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Vietnam/ese/ness in Translation: A Micro-cosmopolitan Approach

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## Abstract

This paper addresses issues of modern-day Vietnamese identity, through the lens of “micro-cosmopolitan” translation theory. Proposed by Michael Cronin in 2006, micro-cosmopolitanism was particularly well suited to the languages observed in this study: Vietnamese, English, and French. Translations from Vietnamese to English and French are presented along with the work of prominent Vietnam scholars from a variety of disciplines. These are observed through a theoretical framework that looks to undermine conventional wisdom, engage in “intercultural fractal traveling”, and seeks to further complexify translation phenomena it encounters. The approach also allows for a broad range of topics to be explored, thereby providing translation studies a comprehensive introduction to a language and identity the field has yet to explore in any depth. This study looks at areas familiar to translation scholars in chapters on language, poetry, literature, the media, and internet. Substantial historical background is included in order to gain a deeper understanding of contemporary Vietnamese identity as expressed in translation. Along the way, research has revealed much about the practice of translation in contemporary Vietnam, as well as the prominent role translation has played throughout this ancient nation’s history. The innovative tools offered by micro-cosmopolitanism have helped create a study that would be of interest to anyone interested in translation, Vietnam, and the current status of an identity crafted via translation.

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## Introduction

The study of Vietnam in translation studies is a conspicuous lacuna. A 2006 article by Maria Tymoczko, a short but convincing piece calling on translation studies to incorporate non-Western languages and cultures into the field – as a matter of urgency, provided me with initial impetus to conduct more in-depth research. My knowledge of Vietnamese and Vietnam has long prompted me to conclude that translation studies is entrenched in Western modes of academic conceptualization, and I could only agree that other cultures' translation discourse might mitigate some of the discipline's self-imposed barriers. The Chinese, for example, have had an ongoing discussion about translation for over 2000 years. The Vietnamese have been translating at least as long. Many longer-standing translation theories simply couldn't incorporate the particularities I knew to be true of Vietnamese translation, in large part due to the rigors of our own academic parameters.

Succinctly, this study deploys a form of cosmopolitanism to examine elements of Vietnamese identity that are revealed in or through translation, translation scholarship, and relevant commentary. The cosmopolitan approach chosen was proposed by translation studies scholar Michael Cronin in 2006, when he advocated reshaping cosmopolitanism to accommodate the branch of translation studies that discusses identity, calling this reformulation "micro-cosmopolitan".

Cronin's theory, with its seeming flexibility, did seem to offer a way in which I could, in a very limited way, respond to Tymoczko's urgency – and try to integrate Vietnam into translation studies. "Identity" is a key component of Cronin's oeuvre. I did not avail myself of his many publications on the topic. Instead, I used a Vietnamese scholar's

discussion of “Vietnamese-ness” and used his pared-down definition of this identity: the “cultural personality of the Vietnamese”.

This study explores areas familiar to the discipline. The five chapters discuss, in order, a theory of translation, language, poetry, prose literature, and the media – all common to translation scholarship. As Vietnam and Vietnamese are all but unmentioned in our current literature, firm historical contextualization was essential throughout, though not only from a micro-cosmopolitan perspective. For the sake of coherence, an adequate foregrounding of Vietnam’s 3 millennia of translation and identity was required to explain the very different trajectory and timeline along which these indispensable phenomena have developed. Mention was made whenever a topic resonated with what I know of micro-cosmopolitanism, the task or study of translation, or the identity under observation. Constant juxtaposition or confluence with disciplinary and micro-cosmopolitan concerns had the effect of pushing the study forward, usually through to a deeper level of Vietnamese history, affording me an ever better “view from below” – into what is happening in Vietnam right now, via translation.

The first chapter introduces the theoretical backbone of my study. Micheal Cronin’s 2006 book *Translation and Identity* generates a new, translation-based discourse on Irish identity. I wished to attempt the same for Vietnam, a country I have studied for over 15 years. Some immediate problems become apparent: Cronin is Irish, and he lives in Ireland. I am American, and am far from the place I wanted to research. Unlike Ireland, Vietnam has laws that restrict the free flow of information in terms Westerners are familiar with; this has an impact on research. Also, cosmopolitanism as reworked by Cronin specifically seeks to detail the complexities of identity as revealed in translation –

a task that makes a short study such as this more difficult. Nonetheless, after 9 months of seeking a translation studies model that seemed suited to studying Vietnam as I knew it, Cronin's theoretical construct stuck me as potentially capable of processing Vietnam's linguistic and cultural complexities, including censorship, paradox, and limited data. There are additional benefits of using micro-cosmopolitanism as a tool for translation research: it offers a manner in which to observe the present moment; it favors "the smaller political unit"; it insists on viewing issues from a local perspective (in this case, Vietnam); it opposes attempts at universalization and essentialism; it can navigate in the presence of perpetual states of flux; and it seeks to tease out the counter-intuitive presence of complex diversity masked in the "conventional wisdoms" it encounters.

The second chapter looks at the Vietnamese language. Beginning with the field of linguistics, I sought out the challenges that have long been mentioned in translators' notes and prefaces. These usually revolve around the lack of the words "I" and "you" in the Vietnamese language. Instead, there are between 80-140 translations or ways to say "I" or "you", yet none of these reflect the meaning of these words as understood in Western languages. These "pronouns" can shift in mid-conversation, adding further depth to actual "meaning". Gender, number, and tense are often only accessible through context: the language itself does not automatically denote such specificities. Another area that challenges translators is that in many instances, punctuation marks such as commas require translation, as they can imply a variety of things that do not coincide with their use in Western languages. The Vietnamese language maintains a level of ambiguity that makes author contact imperative if Western standards of specificity are applied to translation – even in instances where the source text does not disambiguate through

context. Chapter 2 also looks at the only translation studies paper I have been able to locate that deals with the Vietnamese language. In this four-page paper, the author promotes a foreignizing tactic to address this lack of the words “I” and “you” that is based on Nida’s notions of dynamic and functional equivalence. I then explore what a micro-cosmopolitan translation might look like: in the case above, it involves a more domesticating translation accompanied by paratextual explanation of the Vietnamese pronominal issues.

Chapter 3 examines poetry in translation. After historical foregrounding covering two millennia of verse, two poets who undermined local conventional wisdom were chosen. The first, poetess Ho Xuan Huong, was an intellectual dissident whose 18<sup>th</sup> century oeuvre addressed sexuality with only the thinnest veil, while openly criticizing the social subjugation of women. Considering the times in which she wrote, it is amazing that she was not executed. The translator of her works provides detailed insight into the effort involved in his rendering of her work in English. The second poet examined, Ho Chi Minh, is the founder of the modern Vietnamese state. His most popular poetry comes from his *Prison Diary*, which remains the most widely translated collection of Vietnamese poetry. Written in the early 1940s, Ho Chi Minh was considered a political dissident by Vietnam’s French colonial authorities and other anti-communist international powers such as the US and Britain. His *Prison Diary*, however, is apolitical – and written in Classical Chinese, not the romanized Vietnamese script he successfully promoted. These anomalies were due to incarceration: held in Hong Kong, his writing had to be understandable to his Chinese guards. If revealed as a communist, he would have been executed. This limited his poetry to personal topics, now seen as a window

into the soul of the man who inspired Vietnam's liberation and reunification. His veneration has resulted in a continuing cult of personality, and the poet's identity, as revealed in translation, is very much in sync with the national identity the modern state actively promotes. These two poets were thus marginal figures, risking their lives in order to write. Overt political and intellectual dissidence is censored and dangerous in Vietnam. This chapter aims to establish the usefulness of "outsiders", whose insight assist in the micro-cosmopolitan task of gently undermining conventional wisdoms in a manner that allows the researcher to better explore the deeply rooted complexity of identity expressed in Vietnam's sole literary form until quite recently. The next chapter shows that today, intellectual dissidents are able to use Ho Xuan Huong's 18<sup>th</sup> century survival tactics to continue publishing proscribed material – as long as they are clever enough to jam the censors' radar.

The fourth chapter moves my study closer to its desired destination: the present moment in Vietnam. The chapter examines prose literature, a form of writing adopted by the Vietnamese in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Previously, all but 5 or 6 literary works were in verse. For my paper, I chose 2 recent periods in Vietnamese literature. The first period, "High Socialism", examines the introduction of a mandatory new vocabulary that was imposed on the southern half of the country following the communist victory of 1975. Until around 1986, this imposed and unnatural jargon, along with the worldview it espoused, was the only permitted use of the language. To use the language in any other way was dangerous for the closely monitored southerners, sometimes leading to charges of treason. To explore this period, I had to rely on what I consider to be a micro-cosmopolitan selection of translated short stories written anonymously or in exile. The

stories all describe the life of southern Vietnamese in the late 1970s under the new communist administration. For that reason, the works cannot be published in Vietnam. Through careful examination of one short story, I explore the phrase “joy and zeal” to show how deeply the change in language affected day-to-day life. Not only did one have to use the new terminology, one had to show that they were living in accordance with its precepts. The second literary period discussed is called *Doi Moi* Literature – or the literature of renovation. This period lasted from 1987 to 1991. It was the first government-sponsored departure from the rigid rules of Socialist Realism, the only literary genre permitted in communist Vietnam. After years of enforced “joy and zeal”, the literature of the late 1980s unleashed a torrent of pent-up frustration and bitterness. This new freedom was short lived: as the government watched the demise of socialism across Europe and the USSR, the criticism of the regime that characterized *Doi Moi* Literature was swiftly suppressed, and many authors were prosecuted for following the party’s 1987 literary directives. Most prominent *Doi Moi* authors have since gone into exile or exercise a modicum of self-censorship. There is one notable exception: the author Nguyen Huy Thiep. Like the 18<sup>th</sup> century’s Ho Xuan Huong, whose survival tactics he has emulated to an eerie degree of similarity, Thiep is the leading domestic intellectual dissident in today’s literature. His work is known to consternate the censors because it is written in a manner that can be viewed as either neutral or seditious, its ambiguity is airtight. There is simply no way to prove the author’s intent, thus no justifiable grounds for censoring his material. For this reason, Nguyen Huy Thiep has been widely translated by Western Vietnam scholars and is considered one of the country’s most brilliant authors. Luckily, he has been widely written about in both Vietnam and the West. To

describe the Nguyen Huy Thiep ‘phenomenon’, I draw on the work of three experts: a journalist who knows the author and describes his work environment in detail; a Vietnam scholar/translator who published the first Western academic collection of the author’s short stories and remains the only academically-published translator to consult the field of translation studies in his work and describe this effort in his introduction; and the subsequent commentary another scholar/translator who challenges the author’s classification as post-modern in a manner that is very compatible with micro-cosmopolitanism’s anti-essentialist and “localist” leanings. I conclude my look at *Doi Moi* Literature by noting the contribution of authors I had to exclude, as many no longer live in Vietnam. The chapter ends with notification that the study’s focus will now switch from looking at phenomena of identity generated (through language, poetry, and prose) to phenomena of generated identity (through a controlled media and internet).

In Chapter 5, I look at the Vietnamese media from a variety of perspectives – in accordance with the “fractal” nature of micro-cosmopolitan research. I begin with a US-based Vietnamese expatriate whose views on reconciliation are still considered anathema by his staunchly anticommunist peers. From his work comes the idea that Vietnam has, since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, governed itself by alternating “conservative, monoideological, foreign” tendencies with “free-wheeling, pluralistic, and truly Vietnamese” forms of rule. In doing so, his work lays the groundwork for a gentle undermining of how one interpretation of postcolonial translation theories might be challenged when studying a nation that has a long, complicated history of subjugation and subjugating. The next scholars consulted come from a book that I claim to be an example of a micro-cosmopolitan approach to research and explanation. In *Hanoi: City of the Rising Dragon*,

a translation from French by the daughter of the US' leading Hanoi-watcher, the authors reprint an article about Vietnamese translators that appeared in an 1891 French-language Indochinese newspaper. I then return to the two scholar/translators introduced in Chapter 4, both of whom discuss the blossoming of the Vietnamese-language newsrooms in Hanoi during the 1930s. This historical foregrounding brings the study to the destination of its micro-cosmopolitan purview: today's media. Of particular interest is a lengthy 2006 article by communications scholar Theo van Leeuwen: "Translation, adaptation, globalization: The Vietnam news". The article is of inherent interest to translation studies, as its title clearly indicates. Along with a detailed analysis of the translation, adaptation, and globalization as they relate to the publication of Vietnam's official English-language daily newspaper, van Leeuwen mentions the field of translation studies, especially in the context of foreignization along the lines suggested by Venuti. In his research, he looks into a variety of matters that are fundamental questions in translation studies: equivalence, translatability, adaptation, loss, etc. His article, based on research carried out in 2001, describes a work environment very familiar to me, having been a foreign reviser and junior translator for the Saigon Times for 5 years in the 1990s. Since then, I have been a daily consumer of translated Vietnamese media and read as much as I can that deals with Vietnam the country (as opposed to Vietnam the war, though I have read most reputable histories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and am thus well versed in the major variations in the accounting for the era's bellicosity).

The final portion of my study contains some concluding observations on the work as a whole. It offers the reader an assessment of whether or not my choice of a micro-cosmopolitan framework was suited to the objectives of my research. Finally, this section

lists some of the fundamental questions that arose during my effort to provide translation studies a comprehensive, introductory study on which further examination of Vietnam and translation may be built.

## Chapter 1: Micro-cosmopolitanism

This study looks at Vietnam/ese/ness, an identity I define as the cultural personality of the Vietnamese as expressed in translation (in this case from Vietnamese to English or French). The research seeks to address and inform the discipline of translation studies, in which discussions of identity are situated principally within what is known as the “cultural turn”, a development in the field which grew rapidly throughout the 1990s in tandem with diverse cultural and literary theories. While earlier linguistic approaches to the study of translation paved the way for confronting conventional concepts of decoding and recoding meaning during linguistic transfer<sup>1</sup>, it was the introduction of reworked perspectives on the concept of culture that proved essential in conferring a contemporary voice to the discipline. Translation was now seen as a dynamic act of intercultural communication during which the translator, subjectively positioned, actively interprets, mediates and rewrites the source text for the target text readership. This notional shift inspired the formulation and articulation of new methodologies and strategies that would eventually overhaul traditional ideas of equivalence. Polysystems theory<sup>2</sup>, Descriptive Translation Studies<sup>3</sup>, and *Skopos* theory<sup>4</sup> all focused on the production of target translation texts within defined socio-historical contexts. Hermeneutical interpretive approaches led to a deeper understanding of the experience of translation<sup>5</sup>. Philosophical perspectives explored the translatability and essence of both

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<sup>1</sup> In reference particularly to the work of translation scholar Eugene Nida.

<sup>2</sup> Authored by Itamar Even-Zohar

<sup>3</sup> Proposed by Gideon Toury

<sup>4</sup> From the combined work of Katharina Reiss, Hans Vermeer, and Christiane Nord

<sup>5</sup> Through the work of George Steiner

language and literature.<sup>6</sup> The confluence of these new avenues of inquiry helped dislodge the concept of translation from its rather normative anchoring. With culture's function as main axis in the (inter-)discipline of translation studies, translation could now be analyzed and critiqued in terms of cultural influences, history and ideologies. It could also be repositioned and considered alongside increasingly more complex processes of cultural production. Poststructuralism served to problematize the very notion of origin, while Derridean strategies of deconstruction destabilized meaning by focusing on its constant deferral. Feminist perspectives foregrounded strategies of gender construction in discourse, and postcolonial theories provided the resources to identify identities constructed and shaped by power-based relations and hegemonic influence in regions that had been colonized. Lawrence Venuti resurrected and recast the notion of foreignization<sup>7</sup>, marking a pivotal moment for the field, as it led to the proposal of a "foreignizing" translation strategy<sup>8</sup> that consciously promoted translator visibility. Meanwhile, translation scholars such as Antoine Berman sought to expand the concept of an "ethics" of translation, by insisting on vigorously protecting the Other from being "erased" by domestication, as a way to accept cultural difference and heterogeneity.

My study of Vietnam/ese/ness has benefited indirectly from many of the advances made by some of these developed perspectives and theoretical approaches that currently enjoy prominence in scholarly translation discourse. These benefits reveal themselves when considering some very narrowly defined areas that could have yielded a study focused on a specific portion or moment of Vietnam/ese/ness. *Skopos* theory, for instance, shown to be very effective in examining censored material, could offer valuable

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<sup>6</sup> Such as that proffered by Walter Benjamin

<sup>7</sup> Originally proposed by 19<sup>th</sup> c. German Romanticist Friedrich Schleiermacher

<sup>8</sup> As opposed to a "domesticating strategy"

insight into translations published by the government of Vietnam, which actively disseminates approved Vietnamese identities. Deconstructionist strategies could be useful for ferreting out information gleaned by “reading between the lines” of translations, and for teasing out the many complexities that constitute Vietnam/ese/ness. Another approach for research would be an interdisciplinary application of Bourdieusian notions of *champ*, *habitus*, *capital*, and *illusio* to generate a detailed backdrop for conceptualizing Vietnam/ese/ness. Descriptive translation studies would equip the researcher with tools to observe the fierce competition between Vietnamese communities around the world, many of whom claim legitimacy as the sole *true* representatives of Vietnamese identity.

For specific reasons, Cronin’s micro-cosmopolitan approach to translation and identity was chosen over these established methods of research. My choice was informed most significantly by my previous knowledge of Vietnam, its language, and people. My goal was to provide this identity a *comprehensive* (and not partial or narrowly focused) introduction to the field of translation studies. This knowledge and goal helped to define some imperatives that had to be met, as I knew that the availability of research material from Vietnam was limited. Ideally, a scholarly translation framework examining Vietnam/ese/ness would have the ability to process challenges such as paradox; censorship; non-Western values; rapid societal change; unfamiliar academic and professional standards; and the dynamics of a palimpsestic culture that values its long history and syncretic complexity. Micro-cosmopolitanism as explained by Cronin is endowed with enough flexibility to accommodate these challenges when examining translation and identity. While the other translation studies approaches described above would be appropriate for looking at many aspects of Vietnamese translation phenomena,

their carefully defined parameters would have restricted my ability to provide a comprehensive debut for Vietnamese in the field. As this study originated from Maria Tymoczko's call to integrate non-Western languages and cultures into translation studies, I sought a model that allowed me to introduce Vietnam in as substantial a manner as possible ("identity" is a vast topic). In my elaboration of Cronin's micro-cosmopolitanism that follows, I demonstrate how this approach was best suited to address what I already knew of Vietnam and to incorporate a range of topics that would provide a varied, detailed accounting for a new frontier in translation studies.

### **I: Building cosmopolitanism; initial links to research**

Initial interest in Cronin's theory came from a quote by Herodotus that launches the first chapter of 2006's *Translation and Identity*, 'Translation and the new cosmopolitanism'. Cronin's citation of Herodotus' call to try to understand why humans fight one another (Cronin, p. 6) was clearly relevant to my choice of languages (Vietnamese, English, and French), as bellicosity shaped Vietnam's relations with the USA and France for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The ways in which these language groups have communicated, or failed to do so, through translation, inevitably get tied into a complex history of hostility between the three (and their global support networks), an enmity that appears to have entered its definitive death throes only as recently as 2001.

Back, however, to Herodotus, the widely traveled "disciplinary nomad" (Cronin, p. 6): Cronin cites Douglas Robinson's view that "one of Herodotus's central concerns is with cross-cultural communication – how people speaking different languages manage to pass ideas on to each other – and he places that process in an insistently geopolitical

context” (Cronin, p. 7). Additionally, Herodotus “suggest[s] that [it is] the intuition of more marginal members of Greek society that lead[s] us to a more exactly contemporary understanding of the relationship between translation, society and culture” (Cronin, p. 7). This is a point Cronin makes almost in passing, however I will later put forward that this is a crucial link to one of micro-cosmopolitanism’s most vital capacities, that of “intercultural fractal travelling”.

Cronin further explains that academic circles have generally attributed the birth of cosmopolitan thinking to Cynic philosophers, crediting Diogenes with the belief that a scholarly elite made up of “all wise men” formed a unified community of “citizen[s] of the world” (Cronin, p. 7). It will later be shown, through Vietnamese-to-English translation produced in the SRV, that the Confucian role of ‘learned men’ within the Sinicized world shares similarities with Diogenes’ “citizen of the world”. Developing classical cosmopolitanism, Cronin points out that the Stoic philosopher Zeno “‘imagined an expanding circle of inclusion – from self, to family, to friends, to city, to humanity. In this process of enlargement the state itself would disappear, to be replaced by pure reason’” (Cronin, pp. 7-8). As regards this paper, Zeno’s utopian notion of the state withering away resonates with fundamentalist Marxist theory. Yet it is in stark opposition to the seemingly elitist mould Diogenes had restricted to ‘all wise men’, so evocative of traditional Confucian-style mandarinate, where “learned men”, through academic prowess, achieved social advancement. As currently regards the Marxist-Leninist CPV, the state shows no sign whatsoever of withering away<sup>9</sup>, while a Diogenesian,

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<sup>9</sup> Vietnam’s political environment is viewed as very stable. It is also worth noting that its overall “Marxism”, as a phenomenon experienced in daily D/SRV (economic and institutional) life prior to 1986, has decreased to the point of unrecognizability.

technocratic, and *translated/translatable* cosmocratic elite within and outside the party is firmly taking root in the SRV due to economic global integration and its requirements.

Cronin, referencing the 1990 ideas of Hannerz, holds that Diogenes' views can lead to both "moral" and "legal" forms and applications of cosmopolitanism that, in their most altruistic manifestation, lead to cosmopolitan "attitudes" and "dispositions" that function "as the expression of a desire or a willingness to engage with others" (Cronin, p. 9).

Hannerz claims that this type of cosmopolitanism is best manifested by transnational institutions, which Cronin claims "present the cosmopolitan". These institutions include the "European Union, the United Nations Organization, the United Nations Security Council, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund" (Cronin, p. 9). In the case of Vietnam, I add organizations such as ASEAN, the WTO, APEC, the Non-Aligned Movement/World Social Forum, and the nation's multilateral efforts at denuclearizing the Korean peninsula. Also worth consideration is Vietnam's domestic (or specific) cosmopolitanism that I will, for now, call "paradoxical" cosmopolitanism. A preliminary example is the fact that it is simultaneously a "Communist" country and, economically, over the last decade, one of the globe's best capitalist performers. SRV specificities aside, Cronin, claims that "[i]n this view, cosmopolitanism [through the transnational institution] is a way of thinking through the complexity of a polyidentity rather than accepting single, all-encompassing identities for human subjects based on one variable alone" (Cronin, pp. 9-10).

Developing the more ominous challenges of cosmopolitanism, Cronin starts by citing Craig Calhoun's observation "that cosmopolitanism is often seen as the class consciousness of frequent travelers." (Cronin, p. 11). Furthering this 'jet-set' (and

pejorative) notion of cosmopolitanism, Cronin draws on John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, who claim that these easily recognizable, modern-day ‘cosmocrats’ are an entirely *different form of global elite*, now traveling the world in consumerist self-indulgence. This particularly visible “consumerist cosmopolitanism” is unhelpful to a micro-cosmopolitan approach, as it distorts the fundamentals of cosmopolitan thinking described in the paragraphs above. The “universalism of social and material self-interest” feeds consumerist cosmopolitanism in a manner that instead serves as an “eloquent confirmation of a post-nationalist utopia” (Cronin, p.11). By way of example, a lively discussion is occurring in Vietnam about the emergence of a very strong consumerist urban culture, in which the new communist and capitalist cosmocrats owe their increasing global connectivity to a process approved in 1986, a CPV-led policy of economic reform. This move to capitalism and consumerism was supported with vestigial Marxist theory: a true communist society could only be brought about by first developing a bourgeois-style “market economy with socialist characteristics”. In sum, in the SRV, consumerist cosmocrats are becoming a reality and constitute a (small) fraction of society that most Badinhologists (more colloquially, ‘Hanoi-watchers’) of the mid and late 1990’s would find surprising, as conspicuous displays of wealth were heavily discouraged and risky until after the turn of the century.

