

**CONTEMPORARY VIETNAMESE POETRY: ON THE PATH OF
TRANSFORMATION
(A PORTRAIT OF VIETNAMESE LITERATURE)**

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“Poetry as a Window on History and Change in Southeast Asia” is the main topic of a Panel at the 56th Conference of the Association for Asian Studies – Sponsored by Council of Teachers of Southeast Asian Languages, to be held in San Diego on March 4, 2004. In many respects, poetry is indeed linked to history and change. History here must be understood in the broader context of linguistic, literary and political developments. These are the primary elements that make up culture. When we speak of Vietnamese poetry, we are speaking of the larger category of Vietnamese literature as well, since up until the invention of the Quoc Ngu (Romanized National Script), Vietnamese literature was primarily poetic, absent of novels and essays. Short stories only began to emerge with the popular use of Quoc Ngu. The earliest were translations of Chinese and French stories that began to appear in the magazine *Nam Phong Tap Chi*. Thus, the novel only came into existence after 1921¹; an example of such work was *To Tam*, a romantic novel written by Hoang Ngoc Phach. Novels written after that period followed the structure and expressions of plot and character development of foreign literature, merged with the rhetoric techniques of classical poetry. Changes in Vietnamese literature always begin with changes to poetry, since poetry is at the heart of Vietnamese literature. But poetry as a mechanism for change historically has been subjected to the whims of political power, tracing back a thousand years. Changes in government, the written script and other historical changes have also affected the evolution of Vietnamese poetry. As such, we must study Vietnamese poetry from many different angles: the linguistic, historical and cultural influences of foreign civilizations such as China and the West, in order to understand the change and continuity in Vietnamese poetry typical of Vietnamese literature in general.

The Background

As to Vietnamese history, China² dominated Vietnam for nearly one thousand years (from 111 B.C.E. to 938 C.E.). In modern times, Vietnam endured eighty years of French Colonialism (from 1863 to 1949). Those years of foreign domination instilled upon Vietnamese people foreign cultures that deeply affected their customs, daily lives and literary traditions. The Chinese rulers brought to Vietnam their distinctive traditions such as marriage reforms, education, agriculture, and many other aspects of civilization aimed at assimilating the Vietnamese. For instance, they taught Chinese script for use in daily administrative offices because at that time, although the Vietnamese people had their own verbal language, no writing system existed. After the great Ngo Quyen gained Vietnam’s independence from China (939 - 965), the Dinh Dynasty³ (968-960) took over and started to emulate the monarchist system from the Chinese Dynasties and continued

to use Chinese script in administrative offices and diplomatic exchanges with China. Vietnamese poetry in Han Chinese script emerged under the Ly Dynasty (1009-1225), written mostly by Zen Buddhist monks because only Buddhist monks had the privilege of the formal education provided by the monasteries; such writings were usually in the form of Sayings (*katha*).⁴ Buddhism arrived in Vietnam via two routes: by way of China and from India. Many of the Buddhist texts were written in Han Script. Therefore, Vietnamese monks were quite fluent in Han Script, and Sinology became popular with the spread of Buddhism.

As of the tenth century, most Vietnamese social, political, cultural, religious, artistic, and literary traditions reflected Chinese influence. In the year 1075, the Vietnamese emperor Ly Nhan Ton established the first mandarin exams in Vietnam. The purpose of the exams was to recruit able civil servants into the emperor's courts. Despite its political independence, Vietnam still relied on Chinese script and general culture until the reign of Tran Nhan Ton (1279 - 1298). Han Thuyen⁵ used Nom script, which was the unofficial Vietnamese script graphotype using Chinese characters, to write his famous poem 'Van Te Ca Sau' (Ode to the Crocodile). Nom script was transcribed phonetically from Vietnamese pronunciations. Like Han script, it proved very difficult to write. Only civil servants, scholars and students could write in Nom, since it was not popular with the common people. Nobody knew exactly how the Nom script originated. Nom script may have developed from the need to describe daily activities and objects more clearly than in Han script. This Nom script was not conventionalized. Every user adapted it according to the needs at hand. The reader had to rely on guesswork to comprehend the text.

In the sixteenth century, during the Trinh-Nguyen Lords' demarcation period, foreign merchants and missionaries began to arrive in Vietnam. Since Nom script was difficult to learn, the missionaries devised an alphabet writing system based on Vietnamese pronunciation to facilitate the teaching of the Bible and to spread the Christian religion. This was called Quoc Ngu (national script), and it combined the work of many Italian, French and Portuguese priests. In 1651, a Jesuit Priest named Alexandre de Rhodes (1591-1660) published the first Quoc Ngu-Portuguese-Latin dictionary in Rome, marking the beginning of modern day use of the Vietnamese National Script, Quoc Ngu. In 1863, the French invaded Southern Vietnam⁶ and by 1884 had conquered the entire country, making the South its colony and the North and Central areas its protectorates. During the early years of French colonialism, the French had to quell many rebellions, including the Can Vuong⁷ (King Restoration) Movement. The French were not able to abolish the entire mandarin exam system in the North until 1915 and in Hue (in the Central area) around 1919. Afterwards the French opened their own schools to train a new generation of colonists to work for them. They also established the Khai Tri Tien Duc Association (Progressively Open-Minded Association) to advance French culture and Quoc Ngu script.

Around the same time, in 1906, the Vietnamese revolutionary Phan Boi Chau organized the Phong Trao Dong Du⁸ (Go East Movement) to send Vietnamese students to Japan to acquire advanced education. He recognized how strong and prosperous Japan had become by modernizing itself. In early 1907, a number of young patriotic Vietnamese scholars with mixed Confucian and Western backgrounds, including Luong Van Can, Nguyen Quyen, Hoang Tang Bi, and Duong Ba Trac, opened the Dong Kinh

Nghia Thuc (Free School of the Eastern Capital).⁹ These scholars favored the use of Quoc Ngu over the archaic Nom and advocated Vietnamese nationalism, modernization, and mass education while resisting foreign cultural assimilation. At the end of 1907, the French closed down the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc by negotiating a treaty with Japan discontinuing the harboring of Vietnamese students. With the failure of the Phong Trao Dong Du and the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc, many Vietnamese scholars were disappointed and disheartened. They returned to working under French administrators, serving as researchers and analysts to reconcile differences between the French and the Vietnamese.

As part of its propaganda, the French authority assisted Nguyen Van Vinh in publishing *Dong Duong Tap Chi*¹⁰ (*Indochinese Review*, 1913-1915) which specialized in the translation of Chinese and French literature into Quoc Ngu. Another publication, *Nam Phong Tap Chi*¹¹ (*Southern Wind Review*, 1917-1932) edited by Pham Quynh, appeared in 1917 in three languages: Vietnamese (written in Quoc Ngu), French and Chinese. Articles chosen for publication were on revolutionary thoughts and academic research and were educational in nature. *Nam Phong Tap Chi* published widely in order to attract a large audience, from the Confucian educated to the western educated, in order to spread both ancient and modern studies. In 1928, Nguyen Van Ngoc published his modern collection of Vietnamese “folk and custom” verses¹² of some eight thousand verses following such ideals. This collection laid the basis for harmony between *Tho cu* (old poetry) with *Tho moi* (new poetry). Here we can recognize the importance of the written word. Alphabet writing was easier to learn and write, similar to English or French. It helped to change the influence on Vietnamese culture from the Chinese to the West.

By 1932, a new generation of writers had emerged. Those new writers no longer subscribed to the East-West reconciliation views of the *Nam Phong Tap Chi* and *Dong Duong Tap Chi* generation. They revolted against the old, and promoted the new. The first of this new generation was author Nhat Linh, who published *Phong Hoa magazine*¹² (Customs and Morals) and founded *Tu Luc Van Doan* (the Self-Reliant Literary Group) in 1933 that included Khai Hung (1896-1947), Thach Lam (1910-1942), Hoang Dao (1907), Tu Mo, Nguyen Gia Tri (1908-1993) and The Lu (1907-1989). These writers used Quoc Ngu to compose poems and novels. Many other writers later joined them, including Xuan Dieu (1916-1985), Huy Can, Vu Hoang Chuong (1916-1975), and Dinh Hung (1920-1967). Together they started an enlightening literary epoch called *Tho van Tien Chien*¹⁴ (pre-war literature). These writers shared a Confucian scholar background, with a penchant for Western education. Combining traditional Tang poetry with popular oral traditions, they composed a particular Vietnamese-style poetry. Up until this time, all literature was reserved for city-dwellers who were educated since the majority of the common population was still illiterate. It was this period that marked the departure of Vietnamese literature from its heavily Chinese-influenced traditions.

Prior to this, Vietnamese traditions were ingrained in an authoritarian monarchist system modeled after China's. This system, based on Confucianism as its basic social-political-cultural philosophy, aimed only at controlling the populace. Confucianism became prevalent under the rule of the Confucian mandarins. Confucianism dictated loyalty above all else. The King had complete authority over his subjects just as a father has complete authority over his household. This authority over life and death matters

was total and was not to be questioned. The King relied on his mandarins to control his subjects, while the mandarins were bestowed power and privileges in return. In order to attain the status of a mandarin, candidates were qualified through mandarin exams.¹⁵ During these exams, candidates composed poetry and written texts in accordance with set rules of composition based on difficult formal and complicated Chinese literature. Should candidates fail to comply with these strict regulations or corrupt the process in any way due to their ineptitude, they would face imprisonment.

