revolution of 1945 to the outbreak of hostilities against France in December, 1946. Includes interesting, if somewhat fawning, portraits of Hồ Chí Minh and information on challenges presented to the new government by the presence of 180,000 soldiers of Chiang Kai-shek.

Woodside, Alexander. "Vietnamese History: Confucianism, Colonialism, and the Struggle for Independence." *Vietnam Forum* 11 (Winter-Spring, 1988): 21-48.

A good and very concise account of Vietnamese history from 111 B.C to 1954. Obviously too brief to do justice to the topic but a useful overview.



IV. Literary History and Criticism

Discussion

Two Critical Perspectives

Literary histories written by Vietnamese provide important background for understanding individual works about the war. I would suggest assigning chapter V of Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc's *Vietnamese Literature*—the chapter surveying the years 1945 to 1975—and selections from Võ Phiến's *Literature in South Vietnam, 1954-1975*. Drawing on the writings of Trường Chinh, the hardline theoretician of Marxism-Leninism, the authors of the first book make the case for a revolutionary literature that conforms to the principles of socialist realism. After the August Revolution of 1945, Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc write:

The period of hazy dreams and visions that led to hermetism, art for art's sake and purely formal research was over. . . . An artist's genius lay not in plumbing the depths of his own individual soul divorced from social relationships, and producing works devoid of content; but in sharpening his sensitivity and setting his imagination to work out the endless material furnished by social life. Apolitical literature was out of the question. (142)

They include works by northerners and by writers from the “liberated” South. They exclude the literature produced “in the towns under American occupation,” finding it to be “with few exceptions not worth mentioning, except in that it served as a tool of neo-colonialism” (144).

Võ Phiến surveys this southern literature so casually dismissed by the communist commentators, making no extravagant claims but revealing its rich variety. He explains that from 1954 to 1975 contact with the West increased greatly and “transformed our society, our way of life, our very conception of human existence” and in the process “whetted our intellectual curiosity and excited our creative spirit” (87). Some writers abandoned the traditional delicacy and subtlety in matters of sex and love and wrote daring love stories. Others explored philosophical and religious themes. Some began to experiment with reportage and memoirs. Võ Phiến observes that although during this 20-year period people in the North were also living through terrible circumstances, there was no hint of crisis in their works—no “spiritual perturbation, no frantic philosophical and religious searches, no heart-rending cries of pain and despair” (80). Instead we get works with characters who “look as if they have just been dragged out from civics and ethics textbooks or from government training and propaganda material” (81).

Interestingly, this same criticism of socialist realism is now being voiced by northerners, including Nguyễn Khắc Viện. Several of the writers included in his collection—Nguyễn Minh Châu, Nguyễn Ngọc, Nguyễn Đình Thi and Lê Lựu—are now associated

with the contemporary Renovation movement, a movement that at least for a brief period (especially 1987-89) resulted in the publishing of works that provide more honest, less propagandistic views of the war and its aftermath (See articles by Nguyễn Hưng Quốc and Phương Kiên Khanh below). Assigning these two literary histories will expose students to two approaches to literary history that differ greatly in style and content and also provide background information useful when they encounter examples of socialist realism, Renovation literature, and works from the South.

Sources

Duffy, Dan, ed. *The Việt Nam Forum: A Review of Culture and Society*. Việt Nam Forum 14. New Haven, CT: Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1994.

A collection of translations of short stories; critical essays; reports of historical, literary, and medical (AIDS in Vietnam) research; and autobiographical sketches and poems by Vietnamese living abroad, including examples of work selected in a literary contest run by the Yale [University] Vietnamese Students Association. Contains translations by Peter Zinoman of the three stories by Nguyễn Huy Thiệp that deal irreverently with important Vietnamese historical figures and are believed to have caused Hanoi political leaders to re-impose restrictions that were loosened as part of the Renovation movement (The stories are “Kiếm Sắc” [A Sharp Sword], “Vàng Lửa” [Fired Gold], and “Phẩm Tiết” [Chastity]). Includes two critical essays on Nguyễn Huy Thiệp’s work. Earlier literary periods represented with translations (with critical commentary) of key works.

Christopher, Renny. *The Viet Nam War/The American War: Images and Representations in Euro-American and Vietnamese Exile Narratives*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.

Provides excellent critical readings of nine Vietnamese exile narratives which are compared and contrasted to Euro-American works on the war. After the introduction comes a chapter on Vietnamese exile narratives which are seen as differing from Euro-American narratives in their stress on biculturality and communality. Chapter 3 describes the cultural stereotyping of Asians in the U. S. from 1848 through World War II. Chapter 4 explains how Vietnamese are represented in Euro-American works on the war. Although Christopher doesn’t discuss works by Vietnamese still living in Vietnam, this is an indispensable work for teachers who wish to compare and contrast American and Vietnamese perspectives.

Công Huyền Tôn Nữ Nha Trang. “Women Writers of South Vietnam (1954-1975).” *Vietnam Forum* 9 (Winter-Spring, 1987): 149-221.

Surveys women writers and describes their major works. Unfortunately, only a very few works by these writers have been translated, though Banerian’s *Vietnamese Short Stories* contains a story by Nhã Ca and one by Nguyễn Thị Vinh. And he has also translated Nhã Ca’s novel *At Night I Hear the Cannons* [Đêm Nghe Tiếng Đại Bác] (See Section VIII).

Durand, Maurice M. and Nguyễn Trần Huân. *An Introduction to Vietnamese Literature*. Trans. from the French by D. M. Hawke. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Updated (to cover developments up to 1975) and translated edition of a work originally published in French in 1969. A readable survey of the complete span of Vietnamese literature from its early beginnings to modern times. Chapters on the modern period, however, are brief and overemphasize the contributions of northern writers: little information on developments in the south is included.

Huệ-Tâm Hồ Tài. "Dương Thu Hương and the Literature of Disenchantment." *The Việt Nam Forum: A Review of Culture and Society*. Ed. Dan Duffy. Việt Nam Forum 14. New Haven, CT. Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1994. 82-91. See Section XI for annotation.

_____. "Literature for the People: From Soviet Policies to Vietnamese Polemics." *Borrowings and Adaptations in Vietnamese Culture*. Ed. Trương Bửu Lâm. Southeast Asia Paper No. 25. Manoa, HI: University of Hawaii, 1987. 63-83. See Section VII for annotation.

Huỳnh Sanh Thông. "Main Trends of Vietnamese Literature between the Two World Wars." *Vietnam Forum* 3 (Winter-Spring, 1984): 99-126. See Section ■ for annotation.

Neil Jamieson. "Shattered Identities and Contested Images: Reflections of Poetry and History in 20th Century Vietnam." *Crossroads* 7.2 (1992): 71-134.

Describes a group of poets who wrote romantic, melancholy poems in the 30's and then joined the communist revolution, repudiated their earlier work, and, guided by Trường Chinh's advice, began turning out poems fashioned as "cultural bazookas" for the cause. Their life story highlights the conflict between individualism and community that pre-dates both Indochina wars but underlies them both. The information here also appears in Jamieson's *Understanding Vietnam* (See Section VI), but here his account of these poets is more focused—not mixed with discussion of other figures and issues.

Lockhart, Greg. "First Person Narratives from the 1930s." Introduction to *The Light of the Capital*. Trans. Greg Lockhart and Monique Lockhart. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1996. 1-49. See Section V for annotation.

_____. “Nguyễn Huy Thiệp’s Writing: Post-Confucian, Post-Modern?” *Vietnamese Studies in a Multicultural World*. Ed. Nguyễn Xuân Thu. Melbourne: Vietnamese Language & Culture Publications, 1994. 158-181. See Section XI for annotation.

Nguyễn Hưng Quốc. “Vietnamese Communist Literature (1975-1990).” *Vietnamese Studies in a Multicultural World*. Ed. Nguyễn Xuân Thu. Melbourne: Vietnamese Language & Culture Publications, 1994. 120-143.

Contrasts works written during 1975-1985 with the socialist realism produced earlier and with works that started to emerge with the Renovation movement after 1986. Argues that while some writers during the 1975-85 period (Nguyễn Minh Châu, Nguyễn Mạnh Tuấn, for example) began to abandon socialist realism, they made only “halfway changes.” Fuller liberation (later checked by the Party) is revealed in the works of Lê Lựu, Dương Thu Hương, Phạm Thị Hoài and especially Nguyễn Huy Thiệp.

Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc. *Vietnamese Literature: Historical Background and Texts*. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1983 (?).

The largest anthology of Vietnamese literature in English. Includes 157 pages of commentary organized by period: 10th to 17th century, 18th and early 19th centuries, the period from 1858 to 1945, and the recent period (1945 to 1975). The rest of the book is “Authors and Texts”—sample works (poetry and prose) preceded by short biographical sketches of the authors. Includes a useful chronological table and an index of works and names. Marr mentions several faults: some translations are weak, the result of double-translation first to French then to English, and the commentary is “heavily laden with Marxist-Leninist and patriotic presuppositions” (*Vietnam*, p. 304). Selections from recent work reveal Party bias. Interestingly, Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc and many of the writers of socialist realism they anthologize are leading figures in the Renovation movement. A new edition in preparation includes the famous “Renovation” authors.

Phuong Kiên Khanh. “Glasnost in Vietnam: Limits to Openness.” *Indochina Report* No. 25 (Oct.-Dec., 1990): 1-27. See Section XI for annotation.

Trần, Quý-Phiệt. “Contemporary Vietnamese American Feminine Writing: Exile and Home.” *Amerasia Journal* 19.3 (1993): 71-83. See Section X for annotation.

_____. "Exiles in the Land of the Free: Vietnamese Artists and Writers in America, 1975 to the Present." *Journal of the American Studies Association of Texas* 20 (October, 1989): 101-110. See Section X for annotation.

_____. "From Isolation to Integration: Vietnamese Americans in Trần Diệu Hằng's Fiction." *Reading the Literatures of Asian America.* Ed. Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992. 271-284. See Section X for annotation.

Trường Chinh. *Selected Writings*. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977.

A collection of articles and speeches by an important member of the politburo and leading Marxist-Leninist ideologue. Originally published in 1946. In a section entitled "Marxism and Vietnamese Culture," the author defines socialist realism and the proper role of a revolutionary writer.

Truong, Monique T. D. "The Reception of Robert Olen Butler's *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain*: Ventriloquism and the Pulitzer Prize." *Not a War: American Vietnamese Fiction, Poetry and Essays*. Ed. Dan Duffy. Việt Nam Forum 16. Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1997. See Section X for annotation.

Võ Phiến. *Literature in South Vietnam: 1954-1975*. Trans. by Võ Đình Mai. Melbourne: Vietnamese Language & Culture Publications, 1992.

Originally published in Vietnamese in 1986. Surveys the major trends and writers from the non-communist central and southern part of the country. Contrasts the free-wheeling, individualistic atmosphere of the South with the enforced uniformity in the North. Includes a useful section on the major genres: novel, essay, poetry, plays, and reportage. The final section is an alphabetical listing of major writers and their works with some biographical information. A critical work, not an anthology. Only a very few of the many works mentioned have been translated.

**V. Autobiographical Accounts,
Personal Memoirs,
Reportage, Tùy Bút**

Discussion

The First-Person in Vietnamese Prose

The now-familiar canon of literary works by Euro-Americans on the war is heavily weighted toward autobiographical accounts, memoirs, and reportage by low-ranking soldiers and working journalists. These genres, particularly autobiography, are not as highly developed in Vietnam, for a variety of reasons. Autobiography, a genre in which the emphasis is on the author's developing self, encounters obstacles in Vietnam where literary, linguistic, and cultural traditions have not encouraged writers to see the world or to write from a first-person point of view. In Vietnam the individual perspective has been submerged within the collective. It was only in the 1920's and 30's, when larger numbers of Vietnamese students were encountering French literature in Franco-Vietnamese schools, that "tôi" (I) became commonly used in Vietnamese literature. The critics Hoài Thanh and Hoài Chân describe its arrival in poetry:

The first day—who can say exactly what day it was—that the word "I" appeared in Vietnamese poetry it was truly surprised. It was as if it were lost in a strange land. This is because it brought with it a perspective that had not been seen in this country: the individual perspective. Since ancient times there was no individual in Vietnamese society. There was only the collective: a large one, the country, and a small one, the family. As for the individual, the individual aspect was submerged in the family and in the country like a drop of water in the sea.⁹

The arrival of the "I" in non-fiction prose is described in Greg Lockhart's "First Person Narratives from the 1930s," his introduction to *The Light of the Capital*, which contains translations of two examples of reportage and one example of autobiography (See Section II). Lockhart provides information that helps us understand why something long familiar to Western readers—narration in the first person—has had to struggle to gain acceptance in Vietnam. In pre-modern Vietnam, the pronoun "tôi" ("I") meant "servant" or "subject." It was used, for example, in the phrase "vua-tôi" (king-subject) to refer to first of the three most important Confucian bonds (See Section VI). Its use was associated with the monarchy and with the vertical and hierarchical social and moral system that formed the basis of the emperor's power. Within the family and village, Vietnamese kinship terms did double duty as personal pronouns, so a son or a daughter would refer to him or herself as "con" (son or daughter) when talking to a parent and as "cháu" (nephew or niece) when talking to an uncle or

⁹ *Thi Nhân Việt-Nam* [Vietnamese Poets](Saigon: Hoa tiên, 1968) 52. This work, a well-known critical anthology, was originally published in Hanoi in 1942.

aunt. “Fictitious” kinship terms were used when addressing people who were not close relatives but were well known to the speaker, so a boy might refer to himself as “cháu” when addressing a friend of his father’s. “Tôi” was rarely used in conversation. It was rarely used in traditional literature because “tôi” was too self-deprecatory and also because most traditional story tellers presented their stories as retellings in the third person of ancient tales, not as completely original first-person accounts of their own life and times.¹⁰

When the French conquered Vietnam, they set in motion events that promoted the use of “tôi” as an active, egalitarian pronoun. The monarchy was stripped of most of its power. Unable to survive in the countryside, many peasants came to the towns and cities where they became servants, rickshaw drivers, and workers in various trades. These displaced peasants were wrenched out of the old political-moral order. Tam Lang, the author of *I Pulled a Rickshaw*, was a member of the upper class: his father was a Confucian scholar. By becoming a rickshaw driver and reporting on his experience in *I Pulled a Rickshaw*, thought to be the first example of reportage in Vietnam, Tam Lang disrupts the old vertical order. His use of “tôi” in his title is not passive and self-deprecatory but assertive: it suggests the possibility of a new more horizontal, more democratic relationship between people who pull rickshaws and those who ride in them (Lockhart 7).

Revolution and the First-Person

Revolutionary leaders in the communist movement accepted the use of “tôi” but did not like excessively individualistic and romantic poetry, nor were they fond of autobiography. Most of the Vietnamese poets who wrote very individualistic poems in the 1930’s joined the revolution (See Jamieson, “Shattered Identities,” Section IV) and stopped writing the kind of poetry that had made them famous before the war. Instead, they wrote poems that supported the war effort, works that stressed the collective strength of the people. “Today, a poem must have steel, / A poet must learn to wage war,” Hồ Chí Minh wrote in 1942.¹¹

This leader’s stress on “steel” in literature and the communist emphasis of the collective over the individual discouraged revolutionary writers of poetry or prose from telling stories of their developing selves. Nguyễn Minh Châu, a well-respected soldier-writer, mentions another reason why writers avoided personal accounts. If writers in the resistance wars, he says, had allowed themselves the luxury of individual cries of pain and anguish, they could never have defeated the French and

¹⁰ For a comparison of traditional and modern styles of prose narration, see Cao thị Như-Quỳnh and John C. Schafer, “From Verse Narrative to Novel: The Development of Prose Fiction in Vietnam,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 47 (1988): 756-777.

¹¹ The four-line poem from which these lines come is included in Hồ Chí Minh’s *Prison Diary*, p. 97. See Section IX.

the Americans.¹²

Once they leave Vietnam, Vietnamese adapt to the Western demand for more personal accounts. Autobiographical accounts in the form of oral histories appear in David Chanoff and Đoàn Văn Toại's *Portrait of the Enemy*. These compilers interviewed refugees in the West who had played various roles in the communist-controlled regions of Vietnam. One interesting account is by Xuân Vũ who joined the Resistance as a teenager, wrote stories promoting revolutionary heroism, and then abandoned the communist cause. Another interesting narrative, part autobiography, part memoir, is Lê Văn Hảo's "The Path of a Patriotic Intellectual," an account by an anthropology professor at Huế University who surfaced as a member of the Liberation Front during the Tết Offensive.

Personal Essays, Memoirs

Although non-communist writers in central and southern Vietnam produced autobiographical accounts after 1945, some favoring an approach that resembles reportage and others working in a genre that the Vietnamese call *tùy bút*—literary essays filled with personal impressions—no reportage and only a few *tùy bút* essays by Võ Phiến have been translated.

In both communist and non-communist Vietnam, writers have felt more comfortable with memoirs, a genre which because it stresses group achievement is more compatible both with traditional Vietnamese literature and Marxist ideology. In the 1960's, Party leaders encouraged the writing of revolutionary memoirs (*hồi ký cách mạng*), accounts by participants in the revolutionary struggle. Not many have been translated, but some have, including Trần Tử Bình's *The Red Earth*, Nguyễn Duy Trinh et al. *In the Enemy's Net*, Nguyễn Thị Định's *No Other Road to Take*, and Võ Nguyên Giáp's *Unforgettable Days*. See also the following anonymously edited collections (listed in "Sources" by title): *A Heroic People: Memoirs from the Revolution* and *From the Russian October Revolution to the Vietnamese August Revolution*. Many of the selections in these two collections are translated excerpts from individual memoirs.

In both communist and non-communist Vietnam most of the memoirs that have been published are by high-ranking political and military leaders, not common soldiers. Communist writers, no doubt fearing charges of bourgeois individualism, are careful to avoid making their accounts excessively personal. If they include personal details, usually they are ones that reveal their growth in revolutionary consciousness. Since these memoirs are only sporadically personal and since some of them fit nicely into other categories (Colonial Literature, Accounts of Imprisonment), I haven't always placed their primary entry (with annotation) in this section, but all of them are listed here.

¹² Nguyễn Minh Châu, "Writing about War" [Viết về Chiến Tranh], *Văn Nghệ Quân Đội* [Army Literature and Art]: (Nov., 1978). Rpt. in *Trăm Hoa Vẫn Nở Trên Quê Hương: Cao Trào Văn Nghệ Phấn Kháng Tại Việt Nam (1986-89)* [A Hundred Flowers Still Bloom in the Native Land: Dissident Literature and Art in Vietnam] (California: Lê Trần, 1990) 103.

Strong Recommendation: No Other Road to Take

One memoir that I would definitely assign is Nguyễn Thị Định's *No Other Road to Take*. Nguyễn Thị Định grew up in Bến Tre Province and joined the revolutionary movement when she was in her teens, rising eventually to the rank of Deputy Commander of the National Liberation Front Armed Forces. In her memoir, she emphasizes her warm feeling toward her family, particularly her older brother Ba Chấn whose revolutionary activities inspired her own. She describes how pleased she was when an older cadre, a friend of her brother's, proposed to her, and her sadness when she learns he has died in prison not long after their marriage and the birth of their son.

Nguyễn Thị Định wrote in Vietnamese for a Vietnamese audience. Mai Elliot's translation allows students to overhear a discourse that was not written for them but that can teach them a lot about the motivations and way of thinking of people in the revolutionary movement (Pelzer 98). In explaining what inspired them to join the military, American writers such as Philip Caputo and Ron Kovic speak of the powerful influence of John Wayne movies. Nguyễn Thị Định speaks of gathering with her family to listen to her brother read *Lục Vân Tiên*, a 19th century poem glorifying the Confucian virtues of loyalty, filial piety, kindness, and humanity. When she grew older, Nguyễn Thị Định explains, she realized the landlords who kept her family poor were like the wicked characters in *Lục Vân Tiên*. Between John Wayne's *The Sands of Iwo Jima* and *Lục Vân Tiên* lies a world of difference. It is a gap not easily bridged, but a course on the literature of the war can begin to study the myths that help us understand behavior. Aided by works such as John Hellman's *American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam* and Loren Baritz' *Backfire*, we can help students discover intertextual links between John Wayne movies, John Kennedy's speeches on counter-insurgency and the New Frontier, stories of frontier heroes such as Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone, and the Puritan John Winthrop's speeches about America being a City upon a Hill, a moral example to the rest of the world. In Section VI, I've listed some works that will assist students in understanding the myths and legends that have motivated Vietnamese.

Reportage

As for reportage, during colonial times, investigative reporting of political events was a dangerous activity, so writers favored the fictional reportage (phóng sự tiểu thuyết) that I've already discussed in Section II. After 1945, fictional reportage exposing injustice ceased in the communist-controlled areas. The reportage that was done was a type of revolutionary journalism represented in the *Vietnamese Studies* issue entitled *Vietnamese Women*. One could assign Xuân Vũ's account of the uprising in Bến Tre, both as an example of this type of writing and also as a companion to Xuân Vũ's oral history mentioned earlier: this was the kind of writing that, according to Xuân Vũ, the communist culture and propaganda cadres insisted he write—stories glorifying revolu-

tionary achievement. In the South, beginning in the 1960's some journalistic accounts appeared, including, for example, Phan Nhật Nam's vivid accounts of combat, but I know of none that have been translated.