Historically, cosmopolitanism’s detractors have been led to extremes: Cronin mentions Nazi contempt for ‘cosmopolitan Jewry’, along with Cold War inspired (Soviet) diatribes on the “cosmopolitanism” of issues ranging from Zionism, Pan-Africanism, to Catholicism. Thus, Cronin warns, the risk of caricature is high for examination of the cosmopolitan as a phenomenon (Cronin, p. 11). As a translation scholar with a reputation

for considering the impact of globalization and IT on the discipline, it is unsurprising that Cronin relies on the 2002 work of David Held and Stuart Hall. From Held comes a definition for “cultural cosmopolitanism” that is of particular use to this paper, if not all practicing translators: “*the ability to stand outside a singular location (the location of one’s birth, land, upbringing, conversion) and to mediate traditions that lie at its core.*” (Cronin, p. 11) (Cronin’s emphasis) The above quotation in many ways describes the intercultural back-and-forth, the mediating of core traditions, that permeates the working day of the translator on one level or another. Cronin feels that Held’s “notion of mediating traditions begins to capture this necessary duality of the translation task,” (Cronin, p. 12) but he turns to Stuart Hall’s advocacy of a “vernacular cosmopolitanism”, which is aware of its own limitations as relates to other cultures, identities, and society as a whole. Hall’s vernacular cosmopolitanism is not one that would give up its “claim to the traces of difference” (Cronin, p.12). It is these latter cosmopolitanisms that lie behind Cronin’s eventual formulation of micro-cosmopolitanism, given the fundamental difficulty and inability of cosmopolitanism heretofore defined to become “*attentive to those differences, to the particular claims of singular localities.*” (Cronin, p. 12) (emphasis is mine) From this fundamental challenge arises the need, per Cronin, to put an end to the inevitable result of promoting any or all forms of cosmopolitanism previously mentioned, as they could all potentially fall into Peter Coulmas’ inevitable cosmopolitan trap, that of exclusively “locat[ing] the cosmopolitan moment in the construction of empires, in the development of large nation-states [, or in] the creation of supra-national organizations” (Cronin, p. 13). Cronin claims this “macroscopic” cosmopolitanism is inherently suspicious of and hostile to any smaller entity that might wish to protect its

cultural or national identity. In other words, cosmopolitanism misconstrued would become the natural enemy of diversity. This misguided cosmopolitanism, in which only the larger political unit is capable of “a progressive and inclusive vision for humanity, even if the occasional hegemonic overreaching cannot be ruled out”, is what Cronin calls “macro-cosmopolitanism” (Cronin, pp. 13-14). While Cronin uses Northern Ireland and the Balkans to justify, “in Pascalian terms” (Cronin, p. 14), the distrust of the infinitely great (and macro-cosmopolitan) for the infinitely small, he also summarizes the unworkability of macro-cosmopolitanism as relates to my area of study: “If Coulmas is cited *in extenso* it is because he offers in summary form a number of the basic theses of macro-cosmopolitanism, in particular an abiding hostility to political entities that are seen to be primarily defined by notions of national sovereignty or cultural particularism.” (Cronin, p. 14). In fact, Vietnam is known for its ability to maintain national sovereignty and cultural identity, in the face of formidable foes.

Macro-cosmopolitanism’s flaws, at least insofar as Cronin is concerned, are excisable. It is through a *micro*-cosmopolitan perspective that cosmopolitanism becomes appropriate for the uses Cronin intends. It is this refinement of cosmopolitanism that is the chosen theoretical approach for my study of translation and Vietnam/ese/ness. Cronin uses his micro-cosmopolitan translation theory (“a reworked cosmopolitan version of translation theory”(Cronin, p. 4)) to “contribute to debate” in translation studies. He applies a micro-cosmopolitan perspective to observing Ireland’s practice of localization, the reform of national literature courses, and the formulation of translation policy for supra-national institutions (Cronin, p. 4).

The necessity of a micro-cosmopolitan perspective, Cronin notes, is timely, as we have more nation-states than ever before (over 200), alongside the existence of roughly 2,000 nation-peoples (Cronin, p. 14). Cronin claims, per Cohen, that all nation-peoples experience varying degrees of “displacement, persecution, and political uncertainty [\*]” (Cronin p. 14). In developing distinctions between “cosmopolitanism”, “macro-cosmopolitanism”, and “micro-cosmopolitanism”, Cronin acknowledges that the people of smaller and more recently independent states are unlikely to appreciate (macro-cosmopolitan) arguments in which the notion of “nation” is seen as outdated and reactionary – a rather easily perceived threat in this era of globalization. Vietnam, which has proven itself willing to fight tenaciously to maintain its national territory, political stability, and cultural identity, is using one of globalization’s (and micro-cosmopolitanism’s) key tools, the internet, to outwardly promote mainstream SRVietnamese identities in translation. Even the professional translator has a distinctly crafted, state-approved identity he or she can emulate thanks to this effort on behalf of the Vietnamese media, over which the government has oversight and editorial influence. This positions the SRV as an interesting candidate with which to “test drive” a micro-cosmopolitan perspective. One could not disqualify the Vietnamese from the cosmopolitan community simply because of their reluctance to renounce any of their national identity – something that Cronin claims an unrefined cosmopolitanism would be poised to do. He also warns of dangerous, fatal consequences if a micro-cosmopolitan approach is set up along any kind of traditional “city versus country” bipolar continuum – a tempting juxtaposition of “progressive cosmopolitanism in opposition to a bigoted, essentialist nationalism where the latter has no place for the former” (Cronin, p. 14). Yet,

as will be shown, in the study of matters Vietnamese, we will find that one must invariably “take sides”, though not necessarily in relation to the city versus country opposition. In many instances, bipolarity, occasionally of the type Cronin warns against, but mostly not, is at the root of this Vietnamese-identity phenomenon of enforced partisanship. As one of the leading translation studies authors on globalization, Cronin asserts that another “unhelpful dualism” is found in analyses of globalization which claim that the “wholesale standardization” brought on by the ominous reign of multinational manufacturers and large, private financial institutions will only benefit its sponsors (in, mostly, the USA) (Cronin, p. 15). Such “macro-cosmopolitan” views are “deeply disabling both intellectually and politically” – “a trap of the essentialist construction of national identity” (Cronin, p. 15). It is this ability to navigate through or around some of Western society’s more divisive cosmopolitan issues – city versus country, nationalism, globalization, identity – as well as asensitivity to complexity, flux, and “unhelpful” dualism, that render Cronin’s thought on translation relevant to today’s Vietnam.

## **II: Building micro-cosmopolitanism; initial links to research**

Cronin’s “micro-cosmopolitan thinking”, succinctly summarized, is a “view from below [seeking to] diversify and complexify smaller units [...] [that compels us to consider] a defence of difference not beyond but within the distinct political unit”. (Cronin, p. 15) Politicization of micro-cosmopolitanism is evident in much of the vocabulary Cronin chooses, and this entailed examination, reformulation or elimination prior to linking the theory with anything Vietnamese, given the varying definitions of some words when defending difference within the distinct political unit of the SRV. To

this end, a brief listing of cooccurrents and descriptors Cronin uses for ‘micro-cosmopolitan/ism’ was compiled. De- or re-politicization of any theory-linked terms were addressed when necessary.

By building on micro-cosmopolitanism’s links to “fractal differentialism” Cronin insists on an “equal degree of diversity” within entities small or large, strong or weak. This, in turn, contributes to “a valorization of the local that is informed by diversity and difference”. The “fractal travelling of the intercultural researcher” in translation studies is what allows for the “vital nuancing of cosmopolitan theory [into a micro-cosmopolitan theory] as it applies to very different social, cultural, and political realities on the planet” (Cronin, p.15). It does so by allowing the smaller and less powerful polities “[to patiently undermine] conventional wisdom from below” (p. 15). The perennial academic criticism of cosmopolitanism as culturally, economically and politically elitist can be rectified by a properly micro-cosmopolitan orientation. This is accomplished by “attempting to show that elsewhere is next door, in one’s immediate environment, no matter how infinitely small or infinitely large the scale of investigation.” (p. 15) The intercultural researcher’s fractal travelling is a key to micro-cosmopolitanism’s ability to present a wide-ranging introductory examination of Vietnam/ese/ness. Cronin explains that “fractal differentialism” shows that cultural complexity is constant whether looking at large or small political entities. He locates the origin of this fractalism in a 1977 paper by French mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot, who claimed that there might be no answer to the question “How long is the coast of Britain?” This suggests that the space between two points can be infinite – depending on the manner in which it is measured. As for the coast of Britain, Mandelbrot points out that since there are so many ways measure it (satellite

imaging, by car, on foot, as an insect, or with a microscope), the measurements obtained would all differ, though the coastline itself does not change (pp. 15-17). For the task of examining Vietnam/ese/ness, I have used this concept to afford myself different levels of observation: in some instances my focus might be as broad as a telescope's, while in others, as detailed as a microscope's. Given that access to Vietnamese research material is not constant, this fractal differentialism supplies the researcher with more ways to evaluate a diverse, disconnected, or lacking corpus of texts. It also allows for the inclusion of certain types of work that are often avoided by translation studies: literary styles such as Vietnam's former "socialist realism" are generally dismissed by literary scholars as pure propaganda without literary significance. As Vietnam's particular cosmopolitanism can be viewed as paradoxical, perhaps surviving translations of this "worthless" literature would indeed be of value, as they may well betray distinct, perhaps even subversive, elements of Vietnam/ese/ness – despite their numbing similarity and efforts to depict a fictional and static homogeneity that could never have truly existed in a nation as diverse as Vietnam. Micro-cosmopolitanism is also well served by its duty to call attention to the local and to attempt neutralization of the polemics of power politics (geopolitics, hegemonies, external pressures) by incorporating and valorizing the political as it functions "from below". Thereby, it can help the Vietnam researcher see beyond any efforts at control or censorship: as political discourse is the most restricted form of expression, micro-cosmopolitanism's explicitation of underlying complexities reveals one of the theoretical approach's more attractive claims when approaching a society in which information is tightly controlled: it wants to know about any form of control that shapes the translations it observes.

How, then, to harness the characteristics of this new theoretical model and use it as a viable approach to research? An informal listing of the words that appear to describe or cooccur with micro-cosmopolitanism or elements thereof aims to provide a generalized descriptor set that can serve a multipurpose of application and definition of the theory as it applies to this paper. I emphasize the unempirical (non-software effected) nature of the following list of words and phrases that I felt characterized Cronin's presentation and explanation of micro-cosmopolitanism.

Micro-cosmopolitan characteristics:

1. progressive
2. takes a view "from below"
3. undermines "conventional wisdom"
4. translation studies discourse/debate generating or enabling
5. introduces 'intercultural fractal travelling'
6. non-exclusive
7. non-oppositional in regard to large or small (political) units
8. diversifying
9. complexifying
10. anti-essentialist
11. insistent on a view from the present moment
12. revaluative of local/global hybridity

Shared characteristics with "macro-cosmopolitanism":

1. freedom supporting
2. openness
3. tolerance
4. respect of difference

Cronin defines micro-cosmopolitanism as a valuable theoretical apparatus for translation studies insofar as it resists conventional wisdom, offers an academic contextualization for translation in the age of the internet and globalization, values the local, quarantines

unhelpful, “jaded” (macro) cosmopolitan arguments (city versus country, progress versus reaction, history versus contemporary), and defends difference.

There are challenges in testing out a newly proposed translation theory, yet one of the goals of this paper was to provide an explanation of how micro-cosmopolitanism, while not a full-fledged research paradigm, can be deployed as an approach to translation studies-based research and analysis carried out through the examination of selected works, in this case directed at an understanding of (SR)Vietnam/ese/ness via translation. The writings included in this study were chosen either because they represent a micro-cosmopolitan perspective on translation; use or expose micro-cosmopolitan arguments; feature conventional wisdoms of Vietnam/ese/ness(es); or are relevant translations themselves. The most applicable scholarly works I found were scattered among various disciplines (providing another “fractal” dimension to the research, as each uses different forms of measurement and evaluation). They include: communications studies, literary studies, poetry, history, economics, and political science, among others. The translations into French and English studied are divided into three main categories: those published in the SRV or its predecessor, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV;1945-1976); Vietnamese literature published in North America and France; and those published on the internet in SRVietnamese-to-(non-native)-English – a “Vietnamese English”.

Finally, I conclude this chapter with my assessment of the pros and cons of Cronin’s micro-cosmopolitan perspective when considering a Vietnamese context:

#### Advantages

1. Intercultural fractal travelling, as described by Cronin, allows for various intensities of focus within a study. This is particularly useful in my task, as some research material is consistently and widely available, some is found by surprise, most is not readily obtainable, and some is banned in

Vietnam (eliminating the chance of obtaining a local perspective). Also, it has bolstered my conviction that I could attain the depth of research I sought from outside Vietnam, as my own exposure to Vietnam/ese/ness has varied in intensity and focus over the last 17 years. From 5 years in HCMC as a language student/reviser/translator to 12 years as daily consumer of Vietnamese translation and independent researcher, my own perspective has evolved from a micro- to macro-scale.

2. A strong volition to entertain local perspectives. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam goes to great lengths to establish a very different identity-based discourse than those of the *Viet Kieu* communities in the Anglosphere and France. The internet makes many layers of the SRV accessible in real-time, and it is being used by as a tool for the outbound dissemination of Vietnamese identities, in translation. In 1996, Vietnam was still very remote from the rest of the world. Postal, telephone, and fax rates were well beyond the average citizens' means. Today, blogging and internet cafés are as familiar to urban Vietnamese as they are to most Westerners. The “local” has never been this close to us, and translators have vastly improved access to useful global tools.

3. An enthusiastic call for examining “underlying”, behind-the-scenes reasons for conflict and tension. This aspect of micro-cosmopolitanism invites serious consideration of complexity and history – two features that seem essential to understanding the unprecedented burgeoning of new Vietnamese identities in translation that has taken place over the last twenty years. English/Vietnamese and French/Vietnamese translation has played an important role in constructing increasingly global versions of Vietnam/ese/ness.

4. A useful awareness of the “state of flux” brought on by the internet, and of the impact globalization has on identity. Contemporary descriptions of Vietnam often rate the pace of change the country is currently undergoing, due to globalization and *Doi Moi* (Renovation) as “dizzying”. This acceleration has remained constant since the mid-1990s. This assessment could be applied to the field of translation in Vietnam as well, as will be shown.

### Disadvantages

1. In the context provided, a paradoxical application: if micro-cosmopolitanism is anti-essentialist, complexifying, and anti-universalizing, then why apply it to the study of “identity”, which, no matter how homogenized, is an attempt at explaining the *essence* – if not quintessence – of a group.

2. Awkward terminology: Cronin's description of micro-cosmopolitanism in places strongly evokes Vietnamese (socialist) parlance – a coincidence of Vietnamese translation decisions that surface in English – not of shared political conviction. Additional clarification will be required, given the diktats of D/SRVietnam/ese/ness.

3. Unwieldiness: the boundaries and scope of research remain somewhat ill defined. No precise methodology is offered. Nonetheless, Cronin's relativistic effort to establish the (equal) validity of a variety of components (large and small, strong and weak) is useful in the Vietnamese context: access to texts and information of many types can be difficult, and research thus "weakened". Furthermore, Vietnam/ese/ness has been long defined by the very complexity embraced and pursued by micro-cosmopolitanism, which may lead to "research quagmire" when trying to incorporate the potentially random and tangential translational phenomena that surface when pairing a theory and subject that seek and value complexity, respectively.

## **Chapter 2: The Vietnamese Language**

A detailed analysis of the Vietnamese language would require a separate study in itself, and is beyond the scope of this thesis. The modest aim of this chapter is to provide a brief induction into some of the more salient challenges inherent to the language with regard to translation, contextualized briefly within the purview of a micro-cosmopolitan approach. Noteworthy, first and foremost, is the degree of difficulty presented when attempting to learn the language. The US Foreign Service Institute, a branch of the US diplomatic corps' training system, lists the Vietnamese language (Hanoi standard) in the second of three named categories of languages, classified according to a scale of increasing difficulty for the native English speaker to learn: "World" (category I) (close enough to English to learn with relative ease), "Hard" (category II), and "Superhard" (category III), though it issues a caveat that Vietnamese may be substantially more difficult than most other "Hard" languages such as Finnish, Hindi, or Russian ("Everything you wanted", n.d., p. 46).

Some of the more prominent problems, particularly in contrast to western European languages, are exemplified in the translation notes provided by the Vietnamese-English translator of the 2002 revisions to the SRV's Law on Foreign Investment. The official translation of this seven year-old revision (Department of Planning, n.d.) was the *first* government-published legal translation to include notes or adaptations that were not translations from the Vietnamese source text. Legal translation, not usually an area favoring heavy translator intervention or adaptation, has had to change: adequate translation cannot be accomplished from Vietnamese to English without incorporating additional phrases, notes, words, and footnotes. The "translation" of commas and

semicolons is required. Ambiguous expressions will remain a problem despite all of these countermeasures – the translator only indicates the presence of ambiguity, but is mostly unable to resolve it. “Unaddressed” ambiguity not only remains a problem for legal documents and business contracts. It has not yet been resolved either by translation software or computer-assisted translation (CAT) tool developers in Vietnam (Dinh Dien, pp. 1-7), and remains a priority for those involved in internet technology.

Other language specificities are revealed in the notes provided by the many literary translators who make mention of the difficulty in translating Vietnamese “pronouns” into English or French – and with good cause. When speaking Vietnamese, the pronoun “I” is routinely translated into almost a dozen Vietnamese words, as I had occasion to experience during the five years I lived in Ho Chi Minh City. It was matter of course to change the pronominal word referring to myself three times within any conversation lasting over 20 minutes, for the sake of variety or status shift. The same phenomena occurred with efforts to use the equivalents of “you”. Literary translator Greg Lockhart, whose work will be discussed in Chapter 4, devotes a lengthy part of his introduction precisely to this ‘pronoun problem’ for translators from Vietnamese to English.

It is in the introduction to Hy V. Luong’s *Discursive Practices and Linguistic Meanings: The Vietnamese System of Person Reference* (published in 1990 by John Benjamins) that I have located the most comprehensive and compact example to present translation scholars with an understanding of this oft-mentioned difficulty of translating Vietnamese into English and, to a seemingly lesser extent, into French (a conclusion drawn from stylistic literary possibilities in French rather than any linguistic similarities between the pronominal processes of French and Vietnamese). Founding her introductory

observations on scholarly linguistic precedence from Jakobson, Benveniste, Russell, and Pierce (among others), Luong provides an example that illustrates how difficult the task of the translator can be, especially in the case of first or second person pronouns that change for a reason related to the context of the conversation. Depending on the circumstances, a change of pronoun that implies that the dynamics of the relationship or interaction between speakers has changed will require some type of textual addition or compensation in English or French, as pronouns in neither of these two languages have a way of expressing the meaning of such changes. The reproduction of a conversation between two Vietnamese men below lists the Vietnamese sentence first<sup>10</sup>, followed by an interlinear translation, and ends with the intelligible translation into English. Concurrent activities are underlined.

[Mr.] Ham (sitting at his desk, working on a report, seeing [Mr.] Dan coming in):

**(1.3) Ong Dan oi, ong ngoi xuong day toi nho ong cai nay.**

Interlinear translation: 'Grandfather' Dan hey, 'grandfather' sit down here subject-of-the-King ask-to-help 'grandfather' CLASSIFIER this.

Luong's rendering: "Hey, Mr Dan, Mister will sit down here (so that) subject (i.e., the speaker) can ask for Mister's help with this matter."

Dan (sitting down in the chair by the side of Ham's desk, to which Ham pointed during his utterance of [1.3]):

**(1.4) Da**

Interlinear translation: (HONORIFIC)

Luong's rendering: "Yes"

Ham (showing Dan a register of employees' daily tasks):

**(1.5) Ong dien ho toi cai nay di**

Interlinear translation: 'Grandfather' fill for-as-favor subject-of-the-King CLASSIFIER this go

Luong's rendering: "Mister fills this out for 'subject' [i.e., the speaker]."

Dan (after filling out one or more blank pages):

**(1.6) Bua truoc minh lam gi ha?**

Interlinear translation Day before self/body do what INTERROGATIVE?

<sup>10</sup> Diacritical marks not reproduced.

Luong's rendering: "What did 'I' do on that day?"

Ham (looking at the register to see for what day Dan had not reported his daily tasks):

**(1.7) Bua do anh keu benh, em phai lam thay anh ca buoi sang do anh nho khong?**

Interlinear translation: Day that elder-brother claim sick, younger-sibling have-to work as-a-substitute-for elder-brother all half-day-unit morning that elder-brother remember no?

Luong's rendering: "That day, elder brother [i.e., the addressee] claimed illness; younger sibling [i.e., the speaker] had to work in elder brother's place the whole morning, does elder brother remember?" (Luong, pp. 11-14)

Ham, nine years older than Dan and also Dan's boss, switched the "I"/"you" pronominal formula from *toi...ong* ("subject-of-the-King"... "grandfather") to Vietnamese *em...anh* ("younger sibling"... "elder brother") several times during the conversation. This was Ham's way of appropriately projecting his superior status to Dan, both as elder and boss. Ham's switching pronouns communicated an expectation of compliance to Dan; Dan's acceptance of Ham's authority required him to obey. Ham's seemingly inconsistent use of *em...anh* ("younger sibling"... "older brother") in 1.7, however, gives him *inferior* status vis-à-vis his staff member. This anomaly is based solely on the events described: Ham had to substitute for Dan on the morning in question. As he was substituting for someone of lower status, Ham assumed the role of "younger brother" when referring to his participation in that episode. (Luong, p. 17)

Thanh Ngo, an SRV-educated translation scholar, not only addresses the difficult "pronominal problem", but likewise offers a translation strategy for these terms of address in her article "Translation of Vietnamese Terms of Address and Reference" (Thanh Ngo, 2006). Her article, informed by Hy V. Luong's 1990 book, treats the linguistics of Vietnamese terms of address, but also has the distinction of being the only article to date that addresses the Vietnamese language from a purely translation studies-

theory perspective. As for the challenges all of this poses for literary translation, she situates her solution as an opposition between Nida's dynamic and formal equivalences – seemingly favoring a mix. She follows Luong's lead in providing the Vietnamese text and a gloss, the published English translation, and concludes with her compromise translation:

In the following examples from "The Sorrow of War," the subtle change in the character's feeling and attitude is communicated exclusively through the shift of address and reference terms and there are no other clues in the text. The dynamic-equivalence translation of the terms leaves target readers completely unaware of the change. In these examples, Hanh, a female character who normally calls Kien, the main male character, 'younger brother' and refers to herself as 'older sister', which indicates that she normally treats him as a little friend or little brother, changes her address and reference terms to Kien to imply her wish to change their relationship.

**2a. Nhung de chi thu xem da. Co khi phai nho em xe ho may bac de len xuong cho nhanh**

*But let older sister try see [final particle]. Maybe have to ask younger brother dig help some steps so go up down quickly*

BOOK TRANSLATION: BUT LET ME TRY FIRST. WE MIGHT NEED SOME STEPS FOR ME TO GET DOWN INTO IT EASILY

Ngo's compromise translation: 2a. "But let your older sister try first. I might need to ask my younger brother to dig some more steps for me to get down into it easily" [PLUS] "Hanh still treats Kien as a little younger brother, thus when speaking to him still considering herself as his sister."

**2b. Kien?... Cho minh len voi... Minh can noi voi Kien dieu nay**

*Kiên? ... For self up [final particle]... Self need speak with Kiên thing this*

BOOK TRANSLATION: KIÊN, ... PLEASE HELP ME... THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO TELL YOU

Ngo's compromise translation: 2b. "Kiên, ... Please help me (self) ... There's something I (self) want to tell you, Kiên" [PLUS] "Here Hanh ceases to consider Kien as her 'younger brother' and herself as his 'older sister', beginning to call him by his name alone and using a different term, minh, to refer to herself, thus revealing a much more personal, intimate, and affectionate attitude, which clearly sends Kien a signal that she is interested in him and wants to have a closer, more-than-friendly relationship with him." (Thanh Ngo, 2006)

While Ngo's proposal for a more "source-language oriented" solution is welcome, she simultaneously dismisses one of the emancipations offered translation studies by a

micro-cosmopolitan approach, in particular with regard to footnotes. Ngo disparages of translations that might “require numerous footnotes”, seemingly a tenet of “good literary translations”. However, from the micro-cosmopolitan perspective and as per the micro-cosmopolitan approach I seek to develop, footnotes may be seen positively as agents of “complexification” as they embody an ability to complexify in a manner that can expose ‘the local’ ‘from below’ the text – figuratively “that which lies between lines”, and literally, below and adjoined to the very text to which it refers. Indeed, micro-cosmopolitanism would seem to beg a review of the very formatting that is favored in the field, though this may prove to be an uphill battle as footnotes are probably less desirable from a publisher’s perspective<sup>11</sup>. Endnotes effectively push their potential wealth of information in to a physical space that tends to weaken their ability to sequentially guide a reader through the complexities involved in translation: flipping to the back of the book several times in one sitting is arguably more daunting than glancing at the bottom of the page.