Thus, Confucianism became a competition-examination system. From the King to the mandarins, all were career poets who specialized in the flowery style. After some 2000 years of Chinese influence, most Han poets were mandarins (in nature); however, they had weaker poetic standards than the poets of the Tang period. From the beginning, poetry was a means to gain power, and then it became power itself. Once a Confucian poet became a mandarin, he became a ruler; his poetry became sacred, respected, no longer an artistic creation. Han Chinese writing was considered the language of the Sages, not to be used lightly or for entertainment. Once Han Thuyen used Nom script to write his poem (Ode to the Crocodile), more people composed poetry using Nom script to avoid the (said) rules and customs of the mandarin courts. Poetry written in Nom borrowed the Chinese forms initially, but gradually changed to using the traditional forms of Vietnamese folk poetry, which have the six-eight or double-seven and six-eight patterns (A Vietnamese word usually has a single syllable. Six-Eight refers to the count of a line of poetry: first a line of six words; then a line of eight words). At first, poets entertained themselves by using Nom as a new medium for writing poetry, but later some talented poets found that using Nom could relieve them from the usual constructs, enabling free expression, surpassing the eloquence of Tang poetry. Over time, the elite mandarin self inside the poets slowly took over the artist self, making Nom poetry more difficult to comprehend with many historical references. It had taken over the position of Han poetry and became Vietnamese classical poetry.

If Han poetry were an amalgamation of political power and literature, Nom poetry was now a separate literary movement that counter-balanced political power. This new kind of poet was obsessed with the power of opposites, that of illusion and politics, that of mandarin and artist. The great poet Nguyen Du, for example, was a high-ranking mandarin of the Nguyen Dynasty who was disillusioned with the royal court. He could only pour his feelings out into poetry in order to escape reality. Yet Nom poetry like Han poetry had its roots in a monarchist court culture that was heavily influenced by mandarin overtones of dictatorship and arrogance and lost appeal because it was reserved exclusively for elites who proclaimed themselves as venerable sages, “noble gentlemen.” Naturally, the common people had no role in that kind of poetry. And because the French government was busy quelling the masses, they ignored writing groups. Vietnamese literature began to shed political obsessions.

Before the development of Quoc Ngu, common people knew neither Han Script nor Nom Script. Although considered outsiders of the literary groups, the common people, whose spirituality was closely knitted with nature, had learned to express their emotions through traditional folk songs developed over thousands of years. *Ca dao* (folk songs) were sporadic creations of the rural masses that developed into metered poems of the six-eight (words per line) form or sometimes two lines of seven words each followed

by a line of six words and a line of eight words. One can find a trove of anecdotes and tales in poetry and song that passed culture and customs down through the generations. These folk songs were filled with images of daily hardships such as farming, irrigation, or rice pounding. These people relieved the pressures of a life of hard labor by singing or reciting oral poems composed by unknown authors. *Ca dao* was very short and simple. It had only two or four verses, with rhyme and rhythm that were easily sung or recited.

While Tang poetry's structure was rigid with its set rules such as *ngu ngon tu tuyet* (5-4 form: 5 words per line, 4 lines) or *that ngon bat cu* (7-8 form: 7 words per line, 8 lines). Pre-War poetry borrowed from these forms and from the structure of Tang poetry with its 5 or 7 syllable (word) verse form, adding the eight-word verse form and the six-eight-syllable verse form. The 5-4 and 7-8 forms mixed with the *Ca dao* form reflected the natural sounds of Vietnamese spoken language. Lacking structure and eloquence, *Ca dao* never developed into a formal aesthetic trend. Classical poetry and pre-war poetry stemmed from *Ca dao*. If classical poetry reflected a strange and faraway China, the pre-war poetry reflected the common love and romance found in individualism, estranged from traditional daily life. The general population never found a comfortable place in Vietnamese poetry because the literates excluded them in one way or another.

It is worthy to note that Vietnam remained relatively peaceful from 1932 to 1945. In 1945, at the end of World War II, the Nine-Year War with France began, ending with the Geneva Treaty ¹⁶ on July 20, 1954, that divided Vietnam in half. The northern half rallied to communism. The southern half rallied to capitalism. Soon after, another war broke out at the end of 1960, involving both halves of the country. It was during the 1960's that the *Nhan Van Giai Pham* ¹⁷ (*Humanism Quarterly Magazine*) was established in the North, and the Free Verse Poetry Movement developed in the South. In both the North and the South, poets were trying to deviate from the stagnant pre-World War II. poetry. They experimented with more liberal forms of expression. By the end of the latest war in 1975, Vietnamese poetry had undergone two decades of near paralysis. It was not until 2000 that a new and more vibrant movement would emerge - New Formalism. In this essay, we have used comparative studies to juxtapose poetry with historical events within which these works came into being, taking into account the unique characteristics of each of the periods, from the 1960s until the present day.

The continuity

During Chinese domination over Vietnam, poetry flourished, most notably in the Tang Dynasty (618 to 906). Vietnamese poetry, although evolving linguistically and conceptually over time, continued to echo Tang influence into the future. The following example is cited below to demonstrate this point.

The Chinese poet Jia Dao (779-843), as a youth on his way to take the national examination in the Capital, happened to compose the following two verses:

Ma tuc tri trung thu
Tang thoi (xao) nguyet ha mon

The horse sleeps under a tree by the lake
The monk knocks (pushes) the temple gate under the moonlight.

Since he was not quite satisfied with the word ‘knocks’, he was deep in thought and did not even notice a company of officials traveling by. The guards brought him to the State Minister Han Yu (768-824). (In the old days, common people had to stop and yield until the officials passed by; otherwise the people would be arrested for slighting the officials.). Upon discovering his endeavor, the State Minister suggested the word ‘pushes’ instead of ‘knocks’, which is more subtle, and pardoned his impropriety. The hidden meaning in these two versions is profound, demanding its readers to have a repertoire of classical poetry and historical reference. Jia Dao used the Buddhist perspective that human beings are *tam vien y ma*, meaning human beings’ hearts constantly change like a hyperactive monkey while their minds are like a moving horse, never calm. The monk is in control of his mind, as the horse sleeps under a tree. The moonlight reflects upon the lake, signifying life was illusive. Once the monk’s mind calms, he knocks (pushes) the gate. His action was a willful act of seeking the inner meaning of Buddhism, of the sutras as a means to an end, like the finger that points to the moon that is the truth. The monk is on his way to discover the ultimate truth, nirvana. The images of the horse, the gate, and the moonlight represented the human mind, Buddhist teachings and sutras. Han Yu suggested the word *xao* ‘pushes’, which was both gentle and implied that the ultimate truth was not far, but within reach. In these two short verses, one finds idealism. This style of poetry utilizes an “idea-beyond-words” technique. Later on, Jia Dao retired from his mandarin position. He became a monk and continued to write poetry. Once he lamented:

Luong cu tam nien dac
Thi thanh song le thuy

(I) composed two verses in three years
Once written, both eyes filled with tears

This historical reference of *Thoi Xao* (Knock-Push) and the technique, idea-beyond-words, influenced Vietnamese literature from Han script to Quoc Ngu, from Tang influenced-poetry through pre-War and Free Verse poetry. As Tang poetry demonstrated, it was a high form of Art. It required the poet and his readers to possess knowledge of the three great doctrines of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, not reflecting in reality but taking refuge from it. Vietnamese classical poetry and pre-War poetry were rhetorical arts, carefully choosing words, like Jia Dao. The only difference between them is that classical poetry heavily used literary references from (ancient) Chinese literature while pre-War poetry relied on words to convey romantic feelings. During Vietnam’s relatively peaceful period prior to 1945, both classical and pre-War poetry used the right rhetorical techniques. After the 1960s, both the North and South experienced social changes. Rhetorical usage was no longer suitable for such situations. Poets found new ways to express their thoughts and feelings appropriate to their rapidly changing circumstances. However, the communist government in the North forbade all forms of change (no free expression was allowed). Poets had to indulge once again in

rhetorical usage although they were not allowed to have their compositions published; they had to keep their works to themselves. Their rhetorical technique took on ambiguous usage for even the most ordinary words. Their methods disregarded the rules of grammar, eliminating the “idea-beyond-word” approach in which no meaning is real.

Meanwhile in the South, most of the literary elites were those who had immigrated from the North in 1954. As strangers to this new environment who were withdrawing from the war around them, these writers tended to go into self-imposed isolation within the city walls. Alienated from the masses, they turned to their own minds and books, concentrating on words in order to reflect feelings instead of ideology. Thus, both the North and the South prior to the unification in 1975, and out-of-mainstream free verse poetry after the unification, were absorbed in the quest to find interesting words and imageries to paint surprising portraits that were quite removed from any realities.