During Renovation (See Section XI), reportage documenting the ills of society was revived and, ironically, some of the new reports published in the 1980's describing life under the communists resemble accounts in the 1930's and 1940's depicting life under the French colonialists (accounts by Ngô Tất Tố and Nguyễn Công Hoan, for example; see Section II). Readers in Vietnam were quick to notice the similarities.¹³ To my knowledge, the only example of recent reportage that has been translated is Phùng Gia Lộc's "The Night of That Day, What a Night!", an account which reveals that communist officials can squeeze taxes out of poor peasants just as mercilessly as mandarin officials could during the period of French domination. In an interview Phùng Gia Lộc says that after his story was published in *Literature and the Arts* in 1988, local communist officials interrogated his wife and five people mentioned in his story. They all told the officials that everything in the story was true—that conditions if anything were worse than his story suggested.¹⁴

The novels by Bảo Ninh and Dương Thu Hương (See Section XI) are not classified as reportage, but like Phùng Gia Lộc's story they document suffering and injustices and are clearly based on the writers' actual experiences. Like their predecessors who wrote in colonial times, modern writers in Vietnam know that it is usually safer to express truth in the guise of fiction.

¹³ After the story by Phùng Gia Lộc described in this section appeared in *Literature and the Arts*, several readers wrote letters to the editor in which they commented on how this story resembled fictional reportage by the older writers. Two of these letters are reprinted in the issue of *Manoa* that contains Phùng Gia Lộc's story.

¹⁴ A translation of this interview appears in the issue of *Manoa* that contains Phùng Gia Lộc's story. Phùng Gia Lộc insistence that his account is true suggests that we should consider his work an "essay in realist literature" as opposed to a "documentary fiction," to use the terms favored by Ngô Vĩnh Long (See the introduction to Section II).

Sources

Bowen, Kevin. "Memories of War, Years of Peace: An Interview with Nguyễn Ngọc." *Manoa* 7.2 (Winter, 1995): 135-141. See Section XI for annotation.

Bùi Tín. *Following Hồ Chí Minh: Memoirs of a North Vietnamese Colonel*. Trans. Judy Stowe and Đỗ Văn. London: C. Hurst, 1994. Pub. in U.S. by University of Hawaii Press, 1995.

Memoir by a soldier, Party organizer, editor and propagandist who defected in 1990. Author was close to ruling elite and includes a great deal of spicy information about Hồ Chí Minh, Trường Chinh, Lê Duẩn and other high-ranking leaders. A kind of "kiss and tell" account, this memoir contrasts sharply with official works about party leaders.

Chanoff, David and Đoàn Văn Toại. *Portrait of the Enemy*. New York: Random House, 1986.

Interviews with Vietnamese who played various roles in the communist movement—guerilla fighters, writers, peasants, opposition political leaders. The compilers gathered these oral histories from Vietnamese now living in Europe, the U.S., or refugee camps in Southeast Asia.

Freeman, James M. *Hearts of Sorrow: Vietnamese-American Lives*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989. See Section X for annotation.

From the Russian October Revolution to the Vietnamese August Revolution. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1987.

A collection of short pieces, most of them excerpts from revolutionary memoirs, that convey the attitude of Vietnamese revolutionaries toward the Russian Revolution and Marxist-Leninism. Part I focuses on Hồ Chí Minh and contains accounts by him of how he came to admire Lenin and international communism. Part II contains reminiscences by other revolutionary leaders—Tôn Đức Thắng, Hoàng Quốc Việt, Tô Hoài, Đặng Thái Mai, and others. In "From the Dungeon" Hà Thế Hanh provides a vivid description of how colonial prisons became classrooms where revolutionaries learned their Marxist-Leninism.

A Heroic People: Memoirs from the Revolution. 2nd ed. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1965.

Collection of accounts by revolutionary leaders of their underground activities from the late 1920's or early 1930's to the August Revolution of 1945. Nguyễn Lương Bằng describes his work organizing Vietnamese workers in French-owned plants in Shanghai and Vietnamese and French sailors on French liners and warships. Phạm Hùng and Lê Văn Lương describe their experiences in the Saigon central prison. Sentenced to death, they planned the anti-imperialist slogans they would shout before being executed but instead of being killed they were transferred to Poulo Condore, the prison on Côn Sơn Island. Hoàng Quốc Việt vividly describes life in this most famous of French colonial prisons, the so-called "University of the Revolution" where revolutionaries studied Marxist-Leninist works and staged Molière's "Le bourgeois gentilhomme" to entertain themselves and their French guards. Võ Nguyên Giáp focuses on the training of political and military cadres in the mountainous region near the China border, the base from which Hồ Chí Minh and his followers worked in the early 1940's.

Hoàng Đạo. *Mud and Stagnant Water* [Bùn Lầy Nước Động]. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 included in *Before the Revolution*, ed. and trans. by Ngô Vĩnh Long.

Originally published in 1938 and immediately banned, this work is a rare example of non-fiction reportage during colonial times. In these three chapters Hoàng Đạo, a member of the Self-Strength Literary Group, exposes the suffering caused by colonial taxes and the monopoly on alcohol production.

Hoàng Ngọc Thanh Dung. "To Serve the Cause of Women's Liberation." *To Be Made Over: Tales of Socialist Reeducation in Vietnam*. Ed. and trans. Huynh Sanh Thong. Lạc-Việt Series No. 5. New Haven, CT: Yale Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1988. 43-77.

A fascinating account by a former schoolteacher in Saigon (now living in Canada) about her experiences as Propaganda and Training Officer and member of the Executive Committee of the Association of Liberated Women in Hồ Chí Minh City, an association set up by the communists after their victory in 1975. Describes how women would join such associations with feigned "joy and zeal" to gain favor with the new government—favor they hoped would help speed their husbands home from reeducation camps (or prevent them from being sent) or protect the family from being sent to a New Economic Zone. The term "liberation" is used ironically: though the author turns some housework over to her husband, she is liberated only to attend boring meetings and study sessions and to write glowing reports on the association's activities.

Huỳnh Quang Nhuận. *The Land I Lost: Adventures of a Boy in Vietnam*. Illus. Võ Đình Mai. New York: Harper & Row, 1982.

Intended primarily for children, this is a collection of tales about growing up in a village in the central highlands of Vietnam. The author, now living in the U.S., is a veteran who was permanently paralyzed by a gunshot wound. Most tales feature animals—a family water buffalo named Tank, dangerous horse snakes, crocodiles, and giant catfish.

Jade Ngọc Quang Huỳnh. *South Wind Changing*. Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1994.

Account by a young man from the Mekong Delta region of his time in reeducation camps. Interesting description of friction among the prison guards between northern and southern cadre members and of the author's escape first from a reeducation camp and then from Vietnam to the U.S. where he earned degrees from Bennington College and Brown University.

Krall, Yung. *A Thousand Tears Falling: The True Story of a Vietnamese Family Torn Apart by War, Communism, and the CIA*. Atlanta, GA: Longstreet Press, 1995. See Section X for annotation.

Lê Văn Hảo. "The Path of a Patriotic Intellectual." *Vietnamese Studies* No. 37. Ed. Nguyễn Khắc Viện. Hanoi: Xunhasaba, n.d. 137-208.

An account of a French-educated professor at the University of Huế who became involved with students in pro-Buddhist, anti-American demonstrations in Huế and worked as an underground supporter of the National Liberation Front. During the Tết Offensive in Huế in 1968 he surfaced and became Chairman of the Thừa Thiên-Huế People's Revolutionary Committee.

Lockhart, Greg. "First Person Narratives from the 1930s." Introduction to *The Light of the Capital*. Trans. Greg Lockhart and Monique Lockhart. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1996. 1-49.

A useful discussion of why and how first-person reportage (phóng sự) emerged in the 1930's. Focuses not on documentary fictions (See introduction to Section II) but on first-person non-fiction accounts. This essay introduces two examples of reportage and one of autobiography (which Lockhart wants to call "self-reportage"). See the annotation for *Light of the Capital* in Section II for information on the three works translated. Lockhart associates the emergence of the

“active ‘I’” in this reportage, a sharp break with traditional practice, with the destruction of the monarchy, the movement of people from families and villages to the city, and the formation of a new class of laborers and tradesmen. These developments, Lockhart argues, displaced people from the traditional hierarchical system in which the “I” (tôi) was a passive form meaning “servant” or “subject” (of a monarch) and fostered a new kind of horizontal social relationship.

_____ and Monique Lockhart, trans. *The Light of the Capital: Three Modern Vietnamese Classics*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1996. See Section II for annotation.

Nguyễn Duy Trinh et al. *In the Enemy's Net: Memoirs from the Revolution*. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962. See Section IX for annotation.

Nguyễn-Hồng-Nhiệm, Lucy and Joel Martin Halpern, eds. *The Far East Comes Near: Autobiographical Accounts of Southeast Asian Students in America*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989.

These student essays were written in a Southeast Asian cultures course taught by the editors at the University of Massachusetts. Includes essays by students from Cambodia and Laos as well as Vietnam. Most of the essays by Vietnamese students focus on their memories of life in Vietnam and the trauma of leaving their homeland.

Nguyễn Thị Định. *No Other Road to Take* [Không Còn Đường Nào Khác]. Trans. by Mai Elliot. Data Paper No. 102. Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1976.

Memoir with some personal details by a woman who was a revolutionary leader in Bến Tre Province. She eventually became Deputy commander of the National Liberation Front Armed Forces. A well-researched introduction by Mai Elliot describes the historical context for the events described by the author.

Phan Thị Như-Bằng. *Tạ Thị Kiều: An Heroic Girl of Bentre*. South Vietnam: Liberation Editions, 1966.

An account of a female liaison agent, political organizer, and participant in the armed struggle in Bến Tre Province. The heroine accepts some traditional female roles and rejects others. For a discussion of this biography in the context of gender relations, see Christine White's “Vietnam: War, Socialism, and the Politics of Gender Relations in Vietnam” in *Promissory Notes: Women in the*

Transition to Socialism, ed. Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp, and Marilyn B. Young (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989), pp. 172-192.

Pelzer, Kristin. "Love, War, and Revolution: Reflections on the Memoirs of Nguyễn Thị Định." *The Vietnam War: Vietnamese and American Perspectives*. Ed. Jayne S. Werner and Lưu Doãn Huỳnh. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1993. 95-109.

A commentary on these memoirs and an argument for assigning them in courses on the war. Accounts by Vietnamese, Pelzer argues, that are written in English with American co-authors are inevitably "tailored to American sensitivities." These memoirs, however, allow the reader to "listen in on the dialogue . . . of revolutionary Vietnamese" (98).

Phùng Gia Lộc. "The Night of That Day, What a Night! A True Account" [Cái Đêm Hôm ấy Đêm gì]. Trans. Birgit Hussfeld and Hans Schodder. *Manoa* 7.2 (Winter, 1995) 51-66. See Section XI for annotation.

Originally published in 1988, this story is an example of reportage (phóng sự).

Scott, Joanna C. *Indochina's Refugees: Oral Histories from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1989.

Stories gathered by the author between October, 1985, and May, 1986, from refugees at the Phillipine Refugee Processing Center. Vietnamese narrators—all ordinary Vietnamese, not famous generals or politicians—speak mostly about how the communist takeover in 1975 affected their lives.

Thanh T. Nguyễn and Bruce Weigl, eds. and trans. *Poems from Captured Documents*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994.

A bilingual edition of poems found in documents captured by American military units between 1966 and 1972. Written by ordinary soldiers of the revolutionary forces, these poems may strike American readers as simple and sentimental, but they should also humanize the enemy.

Trần Tử Bình. *The Red Earth: A Vietnamese Memoir of Life on a Colonial Rubber Plantation*. Trans. by John Spragens, Jr. Athens, OH: Center for International Studies, 1984. See section II for annotation.

Trần Văn Mai. *Who Committed This Crime?* [Ai Gây Nên Tội?]. In *Before the Revolution*. Ed. and trans. Ngô Vĩnh Long. 219-276.

Originally published in Saigon in 1956. A non-fiction account of the starvation that occurred in Vietnam in the years 1944-45 when the Japanese and Vichy French were ruling Vietnam.

Trương Như Tảng, with David Chanoff and Đoàn Văn Toại. *Vietcong Memoir*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985.

An account by a wealthy southerner who took part in the formation of the National Liberation Front and became minister of justice under the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Later he became disillusioned with the communist regime and fled Vietnam by boat in 1978. Some historians believe that the author claims more credit for himself than is warranted, but this is a revealing, intriguing account of political and military developments within the NLF.

Võ Nguyên Giáp. *Unforgettable Days*. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1975. See Section III for annotation.

Võ Phiến. (See Section X for collections that contain translations of several *tùy bút* [literary essays] by Võ Phiến.)

Xuân Vũ. "Flames in the Night." In *Vietnamese Women*, pp. 66-83.

An account of how the women of Bến Tre Province carried out demonstrations protesting the Diệm regime. A good example of revolutionary journalism by a man who later rallied to the Saigon side and now lives in California. Could be assigned with Xuân Vũ's oral history in *Portrait of the Enemy*, ed. by David Chanoff and Đoàn Văn Toại.

Xuân Vũ. "Xuân Vũ's Story: The French War," "In the North," and "Back to the South." *Portrait of the Enemy*. Ed. David Chanoff and Đoàn Văn Toại. 4-11; 74-84; 178-187.

Xuân Vũ's account of his experience as a writer for the revolution and his later disaffection with communism.

Zinoman, Peter B. "Beyond the Revolutionary Prison Memoir." *The Vietnam Review*. Ed. Huỳnh Sanh Thông, Hoàng Ngọc Hiến, and Trương Vũ. Vol. 1. Autumn-Winter, 1996. 256-272.

In this article based on the introduction to his dissertation (See Section IX), Zinoman argues that the many revolutionary prison memoirs published in Hanoi in the 1960's are "seductive" but "misleading" sources for researchers studying the colonial penal system. They impose an "artificial uniformity" on the diverse experiences of political prisoners and overlook or distort the experiences of non-political prisoners who formed the bulk of the prison population. By consistently portraying colonial prisons as schools these memoirs conceal the fact that the leaders of the Indochina Communist Party came from elite backgrounds and attended the most prestigious schools of the colonial regime.

VI. Cultural Background: Religion, Language, Myths, Legends

Discussion

Preparation for Deeper Readings

Included in this section are works which provide information on the cultural context within which Vietnamese writers work. Teachers may wish to read works in this section before they select and teach individual texts. With information and insights gleaned from this reading, teachers will be better able to prepare lectures and lead discussions of assigned texts. This section can also be used as a source for students doing special reports or for anyone who wishes to deepen her understanding of underlying cultural issues.

Because this section contains works on a variety of complex topics—Buddhism, Confucianism, traditional roles for women, etc.—it is not easy to introduce. Instead of trying to summarize the listed works, I would like to suggest a set of readings drawn primarily from this section. Teachers of some courses may wish to assign these readings; other teachers may wish to read them themselves, working in the information they learn from them when they feel it will illuminate a particular text being discussed.

Suggested Readings in Confucianism

My set of readings focuses on Confucianism, a useful topic to know something about as one attempts contextual readings of works on this bibliography. What we call “Confucianism” is a philosophy and a system of ethical precepts that developed in China as scholars reinterpreted and wrote commentaries on the teachings of Confucius, a sage and teacher born in 551 B. C. The key texts are the famous Four Books and Five Classics, works which in Vietnam were approached primarily through the commentaries of Chu Hsi, a Chinese Neo-Confucianist who lived from 1130-1200. Nguyễn Khắc Viện, Ngô Vĩnh Long, and other Vietnamese intellectuals resent scholars such as Paul Mus and Francis FitzGerald who, they say, seize on some Confucian concept and claim it is the key that unlocks all Vietnam’s mysteries, but they do not deny that Confucianism has profoundly affected Vietnamese life. Writing in 1962, Nguyễn Khắc Viện states that for Vietnamese “Confucianism represents much more than a doctrine inscribed in venerable texts; it is a legacy of history, a fundamental legacy to be understood, fought against and overcome in the course of the historical change which the country is now undergoing” (“Confucianism and Marxism,” 17). Many of the works by Vietnamese on this bibliography reveal the truth of these words.

Before moving to the following readings, it will be useful to do some general reading about Confucianism. Many encyclopedias provide readable overviews of Confucianism in China. As to how it has been applied in Vietnam, one can consult Nguyễn Xuân Thu’s “The Vietnamese Family Moral Code” (in *Vietnamese Studies in a Multicultural World*), Nguyễn Đình Hòa’s “The Garden of Confucianism” (in

Language in Vietnamese Society), chapters two and three of David Marr's *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*, and the first chapter of Neil Jamieson's *Understanding Vietnam*.¹⁵

Because Confucianism is a complex system of social organization, one difficult to grasp in its entirety, I've chosen my readings to highlight two aspects of this system that were emphasized in Vietnam, aspects that are generally referred to as the Three Submissions and the Three Bonds. Listed below is my set of ten readings, a mixture of stories, sociology, history, and criticism. All are annotated as well in the list of sources in this or later sections.

1. "The Lady of Nam Xương." In Dương Văn Quyên and Jewell Reinhart Coburn. *Beyond the East Wind: Legends and Folktales of Vietnam*. 81-88.
2. Công Huyền Tôn Nữ Nha Trang. "Ideal Role Conformity of the Vietnamese Wife Reflected in Folksongs." 60-69.
3. FitzGerald, Francis. "The Making of a Revolutionary." *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans*. 197-211.
4. Nguyễn Khắc Viện. "Myths and Truths." Rev. *Fire in the Lake*, by Frances FitzGerald. *Nguyễn Khắc Viện Miscellany*. 73-94.
5. Nguyễn Khắc Viện. "Confucianism and Marxism in Vietnam." *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam*. 15-52.
6. Woodside, Alexander B. "The Ambiguities of Familism as a Source of Organizational Power"; "Conservative Intellectuals and the Prestige of Confucian Methods"; and "Hồ Chí Minh and the Vietnamese Political Tradition." *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam*. 95-102; 102-108; and 160-165.
7. Jamieson, Neil. "The Battle of the Novels." *Understanding Vietnam*. 117-154. (I suggest concentrating on Jamieson's translations of excerpts from Nhất Linh's *Breaking the Ties* and Nguyễn Công Hoan's *Miss Minh, the Schoolteacher*.)
8. Dương Thu Hương. "Back to His Home Village." In *Back to His Home Village*. Hibiscus Series. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1981. 5-30. See Section VII for annotation.

¹⁵ Like Mus and FitzGerald, Jamieson has been criticized for offering a single Confucian concept (*yin* and *yang*) as the key to Vietnamese history and culture, but his book contains useful information on Confucianism in Vietnam.

9. Ma Văn Kháng. "Mother and Daughter." *The Other Side of Heaven: Post-War Fiction by Vietnamese & American Writers*. Ed. Wayne Karlin, Lê Minh Khuê, and Trương Vũ. 340-352. See Section XI for annotation.
10. Võ Phiến. "The Key." *Landscape and Exile*. Ed. by Marguerite Guzman Bouvard. Trans. Phan Phan. Boston: Rowan Tree Press, 1985. 11-19. Rpt. in *The Other Side of Heaven: Post-War Fiction by Vietnamese & American Writers*. Ed. Wayne Karlin, Lê Minh Khuê, and Trương Vũ. 252-257.

Folk Tales and Poetry

The "Lady of Nam Xương" is an ancient folktale that tells of a young woman named Thiết Vũ who entertained her young son by casting her own shadow on the wall and telling him it was his absent father. When his father, Trương, returned from the war, the son refused to believe he was really his father, telling him, "You cannot be my father because my father comes home to me each night." When Trương accuses his wife of unfaithfulness, she throws herself into the Red River and drowns. When that night Trương lights a lamp and his son points to the shadow and says "There is my father now," Trương grieves for his mistake. In the village of Nam Xương a temple is established to honor the love and loyalty of the good wife Thiết Vũ. This story presents the ideal behavior of a woman who according to traditional morality must remain faithful to her husband until her death (even if her husband dies before her). To be accused of unfaithfulness is too great a shame for Thiết Vũ to endure.

The next reading, an article by Công Huyền Tôn Nữ Nha Trang, explains the Confucian precepts that were supposed to govern the behavior of women. According to the Three Submissions (Tam Tông), an unmarried girl submitted to her father's wishes; a married woman, to her husband's; and a widow to her son's. Fidelity, including sexual faithfulness, was crucial, "an expression of the woman's ultimate value of chastity" (66). Thiết Vũ demonstrates these virtues as do many other heroines of Vietnamese stories. In *Lục Vân Tiên*, for example, a nineteenth century verse narrative, the heroine, Kiều Nguyệt Nga, who has already pledged to marry Lục Vân Tiên, fights off the advances of another man with these words:

"A woman," she [Kiều Nguyệt Nga] said,
 "Must engrave in her heart the phrase fidelity-purity[chánh-tiết];
 And devote herself to fulfilling the word submission [tông].
 In life as in death there must be only one husband."