Ngo’s proffered translation strategy places it squarely within the realm of debate on foreignization and domestication in translation studies. For the problems exemplified in 2a and 2b, Ngo claims her “compromise translations” contain elements of *both* foreignization and domestication. Ngo’s compromise, seen above, consists of inserting a synonymous, parenthetical, and unclear calque or synonym behind a majority of the pronouns. This is followed by additional sentences. These latter would appear to read more like footnotes, as they explain the interpersonal dynamics underway. Ngo’s method does not clearly express the escalation of affection through the use of additional

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<sup>11</sup> Perhaps publication with page-bottom footnotes is less cost-effective, though I have not researched this issue.

parenthetical pronouns, and the additional explanatory sentences risk interference with the author's narrative style.

Two solutions come to mind: Ngo could choose from the vast number of pronominal synonyms available in Vietnamese based on *how well they would translate into the target language*. This effort might convey the same increase in affection, through the exclusive use of translated terms of reference, as in Vietnamese. Such cherry picking among the hundreds of translatable terms of reference, chosen for their impact in the target language, would likely not translate properly back into Vietnamese. Nonetheless, this option would seem a better combination of foreignization and domestication: the term would be a translation of a Vietnamese pronominal word that is suited to its task in the *target language*. Another strategy Ngo might explore is likely both easier and better able to convey the full dynamics of the interaction: English's terms of personal reference are capable of addressing the shift of affection in Hanh's interactions with Kien. An escalation from "soldier" to "young man" to "buddy" to "kiddo" to "hon", while different from the terms used in the Vietnamese text, would be successful, using more accessible terms, yet maintaining the pronominally expressed escalation of affection used in the source language. A translator's footnote briefly outlining the manner in which this was carried out by the author would inform interested readers how Vietnamese approaches the situation, again preserving a continued blend of foreignization (footnote) and domestication (pronominal choice).

To conclude this examination of the Vietnamese language, a fractal re-positioning is required to answer micro-cosmopolitanism's call to observe the local. A comprehensive accounting of the complex struggles and syncretism Vietnamese has faced on its own soil

since the arrival of Western hegemony has been compiled in a short synopsis by Huu Ngoc, Hanoi's expert on explaining Vietnamese culture to the Western world. His commentary in his 552-page, 1995 Hanoi-published *Sketches for a Portrait of Vietnamese Culture* deals with cultural changes during the French hegemonic era, which he delineates as 1862 to 1945 (Huu Ngoc, 1995, p. 258). Ngoc's treatment of Vietnamese "Language and Literature" shows how the Vietnamese language has survived and adapted to centuries of diglossia, generally reaping the benefits of linguistic contact with other cultures – as is characteristic of Vietnamese syncretism, which welcomes outsiders in order to incorporate the best, and repatriate the rest:

The Vietnamese language was a major asset for preserving the national identity from the assault of French culture. Under the colonial regime, as before during the time of the Chinese domination, the Vietnamese community lived in a state of diglossia, bilingualism in which the mother tongue held an inferior sociopolitical status. [¶] French, which was learned on the school benches of the lower primary schools, had total reign over the upper primary and secondary schools, and the university; it dominated administrative activities, business, and foreign relations [¶] In the national collective unconscious, Vietnam rejected the tongue of the conqueror at the same time it was attracted by this more advanced cultural expression. Two impulses were felt: to defend the national language and enrich it [Footnote, verbatim: Like French in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, confronted by Latin. Cf. Du Bellay, *Defense et illustration de la langue française*] [¶] The same problem had been posed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century for *Nguyen Trai*, who crafted the victory over the Chinese occupiers. This Confucian scholar wrote poems in both the *Viet* language (resistance) and in Chinese (attraction), the Vietnamese language at that period not yet being flexible enough to accommodate both expressions in one language. [¶] [...] [W]ith the passage of time, consciously or unconsciously, the Vietnamese language was modernised through its contact with French. Prose became disengaged from poetry in the 1920's and 1930's. Influenced by French rhetoric, the old prose sentence gave way to concern for simplicity, clarity, and logic. [¶] French contributed many words to the lexicon, especially those concerned with material culture, politics, science, and technology. Morphology and syntax also reveal the impact of the French language. Certain Vietnamese words that were formerly rarely used, such as *thì* (then), *ma* (which), *là* (to be), and *nếu* (if), became common usage in the expression of thoughts that were themselves becoming more analytical. [¶] The instrument of these linguistic metamorphoses was *quốc ngữ*, the only romanised script to become popular in [continental] East Asia. First created in the 17<sup>th</sup> century for purposes of evangelization, then used as a tool of the colonial administration, the script was later adopted by nationalist patriots in order to raise the popular cultural level and diffuse revolutionary ideas. [¶] The masterpieces of

classical literature were thus able to be read far and wide, which contributed more than a little to the preservation of the national tradition. [¶] The novel in verse, *Kieu*, is an example. This classic by *Nguyen Du* (1766-1820), written in the demotic *nom* characters that were derived from Chinese, was given widespread accessibility thanks to its transposition into *quoc ngu*. [¶] Under the colonial French regime, it continued without failing in its mission of cultural guardian. It was once said, for good reason, “As long as *Kieu* endures, our language will not be lost. As long as our language endures, our nation will survive.” [¶] [...] [By the 1920s, Hanoi had developed a Western-influenced, cosmopolitan intelligentsia and Modern (and other tolerated) literature movements] For the first time, a demand for individual rights was raised in opposition to the Confucian ethic, as writers attempted to depict intimate states of the soul. [¶] The New Poetry Movement (1932-45) was launched by writers from 16 to 30 years of age. One of the pioneers, *Xuan Dieu*, relates: “These were young people who had received their education in French, who loved Western culture. Our fathers and grandfathers said “we” (*ta*) to speak of themselves; they existed as subjects of the king, pupils of the schoolmaster, sons of their fathers: the Confucian trinity that held spiritual and material power. But as their sons and grandsons us the words ‘I, me’ (*toi*) [which, nonetheless, translates to “subject-of-the-king”], the individual claims the right to exist. (Huu Ngoc, 1995, pp. 264-5)

Having provided a cursory view of the main challenges of the language and some of its dynamics in translation to English, I will now turn to the classic manner in which texts were written in Vietnamese prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century: verse. Poetry is a prominent part of Vietnam/ese/ness to this day, and it was the exclusive repository of Vietnamese literary expression for millennia. Chapter 3 will assess poetry in translation, from a micro-cosmopolitan perspective. I will then address a more recent addition to Vietnam’s literary expression, that of prose, in Chapter 4.

### Chapter 3: Poetry in Translation

Poetry in Vietnam is particularly relevant to the overall objective in my study to illustrate micro-cosmopolitan concerns with regard to Vietnam/ese/ness identity. Examining more closely the tradition of poetry allows the researcher to effectively undermine some of the conventional wisdoms traditionally prevalent in academic literature. Peeling away the historical, linguistic and literary layers of the tradition confronts the researcher with paradox, and reveals the means by which the Vietnamese adjusted their responses, in Vietnamese ways, to Sinitic practices that were outwardly viewed as dominant. Poetry, in fact, was particularly capable as a vehicle for identity transmission. Two compilations of translated poetry have been selected here to draw out issues of relevance to Vietnam/ese/ness, translators and translation studies. Vietnamese poetry, or verse, written or orally passed down, constituted the entirety of that language's indigenous literary production since the ethnicity's emergence in an area that is now part of southern China<sup>12</sup> until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>13</sup>. Poetry seems to enjoy much greater mass appeal than it currently does in the West. New or classic verse is printed at least several times weekly in most newspapers. Short – often very short – stories share similar broad popularity and dissemination.

The first poetic work examined is a 2000 translation by the accomplished US Vietnam scholar and award-winning poet John Balaban. As a graduate student at the height of the American War, Balaban wandered the fields of the former Republic of

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<sup>12</sup> There are, of course, several competing theories on where the Kinh ethnicity emerged. All aspects of Vietnamese history are contentious to certain Vietnamese conventional wisdoms.

<sup>13</sup> Less than a dozen works in prose predating the late 19<sup>th</sup> century are known to exist. These are mostly tales and legends from Vietnamese antiquity. The extent to which Vietnam's literary past has been looted, burned, bombed, sold, or hidden leaves many a researcher frustrated.

Vietnam (also known as “South Vietnam”) recording oral songs and poetry with a cassette recorder among the rural peasantry (Balaban, 2001). Balaban’s translation, a Copper Canyon Press publication that has sold over 20,000 copies<sup>14</sup>, is entitled *Spring Essence: The Poetry of Ho Xuan Huong*. Though the poetess was likely born between 1775 and 1780 (Balaban, 2000, p. 6), she occupies a Vietnamese *societal role* that is, over two centuries and in the same city, quite similar to that of today’s writer Nguyen Huy Thiep – and perhaps ironically – not Mme.<sup>15</sup> Duong Thu Huong, a scathingly critical<sup>16</sup> author of considerable literary talent who is contemporary Vietnam’s most widely-known (through North American brick-and-mortar bookstore *on-hand* availability) *political* dissident. Envisioning the roles of Vietnamese poets and writers is easier to do if we establish identity along a continuum. Historically, the continuum ranges from Ho Xuan Huong to Nguyen Huy Thiep. It comprises domestic *intellectual* dissidents who survive censorship, which has been partially configured by the work of Western translation selectors.

The second work I have chosen to investigate is the translation of *Prison Diary*, translated from the Vietnamese *Nhat Ky Trong Tu* by Ho Chi Minh. The poet’s place along a continuum of Vietnamese literary intellectual dissidents who have piqued foreign interest is clear, as his poetry ranks him first among translated Vietnamese poets worldwide. As a literary dissident, the author was “confined” to expressing only his

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<sup>14</sup> This is exceptional in the USA for a book of translated poetry, per (unretrievable) SRVietnamese media source.

<sup>15</sup> In Vietnamese-to-English translation, eminent women (unless young and unmarried) are addressed with the French word “Madame”, and its abbreviation. English’s ‘Madam’ is not used.

<sup>16</sup> She has been a dissident within the party since 1982; her membership was revoked in 1991, when she was imprisoned for several months.

personal feelings, frustrations, sadness, pain, humor, and optimism.<sup>17</sup> Summed up, *Nhat Ky Trong Tu* can be viewed as the *poet's* identity revealed from below, here defined as the very intimate reflections and emotions of a very complex man. Known for his wit and intellect, the poetry in *Prison Diary* has enjoyed a generally positive assessment in terms of quality, from both East and West, pro- and anti-SRV. A recent retranslation of some poems in this work by an authoritative Vietnamese-to-English translator is perhaps most capable of offering a contemporary, Anglocentric confirmation of the *Prison Diary's* literary panache. The work has generated enough scholarship to merit much greater translation studies attention than this paper's approach permits.

Each of these poems has entered SRVietnamese literary cannon. From a micro-cosmopolitan perspective, both poets in this chapter can be considered “marginals”, outsiders who challenged, in both cases covertly, historical conventional wisdoms with their literary intellectual dissidence. In order to more clearly understand how this was done, we must return to history, and for historical foregrounding, I turn to Huynh Sanh Thong, a prominent US-based Vietnam scholar, translator and poet who has been translating Vietnamese poetry at Yale University since the late 1950's. In the introduction to his 1996 Yale University publication *An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems: From the eleventh through the twentieth centuries / edited and translated by Huynh Sanh Thong*, (Huynh Sanh Tong, 1996) the translator provides a wealth of historical information that assists this paper in setting the examples to be discussed into a more local context. As Sinitic influence for centuries dominated East Asian poesy, Thong shows how this phenomenon played out in Vietnam during centuries of direct Chinese domination or

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<sup>17</sup> Political activism in his poetry would have greatly reduced his chances of survival in the Kuomintang prison system he was held in. He had to compose his works in Classical Chinese prose so that his guards could read them. They were subsequently translated into Vietnamese.

status as tributary vassal “nation” to China. At the dawn of Vietnamese verse, the ruling classes of each country agreed on the educational efficacy of poetry.

Early on, however, the Vietnamese poetic tradition begins to differentiate itself from that of the Chinese. Vietnamese poetry spread through the countryside, becoming accessible to the lowly peasant and illiterate masses, while Chinese poetry served only to educate Confucian elite. This vastly different demographic appreciation of poetry opposes the conventional wisdom that the two peoples’ traditions would be similar since China was the ruling hegemon during the introduction of prose to Vietnam, and the Vietnamese wrote their first verse in Chinese. In fact, they were vastly different. The Vietnamese grassroots tradition, far removed from the polished, Chinese-language verse of the literate mandarins and court elites, soon became a conduit for critiquing this “foreignized” indigenous elite. While Sinicized rulers and elites may demand respect for authority based on Confucianism, the Vietnamese peasant culture naturally regarded any authority figure with suspicion: “the Confucian straightjacket was not tailored to a body politic accustomed to the mercurial ethos of Southeast Asia” (Thong, p.15). Thong further undermines academic conventional wisdom by stating that illiteracy may not have been as previously assumed. Nevertheless, lack of printed material helped verse become a mnemonic device for the Vietnamese – and the most common manner in which news and information were disseminated. This endowed verse with the ability to undermine authority, which often it did. The most offensive verse came in six-eight form, and not the T’ang style favored by the Vietnam’s Sinophile elites. The response to this rebellious verse was also delivered in verse, and in Chinese, with scathing official condemnation of

those who composed verse in Vietnamese and used the six-eight form: “The southern [<sup>18</sup>] vernacular fathers knaves and rogues.” (Thong, p. 17) As we shall see in the Chapter 5, echoes of this form of contempt remain in today’s official media. Vietnamese rulers often banned verse in Vietnamese. Eventually, realizing that they could not eradicate the vernacular, the authorities began composing propaganda in Vietnamese, and in six-eight form (Thong, p. 20). Vietnam/ese/ness had by now shown its ability to resist foreign and domestic hegemonies’ demands for surrender. Thong then acknowledges the mixed origins of the Vietnamese poet, their “motley background – foreign and indigenous, learned and popular, East Asian and Southeast Asian”. He contrasts the Confucian decorum that banished “the comic muse” from poetry in China with Vietnam’s penchant for mirth and satire in poetry. It is this indigenous, grassroots earthy humor and wit that helped bring the taboo topic of sex into classical Vietnamese poetry:

Lady Pan’s plaintive poem about a fan, appreciated in summer and tossed aside in autumn [...] has clear sexual overtones. Yet male writers always feigned to see a political allegory [...]. Not until almost ten centuries after Lady Pan did anyone confront the sexual imagery of the fan. Ho Xuan Huong wrote “Ode to the fan” [...] and other poems on the sexual theme according to T’ang prosody, they might have closer kinship with the folk rhymes known as dirty riddles with clean answers (*do tuc giang thanh*), in which innocent objects are described in suggestive terms. Ho Xuan Huong reversed that process, depicting sexual objects as if they were innocuous things: her poems could be called clean riddles with dirty answers (*do thanh giang tuc*). (p. 21)

As a 2,200-year overview, Thong’s introduction provides evidence that Vietnam has long been a “translation nation”, at least since the emergence of indigenous written material (in Chinese). Given this historical background of Vietnamese poetic traditions concerning the pre-French era, selection of the work of these two poets translated into

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<sup>18</sup> “Southern” in this sense means essentially “the Vietnamese language”, as opposed to the official language of the Confucian imperial court, classical Chinese. The ‘North’ is generally synonymous with China, especially in northern Vietnam, much as “The South” designates the USA in southern Canada.

English can be seen as appropriate to the pursuit of a micro-cosmopolitan approach in assessing Vietnam/ese/ness. The ultimate poetess mentioned by Thong above, Ho Xuan Huong, marginal to the point of risking life and limb, speaks from a culture long gone: pre-SRV, pre-French, northern Vietnam/ese/ness. John Balaban's *Spring Essence* (2000) is in fact presented in double translation: each poem is laid out in calligraphic *chu nom* characters (in which the poems were originally composed), the current phonetic Vietnamese (romanized) alphabet, and in Balaban's English translation. In his introduction, he looks at conventional wisdoms in Vietnam prior to the nation's subjugation to Western powers. He touches on the poetess' exceptionalism, the traditional role of women in Vietnamese society, taboo, and the importance of Ho Xuan Huong's insistence on writing in the vernacular. From Balaban's description of Huong's survival tactics, one can infer that intellectual dissidence has always managed to surface in Vietnamese verse, regardless of attempts to thwart it. But more importantly, Balaban offers an outline of a pre-Sinicized culture – one that shows how the core of Vietnam/ese/ness rejects some of the Confucian values it imposed upon it. To micro-cosmopolitan research, this points to the diversification that is necessary for any individual cultural identity's survival<sup>19</sup>. As we shall see in the chapter on prose literature, her tradition as outlined above is strongly evoked by Vietnam's modern-day censor-taunting intellectual dissident and fellow suburban-Hanoi café owner (Balaban, 2000, p. 7), Nguyen Huy Thiep.

Balaban's translations come with detailed annotation, and the introduction informs on his translation practice with an example of interlinear (gloss) Vietnamese-to-English

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<sup>19</sup> Per Cronin's thoughts on difference, mix, and flux as the motors of a sustainable identity.

rendition of one of Ho Xuan Huong's poems, alongside his final rendering into English-for-publication. In a concluding introductory passage, Balaban reveals an aspect of cosmopolitanism evoked by Herodotus in the opening quote of Cronin's *Translation and Identity* (the value of the outsider) in what I infer to be his literary definition of translation of Vietnamese poetry into English:

This book, the first sizable collection of Ho Xuan Huong's poetry in a Western language, almost certainly contains inevitable errors of provenance as well as errors that are purely of my making, a foreigner, albeit a poet, swimming in waters way over his head although cheered by shouts from Vietnamese standing on the far shore. (Balaban, 2000, p. 14)

Clearly considered above are the contributions of this "foreigner"; the inevitable errors in translation; the difficulty level of this source-language-target-language pair; and the inspiration of the translator. Balaban's long experience and involvement in academics and publication on matters related to Vietnamese oral and written prose as well as his facility with its lexicon likely place him among the very few people qualified for the task undertaken in *Spring Essence*.

In the case of *Nhat Ky Trong Tu*, probably the widest-translated tome of Vietnamese poetry in existence. The writer poet Ho Chi Minh, who reflects an era in Vietnamese poetry during which much of the D/SRV's canonic poetry was produced, is a hugely revered figure in the SRV. His influence continues to be felt, affecting the translation of Vietnamese in the most populous French- and English-speaking countries, as a much-written about international figure. His poetic style has even produced English-language verse<sup>20</sup>, attesting to his grip in the poetic sphere long after his death. Vietnam

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<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 1.

cherishes its centuries-old moniker as the “nation of warrior-poets”<sup>21</sup>. On the value of the ability to compose verse and its political function, importance and connection to the founders of the modern Vietnamese State, US scholar Kim N. B. Binh offers

Nowadays in poetry there should be iron  
A poet must also know to charge ahead  
- Ho Chi Minh<sup>[22]</sup>

“Widely quoted, these two lines of poetry written by Ho Chi Minh have become the official *raison d’être* for intellectuals and their labor in socialist Vietnam. In effect, it is what the Vietnamese state would later define *art* and *literature* to be: a weapon in the struggle for national independence, unification, and socialist revolution.” (Binh, p. 17) [...] “From [this point on, Ho Chi Minh and two other top leaders of the Party became Vietnam’s leading theorists of art and literature.]” (Binh, p. 85)

The most focused recent study of Vietnamese “prison literature”, ‘the literature of confinement’, a varied genre of popular interest in Vietnam since its early subjugation to China, undoubtedly comes from Peter Zinoman. His analysis of the subgenre of “revolutionary prison memoirs” describes stylistic requirements (or norms, given that *Nhat Ky Trong Tu* had to be translated into Vietnamese order to achieve *skopos*) and reveals its modern-day functions. Zinoman describes the subgenre as one that highlights political education and personal resistance against French colonialists. The authors show callous disdain for the “common criminals” around them. Memoirs usually contained no personal details but seemed to use a commonly known communist parlance. Zinoman claims that these “revolutionary master scripts” function like museum exhibits that reflect the party in all its glory, and were generally “commissioned, subsidized, and sometimes even transcribed or ghostwritten by state-controlled publishing houses and literary associations,” all of which fell, conveniently, under the Ministry of Culture: the same

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<sup>21</sup> Whether this is self-ascribed or proposed by a foreigner, the SRVietnamese speak frequently of this assumed national description.

<sup>22</sup> It is noteworthy that these are the first lines of the first chapter of the book from which they have been excerpted.

authority that ran the museums (Hue Tam Ho Tai (Ed.), pp. 22-3). These prison memoirs allowed party leaders to redeem their inherited class background by espousing the proper ideological stance and language – in effect, this was a way in which for them to achieve the blessing of “proletarianization” – throughout the 1920s and 30s, these elites-by-birth were imprisoned for their political activism, offering them a chance to transform their “class outlook”. These memoirs written by top leaders, however, were intended to change the public’s perception of the leader, not the leader’s political outlook. It is in this context that Zinoman places *Nhat Ky Trong Tu*. While Ho Chi Minh’s future colleagues were earning their revolutionary prestige in colonial prisons, the future President was overseas, carrying out Comintern directives assigned by his Soviet sponsors. (Hue Tam Ho Tai (Ed.), pp. 38-39)

Indications of *Nhat Ky Trong Tu*’s aforementioned raison d’être have been alluded to for decades, as evidenced by Bernard Fall’s 1971 comments on Ho Chi Minh’s poetic style: “The thoughts are simple, edged with a moral tone – and a very sharp bite. They reflect his own sense of irony about the injustices he suffered, and yet a complete sense of confidence, as if he knew that being in prison was a required part of his biography, a test to which he was being put, which could only toughen him and prove him more worthy of his people.” (Fall, 1967, p. *xi*)

As for the need to update literary translation, a conventional (translation studies) wisdom holds that a retranslation is required approximately every 30 years. Serendipitously, one is available. In 1996, Steve Bradbury took a new look at *Nhat Ky Trong Tu* in his article “New Translations from Ho Chi Minh’s ‘Prison Diary’”, adding a contemporariness that clearly speaks to a 21<sup>st</sup> century readership, while navigating the

full benefit of hindsight<sup>23</sup>. I posit that this article's modern-day recasting reevaluates important elements of what are today, in Vietnam, among the many cherished traits of Ho Chi Minh; his folksy-wry wit and stoic pragmatism are put into particular focus in the "NKTT Translations" (Appendix 1). Interestingly, Bradbury also composes an English-language poem *in the style of Ho Chi Minh*, wryly musing over reconciliation efforts between the SRV and USA in their diplomatic infancy, 1996. Even if only one instance of such mimicry exists, it is nonetheless one informative of the depth of the poet's impact on US conventional wisdoms.

There is no doubt that the honored author of *Nhat Ky Trong Tu* had a fundamental impact on his people, his nation and the rest of the world. The "new society" he helped create is alive and well: today's Vietnamese government, faults included, can in some ways be defined as the best the country has had in its 3,000-year history: The Vietnamese people are richer, better educated and freer than ever before to engage in a de facto capitalism, if not even consumerism. Military conflicts have been absent for almost 2 decades. Ho Chi Minh's current influence is clearly outlined in a 2002 book by Shawn Kingsley Malarney, in a chapter entitled "Redefining Culture and Morality":

Anyone who spends time in the northern Vietnamese countryside is quick to recognize that the ideas, terms, and categories introduced by the revolution, far from being abstract ideas divorced from everyday life, profoundly structure and influence the way in which people conceive of and talk about society, culture, ritual, morality, politics, and numerous other aspects of social life. [Malarney claims that t]o create the new socialist society, the old morality had to be 'swept clean' (*quet sach*) and a new morality created. The individual who played the key role in this process was Ho Chi Minh (Malarney, 2002, p. 53)

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<sup>23</sup> Most translations of NKTT occurred, on a global scale, between c.1960 and c.1984 - during the last two (of three) Indochinese Wars (1945-1990). By the time Bradbury published his new translations, the US-enforced 29-year trade embargo had been lifted and diplomatic relations with the US restored.

This chapter provides a deep and fractal approach to assessing northern Vietnamese history via the commentary about two poet/*translators* (until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this dual function was required in order to write publicly). The importance of history to translation and hence, its research, is well explained in a 1937 work by José Ortega y Gasset, as presented in 2004 by Lawrence Venuti (Venuti, 2004). Regardless of its reputed volatility and multipolar nature (Venuti p.74), historical foregrounding from a translation studies (and, incidentally, micro-cosmopolitan) perspective is elaborated on by the author: “For Ortega, translating is useful in challenging the complacencies of contemporary culture because it fosters a “historical consciousness”[\*] that is lacking in the mathematical and physical sciences. “We need the ancients precisely to the degree that they are dissimilar to us,”[\*] he writes, so that translating can introduce a critical difference into the present.” (Venuti, p.74). To the micro-cosmopolitan intercultural fractal traveller, this quote contains precursors to the notion of undermining conventional wisdoms (“complacencies”) with the help of historical research, which helps provide a “view from below” as well as “the local”. In this chapter, two defacto ‘outsiders’, marginalized for reasons relating to the local conventional wisdoms of their times, have survived as translated poets who continue to shape the poetic identity of the SRV, as seen through translation and broad-ranging commentary thereupon. The names in many of the chapter’s excerpts relating to Ho Chi Minh are to resurface later in the study, many also find themselves featured in the Bourdieusian field (*champ*) of Appendix 2.