Western influence on both the political and the literary culture began in earnest in the 1920's and was filled with biases; however, the masses ability to grapple with the new concepts remained elementary. Many western ideologies, such as Communism or Surrealism, were only beginning to be digested in Vietnam, even as some of these same ideologies had been abandoned in the West. Over-enthusiasm for Western ideas had eclipsed the early advances made by such writers as those in the Self-Reliant Literary Group. Thus began a period of literary confusion. Hoang Dao with his *Ten Meditations* began something entirely new. Nhat Linh's character Loan in Doan Tuyet took a knife to her husband, intent on his murder. She was symbolic of fundamentalist tendencies. The satires of Ly Toet, Xa Xe ¹⁸, portrayed a backward society filled with the dumb and the blind. These views were slanted toward the negative bias of Western perspectives. Unable to critically analyze and evaluate the impact of this negative trend, these latest writers could not improve or expand upon the national traditions. This confusion gave rise to violent tendencies that inspired a host of extremist activities to follow. This wholesale adaptation of western ideas, undigested and unprocessed, fostered misconceptions and gave birth to a syntactically ill-developed body of work that is typical of Vietnamese literature of the last half of the twentieth century. For several consecutive generations until now, Vietnamese literature looked to the West as a perfect model. In such literature, the common people were viewed as just as backward and stupid as Ly Toet and Xa Xe, the satirical characters of *Tu Luc Van Doan* fame. Vietnamese poetry during this period was nothing more than word play and wordsmithery, devoid of any positive social implications.

From 1960 to 1975, and even after 1975, Vietnamese free verse existed side by side with more structured and metered poetry. In the North, themes of revolution, of struggle, and of propaganda consistent with the party line dominated, while in the South themes of love and romance dominated. In both cases, poetry was a means to achieve an end, not an end in itself. Poetic traditions remained static. Thus, following the pre-World War II poetry, Vietnamese literature diverged into two main paths. One continued along the lines of *Tu Luc Van Doan* (the Self-Reliant Literary Group) with its emphasis on romantic portrayals, and the other was based on new usages of ambiguous rhetoric that pretended to accommodate change. These tendencies have been locked in place to the present day. Since no new aesthetics has emerged, and absent any new thoughts and

techniques, Vietnamese literature has remained stagnant. We find ourselves today in that dilemma.

Ancient Greek rhetoric was established during the fifth century B.C.E. It is the art or study of using speech or written language effectively and persuasively, including techniques for the use of logic or argument aimed at persuading the audience about certain ideals or concepts, and it makes use of grammatical principles. Thus, logic has to be lucidly coherent, leading the audience to complete comprehension of an issue once it is presented. As a custom and habit from old tradition, it must shed light on the truth, and the speaker or writer must be capable of resolving difficult problems through clear and concise reasoning, with the logic flowing as in a story-telling. In poetry, rhetorical figures do not change the meaning of words, but only add to their emphasis through repetition. In short, rhetoric was the invention or discovery of ideas, the arrangement or organizing of ideas, and the style or way of putting ideas into words, which offered practice in oral argumentation for the philosophers, lawyers and politicians.

In the Middle Ages, the study of the *trivium* - grammar, rhetoric and dialectic - emphasized style and logic. During the Renaissance, with the invention of the printing press, the written word became increasingly important. Over the course of many centuries, rhetoric went from a focus on the use of the spoken word to a focus on the written word. And until now, it is a course of study within the English language and literature departments in universities. Later, along came the New Rhetoric with its new viewpoint, one not only related to the content, structure or written representational style, but also one that included many social and political issues concerning maintaining harmonious relationships with each other. Because of our cultural diversity, in everyday conversation many situations occur as a result of only a few misunderstood simple words. New Rhetoric broke away from studying texts for their beauty or content, and began to use rhetoric as a tool to analyze information about society, becoming a vehicle for mutual understanding among humans. Of course, sometimes the rhetoric could fall victim to negative terms, using unnecessary amplification, sham or empty words. In general, according to Western belief, rhetoric was merely a method for helping people open up to the world, while the Vietnamese interpretations kept the door closed to the outside, and were adapted particularly to the country and its own historical situation at that time.

When these two notions about rhetoric are compared, it becomes clear as to why Vietnamese poetry had to change. The idea was, if one line has one excellent word, it is an excellent line; if a poem has an excellent line, it is an excellent poem. Written words remain in the readers' mind throughout their education and experience (for example, Sino-Vietnamese words). Words are signs with a signifier and an attached signified meaning. When a literary work uses only words or lines to create impressions and feelings, it leads readers into a supernatural or surreal world (in reality, a world that is nothing but words) containing only illusions unreflective of the real world. The overuse of impractical literature is a bad influence, and language becomes poison, which deceives readers. The language is no longer a means to transfer thoughts and information from one to another. The written word becomes a privilege of a minor academic group. It is a private power that allows neither a way in, nor a way out of that secluded domain, and the poet finds escape from reality. A text is good because of the feelings and illusions it creates with words. However, it brings no ideological development to that kind of

literature. Thus, we have two distinctively different systems. On the one hand, we have a system based on Tang poetic traditions with its difficult word play. On the other hand, we have a system aimed at exploring thoughts and concepts based on style and logic, ever evolving to reflect social changes. These two systems are irreconcilable. Regardless of the superb translation work done between languages, true understanding has not been attained.

Vietnamese poetry, in its natural course of development, did have some notable epochs. In the 1940's, during the anti-French resistance, rhymed and rhythmic poetry was no longer able to reflect the changes of the times. Free verse only started to diverge from it with poets such as Nguyen Dinh Thi, Huu Loan, and Hoang Cam. Then, the war ended, leaving the country divided. Because of its socialist ideologies, the North became isolated from the Western world. All intellectual productions came under the direct control of the state. An important event that happened during this time was the publication of *Nhan Van Giai Pham (Humanism Quarterly Magazine)*. After a 20th Soviet Party Plenum, on February 1955, Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971) denounced the cult of personality constructed around Joseph Stalin (1879-1953) in a "secret speech". Also in June 1956, the Hundred Flowers campaign¹⁹ began in China. Mirroring this, in January 1956 Vietnamese Communist Party Chairman Truong Chinh gave the green light to a number of artists and intellectuals, such as Tran Duc Thao, Phan Khoi, Tran Dan, Phung Quan and Le Dat, to publish the spring issue of *Nhan Van Giai Pham*. In that magazine, they demanded greater artistic freedom and a separation between the realms of art and politics.

Unfortunately, in the same year, the revolts in Poznan, Poland²⁰ and Budapest, Hungary²¹ led by revisionist communist cadres along the lines suggested by Khrushchev broke out. Fearing fragmentation of the communist bloc, the Soviet Union ordered a massive crackdown. The Vietnamese Communist Party was also afraid of a spreading revolt; they started to crack down and silence any outspoken artists and authors. In *Nhan Van Giai Pham*, all the participating poets had produced only free verse poems, which had been banned since the anti-French resistance period, mainly because of its name "free" verse (although it was not a true free verse according to Western definitions). After the crackdown, most of the poets featured in *Nhan Van Giai Pham* went underground, withdrew from normal life and the literary scene, or resigned themselves to rhetorical writing.

Meanwhile, during the 1960's in the South of the country, Vietnamese poets came under the influence of Western-style free verse poetry in a different context. The French had departed, ending a long period of colonialism, but a new war had also begun. The Southern poets, influenced by French culture, turned away from the pre-war poetry traditions, and advocated free verse poetry. Because of social, cultural and linguistic differences, and because it only absorbed free verse on the surface, Vietnamese free verse poetry did not resemble the Western free verse, but mutated into rhetoric and word play that was difficult to understand. Free verse poetry was developed in polysyllabic languages (such as French or English). Its form is associated closely with reading. It has the ability to create musical sounds, while a monosyllabic language may not have the same effects if it just simply arranges words. Mainly, poetry is based on the art of communication with patterns of form and sound. According to New Formalism, it is the

form of the poem which gives rise to ideology. The failure of the 1960s free verse poetry in the South of Vietnam brought forward the reaction that resulted in the comeback of the rhymed and rhythmic poetry advocated by the Eastern Meditation in relation to the Buddhist movement active after the 1963 coup d'état that brought down President Ngo Dinh Diem. Those poets, Bui Giang, Nguyen Duc Son, and Pham Thien Thu, all wrote in the rhetorical poetry style. Thus, both North (*NhanVan Giai Pham*) and South Viet Nam, though they had different circumstances and political contexts, somehow fell under the same spell of rhetorically-structured poetry.

The historical events of April 30, 1975²² (The Fall of Saigon) further isolated Vietnam from the rest of the world. At the beginning, most Vietnamese refugees were preoccupied with loss and suffering, with restarting their lives and resettling in foreign lands. Young poets, who had grown up during the closed-door policy of the communist government, could not receive anything new so they looked back at the translated works and novels that were produced in the South in the 1960s. Not only did young poets read this literature from the South, they also lived in political atmospheres that were very similar to the *Nhan Van Giai Pham* period. Incidentally, they also inherited the rhetorical style from the *Nhan Van Giai Pham* poets and other poets in the same era from the North, as well as creativity from the South. They came to reconcile both poetry movements and revived them. The poetry of those young poets embraced rhetoric, rebelliousness and escaping from reality, much like the writings of the 1960s in both the North and the South. Regardless, their poetry had neither negative nor positive effects. However, when those young poets' reconciliation role was over, their so-called Young Poets movement was also finished. When they used the same poetic methods that the older generation did, they could not go beyond the confines of their predecessors. They came to be known as the Young Poets, and their poetry was stunted, never to grow beyond this stage or to see that its fate was short lived.