Both the Three Submissions and the Three Bonds were taught in a very well-known poem called "Song of Family Education" [Gia Huấn Ca], a work usually attributed to

Nguyễn Trãi, a high-ranking mandarin in the fifteenth century court of the Lê emperors. This poem also mentions the Four Virtues (Tứ Đức) for women.¹⁶

Here is an excerpt:

Here is some advice on a woman's role:
 Be sure to listen to the old stories.
 Observe how the virtuous daughters-in-law of the past behaved.
 Follow the four virtues: appearance, work, correct speech, and proper behavior.
 Work means cooking rice and cakes—
 How neatly the virtuous woman sews and mends!
 Appearance means a pretty face and dignified demeanor—
 Not careless and sloppy, everything in place.
 Correct speech is to know how to use the polite phrases;
 Proper behavior means to be loyal, filially pious respectful and trustworthy.
 Since olden times daughters-in-law
 Proper in appearance, work, speech and behavior rose above their earthly existence.
 A woman should be polite and proper,
 Be sure to observe the Three Bonds.
 Though you share the same mat, the same bed with him,
 Treat your husband as you would treat your king or your father.
 As a subject be loyal [trung], as a daughter be filially pious [hiếu],
 As a wife strive to build a relationship based on respect.
 Do not take pride in money,
 Do not become conceited because you are smart or clever.
 The way to be a good concubine or wife is to obey
 Just as the way to be a man is to worship one's king as one's father.

Công Huyền asks how these Confucian rules for female conduct imported from China were applied in the actual life not of the elite but of common Vietnamese. Drawing on proverbs and folk poetry, she concludes that among the common people a wife's relationship to her husband was not one of total submission but of "equal and mutual responsibilities," a relationship captured in the proverb: "In harmony, husband and wife can even drain the Pacific Ocean" [Thuận vợ, thuận chồng / Tát bể đông cũng cạn] (65-66).

¹⁶ The phrase *tam tông tứ đức* (three submissions four virtues) was used to refer to the code of behavior expected of women.

Fiction

Although Confucianism was applied differently in Vietnam than in China, and affected different classes in different ways, it is nevertheless true that in many Vietnamese stories the heroine struggles to be true to the Three Submissions. We see this struggle in Nhất Linh's *Breaking the Ties*, a novel in which Loan obeys her parents and suffers in a marriage to a man she does not love. We see it in Dương Thu Hương's story "Back to His Home Village" which takes place on a barren part of Quảng Trị Province after the war. Trần, a former soldier who has come "back to his home village" to set up a State farm, meets Nguyễn Thị Sim, a member of a bomb disposal team who is a widow with a young son. Trần knows Sim is virtuous because she has brought her son back to his father's native land. Her loyalty to her dead husband is contrasted with the unfaithfulness of Trần's wife who took up with a major in the ARVN while Trần was away fighting and followed him to the U.S. after the war, taking Trần's son with her.

In this story the conflict between the desire for love and companionship and the pressure to conform to traditional virtues is suggested but not insisted on: when the story ends Trần and Sim agree to meet the next morning to talk about "business," the removal of bombs, the State farm, etc. We suspect that they both are so virtuous that they may be content to remain only respected comrades and never become lovers. Though it has a similar theme, Ma Văn Kháng's "Mother and Daughter" presents a more painful conflict between love and duty. Duyên, a widow and a doctor with two teenage children, likes a major in the army but refuses his advances for fear of upsetting her daughter, who is horrified at the prospect of her mother remarrying.

Along with the Three Submissions there were also the Three Bonds (Tam Cương): father-son, king-subject, husband-wife. In maintaining the first bond, filial piety (hiếu) was the key virtue; in maintaining the second, loyalty (trung); in maintaining the third, chastity (tiết hạnh) and fidelity (chính chuyên). Vietnamese use the phrase *trung hiếu tiết hạnh* (loyalty filial piety chastity) as a shorthand expression to refer to the entire Confucian system.

Confucianism, for ten centuries "the intellectual and ideological backbone of Vietnam" (Nguyễn Khắc Viện 17), posed certain problems for revolutionaries: it encouraged a tightly knit family system that made it difficult to organize groups larger than the family; it also was very hierarchical and discouraged initiative, particularly by the young (Woodside 100). Another problem was the second bond which demanded loyalty to the king: Vietnam's emperors cooperated with the French and helped cause Vietnam's loss of independence. Since sons and daughters were supposed to learn how to be loyal to the king by being pious to their parents,¹⁷ one could not easily excise the first or second bond. All the bonds were interrelated in a system. Because it emphasized loyalty and obedience to established authority, Confucianism was more appreciated by

¹⁷ "The teaching of filial piety is preparation for serving the ruler of the state." *Great Learning* (one of the Four Books), Chapter IX.

French administrators and conservative Vietnamese than it was by revolutionaries. This alliance of Confucianism and colonialism is revealed in Nhất Linh's *Breaking the Ties*. Loan is brought to court for accidentally stabbing her abusive husband while he was trying to hit her with a copper vase. The prosecutor, who, of course, was working for the colonial government, argues that by disrupting the hierarchical Confucian family system Loan has threatened the stability of colonial society.

Confucianism and Revolution

Though counter-revolutionaries could adopt Confucianism for their purposes, it also offered some advantages to revolutionaries, particularly to Marxists. Like Marxism, Confucianism “concentrated man’s thoughts on politics and social problems” and defined “man as the total of his social relationships.” Therefore, Nguyễn Khắc Viện argues, the traditional Confucian makes a quite easy transition to socialism (47). Hồ Chí Minh’s success resulted in part from his ability to graft European Marxism on to a special form of semi-indigenized and popularized Vietnamese Confucianism exemplified by nineteenth century revolutionaries like Trương Định, rebels whose loyalty to the king was more conditional, less tied to a particular individual. If the king were not worthy (e.g. ceded land to foreign invaders), then he did not deserve one’s loyalty (See Nguyễn Khắc Viện, “Confucianism and Marxism,” 34-41; Woodside, *Community and Revolution*, 163).

In the Army Museum in Hanoi there is a banner with this quotation from a speech by Hồ Chí Minh to soldiers: “Our army is loyal (*trung*) to the Party, and pious (*hiếu*) to the people.” Note how Hồ Chí Minh has used words that evoke the first and second Confucian bonds—*trung* and *hiếu*—but has shifted the focus from king and father to Party and people. In “The Making of a Revolutionary,” Francis FitzGerald reports on research that suggests how hard the NLF worked to “transfer the soldiers’ attachments from their real families to the great ‘family’ of the Liberation” (202). Hồ Chí Minh promoted this transfer by projecting a public persona of a kind and gentle uncle and by encouraging people to call him “Bác Hồ” (Uncle Hồ—literally the older brother of one’s father).

Non-communist nationalists were less successful than Marxists in coming up with an ideology that encouraged loyalty to communities larger than the family. When ARVN soldiers abandoned their posts, it was often to evacuate their families; when Saigon civil servants demanded bribes, it was often to feed their children; and today when Vietnamese exiles, like the son in Võ Phiến’s “The Key,” suffer terribly, it is often because they have had to abandon family and the graves of their ancestors.

Sources

Balaban, John, ed. and trans. *Ca Dao Vietnam: A Bilingual Anthology of Vietnamese Folk Poetry*. Greensboro, NC: Unicorn Press, 1974.

A beautifully printed book of *ca dao* (Vietnamese folk poetry) in English and Vietnamese. The editor and translator worked as a civilian for voluntary agencies in Vietnam and is well-known for his poems and prose about the war.

Công Huyền Tôn Nữ Nha Trang. "The Traditional Roles of Women as Reflected in Oral and Written Vietnamese Literature." Diss. University of California, Berkeley, 1973.

Author analyzes ideal norms for the behavior of traditional Vietnamese women as expressed in oral folk poems and two nineteenth century narrative poems. She attempts to distinguish the ideal from the real by comparing the behavior of female characters in literary works to ideal norms. Excellent description of *Lục Vân Tiên*, the narrative poem that Nguyễn Thị Định (See Section V) cites as an important influence on her life.

_____. "Ideal Role Conformity of the Vietnamese Wife Reflected in Folksongs." *Tenggara* 8 (1976): 60-69.

A summary of the first chapter of the author's Ph.D. dissertation. See above.

Dương Văn Quyên and Jewell Reinhart Coburn. *Beyond the East Wind: Legends and Folktales of Vietnam*. Illustrated by Nena Grigorian Lillberg. Thousand Oaks, CA: Burn, Hart & Co., 1976.

A collection of some of Vietnam's best-known legends and folktales.

Francis FitzGerald. *Fire in the Lake: the Vietnamese and the Americans*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1972.

Most scholars agree that the second part on the Americans is better than the first part, in which the author tries to define the Vietnamese national character by relating it to notions taken from Chinese Confucian texts. Sections of the first part could be assigned and then compared to Nguyễn Khắc Viện's review (See below).

Huỳnh Đình Tế. *Introduction to Vietnamese Culture*. San Diego: Multifunctional Resource Center, San Diego State University, 1989.

Originally published as separate volume; later published with *Introduction to Cambodian Culture* and *Laos Culturally Speaking*. Written for educators and others working with Southeast Asian people. Includes brief accounts of Vietnam's history, language, religions, and cultural beliefs and customs.

_____. Huỳnh Đình Tế. *Selected Proverbs*. 2nd. Edit. Oakland, CA: Center for International Communication and Development, 1990.

A bilingual collection of 369 Vietnamese proverbs.

Huỳnh Sanh Thông, ed. and trans. *An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems from the Eleventh through the Twentieth Centuries*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

A collection of 322 works by 150 poets—some famous, some “ordinary, uncelebrated persons” (x). It contains 125 poems from *The Heritage of Vietnamese Poetry* (1979), a collection of premodern poems also compiled and translated by Huỳnh Sanh Thông. Poems are arranged under nine headings. The section “Response to the West” contains patriotic poems opposing French colonialism. “After the Russian Revolution” contains works on imprisonment and the refugee experience. These sections, and the final section, “War and Peace,” will be particularly useful to teachers of courses on the war. This is an impressive work by an excellent scholar who is the leading translator of Vietnamese literary texts.

Jamieson, Neil L. *Understanding Vietnam*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993.

An extremely ambitious work—a mixture of sociological, literary, political, and historical analysis. Covers the period from 1858 to the present. Suggests that Vietnamese history in the 20th century can be seen as “as a case of patterned oscillation” between yin and yang (13). In this scheme, yin is more female, indigenous, informal, consensual, emotional, and egalitarian. Yang is more male, Sinitic in origin, formal, autocratic, rational, and hierarchical. Jamieson associates Yang with Neo-Confucianism and communism and Yin with the opposition to these doctrines. Excellent chapters on late colonial fiction and poetry with translations of excerpts from novels and many poems. See annotations in Section II for more information on these parts of this work. Also discusses the poetry, folk songs, bar girls, street children, and other “urban yin sub-systems” that developed in the South during the period 1968-1975.

Ngô Vĩnh Long. "Fizzle in the Lake." Rev. of *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, by Frances FitzGerald. *Ramparts* Jan. 1972: 45-47, 56-60.

In *Fire in the Lake*, FitzGerald argues that Americans failed in Vietnam because they did not realize that Vietnamese, because they accepted Confucian doctrine (the mandate of heaven, absolute loyalty to ruler and father, etc.) valued authority figures more than programs and policies. Ngô Vĩnh Long says that FitzGerald is led to this erroneous conclusion because she exaggerates the influence of Confucianism in Vietnam. Objects to FitzGerald's reliance on Chinese Confucian texts (*The I-Ching*, in particular) and European sources to produce a "cocksure analysis" of the Vietnamese psyche which she then presents as an explanation of the war.

Nguyễn Đình Hòa. *Language in Vietnamese Society: Some Articles by Nguyễn Đình Hòa*. Ed. by Patricia Nguyễn Thị Mỹ-Hương. Vietnam Culture Series No. 1. Carbondale, IL: Asia Books, 1980.

Articles on Confucianism, language and literature, names and titles and other topics by a leading Vietnamese linguist.

Nguyễn Khắc Viện. "Confucianism and Marxism in Vietnam." *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam*. Berkeley: Indochina Resource Center, 1974?. 15-52.

The author explains why Marxism did not "baffle" Vietnamese exposed to Confucianism: both "isms" concentrate a person's thoughts not on the individual but on political and social problems. (But see Woodside's *Community and Revolution*, below.)

_____. "Myths and Truths." Rev. *Fire in the Lake*, by Frances FitzGerald. *Nguyễn Khắc Viện Miscellany*. Vietnamese Studies No. 70. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1983. 73-94.

Originally appeared in *Vietnam Courier*, Sept., 1973. Objects to FitzGerald's setting aside of history in her concentration on psycho-social analysis. Argues that the confrontation was between "neo-colonialist oppressors" and people engaged in a struggle for liberation; it was not fundamentally a confrontation between "men formed by different cultural traditions" (81). Objects also to FitzGerald's reliance on Confucianism to explain Vietnamese national character. After 1900, the author argues, Confucianism was a "mere relic" that could not explain major historical events.

Nguyễn Xuân Thu, ed. *Vietnamese Studies in a Multicultural World*. Melbourne: Vietnamese Language & Culture Publications, 1994.

A collection of 18 articles that appeared in the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, an Australian publication. Articles are grouped under five headings: Intrinsic Values, Cross-Cultural Communication, Language and Literature, Refugee Issues, and Current Socio-economic Development. The following articles should be of special interest to teachers of courses on Vietnam War literature: Nguyễn Hưng Quốc's "Vietnamese Communist Literature (1975-1990)" (See Section IV for annotation) and "Vietnamese Literature in Exile" (See Section X); and Greg Lockhart's "Nguyễn Huy Thiệp's Writing: Post-Confucian? Post-Modern?" (See Section XI).

Sully, Francois, ed. *We the Vietnamese: Voices from Vietnam*. New York: Praeger, 1971.

Published during the war, this book "attempts a non-partisan portrait of Vietnamese life, without bias and without omitting any representative group..." (xv). It is edited by a French journalist who covered Indochina for *Newsweek* and died in a helicopter crash a few months before this book was published. Includes thumbnail sketches by Vietnamese of their beliefs, history, customs, religions, literature, and other topics. Most selections previously appeared in English-language publications emanating from Saigon, Hanoi, or the National Liberation Front in the South.

Thích Nhất Hạnh. *A Taste of Earth and Other Legends of Vietnam*. Trans. Mobi Warren. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1993.

A retelling of some of Vietnam's most famous legends, including the story of Âu Cơ and the Dragon Prince ("A Taste of Earth"), the mythical story of the origins of the Vietnamese. The compiler is a well-known Zen master, poet, and peace activist who now lives in the U. S. Buddhist themes appear in some of these stories, but the tales are not explicitly Buddhist. Several stories reveal the influence of India on early Vietnamese culture.

_____. *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1967.

Summarizes the history of Vietnamese Buddhism and argues for the establishment of a government not aligned with either the Americans or the Communists.

Trần Văn Dĩnh. "Why Every American Should Read *Kim Vân Kiều*." *Washingtonian Magazine* Sept. 1968. Adapted version reprinted in *We the Vietnamese*, ed. Francois Sully (See above).

Argues that Vietnam's best-known literary work—Nguyễn Du's 19th century verse narrative *Kim Vân Kiều*—offers valuable clues to the Vietnamese character, clues that would have helped President Johnson and other American leaders avoid mistakes they made in prosecuting the war.

Woodside, Alexander B. *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976.

An intellectual history of modern Vietnam. This is a scholarly book, perhaps too scholarly for some undergraduates. In one section that I would assign, Woodside explains that the Confucian family posed a dilemma for revolutionaries: it contributed to social cohesion but also blocked the emergence of social organization above the family (pp. 95-108). In another section he explains how Hồ Chí Minh and his generation, aware that Vietnamese kings were cooperating with the French, struggled with the Confucian notion of loyalty to the king (pp. 160-165).

VII. Works of Socialist Realism from the North and “Liberated” South

Discussion

Socialist Realism in Russia and Vietnam

Neither Marx nor Engels used the term "socialist realism," but Engels, in a letter to a British writer, offered what has become his famous definition of realism: "Realism, to my mind, implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances."¹⁹ Like most of Marx and Engels' comments on literature, this definition is vague enough to have spawned a host of interpretations. When in a report delivered in 1948 Trường Chinh, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party, defines socialist realism, he quotes from Engels' definition, but it is clear that his formulation owes much to literary debates in Russia where the term "socialist realism" emerged in the early 1930's.

The term "socialist realism" and the theory it referred to were, like most everything in the Soviet Union at this time, ascribed to Stalin himself, but Soviet critics and writers, particularly Maxim Gorky, were chiefly responsible. A resolution passed by the Central Committee of the Communist party in 1932 created a single Union of Soviet Writers. Writers who wished to join had to accept the general policy of the Soviet government, support socialist reconstruction, and adhere to the method of socialist realism. Though socialist realism is now seen as a restrictive doctrine, it was formulated in Russia as a reaction to an even stricter regimentation by a group known as the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers. This group insisted on proletarian literature that would serve Russia's Five-Year Plan for industrial and economic development. Approved works glorified workers in factories and on collective farms. Disappointed with the quality of this proletarian literature, party members established a new Union of Soviet Writers and the new doctrine of socialist realism in order to improve literary quality. Restrictions were still in place, writers had to produce socialist realism, but they were relieved of the requirement to write purely industrial or political novels.

Russia

In 1934 Maxim Gorky summarized the four key features of socialist realism. First, socialist realism is a *programmatically* literature that affirms something. Second, it is a literature in which *collectivism* is presented as the main factor in shaping man. "Socialist individuality can develop only in conditions of collective labor," said Gorky. Third, socialist realistic literature provides an *optimistic* outlook on life. Fourth, this literature must have an *educative* function.²⁰ Zhdanov, another prominent critic at the time,

¹⁹ Quoted in George Bizstray, *Marxist Models of Literary Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) 17. My discussion of socialist realism is based on Bizstray's account and also that of Gleb Struve in *Russian Literature under Lenin and Stalin: 1917-1953* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971).

offered this definition: "[T]ruthfulness and historical concreteness of artistic depiction must be combined with the task of ideological remolding and re-education of the toiling people in the spirit of Socialism. This method in fiction and in literary criticism is what we call Socialist Realism" ²¹

Gorky and other critics who helped define socialist realism often contrasted it with critical or bourgeois realism—the realism of Balzac, for example, or of Russia's great nineteenth-century novelists Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. According to Gorky, the problem with critical realism was that it was too negative, too pessimistic. It was good at exposing the evils of pre-socialist society but it was not upbeat enough to develop a new socialist personality.

Vietnam

Vietnamese intellectuals followed debates in the Soviet Union relating to socialist realism by reading accounts in French journals, including *l'Humanité*, the official newspaper of the French Communist Party, and *Monde*, edited by Henri Barbusse, a leading communist intellectual. These journals were available in Vietnam when the Popular Front gained control in France (1936-39) and relaxed the censorship of materials sent to the colonies (See Huệ Tâm Hồ Tai, "Literature for the People"). In Vietnam arguments over socialist realism emanating from the Soviet Union became part of a Vietnamese debate between a group advocating "art for art's sake" and another group in favor of "art for life's sake." The leading spokesperson of the latter group, a communist Party member named Hải Triều, aligned himself with Soviet (Maxim Gorky) and French (Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse) critics who advocated flexible definitions of socialist realism. According to Huệ Tâm Hồ Tai, Hải Triều was "the leading proponent of the communist conception of literature" before the outbreak of World War II (65). The war caused Soviet critics to tighten their definitions of socialist realism, primarily by making patriotism a dominant theme. It was these more rigid definitions, rather than Hải Triều's more moderate views, that were adopted by the Indochina Communist Party in its "Theses on Culture" that it promulgated in 1943—the Party's first formal statement of its position on literature.

Trường Chinh, General Secretary of the Central Committee, amplified these "Theses" in his 1948 report "Marxism and Vietnamese Culture." Here is how Trường Chinh defined socialist realism in that report:

As we understand it, socialist realism is a method of artistic creation which portrays the truth in a society evolving towards socialism according to objective laws. Out of objective reality we must spotlight "the

²⁰ My account here is based on Bisztray's summary of Gorky's address to the Pan-Soviet Congress of Writers which took place in 1934. See pp. 53-54.

²¹ Quoted by Struve, p. 262.

typical features in typical situations” [from Engels’ definition of realism] and reveal the inexorable motive force driving society forward and the objective tendency of the process of evolution. (285)

Even if we understand “objective laws” to mean Marx’s laws of dialectical and historical materialism, his definition remains vague. Occasionally, however, Trường Chinh gives examples which clarify his meaning. After reiterating that “socialist realism is objective,” he admits that some objective truths are unfavorable to the cause. Then he provides this example:

For example, shall we report a battle we have lost truthfully? We can, of course, depict a lost battle, but in doing so, we must see to it that people realize how heroically our combatants accepted sacrifices, why the battle was lost, what our gains were and notwithstanding the defeat, that our combatants never felt demoralized because all were eager to learn and draw the appropriate lessons in order to secure victories in future battles. (286)

A section on how to create works of art is also quite specific. Trường Chinh suggests that creation can be facilitated by having a clear view of who one’s audience is. It should be the mass of the people, not the lowest artistic level but the majority of the people. Artists should live among the masses—workers, peasants, soldiers: “On-the-spot observation has always been profitable to artistic creation” (291). Finally, artists should get criticism from the masses before putting their work in final form. Even a playwright who is in the army should have his work performed in front of his fellow soldiers and take into account their criticisms (291-2).