The following chapter on prose literature shall also rely on history, though not as far back. Prose (Chapter 4) and journalism (Chapter 5) rose to prominence less than a century ago, however as micro-cosmopolitanism strives to expose the equivalent

complexities in subjects large and small, their shorter history is equally rich – and of relevance through to the present moment, the final destination of this study.

## Chapter 4: Prose Literature in Translation

In order to adequately explicitate and substantiate translation concerns and the varying conventional wisdoms that are exposed in prose literature, this chapter has been divided into five parts. Two main topics have been selected for examination. The first topic, “High Socialism” is explored through a collection of stories edited and translated by Huynh Sanh Thong, focusing particularly in depth on Mme. Hoang Ngoc Thanh Dung’s short story ‘To Serve the Cause of Women’s Liberation’, which speaks to the effect of a newly imposed and reworked native language and its worldview at the time of contact with an uninitiated population. The second topic, the Nguyen Huy Thiep phenomenon, is observed through a much wider fractal lens, and examines Nguyen Huy Thiep’s position as contemporary anchor in the Vietnamese continuum of internal *intellectual* literary dissidents who cleverly and artfully (that is to say, *linguistically*) avoid censorship and are widely read both in the SRV and in translation<sup>24</sup>. “The Nguyen Huy Thiep phenomenon” has generated a relative abundance of commentary pertinent to translation studies, translators, SRVietnam/ese/ness, and the micro-cosmopolitan. It also posits firm challenges to the Western conventional wisdom that holds that “the SRV tolerates no dissidence” in literature, as well as to various Western academic efforts at situating Vietnam/ese/ness in pre-defined categories.

### **I: “High Socialism”: 1975-1986**

The selection of Huynh Sanh Thong’s 1988 *To Be Made Over: Tales of Socialist Reeducation in Vietnam* (Huynh Sanh Tong, 1988) represents an attempt to identify a

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<sup>24</sup> This, insofar as he has many published translations in each language, most easily available in North America through internet purchase or bookstore pre-order.

translation that embodied, reflected, meshed with, or promoted micro-cosmopolitanism. The criteria that linked this anthology to the concerns of micro-cosmopolitanism have revealed themselves gradually. The first link noted resonates with the concept of favoring examination of the smaller political unit. Published in the US in 1987, Thong's translations of Vietnamese literature of confinement is profoundly different in its treatment of Vietnam's communist rulers than any of the era: the subgenre was overwhelmingly dominated by works that portrayed the communists as inhuman and cruel. An editorial directive to select works that portray communists as "fallible humans" in memoirs by those most persecuted and disenfranchised in the newly socialist south set this book apart from the other books of its type:

In this book, the reader will be spared gore and horror [...] The editor avoids stories that revel in vitriol and hatred, preferring tales whose authors speak with at least a modicum of detachment and objectivity, who depict Communists far less as monsters and agents of some "Evil Empire" than as all too fallible humans, both victimizers and victims, ordinary persons corrupted by power, misled by folly and self-deceit. (Huynh Sanh Thong, 1988, p. xii)

The only available examples of Vietnamese literature of confinement that portrayed communists as human were translations of revolutionary prison memoirs published decades earlier. Very few US publications in the 1980s supported or praised the rulers of the SRV; anti-communism and strong antipathy toward Vietnam were ubiquitous during the Cold War. While Thong's collection shows no sympathy toward the communists, its refusal to dehumanize them disqualifies it for either end of the bipolar opposition. Thus, a second micro-cosmopolitan link was established: it undermined conventional wisdom, but did not challenge it. The third criterion was met in selecting a story that emphasized the drastic effects of an imposed language. Micro-cosmopolitanism is anchored in translation; the story describes a situation where the southern population had to learn to

speak an unknown language as a matter of survival. An aspect of translation is implicit in this situation. Additional criteria establishing this text as relevant to micro-cosmopolitanism are: (a *narrative-based* instance of) favoring the smaller political unit by giving a voice to the newly politically disfranchised; consequential qualification as ‘a look from below’ as the authors were the lowest ranked members of the new society; and the undeniable “local” perspective detailed in each story. The six links described above constitute the foundation of my position that the text selected has demonstrable relevance to micro-cosmopolitanism. Before discussing the text itself, I will offer some foregrounding on the language shift that the short story explicates.

“Socialist Vietnamese” has influenced language in today’s southern Vietnam, and Thong’s selection of translations provides many “fresh” reactions to the imposed linguistic shift’s implementation. This socialist parlance remains discernible, overtly, syncretically, or as palimpsest, in most of the D/SRV literature and press that is translated into French and English. Thong’s translations, occupying a micro-cosmopolitan mid-point in relation to the genre’s two political extremes, provides valuable insight into the initial reception to a usage of language that has almost disappeared from interpersonal communication but continues, in a revised version, to be the language of the government. Given how unnatural the wording of high socialism is to many Westerners, it is likely that the translator from Vietnamese-to-English or -French (and vice versa) would benefit, if concerned with receptivity, from knowledge about how this imported language affected the southern Vietnamese themselves when it arrived, in its most potent form, in the mid 1970’s.

Many post-1975 memoirs contain passages on how the Vietnamese language was altered under the new communist leadership in the South. A typical example, from what would have to be considered a “non-micro-cosmopolitan” source (one of vitriolic anti-communism, fully attuned to the conventional wisdom of the society in which it was published) appeared in 1981:

Interpersonal life has become so compulsively hypocritical that the Ho Chi Minh City People’s Committee felt obligated to issue a resolution prescribing appropriate terminology for people to use in addressing each other and in referring to Party officials. The word *bac* (uncle, father’s elder brother, or anyone to whom reverence should be paid) is used exclusively to refer to Ho Chi Minh and President Ton Duc Thang. *Chu* (uncle, father’s younger brother, or anyone considered inferior to father) is commonly used to refer to any Party member – including Le Duan, general secretary of the party – cadre, soldier, and security agent. *Chau* (nephew, niece, or grandchild) is for children to call themselves when speaking to uncles and for the young cadres to call themselves before the people. (Nguyen & Kendall, 1981, p. 105)

Huynh Sanh Thong’s translation of Hoang Ngoc Thanh Dung’s “To Serve the Cause of Women’s Liberation” in *To Be Made Over* takes the reader deeper into the dynamics of life amid the changing language and roles in the brand-new socialist south. It will be quoted at length, in accordance with the fractal mandate permitting a micro-scopic focus as equally valid as the macro-scopic. This will more effectively expose the measures taken by those left to adapt to the new regime, and the implicit ‘translation’ of the newly imposed language. Yet again, the Vietnamese people had become unwitting translators for hegemonic rulers seeking to distort or eliminate their language. This story addresses the often overlooked tragedies of the women left behind in the newly named Ho Chi Minh City as their husbands were either sent to languish in “reeducation camps” or found themselves homebound, instantly unemployed and unemployable under the new and increasingly Hanoi-administered socialist system. Thus, the notion of “househusband”

had arrived, unpleasantly, in socialist Vietnam decades earlier than its more benign, bourgeois, and current English counterpart.

“To Serve the Cause of Women’s Liberation” (Huynh Sanh Thong, 1988) reveals many of the “grave errors” the current and recent leaders of the SRV admit to, with typical (not necessarily obfuscatory) vagueness<sup>25</sup>, when addressing the era of reunification and introduction of socialism to the southern part of the country. The story simultaneously reveals popular adaptive measures from this period that are usually ignored: evidence of wittiness in the face of adversity; cognizance of hypocrisy, paradox, and irony; adaptive creativity; and the effects of an imposed gender role reversal. By concentrating on the bipolarity micro-cosmopolitanism seeks to avoid, translations from this era generally overlook much of this revealing socio-linguistic data. In relying so heavily on the political soapbox, they lose much of their ability to look at Vietnam/ese/ness as an adaptive identity able to overcome a rapid succession of hegemonic reversals. This does not diminish the value of the “gore and horror” genre, though it does root it more firmly in the past than does Mme. Dung in her focus on the lives of women.

“To Serve the Cause of Women’s Liberation” by Hoang Ngoc Thanh Dung begins with a description of the gender role reversals as women were now “all away tending to state affairs.” “It’s [the] men who stay home and do household chores or go out shopping for groceries.”(Huynh Sanh Thong, 1988, p. 43) The first chapter alludes to some of the initial particularities and dislocations, linguistic and otherwise, of city life in late 1975:

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<sup>25</sup> Vietnamese official socialist parlance is vague concerning all subjects, not only controversial topics. Indirect and elliptical styles of speaking, querying, arguing, and writing are all norms in both personal and institutional communication in Vietnam.

These men, now homebound, were even denied the privilege of “going back to the garden and chasing chickens for their wives (ve vuon doui ga cho vo), as the folk saying goes. That was an undreamed-of luxury under communism. First, all gardens had been confiscated by the state. Second, there wasn’t enough rice to feed humans, let alone chickens. The serious shortage of grain as fodder for meat-producing animals was confirmed by a communist cadre himself who, at a study session for the Party’s Resolution No. 24, commented: “Over the next fifteen years, we all shall be herbivores.” (Huynh Sanh Thong, pp. 43-44)

The (author-) narrator then delineates the new hierarchy imposed on southern women, the largest segment of the population trusted by the new authorities to fill in for the recently dismissed, male-dominated “Establishment” of the vanquished RVN (formerly known as “South Vietnam”):

[R]ight after the communists seized the South, women’s organizations sprang up everywhere, along with organizations for children and young people. Women in every precinct or ward were all “invited” to join the Association of Liberated Women (Hoi Phu Nu Giai Phong). [...] Members of a precinct branch were grouped into several cells, each cell consisting of about fifteen people, led by a cell chief and a cell deputy chief. Upon joining, a member was known as a “Patriotic Woman” (Phu Nu Yeu Nuoc). Later she would become a “United Woman” (Phu Nu Doan Ket). After a period of active membership, if she was judged as having “progressed” and if her background was found acceptable, she would be fully admitted as a “Liberated Woman” (Phu Nu Giai Phong). (Huynh Sanh Thong, p. 44)

Within Huynh Sanh Thong’s translation of this (micro-cosmopolitan) memoir, some of the hidden, personal devastation and demoralization (a source of ‘information from below’) of the “grave errors” come to light, as highlighted by the narrator’s interaction with the authorities new, official slogan-concept of “joy and zeal”. It is this slogan that will be put under micro-cosmopolitanism’s fractally permitted microscope. It will be revealed as much more than a simple slogan, and as an issue that impacts modern-day translations for another hegemonic force gaining increasing power within Vietnam. To demonstrate this, much of the short story will be excerpted, affording the fullest possible understanding of these three seemingly innocuous words.

As the narrator becomes more involved in her neighborhood women's group cell ("*chi hoi*"), the topic surfaces in the discussion of the ulterior motives many women had in joining "the revolution" after the liberation of Saigon (conventional wisdom holds that this was done in hopes of ensuring their husbands' wellbeing). Bracketed text is my approximation of interceding passages:

Even more peculiar was the case of Phu's wife: she joined the revolution not to tend to state business but to pursue her own *affaires*. [Phu, a new 'househusband' given to fits of rage every time his wife had to attend a meeting and leave him to tend to household affairs, had come to the attention of our *chi hoi*.] One day, [...] Xuan, the deputy chairperson, smiled triumphantly and announced for all to hear: "From now on Phu won't be able to give his wife a hard time any more!" Surprised, I asked, "What happened to him? [...] How did the committee settle it?" "How else? He got a lecture and was warned to mend his ways and stop interfering with his wife's participation in revolutionary activities of he'd be packed off and to some camp for a long term of re-education." [...] [With her husband thus neutralized, Phu's wife becomes an increasingly adventurous adulteress in the new and seamier side to the interactions between the new (northern) cadres and the newly liberated women of the south. I am shocked that Phu's wife has not been reprimanded for such behavior:] "But Phu's wife has a family. What's happened to 'the new woman's ethics' when the committee and the deputy chief take her side against her husband? The old society was corrupt and decadent, all right, so the new society ought to be more wholesome. Are we, by any chance, progressing... backward?" [The committee secretary responded,] "Talk can always make things sound better than they are. The worse reality is, the fancier the talk becomes to cover up what's wrong. [...] [Scandals (there are several) notwithstanding, Phu's wife has] tended to state affairs with more 'joy and zeal', to use the official phrase, than ever before" I thought to myself: "At least there are some women who tend to state affairs with genuine, unfeigned 'joy and zeal' [...] I felt sorry for and admired those women whose husbands [were sent away]. By day they would go to work for a pittance in order to support their family. At night they would go to meetings or other assignments and put on a mask of cheerfulness and enthusiasm" (Huynh Sanh Thong, 1988, pp. 47-49)

An interesting linguistic note on women's identity in the above excerpt is the "name" of the woman being discussed: known only as "Phu's wife"; she has no name as an individual, only one that denotes her relationship to a man. This common form of identification among Vietnamese and many other Asian women is entirely antithetical to the Western notion of "women's liberation".

Continuing to complexify the phenomena lying below daily life under the term-edict translated as ‘joy and zeal’, the memoir’s fourth chapter is entitled “How we Learned and Practiced “Joy and Zeal””. After a six-day study course, the narrator returns to her Ho Chi Minh City precinct to assume her duties as “Propaganda and Training Commissioner”.

By subjecting the people to one study session after another, day in, day out, did the Party and the state succeed in having them carry out their directives and policies? What was certain was that everyone, young and old, eventually learned and knew by rote a number of catchwords and stock phrases that could be trotted out to prove conformity with such directives and policies when called upon to “express an opinion” [*phat bieu*]. After umpteen hours of “study”, no one was either so foolish as to speak the truth or so dumbstruck as to clam up and say nothing. And, under communism, you had no right to keep silent, anyhow: “silence doesn’t mean consent but discontent and protest”. You had to memorize some eulogistic formulas for the sake of the Party and state, and you had to mouth them wearing faces aglow with “joy and zeal” (ho hoi, phan khoi). [¶] In July 1976, a woman colleague of mine was allowed to go and visit her husband who was being detained at a re-education camp in the Central Highlands. When she came back, she would collar any friend or acquaintance in the streets and gab cheerfully about her trip and her husband’s condition: “He’s nice and plump now, because among the camp inmates there are quite a few medical doctors. [...] Also, the state’s taken good care of him there – being re-educated, ha hasn’t got a thing in the world to worry about any more. [...]” [¶] Her flow of blah-blah got on my nerves. I lost patience and told her off: That’s great! Your husband may as well stay there and be re-educated till the crack of doom! No need for him to come back to you.” She realized that her “joy-and-zeal” act had gone a bit too far and annoyed me. So she took me out of our office and to a stone bench in the middle of the courtyard where we sat down. Out of earshot, she sheepishly confessed: “When I say that my husband’s grown plump, it’s not a lie strictly speaking: he’s had puffy swelling all over his body because of beriberi! He’s lacked proper food to eat. When I saw him, I could scarcely believe my eyes.” [I asked her,] “Did you two have a chance to hold a long conversation?” “No[,]” she replied,] “We couldn’t say what was in our minds, anyhow – a guard was sitting there and listening. Moreover, before I was allowed to see my husband, a cadre had warned me: I could only talk about cheerful matters. He had said: ‘For instance, let’s say your husband’s mother has died. You don’t break the news to him – instead you tell him she’s been doing just fine. You don’t complain to him of what’s gone wrong at home. And back from your visit, you tell everyone how well he’s fared. If you behave, you’ll get permission to see him again. Otherwise... [...]’ [¶] Alarmed by the changes in my facial expression as her story progressed, she pleaded with me: “Please smile and keep smiling even if what I tell you is nothing to smile about. They’re watching from afar. If they catch signs of unhappiness, they may make trouble for you and me. Don’t you see I’ve been grinning from ear to ear all along? Well I must leave you now. I’m under orders to go and tell as many people as possible what a paradise re-

education camp is. This way I'll have something to my credit to report.”(Huynh Sanh Thong, 1988, pp. 65-67)

Further distinguishing “For the Cause of Women’s Liberation” as a source of fractal examination of the slogan “joy and zeal” (ho hoi, phan khoi) is its revelation of how this ‘enthusiasm-ism’ infested prose in those first days of High Socialism’s hold over southern Vietnam. As she progressed in her position as “propaganda and training officer,” the author/protagonist’s duties came to include taking minutes at meetings and writing reports for the district office of the Association of Liberated Women.

I still remember the first report I ever submitted, one on the study session devoted to the campaign against the “compradore bourgeoisie”. I had sweated to produce a concise but complete account, and I felt confident that the chi-hoi chief would be pleased with it. But after she had quickly gone through it, she returned it to me and asked that it be done all over again. Surprised, I asked her: “Did I forget something important in my report?”

“Not exactly, but it was too spare. You failed to give a fleshed-out account of what happened. For example, you said: ‘The study session began at seven o’clock.’ But isn’t that rather meager? You should have said: ‘Despite a rainstorm, all our sisters defied the inclement weather and arrived on time for class at seven o’clock.’”

“But it did *not* rain that evening, sister!”

“Well, if it didn’t rain, you could have said: ‘Despite the sweltering heat, all our sisters..., etc.’ Or something else to that effect. You know what I mean. There are ways aplenty to go about it. You also said: ‘Most of our sisters studied hard and made a genuine effort to speak up in class.’ You should have put it this way: ‘All of our sisters applied themselves with determination to the course of study and enthusiastically vied with one another in expressing their opinions on the subject.’”

“But I thought we were supposed to report the truth! If we overstate things, we will be accused of exaggeration, won’t we, sister? And a bit of modesty never hurts, I think.” What I said seemed to embarrass the chi-hoi chief, who replied:

“Yes, I agree with you. But when you walk with the Buddha you wear a cassock, and when you walk with the devil... We must do as they do. Haven’t you read in the newspapers or in books all those accounts of results achieved in various branches of agriculture or industry and by one organization or another? They’re splendid, inspiring, worth emulating.” (Huynh Sanh Thong, 1988, pp. 71-72)

The minutiae and detail in the above passages are valuable to any theory that encourages a fractal approach to observation, for they touch on the infinite complexity of ways to

view, understand, explain, and translate the human experience. By attempting to ‘travel interculturally’ with Hoang Ngoc Thanh Dung’s narrator in her journey to fully understand the meaning behind “joy and zeal”, other Vietnamese terms that arrived with High Socialism, listed in 1988 as ““struggle”, “dialectics”, “historical materialism”, “modes of production”, “infrastructure”, [and] “militant”” (Huynh Sanh Thong, 1988, p. 70) can be considered equally complex and influential in this era of near-total linguistic literalism. Today, *Doi Moi*’s impact on official parlance has eliminated most of these classic Marxist-Leninist terms, and slogans are no longer enforced to such a literal degree. Nonetheless, useful information for the translator would be unearthed by microscopic (fractal) examination of surviving communist terms like ‘infrastructure’, ‘democracy’, ‘human rights’<sup>26</sup>, as well as newly imported terms and their Vietnamese meanings in English translation, such as ‘capitalism’, ‘transparency’, and ‘market economy’.

The lengthy excerpts were necessary to expose issues that are of crucial concern to today’s translators. If the phrase “joy and zeal” were to appear in an English sentence, as seen in many Christian publications, should a translator translate it into Vietnamese as ‘*ho hoi, phan khoi*’? If the translation goal were to proselytize, as it currently is among many US-based Protestant groups, it may well backfire against the generation of southern (SR)Vietnamese that remembers the hegemonic volte-face of the mid 1970’s. Similarly, how might, for instance, a 40 year old US-based translator of Vietnamese ethnic origin,

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<sup>26</sup> All were part of the lexicon of High Socialism and have since been officially redefined to a substantial degree. This increases the chance for false cognates, especially between English and Vietnamese, as French is still more accommodating toward modified socialist parlance.

who may have attended early primary school in pre-liberation Saigon<sup>27</sup>, but has grown up to become a native-English Californian, nonetheless fluent in Vietnamese, translate the hypothetical US English phrase “those wild and crazy days of Women’s Lib back in the ’70s” into (SR)Vietnamese? Would such a translator be adequately informed to accommodate for the vast difference in potential meanings? Many Vietnamese parents, in hopes of quickly acculturating their children to American life, spoke little of what they left behind, a trend that continues among that generation of Vietnamese, both overseas and in the homeland. Would this hypothetical Vietnamese-American translator’s translation convey something like the heady, emancipatory phenomenon of US “bra-burning” or post-liberation’s drearier “joy and zeal”? Would such a translator be able to identify the proper conventional wisdom lying beneath the phrase and translate it adequately for Mme. Dung’s peers, especially those who still live in the SRV?

## **II: The Nguyen Huy Thiep “phenomenon”**

### **II-A: Introduction**

The usefulness of familiarity with the origins of Vietnam’s modern socialist-influenced parlance described in the conclusion to the discussion of “High Socialism” above (4(I)) makes itself evident in current writings on Vietnam’s interactions with the world: an example in the Asian press from recent days shows how the term “democracy” (*dan chu*) has evolved in socialist Vietnam:

[T]he “localizing” of democratic values is complex and often contradictory. For example, the 2001 World Values Survey-Vietnam showed overwhelming support

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<sup>27</sup> SRVvietnamese-English terminology indicating the city as it was prior to April 30, 1975. Saigon now orally designates a handful of central districts in Ho Chi Minh City, though this distinction is not made on printed material. Instead, Districts 1, 2, and 3 refer to what was the capital of the RVN.

among Vietnamese youth for the idea that democracy is the best form of government. However, the same survey also found that an even greater percentage of the population endorsed and supported democracy as it was constrictively defined in the state's development plan. (Le, Long S., 2007)

Clearly, notions and hence implementation of “democracy” diverge dramatically between the SRV and for example, the USA's de facto two-party federal democracy. There's a gathering mass of credible concurring evidence from a variety of sources that the level of support for Vietnam's official “centralized democracy” described above is both sincere and not uninformed. The longstanding overseas Vietnamese conventional wisdom, that all the SRVietnamese have all been brainwashed into apathy, is becoming harder to maintain under current scrutiny. “Democracy”, whether centralized, multiparty, presidential, parliamentary, or other, is micro-cosmopolitanly valued as having *inherent equivalence in diversity and complexity*. The definition of “democracy” as gleaned along a US-SRV continuum, for example, is fraught with complications for English or French translation that are similar to traditional false cognates (“sensible” in French and English, for example). For the translator or editor of SRV media or theoretical texts located outside the country, complexities of this nature are bound to increase as SRV-based translation increases its outbound translation product's linguistic similarities with Anglospheric English to better participate in globalization and to achieve *Doi Moi*'s domestic economic dictates.

Prior to the early 1990's, SRV efforts to dejargonize translations into English were contrary to the translation norms of the High Socialist period (1975-1986). The advance in efforts to render English translations increasingly accessible to world readers of English, which has adopted dejargonization as a norm<sup>28</sup>, has led to a situation in which

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<sup>28</sup> This will be established in the section on the Viet Nam News.

Anglospheric terms like “transparency”, “land ownership”, “grassroots” and “party leader” function as de facto if not de jure false cognates between Anglospheric and SRVietnamese Englishes. In a similar instance of things not quite being that which they seem, an understanding of the language changes in southern Vietnam after 1975 will help avoid what Peter Zinoman, another prominent US-based Vietnam scholar and translator, has clearly pointed out as a problem in the study of (translated) contemporary Vietnamese literature, originating in what Vietnamese literary circles call “the year of the Nguyen Huy Thiep phenomenon”, 1988. Peter Zinoman is an invaluable contributor to a micro-cosmopolitan perspective: he is a fractal<sup>29</sup>, intercultural researcher<sup>30</sup> and exhibits a refreshing lack of interest in both the traditional obligation to “take sides”<sup>31</sup> and in what might be construed as typical Anglospheric antipathy to SRV officialdom. A discussion of his work follows a look at the contributions of his academic rival, Greg Lockhart<sup>32</sup>. First, however, I will use British journalist Robert Templer for foregrounding on Nguyen Huy Thiep and his work.