In reality, the poets of *Nhan Van Giai Pham* and of the South in the 1960s, and the Young Poets all wanted literary change. But they were unlike the artists in the West who, in reaction to the new dynamics of their time and place, attempted to change the very essence of aesthetics. Free verse poetry in the west was a major revolution in aesthetics that began at the start of the twentieth century, attempting to change the nature of expression, as a reaction to the industrial revolution and the major ideological movement of the later parts of the century. It explored new angles of aesthetics and created new perspectives on free verse poetry. In the second half of the twentieth century, free verse poetry saw more pioneering movements, which came with new aesthetic concepts and perspectives. Throughout the twentieth century, when imperialism (regardless of whether it was capitalist or communist) and nationalism were promoted to unite the different races and form alliances, the artists fragmented their own works. For example, "The Waste Land" of T.S. Eliot, Cubic works of Picasso, and the latest pioneering movement of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poetry in the United States in the 1980s, which considered language to be a symbol of political power. Those artists fragmented the syntax in favor of their own theory of aesthetics.

However, when the Cold War²³ was over, while races in the same country were back to separation and their conflicts sparked several miserable civil wars, New Formalism returned to the whole syntax, natural and perfect ideals which were

represented by the poetic forms. They called for many things, a wish for a normal life, an attempt to abolish differences between races, and compassion and greater understanding of common human sufferings. The avant-garde artists in the West were able to break through due to the liberties that their societies afforded them. Free to explore many different perspectives, they were able to find common ground and forge a new aesthetic movement based on the great inheritance of historical aesthetics, which had been established much earlier. These were the conditions that gave rise to their success. Whereas the out-of-the-mainstream poetry of the Northern part of Vietnam was self-contained with isolated individuals and the Southern part was somewhat freer, neither inherited any traditions other than those of Tang poetry and Pre-War poetry. Thus, in both the North and South, poetry reflected individual reactions to the circumstances – socialism and politics on the one hand, and perpetual war on the other. Although the poets failed to change the fundamental theories of aesthetics, they were successful in placing Vietnamese rhetorical poetry at the top of its class; no one could surpass them. However, that forced younger generations of poets into the inevitable position of having to find changes that they could make. This is obviously why the poet Thanh Tam Tuyen (1936 -) returned to rhymed and rhythmic methods in the collection *Tho O Dau Xa* (Poetry is Not Far Away), which he produced much later in his life. The Young Poets (after 1975) turned to the poetry of the 1960s, and poet Le Dat played a lonely poetic game with *Bong Chu* (The Shadow of Words). Each poet who travels under the umbrella of rhetoric forges a narrow path like a lonely planet. That path will lead to a dead-end in a few years. Poetry cannot be a narrow path for one; it should be a large thoroughfare for thousands and thousands of travelers, and it should even have room for more. It should lead to infinity, not to a dead-end.

For the *Doi Moi* (Reformed Literature) movement in the 1980s, which took advantage of the open-door policy of that time, some writers thought they were able to find some social consensus. The Young Poets at that time could write what they wanted to, rather freely, to their heart's content, even though literature was not much under social influences and officially freedom of speech was not allowed. Eventually both the *Doi Moi* and the Young Poets movements stopped in their tracks. One was a reaction to the social and political circumstances and had to be quelled. The other was a reaction to the market economy. To change, one has to begin with methods of representation, replacing the art of rhetoric with the art of syntax; it is the first fundamental step toward creating a new methodology and developing literary works with deep ideology if one aspires to create works worthy of being considered world literature.

Of course, talented Vietnamese poets have produced numerous quality works spanning several centuries, with readers who know how to enjoy those works in its rhetorical system. Regrettably, the ensuing generations have added nothing new besides repeating the same pattern of flowery words empty of meaning. Those recent works lack analytical methods connecting ideas that would capture the reader's attention. Half way through the work, the reader becomes bored with the poem and never finishes reading it. For lack of knowledge of such aspects of the poetry as the Sino-Vietnamese terms, for instance, readership continues to shrink. When there is no longer a proper balance between readers and writers, literature reaches an impasse, and the writers themselves become the readers. Maybe the Young Poets were the last generation that could continue

with some of the traditions, but it was also with their generation that the dominance of the rhetoric system ended.

The younger generations, who are or will become mature during the time of the open-door policy, will no longer be able to enjoy many rhetorical works. In addition, these younger generations need some works that are comprehensive, reflecting their own time and reality. As with many New Formalist poets now living abroad, the new generations have more opportunities and abilities to see the world, to become more open-minded and to accept many new methods of literary representation, which helps them to absorb knowledge that is more fundamental and to understand more. From this, one can look back at many literary movements in Vietnamese literature. Most of the strong movements that contributed to literature were outside of the political mainstream and always were suppressed and/or prohibited; such movements include *Nhan Van Giai Pham* in the North, literature in the South part of Vietnam in the 1960s, *Doi Moi* literature in the 1980s, and now the Young Poets and Vietnamese New Formalism. Such movements have been characteristic of Vietnamese literature for more than half a century. They are also clear evidence that no one can deny the value of Vietnamese literature (whether mainstream or not). Maybe that is why Vietnamese literature is progressing more slowly than the literature of many countries. Maybe that is why Vietnamese cultural standards have increasingly regressed, and the gap between readers and writers has increasingly widened. At times, it may seem that these obstacles are difficult to overcome.

But Western poetry has had its setbacks also. Free verse in the West, especially that of the avant-garde movements in the United States before the 1980s, has become out of touch with the times, pigeon-holed into individualized self-expression, esoteric and fragmented to the point of having no relevance to the general audience. Lacking the ability to create new developments from ordinary stories surrounding daily lives, poets became self-serving, presenting their own emotions and feelings to satisfy their own egos. The result was that common readers were intimidated by poetry. Writers did not read poems. Even poets did not read other poets' works; they only read their own and their friends' works. Ordinary readers lost the enjoyment that poetry had brought them in the past. The rhetorical system was an obstacle that blocked any contact with the outside world, while free verse was a product of the twentieth century, with all of that century's characteristics including social and political characteristics; it was not coincident with general trends now that attempt to reconcile the many differences so that everybody can create a peaceful and happy life. There is a need for a reconciliation of all differences so people can live in peace with each other. For Vietnam, that need is even more urgent because of the consequences of the civil war, which divided her people further; Vietnam is in need of a healing remedy after so much misery.

The Effects of the Era and the Poet's Role

In the second half of the last century, Vietnam, after emerging from colonialism, was plunged into a twenty-year-long war, her most devastating war. During the cold war period, there were three countries suffering from partition: Germany, Korea and Vietnam. In 1975, Vietnam was unified under socialism. In 1989, the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe fell apart, and East and West Germany were unified. Capitalism became dominant, the two German political and economic systems merged under Capitalism,

while the Koreans remain separate states. After the collapse of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, numerous ethnic and religious conflicts broke out in Yugoslavia (1991), Rwanda (1994), Sri Lanka, East and West Timor. Following that was terrorism, fanned, in part, by the differences between the Muslim world and the West. This terrorism reached a high point when the World Trade Center was destroyed on 9-11-2001 in New York City.

The need for reconciliation between different peoples who have their own political ideologies, religion and cultures has to be addressed so everyone can live together in peace. All humanist cultural arts that relate closely to human life and the mind must be changed in means of representations, to conform to the current trends of the era. Thus, Vietnam, Germany and Korea are three models from which we can learn more about reconciliation: Germany – capitalist; Vietnam - part capitalist (with a market economy) part communist; Korea – the North is communist, the South is capitalist. Looking back upon Vietnamese history, it shows that after Ngo Quyen gained independence for Vietnam from the Chinese in 938, to avoid future invasions, Vietnam continued to pay tribute to China yearly. This proves that the Vietnamese are pacifists in nature and are adaptive to new conditions. Yet, Vietnamese history is also filled with several demarcations. The first was the Trinh – Nguyen Lords (or the North–South reigns from 1543 to 1788). The second was when the French colonized Vietnam; France took advantage of Vietnam’s geographical coastal S-shape (along the Pacific Ocean), backward and difficult transportation (either by land or by sea, with horses and boats) to use a partitioning policy to control Vietnam. In effect, it also created a lasting North – South bias among Vietnamese people. The last partition was in 1954. Thus, the role of literature must be a methodical reception of cultural elements, a reconciliation of people’s differences in order to develop itself further in the right direction.

After World War II, world events had a significant impact on Vietnam. In the spring of 1940, Germany was victorious over France and established the puppet government of Marshal Henri-Phillipe Petain (1856-1951). In the same year, Japan allied itself with Italy and Germany to form an “axis of power.” Prior to that, Japan had attacked China in 1937, and invaded Vietnam in September of 1940, taking advantage of a treaty between Germany and France. France could not reinforce French Indochina. Japan also suggested that they both co-govern Vietnam. In reality, Japan controlled Vietnam totally, while France was allowed to hold only an administrative role. The United States stayed out of this world event until Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Japan continued to expand its military reach into the Pacific, Southeast Asia and the Malaysian islands in search of oil, rubber and extensive food. On the day after the Pearl Harbor attack, the United States declared war on Japan. Four days later, the “axis of power” declared war on the United States. On D-Day, June 6 1944, the Allied Forces crossed the English Channel to Northern France and successfully liberated Paris on August 25, 1944. World War II ended with the unconditional surrender of Germany on May 8, 1945.