Trường Chinh, despite his reputation as the most pro-Mao member of the Central Committee (Trường Chinh, his chosen pseudonym, means “long march”), does not refer in his address to Mao Tse-tung’s speeches on literature and art at Yen-an, which were delivered six years earlier. He, however, makes many of the same points as did the Chinese communist leader. According to Georges Boudarel, a Frenchman with close ties to the communist leadership in Hanoi, Maoism began to be imported massively into Vietnam beginning in 1950. Official policy in the arts “followed the guidelines laid down by Mao Tse-tung in Yen-an in 1942”:

Vietnamese writers and artists were urged again and again to reexamine their ideological stand. Their works were expected to revolve around stock characters or ‘types’ (điển hình) and to serve the political requirements of the moment in a ‘timely’ fashion (phục vụ kịp thời). The catchword was ‘hate’ (căm thù): hate for the foreign ‘imperialists’ (đế quốc) and for the native ‘feudalists’ (phong kiến) or landowners. (155)

According to Boudarel, the Nhân-Văn Giai-Phẩm affair, the precursor in some ways to the recent Renovation Movement (See Section X), was a reaction by writers and artists to these strict guidelines.²²

Teaching Suggestions

If students know that the writers represented in this section had to follow the rules of "socialist realism," they will read their works more intelligently and sympathetically, even if they are still put off by the one-dimensional characters and clear political intent. Possessed of this information, they will not reject a story such as Nguyễn Sáng's "Ivory Comb" too hastily. This story is narrated by an older Resistance fighter and features a brave female liaison girl who helps the narrator and other resistance fighters elude American helicopters in the Plain of Reeds. It turns out that the girl is the daughter of an old friend and comrade-in-arms of the narrator. The story ends with the narrator giving the liaison girl an ivory comb that her father had made for her many years ago.

"Ivory Comb" is a fairly typical story, the beautiful and brave female liaison girl is a stereotypical figure in revolutionary stories, but it does present a Vietnamese perspective. Instead of looking down on the Vietnamese from a helicopter, the perspective encouraged by American stories, the reader looks up at the Americans in the helicopter, seeing them through the eyes of Thu, the liaison agent, and the other cadres. The story also contains some common themes in this literature: how, from the revolutionary perspective, the resistance against the Americans was a continuation of the resistance against the French, all one "Long Resistance," to use the title of Nguyễn Khắc Viện's history; and how though normal family life was sacrificed for the Revolution, still family loyalties were affirmed as sons and daughters followed their parents along the road to revolution.

Students will certainly recognize that stories like "Ivory Comb" are propaganda to further a cause, and no doubt they will and should judge them harshly, at least as harshly as many of their creators, Nguyễn Sáng included, are now judging them in Vietnam (See Section XI). One can suggest, however, that the persistent emphasis on private experience in American narratives, although not overtly forced by the State, is not a universal tendency. Nor is propaganda absent from American works on the war. It might be instructive to make these stories part of a unit that included readings from U.S. Army magazines published during the war, some male adventure stories like those in Robin Moore's book *the Green Berets* (or the movie *the Green Berets*) and the anti-war movie *Hearts and Minds*. With these works in mind, one could try to identify American cultural stereotypes, counterparts to the brave liaison girl, and attempt a definition of propaganda. The goal would be to get students to see that American works on the war are

²² This "affair" take its name from two journals (*Nhân Văn* [Humanism] and *Giai Phẩm* [Works of Beauty]) that were founded by writers demanding release from the strictures of socialist realism and also more democracy and respect for legal procedures. The movement began in 1955 and was squashed in 1958 with several writers getting long prison sentences.

not as politically disinterested as they might think.

For example, to generate discussion one could pair Robin Moore's "Home to Nanette" (a chapter from the *Green Berets*) with an excerpt from Nguyễn Ngọc's *The Village that Wouldn't Die*. Moore's story is a semi-fictionalized account of a Major Arkin who is dropped into Laos to organize the Montagnard tribesmen to fight the communist Pathet Lao. Nguyễn Ngọc's account, also semi-fictionalized, concerns the heroic efforts of a Montagnard village, assisted by a Vietnamese representative of Hồ Chí Minh's government, to defeat the French. Both accounts are formulaic, but written, of course, to different formulas.

Sources

Anh Đức. *Hòn Đất*. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1969.

A novel describing heroic revolutionary action around 1961 in a hamlet called Hòn Đất in the western part of South Vietnam. The revolutionaries take refuge in a cave and with the help of the people withstand all attacks by Diệm's soldiers and their American advisors. Affection between revolutionary families and cadre members is sometimes effectively rendered. ARVN commanders and Americans are stereotypical villains

Back to His Home Village. Hibiscus Series. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1981.

Three stories on the theme of returning home after the war. The title story by Dương Thu Hương is about a soldier returning to Quảng Trị to set up a State farm. He meets a widow, a member of a bomb removal team, and her young son. The story emphasizes traditional loyalties to husbands and wives and devotion to the revolution. This story with its one-dimensional characters could be compared to Dương Thu Hương's *Paradise of the Blind*, a novel which offers more complex characters and a less optimistic view of post-war Vietnam (Section XI).

Distant Stars. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1976.

Collection of stories set in the North that glorify socialist construction and workers supporting the military effort. Several stories feature effective leaders of agricultural production brigades. Others describe truck drivers and cadre that detonate American bombs that have failed to explode. Probably the best is the title story, "Distant Stars," by Lê Minh Khuê, an account of three girls from Hanoi who reminisce about childhood joys in their beloved Hanoi as they go about the dangerous business of detonating bombs. The recent collection *The Stars, the Earth, the River: Short Stories*, by Lê Minh Khuê, translated by Bac Hoai Tran and Dana Sachs with an introduction by Wayne Karlin (Curbstone Press, 1997) was not reviewed for this bibliography.

The Fire Blazes. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1965.

A collection of stories describing and promoting resistance to Diệm and his American backers. Several stories describe the people's resistance to Diệm's strategic hamlet program. In "The Little Wooden Sandal," a second lieutenant in Diệm's army comes upon a child's slipper in a hut after a raid and regrets his

involvement in the attack. After witnessing a fellow officer torture two women, he strikes him and then flees through the rice fields. Another story, "An American Sees the Light," describes the capture and release (after he "sees the light") of an American soldier. Could be assigned with accounts listed in section VIII.

Huệ Tâm Hồ Tai. "Literature for the People: From Soviet Policies to Vietnamese Polemics." *Borrowings and Adaptations in Vietnamese Culture*. Ed. Trương Bửu Lâm. Southeast Asia Paper No. 25. Manoa, HI: University of Hawaii, 1987. 63-83.

Describes how Soviet policies relating to literature influenced Vietnamese intellectuals in the late 1930's and helped to shape the Indochina Communist Party's definition of socialist realism.

The Ivory Comb. 2nd Edit. South Viet Nam: Giai Phong Publishing House, 1968.

A collection of short stories and excerpts from novels by southerners who joined the revolution. The title story is by Nguyễn Quang Sáng (pseudonym: Nguyễn Sáng). Also includes a short story by Nguyễn Ngọc (pseudonym: Nguyễn Trung Thành) from his collection *Rừng Xà Nu* [The Forest of Xa Nu Trees] (1963). All stories glorify revolutionary heroes in the fight against "Mỹ-Điệm," the Americans and Ngô Đình Diệm.

Literature and National Liberation in South Vietnam. Vietnamese Studies No. 14. Hanoi: Xunhasaba, n.d.

A collection of articles about militant literature with a sample of poems and fiction. Trần Đình Văn's "Artistic and Literary Life in the Liberated Zones of South Vietnam" describes the dangers faced by writers in the "liberated" areas. The fiction included is similar to that included in Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc's *Vietnamese Literature*.

Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc. *Vietnamese Literature: Historical Background and Texts*. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.

Most of the post-1945 works in this collection are in the socialist realism mode. See Section IV for annotation.

Nguyễn Ngọc. *The Village That Wouldn't Die* [Đất Nước Đứng Lên]. Trans. Trần Văn. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958.

Story of how a Bahnar (an ethnic minority) village in the central highlands, led by a heroic fighter-organizer named Nup, resisted the French during the First Indochina War. In his introduction, the author explains that his novel is based on the exploits of a real person, Nup, whom the author met when he was "an organizing political cadre sharing the hard life of the Highland people." Though awarded a First Literary Prize for 1954-55, this is a propagandistic account that idealizes all aspects of the resistance, including Montagnard-Vietnamese relations. For biographical information on the author, see Kevin Bowen's interview with Nguyễn Ngọc annotated in Section XI.

Nguyễn Sáng. "The Ivory Comb." *The Ivory Comb*. 2nd ed. South Vietnam: Giai Phong Publishing House, 1968.

This story is described in the introduction to this section.

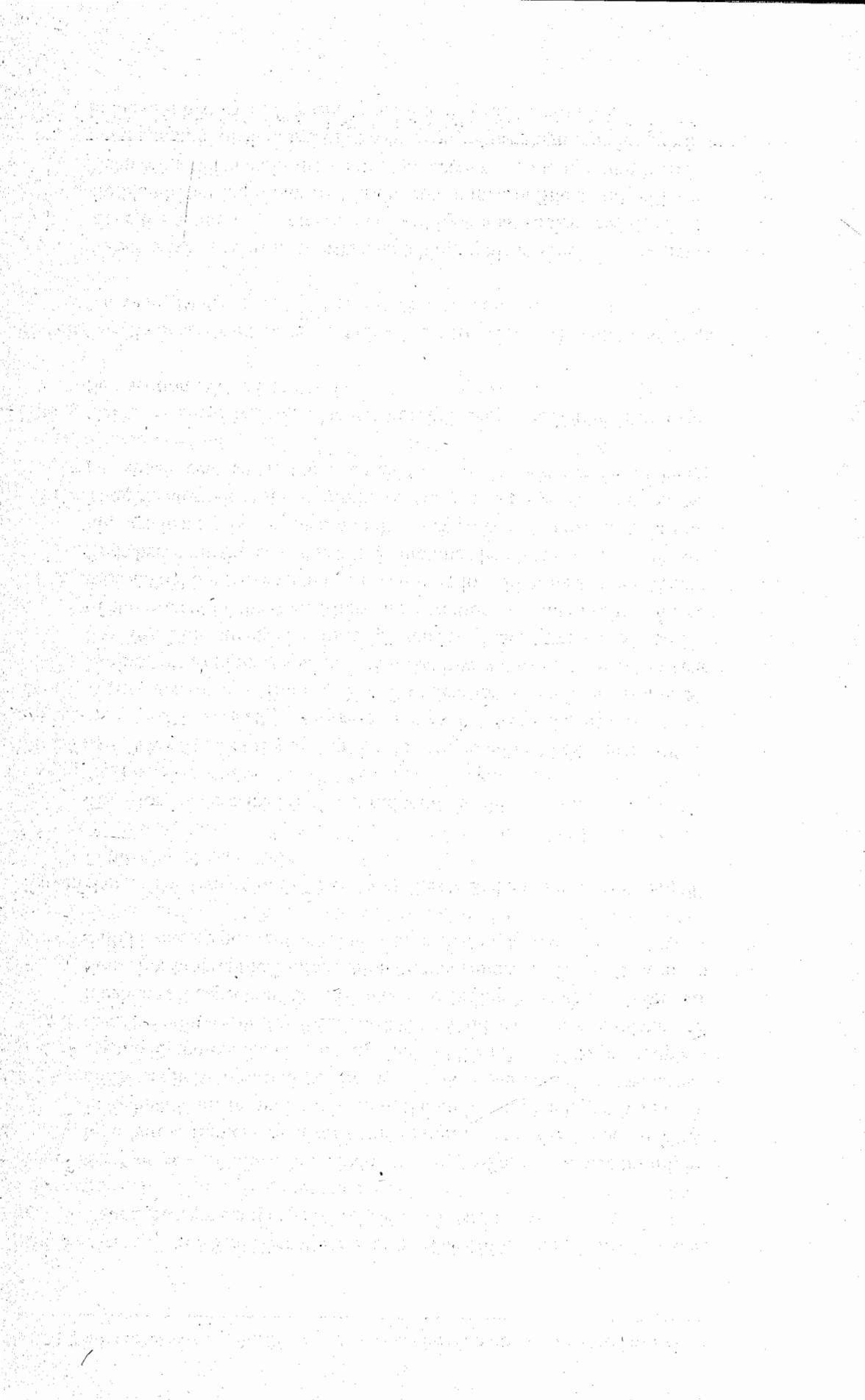
"Time" and Other Stories. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1985.

As explained in an "Editor's Note," the authors of the short stories in this collection "try to portray south Vietnam as it was during the past ten years (1975-85)" (6). Collectively the stories present an idealized and sentimentalized view of the effects of the war. Many are variations of this motif: a former soldier returns looking for a young girl whom he loved before the war. Sometimes he finds her, sometimes he doesn't. Sometimes he meets another woman who like him has lost a pre-war lover and the story ends with hope for their relationship. The title story describes a mother's struggle to prove that her son, rumored to have been seen at a "rallying center" for turncoats, did not betray the revolution.

Trường Chinh. *Selected Writings*. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977. See Section IV for annotation.

Vietnamese Women. Vietnamese Studies No. 10. Hanoi: Democratic Republic of Vietnam, 1966.

A collection of essays, reportage, and biographical sketches all designed to convince the reader that women, repressed by feudal society and the Diệm regime, are playing an important part in the communist political and military struggle. Xuân Vũ's "Flames in the Night," an account of the uprising in Bến Tre, is a good example of the kind of revolutionary journalism that Xuân Vũ describes in his oral history in *Portrait of the Enemy* (See Section V).



VIII. Fiction from the Non-Communist South

Discussion

Complexity of Vietnamese Regionalism

The paucity of works in this category reflects not low output but lack of translations. Hundreds of fictional works have been written by non-communist writers (See Võ Phiến's *Literature in South Vietnam* for a listing), but to my knowledge the works cited below are the only translations. Section X, Vietnamese Exile Narratives, includes some fictional works—Võ Phiến's *Intact*, for example—that discuss life in Vietnam during the war as well as life in the country of exile. Included in this section are works written in Vietnam or works that may have been written abroad but focus primarily on life in Vietnam.

Literature from the communist areas is fairly easy to characterize because so much of it was written according to the rules of socialist realism. Literature in the South, however, is much more diverse and therefore much more difficult to summarize. Drawing heavily on Võ Phiến's *Literature in South Vietnam*, however, we can venture a few remarks.

One way to introduce literature in the South is to group writers by their home region—north, central, and south. The advantage of this grouping is that it provides an opportunity to convey some important facts about Vietnamese history, language, and culture. On formal occasions Vietnamese no matter what their political orientation will always speak of Vietnam as one country from Cà Mau to the border with China, and the communists gained converts by making “thống nhất” (unification) their goal. But Vietnamese also have intense regional loyalties, a fact which must be born in mind in trying to understand a great many aspects of Vietnamese life.

What is referred to as “Southern literature” is written by Vietnamese from the north, from central Vietnam, and from the south. The Geneva Accords of 1954, the treaty that ended the first Indochina war, established a temporary demarcation line at the seventeenth parallel which divided communist North from the non-communist South. This line went through central Vietnam, leaving some central Vietnamese in communist-controlled areas and some in the non-communist part of the country. In other words, this political line was superimposed on older divisions between north, central, and south—divisions which reflect distinct cultural and linguistic traditions.

Southerners from the North

In 1954 many Vietnamese living in the North, including many future writers, fled to the South to avoid living under communism.²³ Võ Phiến talks of two generations of north-

²³ There was movement in the other direction as well. Quite a few southern writers “regrouped” (tập kết) in the North. During the war they were sent back to the South to gather material for their writing and to carry out propaganda activities. Usually these writers wrote under a

ern refugees: an older group who were involved in the Resistance against the French but became disenchanted with communism and another group who were too young to be involved in the first Resistance (124). Doãn Quốc Sỹ, for example, belongs to the first group. His short story "The Crimson-Bordered Straw Mat" (in *War and Exile*) takes place in the north during the war with the French. After 1954, the narrator of this story, like its author, moved to the South.²⁴ This move to the South by northerners involved in the first Resistance was more than a simple change of location: it was, as Võ Phiến points out, a complete transformation of their lives. For years they had devoted body and soul to a cause; now they had to find new reasons to live and to write. Initially after the end of the first Indochina war, this older generation was consumed with politics, the issue of communism vs. anti-communism (124).

The younger generation of northern refugee writers is represented in this bibliography by Dương Nghiễm Mậu, Duyên Anh, Lê Tất Điều, Nhật Tiến, and Thảo Trường. Before the war intensified in the mid-60's this generation was less obsessed than was the older generation with political issues; they were more interested in the "subjects of all times: the joy and pain of love, the suffering of the have-nots, the travails of human destiny, etc." (Võ Phiến 124). From 1954 to 1963 South Vietnam was relatively peaceful and relatively stable politically and so it is natural that when this younger generation of writers first began to write, they took up less political topics.

From 1960 on, however, the war heated up, and most of the translated stories by these younger northern refugees reveal its effects. One effect was the experience of being uprooted from their homes. Some stories like Duyên Anh's "The Thiên Lý Flower" (in *Vietnamese Short Stories*) reflect nostalgia for a native village in the North and resentment at the communists whose takeover of the Resistance forced the villagers to move. In this story, the narrator, now in the South, dreams of returning to the North and marrying a northern girl. Other stories reveal the effects of war in the South. Dương Nghiễm Mậu's "The Day the Milk-Breast Tree Was Cut Down" (in *War and Exile*) takes place during the second Indochina war and describes the plight of a couple living in a contested area of South Vietnam. The couple have one son fighting for the communists, the other for the Saigon government. Lê Tất Điều's story "One-Sixtieth" in the

pseudonym. Included in this group are: Bùi Đức Ái (Anh Đức), Nguyễn Quang Sáng (Nguyễn Sáng) and Nguyễn Ngọc (Nguyễn Trung Thành). See the *Ivory Comb* (Section VII) for works by these authors.

²⁴ From 1976 to 1980 Doãn Quốc Sỹ was in a reeducation camp. He was arrested in 1984 and brought to trial in 1988. Found guilty, he was imprisoned until 1994. He now lives in Houston, having come to the U.S. under the Orderly Departure Program. The official media in Vietnam have accused him of "distorting the history of the Resistance" and of being an "opportunist," a "reactionary artist," and a "psychological warfare cadre of the USA." His works, along with those by most of the writers mentioned in the introduction to this section, are not allowed to circulate in Vietnam. See Amnesty International's *Vietnam: "Renovation" (Doi Moi), the Law and Human Rights in the 1980's* (Feb., 1990): 27-28.

Banerian collection describes how war impinges on a school teacher and his class of 60 students. Thảo Trường's "The Bullet," structured around a conversation between a young girl and a passing soldier, reveals the effect of war on a sensitive child (in *War and Exile*). Two of Nhật Tiến's stories ("The Khaki Coat" and "A Pot of Gruel") describe the poverty and desperation of people trying to live under the communist regime after 1975. (The first appears in *War and Exile* and the second in *Vietnamese Short Stories*.)

Southerners from the Central Region

Central Vietnamese writers are represented in this bibliography by Võ Phiến, Nhã Ca, and Nguyễn Mộng Giác. Võ Phiến, a highly respected literary figure both in Vietnam and in the exile community (He now lives in California), groups himself with writers, mostly northerners, who immediately after the settlement in Geneva wrote political works addressing the issue of communism and non-communism (*Literature*, p. 124). Both he and the younger Nguyễn Mộng Giác are from a region of central Vietnam that was under Việt Minh control before 1954, and so they shared with the northern refugees the experience of living under communist rule. Later Võ Phiến turned to other subjects. His well-known story "Love Cherished for a Thousand Years" in the Banerian collection describes a young girl's developing awareness of the varieties of love. Nguyễn Mộng Giác, from the same province as Võ Phiến, is represented by a story about life in Vietnam after 1975 (in *To Be Made Over*; see Section IX). "A Day Like Any Other Day" suggests how difficult it is for a writer, at least a writer determined to speak the truth, to survive economically and emotionally in a repressive communist state. Though listed here, the story could be profitably assigned when discussing socialist realism and the works found in Section VII.

Nhã Ca is from Huế, which like most larger coastal cities in central Vietnam was not under communist control before 1975. She is best known for her semi-fictionalized account, unfortunately not yet translated, of her experience in Huế during the Tet Offensive of 1968: *Giải Khăn Sô Cho Huế* [A Cloth of Mourning for Huế] (1969). Fortunately her short story, "A Story for Lovers," which takes place in Huế during this battle, is available in both the Nguyễn Ngọc Bích and Banerian collections. And an earlier (1966) novel by Nhã Ca has been translated, one that describes the effect of war on a Saigon family (*At Night I Hear the Cannons* [Đêm Nghe Tiếng Đại Bác]).

Southerners from the South

Southern writers are less well represented, a significant fact. Literature in Vietnam, particularly literary history and criticism, has been dominated by northerners (with some help from central Vietnamese) for years. The causes of this dominance are complex, having to do with north Vietnam being the site of the original land of Vietnam, the home

of the ancient capital. As Vietnamese moved southward, conquering and pushing back the Cham and Cambodians, they settled in what was for them a frontier region. Northerners, who have always favored a more refined and formal style, have often found southern writing to be too colloquial, too simple, not polished enough. Writers from the southern region have had to struggle for respect and recognition. For example, though the available evidence suggests that the first prose novel in Vietnamese was written in the South, northern literary historians, unaware or unimpressed by southern novelists, have insisted that the Vietnamese novel began in the North.²⁵ In a well-known critical work published in 1941, Vũ Ngọc Phan, a northerner, surveys 78 writers, almost all northerners. Only ten per cent come from below the seventeenth parallel and in this group there is only one writer of popular fiction (Võ Phiến 87). Southerners had to struggle not to internalize a sense of cultural inferiority vis-a-vis the North. Some southerners, the poet Đông Hồ, for example, were so in awe of northern literary accomplishments that they wrote not in their native southern idiom but in the dialect of the north.