## **II-B: Templer on Thiep**

In October 1987, the Party chief Nguyen Van Linh addressed a group of around a hundred writers and intellectuals to give his official approval to the currents of critical writing that had been trickling out. Linh complained that the literature

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<sup>29</sup> Primarily a Vietnam scholar, he has been described professionally in academic publications as “historian”, “translator”, “Vietnamese Studies scholar”, inferring that if his focus has remained the Vietnamese nation, he has the benefit of exposure to multiple academic measurements, tools, and theories.

<sup>30</sup> Zinoman’s spouse and co-translator is the academically accomplished Nguyet Minh Cam.

<sup>31</sup> This seemingly applies exclusively to thorny matters concerning Vietnam/ese/ness itself. He has reserved his confrontational stances, apparently, for other Anglospheric Western Vietnam scholars, Australian Greg Lockhart in particular.

<sup>32</sup> In his publications, Lockhart does not respond to Zinoman’s documented habit of pointing out the former’s (perceived) deficiencies. The latter’s critiques of Lockhart leave the reader with the impression that Zinoman is personally antipathetic to Greg Lockhart. Lockhart is nonetheless first to generate discourse, allowing Zinoman a few years to research and publish the former’s errors.

written since the end of the war had been poor and the Party was in part to blame. Writers and artists needed new freedoms if they were to address issues affecting Vietnam. He urged writers to infuse their work with a new spirit. [¶] His speech opened the floodgates of criticism, releasing a pressure that had been building since the late 1970s. Speaker after speaker attacked the limits of socialist realism and the controls of the party. Nguyen Ngoc, then editor of *Van Nghe* magazine, talked of a 'lost generation' of artists and writers who had been forced to talk only about success, never failure; about achievements, never losses; about correct decisions, never mistaken ones'. There was a widespread rejection of the artistic controls imposed by the Party and a surge of anger against the passivity, self-loathing and artistic weakness it had bred. 'For too long the leadership held artists in great contempt,' the critic Nguyen Dang Manh said. 'People held in contempt end up seeing themselves as small and contemptible. (Templer, 1999, pp. 128-129)

This call for blunt honesty from the leadership brought a fair amount of Early *Doi Moi* enthusiasm among (mainly) younger literati and unleashed voices of discontent and disillusionment not tolerated since the long struggle against French colonialism. This era of tolerance was abruptly ended in the early 1990's, a move by the authorities assumed to be a reaction to events befalling Communist parties in Europe's Warsaw Pact nations at the time. Robert Templer, correspondent for the Agence France Press in Hanoi during the more conservative late 1990's and author of 1998's *Shadows and Wind – A View of Modern Vietnam* offers a wealth of translation-relevant information in his chapters on media and literary challenges during these earlier years of literary flux. The authors and personalities discussed are those who are known to a global audience, mostly through translation or dissident-like, marginal status. In terms of methodology, I will revisit the same translated author (Thiep) via the views of experts other than Templer, a micro-cosmopolitan task of fractally approaching an object of study from multiple perspectives.

Templer, a journalist, is gifted with a descriptive prose that in my view deserves quotation at length, as opposed to paraphrase. In my readings of French and English translations of Nguyen Huy Thiep and other writers, along with much commentary on

Vietnamese literature, my view is that Templer's assessments equally benefit this work by being researched with adequate rigor.

Nguyen Huy Thiep came among them, a critic wrote, like a 'quirky wind or troubling star', a strange natural phenomenon that sent a shiver of consternation through the world of Vietnamese writing. He plunged the desiccated critics and cultural commissars into a state of bewilderment. Critics had played an important role in policing the pages of literary magazines and newspapers with forensic skills that were able to excise any hidden meanings. Their scratchy pens were poised over any potentially troublesome poem or story, ready to seek out the pessimistic or critical, anything that strayed from the numbing cheer of socialist literature. (Templer, 1999, p. 194)

The story that ignited the "Nguyen Huy Thiep phenomenon" in the SRV was *The General Retires*, published in 1987. The earliest translation into English obtainable for this paper was published by Oxford University Press (Singapore) in 1992, translated by Greg Lockhart (Nguyen Huy Thiep, 1992). The short story has also been translated into English by Linh Dinh and into French by Kim Lefevre and Phan Huy Duong (among others). *Cun*, another story by Thiep, has been translated into the same languages by the same translators. This fact alone inevitably places Thiep among the most avidly translated contemporary SRV authors. In case of Thiep, his prose allows me to speak from a position I have never before been afforded: Thiep's style is so direct and pared-down that I am able to understand the original Vietnamese versions of these stories with dictionaries at my disposal<sup>33</sup>. Phan Huy Duong acknowledges this exceptionality to Thiep's writing:

Il revint à Nguyễn Huy Thiệp l'honneur de provoquer le premier vrai débat littéraire depuis trente ans, en 1987, avec la nouvelle *Un général à la retraite*. Une centaine d'articles passionnés attaquaient, défendaient l'œuvre. La querelle était largement répercutée jusque dans la diaspora vietnamienne aux Etats-Unis,

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<sup>33</sup> Literary Vietnamese, due to its vast difference from the conversational, propagandistic, and journalistic styles to which I am more accustomed, is almost impossible for me to read. For that reason, I have attempted to limit literary critics to the both specialized and credible. The academic and journalistic sources cited each seek to provide verifiable information, and have all looked at issues in Vietnamese literature in the SRV.

en France, en Europe de l'Est. Une écriture brutale, glacée, tranchante, si limpide qu'un enfant ayant appris à épeler pouvait la comprendre. Et pourtant, de cette écriture surgissait un monde quotidien méconnaissable, grotesque, absurde, où plus rien n'avait de sens, où plus rien n'avait l'air humain (Phan Huy Duong, 1997, p. 9)

Templer offers a *modus operandi* for Nguyen Huy Thiep's ability to avoid the occasionally severe rebukes suffered by more outspoken authors: "Thiep's evasiveness left critics with the nagging fear that they were being mocked, but the writer never quite furnished them with enough proof. The ambiguity of his work protected him, as have some well-placed friends." (Templer, 1999, p. 196).<sup>34</sup> Worth remembering is that the variable dynamics described above and below have undergone considerable change since being penned. That which is today understood to be permitted (or, more precisely disseminable), in the realm of the politico-literary expression, has constricted in some ways, expanded in others. None of these affect Nguyen Huy Thiep. Templer's unvarnished dislike of the SRV's leadership is somewhat of a distraction, but his journalistic inclination toward substantiation of his claims helps clarify a literary and in this case, SRV-based translation-related Bourdieusian field of considerable complexity and contention<sup>35</sup>.

Templer situates Thiep as the SRV's first 'maverick' literary superstar. He acknowledges the oddities of a writer's status in Vietnam: "Thiep portrays himself not as an heroic iconoclast but as a 'pitiful writer'." (Templer, 1999, p. 196) Likewise, Templer here notes that Thiep's "day job" is restaurant owner, a fact that has fascinated Vietnamese and international observers for decades. But those who have also read

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<sup>34</sup> The similarity between Nguyen Huy Thiep's and Ho Xuan Huong's survival tactics is here quite striking.

<sup>35</sup> This, as would be expected in a micro-cosmopolitan consideration of a 'smaller' unit, that of the Vietnam/ese/ness in translation. See Appendix 2 for an elaboration of the current Bourdieusian *champ* for the SRV-outbound-translation-oriented translation researcher.

Balaban's *Spring Essence* would see a distinct continuum: Ho Xuan Huong repeatedly refers to herself as 'pitiful' in a variety of ways, and Balaban notes that her survival tactics included being a suburban Hanoi café owner, an intellectual powerhouse, and having friends in the right places. Nonetheless, Templer valorizes Thiep's pre-*Doi Moi* past, one from the bleak post-war years in the service of minor officialdom, a somewhat paradoxical role for an author-maitre-d' that remains the SRV's most acclaimed *intellectual* dissident writer, admired even by the harsh standards and critics of both Western academia *and* the official Vietnamese literati<sup>36</sup>. He is not entirely safe from onerous prosecution – in likelihood a maximum of perhaps a few hundred individuals in the SRV can in reality independently act with CPV-sanctioned impunity of one form or another. Decision-making is highly centralized and consensus oriented. As Templer implies: "he does occupy an uncertain place in the system, like many Vietnamese intellectuals. He was himself a former teacher and official in an educational publishing house where he operated around the margins of the law, smuggling goods and trading in the shady grey markets of Hanoi." (Templer, 1998, p. 196) Most important to the translator in Templer's discussions of Thiep is the author's ability to in effect, jam the censors' radar. Taking the reader through a nutshell analysis of the palimpsestic, syncretic potential of Vietnamese and its literature for subterfuge, Templer relies on Peter Zinoman's deft unlayering and decoding of some of Thiep's most controversial sentences.

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<sup>36</sup> Nguyen Huy Thiep won a 2007 SRV award for 'best novel'. SRV English- and French-language press mentioned this accomplishment as a final aside to an article on literary awards. An internal intellectual dissident at least merits begrudging mention from an identity-generation source that would obviously prefer we read the (mostly untranslated) short-story writers who garner 95% of the article's coverage of the literary awards.

By blurring the boundaries of history and fiction and shifting his vocabulary, Thiep could take the reader from a historical fable to contemporary political criticism and yet avoid censorship. Thiep's translator, the historian and critic Peter Zinoman, points to a line in 'Fired Gold' that illustrates the writer's ability to use the language of state propaganda to undermine its message. In one of the multiple conclusions to the story, Thiep writes: 'It [Europe] begins to understand that the beauty and the glory of a people are based neither on war nor revolution nor on ideologists or emperors' The words 'beauty and glory of a people' is one of the stock phrases of Communist Party slogans and its insertion into a sentence about eighteenth-century Europe immediately brings the reader back to the present. 'After redirecting our attention to the modern state, the sentence rejects revolution, war, ideology and leadership as valid criteria for assessing national "glory",' Zinoman wrote. 'Lacking real economic accomplishments, the Party traditionally points to successes in these fields to justify its exclusive monopoly over power. Thus the form of the sentence openly mocks the state's sloganeering rhetoric, the content bluntly assails its grounds for political legitimacy.' (Templer, 1998, p. 199)

Robert Templer's *Shadows and Wind* is the work of an accomplished journalist. His selection of topics and complexity-elucidating prose, his access to both persons of influence and personae non gratae in the SRV, and skillful analysis of the domestic media constitute his strengths as a contributor to translation studies data corresponding to a micro-cosmopolitan approach. This may seem at odds with the fact that Templer is simultaneously one of the SRV leadership's most acerbic critics, whose personal disapproval of the nation's State and Party during his 1994-1997 posting in Hanoi is unerringly described throughout. A micro-cosmopolitan approach seeks here to sidestep such "obvious" grand bipolar oppositions, favoring instead to play the deck of complexity and contradiction in Vietnam's particularly rich deck of cards. Templer's work has 'unavoidably', as scholar Nguyen Ba Chung<sup>37</sup> explains with credibility, forced him to take sides at one end of Vietnam/ese/ness' information-related, hence communist versus anti-communist, conflict continuum. As a journalist in the Western tradition, the era's restrictions (and Hanoi's eventual loss of patience with *persistently* critical

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<sup>37</sup> Nguyen Ba Chung's thoughts on Vietnamese history and diasporic reconciliation with the homeland will be more thoroughly discussed in the SRV Media and Internet chapter.

correspondents) likely ran counter to all standard operating procedures – and ethics – in non-Westernized media markets. Templer’s level of detail is such that it provides a useful, fractal, and locally-rooted micro-cosmopolitan foregrounding for the complexities that arise in considering what has been written about the translations of Nguyen Huy Thiep. Turning to sources with a much longer-standing (and often academic) relationship with Vietnam and the Vietnamese, if not with the author himself, I will begin by looking at the academic-publishing pioneer of Thiep’s *The General Retires* and other stories.

### **II-C: Lockhart on Thiep**

By the time Greg Lockhart, an Australian scholar in Hanoi during the late 1980s, set about translating Thiep’s *The General Retires* (Nguyen Huy Thiep, 1992), some ninety articles had been written in the Vietnamese literary press about the short story. This bleakly detached, grim tale about the post-American<sup>38</sup> War disillusionment of a retired, “honorable” Vietnamese general had generated a firestorm in Vietnamese literary criticism. Oxford University Press (Singapore) published Lockhart’s translations of and introduction to Nguyen Huy Thiep’s *The General Retires and Other Stories* in 1992. Lockhart’s interest in Vietnamese literature and opportunity to study at Hanoi University in 1988 were timely:

With the government wanting to make contacts with ‘capitalist’ countries, my invitation to study at Hanoi University therefore coincided with an exciting shift in Vietnamese literary thinking. There had been nothing like it since the period of the Popular Front in the late 1930s when temporary freedom of expression [was] permitted by the colonial government [...] (Nguyen Huy Thiep, 1992, p. v)

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<sup>38</sup> The general in question is possibly a retiree from the Cambodian or Chinese Wars, or both, as well as the American War. This is not specified in the story.

Lockhart's preface describes his encounter with issues of particular interest to translation studies. His personal inspiration for translating Thiep, the result of a continuing fascination with his work and the increasing international attention, is enhanced by a conviction that "N. H. Thiep's new construction of Vietnamese society confirmed my original intuition that Vietnamese literature could not be kept entirely at home. Even before I had the opportunity to study in Hanoi, I had long been attuned to the possibility of doing something about the lack of attention to Vietnamese literature beyond its borders." (pp. vi-vii). Lockhart's toolbox is summarized as:

Intellectual and other debts incurred while turning eight of N. H. Thiep's stories into English [including:] [...] the Vietnamese Faculty at Hanoi University [,] [...] the excellent *Vietnamese Dictionary* [(Hoang Phe, general editor; Social Sciences Publishing House of Hanoi; 1988), and] [...] my wife, Monique, a native Vietnamese speaker, whose authentic knowledge, intelligent comments, and oral support deepened my contact with the culture it gave me so much interest and pleasure to translate. To her I am most grateful." (pp. vii-viii)

Lockhart follows this preface with a 36-page introduction that, almost two decades later, distinguishes itself as the only English- or French-language introduction to translated Vietnamese that mentions (Western, post-1976) translation studies<sup>39</sup> and attempts to apply the thought of then-prominent translation scholars to his task.

Lockhart's 1992 introduction reveals other discernible micro-cosmopolitan- or translation studies-relevant features. First, a valorization of (re)imported Western notions that influence Thiep's writing is explained in the context of how the author differs from those in the late 1970s who could be considered *Doi Moi* literature's forerunners. It is likely that these were the writers responsible for the "currents of critical writing that had been trickling out" (Templer, p. 128) empowered by Nguyen Van Linh's 1987 speech (4(II-B)). By the time Thiep was writing in the mid 1980's, the reintroduction of

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<sup>39</sup> According to my research.

consumerism was about to set off changes that, in retrospect, have had a profound impact on translation as practiced today in Vietnam:

“It may also be that, unlike [predecessor] Nguyen Khai, an older writer, N. H. Thiep began publishing at a time of unusual freedom of expression. But, even so, there is no doubt that the renovation freedoms were encouraged by a widespread desire for economic development that, by the late 1980s, had a particular edge. This was the edge of post-Vietnam War consumerism.” (Nguyen Huy Thiep, 1992, p. 25)

Secondly, the introduction discusses the source text’s domestic reception<sup>40</sup> and includes examples of both fawning and excoriating critiques – “the disturbance of the conservative critics who nevertheless read on with fascination and horror” (Nguyen Huy Thiep, p. 16) – found in numerous SRV literary journals and magazines. Lockhart also sums up the local impact of Thiep’s writings’ as reliant on shifting temporality, using Derrida’s notion of “continual deferral of meaning”. This Derridean quality is cited by Templer as a survival tactic, allowing Thiep to publish in the SRV by “blurring the boundaries of history and fiction and shifting his vocabulary [...] [thus] avoid[ing] censorship” (Templer, p. 199). Lockhart elaborates:

What we are dealing with in [Thiep’s] case is a very different preoccupation with language and writing itself, which, as a temporal sequence of signs, produces what Derrida teaches us is a continual deferral of meaning. By placing the accent on time, this deferral permits the narrative to float free of the political-moral authority which sets up the temporal disjunction of the renovation agenda. By placing the accent on shifting points of view, it also reveals individual differences between people which have the same effect. Hence, the euphoria of those readers who felt that their imaginations were being set free in a new way of viewing society. Hence, also, the disturbance of the conservative critics who nevertheless read on with fascination and horror. What these critics singled out for most attention, of course, were the bizarre details of cruelty, hunger, and lust which figure in the stories. In a typical conservative explanation of this dark side of N. H. Thiep’s writing, the critic Mai Ngu suggested something cold, irresponsible, even ‘pathological’ [...] in the nature of the writer. (p. 16)

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<sup>40</sup> This being informative on local conventional wisdoms.

Furthermore, Lockhart illustrates the ways in which Thiep's writing deviates from "standard" *Doi Moi* literature (c. 1987-1991) in a manner that is non-exclusive, diversifying, and distinctly anti-essentialist – that is, micro-cosmopolitan – in the context of D/SRV literatures. Below, Lockhart lists many of the palimpsestic layers that form, to varying degrees, identifiable components of Vietnam/ese/ness: syncretism, individualism, and constant flux:

[T]o clarify the way N. H. Thiep's stories override the temporal and spatial disjunctions of the standard renovation agenda, one can say that in their deferral of meaning they do not have a single ideological centre; they have multiple centres – Christianity, humanism, socialism, feudalism, democracy, or whatever – that are constantly constructed and reconstructed by individual differences. Stated in a different way, there is an absence of a single ideological centre in N. H. Thiep's writing, which has a number of important implications. (p. 23)

Lockhart then looks at some of the writers who may have informed Thiep's style – authors whose atypical writings predated what had become in the SRV 'Doi Moi literature' and, by 1988, the "year of the Nguyen Huy Thiep phenomenon" (p. 3). It also serves to indicate that although *Doi Moi* was officially declared in 1986, Vietnam's supposedly rigid enforcement of Socialist Realism during the days of High Socialism nevertheless allowed periodic deviation into experimental styles. It also confirms that intellectual dissent was able to elude censors, usually through ambiguity, during Vietnam's most oppressive periods:

[M]any writers in the 1920s and 1930s had to deal more or less ambiguously with more than one ideological centre. This was inevitable at a time when the literary agenda raised the complex issue of modernization within the context of foreign political domination. [Even after colonial liberation and the subsequent communist struggle for reunification of the nation,] where the main literary project since 1945 has been the reconstruction of a single ideological centre under the banner of the Communist Party, there is at least one major example of deconstruction before we get to N. H. Thiep and Pham Thi Hoai: Nguyen Khai's very interesting 1979 novel, *Cha va con va...* (*Father and Child and...*), about a young priest who goes into a parish after the revolution. [The novel

indicates][...] a shift in political consciousness – marked by 1979 when the renovation agenda was first mooted – which acknowledges that the democratic revolution has only been a partial success. By the time we get to N. H. Thiep’s work a decade later, however, our sense of this shift comes in on an altogether new level of complexity. (p. 3)

Lockhart’s *Note on the Translation* includes a contextualized working definition for “translation”, comments on how identity is impacted by translation, questions the writer’s literary categorization, and reveals the translatability-related basis on which stories were selected:

If N. H. Thiep’s writing reflects the international (consumer) links which stimulated new literary perceptions in Vietnam in the late 1980s, the following translations reflect the opportunity which these links also gave me to cross a cultural divide. Yet such a crossing clearly works in two ways. Translation is finally the transfer of meaning that comes back across a divide and *ensures that the identity of the original texts and the translation will not be the same*. In the case of the following translations, there is first the question of selection from the three artificial categories into which N. H. Thiep’s stories are usually said to fall: historical stories, mythical stories, and realistic social fiction. The basis on which I have culled the stories has been their readiness to convey the range and quality of N. H. Thiep’s writing in English translation [...]. (emphasis mine) (pp. 29-30)

Lockhart’s efforts at including the translation scholar’s discipline in his academic-quality introduction remain unique according to the research I have conducted. From his reading of Derrida, the translator evaluates the challenges of translatability:

With respect to translation itself, the many months I spent working with N. H. Thiep’s texts certainly attuned me to Derrida’s proposition that translation is inscribed in a double mind, that is, a text is both translatable and untranslatable. [...] My decision not to include [a few] interesting stories was [...] partly based on a difficulty of translation: each contained more than one or two paragraphs *which I might have understood in the original, but which I did not think I could in any case make sufficiently meaningful in translation.*” (emphasis mine) (pp. 30-31)

After discussing the source and target language linguistic difficulties of translating Vietnamese into (presumably) English, a consideration addressed in Chapter 2, Lockhart returns to translation scholarship, this time referencing Walter Benjamin’s 1923 essay

‘The Task of the Translator’<sup>41</sup>, as well as the chapter on Walter Benjamin in Andrew Benjamin’s<sup>42</sup> 1989 essay *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy: A New Theory of Words*<sup>43</sup>. Lockhart assures, “I do know that the only advice I found helpful came from a theory of translation that displaces the Babel myth.” (Nguyen Huy Thiep, p. 34) He then discusses W. Benjamin thoughts on “pure language”<sup>44</sup> and A. Benjamin’s reiteration that translation must serve the purpose of ““expressing the central reciprocal relationship between the languages”” (p. 34). Lockhart provides a subsequent account of how he turned W. Benjamin’s theories into “practical advice” for the translation of Thiep’s short stories:

This leads to the following practical advice: for the sake of ‘pure language’ the translator must break the crumbling barriers of his own language. He must not perpetuate the usual error of attempting to preserve its state. [Per W. Benjamin,] he must allow ‘his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue’ [\*], especially when translating from a language remote from his own. In such cases it is necessary to search all the more deeply for the convergence of image, tone, and work. [...] In any case, when I read Benjamin’s argument about two-thirds of the way through the second draft of my translations, I sensed immediately that I had come across some useful advice. And I can suggest a reason for the possibility that this sensation was self-fulfilling [:] [...] I had become increasingly aware of the potentially endless nature of the task. In other words, I was already aware of the need for a pragmatic use of language for what was translatable in N. H. Thiep’s texts: the sense of sameness and difference which was familiar to me from the time of my first reading of ‘The General Retires’. (pp. 35-36)

With such a heavy anchor in translation studies’ discourse of the early 1990’s (Derrida’s “double mind”, Benjamin’s “pure language”) Greg Lockhart’s introduction is unique in Vietnamese-to-English translation. Though his subsequent translations do not revisit the

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<sup>41</sup> Published in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, edited with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn and published in 1969 by Schocken in New York.

<sup>42</sup> Per Lockhart, no relation to Walter Benjamin.

<sup>43</sup> Published by Routledge.

<sup>44</sup> This, and the translator’s attendant task of liberating the pure language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work.

discipline, it seems that Lockhart remains the originator of discourse in Anglospheric academic circles that translate contemporary Vietnamese literature into English.

#### **II-D: Zinoman on Thiep**

In his 1994 article “Declassifying Nguyen Huy Thiep”, Peter Zinoman cites a 1989 claim by Greg Lockhart written<sup>45</sup> for the SRV’s *Tap Chi Van Hoc (Literary Studies Review)* (my translation)<sup>46</sup> as the *raison d’être* for his article. In Lockhart’s “Why I am Translating Nguyen Huy Thiep’s Short Stories into English”, Zinoman challenges the translator’s literary assessment: “‘What we have here,’ Lockhart wrote expansively, ‘is the literary phenomenon which we call postmodernism.’” (Zinoman, 1994, p. 294). His disagreement on this point extends to other prominent Vietnam scholars worldwide who independently or previously concurred with Lockhart’s “expansive” declaration. These included the first person known to have labeled Thiep’s work ‘postmodern’, Hanoi literary critic Le Xuan Giang; Hue Tam Ho Tai, one of the US’ most-published contemporary Vietnam scholars; and California-based literary theorist, Dao Trung Dao, who publishes in Vietnamese (Zinoman, 1994, pp. 294-295). In accordance with Nguyen Ba Chung’s postulate that in considering Vietnam/ese/ness one is forced to “take sides” (Nguyen Ba Chung, 2002, p.34), my position concurs with Zinoman’s. More pertinently, his arguments against the ‘postmodernification’ of Thiep’s *œuvre* can be situated within the concerns of a micro-cosmopolitan-informed approach to translation research. Two

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<sup>45</sup> Though published in Vietnamese, I have been unable to ascertain whether Lockhart wrote his contribution in Vietnamese (he had the resources and skills available to do so at the time) or had it translated from English.