England, France and China called on Japan to surrender, but received no response. At the same time that France was liberated ²⁴ by the Allied Forces, Japan subverted ²⁵ the French administration in Vietnam because Japan feared that France would counter attack to take control of Vietnam. However, only a few months²⁶ later, on

August 14, 1945, Japan surrendered unconditionally after the United States dropped two nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There was a power vacuum in Vietnam at this time. The Viet Minh, under the name of the Vietnamese Communist Party, took advantage of the situation, seized power, and declared Vietnam's independence on August 19, 1945. Bao Dai (1913-1997), the last emperor of Vietnam, abdicated.²⁷ The allied forces assigned Chiang Kai Shek of China with his two generals Lu Han and Xiao Wan, the responsibility for disarming the Japanese troops from the 16th parallel of latitude up through the North of Vietnam. The British and French were to disarm the Japanese troops from 16th parallel of latitude down through the South of Vietnam. Only 21 days after Viet Minh had declared Vietnam's independence, the French replaced the British in Saigon and established a provisional government²⁸ for all of Vietnam (the North, South and Central regions). At this time, the Viet Minh were militarily deficient so it signed a compromise Convention²⁹ with France, temporarily making peace with her in order to regroup and ally with other nationalist parties. On December 19, 1946, the Viet Minh mobilized its force for a national resistance to French Occupation. From 1947 to 1949, the governing of Vietnam remained in French hands until the Treaty of Elysee on March 8, 1949; France restored independence to a so-called Vietnam nation, not to the Viet Minh but to Emperor Bao Dai as Head of State. The war between the Communists and the Nationalists started at this point.

It was a most chaotic time for Vietnam. People were divided. Society was changing rapidly. Poets were no different than the common people; their minds were occupied with the surrounding chaotic social problems. Poets did not have the frame of mind to think of developing new methods of writing poems. Therefore, most poems during this time used either pre-war methods or the "break-through" method from poet Phan Khoi's time. In those creative works, only the contents were different; there was more about patriotism, soldiers' missing home, and hopes for peace, and there was no place for romantic love. Vietnamese poetry took another step in the direction of daily life because poets had to keep pace with the common people by engaging in their ideal war, sharing their dreams and hardships. A particular trait of that time was that poets no longer differentiated themselves – either from the romantic or the realist school. It seemed that they grouped themselves under a romantic realist banner and concentrated on true human feelings. In this societal context, the French partitioning policy eventually became neutralized. However, it was not until the 1954 treaty dividing Vietnam into the communist North and the democratic South and the mass migration of one million northerners to the South of Vietnam that people of Vietnam (in the South) had the opportunity to face its differentiated friction head on and finally completed their reconciliation.

However, both North and South Vietnamese enjoyed relative peace for a short period, from 1954 to 1960. On December 20, 1960, the National Liberation Front was formed in the South, and this event helped to jump start the civil war between the North and the South. Once again, the demarcation became a bloody wound because of the involvement of world powers. One was the communist ideology of the Socialists; the other was the free ideology of the Capitalists. In 1976, the country was unified under Socialism, and Vietnam established diplomatic relations only with the Soviet Union and other communist countries. The Vietnamese people, who had suffered hardships,

confusion and hatred under several different policies over the course of decades, now had to conquer their own biases amongst themselves in order to survive and to heal their psychological wounds.

More than a decade later, in 1978, Deng Xiao Ping (1904-1998) came to power in China. Deng continued the Four Modernizations begun by Chou En Lai (1898-1976): to modernize industry, agriculture, national security and science. In the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev (1931-) initiated Perestroika in 1986. In that same year, Vietnam followed the Soviet Union's lead and implemented reforms, lifting restrictions on artists. The *Doi Moi* (Reformed Literature) movement emerged. However, in 1989, the collapse of the Berlin wall initiated a series of Eastern Europe Communist Bloc collapses, and Vietnam clamped down on artistic freedom for fear of a similar collapse. In 1991, Boris Yeltsin (1931-) came to power in Russia, dismantling its Communist Party. Vietnam lost its main aid, which was from Russia and totaled three billion U.S. dollars from 1976-1980. Vietnam could not turn to China for aid because of the border conflict that flared up between the two countries in 1979.³⁰

In 1992, Vietnam had no choice and turned to foreign investment resources from the free world to solve its economic problems, but it was determined to hold onto its political institutions, socialist viewpoints and economic direction. This change from the Vietnamese communist government also pushed a majority of its people, after many war-created hardships, to want more than ever to have a comfortable life. The Vietnamese government focused solely on anti-government or hidden political messages in creative works so that a pure literary movement such as the Young Poets had an opportunity to emerge. In fact, the acceptance of new literary movements from the communist government only added more to its credibility as an open society in the eyes of the international community. We have learned from chaos theory that a small change in the input can cause a huge change in the output, exhibiting sensitive dependence on initial conditions. Thus, a small change toward a free market economy will naturally lead to other major changes, and no one can predict the outcome.

One year after *Doi Moi*, in 1987, the William Joiner Center in Boston began exchanges in literary studies with Vietnam. Poetry served as a catalyst for reconciliation between former enemies, with the hope that poetry could bridge ideological and political differences. Of course, many of the American veterans may be unconcerned about the literary value of Vietnamese creative works. For some, their primary motivation may be to study what is being written about them. Another purpose may be to reconcile with Vietnam and to prepare for normalization of political and economic relations. That direction is correct, because poetry is the most powerful art form for creating understanding and reconciliation among different people. Cynthia Cohen,³¹ quoting the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, believes that:

“... to understand a poem we must attend not only to the words and sounds of the poem, but how those words and sounds reverberate within us. Our attention shimmers he says, between the poetic image and our own response. The poem, therefore, invites us to experience something previously unknown about ourselves; and conversely, it is only by attending to that which is evoked within us that we are able to understand

the poem. Bachelard refers to this kind of understand -- the simultaneously deepening understanding of self and others through each other -- as trans-subjectivity.” (2000, p. 2)

Cynthia Cohen refers to a “feelingful awareness”, equivalent of the notion of compassion and wisdom prevalent in Buddhism. Recall that Vietnamese culture was immersed in Buddhist philosophy from at least the beginning of the eleventh century with the Ly Dynasty, which produced poetry with Buddhist themes, by monks. Compassion is sympathy with others and sharing other people’s sufferings, while wisdom is recognizing the truth of life and human beings. Of course, in real life application, these notions no longer carried purely religious implications, but took on a different meaning as described by Cynthia Cohen. Through poetry, people can relate to each other, to themselves, and see the truth that allows them to recognize both positive and negative aspects in life.

Because Vietnamese literature remained confined within the realm of a rhetorical system prior to 1990, and because of economic changes, many creative works were translated into English and French by 1992. These works did not make a significant impression in the West, and they have since been forgotten. The main difference between the two literary traditions of the West and Vietnam was in their different creative methods. On the one hand, the Vietnamese have a rhetorical tradition, whereas the Western approach is to use methodology and syntax to convey thoughts. Thus, translations of Vietnamese works into French or English were either difficult to understand or appeared to be lacking in ideas.

As for poetry, it was even more difficult to translate. In translation, verses became banal prose, tasteless or with dissenting syntax. Further complicating the matter is the control exerted by the state upon the selection of particular works, which mostly are from the mainstream. The state’s main purpose is to keep as the status quo the Vietnamese poetry that came into existence half a century ago. As a result, those selected translations, with their out-of-date representations, do not reflect present-day Vietnamese society. Here, we can see that, in the West, from the Renaissance onward, with its industrial revolutions, its societies are always changing, and its literature and arts are constantly undergoing change as well making many discoveries or establishing new trends. Unlike the West, Vietnamese society is an agricultural one. It has little demand for change in most aspects of life. As its agricultural society, Vietnamese literature, from pre-war to free verse poetry, has undergone some change in representative methods, but its essential elements are still based on rhetorical art. On top of everything else is the state control, which always interferes with the right to create. All attempts at renewal are either suppressed or occur only with extreme difficulty.

If literature reflects social and political realities, then, through the study of social and political realities, one should be able to gain understanding of that literature. Throughout its history, Vietnam has held agriculture in high regard. The social hierarchy ranks agriculture just behind the ruling class, above the industrial and economic sectors of society. Vietnamese nature is peaceful; its people prefer to live in peace without conflict and competition. Wars only arise out of uncontrollable circumstances, out of conservatism. Characteristically, the people are more passionate than science oriented, more emotive than rational, in favor of an unpractical literature rather than a thought-

dominated one. In classical poetry, Nguyen Du combined Six-Eight meter with Chinese quintessential culture inspired literary traditions in the *Truyen Kieu*³² (Tale of Kieu), a combination of historical reference and the folk art of oral tradition. Then verses in the Double-Seven-Six-Eight pattern were used by On Nhu Hau to write *Cung Oan Ngam Khuc*³³ (Sorrows of An Abandoned Queen). Doan Thi Diem also used the Double-Seven-Six-Eight form to translate into Nom *Chinh Phu Ngam*³⁴ (The Song of A Warrior's wife), which originally had been written by Dang Tran Con in Han script, in broken form with long-short verses. Even after the invention of the Quoc Ngu (Romanized script), these classical styles were emulated by the pre-war poets, who returned to using rhyme and forms of Tang poetry.

The transfer from classical poetry to pre-war poetry represented the transfer from mandarin education to western education, from Nom to Quoc Ngu, from one generation to another generation. The aforementioned, classical poetry (or Nom poetry) detached itself from the system of political power; Quoc Ngu poetry also was not influenced by such a system, so their transfer had almost no contradictions. Because power was in the hands of French colonialists, it made it more difficult to follow the classical traditions. Another reason is that the poet, Phan Khoi (1887-1959), who started the new poetry with his poem "*Tinh Gia*" (Old Love) which appeared in 1932, was a mandarin-educated scholar. However, Vu Dinh Lien (1913-1996), a Western-educated scholar, in his poem "*Ong Do*" (The Old Calligrapher) in 1936, expressed nostalgic feelings for the loss of the tradition. Contemporaries, such as Dong Ho (1906-1969), Quach Tan (1910-1992), and Ngan Giang, adhered to classical poetry and continued to write poems in Tang traditions. Some poets, such as Vu Hoang Chuong, used both classical and modern styles.