Võ Phiến sees these attitudes changing between 1954-75. He speaks of a "Southernization" of literature, by which he means a growing confidence on the part of southern writers in their region and in their style of writing. Northern refugee writers began to express their appreciation of southern culture and even began to have characters in their works speak in the southern dialect. This recognition by northerners excited "the pride and creative juice" of southern authors (80). It was during this period that southern writers like Bình Nguyên Lộc and Sơn Nam, whose works focus on the way of life and customs of the south, became appreciated by both southerners and northerners alike. Unfortunately I know of no stories by Sơn Nam that have been translated, but both the Banerian and Nguyễn Ngọc Bích collections contain a story by Bình Nguyên Lộc.

The interaction in Saigon of refugee writers from the North and the previously communist-controlled areas of Central Vietnam with writers native to the South, coupled with the relative political stability, made the late 50's and early 60's a period of confidence and enthusiasm. With the overthrow of Ngô Đình Diệm in 1963 and the ensuing political instability, the escalation of the fighting, and the arrival of large numbers of American troops, this mood of hope and optimism soon changed to despair and confusion. Southern residents were shocked by the rapid social changes, the corruption in government, and the decadence, including rampant prostitution, in social life.

What Võ Phiến calls a "Culture of Entertainment" developed (143), partly in response to people's need to be distracted from their daily troubles. Readers became addicted to translations of Kung-fu novels and sentimental romances by Taiwanese writers. Writers began to write daily installments of stories, or feuilletons, for the many new newspapers that were springing up in Saigon. Translations of books by Jean-Paul Sartre, Graham Greene, Herman Hesse, Leo Tolstói, Eric Segal and other well-known

²⁵ See John C. Schafer and Thế Uyên, "The Novel Emerges in Cochinchina," *Journal of Asian Studies* 52 (1993): 854-884.

(and not so well-known) Western writers were all available in Saigon bookstores. Though not new in the West, this Culture of Entertainment represented a radical departure from past practice in Vietnam, where literature has traditionally been associated with education and moral improvement.

Writers in the South began to treat emotions like love, anger, joy and hatred much less delicately than was the custom in pre-war literature. Chu Tử, a northern refugee writer, wrote *Yêu* [Love] in which a single father sleeps with a woman after a date arranged by his two daughters. Nguyễn Thị Hoàng, from central Vietnam, wrote a widely-read novel, *Vòng Tay Học Trò* [In the Arms of a Student], which described a female high school teacher who falls in love with one of her students. We see some of this boldness in treating love in Võ Phiến's "Love Cherished for a Thousand Years" (*Vietnamese Short Stories*, ed. James Banerian) and in Nhã Ca's *At Night I Hear the Cannons*.²⁶

Võ Phiến laments the fact that even though during the past thirty years Vietnamese writers in the South have been exposed to "countless subjects of incredible variety and fascination," they have not yet produced "works of fiction the quality and scope of which would be on a par with the incredible richness of the subjects at hand" (179). As an explanation he mentions the difficult wartime conditions under which writers worked, including economic pressures which forced writers to dash off feuilletons quickly to make ends meet. In speaking of the absence of great novels of action, he offers another explanation. Most fiction writers lived during the war in the coastal cities where except during the Tet Offensive there was rarely any fighting. So they did not observe battles first-hand. Writers from the North, on the other hand, were ordered to observe battles first-hand, but were not given the freedom to write as they wished (177).

Though Võ Phiến may be too modest in his comments about fiction in the South, too fearful of being the cat that praises his own long tail, as the Vietnamese say, there is some truth in what he says. Instead of expecting grandiose tales of adventure, readers of Vietnamese fiction should look for other pleasures. *Giản dị* (simplicity) and *tầm thường* (the commonplace) are, Võ Phiến suggests, "the major characteristics of our art works." Part of adopting a Vietnamese perspective involves understanding this—understanding that "[the Vietnamese] are not usually given to colorful flourishes: even the most magnificent act of sacrifice takes place quietly, without anyone knowing about it, or is cloaked under a simple, modest appearance" (176).

²⁶ Works by Chu Tử, Nguyễn Thị Hoàng, and Võ Phiến are not published in Vietnam today.

Sources

Banerian, James, ed. and trans. *Vietnamese Short Stories: An Introduction*. Phoenix, AZ: Sphinx Publishing, 1986.

A good sampling of short stories by some of the best writers, all non-communist. Banerian selects writers who are associated with the South politically but come from all three regions—north, central, and south. Not all stories deal with the war directly. Contains several stories written in the 30's and 40's by writers from the Self-Strength Group (See Section II) and so represents the colonial period as well as more recent writing. For information on how to purchase, contact James Banerian, 5816 Trojan Ave., San Diego, CA 92115.

Bình Nguyễn Lộc. "The Mam Grove." In *Vietnamese Short Stories*. 99-113.

The author, a southerner, is famous for being able to capture the language and life of the Mekong Delta region. This is a story about a boy and his parents and grandfather who live in the marshy lands near the sea.

Doãn Quốc Sỹ. "The Crimson-Bordered Straw Mat." Trans. by Võ Đình Mai. *War and Exile: A Vietnamese Anthology*. Ed. Nguyễn Ngọc Bích. 45-57.

The narrator is a law student in the north whose family moves from village to village to escape fighting between the Resistance troops and the French. His mother finds a fine straw mat and takes it home for her youngest son to use at night to keep warm. Later it is reclaimed by its owner. For the narrator, who eventually moves south to avoid living under the communists, the mat remains in his mind as a symbol of former suffering and a reminder that one must show compassion for the less fortunate.

Dương Nghiễm Mậu. "The Day the Milk-Breast Tree Was cut Down." Trans. by Võ Đình Mai. *War and Exile: A Vietnamese Anthology*. 59-73.

Story of a family with two sons, one who has joined the guerilla army, one a soldier with the Republican forces. The story ends tragically on the same day the father chops down a milk-breast tree that was dying from defoliation.

Minh Đức Hoài Trinh. *This Side . . . The Other Side*. Washington, D.C.: Occidental Press, 1980.

Novel about a girl from a poor family in central Vietnam who becomes a bar

girl in Saigon. Her brother joins the Front and is killed during the Tet Offensive. His sister has an affair with an American officer attached to the Public Affairs Office, but when the novel ends, it is hinted that she will marry a friend of her brother's who has defected to the Saigon side. No translator is listed so apparently written in English.

Nguyễn Mộng Giác. "A Day Like Any Other Day." *To Be Made Over: Tales of Socialist Reeducation in Vietnam*. Lạc-Việt Series No. 5. New Haven, CT: Yale Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1988. 218-241.

A bitter attack on the economic and spiritual failures of communism. A former writer under the old regime, now unemployed, describes a day under communism, a day that consists of desperate efforts to sell books from his private collection to get enough money to buy a little coffee and tobacco. His purchases are to enhance creativity but every truthful story he starts has to be rejected because he knows it would get him in trouble with the authorities. But when he starts a safe story glorifying life in the New Economic Zones, he keeps remembering truthful details that don't fit the plot.

Nguyễn Ngọc Bích, ed. and trans. *War and Exile: A Vietnamese Anthology*. Vietnamese PEN Abroad, 1989.

A good collection of fiction, poetry, and essays. Some of the authors included appear also in Banerian's collection *Vietnamese Short Stories*.

Nhã Ca. *At Night I Hear the Cannons* [Đêm Nghe Tiếng Đại Bác]. Trans. by James Banerian. 1993.

Originally published in 1966. Story of a middle-class Saigon family. It is narrated by a female character whose older brother is in the army as is the fiancé of her elder sister. The mother prepares a special dinner of spring rolls (chả giò) to welcome the two soldiers home on leave, but they never return. For copies contact: James Banerian, 5816 Trojan Ave., San Diego, CA 92115.

Nhã Ca. "A Story for Lovers." *Vietnamese Short Stories: An Introduction*. Ed. and trans. by James Banerian. 128-137. Also appears in *War and Exile*. Ed. Nguyễn Ngọc Bích. Trans. Võ Đình Mai. 87-102.

The setting for this story is Huế during the communist offensive at Tết, the lunar new year, in 1968. Two young people, Phan and Diễm, are planning to marry in the first month of the new year, but Diễm, the girl, is killed.

IX. Accounts of Imprisonment and Reeducation

Discussion

Vietnam's Legacy of Prison Literature

Most of the accounts in this section are autobiographical and some are written by Vietnamese exiles, and so they could be listed in Sections V or X, but there are good reasons for highlighting them in a special section. Roughly half of the Vietnamese writers listed on this bibliography have been imprisoned at some time in their life. Some were in colonial prisons run by the French, or, as in Hồ Chí Minh's case, in Chinese prisons, or they have suffered in "reeducation camps," which were also prisons, run by the communists after 1975. Other Vietnamese have been imprisoned by anti-communist Vietnamese regimes and their American allies. Sadly, the experience of prison is widely shared by Vietnamese: literature about prison life forms an important part of Vietnam's literary heritage.

In a speech on May 1, 1960, Hồ Chí Minh announced that the thirty-one current members of the Vietnamese Communist Party's Central Committee had spent a cumulative total of 222 years in French colonial prisons. He called for revolutionary memoirs (hồi ký cách mạng) documenting this experience and other aspects of the anti-colonial struggle (Zinoman, "Beyond the Revolutionary Prison Memoir," p. 256). Unfortunately only a few of these memoirs have been translated—accounts by Nguyễn Duy Trinh et al., Nguyễn Thị Định, Trần Tử Bình, and Võ Nguyên Giáp (See Section V). Although all these authors spent time in prisons, their narratives are not focused on their prison experiences. The two anonymously edited collections of revolutionary memoirs described in Section V (*From the Russian October Revolution to the Vietnamese August Revolution* and *A Heroic People: Memoirs from the Revolution*) contain accounts of life in colonial prisons. I recommend assigning Hoàng Quốc Việt's account, "Our People, a Very Heroic People," included in the second collection. Hoàng Quốc Việt was a revolutionary leader who spent time in several prisons, including the infamous Poulo Condore, the French penitentiary on the island of Côn Sơn. In *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, David Marr presents this argument: "Jails were to the Vietnamese what the Long March was to the Chinese. They were seen both as microcosms of colonial society and universities of revolutionary theory and practice" (340). Hoàng Quốc Việt's account, which includes descriptions of study sessions on Poulo Condore led by Lê Duẩn, Phạm Văn Đồng, and other revolutionaries, supports Marr's assertion. Hoàng Quốc Việt's account also includes interesting details about prison life and his fellow prisoners, including descriptions of a prisoner production of Molière's "Le bourgeois gentilhomme" and the fact that Phạm Văn Đồng, later Prime Minister, impressed fellow prisoners with his skill in soccer, especially his ability to shoot with either foot.

Most of the accounts below are by anti-communist Vietnamese who spent time in reeducation camps after the war ended in 1975. We have quite a few accounts of this experience because many former inmates have later come to the U.S. either as "boat

people” or by plane under the Orderly Departure Program, a program negotiated with Vietnam that provides for safe emigration out of the country. In 1989 the U.S. negotiated a bilateral agreement with Vietnam that gives priority in the ODP to those who have spent at least three years in reeducation. As of August, 1995, 405,000 Vietnamese have been admitted to the U.S. under ODP, including 123,000 persons (includes former prisoners and their families) under the Former Re-Education Camp Detainee subprogram.²⁷

In the frantic days and hours leading up to the final collapse of the Saigon regime, many Vietnamese had to make quick decisions as to whether to stay or to try to make it out to one of the American ships waiting to take them to the U.S. Those who stayed did so for a variety of reasons—because they did not want to leave their homeland, because they couldn’t find a way to escape, or because they felt they had nothing to fear from the communists and wanted, now that the war was finally over, to contribute their energy and talents to the rebuilding of their country. Some, like Nguyễn Long and Đoàn Văn Toại, had opposed the war and been imprisoned by South Vietnamese authorities, and so believed the communists would not bother them. Soon after the communists took over, former officers in the armed forces, religious leaders, intellectuals, employees of the Americans, officials in the former government, and some men, who, like Jade Ngọc Quang Huỳnh, just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, were asked to report for reeducation. Usually they were told to pack enough clothes and personal effects to last ten days or two weeks. Many did not return for several years. Some remained until 1988, a period of fourteen years.²⁸

In introducing *To Be Made Over*, Huỳnh Sanh Thông explains that

[t]he term ‘reeducation,’ with its pedagogical overtones, does not quite convey the quasi-mystical resonance of *cải-tạo* in Vietnamese. *Cải* (‘to transform’) and *tạo* (‘to create’) combine to literally mean an attempt at ‘recreation,’ at ‘making over’ sinful or incomplete individuals. Born again as ‘Socialist men and women’ (*con người xã-hội chủ-nghĩa*), they will supposedly pave the way to the Communist millennium. (x)

In reality, however, the camps were terrible places in which men were forced to work at hard labor with not enough food and no medical attention. They were also placed in terrible moral dilemmas. In a moving section in his *Lost Years*, Trần Tri Vũ

²⁷ These figures come from a report on behalf of the President submitted to Committees of the Judiciary of both the House and Senate on August 1, 1995.

²⁸ According to testimony to a House subcommittee by Dinah Pokempner of Human Rights Watch/Asia, thousands of reeducation camp inmates were released in 1987 and 1988. “At present,” she testified, “all such ‘reeducation’ detainees who were held continuously since the 1975-76 period without trial have been freed.” The date of her testimony, which was before the House Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights, was July 26, 1995.

explains that just before he was released after four and a half years in reeducation he was told by a cadre that as a condition of his release he had to denounce any fellow prisoners who opposed the revolution or had not yet “achieved a good education” (376). The cadre handed him a pen and a piece of paper. His face flushed and his heart pounding at the prospect of freedom, of seeing his wife and children again, he sat dumbfounded. Freedom was almost in his grasp but it could only be achieved by betraying the trust of his fellow prisoners. Finally, he hit upon a solution: he would denounce himself, admit what he knew his wardens already knew, that he had made some tables and chairs for another prison guard who had sold them. The tactic worked for Trần Tri Vũ but this episode and others in these accounts hint at the compromising decisions that prisoners had to make.

These accounts reveal much more, however, than the physical and mental agony of incarceration. They contain moving sections that describe the mutual sympathy that sometimes developed between prisoners and their guards, some of whom suffered in the camps along with the inmates. Jade Ngọc Quang Huỳnh, for example, explains how he was befriended by a guard, a fellow southerner, who resented his comrades from the north. In this case, regional loyalty overcomes political ideology. Nguyễn Ngọc Ngạn describes how he was intrigued by a guard’s dream to learn English and to attend a university in Hanoi when he was demobilized. He agreed to teach him English secretly, a dangerous activity for both of them, using a dog-eared copy of *English for Today* that the guard had brought back from Saigon.

In these accounts we see the clash in cultures between the sophisticated, typically highly-educated prisoners from the South and their uneducated guards and carefully-indoctrinated teachers. We see this clash in almost every account of reeducation but perhaps nowhere more vividly than in Võ Kỳ Điền’s portrait of Brother Ten, his teacher in a political training class for teachers of the former regime. Lips dark from smoking too much tobacco, hair as yellowish as cornsilk, weakened by malaria, Brother Ten passionately presents his view of Vietnamese and world history. The author knows Brother Ten is absurdly misinformed but still marvels at his theatrical performance.

In summary, we should emphasize these accounts because they depict an important aspect of the war, one that affected many Vietnamese, including many Vietnamese who now live in the U.S., and because they are moving narratives of people adjusting to stress. These accounts can also be used to restore a more balanced view of the Vietnamese conflict. Some accounts by Western academics romanticize Vietnamese revolutionaries. The narratives in this section present a less rosy view of what it is like to live under communism. Nguyễn Long, for example, describes in detail how the communists set up ward and neighborhood information networks so that everyone becomes involved in watching everyone else, a system that destroys personal and family privacy.

In the U.S., so much attention has been focused on American prisoners of war that it becomes easy to forget the large number of Vietnamese on both sides that spent long

periods of time in prison. Readings in this section make it clear that captivity was an experience shared by both Americans and Vietnamese.²⁹

In one sense, however, this section of readings may encourage a distorted view. It contains no accounts by Vietnamese communist soldiers who spent time in prisons run by the South Vietnamese government (often with American assistance). Though I know such accounts must exist, I have not been able to locate any.³⁰

²⁹ Teachers could compare Vietnamese and American accounts of imprisonment. In *The Vietnam War: Teaching Approaches and Resources*, ed. by Marc Jason Gilbert (Greenwood Press: New York, 1991), several bibliographies of works by Americans about their POW experience are listed. See pages 147 and 221.

³⁰ A Vietnamese acquaintance in the U.S. told me such accounts may be rare because communist soldiers were expected to resist until death. Those who didn't aren't eager to publicize the fact.

Sources

Đoàn Văn Toại and David Chanoff. *Vietnamese Gulag*. Trans. from the French by Sylvie Romanowski and Francoise Simon-Miller. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986.

Account by a participant in demonstrations against the government of Nguyễn Văn Thiệu who was imprisoned by the communists in June, 1975. After paying a bribe in 1978, he was allowed to leave jail and fly to the West. Marr finds his recollections of jail life to be "too precise to be credible" and suggests that his accounts of pre-1975 political activities be checked against other sources (*Vietnam*, p. 152).

From the Russian October Revolution to the Vietnamese August Revolution. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1987. See Section V for annotation.

A Heroic People: Memoirs from the Revolution. 2nd ed. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1965. See Section V for annotation.

Hồ Chí Minh. *Prison Diary* [Nhật Ký Trong Tù]. In *Reflections from Captivity*. Trans. Christopher Jenkins, Trần Khánh Tuyết, and Huỳnh Sanh Thông. Ed. David G. Marr. Southeast Asia Translation Series, Vol. I. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1978. 67-98.

A collection of short poems written during a fourteen-month period (1942-1943) when Hồ Chí Minh was in many different prisons in Kwangsi Province, China. He was arrested by Kuomintang police, who didn't recognize him, on his way to Chungking to meet Chiang Kai-shek and other potential allies in the fight against the Japanese. The poems describe the harsh conditions (scabies, leg irons, hunger) and suggest Hồ Chí Minh's determination and sharpness of mind.

Huỳnh Sanh Thông, ed. and trans. *An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966. See Section VI for annotation.

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Contains prison poetry by communists and non-communists. Includes works by Hồ Chí Minh, Nguyễn Chí Thiện, Tố Hữu, Trần Huy Liệu and others.

_____, ed. and trans. *To Be Made Over: Tales of Socialist Reeducation in Vietnam*. Lạc-Việt Series No. 5. New Haven, CT: Yale Council on Southeast Asia Studies Studies, 1988.

Collection of memoirs and stories translated from the Vietnamese about life in communist reeducation camps. Annotations for four selections are included in this bibliography. See articles by Hoàng Ngọc Thanh Dung (Section V) and by Nguyễn Ngọc Ngạn, Trương Năng Tiến, and Võ Kỳ Điền in this section.

Jade Ngọc Quang Huỳnh. *South Wind Changing*. Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1994. See Section V for annotation.

Nguyễn Chí Thiện. *Flowers from Hell*. Lạc Việt Series No. 1. New Haven, CT: Yale Council on SEA Studies, 1984.

A bilingual edition of poems by Vietnam's most famous anti-communist prisoner of conscience. Nguyễn Chí Thiện was first arrested in 1958 when he and some friends tried to publish a journal containing romantic poems and other material objectionable to communist authorities. He spent thirty of the next thirty-seven years in prison until he was released after pressure by Amnesty International and other groups. He came to the U.S. in 1995 under the Orderly Departure Program. He managed to get this collection to the British Embassy in Hanoi in 1979. From there it made its way first to London and then to Europe and the U.S. Some poems are stridently anti-communist. Many are agonizing cries from the heart of a man who refused to be broken by prison.

Nguyễn Đức Thuận. *The Victor*. In an unnumbered issue of *Vietnamese Studies* (Dec., 1965): 3-47.

An account of the author's experiences in prisons in South Vietnam between 1956 and 1964. He was violently interrogated and sent eventually to Côn Sơn prison island, but never betrayed Party comrades.

Nguyễn Duy Trinh et al. *In the Enemy's Net: Memoirs from the Revolution*. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962.

Four autobiographical accounts by communist party members of their revolutionary activities. The authors describe imprisonment and hair-raising escapes. The first two narratives take place in 1930-31 when French colonialists, alarmed by strikes and demonstrations, cracked down on suspected organizers. The third account takes place in 1941 and the fourth describes events leading to the August Revolution in 1945. The authors later held important positions in the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Nguyễn Long with Harry H. Kendall. *After Saigon Fell: Daily Life Under the Vietnamese Communists*. Research Papers and Policy Studies Series of the Institute of East Asian Studies. Berkeley: University of California, 1981.

In 1973 Nguyễn Long returned to Vietnam from the U.S. with a Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley. When the Saigon government fell in 1975, he stayed on and experienced life under communism until he left as a "boat person" in 1979. Interesting vignettes and descriptions of daily life under the new regime. Particularly good account of how the communists organized the people into family clusters and wards and set up neighborhood information networks.

Nguyễn Ngọc Ngạn. "My Communist Warden and I." Trans. Huỳnh Sanh Thông. In *To Be Made Over: Tales of Socialist Reeducation in Vietnam*. 135-146.