<sup>46</sup> Zinoman’s translation of this publication’s title, “*Literary Studies*” (Zinoman, 1994, p. 294), is lacking. The Vietnamese word “tap chi” has been ignored. It is usually translated as “review”, “journal”, or “magazine”.

major passages on the article's first page are almost explicitly micro-cosmopolitan as it is being deployed in this study. Questioning the conventional wisdom from below<sup>47</sup>,

Zinoman states

What is peculiar about this burgeoning consensus that puts Thiep in the “postmodern” camp is a basic disagreement about why the label fits. In the cases cited above [<sup>48</sup>], divergences [in how Thiep is linked to postmodernism] may stem from the very different sociocultural backgrounds and scholarly traditions inside of which the critics work. Another reason, however, lies in the fundamental unclarity of the concept of postmodernism: postmodernism, like pornography, has proved easier to recognize than to define. (Zinoman, 1994, p. 295)

In the passage above, Zinoman acknowledges diversity, personal background, and the local in terms of their capacity to influence underlying reasons for the international scholarly consensus that “appended” Thiep to the globalizing aspirations of a universalizing postmodernism. Undermining such conventional wisdom via complexification, or problematization of the definition of “postmodernism”<sup>49</sup> seems intuitively micro-cosmopolitan. Zinoman explains his opposition to postmodern classification for Thiep:

My position – that the historical significance of Thiep's stories are most vivid in the context of “local” Vietnamese economic and cultural development – partially reflects the immaturity of early scholarly criticism of the writer and his work. This essay is thus a bald attempt to direct interpretive emphasis in treatments of Thiep's work away from features that place him at the tail end of some international literary avant-garde and toward the features that have made him a leading intellectual dissident in contemporary Vietnam. (Zinoman, 1994, p. 295)

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<sup>47</sup> “Below” is to be understood in this context as: ‘from the very definition of the word itself, below the level of applied discourse’ (my interpretation).

<sup>48</sup> A discussion of the scholars who agreed with Thiep's association with the postmodern; most are listed in my summary above.

<sup>49</sup> My position here is that stated or implicit undefinability is tantamount, in this context, to complexification, especially as concepts and theoretical consideration of postmodernism have likely changed – to some extent – in the thirteen years since Zinoman's article was written, and to an even greater extent since Thiep's postmodern label was internationally and domestically affixed.

This 1994 harbinger of a micro-cosmopolitan outlook is evident in the excerpt above: “historical significance”, defined above as a desire on Zinoman’s part to foreground and complexify the issue of literary classification, lies most ‘vividly’ in the “context of ‘local’ Vietnamese economic and cultural development.” The temporal context of Zinoman’s writings (early *Doi Moi*) was an era of fundamental internal sociopolitical change, economic growth and influx of the Western and the ‘globalized’ (in its pre-internet form). Thus, Zinoman’s perspective can be seen, in varying degrees, as “revaluative of local/global hybridity”, “anti-essentialist”, sensitive to the symptomatic “flux of [inbound and outbound] globalization”, and “progressive” in its didactic focus. Such evidence of the micro-cosmopolitan in “Declassifying Nguyen Huy Thiep” firmly establishes its authority to inform this study.

Zinoman’s article does not dispute the presence of “postmodernist trope” in Thiep’s writing: “Postmodern fiction’s characteristic penchant to concurrently make transparent and problematize the processes of its own creation stands out clearly in several of Thiep’s short stories.” (Zinoman, 1994, p. 296). In his challenge to the postmodern arguments of (presumably, the aforementioned) ‘immature scholarly critics’, Zinoman inadvertently reveals a substantial oversight in both Lockhart’s English-language and Phan Huy Duong’s French-language translation of Thiep’s short story “Cun”. By going “deeper” into the source text’s creation and critical reception, Lockhart reevaluates the local<sup>50</sup>, ‘travels interculturally’ in an analysis of the translation (Zinoman, 1994, p. 301)<sup>51</sup>, and

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<sup>50</sup> as shall be seen in the explanation of the preceding claim of translator oversights in the French and English translations of “Cun”.

<sup>51</sup> Zinoman’s biographical paragraph on Thiep includes the writer’s literary collection, professional training, creative influences, monolingualism, and lack of overseas travel. There is additional though less “objective” micro-cosmopolitan resonance in this portion of Zinoman’s research: my position is that contextually for Vietnam, this accounts as “undermining

undermines conventional wisdom from below (Zinoman, 1994, pp. 298-305)<sup>52</sup>. “Cun” is a typically bleak and unsettling tale from the early *Doi Moi* period whose translations into English and French exemplify the type of translated Vietnamese literature still in demand in the Anglo- and Franco-spheres. Before explaining how Zinoman challenges Lockhart’s translation of “Cun”, it is worth noting several relevant features of his research into Vietnamese literary history vis-à-vis Thiep that are of interest to translation scholarship regarding Vietnam.

As Vietnamese literary trends are popularly assumed to remain heavily influenced<sup>53</sup> by French Romanticism<sup>54</sup> Zinoman explains this seemingly intuitive conclusion (Vietnamese prose was born in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century under French colonialism) by offering a more pragmatic, if nefarious, reason for French Romanticism’s continuing echo in much of contemporary Vietnamese prose. This echo is distinct, whether written in Vietnamese, “*un français indochinois*” (a usage of French that does not have a counterpart in English), or in translation.

[For] postmodern writers, the formal conventions of modernism represent the entrenched and, thus, conservative literary establishment and forms their natural

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conventional wisdom from below” as it emphasizes the individual, who rests at the bottom of the traditional Vietnamese hierarchy that ranks such things: the family and ancestors, the village, “society”, and the nation (including its collective leadership) have all ranked higher than the ‘individual’ in traditional-cultural Vietnamese notions of identities. There is concern in the contemporary SRV media that this cultural feature is fading and that the ‘new individualism’ will replace valued SRV traditions.

<sup>52</sup> Here, “below” can be defined by Zinoman’s explicating chapter “Thiep and the Burden of Vietnamese History”, covering millennia of Vietnam’s literary history while exposing the flux of incessant change brought about by centuries of national experience with notions, influence and control from the non-Vietnamese world, all of which inform from below the timeline of contemporary history.

<sup>53</sup> This is the case of SRV’s best-selling (in translation only) author/political dissident, Hanoi’s Duong Thu Huong – “Balzac in Vietnam” enthused *le Nouvel Observateur* – presumably over Phan Huy Duong’s (2005) French language translation of the work cited in the Reference list.

<sup>54</sup> Another important addition to Vietnamese prose during the French colonial era is *reportage* journalism, “phong su” in Vietnamese. This latter has enjoyed a SRV media “renaissance” in the current phase of *Doi Moi*, according to my own independent research.

target. *Thiep and northern Vietnamese writers of the contemporary era, however, contend with a very different literary establishment shaped over decades by colonialism, civil war, and a culturally dogmatic communist state. [...]* [In the case of the former,] the French educational system influenced early Vietnamese attempts as prose fiction. For political reasons, this colonial literary canon was dominated by the sentimental classics of French romanticism, especially the works of Lamartine, Hugo, Musset, and Vigny. As one observer has pointed out [<sup>55</sup>], French interests were served by “having the Vietnamese youths of the time devoting themselves to pathetic love, moaning, weeping or burying flowers” rather than to political agitation. (emphasis mine) (Zinoman, 1994, pp. 298-299)

‘If the origins of prose fiction and romanticism in Vietnam were so imposed, and interceding history so fraught, can the development of literature from “modern” on to “postmodern” be in any way comparable to the way in which the phenomenon developed in the West?’ seems the major rhetorical question raised by Zinoman’s article. In the mid 1940s, French Romanticism was, in northern Vietnam, banned in favor of exclusive Socialist Realism, a literary diktat extended throughout the reunified nation in 1975. Stating his own research preferences in his attempt to situate Thiep and his œuvre, Zinoman valorizes a deep historical, thus unavoidably political, local perspective: “I find it more fruitful to follow Thiep’s Vietnamese critics and *read his work in relation to the styles and conventions of Vietnam’s precolonial literary history on the one hand and to the hegemony of socialist realism in Northern Vietnam on the other.*” (emphasis mine) (Zinoman, 1994, p. 302). Further encasing this approach in the micro-cosmopolitan vein is its stated attempt at reevaluating the “anti-essentialist” local (precolonial versus colonial Vietnam<sup>56</sup>) while remaining non-oppositional in regard to contextualizing the globalizing/hegemonic influences of the Socialist Realism literary style. In examining Thiep’s precolonial narrative traditions and their relation to his status as an intellectual dissident, Zinoman confirms that the effectiveness of his research rests, in this micro-

<sup>55</sup> Zinoman appears to be citing a 1991 article by Hoang Ngoc Thanh; see note 20 (Zinoman, 1994, p. 313).

<sup>56</sup> This, in terms of Vietnamese prose fiction’s supposedly essential debt to French literary styles.

cosmopolitan context, in understanding Thiep's adeptness at "undermining conventional wisdom from below":

[M]any appraisals have approvingly noted that Thiep's work is rarely transparently didactic.[...] In an early review of "The General Retires" [SRV literary critic Dang Anh] Dao argues that, unlike the typical narrators in works acclaimed for their "mass character," Thiep's narrators are not "secretly and patronizingly trying to educate the masses. *In fact at certain points, the narrator even seems 'below' the characters and the readers.*"[cites Dao's article "Khi Ong 'Tuong Ve Huu' Xuat Hien"] (Zinoman, 1994, p. 303)

In taking the reader through various turns of recent Vietnamese literary history, Zinoman deploys an approach that taps into many micro-cosmopolitan concepts in defending his stance on Thiep's classification as an author. In problematizing this strong, global desire to categorize a contemporary D/SRVietnamese-influenced author in contemporary, Western terms, Zinoman exposes a major flaw in most Western assessments of Vietnam/ese/ness. As the West has shaped Vietnam's history for over a century, Vietnam/ese/ness may generate phenomena that *seem* suited for Western definition and categorization. This, however, is an illusion borne of a syncretic culture that palimpsestically and selectively co-opts foreign elements. While these elements may be recognizable to outsiders, they are as superficial and misleading as the "trope" of postmodernism in Thiep's writing. Zinoman's proto-micro-cosmopolitan argument bolsters the notion that in Vietnam, what you see is not what you think you see – an illusion dismissed only if approached from a local-centric and historical consideration of Vietnam/ese/ness and its syncretic characteristics.

His research further reveals potential "losses" in a number of translations of the introduction of Thiep's short story, "Cun". One is found in Phan Huy Duong's *Terre des éphémères* (Phan Huy Duong, 1997) and the second in Greg Lockhart's translation of *The General Retires and Other Stories* (Nguyen Huy Thiep, 1992) These two cited

translations of “Cun” also effectively illustrate how Zinoman has exposed Thiep’s “postmodernist trope” to be something perhaps quite different, something complex, local, traditional, and always a bit difficult for the government to swallow. Yet, as we shall see, Thiep’s intellect throws the censors into a fidgety inertia – he’s now world famous, and he never *overtly* crosses the shifting limits of tolerance for potentially “problematic” literary works. What has been missed in the translations below is an example of Zinoman’s usefulness: his publications use hindsight to produce what he likely considers ‘mature scholarly criticism’. In Phan Huy Duong’s translation, the short story begins:

NGUYÊN HUY THIÊP  
CUN

**Prologue**

Parmi les gens que je connaissais, j’admirais beaucoup K., l’essayiste. Il était très savant en conception littéraire (domaine auquel j’avoue ne pas comprendre grand-chose). Il fut un temps où l’on considérait ses écrits comme “des coups de cravache” qui incitait le cheval de la création littéraire à foncer sans dériver du droit chemin”. (Phan Huy Duong, 1997, p. 19)

In Lockhart’s 1992 translation (Nguyen Huy Thiep, 1992), with which Zinoman had the benefit of hindsight, we see a similar approach:

**Cun**

1. *The Cause of the Story*

Among the people I know, I have particular respect for the literary scholar K. He understands our literary debates well (which I must confess I don’t). There are even times when people compare his articles with ‘whips’ that lash ‘the horse of creation’ unerringly along its path. (Nguyen Huy Thiep, 1992, p. 102)

In the above introductions, it appears that neither Lockhart nor Phan Huy Duong were able to “read between the lines”. Zinoman, however, situates the beginning of “Cun” into a historical background that fully changes the reader’s perspective on what might appear to be evidence of the author’s “postmodernism”. In discussing Thiep’s ability to critique the state via association with ancient history (as Templer’s comments above on Zinoman’s translations of Thiep’s “Fired Gold” explain), Zinoman exposes another way

in which Thiep's "Cun" subverts official canon, via the onetime czars of northern literary production:

Another example surfaces in "Cun," when the narrator mockingly compares the writing of the "literary scholar K" to "whips which lash the horse of creation unerringly." This metaphor is ironically culled from a speech by Truong Chinh on the nature of politically acceptable criticism (see *Selected Writings*, 287). "Without criticism and controversy, our cultural movement is too placid and too uneventful! It is just like a horse trotting along with his head drooping, who needs the whip of criticism to set him galloping." It is rumored in Hanoi that "the literary scholar K" stands for the conservative critic Do Van Khang, one of Thiep's harshest critics. (Zinoman 1994, p. 315, note 45)

Factoring in Truong Chinh's writings entirely changes the meaning of the very simple words with which they are interlaced. Zinoman's explicitation of "Cun's" introduction constitutes a major micro-cosmopolitan coup. By exposing a case of undermining of local conventional wisdom (he seems to have unveiled an issue that Vietnamese censors had not – but should have – noticed), and by opening up an entirely different avenue for categorizing the writer – one that relies on *the local specificities of categorization* (as opposed to universalizing literary trends), in this case Vietnam's millennial tradition of an unspoken tolerance of the *most talented* intellectual dissidents, Zinoman renders a much more profound, Vietnamese, and difficult-to-categorize portrait of the author. In defense of Lockhart, it is unlikely that mockery of Truong Chinh would have been pointed out even if noticed during his academic stay in Hanoi, where he translated the stories in *The General Retires and Other Stories*. Given habitual delay Zinoman allows himself in addressing issues, genres, and authors translated by Lockhart<sup>57</sup>, Zinoman's discourse maintains the benefit of hindsight and further research. It is noteworthy that Phan Huy Duong, three years after Zinoman's article was published, appears to have

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<sup>57</sup> Lockhart's first major translation and commentary on Vietnamese modern literature of the 1930's appeared in 1996. Zinoman's was published in 2003.

missed this particular “nugget” in his 1997 rendition of “Cun”. Duong has severely criticized Truong Chinh in his translations’ introductions as a major contributor to the “destruction” of Vietnamese prose.

## **II-E: Exclusions**

For this discussion, I chose to focus on Nguyen Huy Thiep and two of his translators. Not only has this excluded other scholarly translators of the author’s works (Dana Sachs, Frank N. Trinh, Linh Dinh, and Kim Lefevre, in particular). It has also excluded Nguyen Huy Thiep-related input of other Franco- and Anglospheric editor/translators, websites, and publishing houses that commission or anthologize current Vietnamese literature in English translation. This loss includes the contributions of such individuals as Wayne Karlin, Dan Duffy, Frank N. Trinh, and others who have published a highly diverse corpus of current Vietnamese authors to an English-reading audience. In the US, academic, apolitical, neutral<sup>58</sup>, and smaller-scale publishers of contemporary literary translation (SRVietnamese to USEnglish) include: Curbstone Press, Willimantic Press, Seven Stories Press, Copper Canyon Press, [www.vietnamlit.org](http://www.vietnamlit.org)<sup>59</sup>, University of Hawai’i, University of California at Berkeley, Yale, the University of Michigan, among others. Specifically excluded from this study are those publishers that tend to promote Cold War-related Western conventional wisdoms, though they usually nowadays approach the topic through an updated jargon, such as “individual human rights”, “freedom of expression”, or “freedom from repression”.

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<sup>58</sup> Who thus challenge the US-centric, triumphalist conventional wisdom claiming “communism is bad”.

<sup>59</sup> Another literary website, published by Wikivietlit, is not SRV-source-text specific and seems more concerned with the “lost” literature of the RVN (1954-1975).

Unfortunately, this disqualifies the publisher with (apparently) the broadest reach for current SRVietnamese to USEnglish literary translation (on the North American market), the US's Hyperion East, owned by the Walt Disney Company, and distributed by Harper Collins publishers. Hyperion East's<sup>60</sup> mission statement has changed since Hyperion's founding in 1991<sup>61</sup>. This has led to the exclusion of North America's best selling SRV author, *political* dissident Duong Thu Huong<sup>62</sup>. Her translators Nina McPherson and Phan Huy Duong make their anti-SRV penchant clear, especially in their earlier English translations (Duong Thu Huong, 1995, "About the Author"). Phan Huy Duong's French-language translations, which usually predate his English-language collaboration with McPherson by two to four years, maintain his vitriol to this day. Hyperion East's English-language translations now make very brief mention of the author's dissident status, though she has long been the imprint's sole SRVietnamese voice. Incidentally, or perhaps not, the Walt Disney Company has been present and successful in Vietnam's business environment since the lifting of the US trade embargo in 1994, prior to their ownership of Hyperion East.

### **III: Identity generated to generated identity**

Through commentary on Hoang Ngoc Thanh Dung and Nguyen Huy Thiep above, distinctions of a more recent addition to Vietnam/ese/ness have been explored. In selecting texts that present the micro-cosmopolitan themselves, they inform on related concerns, and lend support to a fractal, intercultural method in which translation research

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<sup>60</sup> An "imprint" of Hyperion Books, according to source cited for corporate profile quote.

<sup>61</sup> I remember explicit dustcover or paratextual mentions implying Hyperion East was devoted to giving a voice to those who could not be heard in Asia and more emphatically promoting a 'freedom-of expression/-from repression' agenda.

<sup>62</sup> Duong Thu Huong moved to France in 2006.

can validate the local, and its history. Contemporary Vietnam (since 1975) has generated an ever-increasing amount of translation product. My discussion of prose literature has limited me to older translations, for the simple reason that the discourse since generated is of importance here, as it reveals the continued survival of SRV-published intellectual dissident.

If translated prose literature is the closest we can come to spontaneous, individual disseminations of identity-related material, the following chapter (5), focuses on a different type of identity dissemination: a controlled-release version, micro-managed by the state, and judiciously disseminated via a medium that has helped the SRV in its rapid material and economic development: the internet. In contrast to the *identity generated* by literature, the next translations examined are those that expose a *generated identity*. Again, historical foregrounding will be an introductory method of contextualizing translation that is being produced today in the SRV. Focusing on journalism and internet news sites from within the SRV as a valid repository of syncretic, palimpsestic Vietnam/ese/ness, the following chapter is informed by a deep-reaching historical look at modes of self-governance; “Hanoi newsrooms of the 1930s”; newsrooms of the post-*Doi Moi*, pre-internet era (both through my own experience in such newsrooms and a communications scholar’s paper on the *Vietnam News*); and finally, to conclude my study, I bring my focus to as close to yesterday’s headlines as relevance allows. Thus, the final chapter of the study concludes by bringing the micro-cosmopolitan approach up to the present moment, in translation – a theoretical goal in itself.

## Chapter 5: SRV, Media, and Internet

Given that translated media and internet content is state-supervised in Vietnam, it is worth understanding governing trends among the Vietnamese. Publications and print media have never been free<sup>63</sup> from official censorship in Vietnam. There are, however, discernable historical trends in tolerance and management of marginal public voices.

Within the US Vietnamese community, scholar-author-poet-translator Nguyen Ba Chung is a marginal ethnic-Vietnamese figure, as noted in his 2002 article for the University of Hawai'i's journal *Manoa*. "*The Long Road Home: Exile, Self-Recognition, and Reconstruction*" (Nguyen Ba Chung, 2002) is a "Call to Conscience" to the anti-SRV *Viet Kieu* communities to come to better terms with their modern-day, communist-led homeland.<sup>64</sup> He is of the same generation as the most virulently anti-SRV exiles, those who left Vietnam during or after the American military conflict, a three-tiered *multigenerational* exodus: in the panic of 1975; the "boat people years"; and via the jointly GVN-USG administered Orderly Departure Program (ODP), which has ended since the establishment of normal SRV-USA diplomatic relations in 1995. In the conventional wisdom of this particular *Viet Kieu* community, this call for reconciliation is *de facto* heresy, perhaps more so to the non-Buddhist<sup>65</sup>. Chung's article touches on

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<sup>63</sup> "A free press", as exemplified by the "Westernized, economically-advanced, multiparty democracy" mainstream media (mostly under private ownership) does not seem to apply to much of the world.

<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, on page 36 of the article cited, Chung credits the 1992 Montréal-based Vietnamese-language journal *Tram Con* (A Hundred Children) as a pioneer in literary reconciliation through "[having a] proclaimed objective of publishing works by writers both inside and outside Viet Nam". (Nguyen Ba Chung, p. 35)

<sup>65</sup> US Christian families sponsored many post-1975 Viet Kieu/refugees; this is documented to have had an impact on the exile families' spiritual acculturation to the US in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Among the most radically opposed to the current Vietnamese government are US-based Christian Viet Kieu and overseas Vietnamese, for both political and religious reasons. In

literature, war, history, clashing conventional wisdoms, and Vietnam's centuries old north-south regional and socio-political differences, all from the perspective of exile<sup>66</sup>. A distinguishing cosmopolitan feature of this article is its resonance with what Herodotus described as a yearning to understand the reasons behind why peoples fight one another, as outlined in Chapter 1.

Before delving into Chung's socio-historical foregrounding for this chapter, I will posit that *Doi Moi* and the internet have occasioned a broad improvement in and expansion of translation activity in Vietnam. This position is based on my experience in Ho Chi Minh City in the early-to-mid 1990's as a former reviser/junior translator for a local newsweekly and daily consumer of Vietnamese-language print media. It is further informed by 12 years of daily exposure to SRVietnamese translated media (radio and print, via internet). Below are related preliminary observations, and some underlying reasons for my optimism regarding prospects of translation research in the SRV.

First, the SRV's expanding internet media provides the most reliable window into SRVietnam/ese/ness, allowing the overseas translation researcher access to information almost impossible to obtain prior to the internet's arrival in Vietnam. The most important benefit to the translation scholar is the fact that these digitized translations can be easily archived – an ability previously monopolized by the state. In addition to much quicker dissemination, information is (locally) translated into more languages, English ranking first. Second, the internet is the most valuable tool for locating (other) Vietnamese translation resources. For today's translators and translation scholars, the most valuable pre-internet (pre-1997) texts referenced online are generally inaccessible. The role of

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France, on the other hand, it is the Buddhist-led resistance that generates the most vociferous denunciations of the SRV.

<sup>66</sup> See Final Provisional Observations (IV).

used-bookstores in our digitized world is, in this instance, placed in greater prominence: they constitute the sole outlet for books unlikely to be reprinted or digitally disseminated. In terms of micro-cosmopolitan relevance, as the books are presumably pre-read, they have likely contributed to the formation of another's conventional wisdom on Vietnam – depending on how far one wants to take the micro-cosmopolitan “idea”. Peter Zinoman and Greg Lockhart have both lamented the inaccessibility of a wide range of translations published in northern Vietnam since 1975. As noted in 2005 (Zinoman) and 1992 (Lockhart), these prominent translators consider this lacuna, in Vietnam and overseas, to be a substantial loss and an impediment to their work. The only hope of locating such translations rests with used bookstores, where supply is inherently random. Third, micro-cosmopolitan reflection has informed the selection of material used to construct this chapter. My personal experience in the field of translated Vietnamese media, however, makes objectivity understandably elusive. While this personal experience is likely an asset to my research, it makes academic detachment difficult. As elsewhere in this paper, subjectivity is countered with self-disclosure, an element I consider essential to the micro-cosmopolitan approach. If the major risks of using a cosmopolitan framework are elitism, universalization, and tolerance of hegemonic over-reaching, self-disclosure becomes indispensable for separating the researcher from the research. While self-awareness has obvious limitations as a countermeasure against subjectivity, it is incumbent on the researcher to note instances in which one's personal viewpoint is confirmed – especially when dealing with topics that have not been widely studied. And finally, SRVietnamese mainstream media and official organizations actively project mainstream Vietnamese identities via the internet, a virtual Vietnam/ese/ness. This

practice has even generated a profile for an official set of “Vietnamese translator identities” by regularly featuring (much more frequently than the mainstream Anglophone or Francophone media) articles about translators and their thoughts on translation, often written by their translating colleagues in the media industry<sup>67</sup>.