In general, prior to 1945 Vietnamese poetry developed naturally under the monarchist and colonialist administrations. Although the writing system changed (from Nom to Quoc Ngu script) and society was somewhat pure and simple-minded, Vietnamese poetry remained deeply rooted in Tang poetry traditions. Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism are the dominant philosophies at the core of the Vietnamese psyche and culture. Both classical and pre-war poetry reflect this spirit of Tang poetry. Poets who have freedom and detach themselves from systems of political power are able to produce works of great worth. Somehow, these poets execute the role of poetry correctly as reconciliation between the old and modern cultures, between the ruling class and the common people.

Pre-war poetry relied on Tang poetry and Ca Dao forms to create new feelings and content. It associated the last draught at the end of a season of French romanticism with the dying embers of Tang poetry traditions, relying on the foundation of existing classical poetry. Meanwhile free verse poetry in the West had departed from tradition and had begun building a new aesthetic foundation. Thus, by the 1960s, the young poets in the South of Vietnam had begun a new free verse movement that attempted to mirror developments in the West. Not much different from the pre-war poets before them, they were not concerned with the literary studies and ideology that existed at the time of the magazines *Dong Duong* and *Nam Phong*. They only received concepts not methods, and thus were unable to surpass Western literary thought. The free verse movement, stuck with the use of technical terms, became a hybrid, born of the rhetoric of Tang poetry and

pre-war poetry, mixed with French surrealism of the 1930s, and outfitted by the unstructured format of classical traditions. Like pre-war poetry, the poetry of the 1960s in the South of Vietnam was not subjected to the whims of political power because both the government and the artists had the same interest in promoting freedom. Controls were kept to a minimum, mostly just the censorship of newspapers to manipulate coverage of the war. However, unlike the pre-war poets' generation, these young poets were more like the poets who used Nom. They fell under the spell of their own illusions about the power of words.

As for mainstream poetry in the North, although the leaders did not follow examination paths to gain power, they viewed poetry as a means to control the entire body of literature. If in the past, under a monarchist system, the king and his mandarins all wrote poems, then in a communist system all political leaders wrote poems too. For example, Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969), Le Duc Tho (1911-1990), Truong Chinh (1907-1988), and To Huu (1920-2002) all wrote poetry. Poems had to be simple and comprehensive so that political power could be spread widely by them; the influence of poetic power must be accepted by all classes. A few of the poets were repressed and found expression not in content but in words, another form of self-delusion. Although the North and the South were isolated from each other and opposed politically, the Northern out-of-mainstream poetry and Southern poetry had the same trends: it represented antagonism, obstructed politics and obstructed studies that created extreme literature and pushed the rhetorical system to the point that it no longer made sense, that it no longer developed along set lines as had pre-war poetry. The notion of idea-beyond-word became a habit, guiding all literary critique as well as political thought.

After 1975, the literary power of mainstream poetry was in the hands of the generation that fought against America during the war. This is the official party line. The Young Poets, who grew up after 1975, have been marginalized. Poets of this generation have no means to mass produce their work other than utilizing the global internet or handing out poems to friends and acquaintances. While most of the *Nhan Van Giai Pham* writers who opposed French colonialism were educated in French culture, the generation that fought the Americans was not that lucky. Most of them had no knowledge about western culture. Their education was limited to literary studies of the former Soviet Union. The reaction of the Young Poets to this trend was clear. The Young Poets turned to the styles used by writers of the 1960s in the South. These styles were considered corrupt and reactionary by the communist government. Since these writers only connected with words on the surface, the hypnotic power of these words made them fall victim to its illusions. These poets lived in a delusional world, increasingly detached from the art of poetry and from daily life.

Thus, both the poets of the mainstream and the marginalized poets lacked the ability to change. In fact, they did not desire change because that would mean giving up everything that they had; all would be lost. Poetry was left without a readership. Mainstream poetry continued with the trend of the pre-war time of using rhymed structure or broken forms, and it followed the politically-correct themes closely. Nobody could understand the marginalized poetry either. That fact pleased the communist government well because it did not want to have any problems. Vietnamese poetry lost its function of creating better understanding for people. It stayed away from social

changes when it should have reflected people's craving for a better life, an ability to reconcile conflicts and the easing of all of the wounds of war. The interference of politics in literature had created a dysfunctional literature, reflecting a dysfunctional society. Of course, both poets and poetry were victims of outside pressures. They were powerless in the face of historical tragedies, whereas the cultural and literary spheres of free societies were independent of the political sphere and could grow and prosper, evolving with life, in-step with the advance of civilization.

Absent such conditions, regardless of time, literature would remain the same. However, at the end of the war, another mass migration happened. Millions fled the homeland. This time, it was more tragic than any earlier migrations in Vietnam history. This migration resulted in many deaths in the high seas. At that time, some young poets well-versed in the Vietnamese language came to free countries. They faced culture shock. Two decades later after many difficulties, they recognized the weaknesses and the dead-end situation of Vietnamese poetry over more than half a century. The Vietnamese New Formalism movement emerged at the beginning of the year 2000. Three years later, unlike the transformation from Tang poetry to pre-war poetry, this movement brought on many intense debates. It was because Vietnamese New Formalism attempted to liberate Vietnamese poetry from the shackles of the rhetorical system. However, traditional writing methods and reading habits still embraced Vietnamese literature regardless of whether the writers and readers lived in Vietnam or overseas. Conservative writers and readers feared that New Formalist poetry would eclipse other traditional styles such as the rhymed or free verse styles. This fear is unfounded if one spends more time studying Vietnamese New Formalist theory and discourse closely.

Vietnamese New Formalism is a technical term that was borrowed from American New Formalism, but the two approaches are not entirely similar. In American New Formalism, the poet returns to traditional metered verses and rhyme-schemes, introduces normal everyday language into poetry to create everyday poetics, and continues the revolution that had begun a century before with the first phase of Romanticism and free-verse poetry, but which was mitigated by avant-garde movements of the first half of the century. First of all, Vietnamese New Formalism had to contend with the difficulties of introducing normal everyday language into poetry because of the molds that had formed around the rhetoric of pre-war poetry and 1960s free-verse poetry. Secondly, it had to adapt New Formalism techniques from a polysyllabic language (English) to a monosyllabic language (Vietnamese) with all the entailing structural differences. Incidental to the process, Vietnamese New Formalism poets received Blank Verse from Western Poetry, and discovered unrhymed meters in their poetry. They created verses of five, seven, eight or six-eight syllables/words, and replaced the rhyme and meter of pre-war poetry with repetitions and enjambment. Not only did they adapt the principles of Iambic meter from English traditional poetry, they also incorporated new effects such as the Butterfly Effect, feedback and iteration, which is based upon naturally evolving sequences.

However, New Formalism does share some characteristics of classical, pre-war and folk poetry. That is, it is endowed with the Vietnamese spirit and the ability to adapt and absorb. It is the natural transformation of past traditions into something new and more vibrant. If the pre-war poetry keeps the rhyme of Tang poetry, Vietnamese New

Formalism abandons the rhyme, continuing to conciliate with Western culture. It could be said that Vietnamese New Formalism is a new trend, which learns from both the pre-war and free verse to seek a new poetry, like the voice of all Vietnamese people who endeavor earnestly as they change to beat the same rhythm with the larger world communities. Through the use of the vernacular, New Formalism has the ability to relate to everyone regardless of status, power, education, or background. It is a more democratic art form, better disposed to connect writers and readers, leading the way for other fine arts to follow, that of the novel, the plastic arts, and the performance arts.

Conclusion

Once the Vietnamese accepted a market economy, they turned a new page in their history. For now, their economy is still guided by socialist theories, but with time, Vietnam will change further to find its rightful place in the world. Poetry and literature are the sight of and for an entire people. The Vietnamese must learn and adapt new techniques that will allow their voices to be heard. But for communication to take place, they must also become attuned to what is being said by others around the globe. Throughout its history, Vietnamese literature has been repressed by political power or by illusive power. Political power creates a literate elite class or literary cadre that compromises with the state in return for privileges. Illusive power causes literature to become impotent, conservative, out-of-touch with reality. Literature has been parasitic on power for too long, having been subservient to political power and psychologically dependent upon its whims. The debates of the past and the present have been obsessed with the competition to get the influence of illusive power, not with engagement to change literature or how to bring literature more in-line with real-life. The masses are marginalized, pushed out of the literary sphere. If they are involved as a necessary evil, they are manipulated like puppets for the benefit of the powers-that-be.

Without a firm foundation in aesthetic theories and methodology as a guide, how can it even be possible to develop literature? Thus, we are left in an enigmatic state of limbo. Either the political theory of Marxist-Leninism or a consumer-oriented industrial approach is applied to interpret the literary productions of this half agrarian and half communist society. This is proof that those engaged in literature lack the basic understanding of the foundations of literature. Vietnamese literature had no role to play in the reconciliation and reconstruction of Vietnam after a most destructive and divisive war, not even in the limited realms of art and culture. The poet Frederick Turner³⁵ in his speech delivered September 21, 2002 at The Philadelphia Society Cleveland Regional Meeting, under the subject-title “The New Classicism and Culture” says:

“... but with the internet a significant new element has been introduced, and whereas it took the Renaissance perhaps three hundred years to diffuse throughout Europe, and the Romantic movement a hundred years to diffuse through the West, it need take only a decade or two for the whole world to wake up to the change that is happening in the culture climate.”