An account by a well-known exile writer (now living in Canada) of his relationship with a warden in a reeducation camp. Author offers a sympathetic and moving portrait of Thân, the warden, who dreams of going to a university in Hanoi and asks the author to teach him English. Instead the warden is sent to fight in Cambodia.

_____ with E. E. Richey. *The Will of Heaven*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1982.

Christopher faults the author for "unintentional self-revelation," "doctrinaire anti-communism," "cloying pro-Americanism," and other sins (See *The Viet Nam War/The American War*, Section IV), but she is much too hard on him. This is a very readable story about a former ARVN officer who was wounded twice as a soldier, suffered for three years in a communist prison, was told to report to a New Economic Zone when he got out, and lost his wife and son when their refugee boat crashed on the coast of Malaysia. His narrative focuses on the three years he was imprisoned.

Nguyễn Quí Đức. *Where the Ashes Are: The Odyssey of a Vietnamese Family*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994. See Section X for annotation.

Phan Bội Châu. *Prison Notes* [Ngục Trung Thu]. *Reflections from Captivity*. Trans. Christopher Jenkins, Trần Khánh Tuyết, and Huỳnh Sanh Thông. Ed. David G. Marr. Southeast Asia Translation Series, Vol. I. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press. 9-56.

An important work in Vietnam's canon of prison literature. The author died in 1940 before the war with the French, but he was an important anti-colonial

leader. Describes his travels all over Vietnam and to China and Japan to seek assistance in overthrowing colonial oppression. Written in 1914 while imprisoned in Canton by a warlord opponent of the Kuomintang. Contains personal information rarely found in Vietnamese works of this kind.

"Prison Poems by Communists." Trans. Huỳnh Sanh Thông. *Vietnam Forum* 13 (1990): 140-143.

Poems written in the late 1930's by Trần Huy Liệu, Xuân Thủy, and Tố Hữu.

Trần Dạ Từ. *Writers and Artists in Vietnamese Gulags*. Elkhart, Ind.: Century Publishing House, 1990.

Short one-page biographical sketches of writers and artists imprisoned in communist reeducation camps. The author—a journalist, editor of literary journals, and poet—knows of what he speaks: he was arrested with his wife, the writer Nhã Ca, in 1976, and while she was released after nine months, he remained in prison for 12 years. Also contains cartoons by the well-known political cartoonist Choé (real name: Nguyễn Hải Chí), who spent 12 years in re-education, and two prefatory essays by the author: "The SRV Campaign against Writers and Artists" and "Choé's World before and after April, 1975."

Trần Tri Vũ. *Lost Years: My 1,632 Days in Vietnamese Reeducation Camps*. Trans. by Nguyễn Phúc. Indochina Research Monograph Series of the Institute of East Asian Studies. Berkeley: University of California, 1988.

Account by a junior officer in the ARVN of his four and half years in several re-education camps. The author in matter of fact, non-hysterical language describes his experiences completely and in great detail. He brings you almost all the way there. Though a long work (381 pages), it contains many fairly self-contained, excerptable episodes that are moving and revealing of life in the camps.

Tướng Năng Tiến. "Communism and Guigoz-Canism." Trans. Huỳnh Sanh Thông. In *To Be Made Over: Tales of Socialist Reeducation in Vietnam*. 164-172.

A Guigoz can was an aluminum container that once contained powdered milk imported from Holland and was used by prisoners in the author's reeducation camp to place food that they had scavenged during the day. When released, the author finds that those outside prison use these cans too. Around this can the author weaves an entertaining commentary of life in post-war Vietnam.

Võ Kỳ Điền. "Brother Ten." Trans. Huỳnh Sanh Thông. In *To Be Made Over: Tales of Socialist Reeducation in Vietnam*. 26-35.

Describes how Brother Ten, a Party member, taught a political training class designed for teachers who had been associated with the former regime. The author, a student in that class, portrays Brother Ten, a poorly educated spouter of Marxist-Leninist jargon, critically but not completely unsympathetically.

"'With the Only Weapons We Have' . . . Resistance in Saigon's Prisons." *Indochina Chronicle*. No. 4 (April, 1975).

Not available for review, but David Marr in an endnote in *Reflections from Captivity* (p. 99, note 3) suggests it contains writing by Vietnamese imprisoned by the Saigon regime of Nguyễn Văn Thiệu.

Zinoman, Peter B. "Beyond the Revolutionary Prison Memoir." *The Vietnam Review*. Ed. Huỳnh Sanh Thông, Hoàng Ngọc Hiến, and Trương Vũ. Vol. 1. Autumn-Winter, 1996. 256-272. See Section V for annotation.

_____. "The Colonial Bastille: A Social History of Imprisonment in Colonial Viet Nam, 1862-1940." Diss. Cornell University, 1996

A study of prisons and imprisonment in colonial Vietnam. Author argues that colonial prisons differed from metropolitan counterparts, a fact which calls into question the common notion that metropolitan institutions are transported intact to the colonies. Colonial prisons were more communal, allowed more intercourse between prisoners, and were less ordered than the "panopticons" of late nineteenth-century France. Colonial prisons, in part because of the above features and also because they contained political prisoners from all regions, promoted effective anticolonial alliances. These alliances were also strengthened by the way French authorities treated ex-prisoners: intense surveillance, restrictions on travel, and other imposed hardships forced ex-prisoners to band together. Zinoman, who bases his research on a variety of French and Vietnamese sources, points out dangers in relying too heavily on the many revolutionary prison memoirs written in the 1960's. According to Zinoman, these memoirs slight the experience of non-political prisoners and non-communist political prisoners and were written to further party purposes (See Zinoman's "Beyond the Revolutionary Prison Memoir," Section V).

X. Vietnamese Exile Narratives

Discussion

Remembering Another Place

There is a song that when heard in Vietnamese communities from San Jose to Sydney seldom fails to bring a tear to the eye. It is called "Do You Still Remember or Have You Forgotten?" [Em Còn Nhớ Hay Em Đã Quên?]. It was written by Trịnh Công Sơn, who during the war composed and sang sad songs about love and the pain of war. He elected to stay in Vietnam after 1975, but Khánh Ly, the famous singer who sang his songs and was rumored to be his lover, came to the U.S. The song mentions favorite spots that singer and lover had visited together and then in each refrain asks: "Do you still remember or have you forgotten?"

Most Vietnamese exiles, at least those of Trịnh Công Sơn's generation, have not forgotten. If an exile is "someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another,"³¹ then Vietnamese living abroad are indeed exiles. Vietnamese exile narratives differ from those by other Asian immigrants. Literature called Asian American is typically written by second-generation Japanese and Chinese who speak English as a first language and have learned about the "homeland" from their parents. All the Vietnamese exile writers listed in this section, however, are first-generation immigrants whose first language is Vietnamese. All of them focus as much (if not more) on life in Vietnam than life in the U.S., a fact that makes their works difficult to classify. If a Vietnamese exile writes a book that focuses almost exclusively on life in Vietnam, should this book be classified as an exile narrative? My solution has been to reserve this section—"Vietnamese Exile Narratives"—for works that discuss maybe not exclusively but at least partially life in the land of exile. Citations with annotations for these works will be found here. Books written by exiles which focus exclusively on life in Vietnam are cross-listed in this section but their annotations will be found in other sections.

In the *Viet Nam War/The American War*, Renny Christopher suggests that this preoccupation with both Vietnam and America that one typically finds in Vietnamese exile narratives is caused by more than the fact that the authors are first generation immigrants. Vietnamese, she implies, are culturally conditioned to prefer a more communal perspective. She compares Euro-American narratives to Vietnamese exile narratives and finds the former to be preoccupied with America and Americans and with the "mythologizing and valorizing of personal experience"; the latter, however—the works by Vietnamese exiles—are distinguished by their dual focus on America and Vietnam and by their "biculturality" and "communality" (2, 30-38). These different preoccupations lead to different views of the war: "While Euro-Americans tend to see the Viet

³¹ Michael Seidel, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986) ix.

Nam war as being ‘about’ America, Vietnamese refugee writers show it to be ‘about’ both Viet Nam and America, together.” (36-37).

In their choice of content Vietnamese exile writers may be expressing a cultural preference for community. In their choice of form, however—autobiography, first-person accounts of private lives—we see them adapting to Western individualism and the expectations of English-language readers. It is not surprising that the most completely fictionalized narrative of all those listed here—Võ Phiến’s *Intact*—was written originally in Vietnamese for a Vietnamese audience. This avoidance of autobiography may result not from a deep cultural aversion to personal revelation but from years of writing under fear of censorship and imprisonment. Many Vietnamese have learned that heartfelt thoughts are often more safely expressed in the guise of fiction.

Some of the American works are written with professional assistance and most appear to be carefully edited and packaged for Western readers. The exception, as already mentioned, is Võ Phiến’s *Intact* the story of Dung (pronounced “yoom”), a young girl, who in the confusion surrounding Saigon’s fall, gets separated from her family and fiancé and comes to the U.S. alone. Eventually she reunites with her family in Minnesota, but not with her fiancé, who at the end of the book is still in Vietnam. Dung’s separation from her fiancé becomes a metaphor for the exile experience—for the sadness, regret, and nostalgia that people who love their country feel when they must leave it. The reader understands this nostalgia because the novel begins with scenes that capture the charm of a peaceful Vietnam. In one scene, Dung and her fiancé spend siesta time together in her house. They only hold hands briefly, for they are proper young people, but they are intimate nevertheless. Time seems to slow down on this languid Vietnam afternoon. As the communist troops advance, quiet scenes like this one become rarer and rarer and finally exist only in memory.

Teaching Suggestions

Living in one place and remembering another—this, critics tell us, is the condition of exile writers. What is special about the experience of Vietnamese exiles is that their memory of this other place—Vietnam—is bound up with their memory of the war. While they are still in Vietnam, Dung’s friend Nguyễn tells her: “We can curse the war all we like, but it’s the setting for love in our lives. It’s our poetry and our dreams. Whether we like it or not, we’re going to miss it” (88). The power of this under-appreciated book stems from its description of an ordinary girl pursuing rather modest dreams of love and happiness; and then the war intrudes, changing her life forever and leaving her dreams unfulfilled but not abandoned, strangely “intact,” as the title suggests. It could be assigned with Bobbie Ann Mason’s *In Country*, a story of an American girl whose plans and dreams, like Dung’s, are affected by the war. Or Dung’s nostalgia could be compared to Michael Herr’s in *Dispatches*: “Vietnam was what we had instead of happy childhoods” (or with Philip Caputo’s rejoinder: “Vietnam was what we had

because we had happy childhoods.”³²)

These narratives represent a variety of regional, gender, and class perspectives. One could assign them in arrangements that would help students appreciate that within the common experience of exile lie a host of individual stories. For example, one could assign Lê Lý Hayslip’s *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* with Nguyễn Quí Đức’s *Where the Ashes Are*. Though the authors of these accounts are both from the Huế-Đà Nẵng area of central Vietnam, their backgrounds couldn’t be more different: Lê Lý Hayslip grows up hard-scrabble poor in a rural peasant village; Nguyễn Quí Đức grows up in a house full of servants, the son of socially and politically prominent parents. Despite their different backgrounds, both writers struggle to reconcile their lives in America with their love and concern for Vietnam. Or one could keep gender constant while varying region and social class and compare Lê Lý Hayslip’s account with those by Nguyễn Thị Thu-Lâm and Nguyễn Thị Tuyết Mai, two sisters from an upper class northern family with very Francophile parents. Despite their very different social backgrounds, all three women become adept at dealing with Americans and in surviving in contexts usually dominated by men.

The essential sadness of exile, Edward Said observes, the “unhealthy rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home,” can never be surmounted.³³ We find this sadness expressed perhaps most poignantly in Võ Phiến’s literary essays—in “The Key,” for example. But as Said and others have pointed out, exile also makes possible originality of vision. “Often it is when we journey,” Marguerite Bouvard writes in her foreword to *Landscape and Exile*, “that we see the most clearly, both the places we have left, and the new and strange places of arrival” (x). These exile narratives demonstrate the truth of these statements.

³² Philip Caputo, *Means of Escape: Memoirs of the Disasters of War* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991) 13.

³³ “Reflections on Exile,” *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson et al. (New York: MIT Press, 1990) 357.

Sources

Balaban, John and Nguyễn Quý Đức, eds. *Vietnam: A Traveler's Literary Companion*. San Francisco: Whereabouts Press, 1996. See Section VI for full annotation.

Though all the stories in this collection are about Vietnam, six are written by Vietnamese now living abroad. Three of these six are characterized by the double vision, the bi-culturality (of homeland and new land), that Christopher identifies as characteristic of Vietnamese exile narratives: Nguyễn Quý Đức's "The Color of Sorrow," Andrew Q. Lam's "Dark Wood and Shadows," and Nguyễn Bá Trạc's "The White Horse." In this last story, the main character "lives in two worlds: his soul is in America, but his spirit shuttles back and forth between America and his homeland way on the other side of the globe" (224).

Christopher, Renny. *The Viet Nam War/The American War: Images and Representations in Euro-American and Vietnamese Exile Narratives*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995. See Section IV for annotation.

_____. "Vietnamese Exile Writers: Displacement, Identity, The Past and the Future." Paper presented at the Modern Language Association Convention, 1995.

Critical discussion of Nguyễn Quý Đức's *Where the Ashes Are* and Jade Ngọc Quang Huỳnh's *South Wind Changing*. Concludes that these recently published works by younger writers are, in their dual focus on both Vietnam and the U. S., like the exile narratives by older writers that the author reviewed in *The Viet Nam War / The American War*. Because these younger writers (particularly Đức), however, must struggle more to maintain their Vietnamese identity, Christopher sees them as representing "a transitional period in Vietnamese American literature, poised between exile literature and immigrant literature." She finds *South Wind Changing* "less complex and less interesting than Đức's narrative."

Duffy, Dan, ed. *Not a War: American Vietnamese Fiction, Poetry and Essays*. Viet Nam Forum 16. New Haven, CT: Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1997.

An eclectic and fresh collection of poetry, stories, and essays by "American Vietnamese," a term carefully chosen by the editor "in order to make a plain description with generous boundaries for including excellence" (7). Includes works by older Vietnamese exile writers (Võ Phiến, Thế Uyên, for example) and also by the younger generation: Andrew Lam, Khoi T. Luu, and others.

Selections are too diverse to summarize, so one can only cite examples, like these: a story about a Vietnamese grandmother whose corpse is placed in a deep freeze by her grandchildren but she rises to dance at a San Francisco party and later runs off with a Latin American novelist; a journal (with photos) by a French woman who grew up in Vietnam in the 1920's; poems by Xuân Diệu on homosexual themes and an interview with another Hanoi writer by a Vietnamese scholar from Harvard in which the previously glossed over homosexual relationships between some famous Vietnamese writers are openly discussed. Little background information on contributors is provided because the younger writers wanted their works alone to speak for them.

Freeman, James M. *Hearts of Sorrow: Vietnamese-American Lives*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989.

Fourteen life stories based on interviews with Vietnamese refugees now living in the U.S., most of them in Santa Clara, California. The stories document childhood experiences and the effect of the war and resettlement in the U.S. The arrangement is chronological as this list of section titles suggests: Hearts of Sorrow; Vietnam: Childhood, Youth, and Character; Vietnam: Sorrows of War; Vietnam: Sorrows of Liberation; Flight to Freedom; America: Heartache Beneath Success. In a final section, the author reflects on his methods. The narrators included are ordinary Vietnamese from the north as well as the south, not well-known political and military leaders—a soldier, an automobile mechanic, a teacher, a civil servant, etc. The accounts are fragmentary, not complete life histories, but they are rich in detail and movingly document the effect of war on individual lives.

Hayslip, Lê Lý, with James Hayslip (son). *Child of War, Woman of Peace*. New York: Doubleday, 1993.

A continuation of *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (See below). The story of the author's life from 1970 when she arrives in the U.S. to meet her husband, an aging construction worker whom she met in Đà Nẵng, to 1989-92 when she makes trips to Vietnam to see her relatives and oversee the work of her philanthropic foundation, East Meets West. Less about the war than *Heaven and Earth* and more about the cultural and spiritual conflicts that the author, a peasant woman from Quảng Nam Province, must face as she tries to adapt to an odd assortment of American men, all losers weird enough to make anyone worry about bad karma. Given the author's bad luck with American men, her emphasis on reconciliation between Vietnamese and Americans is impressive. Sections describing her successful financial deals ("Finding the American

Dream” is the title of one) have a boastful ring and resemble accounts by other immigrants.

Hayslip, Lê Lý, with Jay Wurts. *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places: A Vietnamese Woman's Journey from War to Peace*. New York: Penguin, 1989.

Autobiography by a woman from a small village outside Đà Nẵng. A moving account that reveals how the conflict was a civil war that tore families apart. The author helps the Việt Cộng until she is wrongly suspected of helping the Republicans and is raped by two VC guards sent to execute her. While working as a maid in Saigon, she is seduced and made pregnant by her Vietnamese employer. Dismissed by the employer's wife, she survives by peddling goods and obtaining American boyfriends. Eventually an older American, a civilian employee of a construction firm, marries her and brings her to the U.S. The story ends in 1986 when she makes a return visit to Vietnam and is reunited with her family. An important work because it reveals how the war affected a peasant family from the countryside of the central region. (Most exile narratives are written by members of the educated elite from urban areas.)

Karlin, Wayne, Lê Minh Khuê, and Trương Vũ, eds. *The Other Side of Heaven: Post-War Fiction by Vietnamese & American Writers*. Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1995.

See Section XI for full annotation. Seven of the 38 selections in this collection are by Vietnamese exiles.

Krall, Yung. *A Thousand Tears Falling: The True Story of a Vietnamese Family Torn Apart by War, Communism, and the CIA*. Atlanta, GA: Longstreet Press, 1995.

Not available for review, but judging from newspaper reviews, this is an intriguing account. The author's father was a leading communist revolutionary, at one point North Vietnam's ambassador to the Soviet Union. Raised in the South by an anti-communist aunt, the author developed anti-communist views and worked for the South Vietnamese Army. She married an American Navy pilot and in 1969 moved to the U.S. where she became a spy for the CIA in exchange for her family's rescue from Saigon.

Linh Dinh, ed. *Night, Again: Contemporary Fiction from Vietnam*. New York: 7 Stories Press, 1996. See Section XI for annotation.

Five of the 12 stories in this collection are written by Vietnamese living in the West, including Mai Kim Ngọc's "In the Recovery Room" (See below).

Mai Kim Ngọc. "In the Recovery Room." *Night, Again: Contemporary Fiction from Vietnam*. Ed. Linh Dinh. New York: 7 Stories Press, 1996. 87-107.

Lying in bed in an American hospital, an old man about to be operated on speaks to his son-in-law, a writer, about his (the old man's) first sexual experience, which was with a prostitute on a sampan in Huế. He contrasts the earthiness of this experience—the smell of sweat, the dirty blankets—with the clean and sterile bed on which he now lies. Nearing the end of his life, he feels out of place in the cold, antiseptic world of his son-in-law and daughter.

Nguyễn Hưng Quốc. "Vietnamese Literature in Exile (1975-1990)." Trans. Hoài An. *Vietnamese Studies in a Multicultural World*. Ed. Nguyễn Xuân Thu. Melbourne: Vietnamese Language & Culture Publications, 1994. 144-157.

Considers various attempts to define the expression "literature in exile." Then outlines a framework for considering contemporary Vietnamese literature (of which, he says, the literature in exile is a part) based on "ego." His framework has four periods: 1. Period of the emotional or sentimental ego (1930-45); 2. Period of the citizen ego (1945-54); 3. Period of the intellectual ego (1954-75—in South Vietnam only); 4. Period of the historical ego (the period of exile since 1975).

Nguyễn Quý Đức. *Where the Ashes Are: The Odyssey of a Vietnamese Family*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994.

The author's father, a civilian deputy to the military governor of the Đà Nẵng region, was captured when the whole family was visiting relatives in Huế during Tết, 1968. The author, only nine years old in 1968, tells his family's story, including that of his father who spent 12 years in communist prison camps before he was released in 1980. Both the author and his parents eventually came to the U.S.

Nguyễn Thị Thu-Lâm with Edith Kreisler and Sandra Christenson. *Fallen Leaves: Memoirs of a Vietnamese Woman from 1940 to 1975*. Lạc Việt Series No. 11. New Haven, CT: Yale Council on SEA Studies, 1989.

An account by a woman from an upper class northern family of her and her family's experiences from the author's birth in 1940 to the fall of Saigon to the communists in 1975 and the family's move to the U.S. Early chapters describe life in the North during the war with the French, her father's gradual disenchantment with the revolution, and the family's move to the South in 1954. Later chapters describe her loveless marriage to a Vietnamese, her business deals with the Americans (She ran craft shops, steambaths, and laundries on American bases), and her stormy relationship (married then divorced) with Michael, a Captain in the U.S. army. The author, often without much self-awareness, reveals contradictions: her father wants a revolution but not if it threatens the privileges of his class; she criticizes the Americans but goes to them because she wants to make "big money."

Nguyễn Thị Tuyết Mai. *The Rubber Tree*. Edited by Monique Senderowicz. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1994.