### **I: Nguyen Ba Chung**

In his reconciliatory article centered on literary inter-valuation between the (mostly-US or Anglospheric) *Viet Kieu* literary circles and their ethnic homelands’, Chung notes three important “cultural disruptions and discontinuities” (Nguyen Ba Chung, 2002, p. 39) that have shaken Vietnam since the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is in this discussion that we discover two indigenous modes of governance that have operated among the Vietnamese during times of hegemonic flux and thereafter. He points out that these “[t]hree periods of major cultural disruptions and discontinuities [...] [are] responsible for the creation of [...] [many] deeply divided<sup>68</sup> ‘little Vietnams’.” (p. 39). The 1460-1497 reign of emperor Le Thanh Tong was a time during which Vietnam almost doubled its national territory in its centuries-long “*nam tien*” (southward expansion) nation-building process, during a period known as the Hong Duc (Flood of Virtue) era. Chung describes the impact of this first cultural disruption:

The first discontinuity occurred at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Following the Chinese administrative model, the Le dynasty promoted Confucianism as the state doctrine in order to strengthen its absolute reach. Buddhist monks, no longer welcome in the corridor of power, returned to the village and carried on their tradition among the peasantry. The king ruled with the help of his mandarin, whose scholars could only be appointed after passing examinations based on the Four books and the Five Classics of

<sup>67</sup> Several of these translator identities have been summarized in Appendix 4.

<sup>68</sup> Representing fractal, fractious qualities as a historical feature of Vietnamese identity.

Confucianism<sup>[69]</sup>. With time, the national intellectual temper became much more dogmatic and less tolerant. The atmosphere of freedom, inclusiveness, and tolerance that had prevailed under the influence of Buddhism dissipated, leading to the civil war among [powerful clans] the Mac, the Trinh, and the Nguyen during the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. (Nguyen Ba Chung, p. 39)

The excerpt above describes the result of a fundamental shift in governance guided by hegemonic principles imported from China. While Vietnam has been ruled by invaders for most of its existence, its brief periods of independence have been punctuated by a willingness to import foreign hegemonic models that have had disastrous results for the nation. The choice of Vietnamese rulers to align themselves with the USSR after 1975 is an example: by 1986, the country was on the edge of famine, deeply in debt to the disintegrating USSR, and still largely unreconstructed after wars that had ended 10 years earlier. Chung's article goes on to show two distinctly Vietnamese forms of self-governance that explain why it may appear that the nation is prone to making choices that seem guaranteed to cause it further distress:

In his article "Culture As a Motive for Development," Nguyen Hue Chi describes two governing models in this era of Vietnamese history. The first was composed of the pluralistic (*da nguyen*), freewheeling (*tu do thoi mai*), and syncretic (*dung hop*) dynasties of Ly Tran, wherein Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism coexisted and flowered. The second was composed of the monophilosophical (Confucianism only), monopolistic (*doc quyen*) and unnatural (*phi tu nien*) regime under Le Thanh Tong. He considers the latter, which was able to rise to eminence – but only for a short time – to be at odds with Vietnamese culture, and he concludes, "Vietnamese culture both in the past and in the present has always thrown into the dustbin quietly and in due time, though it may take a long while but always inexorably, phenomena that deviate from its law." Nevertheless, the competition between these two governing models created the first period of cultural disruption. (Nguyen Ba Chung, p. 39)

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<sup>69</sup> It is noteworthy that this mandarin lived a life that included a language used at home, Vietnamese, and a foreign language in their capacity as officials – Classical Chinese. Having devised a script for their native language, it is certain that translational activity was a part of their daily lives.

This aspect of ‘throwing into the dustbin’ of ‘phenomena that deviate from its law’ lends final credence to the assertion that Vietnam/ese/ness syncretically *retains* elements of non-Vietnam/ese/ness that *do not* ‘deviate from its law’, incorporating them palimpsestically. Chung’s article goes on to identify the two “cultural disruptions” that took place thereafter: the imperial signing of the Protectorate Agreement with France (the Patenôtre Accord) in 1884, followed by the Communist victory at Dien Bien Phu (the end of French colonial rule of Vietnam) seven decades later. In terms of this chapter, I propose viewing the growth, standardization, dissemination, and improvement of SRVietnamese print media and internet during the *Doi Moi* era in general, and since around 2005 in particular, as evidence of a reemergence of a *managed* freewheeling, pluralistic, and naturally Vietnamese form of governance. Somewhat paradoxically, this is due to the efforts of a domestically tolerated, politically unchallenged communist party that has been espousing economic growth through a market economy, increased interaction with the non-communist world, and the promotion of pragmatic “positives” of *un-communist* Confucianism (education, loyalty to leaders, respect for elders, and public morality, to mention a few). This syncretic while seemingly dualistic state of affairs, I feel, demonstrates a key element of Vietnam/ese/ness oft mentioned or alluded to by scholars and authors, even from fields as seemingly remote from such rhetorics as economics, as evidenced in the title of David Dapice’s UN/Harvard-published study “*Viet Nam’s Economy: Success Story or Weird Dualism? A SWOT Analysis*” (Dapice, 2003). Nguyen Ba Chung hints at a another paradoxical reversal in self-governance in his observation that the most virulent anti-SRV *Viet Kieu* communities (in the “free world”) had taken on the characteristics of a monoideological (anti-communist, RVN-restorationist), unnatural

form of resistance to the homeland, while SRV's hegemonic authorities slowly, incrementally, and erratically prioritized *Doi Moi* reforms, which included allowing traditional Vietnamese culture (and forms of worship) to flourish. (Nguyen Ba Chung, pp. 40-41). An informed, daily consumer of “.vn” Vietnam/ese/ness in translation could only concur that in Vietnam, the perceived shift toward a limited “restor[ation of] some of the tolerance and unity of the Ly Tran era” (Nguyen Ba Chung, p. 41) is benefiting translation quality in the virtual SRV. This poses a relevant question for a micro-cosmopolitan researcher on Vietnam/ese/ness: Has the rise in media and internet translation products, flowing in and out of the SRV, reflected, or in any way occasioned, what may be a *fourth* Chungian cultural disruption, this time a positive sea-change that furthers economic wellbeing for the citizens of the SRV and their interactions with the globalized world? As for the outflow of SRV internet media in translation, targeted at a global audience and scrutinized pre- and post-dissemination for deviation from commonly understood and accepted official norms<sup>70</sup>, this new reality offers a researcher the opportunity to observe and archive real-time trends via steady flows of translation product.

## II: Georges Boudarel and Nguyen Van Ky

Further historical windows on translation and Vietnamese media are of interest to those looking at roles, duties, and identities of translators in Vietnam. In their book

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<sup>70</sup> Appendix 2 reveals that translation in Vietnam can be an element leading to criminal prosecution, depending on circumstances, intent, and dissemination. Otherwise, many roles reflect common translator “identities” observed in “Western” culture.

*Hanoi: City of the Rising Dragon* (Boudarel & Nguyen Van Ky, 2002)<sup>71</sup>, the authors present a rather tormented view of Vietnamese translators. During a period remembered mostly as France's "Belle Époque", historian and Badinhologist Nguyen Van Ky presents a colonist's view of the translator (interpreter) and their role within indigenous society:

What pests! [¶] The interpreter from Saigon is the most pedantic of all of them, he whose knowledge of the Annamite language led us to bring him here as interpreter from the beginning of the Conquest. Then there is the interpreter from Tonkin properly speaking – the little *nha que* (peasant) still green and fresh out of school, in front of whom a correct page of writing flung open the doors of the presidential coterie of the capital – they are like administrative confidants of both important and petty officials, draped in their pride as newcomers. They both, however, put on insolent and high airs in front of Europeans like someone who thinks himself indispensable and feels himself highly favored. [...¶] In sum, in this venal country, as in so many others, everything is subjected to an inevitable tariff of influence of friendship: charges, protection, council, etc. But here influence is often only apparent and friendship never counts for anything. [¶] In all of Tonkin there is no sacrament that is solemn enough, no moral profound enough, to resist the bewitching shine of a new piaster. (Boudarel & Nguyen Van Ky, p. 61)

Over a century later, in 2003, we again encounter a scathing, imperious tone, this time directed toward Vietnamese journalists, from their (fellow Vietnamese) rulers. Journalists who are also translators (as was the case with all the primary translators at the *Saigon Times* and other SRV foreign-language publications in the early to mid 1990's), along with "univocational" media translators, are, as everywhere, bound by legal conditions regarding the dissemination of information. The internet's presence in the SRV for ten years has seen many more SRV journalists finding their work translated into various languages (mainly English) and disseminated worldwide on the internet. The SRV-based translator would need to be aware of the attitudes espoused below, and to remember that such sentiments lie within the multilayered leadership structures of Vietnam. The author, Huu Tho, "politburo" member and late-1990's Chief of the Department of Culture and

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<sup>71</sup> Translated from French by Claire Duiker, daughter of leading US Badinhologist William J. Duiker (who wrote the cited translation's introduction). See Appendix 2.

Ideology<sup>72</sup> originally composed this text with the aim of warning journalists on how far to “push” in their quest for information. The piece was written for the CPV’s theoretical journal, *Tap Chi Cong San*; it was translated for the journal’s English-language version, *Communist Review* and disseminated online via the Viet Nam News Agency.

In reality, many journalists still win the support, even respect from their interviewees who are senior in their age, knowledge and position, as their questions suggest new ways of looking at issues, and their attitudes show their modesty and sincerity even when expressing opposing opinions. On the contrary, some others fail to achieve their goals, but only make their interviewee feel uncomfortable at being confronted by a vainglorious and self-important person! Some journalists try to show off about their relations with senior national leaders by talking about meetings with them and showing photographs taken with them. Meanwhile, they show disrespect to people in a lower position, making them uncomfortable. These journalists become important in their own eyes – just because through their work – they meet with important people. They are “poorly cultured” and are “a fox borrowing feathers from a peacock.” Modesty, self-respect, straightforwardness, sincerity and devotion constitute the most correct attitude of cultured journalists, even when they have to question a matter many times. Being an obsequious toady does not make a cultured journalist. Taking advantage during contacts to suggest bribery is the sign of a poorly cultured person, for whom one should feel sorry, if not despise. Putting on airs, being haughty, thinking little of the interviewee dose [sic] not make a cultured journalist. (Culture Vulture, 2003)<sup>73</sup>

Comparison of the preceding excerpts, from a translation studies perspective, would fall rather neatly into the postcolonial perspective found in an early-1990’s study on French-Arab translation. In his 1992 article “Translation and Cultural Hegemony: The Case of French-Arabic Translation”, Richard Jacquemond asserts that hegemonic colonial tendencies *do not disappear at the time of a colony’s national liberation* (Jacquemond, 1992, p. 155). And it is worth remembering that the liberation considered in this paper’s

<sup>72</sup> In this sentence, both the term “politburo” and the professional title mentioned have changed. They were appropriate translations as of 2003. Doi Moi structural changes have brought on a broad-scale change of names, culturally relevant in terms of the classical Chinese *Book of Changes* and the changing of language explored earlier in this paper.

<sup>73</sup> To the best of my research abilities, this text has disappeared from the internet since 2005, when I was last able to access it for research purposes. Surrounding dates of the Culture Vulture column are available, and the other online publications in which the piece appeared have no archives dating back to 2003 available online. Academic-standard internet databases and search engines were also unable to locate the text as of this writing.

purview occurred as recently as 1975, when the communist-led north took control of the entire nation. Hence, the evident hostility of Bon Mat's article would, from Jacquemond's postcolonial perspective, trickle down to the next nationally-unifying hegemon, the communist rulers of the SRV; their venom now directed explicitly toward other purveyors of information (journalists), which in a 2003 context, implicitly enmeshes their lot with that of those involved in the resulting translation and dissemination of this outwardly-globalizing nation. It is a rare glimpse at the lower end of the tolerance threshold held by (a decreasing, for now) number of voices in high places. It is also not entirely surprising that I have been unable to relocate it online as it represents a view infused with attitudes now deemed unsuited to Vietnam's outward globalization. Many other sections of Jacquemond's article resonate well with the Vietnamese translation experience since Vietnam's liberation from France. A micro-cosmopolitan approach, however, offers alternatives for evaluating Huu Tho's diatribe against 'uncultured' journalists and by extension, media translators. These alternatives do not intersect with Jacquemond's postcolonial argument. Instead, they point to fully Vietnamese explanations for Huu Tho's disdain. In Nguyen Ba Chung's recognition of two completely indigenous manners or modes in which the Vietnamese govern among themselves, the above passage may reflect the representative voice of the more restrictive, unnatural, monoideological form of Vietnamese self-governance, thus independent from any conclusion that the French colonial era and its aftermath could be the *cause* of this striking continuity of disdain echoed between hegemonists over the course of a century.

A book that values the local perspective above any other, Mark Sidel's *Old Hanoi*, hints at another potential cause for Huu Tho's vitriol. From the excerpt below, it can be posited that Huu Tho might have had concrete political motives for his hectoring. The modern-day heirs to Hanoi's 1920's intellectuals who eventually helped Vietnam defeat the French and Americans continue to publish and disseminate their ideas under state supervision. Fomenting discourse on political change, even in a new atmosphere of intellectual and ideological relaxation, would not be tolerated in today's *overseen* national intellectual rejuvenation. Huu Tho's contemptuous warning could be nothing more than the banality protecting one's political turf. As Sidel notes:

[Hanoi was, during the 1920s and 1930s] a centre for French repression of growing Vietnamese resistance [...]. Perhaps most importantly, Hanoi was a key centre for the dialogues that involved the new *petit bourgeoisie* and the new intellectuals, among them *journalists, teachers, translators, and writers, who led the resistance against the French and the explorations of new paths of culture, politics, and social life throughout the first five decades of the century under colonial rule.* (emphasis mine) (Sidel, 2000, p. 29)

Another reason behind Huu Tho's warning to journalists may be the SRV's acute fear of "peaceful evolution", a supposedly Western plot to lull communist nations into wealth-based devolution away from their communist and socialist ideals. By echoing the days of High Socialism, the diatribe may have sought to remind journalists that Vietnam will not tolerate any internal discussion about regime change. Coming at a time noted more for its increase in journalistic freedom, Huu Tho might have been reminding journalists of the very real limits to their ability to investigate and question the nation's leaders. In communist countries, the media's primary role is to promote and protect the party's legitimacy and interests. Inferred from Sidel's quote, the journalists (and thus translators) singled out by Huu Tho may well have been considered conduits to the phenomenon of peaceful evolution, even if not actively fostering a "Western" sense of democracy. As

noted, translators are among the professional classes that helped foment the forces that led to Vietnam's independence and reunification. Such potentially destabilizing and coordinated anti-regime activism is no longer tolerated. The final possible explanation for Huu Tho's rant may lie in Vietnamese diplomatic realities: it may have been meant to reassure the hegemon to the north of Vietnam's commitment to similar basic political values. China would not be receptive to any change of government in Vietnam, and incurring Chinese wrath is something the Vietnamese leaders are keen to avoid. This potential interpretation, while entirely plausible, is likely impossible to confirm. What is of value in all of the speculation above is that it seeks to establish purely Vietnamese motivation for the evidenced continuation of disdain for purveyors of information between 1891 and 2003 – instead of attributing it to the colonial experience with France. A micro-cosmopolitan view would be more amenable to seek out local reasons for such phenomena, and be wary of connecting it to the long-forgotten era of French rule.

### **III: Lockhart & Zinoman: Hanoi newsrooms of the 1930s**

Further research, from a translator's perspective, explores the era mentioned in Sidel's quote and describes a period of 'freewheeling' flux in the Vietnamese media. The introduction to Greg and Monique Lockhart's 1996 *The Light of the Capital: Three Modern Vietnamese Classics*, their translation of Hanoian 1920s and 1930s "modern" literature (Lockhart & Lockhart, 1996), adds to my notion that Vietnam's media in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by several upheavals unrelated to technology, linked instead to history, circumstance, ideology and identity.

In a section of the Lockharts' introduction entitled "*International Models, Social Realism, and Democratization of the Press*", the researcher is given a glimpse of the Hanoian media scene during such a period of flux and, per Sidel, considerable colonial resistance. The excerpt below looks at a Hanoian editor during the late 1920s credited for bringing Vietnamese print media up to international standards, and describes the type of journalism that his efforts sought to replace:

The editor was Hoang Tich Chu, and he is remembered for transforming the layout and content of Vietnamese journalism after a trip to France to study journalism in the mid-1920s. To this time, journals [the Vietnamese-language "newspapers" of their day] did not actually publish much news. Rather they published a range of fiction, poetry, translations, official reports, advertising, agricultural information, and educational essays – all in the same journal. But now, under the guidance of Hoang Tich Chu, the appearance of broadsheets with headlines, columns, and more local and international news than ever before meant that journals started to resemble modern newspapers. (Lockhart & Lockhart, pp. 15-16)

By bringing the researcher into the editorial mindset of the era and the radical adaptation of the media to what were, at the time, "international (French-based) norms", I intend to help substantiate the syncretic nature of Vietnam/ese/ness via the present. A few days' familiarity with SRV "official"<sup>74</sup> internet translation-product gained browsing the SRV's national news agency's English webpage, alongside the handful of non-subscription online translated daily newspapers, or listening to a week's worth of Radio the Voice of Vietnam's English or French daily news broadcast (on air since 1945, now also via internet) shows a blend of content that incorporates a combination of poetry, domestic news, relatively standardized and diversified SRV-"Westernized" styles of formatting, learned essays, short fiction, international news, sports, economic, agricultural reports,

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<sup>74</sup> "Private" SRV publications that are offered in translation, for the most part, require a paid subscription. Only a handful of articles, some outdated, are available freely from the *Saigon Times* online, for example.

and political ideology – an evolving, online, syncretic identity for the post-WTO “virtual” SRV.<sup>75</sup>

Similar media history comes from Peter Zinoman-edited/co-translated *Dumb Luck: A Novel by Vu Trong Phung* (Zinoman, 2002) As per micro-cosmopolitanism’s mandate to diversify – to, for the sake of study, problematize complexity – appropriate translation research should involve looking at the discourses and debates of other disciplines (micro-cosmopolitan “open-mindedness”) related to the area of study, if they exist. In the case of the recently rehabilitated writer Vu Trong Phung, whose works were previously banned in the SRV, Lockhart & Lockhart translated and contextualized the emergence of 1930s newsroom and the modern literature movement. As for the content of Zinoman’s introductory discussion of modern Vietnamese literature, to the intercultural, fractal researcher, it is complementary to the Lockharts’ treatment of the topic. In discussing Hanoi’s “modern” 1930s, Zinoman informs on the new ideas, new writers, generational shift, and emergence of professional journalism. It is precisely this flux that micro-cosmopolitanism is keen to observe:

The fluid trajectory of Phung’s career reflects the explosive growth of Indochinese journalism during the 1930s. While only thirty periodicals in quoc ngu came out during the first sixty years of French rule (1862-1918), Sarraut’s language reforms created a robust market for quoc ngu publications, especially newspapers [\*]. Indeed, the French sociologist André Dumarest identified a taste for newspapers as a defining cultural feature of the new elite that emerged in Indochinese cities during the interwar years [\*]. To meet the surging demand, publishers founded over forty quoc ngu periodicals between 1926 and 1930 and another four hundred during the 1930s [\*]. These publications included general interest newspapers as well as specialized publications focusing on literature, science, sports, cinema, women’s issues, and fashion. This growth in publishing generated demand for written material, which facilitated the transformation of

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<sup>75</sup>Vietnam’s approval for membership in the World Trade Organization in was secured in 2006. Their enthusiastically fêted official acceptance as a full member came in January 2007. This is viewed as a major accomplishment of Doi Moi and further evidence of Vietnam’s emergence as a globalizing nation in economic terms. There are many laws that will need to be changed over the next 12 years, the allotted time given Vietnam to fully comply with WTO standards and practices.

writing into a profession. Editors during this period paid as much as five piasters for an essay or short story, enough for productive and popular writers to make a modest living [\*]. (emphasis mine) (Zinoman, 2002, p. 17)

After this 1930s period of flux and flourish for prose<sup>76</sup> in general and journalism in particular, Vietnam's indigenous communists began their efforts to become the entire nation's liberating and ruling power. Marxist-Leninist journalistic and information dissemination standards were imposed in areas under their control. With the onset of *Doi Moi* in 1986, which eventually made way for a real diversification of journalism and literature, flux and flourish has returned to the media. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have entered an era inherently challenging for Vietnamese authorities: information is now virtually impossible to withhold if Vietnam is to become a dynamic, prosperous stakeholder in the regional and global economies. Internet use is widespread and government censorship is relatively limited; there is no "Great Firewall" of Vietnam, as China's internet-blocking efforts are currently known. Thus, Vietnam/ese/ness' penchant for pragmatism has had to be deployed by today's Communist rulers: if it is required for national development, it will be implemented to the degree that it meets local demands, but in a manner that does not decrease stability and prosperity. If new interpretations contradict the position of two, five, or ten years ago, so be it. It is fortuitous that an identity that seems fraught with paradox is checked and balanced by its own penchant for pragmatism.

The next part of this chapter looks at the beginnings of a subsequent and translated journalistic trend that has yet to abate<sup>77</sup> – a quickening march toward globalized standards of transparency and statistical accuracy. It is, as with much of the *Doi*

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<sup>76</sup> Surrealism and Dadaism saw attention from some in northern Vietnamese literary circles of the 1930s. Interestingly, they were not vigorously persecuted as they were in early Communist China – for the most part, they were simply left unpublished.

<sup>77</sup> See Appendix 4

*Moi*/WTO era, going to be applied as gradually as possible. In a Vietnam fully cognizant of the time-space compression brought about by technology<sup>78</sup>, it now appears that most leaders realize that “gradual” in the age of the internet involves a dramatic decrease in the amount of time between “gradual” to “glacial”.

#### **IV: Van Leeuwen tries translation studies**

Media history adequately foregrounded, a jump closer to the present can now be integrated. To open this area, a look at the (translated) SRVietnamese print media at the turn of the century is warranted. The 2006 article “Translation, Adaptation, Globalization: The *Vietnam News*” by media and journalism scholar Theo Van Leeuwen (Van Leeuwen, 2006)<sup>79</sup>, provides the most translation studies-oriented academic resource found for this study. It is also my contention that it stands on its own as a text incorporable, on some level, into a translation studies corpora itself, given its content, and the interdisciplinarity of translation studies, without which notions from cultural studies, such as identity, would not have gained currency. It informs on the local by addressing various topics including: current media trends; globalization(s); globalization as considered via the development of translated SRVietnamese print media; translation problems and solutions; grammatical analysis of Vietnamese and English translation issues<sup>80</sup>; currently debated/discussed translation studies theoretical issues (in explicitly acknowledged translation studies terms); SRVietnamese identity issues and changes;

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<sup>78</sup> Vietnam’s current use of the internet is more widespread than in many neighboring nations. See Appendixes for regional comparisons of internet accessibility and use.

<sup>79</sup> Published originally by the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia, where van Leeuwen is Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Reprinted in the journal *Journalism* (London, Thousand Oaks [California, USA], New Delhi)

<sup>80</sup>This discussion is carried out at a linguist or grammarian’s level that I am academically unqualified to fully access.

target-language-readership-oriented removal of communist jargon; local (Hanoian editing-room) views and requirements on translation and its revision by select (non-US) foreign translation revisers whose first language is English; and the emergence and dissemination of an SRV journalistic English in an outwardly-globalizing framework.

Van Leeuwen's introduction starts with a micro-cosmopolitan orientation: his research requires the positioning of globalization as an outbound, Vietnam-initiated process (as opposed to another hegemonic force invading Vietnam) that constitutes an undermining of conventional wisdom and, in Cronin's terms, is "revaluative of local/global hybridity". At the Vietnam News, "the local must be globalized" – and not vice-versa, a phenomenon that is concurrently happening, gradually, on the streets below the newsroom researched. Van Leeuwen describes the newspaper, its official *raison d'être*, and the target audience of its translated text. He also mentions a function of media with which many Westerners are not familiar: the front page "coded messages" (viz. "secrets") decipherable to Vietnam's pre-internet SRV diplomatic missions around the globe. An excerpt from the introduction to "Translation, Adaptation, Globalization: The *Vietnam News*" describes the operations and goals of the newspaper:

[...] In newspapers like the *Vietnam News*, the paper on which we will focus here, the local must be globalized, rather than the global localized – the local, Vietnamese language must be translated into the global English language, the local Vietnamese newspaper style transposed into global 'journalese' and local cultural and ideological references transformed into globally understandable and acceptable versions. The problem is how to safeguard specific local interests while catering to the new, globally oriented readership. [¶] The Vietnam News [...] comprises translations of selected articles from the Vietnamese press [...] and occasional reportage by Vietnamese journalists in English. [...] Front page coverage is skewed toward diplomatic 'handshake' stories which send coded messages to the embassies. At the Ministry of Culture and Information, the newspaper is re-read the next day with a fine-tooth comb, and deviations from the Party line are brought to the editor's attention in no uncertain terms. [¶] The staff of the *Vietnam News* consists of 40 translators who double as proofreaders (and occasionally write their own stories as well), working together with 6 to 8

foreign sub-editors who correct the translated English and write headlines and captions. [...] (Van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 217-8)

In concluding his introduction, Van Leeuwen discusses the level of state supervision and post-publication scrutiny that is applied to the *Vietnam News*. He also limits the scope of his study to 100 translations published around the turn of the century, and clearly identifies the steps he will take in examining “the process of globalizing Vietnamese press discourse” from evidence in these translations.