But the above notions are not true with respect to Vietnam because the state maintains direct control over every intellectual production and censors literature from

abroad, presenting distribution within Vietnam. The miniscule drip-drop of information that makes it past internet fire-walls simply cannot substitute for the deficiencies of basic ideology and study. Such tidbits evoke more confusion than literary inspiration. But not everything can be blamed on the state and the political regime. True literature should not be engaged in the building-up or deconstruction of a government, but should be expressive of and reflective about the social life. The government of Vietnam is utilizing the mainstream literature and mass media under its control to build-up the regime and to stabilize its political structures; it is also coming under tremendous pressures from the international community, from intellectuals and religious leaders calling for greater freedom, democracy and human rights. Furthermore, the state has neither the will nor the way to control all the developments of marginalized literature or literature on the fringes of society. Thus, Vietnam has a unique opportunity at this time to develop new aesthetic perspectives. The poet is relatively free to create. Unfortunately, sometimes poets do not know what to do with this freedom. They are keeping themselves in shackles, haunted by the specter of political control, and unwilling to break free from their chains, detach themselves from the past and rise up to create a more vibrant literature.

Today, more than 50% of the Vietnamese population has come into existence since the end of the war in 1975. They have no particular attachment to biases and backwardness of the generation that participated in the war. Meanwhile, Vietnam is further benefited by the three million overseas ex-patriots who have acquired tremendous scientific knowledge combined with broad cultural and intellectual knowledge of the many different societies of which they are now a part. They have become acculturated and well educated in their newfound countries, and they can help Vietnam reconcile with the international community in many ways undreamt of just a generation ago. This is a unique opportunity that comes around only once every thousand years! Each of the periods of literature has its own historical place, no one contests that. But being knowledgeable in the ways of the past does not mean we are condemned to repeat it, forever haunted by its ghosts. Once we have identified the problems of the past, we have also discovered the path to the future.

The author is certain that this essay will be received with debate and engulfed in controversy once it is published. But he is willing to accept this risk and responsibility. His only intention is to breathe new life into Vietnamese poetry so that it may gain strength and momentum to catch up with the rest of the world of poetry. Having reviewed the evolution of Vietnamese poetry through historical developments, the changes and continuity that it has undergone, we can conclude that Vietnamese poetry has much potential and aspires to the level of world-class literature. If only the Vietnamese poets would have the courage to accept the truth about Vietnamese literature, with all its failures and shortcomings and accept new concepts and ideas in-step with the times. Given the many opportunities afforded to us right now, we can make fundamental changes to Vietnamese literature in this generation. Otherwise, the task will fall onto the following generation. Sooner or later, change will happen because poetry will reach inside itself, seeking change.

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Notes

1. According to Tran Van Giap, the first Vietnamese novels were *Canh Le Tuyet Diem* (1921), *Cuoc Tang Thuong* (1922) by Dang Tran Phat and *To Tam* (1925) by Hoang Ngoc Phach.
2. For over one thousand years, (from 111 B.C.E. to 936 C.E.), Vietnam was dominated by Han China Dynasties. During this period, there were two revolts led by Hai Ba Trung (40-43 C.E) and Ly Bi who declared themselves Queen and Emperor.
3. The dynasty established by Ngo Quyen lasted fewer than thirty years and was overthrown in 968 by twelve local rival chiefs. After that, the chiefs were defeated by Dinh Bo Linh who reigned under the name Dinh Tien Hoang. That was the Dinh Dynasty (968-980). After Dinh Tien Hoang died, Le Hoan, the commander-in-chief of Dinh Bo Linh's army, seized the throne, and called himself Le Dai Hanh. Ly Cong Uan, a former temple orphan who had risen to commander of the palace guard, succeeded Le Hoan in 1009, thereby founding the great Ly Dynasty that lasted from 1010 until 1225. The Tran family, which had effectively controlled the Vietnamese throne for many years, replaced the Ly Dynasty. In 1400 General Ho Quy-Ly seized the throne and proclaimed himself founder of the short-lived Ho Dynasty (1400-07). In 1414, China's Ming Dynasty intervened and took control. Le Loi, one of Vietnam's most celebrated heroes, was credited with rescuing the country from Ming Chinese domination in 1428. Le Loi then ascended the throne, taking the reign name Le Thai To and establishing the Le Dynasty (1428-1788). At the end of Le Dynasty, Mac Dang Dung, a scholar-official, seized the throne (1527-1592). Trinh Tung helped the Le king to restore the throne but took the power under the title of Chua (Lord). A descendant of the Nguyen family and former Le Dynasty general seized control of the southern part of the country, establishing himself as Chua Nguyen (Lord Nguyen), like the Trinh. The country was divided into two parts, North and South, the first time

from 1543 to 1788. In 1792, The Tay Son Rebellion (1771-1802), which ended the Trinh and Nguyen Lords' Dynasties, was led by three brothers from the village of Tay Son in Binh Dinh Province. Under the Tay Son, Vietnam was united after more than 200 years of civil strife and divisions under the Trinh and Nguyen Lords. Meanwhile, Nguyen Anh, a descendant of the Nguyen family, fled mainland Vietnam and took refuge on Phu Quoc Island. Soon thereafter, he met French missionary bishop Pigneau de Behaine and asked him to be his emissary in obtaining French support to defeat the Tay Son. Nguyen Anh's forces took Phu Xuan in June 1801 and Thang Long a year later. He came to rule under the reign name Gia Long. The Nguyen Dynasty lasted from 1802 to 1945.

4. "*Katha*" (Sayings) are short verses, easy to understand and remember, summarizing religious teachings. "*Kinh*" (Prayers) are essays to explain the teachings.
5. The date of the birth and death of Han Thuyen, whose true name was Nguyen Thuyen, is unclear. Under the reign of Tran Thai Tong, in 1282, there was a crocodile in the Lo River. The emperor asked Han Thuyen to make a funeral oration and throw it into the river to drive away the crocodile. The crocodile went away, and the emperor rewarded and renamed him Han Thuyen because his meritorious deeds were the same as Han Yu before him. Han Thuyen was a talented poet who wrote Nom poetry and was the first person to apply the techniques of Tang's prosody to Nom which also came to be known as Han prosody. This is the poem of Han Thuyen:

ODE TO THE CROCODILE

O, Crocodile don't you know,
The Eastern bountiful sea is here.
Phu Luong is sacred land,
Wherefore you wander lost there?

Have you forgotten the Viet of old?
Our seafarers most heroic,
Taught to tattoo by the Hung kings,
They frighten even the sea dragons.

Descendants of royals and saints,
From Hai Ap, took the place of the celestial throne.
Resounding in martial ars,
They pacify the rivers and the seas.

Tigers and lions know to stay away,
Our peasants and people live in peace.
In the name of our emperor do I speak,
Go forth to the Eastern Sea and roam free.

Phu Luong: Lo River.

Quoted from "Les chefs-d'oeuvres de la littérature vietnamiennes", Duong Dinh Khue, Kim Lai An Quan, Saigon, 1966).

6. Because of a series of edicts forbidding the practice of Christianity, the French government intervened militarily and demanded the cession of three provinces: Bien Hoa, Ba Ria, and Vinh Long. On June 5, 1862, Emperor Tu Duc signed the Treaty of Saigon. After that, the French controlled North Vietnam with the intention of opening the Red River to commerce to Southern China. Finally, the Nguyen Dynasty had to accept the French protectorate over Central and Northern Vietnam under the terms of the Patenote Treaty, which was established on June 6, 1884.
7. At the end of July 1884, the emperor Phuc Kien died; Nguyen Van Tuong and Ton That Thuyet, two high-ranking mandarins, endorsed Ham Nghi for the throne, resisted the Patenote Treaty and engaged the French militarily, but failed. They escaped with the Emperor Ham Nghi and issued orders to rebel against the French, which came to be known as the Can Vuong (Loyalty to the King -- King Restoration) movement, attracting support from both scholars and peasants from throughout the country. Two famous leaders from this period are Nguyen Xuan On (1825-1889) and Phan Dinh Phung (1847-1895).
8. Phan Boi Chau (1867-1940) and his comrades, favored retaining the independent monarchy with the financial support of China and Japan. They endorsed Ky Ngoi Hau Cuong De, a direct descendant of Gia Long to fill this role as a leader of a nationalist movement. In 1905, they brought Cuong De to Japan and called upon Vietnamese Youth going to Tokyo for military and political training to drive out the French through armed resistance in order to restore Vietnamese independence.
9. Doubtful of assistance from Japan, (because Japan also wanted to dominate Southeast Asia), Phan Chu Trinh (1827-1926) and his comrades built up the Reformism movement, educating people and winning independence through non-violent means. *Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc* (Free School of the Eastern Capital) was founded in Ha Noi in 1907. Free classes were opened that taught the Vietnamese, Chinese and French languages, as well as basic educational and trade disciplines. Also during this time of political crisis, the French deposed and exiled Emperor Thanh Thai to Re-union Island. The movement then changed to instigating anti-tax demonstrations. The French reacted harshly, arresting and deporting to Con Dao famous scholars such as Phan Chu Trinh, Huynh Thuc Khang (1876-1947), and Ngo Duc Ke (1878-1929).
10. On May 15, 1913, Nguyen Van Vinh, with the financial support of the French, succeeded in publishing *Dong Duong Tap Chi* (*Indochinese Review*), in collaboration with Pham Quynh (1892-1945), Pham Duy Ton (1883-1924), Nguyen Van To (1889-1947), Phan Ke Binh (1875-1921), Nguyen Do Muc, and Duong Ba Trac (1884-1944). Later, some writers separated; Nguyen Van Vinh, Nguyen Do Muc, and Phan Ke Binh remained. *Dong Duong Tap Chi* was a weekly journal that specialized in literature and literary studies. Chinese scholars introduced Vietnamese and Chinese cultural classics and reformist French literature and academic writings.
11. *Nam Phong Tap Chi* (*Southern Wind Review*) was a monthly journal. The first issue appeared in July of 1917. Pham Quynh was the editor-in-chief of the Quoc Ngu section and Nguyen Ba Trac (—1945) of the Chinese character section, with the editorial assistance of Dong Chau Nguyen Huu Tien (1874-1944), So Cuong Le Du,

Nguyen Don Phuc (—1945), Tran Trong Kim (1887-1953), and Nguyen Trieu Luat (—1946). *Nam Phong* was published on behalf of the Khai Tri Tien Duc association. (Progressively Open-minded Association). Pham Quynh was the general secretary overseeing operations.