A somewhat rambling autobiography by a woman whose life was full of contradictions. She grew up in a Francophile Vietnamese family near Saigon but as a young woman helped the communists fight the French for a year and a half. Though not a strong supporter of President Ngô Đình Diệm, she married a man who became director of the government-controlled Vietnam Press. Eventually she helped her husband import Honda motorcycles while she ran a laundry for GI's. She and her family moved to the U.S. when her husband lost his leg in a terrorist bombing. Author is the older sister of Nguyễn Thị Thu-Lâm who wrote *Fallen Leaves* (See above). Together these two accounts reveal the struggles of upper class women to bridge cultures and survive in a male-dominated society. This work provides ample evidence of the corruption that pervaded the Diệm regime and the governments that followed.

Tran, De, Andrew Lam, and Hai Dai Nguyen, eds. *Once Upon a Dream: The Vietnamese American Experience*. Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1995.

A spirited collection of short stories, autobiographical sketches, poems, paintings, and color photographs most of them produced by Vietnamese now living in the U.S. or Canada. It is organized into four sections: "Exodus" contains accounts of departures from the homeland; "Elegies" focuses on the nostalgia and homesickness of the exile; "VietnAmerican" describes the struggles to create a Vietnamese-American identity—to, as Andrew Lam puts it, "walk that

strange Vietnamese-American hyphen" (83); "Homecoming," the last section, includes accounts by exiles of trips back to Vietnam. This is a rich and varied collection, one that is particularly effective in conveying the pain and promise of "twenty something" Vietnamese, young people caught between the Vietnam of their parents and modern America. Contains a foreword by Stanley Karnow.

Trần, Quí-Phiệt. "Contemporary Vietnamese American Feminine Writing: Exile and Home." *Amerasia Journal* 19.3 (1993): 71-83.

Argues that recent fiction by Vietnamese women living abroad deals with two themes: exile and home. Stories of exile reveal how women suffer from both the dehumanizing effects of American life and rigid Confucian ethics (no second marriage for widows, for example). Stories of home portray it as both a painful loss and important strength.

_____. "Exiles in the Land of the Free: Vietnamese Artists and Writers in America, 1975 to the Present." *Journal of the American Studies Association of Texas* 20 (Oct., 1989): 101-110.

Describes two groups of Vietnamese exile writers in the U.S., a "1975 group" who arrived after the communist victory and a group who came as "boat People" beginning in 1977. Writers in the first group regret the past and lament the present, including the loneliness, competitiveness, and hectic pace of American life. Those in the second group focus on the misery of life in post-war communist Vietnam.

_____. "From Isolation to Integration: Vietnamese Americans in Trần Diệu Hằng's Fiction." In *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*. Ed. Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992. 271-284.

Introduces the fiction of Trần Diệu Hằng. Contrasts the idyllic portrayal of Vietnamese refugees in the U.S. media with the sad, frustrated characters, mostly women, found in Trần Diệu Hằng's short stories—characters who find their traditional Vietnamese values crushed by the individualism and materialism of America. Unfortunately to my knowledge only one of her stories has been translated, a meditation on the difficulties of being a mother and a writer that does not relate, at least in any direct way, to the war or the exile experience (See Trần Diệu Hằng, "Zenith: A Tale," trans. by Quí-Phiệt Trần, *Asian America: Journal of Culture and the Arts* 1 [Winter, 1992]: 59-72).

Trần Văn Dĩnh. *Blue Dragon, White Tiger: A Tet Story*. Philadelphia: TriAm Press, 1983.

Semi-autobiographical novel about a Vietnamese man who at the beginning of the novel is a professor in the U.S. He returns to Vietnam, joins the NLF, and participates in the struggle for liberation. He later becomes disillusioned with communism and escapes from Vietnam, returning to the U.S.

Truong, Monique T. D. "The Reception of Robert Olen Butler's *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain*: Ventriloquism and the Pulitzer Prize." *Not a War: American Vietnamese Fiction, Poetry and Essays*. Ed. Dan Duffy. 75-94.

Author attacks Butler's Pulitzer Prize-winning collection of stories about Vietnamese in America. According to Truong, Butler perpetuates Charlie Chan-type stereotypes, but has gotten away with it by appropriating Vietnamese American first-person voices. Butler's stories are examples of "yellowface," an invasion of Vietnamese cultural space analogous to the blackface performances of minstrel shows.

Võ Phiến. *Intact* [Nguyễn Vẹn]. Trans. by James Banerian. Victoria, Australia: Vietnamese Language and Culture Publications, 1990.

The story of Dung, a young girl who, in the confusion surrounding Saigon's fall, gets separated from her family and fiancé and comes to the U.S. alone. Eventually she reunites with her family in Minnesota, but not with her fiancé who at the end of the book is still in Vietnam. Dung's separation from her fiancé, which causes sadness, regret, and nostalgia, becomes a metaphor for the exile experience. For information on how to purchase, contact James Banerian, 5816 Trojan Ave., San Diego, CA 92115.

Võ Phiến. "Wrapping Clouds and Blocking Snow," "A Dream of Mars," and "A Freedom Wall?" *War and Exile*. Ed. by Nguyễn Ngọc Bích (See Section VIII). Stories translated by Nguyễn Ngọc Bích. "A Spring of Quiet and Peace," "The Key," and "A Day to Dispose Of." *Landscape and Exile*. Ed. by Marguerite Guzman Bouvard. Stories translated by Huỳnh Sanh Thông, Phan Phan, and Võ Đình Mai. Boston: Rowan Tree Press, 1985.

These are examples of a genre the Vietnamese call *tùy bút*, perhaps best translated as "literary essay." Võ Phiến is considered a master of this genre. In "Wrapping Clouds" he discusses the reaction of Vietnamese refugees in Minnesota to their first snowstorm. In "A Dream of Mars" he compares leaving

Saigon for America with leaving the earth for Mars. In "The Key" he describes a refugee who has abandoned his 93-year old father in Vietnam. He left gold in a wardrobe for his father but forgot to leave the key! In a quiet, sometimes whimsical, and always thoughtful way, Võ Phiến expresses the sadness of exile. For information on the *tùy bút* genre, see Võ Phiến's *Literature in South Vietnam: 1954-1975*, pp. 180-185 and pp. 205-210.

XI. Đổi Mới (Renovation) Literature

Discussion

Political Background of a Literary Movement

The Renovation movement was an attempt by the Party leadership to breathe new life into Vietnamese socialism and also manage a population growing increasingly frustrated by a stagnated economy and a variety of other problems—the corruption of officials, bureaucratic immobility, the declining morale of young people, and the lack of educational and training opportunities, to name a few. Though it developed in response to local conditions, it can be compared to “glasnost,” the movement for openness in the former Soviet Union. Though Vietnamese reformers were not imitating developments in the USSR, they apparently did track events there closely. “[T]he real breakthrough,” Phương Kiên Khanh writes, “occurred with the political mutation in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev’s crackdown on bureaucratic immobilism had a tremendous impact on Vietnamese internal affairs and helped reduce the resistance of conservative officialdom” (13).

The Renovation movement began in 1986 when Nguyễn Văn Linh, sometimes referred to as “Vietnam’s Gorbachev,” took over as General Secretary of the Party following the death of Lê Duẩn, an arch-conservative. Secretary Linh and his reform-minded allies began a process of quite radical change, the most fundamental being the move away from centralized control and toward a market economy.

Cultural Background

Before the movement for renewal became official and was given a name, significant developments were already taking place in literature and the arts. When the war ended, writers and critics in Hanoi hoped that masterpieces depicting their victory would be written. When no great works were forthcoming, these writers and critics felt compelled to explain why. In an influential article entitled “Writing about War” that appeared in 1978 in *Literature and Arts in the Army* [Văn Nghệ Quân Đội],³⁴ Nguyễn Minh Châu, a well-known army journalist and writer, suggested that the works produced about the war had failed to satisfy readers because they did not pose psychological or social problems or express the attitude of the author. Perhaps avoiding these topics was appropriate during the war, he suggested, when everyone involved in the struggle was afraid that admitting individual fears would have weakened courage, but now that the struggle was over it was time for writers to reassess their strategies. We have fallen into the habit of writing a “wishful realism” (hiện thực ước mơ), Nguyễn Minh Châu said. Perhaps it is time to return to “actual realism” (hiện thực đang tồn tại).

Hoàng Ngọc Hiến, a literary critic and trainer of literary cadres, enlarged upon Nguyễn Minh Châu’s views in an article that appeared seven months later in *Literature and the Arts* [Văn Nghệ]. In this Soviet-trained critic’s view, writers have become too

³⁴ This article, the Vietnamese title of which is “Viết về Chiến Tranh,” has not been translated. It appeared in the November, 1978, issue of the journal mentioned.

concerned with writing “what should be” (phải tồn tại) instead of “what is” (đang tồn tại). They have adopted “doctrinaire realism” (chủ nghĩa hiện thực phải đạo), a kind of writing that follows preconceived rules and discourages the telling of truths.³⁵ At this time critics, even those officially sanctioned like Nguyễn Minh Châu and Hoàng Ngọc Hiến, had to speak cautiously and a little obscurely: since the term “socialist realism” (chủ nghĩa hiện thực xã hội chủ nghĩa) had acquired an almost sacred quality, it was better to avoid it and to attack “doctrinaire-ism” and a literature of “what should be.” But clearly what both men were pointing out is that pressure from the Party to write socialist realism was stifling creativity.

Writers as well as critics began to chafe at the bit of socialist realism several years before Renovation policy was officially inaugurated. Nguyễn Mạnh Tuấn, Nguyễn Thị Ngọc Tú, and Nguyễn Khải, for example, all published novels before 1986 that exposed the incompetence and greed of Party members and talked of losses as well as victories, of cowardice as well as heroism. Although an article in which the exile critic Nguyễn Hưng Quốc surveys works by these authors has been translated (“Vietnamese Communist Literature”), I know of no translations of the works themselves.

Renovation Literature

Increased momentum for change occurred after the Sixth Party Congress in 1986. At this congress, Party leaders emphasized the responsibility of the media and the press to boost the spirit of the masses and suggested they could do this by ensuring truthfulness and avoiding simplistic, cliché-ridden accounts. In October, 1987, Nguyễn Văn Linh, the new Party Secretary, personally attended a memorable meeting of writers and artists and participated with them in a frank dialogue about the state of creative activity. The Party Secretary suggested that the creative elite could play an important role by investigating problems facing the country and enlisted their help in the battle against bureaucratism and corruption. In remarks he made at the end of this two-day exchange, the Party Secretary stated that “one must hold fast to socialist realism,” but he suggested that writers who properly adopt this approach are not afraid to attack evils, even evils in people holding important posts in the Party, if these evils prevent the new socialist man from emerging (Nguyễn Văn Linh 123). This invitation from the most powerful person in government signaled a major change in policy and had an immediate liberating effect on literary production in Vietnam. Most works from the North listed in this section were produced or published during this period of openness that lasted from roughly 1986-87 until 1988-89. Contacts with the West were easier during this period and they facilitated the translation and publication abroad (not always with government approval) of works by Bảo Ninh, Dương Thu Hương, Nguyễn Huy Thiệp, and Phạm Thị Hoài.

³⁵ “Some Characteristics of Our Literature and Art in the Period Just Passed” [Về Một Đặc Điểm của Văn Học Nghệ Thuật ở Ta trong Giai Đoạn Vừa Qua], Văn Nghệ [Literature and the Arts] 23 (9 June 1979).

As is clear from the annotations of their works, these writers depart from the strictures of socialist realism. According to Nguyễn Hưng Quốc, they depart in four ways. First, these writers “recognize an internal conflict between the proletariat and the nature of socialism” (344). The Party line has always been that the socialist regime and the people share the same ideals and goals. All negative phenomena can be traced to the enemy. This view led to a division of characters into two factions, one progressive and one reactionary. Renovation writers, however, reveal situations in which the Party leadership is the problem and they produce characters who are complex mixtures of good and bad traits.

This first “renovation” shades over into the second: a willingness to recognize evil or badness (“cái xấu”). Previously in communist literature badness could be ascribed to rich land owners and members of the bourgeoisie but not to the “new socialist man,” certainly not to Party officials who were supposed to be wise and capable of solving all problems. According to Nguyễn Hưng Quốc, this willingness to see badness in a wider range of people has reintroduced a tragic element in Vietnamese literature. Writers could again dampen their pages with tears, something that was difficult before Renovation.

In the late 70’s the critic Hoàng Ngọc Hiến had already recognized a problem with typical characters. An individual, he said, is attached to certain groups based on social class, ethnicity, religion, vocation, etc. and certain characteristics have been associated with each group. “But we know,” he continued, “that the adding together of those characteristics will not produce an individual person, will not clarify the individual aspect, the unique capacity and particular appearance of the person.”³⁶ Nguyễn Hưng Quốc identifies a reaction to the typical and a return to individual expression as his third renovation. Renovation writers, he says, “recognize that in literature there is reserved a fairly extensive territory for the ‘I,’ for the personal aspect of people, ordinary common people” (345). Nguyễn Minh Châu suggests that during the war writers voluntarily avoided personal expression for fear of releasing floodgates of emotion that would weaken the will to resist. Clearly, however, socialist realism, from Engel’s famous definition (See Section VII) to more recent formulations, has encouraged the depiction of “typical characters under typical circumstances.” Personal cries of anguish such as Bảo Ninh’s *The Sorrow of War* and individual portraits of corrupt officials such as Uncle Chính in Dương Thu Hương’s *Paradise of the Blind* did not fit the formula.

Nguyễn Hưng Quốc’s fourth departure from socialist realism is not a feature of renovation writing but rather a changed definition of the acceptable canon. Previously, he argues, only “useful” literature (văn học có ích), literature supporting the revolution and socialism, was accepted. After Renovation, the leadership allowed a category of works that in its view might not be “useful” but were judged “harmless” (vô hại). Many pre-war stories and poems that had been labeled bourgeois and reactionary, including those by Nhất Linh and other members of the Self-Strength Literary Group (See Section II), could be reprinted and sold in bookstores. New works, including many listed in this section, could be published.

³⁶ Ibid.

The Movement Was a Moment

The window of opportunity that allowed works with the features enumerated above was not open for long. In December, 1988, Nguyễn Ngọc, author and editor of *Văn Nghệ* [Literature and the Arts] was sacked, presumably for publishing stories by Nguyễn Huy Thiệp. Most observers believe it was Nguyễn Huy Thiệp's historical stories—"A Sharp Sword," "Fired Gold," and "Chastity"—that angered some Party leaders. In these stories traditional heroes such as Quang Trung, who drove out the Chinese in 1789, are treated irreverently; and traditional villains such as Emperor Gia Long, accused by patriots of making deals with the French, are treated sympathetically. The reformist faction began to lose power, no doubt in part because conservatives were alarmed by the collapse of communist governments in Eastern Europe and events at Tian An Men Square. Even General Secretary Nguyễn Văn Linh lost his zeal for openness and began to speak of the dangers of irresponsible dissent. In January, 1990, new press regulations were passed which tightened censorship and warned of incorrect interpretations of Renovation freedoms. In 1991 Đỗ Mười, a conservative, replaced Nguyễn Văn Linh as Party Secretary.

Recent developments indicate that pro-reform elements, at least those in favor of artistic freedoms, are still in retreat. In the economic sphere, however, freedoms have not been curtailed and the move toward a market economy has become a race (if not a stampede). It appears that Vietnam is following the Chinese model of granting freedoms to business people but not to writers and journalists. Whether this policy will be successful remains to be seen. In one sense, literary and economic freedoms are intertwined. One impetus for relaxing central control of literature and journalism was economic: lacking funds to support many publications, the government told agencies that their journals would have to become self-supporting. To attract readers and make a profit these journals began to include sensational stories and pictures, often culled from foreign publications. In addition, the influx of modern communication technology—photocopiers, fax machines, video cameras and recorders—makes strict control of the dissemination of printed information and images extremely difficult. As Western-style consumerism spreads, it will no doubt create its own momentum for freedom.³⁷

Despite the current retreat from openness, the Vietnam literary scene has been profoundly affected by the Renovation movement. The debates surrounding socialist realism, Nguyễn Huy Thiệp's iconoclastic short stories, and the firing of Nguyễn Ngọc have energized writers and critics alike and may be the prelude to increased literary achievement.

³⁷ For a discussion of how Renovation has affected the circulation of information in Vietnam, see David Marr, "Education, Research, and Information Circulation in Contemporary Vietnam," *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, ed. William and Mark Selden (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993) 337-358.

Sources

Balaban, John and Nguyễn Quý Đức, eds. *Vietnam: A Traveler's Companion*. San Francisco: Whereabouts Press, 1996.

A collection of seventeen recently written (most in late 80's, early 90's) short stories, part of a series of books to "enlighten travelers to the soul of a place" (ii). Most stories are by northerners whose works became known in the West during the Renovation period—Bảo Ninh, Dương Thu Hương, Nguyễn Huy Thiệp, and Phạm Thị Hoài. Six are by Vietnamese now living in the West (Some of these could be considered exile narratives). Editors purposely avoided "war stories" and stories "carrying heavy political freight," but war and politics are in the background. In their choices (four stories by the iconoclast Nguyễn Huy Thiệp, for example), the editors appear eager to represent modern (even postmodern) works—works that break sharply with previous narrative styles. Many stories reveal Vietnamese trying to adjust to a new commercialism associated with Vietnam's move to a market economy.

Bảo Ninh. "A Marker on the Side of the Boat." *Night, Again: Contemporary Fiction from Vietnam*. Ed. Linh Dinh. New York: 7 Stories Press, 1996. 7-16.

In this story a former soldier remembers a night in Hanoi twenty years ago when he and a woman he had never met before ended up holding each other in their arms during a B-52 bombing raid. When the raid is over, the soldier leaves to help others. Later he searches for the woman's house but can't find it because the trolley that he used to mark its location has moved. Vividly describes a B-52 raid from the perspective of those under the bombs. Also suggests how a brief wartime encounter can dominate a soldier's memory of war.

_____. *The Sorrow of War* [Nỗi Buồn Chiến Tranh]. English version by Frank Palmos based on the translation from the Vietnamese by Võ Bang Thanh and Phan Thanh Hao, with Katerina Pierce. London: Secker & Warburg, 1991. Published in U.S. by Pantheon Books.

Semi-autobiographical novel: Kiên, the leading character, is one of only ten survivors from the 27th Youth Brigade. A moving account of a man haunted by memories of lost comrades, by the "sorrow of having survived." It is also a love story, an account of his relationship with Phương, his childhood sweetheart, whose life—her fall from innocence into a joyless promiscuity—suggests that the war destroyed everything that was pure and innocent. Some readers charge that the English text differs greatly from the original.

Boudarel, Georges. "Intellectual Dissidence in the 1950s: The Nhân-Văn Giai-Phẩm Affair." *Vietnam Forum* 13 (1990): 154-174.

Describes the opposition to Party control of literature and the arts that took place in North Vietnam from 1956-1960. (This opposition movement took its name from two journals founded by dissidents: *Nhân-Văn* [Humanism] and *Giai-Phẩm* [Works of Beauty].) Suggests that the movement began as a response to excesses caused by the importation of Maoism from China, excesses that included the rigid ideological control of art. The Party's repression of this movement in 1960 meant that until around 1980 published criticism of life under communist rule was "sporadic or shrouded in metaphor" (173). Important background for understanding the Renovation movement.

Bowen, Kevin. "Memories of War, Years of Peace: An Interview with Nguyễn Ngọc." *Manoa* 7.2 (Winter, 1995): 135-141.

The author of the *Village that Wouldn't Die* (See Section VII) and a key figure in the Reformation movement (See introduction to this section) reflects on his life as a soldier-writer. Provides details about writing and publishing in the communist-controlled areas during the war. Includes rare personal information, including information about his wife, also a soldier, who was wounded, then captured and imprisoned for six years by Saigon forces.

Duffy, Dan, ed. *Literature News: Nine Stories from the Viet Nam Writers Union Newspaper, Báo Văn Nghệ*. Selected and trans. by Rosemary Nguyen. Lạc Việt 16. New Haven, CT: Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1997.

Nine stories from the national weekly *Literature News* chosen and translated by Rosemary Nguyen, who learned Vietnamese while a staff member at a refugee camp in Hong Kong. Written in the early 1990's, the stories describe the after-effects of war and the struggles of people to preserve hope and achieve happiness in the face of grinding poverty. Several stories present the predicament of war widows who find it difficult to fulfill their sexual and emotional yearnings in a society that still frowns on widows remarrying. The stories appear in bilingual format, Vietnamese on the left, English on the right.

_____, ed. *North Viet Nam Now: Fiction and Essays from Ha Noi*. *Việt Nam Forum* 15. New Haven, CT: Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1996.

A collection which features short stories by authors from north Vietnam but also includes a short story by the American veteran Wayne Karlin, an article on

village art, translations of proverbs and riddles, and three “valedictory essays” by Nguyễn Khắc Viện, the well-known physician, writer, and publisher. The collection opens with translations of stories by Nguyễn Huy Thiệp from *The Winds of Hua Tát* [Những ngọn gió Hua Tát], the work published in 1986 that launched this writer’s career. It concludes with essays on different aspects of Hanoi life (computers, corporate philanthropy, anthropological research) by three foreigners who spent time there. Readers will appreciate Duffy’s informative biographical sketches of the authors. By suggesting that art in contemporary north Vietnam is a multifaceted thing, this volume will discourage easy stereotypes.

_____, ed. *The Việt Nam Forum: A Review of Culture and Society*. Việt Nam Forum 14. New Haven, CT: Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1994. See Section IV for annotation.

This issue of the Forum contains, among other things (see annotation), translations of stories by several Renovation writers, including Nguyễn Huy Thiệp’s historical stories (See below), and critical articles on Renovation writers.

Dương Thu Hương. *Novel Without a Name*. [Tiểu Thuyết Vô Đề]. Trans. by Phan Huy Đường and Nina McPherson. New York: William Morrow, 1995.

Written in 1990, this is the author’s second novel to be translated into English (First was *Paradise of the Blind*). Quân, the narrator and main character, describes his experiences as a captain in the army. Main narrative is an account by Quân of his trip home on leave and then his return to the front and more fighting that, by the end of the novel, has led to victory. Through flashbacks, dream sequences, and other devices we learn of earlier events: Quân’s mother’s death of typhoid when he was eight, his brother’s death in battle, his childhood sweetheart’s forced seduction by Party officials. Though once an idealistic volunteer, the horrors of war have made Quân distrust the patriotic slogans of the revolution. Main themes, besides this attack on the rhetoric of war, are the persistence of love—for one’s comrades and family members—and nostalgia for one’s youth and for village life before the war.

_____. *Paradise of the Blind* [Những Thiên Đường Mù]. Trans. by Phan Huy Đường and Nina McPherson. New York: William Morrow, 1993. Paperback edition by Penquin Books, 1994.

A novel of a woman, her mother, and her aunt all of whom are greatly affected by the land reform campaign of 1953-56 in communist North Vietnam. All

three characters struggle to maintain family traditions threatened by doctrinaire communism in the person of Chính, the uncle of the main character and a cadre in charge of land reform. The author's disenchantment with communism is suggested by Uncle Chính's movement from ignorant devotion to communist principles to corruption and black market dealing. Contains richly drawn accounts of everyday family life, particularly the preparation of food, and while it doesn't describe the war directly, conveys one woman's view of what it is like to live after decades of war and communist rule.

Huệ-Tâm Hồ Tài. "Dương Thu Hương and the Literature of Disenchantment." *The Việt Nam Forum: A Review of Culture and Society*. Ed. Dan Duffy. Việt Nam Forum 14. New Haven, CT. Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1994. 82-91.

Provides biographical information on the author and comments on her major works. Argues that Dương Thu Hương's deepening disenchantment with communism and her growth as a writer were parallel processes and that the depth of her disenchantment lends power to her writing. Faults the author for creating characters lacking in psychological depth but says she compensates for this weakness with detailed portraits of everyday life.

Karlin, Wayne, Lê Minh Khuê, and Trương Vũ, eds. *The Other Side of Heaven: Post-War Fiction by Vietnamese & American Writers*. Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1995.

A powerful (but grim) collection of fictional stories about the aftereffects of the war by both American and Vietnamese writers. Evolved from emotional meetings in Boston attended by American and Vietnamese writer-veterans who decided to produce this work of reconciliation. Given this purpose, it is ironic and sad that when the editors toured the U. S. to promote this book, there were demonstrations in some cities by anti-communist Vietnamese. Includes stories by Vietnamese exiles living in the U.S. as well as by Vietnamese from Vietnam. Selections take up the following concerns: "the need to tell the story, the grief of loss and the ways the dead continue to haunt the living, the psychologically and morally and physically wounded, the tragedy of exile, and, finally, the displaced, the lonely, the haunted, the trapped—the children of the war" (xiv). Eleven selections are excerpts from longer works. No information is provided on the literary or historical context of the Vietnamese works—only short biographical sketches of the authors—but there is no better collection in English of post-war fiction by Vietnamese.

Lê Lựu. "The Rucksack" [Excerpt from *Thời Xa Vắng* (Echoes of Times Past)]. Trans. Nguyễn Bá Chung. Ed. Wayne Karlin. In *The Other Side of Heaven*. Ed. Wayne Karlin, Lê Minh Khuê, and Trương Vũ. 118-121.

Story of a poorly educated veteran whose wife and wife's family criticize him for not knowing how to take care of the couple's sick baby. One night he discovers his wife has cut the straps from his beloved rucksack that he used during the war. He holds the strapless rucksack and remembers fallen comrades.

Lê Minh Khuê. "Tony D" [Anh Lính Tô Ny D]. Trans. Nguyễn Bá Chung, Nguyễn Quý Đức and Wayne Karlin. *The Other Side of Heaven*. Ed. Wayne Karlin, Lê Minh Khuê, and Trương Vũ. 210-222. The recent collection *The Stars, the Earth, the River: Short Stories by Lê Minh Khuê*, translated by Bac Hoai Tran and Dana Sachs with an introduction by Wayne Karlin (Curbstone Press, 1997) was not reviewed for this bibliography.

A father and son—both rogues—come across some American bones that they hope to sell for millions. Before they can unload them, they are haunted by the ghost of a Black American soldier.

Linh Dinh, ed. *Night, Again: Contemporary Fiction from Vietnam*. New York: 7 Stories Press, 1996.

A collection of twelve modern short stories, six by writers living in Vietnam, one by Nguyễn Minh Châu who died in Vietnam in 1989, and five by writers who now live in the West. Includes stories by the best known writers of the Renovation movement: Bảo Ninh, Dương Thu Hương, Nguyễn Huy Thiệp, and Phạm Thị Hoài. These are not traditional tales of gentle love and sweet nostalgia, nor are they civics lessons in the socialist realism mode. Most stories about postwar Vietnam are, as the Introduction states, "bleak portraits of a backward, rundown and corrupt society" (xiv). Stories by exiles about life in the West are equally bleak. The editor has chosen interesting stories and found translators who present these narratives in nicely crafted English prose. Two stories from this collection are annotated separately: Bảo Ninh's "A Marker on the Side of the Boat" in this section and Mai Kim Ngọc's "In the Recovery Room" in Section X.

Lockhart, Greg. "Nguyễn Huy Thiệp and the Faces of Vietnamese Literature." Introduction to Nguyễn Huy Thiệp's *The General Retires and Other Stories*.

A scholarly essay designed to place Nguyễn Huy Thiệp's stories in a historical, literary and political context. Explains Nguyễn Huy Thiệp's work by contrasting it with a "standard renovation agenda" pursued by writers like Dương Thu Hương (See above). While Dương Thu Hương reveals the face of suffering caused by ignorant and corrupt Party officials, Nguyễn Huy Thiệp does not "simply displace one image with another" (the image of the revolutionary hero with the image of suffering victim, for example), but rather creates "multifaceted images," "free floating signs" that have no "single ideological centre." Suggests that Nguyễn Huy Thiệp's fiction "marks the possibility of a fundamental shift in literature's position in the culture" (24).

_____. "Nguyễn Huy Thiệp's Writing: Post-Confucian, Post-Modern?" *Vietnamese Studies in a Multicultural World*. Ed. Nguyễn Xuân Thu. Melbourne: Vietnamese Language & Culture Publications, 1994. 158-181.

An intriguing elaboration of Lockhart's introduction to his translation of eight Nguyễn Huy Thiệp stories (See above). Lockhart asks whether this writer's work is more accurately termed post-Confucian or post-modern. His conclusion: it is both. It is post-Confucian in its rejection of didacticism, of the notion that literature must support the political-moral order. It is post-modern in its merging of myths and history, its use of surrealism and magical realism, its deferral of meaning, its "de-naturalizing" of standard historiography, and its lack of a clear ideological center. Nguyễn Huy Thiệp's postmodernism, Lockhart suggests, results not from direct foreign influence (Nguyễn Huy Thiệp knows no foreign languages) but from nascent consumerism induced by Vietnam's movement toward a market economy.

Ma Văn Kháng. "Mother and Daughter." *The Other Side of Heaven: Post-War Fiction by Vietnamese & American Writers*. Ed. Wayne Karlin, Lê Minh Khuê, and Trương Vũ. 340-352.

Duyên, a 42-year old doctor whose soldier husband was killed 12 years ago, works in a hospital and raises her two teenage children. She meets a major, a widower, and becomes torn between her desire for happiness with him and her sense of duty to her children and her mother-in-law.

Manoa 7.2 (Winter, 1995): 135-141. Vietnamese poetry section guest-edited by Kevin Bowen. Vietnamese fiction section guest-edited by Nguyễn Nguyệt Cầm.

This issue of this journal of international writing features contemporary poetry and prose from Vietnam. Most poetry is by veterans of the war against the Americans, with some by younger poets. Prose is by Phùng Gia Lộc ("The Night of That Day, What a Night! A True Account"), Phan Thị Vàng Anh ("Pantomime"), and Tạ Duy Anh ("The Broken Curse"). Also included is an interview by Kevin Bowen with Nguyễn Ngọc, author of the *Village that Wouldn't Die* (See Section VII), a former editor of *Literature and Art*, and a leading figure in current literary debates. See this section for annotations on Phùng Gia Lộc's story and the interview with Nguyễn Ngọc. Phan Thị Vàng Anh's story describes a girl trying to adjust to the knowledge that her father has been unfaithful to her mother. In Tạ Duy Anh's story, the narrator pities and later falls in love with the daughter of a landowner whose family suffers during the communist land reform campaign.

Nguyễn Hưng Quốc. "Vietnamese Communist Literature (1975-1990)." *Vietnamese Studies in a Multicultural World*. Ed. Nguyễn Xuân Thu. Melbourne: Vietnamese Language & Culture Publications, 1994. 120-143. See Section IV for annotation.

Nguyễn Huy Thiệp. *The General Retires and Other Stories*. Trans. by Greg Lockhart. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992.

A collection of eight stories by a Renovation writer considered by some critics to be Vietnam's first postmodern writer. Includes examples of what Lockhart calls mythical, historical, and realistic social fiction, but doesn't include the historical stories that upset the political-literary establishment in Hanoi (These are included in *Việt Nam Forum* 14, edited by Dan Duffy. See Section IV for annotation). The title story ("The General Retires"), his most famous, is narrated by the son of a general who has retired after a successful career in the army. The son describes his father's return to civilian life and the problems he encounters adapting to post-war society.

. "Kiếm Sắc" [A Sharp Sword], "Vàng Lửa" [Fired Gold], and "Phẩm Tiết" [Chastity]. Trans. by Peter Zinoman. *Việt Nam Forum* 14 (1994): 7-36.

These are the historical stories referred to in the preceding annotation. "Fired Gold" can stand as an example. This is a complexly put together story (three narrators, three possible endings) about events in the early 19th century under

King Gia Long. It disturbed Hanoi authorities because one of the narrators has some kind words for King Gia Long, who cooperated with the French, and some unkind words for Nguyễn Du, Vietnam's most famous writer. See Zinoman's helpful analysis below.

Nguyễn Văn Linh. "Let Writers and Artists Actively Contribute to Renovation." *Vietnamese Studies* (New Series) 21 (1991): 117-125.

Translation of Nguyễn Văn Linh's (Party Secretary) speech to writers, artists, and cultural workers on the occasion of his two-day meeting with them on October 6 and 7, 1987. This is the speech that officially announced a Renovation policy in the arts. The Secretary urges writers not to "bend their pens" to please people but instead to be courageous in attacking evils even if they occur among high Party officials. A proper work of socialist realism will "perceive [people's] failings in order to make them better." In this sense writers and artists are "engineers of the soul" (kỹ sư tâm hồn) (123-24).

Phạm Thị Hoài. "Nine Down Makes Ten." Trans. Peter Zinoman. *Grand Street* 11 (1993): 66-77.

A short story in which the narrator critically appraises nine men with whom she has associated. This author's work, like that of Nguyễn Huy Thiệp, has been called postmodern.

_____. "The Saigon Tailor Shop." Trans. Nguyễn Quý Đức. *Vietnam: A Traveler's Literary Companion*. Ed. John Balaban and Nguyễn Quý Đức. San Francisco: Whereabouts Press, 1996. 28-41.

The narrator enrolls in a sewing class in what is called the Saigon Tailor Shop though it's located near a railroad crossing in Hanoi. The shop, the narrator says, "was a dark train car packed with dreams, and I had bought an express ticket to a future full of cheap dress shirts and windbreakers with fake South Korean labels" (30). Orchid, one of the girls in the shop, is run over by the Unification Train on an express run to Saigon. A humorous and scary vision of where Hanoi may be heading.

Phùng Gia Lộc. "The Night of That Day, What a Night! A True Account" [Cái Đêm Hôm ấy Đêm gì]. Trans. Birgit Hussfeld and Hans Schodder. *Manoa* 7.2 (Winter, 1995) 51-66.

This story, an example of reportage (phóng sự), was originally published in

Literature and the Arts on Jan. 23, 1988. It describes a raid on the house of the author by commune officials and police who mercilessly demand outstanding rice-tax contributions. Includes three letters to the editor about this story and excerpts from an interview with the author and from a profile and a eulogy (Phùng Gia Lộc died in 1992). This piece testifies to the rebirth during the Reformation period of reportage, a genre that Ngô Tất Tố, Nguyễn Công Hoan and others employed in the 1930's and 40's (See Section V).

Phương Kiên Khanh. "Glasnost in Vietnam: Limits to Openness." *Indochina Report* No. 25 (Oct.-Dec., 1990): 1-27.

A good explanation of the Renovation movement in literature, the reaction against socialist realism that occurred after the Sixth Party Congress in 1986. A Postscript describes the government's retreat from reform in 1988-89. Crucial background for understanding the political context within which recent works by writers such as Bảo Ninh, Dương Thu Hương, Nguyễn Huy Thiệp, and Phạm Thị Hoài are produced.

Portrait of the Vietnamese Soldier. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1984.

A collection of short stories and excerpts from novels designed to convey a picture of the Vietnamese soldier. Most authors are soldier-writers from the north with established reputations as chroniclers of army life: Hữu Mai, Nguyễn Khải, Hồ Phương, and Nguyễn Minh Châu, for example. Most stories take place during the war against the Americans. All follow the rules of socialist realism: the heroes, usually soldiers, are models of revolutionary virtue. Still no doubt some truths are conveyed about soldiers' attitudes toward love, family, home village, and comrades.

Trần Đạo. "A Work of Art." Trans. by Phan Huy Đường and Nina McPherson. *Việt Nam Forum* 14 (1994): 45-53.

Critical commentary on Nguyễn Huy Thiệp's short story "The General Retires."

Zinoman, Peter. "Declassifying Nguyễn Huy Thiệp." *Positions* 2 (Fall, 1994): 294-317.

Argues that the supposedly postmodern features in Nguyễn Huy Thiệp's fiction are best explained as reactions not to modernist art (which Zinoman says never circulated in Vietnam), but to Vietnamese cultural and economic developments. Suggests that when Nguyễn Huy Thiệp blurs history and fiction and the natur-

al and supernatural, he is playfully reworking narrative conventions employed by traditional (precolonial) story tellers. The loneliness and pessimism of his stories are meant to oppose the “obligatory hopefulness” of socialist realism and to point out how a growing materialism brought by the new market economy is destroying the warmth and humanity of traditional Vietnamese life.

_____. “Nguyễn Huy Thiệp’s ‘Vàng Lửa’ and the Nature of Intellectual Dissent in Contemporary Viet Nam.” *Viet Nam Generation* 4 (Spring, 1992): 61-64.

Critical analysis with notes of one of the three historical stories by Nguyễn Huy Thiệp that so upset Party officials in Hanoi and are believed to have caused them to re-impose restrictions on writers. This essay is reprinted in the *Việt Nam Forum* issue (No. 14) edited by Duffy, which also includes Zinoman’s translations of the three stories.

List of Works Annotated

Note: The roman numeral in parentheses at the end of the citation indicates the section in which the work is annotated. For example, a "IV" placed at the end of a citation indicates that the annotation for the work is found in the section on "Literary History and Criticism" (Section IV). If a work has no author or editor listed, it will be found under its title.

- Anh Đức. *Hon Dat* Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1969. (VII)
Back to His Home Village. Hibiscus Series. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1981. (VII)
- Balaban, John, ed. and trans. *Ca Dao Vietnam: A Bilingual Anthology of Vietnamese Folk Poetry.* Greensboro, NC: Unicorn Press, 1974. (VI)
 _____ and Nguyễn Quý Đức, eds. *Vietnam: A Traveler's Literary Companion.* San Francisco: Whereabouts Press, 1996. (X)
- Banerian, James, ed. and trans. *Vietnamese Short Stories: An Introduction.* Phoenix, AZ: Sphinx Publishing, 1986. (VIII)
- Bảo Ninh. "A Marker on the Side of the Boat." *Night, Again: Contemporary Fiction from Vietnam.* Ed. Linh Dinh. New York: 7 Stories Press, 1996. 7-16. (XI)
 _____. *The Sorrow of War* [Nỗi Buồn Chiến Tranh]. English version by Frank Palmos based on the translation from the Vietnamese by Vo Bang Thanh and Phan Thanh Hao, with Katerina Pierce. London: Secker & Warburg, 1991. Published in U.S. by Pantheon Books. (XI)
- Bình Nguyên Lộc. "The Mam Grove." *Vietnamese Short Stories.* Ed. and trans. James Banerian. 99-113. (VIII)
- Boudarel, Georges. "Intellectual Dissidence in the 1950s: The Nhân-Văn Giai-Phẩm Affair." *Vietnam Forum* 13 (1990): 154-174. (XI)
- Bowen, Kevin. "Memories of War, Years of Peace: An Interview with Nguyễn Ngọc." *Manoa* 7.2 (Winter, 1995): 135-141. (XI)
- Bùi Diễm and David Chanoff. *In the Jaws of History.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987. (III)
- Bùi Tín. *Following Hồ Chí Minh: Memoirs of a North Vietnamese Colonel.* Trans. Judy Stowe and Đỗ Văn. London: C. Hurst, 1994. Pub. in U.S. by University of Hawaii Press, 1995. (V)
- [General] Cao Văn Viên. *The Final Collapse.* Indochina Monographs. Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1983. (III)
 _____ et al. *The U.S. Adviser.* Indochina Monographs. Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1980. (III)
- Chanoff, David and Đoàn Văn Toại. *Portrait of the Enemy.* New York: Random House, 1986. (V)
- Christopher, Renny. *The Viet Nam War/The American War: Images and Representations in Euro-American and Vietnamese Exile Narratives.* Amherst,

- MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995. (IV)
- _____. "Vietnamese Exile Writers: Displacement, Identity, The Past and the Future." Paper presented at the Modern Language Association Convention, 1995. (X)
- Công Huyền Tôn Nữ Nha Trang. "Ideal Role Conformity of the Vietnamese Wife Reflected in Folksongs." *Tenggara* 8 (1976): 60-69. (VI)
- _____. "The Traditional Roles of Women as Reflected in Oral and Written Vietnamese Literature." Diss. University of California, Berkeley, 1973. (VI)
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John C. Schafer went to Vietnam in 1968 as a member of International Voluntary Services, after earning a B.A. in English from Yale and a Master of Arts in Teaching from Harvard. He taught English in central Vietnam for four years, first at Phan Chu Trinh High School in Danang and then at the University of Hue. Students and faculty colleagues introduced him to Vietnamese literature and he has been studying it ever since. His articles about Vietnamese prose and poetry and some translations have appeared in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, *Viet Nam Forum*, *Vietnam Review*, *Hợp Lưu*, and other journals. His research on the Vietnamese novel has resulted in three articles, two authored with his wife, Cao thị Như-Quỳnh, and one with Thế Uyên. In 1992 a grant from the Social Science Research Council enabled him to return to Vietnam where he interviewed writers and scholars for a project on southern novelists. At Humboldt State University in northern California, where he is Professor of English, he teaches a course on the war, using many of the texts and approaches that he recommends in this volume. The author and Cao thị Như-Quỳnh, who holds degrees from the universities of Hue, Hawaii, and Michigan, are now working on an anthology on the war by Vietnamese writers.

Vietnamese Perspectives on the War in Vietnam: An Annotated Bibliography of Works in English

by John C. Schafer, Humboldt State University

THIS WELL-ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY WILL ENABLE university and high school teachers to integrate multiple Vietnamese views of the war into their lecture notes and course readings. It is particularly strong on memoirs and fictional accounts, which often pique the curiosity of students in a way that history texts do not. Because Schafer's own research specialty is twentieth-century Vietnamese literature, his running commentary on novels and short stories in translation is especially valuable.

David Marr, Australia National University, author of *Viet Nam 1945*

JOHNSCHAFAER'S BIBLIOGRAPHY IS INVALUABLE TO TEACHERS of courses on the Vietnam War and on Vietnamese history and culture. It brings together dozens of otherwise obscure references and adds brief annotations that place literary and historical sources in their proper context. This work will be particularly useful for college and high school instructors who wish to introduce or enhance segments on Vietnamese culture and for teachers and librarians whose students include Vietnamese-Americans. Schafer's bibliography gives us a ready reference to hundreds of sources that correct the American-centered focus common in many courses.

Steve Potts, History, Hibbing Community College and Mankato State University

AS SOMEONE WHOSE COURSES ON THE VIETNAM WAR have emphasized the American experience, I am excited by the larger perspectives that John Schafer's bibliography offers. Schafer has located some fascinating works by Vietnamese of various political persuasions and organized them conveniently by topic. His introductions to each section include thoughtful suggestions for teaching as well as the kind of cultural and historical background that teachers will find indispensable. Aided by this book, I look forward to revising my syllabus so that students develop a deeper and more inclusive understanding of the war in Vietnam. Teachers will find useful information on colonialism, literary trends in Vietnam, and the experience of Vietnamese immigrants in America. Anyone who teaches courses that touch on the Vietnam War should have this book as a resource and reference.

Barry Kroll, Rodale Professor of English, Lehigh University, author of *Teaching Hearts and Minds: College Students Reflect on the Vietnam War in Literature*

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