12. *Ca Dao* (folk songs) are also called *Phong Dao* (customs songs) because they usually describe the habits and customs of the people through short songs, passing down as tradition of the masses. Often there are four words in a sentence; six-eight or double seven six-eight form is usually used. Proverbs are short and well known, supposedly wise sayings, usually in simple language.
13. *Phong Hoa* (Customs and morals) was a journal of Nhat Linh (1905-1963), who brought it from Pham Huu Ninh; the first issue was dated September 22, 1933. It was the voice of *Tu Luc Van Doan* (Self-help Literary Group). *Phong Hoa* was suspended in 1936 because Hoang Dao (1906-1948) wrote a satire of Hoang Trong Phu.
14. Pre-War literature from 1932 to 1945 was a peaceful period before 1945, preceding the Nine-Year War to drive out the French. This period had some trends, such as Romanticism and Realism, influenced by French literature. Also it was a period of development for Nom literature.
15. There were two examinations. “*Huong*” was the local examination for the baccalaureate held throughout the country. Those who passed the baccalaureate went to the Capital to take the “*Hoi*” examination for the doctoral and junior doctoral degrees. The *Huong* and *Hoi* examinations had a similar structure: the candidates were tested on “*Kinh Nghia*” (the meaning of classic works), “*Van Sach*” (dissertation), “*Tho Phu*” (poetics) and “*Tu Luc*” (coupled sentences). *Kinh Nghia* was in prose, declaiming a sentence that usually was comprised of excerpts from classical Chinese literary works. *Van Sach* was a dissertation, questioning and responding to something related to the present or ancient time. Poetry was both rhymed and symmetric; *Tu Luc* was parallel constructed sentences, without rhyme but with symmetry.
16. After being defeated at Dien Bien Phu, the French surrendered to Viet Minh forces on May 7, 1954. This defeat led to the Geneva Agreements on July 20, 1954. Vietnam became demarcated at the 17th parallel. About one million refugees escaped from the North to the South of Vietnam.
17. “*Nhan Van Giai Pham*” (*Humanism Quarterly Magazine*) first appeared in January of 1956 with the Spring issue, followed by the Fall and Winter issues, and contained the writings of the writers and poets who wanted to reform the literature such as Phan Khoi, Hoang Cam, Le Dat, Phung Quan, and Van Cao. Only a year later, their writings were suppressed and the writers forbidden to publish for the next 30 years.
18. Ly Toet and Xa Xe were the name of two cartoon characters appearing in *Phong Hoa*, a journal “to joke and change the customs and morals of the time”. Ly Toet, a village headman, had red and teary eyes. Xa Xe was an obese villager.
19. In 1956, in an attempt at reforming the Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong launched the “Hundred Flowers Movement,” which encouraged intellectuals and cultural leaders to speak their minds and to push the country forward through open debate. The campaign quoted from classical poetry, “Let one hundred flowers bloom and one hundred schools of thought contend....” Later, Mao turned on the critics, denouncing them as “bourgeois rightists” and “enemies of the people.” The purpose

- of the campaign was to purge opposition within the leadership. The “Great Leap Forward” (1958-1961) followed.
20. In response to Khrushchev’s “secret speech”, in Poznan, Poland, 15,000 workers revolted on June 15, 1956, giving reason for the Red Army to move into Polish cities. In an effort to subdue the riots, The Polish Communist Party reinstated Wladislaw Gomulka as Party Secretary, a man imprisoned by Stalin and seen as liberal to the people. The Red Army later withdrew, and the Soviet government loosened their control over Poland.
 21. In 1956, the people of Hungary hoped that Khrushchev’s “secret speech” would bring an end to the cruel reign of Matyas Rakosi, a close and reliable cadre of the Soviet Union. The anti-Soviet sentiment among the population focused on Rakosi, culminating with the funeral of a moderate party member. Approximately 300,000 students and workers demonstrated on October 6, 1956. The next day the Hungarian Politburo made Imre Nagy, a moderate, Party Secretary in order to quell the crowds, and the Hungarian Politburo also called for Soviet assistance. The Protests forced Nagy to bring non-Communists into the government and to order the Red Army away. On November 4, 1956, Soviet forces attacked Hungary. Nagy himself would seek asylum at the Yugoslav Embassy. Janos Kadar took power with Moscow’s backing. Over 20,000 Hungarians were killed and another 200,000 fled to the West. The short-lived revolution was completely crushed.
 22. After the Paris Treaty, the United States withdrew its Army from South Vietnam. On April 30, 1975, Communist North Vietnam won the War and unified the country after twenty years of division.
 23. The Cold War started with the Yalta Treaty, which was signed on February 11, 1945, between the United States of America, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, headed by Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Josef Stalin, respectively. They met in Lavidia Palace to determine how the war should be finished. The purpose of Yalta was the re-establishment of the nations conquered and destroyed by Germany, with an agreement to divide Germany into zones controlled by each of the three nations. Russia would take Berlin and the eastern half of Germany. Russia also let communism influence Eastern Europe, including Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. In exchange, Russia agreed to join the war against Japan. Eventually, Eastern Europe was to regain its independence and hold its own national elections to create independent governments. But Russia prevented popular elections by assigning permanent Communist governments while the United States, busy in its war against Japan, did nothing. The Cold War started in 1945 and ended in 1991, the year Russian’s communist government failed.
 24. August 1944
 25. March 1945.
 26. From March 1945 onward.
 27. On August 25, 1945.
 28. Until January 1947.
 29. On March 6, 1946.
 30. The conflict between China and Vietnam lasted from February 17, 1979, to March 5, 1979, about 29 days. The incursion was a response to what China considered was Vietnam’s increasingly intimate relations with the Soviet Union and mistreatment of

ethnic Chinese living in Vietnam. China also thought that Vietnam attempted to repatriate its ethnic Chinese residents, and pursued hegemony and “imperial dreams” in Southeast Asia.

31. Cynthia Cohen, “Peace and Aesthetic Experience: Coexistence, Reconciliation and the Arts”, translated by Nguyen Thi Ngoc Nhung.
32. *The Tale of Kieu* by Nguyen Du (1766-1820) is a story about Thuy Kieu and her fifteen years of hardship. She drifted from one tragic circumstance to another. Despondent in love, she was tricked by an unscrupulous womanizer, So Khanh, and sold to a brothel. Her true love was Kim Trong; tragedy struck, and she became married from Ma Giam Sinh to Tu Hai. She attempted to commit suicide to get out of this relationship, but survived and was rescued by Giac Duyen, a nun. She ended up in a nunnery. The author of this work, Nguyen Du, was a talented and erudite scholar, a high-ranking mandarin of both the Le and Nguyen Dynasties.
33. *Cung Oan Ngam Khuc* (Sorrows of an Abandoned Queen) of On Nhu Nguyen Gia Thieu (1744-1789) describes the trials and tragedy of a young girl who was chosen to go into the royal harem for her beauty and talent, which surpassed that of many other girls of her teen years. At first, she was dearly loved by the King, only to be abandoned later when her beauty and talent faded. She lived out the rest of her life moaning with grief and self-pity for a “woman’s unappreciated lot”.
34. *Chinh Phu Ngam* (The Song of a Warrior’s Wife) is a lamentation written by Dang Tran Con in Han characters and free verse, with long and short sentences, translated into Nom by Doan Thi Diem. Dang Tran Con, exact dates of birth and death unknown, was reputed to be liberal minded, to like wine, and to be a good poet. During his period, the Le emperor and Trinh Lord enforced strict rules regulating such things as no fire at night. To avoid punishment for breaking this regulation, Dang Tran Con dug a shelter in the ground and lit lamps to read books under cover of earth. When the Trinh Lords took power, they entrusted much power in eunuchs who abused their privilege and oppressed the people. Hostilities broke out throughout the country. The mandarins sent in soldiers to crush these rebellions. These soldiers had to renounce their homes, wives and children, and were often killed in battle. Dang Tran Con wrote these famous *Chinh Phu Ngam* epic poems, which have been handed down through many generations.
35. Frederick Turner, “The New Classicism and Culture”, translated by Nguyen Tien Van.