In his section entitled ‘Vocabulary and Idiom’, van Leeuwen notes that despite efforts to the contrary, “sometimes with something like real feeling, indeed a desire for poetry shin[es] through” in the translations he has studied. He then goes on to expose the influence of French colonialism on Vietnamese attitudes toward outbound translation; Vietnamese conventional wisdoms on translating into English; and professional processes used to mitigate both:

The writing [in the Vietnam News] betrays the lingering influence of the French education system, which sought to have the Vietnamese speak French as perfectly as the French themselves. From the point of view of the Vietnamese, there are two rules about English: ‘don’t translate’ and ‘speak simply’. In their view the English don’t appreciate poetry, flowery language, and exotic adjectives. As English language teaching in Vietnam is mostly concerned with writing, there is a certain emphasis on these ‘exotic adjectives’, and as a result writers and translators are always on the lookout for opportunities to use them. From an English perspective, on the other hand, this can lead to overly ‘florid’ and ‘rhetorical’ language [<sup>81</sup>]. [¶] The foreign sub-editors therefore try to make the story sound more natural and more familiar to English readers. (p. 224)

The excerpt above leads to a discussion about the delicate interplay between foreign revisers (micro-cosmopolitanism’s “outsiders”), Vietnamese journalist/translators, and editors (whose decisions are scrutinized, post-publication, by the Ministry of Information). Immediately, issues of “domestication” and “foreignization” are brought to

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<sup>81</sup> A “problem”, often alluded to, it seems to me, for the “English perspective” on written French as well, at least among French-to-English translators of my acquaint.

the fore: it is the foreign revisers who favor retaining a Vietnamese “voice”, as much has already been lost in translation. Van Leeuwen notes that this effort is more time consuming than simply “domesticating” the text. He also notes that the preference of the local journalist/translators is for a completely target-language domesticated text – and then shows that there are nevertheless moments when a “foreignized” text may well provide the English language with a new, creative, poetic, and *culturally identifying* form of writing. The excerpt below contextualizes all of these contributions:

**A Vietnamese accent?**

Some of the foreign *Vietnam News* sub-editors favour retaining something of the ‘voice’ of the Vietnamese reporter. Making editing decisions along these lines means nothing less than helping to bring about a new variety of English, a new local ‘accent’ of the global style of English journalistic writing. Much of the voice of the Vietnamese journalist is of course already lost as many of the translator/reporters are not very confident in English. And while some of the foreign editors simply rewrite this column in their own style, other try to stay faithful to the kinds of expression and vocabulary the writers use. However, mitigating against this is the fact that rewriting a story in one’s own style takes less time, and time is often in short supply. Also, retaining and refining the Vietnamese writers’ style becomes more difficult as their English becomes weaker. Finally, many of the translator/reporters themselves prefer to see their thoughts rendered in good ‘global’ English, even if that entails some slippage of voice and thereby perhaps of meaning. It is thus often the foreign sub-editors, rather than the locals who favour (re)creating a local ‘accent’.

[...] For now, let me look at one more example of Vietnamese written English, a translation of the introduction to a book of photographs by Hanoi photographer Nguyen Hoai Linh:

At a moment of time, I hear in the noisiness of Hanoi streets, a serene sound.

At a moment of time, I see on the strange faces passing by streets in the afternoon, a familiar smile

At a moment of time, I find in the crushed space of the Old quarter, a softly fragrance.

And at a moment of time, I am in deep confusion of not knowing how to fully love my hometown.

At that moment of time, I take a photograph.<sup>82</sup> (p. 225)

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<sup>82</sup> It is my proposition that, as presented, these sentences would be more readily accessible, less awkward, if translated into French and understood from a Hexagonal French perspective. See previous footnote. It may be to the Anglosphere’s benefit that the translation of contemporary SRV literature from SRVietnamese-to-French is carried out in France on a much timelier and wider level than in the Anglosphere’s mass market. Harmattan and Editions de l’aube are among the most prolific contributors to SRVietnam/ese/ness in translation.

Van Leeuwen then offers what may be considered a micro-cosmopolitan undermining of the more pessimistic conventional wisdoms surrounding globalization. Specifically, he looks into issues of language death and the notion that globalization increases linguistic homogenization and decreases diversity. He realizes that in translating Vietnamese, he is faced with paradox: even while the underlying aim of translation is to globalize, does not the excerpted preservation of “voice” above serve as a vehicle that *decreases* linguistic homogenization? Van Leeuwen explains:

This piece contains many of the grammatical mistakes and odd choices of word I have discussed in this article. Yet its strong rhythm and its grammatical and semantic parallelism, stylistic virtues that transfer well between languages, somehow suggest difference rather than deficiency [<sup>83</sup>]. Perhaps the ‘mistakes’ create new meanings that would be difficult to convey in ‘correct’ English – e.g. that ‘at a moment in time’, or that ‘passing by streets’, in which the streets become a participant in the event, rather than a location. Perhaps English is renewed and reinvigorated here by what are, for the English reader, new ways of meaning and new ways of feeling. It is often said, especially in relation to ‘language death’, that globalization increases linguistic homogenization and decreases diversity, and thereby our stock of resources for change and renewal [\*]. But could the kind of globalization envisaged here not also *decrease* homogenization, and increase variety in a new and different way? (p. 226)

Certainly, in the above, Van Leeuwen challenges a conventional wisdom that holds that globalization is merely a hegemonizing, homogenizing, and “Westernizing” socio-economic phenomenon. Further on, he addresses “Issues of cultural and ideological adaptation”, and confirms that in the case of Vietnam, the State will ensure a certain level of Vietnamese ‘voice’, in the form of their own imposed jargon:

Translating Vietnamese journalistic discourse involves not only language correction and stylistic adaptation, but also a ‘repositioning’ of the reader. The foreign sub-editors play a crucial role in this process, acting as cultural interpreters in a way that the Vietnamese themselves can perhaps not (or not yet) provide. Their stories are usually written from a local perspective, or at least

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<sup>83</sup> Not a discountable situation of paradox in terms of this paper; see Final Provisional Observations.

from the perspective of someone who is well acquainted with the country and its culture. Globalizing this local perspective means pulling it back to that of an outsider. This entails not only the unpacking of Vietnamese concepts and terminology (for instance the Vietnamese use of ‘equitization’ instead of ‘privatization’), but also the backgrounding of or deletion of Communist terminology. ‘Cadres’ become ‘officials’, ‘the fight’ becomes ‘a campaign’, ‘State control’ becomes ‘supervision’, ‘being enlightened’ becomes ‘being converted to the Communist cause’, and so on. The fact that Vietnam, market reform notwithstanding, is still a Communist country is watered down for foreign consumption. But not hidden – enough Communist terms (e.g. ‘revisionists’, ‘social evils’, ‘a firm political orientation, ‘tendencies contrary to Party guidelines’) remain to provide *couleur locale* in this respect. [...] [¶] Preconceptions about Vietnam, or, more generally the ‘Orient’ [as represented by the admired teacher in an example provided] are one kind of theme considered familiar and interesting to the reader. Comparisons between Vietnamese and Western traditions or practices are another. Specific cultural detail is deleted or generalized although a few details are retained for the sake of *couleur locale*, in a judicious mixture of the exotic and the familiar (and as it happens also in the local and the global). (Van Leeuwen, pp. 230-232)

In his conclusion, Van Leeuwen offers a summary of this seminal article that spells out definitions, complexities, and ideas in disciplinary terms familiar to translation studies scholars in general and, more specifically, those with an interest in how translation activity and cross-cultural mediation manifests itself in the production flow at a broadsheet, carried out contemporarily in the “distant and unglamorous newsroom of the *Vietnam News* (and in others like it)”. He starts by reiterating a micro-cosmopolitan-oriented, positive assessment of globalization, separating it from conventional wisdom. He goes on to converge with micro-cosmopolitan interests in his valorization of “the multi-local” and “interconnected history” of the development of the Vietnamese press:

It should of course be remembered that Vietnamese journalistic roots in the multi-local and interconnected history of the development of national newspapers generally, and the national newspapers of Communist countries specifically. [¶] I have shown that this process involves not only translation, but also two forms of adaptation: adaptation to one of two global conceptions of English journalism, the Anglo-Australian one, and adaptation to a global cultural and ideological frame of reference, and I have stressed that this globalization process is initiated locally, by Vietnam itself, with the crucial help of foreign sub-editors. (p. 225)

Van Leeuwen then follows with a look at translation studies, and notes that in the case of his Hanoi newsroom, the paradox of *competing* “foreignizing” and “domesticating” tendencies is always present.

One of the basic issues in translation theory is the issue of target-oriented versus source-oriented translation. In the case of the *Vietnam News* the overall process is very much target-oriented in its insistence on global news lead priorities, global practices of attribution, accuracy, etc., there is also an interest in allowing and further developing a local ‘accent’, a distinct voice for English language Vietnamese journalism, and perhaps for English language Vietnamese writing generally. Thus, ‘foreignizing’ and ‘domesticating’ tendencies compete. [¶] A local accent, if properly nurtured and refined, could be both enriching for the local writers, whose work would gain a distinct identity, and for journalism, and the English language generally. (pp. 225-226)

Against the backdrop above, Vietnam retains its conventional wisdoms about translation into English. This desire for complete domestication in English, a complete target-language-aligned orthodoxy, reflects, interestingly, the manner in which *French* was imposed in the educational system during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is then contrasted with the use of English in Southeast Asia’s quasi-Anglophone nations, which happens to be the opposite:

Here, English is still tightly regulated by house-style manuals and editing and proofreading practices. Most of the sub-editors at the *Vietnam News* and other such papers rigorously uphold the rules of ‘the Queen’s English’. On the other hand, in countries where English is more widely spoken than in Vietnam (Malaysia, Singapore, India), English language journalism is already becoming more heterogeneous, as a look at any Indian newspaper online will confirm. Such heterogeneity manifests itself mostly at the lexical level, through the uses to which words are put, and through surprising concepts and turns of phrases, rather than at the grammatical level. (p.228)

By bringing us back to the local – and presenting it as a place where the competency of foreign revisers to edit their native language decreases over time – Van Leeuwen returns to the fundamental question of whether or not it is appropriate to impose a Western

“straightjacket” on something as potentially unwieldy as Vietnam/ese/ness in translation.

The risk of “loss” weighs heavily:

Some sub-editors use this as a criterion in their attempts at retaining something of a local accent, so that they would, for instance, correct Nguyen Hoai Linh’s [\*] phrase ‘strange faces passing by’ quoted above, but perhaps (if they had time) look for a novel (and equivalent) way of saying ‘bustling streets’. With spoken English things are different, of course. Even Westerners in Vietnam soon find themselves speaking English in grammatically unfamiliar ways, e.g. by dropping articles and tenses, as the Vietnamese do in their writing. (p. 235)

The article ends with relevant questions that probably have not yet been answered in full, even though 7 years have elapsed since the material and interviews were gathered for Van Leeuwen’s contribution to translation discourse. The likely reason no answer is yet possible: all the questions asked are indicative of a local and translated Vietnamese press discourse that is still in a state of flux: the *Vietnam News* of today features an online edition that is not part of Van Leewen’s 2006 article, as it did not exist at the time of his research:

Meanwhile in the distant and unglamorous newsroom of the *Vietnam News* (and in others like it) lowly paid sub-editors are asking themselves just what it is they are doing. Are they helping a local accent to be developed and accepted? Or are they putting the Vietnamese local accent into the straightjacket of Western cultural norms and values? If the Vietnamese did not need sub-editors to correct their work, would they have greater freedom to develop their local style, like the photographer in his book intro? It is easy to assert the potential of a local accent from the comfortable distance of abstract theorizing. At the level of day by day editorial decision making there are no easy answers. There is just a gradual trial and error learning process. But although the end result is as yet difficult to predict, it is certainly not out of the question that it will lie in the direction of a greater variety of journalistic Englishes. (Van Leewen, pp. 236)

Having started this chapter with an independent assessment of the state of media and internet in the SRV, I reverted to the homogenizing efforts of a 15<sup>th</sup> century Vietnamese emperor, fractally travelling on to times of harsh orthodoxy in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, then to more freewheeling moments of this new century and the last, this chapter has

managed, in a micro-cosmopolitan-appropriate manner, to seek out Vietnam/ese/ness in translation. By offering an interdisciplinary assessment of the vast range of topics that bring us to the SRV's 'translation present', through this chapter and those that precede it, it is time to look at the results of my research. The next part of the paper, my Concluding Observations, offers a brief assessment of whether or not my initial objectives were met by the approach chosen, and lists a variety of questions and concerns that have arisen over the course of my research into translated Vietnam/ese/ness.

## Concluding Observations

This study proposed to examine elements of Vietnamese identity that are revealed in or through translation, translation scholarship, and relevant commentary by means of the micro-cosmopolitan concept introduced into the translation studies field by Michael Cronin in 2006.

### **I. Overall assessment**

At the outset, this goal, inspired by Maria Tymoczko's 2006 call to include non-Western cultures into the discipline, was one that seemed within reach as I had personal knowledge of and experience with Vietnam and the Vietnamese, as well as an understanding of the difficulties of translating the Vietnamese language. In discovering that translation studies had not specifically addressed the language in any depth, I felt that the best way to respond to the urgency of Tymoczko's request would be to introduce Vietnam to the field in a comprehensive manner that offered the reader the broadest perspective possible on that country's experience with translation.

This goal quickly revealed itself to be challenging. In seeking a translation studies framework that would assure a *comprehensive* introduction for Vietnamese into the field, I found limited possibilities for carrying out this task. Essentially, I felt that some form of general accounting for the language ought to precede more narrowly focused research. Many approaches and theories could have been deployed to examine specific aspects of translation in Vietnam, yet none appeared to offer a way to present the field with an introductory overview. Each chapter above could have been presented as a study in itself, as could many of the topics brought up within each chapter. *Skopos* theory, for instance,

could have been a manner in which fully map out the translation practices and priorities mentioned in Theo van Leeuwen's "Translation, adaptation, and globalization: the *Viet Nam News*", as the theory has shown itself to be effective at observing translation under conditions of censorship. In my mind, however, it would have "pigeon-holed" the topic I wished to explore, and most likely painted an incomplete, possibly unfair, picture of translation in Vietnam. A broader, more flexible approach allowed me instead to reveal how literary intellectual dissidents have successfully avoided censorship for centuries, and how their works often become the most frequently translated pieces of Vietnamese literature. This is the type of challenge I ran into repeatedly in my search for a translation studies framework: as I assessed the various established approaches mentioned in Chapter 1, they each seemed to reduce the focus to a point that I felt was not fully representative of what I knew of the overall translation landscape in Vietnam. In using Cronin's notion of micro-cosmopolitanism as a heuristic device for inquiry, the study of "identity" and translation was able to accommodate a broader range of information. As such a vast topic, it was my hope that in addressing translation from a perspective of Vietnamese identity, I might be able to construct a study that could serve as a foundation for translation studies to set the course for a more focused, in-depth observation and exploration of translation in Vietnam.

The micro-cosmopolitan approach allowed the inclusion of several important areas on which translation scholars focus: language, poetry, prose literature, and the media. This met my primary objective of producing a study that observed translation in a substantial way. Various tools provided by micro-cosmopolitanism were particularly helpful in the examination of Vietnamese identity in translation. "Intercultural fractal

travelling”, for instance, allowed both macro-scopic and micro-scopic perspectives to be included. This was useful as research material from Vietnam can be difficult to obtain, as many scholars and translators have noted. In being able to adjust the depth of study (fractal observation maintains that complexity is constant from the micro to macro scale), I was also afforded a manner in which to resist the narrowing of focus I sought to avoid. Another component of micro-cosmopolitanism that allowed me to achieve my goal is its equal concern for both history and the present moment. In being able to address both, Vietnamese identity and translation could be presented in a fuller, better-contextualized manner than other approaches might have permitted. In valorizing “global/local hybridity”, micro-cosmopolitanism was especially well suited to studying an identity that is syncretic, and which consciously adopts influences of other cultures and hegemonic forces it encounters. In undermining conventional wisdoms without challenging them, as well as its resistance to essentialism, Cronin’s framework also allowed me to show how this syncretic identity actually reshapes and redefines the external influences it absorbs, a process that leads to frequent problems with categorization. This was best demonstrated by Peter Zinoman’s article questioning Nguyen Van Thiep’s label as a “postmodern” author: while translations of Thiep’s work may contain “postmodern trope”, to categorize it as such is definitely problematic.

Micro-cosmopolitanism also allowed for examination of some of the challenges that have long been associated with the study of Vietnam. The issue of paradox is often mentioned in studies of Vietnam. Robert Shaplen, who spent much of 1946 to 1975 in Vietnam, offers a perspective from his 1986 *Bitter Victory*. Historians, journalists, and

academics commentators regularly echo his impressions below; they persist to this day; and coincide with my personal experience:

Vietnam and the Vietnamese, in the many years I have known the country and the people, have always been, and still are possessed of far more than the customary quota of national anomalies and contradictions. What I found most interesting during my visit to Vietnam was that many if not most of these [...] contradictions are still confounding Westerners, and other Asians, too, who try to follow the elusive course of the Vietnamese revolution and to understand why the Vietnamese act as they do. (Shaplen, 1986, pp. 73-75)

A paradox of interest to scholars of translation was exposed in Chapter 5: within Vietnam, the only known proponents of foreignizing strategies for translating Vietnamese to English are foreign translators or revisers. The Vietnamese are virtually unanimous in their desire for a fully domesticating style of translation into English. Due, however, to the Vietnamese workflow in publication, in which a non-native English speaker must approve the final text, it is virtually guaranteed that a domesticated translation will be re-foreignized post-revision. Thus, it is the proponents of domesticating who ensure that a foreignizing strategy is maintained. Translation remains one of the rare activities in the SRV where (low-status) foreigners get their way despite widespread Vietnamese desires to the contrary – even if only by default. It is the ability to examine such details *within* an introductory study that made Cronin's approach appealing.

In sum, I believe my overall goal was met. I feel that this study offers the reader a broad look at issues relevant to translation scholars should they turn their gaze to Vietnam and its language. Micro-cosmopolitanism, as interpreted herein, afforded me the flexibility to achieve my personal goal of presenting a comprehensive study, as well as one that both respects and informs the discourse of translation studies.

## II. Further considerations

Having applied an untested approach to an area unexplored by translation studies, I am left with unanswered questions that arose during research. Among my queries:

1. Is a micro-cosmopolitan approach a trap of sorts, leading to nothing greater than annotated subjectivity? If so, is that a problem? It is, after all, referenced, cited, and ideally, information pertinent to research. Do such risks apply equally to other translation studies?
2. Does a pre-existing knowledge of the subject of study detract from translation studies research into which it is incorporated? Does it subjectivize it further? Or does it enrich and expand a discipline whose potential is far greater than currently deployed?
3. Is it not likely that translation studies will only explore unfamiliar, ‘problematic’, or under-addressed subjects if they are introduced and advocated by those for whom such topics are an area of established expertise or interest – and who are thus likely to have preconceptions that may influence their translation scholarship? Is this an impediment, a benefit, or inevitable?

The questions above likely will not have answers unless micro-cosmopolitan thinking spurs additional research. As presented by Cronin, micro-cosmopolitanism is defined as a “theory of translation”, a “movement”, and an “idea”. This poses a further question: can a theory of translation also be a worldview?

Another question arises from Maria Tymoczko’s call to introduce non-Western cultures into the discipline: Does the field offer a framework better suited to providing a comprehensive, introductory examination of areas unexplored, including those that might pose challenges to established approaches and theories used in translation studies? While I am satisfied with the study above as an introductory effort, micro-cosmopolitanism is not an established approach in the field. Much more research will be required to assess its potential as an approach to studying translation and identity. What seems evident, as the field expands to cultures and languages as yet unobserved, is that translation studies would likely benefit from a framework specifically devised to provide scholars a method

in which to respond to Tymoszko's imperative, with all the challenges it implies, in a manner that is introductory and comprehensive.

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Appendix 1: NKTT Translations

OFFICIAL “cpv.org.vn” TRANSLATION

1- The Press: Warm Welcome to Wilkie (Ho Chi Minh, 2003)

Both good friends of China, fur [sic.]  
Zhongqing we are both heading.  
But there you are, offered the seat of honor;  
While here I am, down the steps, a prisoner.  
Like you I'm a visiting delegate; Why then is  
the difference in treatments so great?  
Such is life: coldness to some, warmth toward  
others.  
Forever eastward now the waters.

.....

2- Good-bye to a Tooth (Ho Chi Minh, 2003)

You were, my friend, hard and unyielding;  
Not like the tongue, soft and stretching.  
The bitter and the sweet we have shared to this  
day.  
But now each of us must go his own way.

.....

ENGLISH: PRE-1986 TRANSLATIONS

1- News Report: Wilkie Given a Warm Reception (Marr, p.77)

Both you and I are China's friends.  
We both are heading for Chungking  
You're sitting in the seat of honor –  
meanwhile, I'm lying low in jail.  
Both you and I speak for our countries –  
why don't they treat us the same way?  
Coldness towards one, warmth towards another  
so goes the world as streams flow to the sea.

.....

2- Good-by to a Tooth (Marr, p. 80)

You're made of hard and sturdy stuff  
unlike that soft, long-stretching tongue.  
We've shared the bitter and the sweet.  
Now you go east and I go west

.....

ENGLISH: STEVE BRADBURY, 1995-6

1- On Reading of Wendel Wilkie's Reception in China (Bradbury, p. 244)

We both came in amity,  
Wartime allies of the KMT.  
While you were feted at the seat of honor  
I was fettered in this penal horror  
Diplomatic affections may run hot and cold,  
Such is the way of the world,  
Or as the French say, *C'est la vie*,  
All waters flow down to the sea.

.....

2- On the Fall of a Tooth (Bradbury, p.245)

In spirit you were hard and proud,  
Not soft and pliant like the tongue.  
We have shared the bitter and the sweet  
Now you go West and I go East.

.....

3- Ho Chi Minh On the Morning of Our Invasion\* (Bradbury, p. 243)

In the pluperfect of our permanent revolution  
When all that is solid melts into air, you  
Who were so many things to so many  
And everyone's favorite uncle, appear  
Once again in the pages of *Time* and *Fortune*  
Burgers and fries now firmly in hand;  
While all across the nation, we collectively  
sigh,  
“This is who they really are. This is who we  
are.”

\* not a translation; translator's own poem.

.....

## Appendix 2: Bourdieusian Fields:

### Who's Who and What's What in SRVietnamese Translation

Below I hope to help populate a preliminary Bourdieusian *champ* of translation for the languages and locations addressed in this paper. Describing some of this field's features involves a listing of names, publications, organizations, and other translation-relevant phenomena shall contribute to an initial topographic, geographic, cultural, and ethnic rendering of the field. Furthermore, I have included prominent scholars on matters related to Badinhology and Vietnam/ese/ness. Undoubtedly, access to relevant data, researcher locale, and my narrowed scope of study are to blame for many omissions. This appendix is meant to reflect the global nature of the *champ*, and will be regionally divided between Sections 1-4. Otherwise, the listing order is random. Section 5 consists of translator "roles" – identities – observed over the course of this project. Many of these are discussed further in Appendix 4, Section 1, a listing and summary of the articles printed out for review during my defense of this paper.

#### **Section 1: SRV-based**

1. Nguyen Huy Thiep: writer, intellectual dissident, and café owner
2. Ho Anh Thai: writer, translator, news publisher, and retired diplomat
3. Lady Borton: writer, long term SRV resident, philanthropist, scholar, translator
4. Le Minh Khue: writer and publisher
5. *Bao Dien Tu Nhan Dan*: online version of "The People" newspaper, in English
6. *Thanh Nien Online*: online version of "The Youth" newspaper, in English
7. *Bao Dien Tu Dang Cong San Viet Nam*: online newspaper of CPV's Central Committee
8. *Tap Chi Cong San*: Communist Review: the SRV's public theoretical political journal
9. Article 88: Constitutional law prohibiting defamation or insult of the SRVietnamese Party, State, People or culture
10. Embassy of SRV in the USA website (MOFA supervised): one of GVN's most ambitious online translation projects that attempts to *fully integrate* into TL internet culture (USA); updated fortnightly

11. Self-censorship: a misnomer for broadly understood legal norms applied to dissemination of information domestically or overseas. The internet, introduced on a limited basis in 1997, has seen a vast increase in GVN and socio-cultural information disseminated, especially since 2002
12. *Vietnamnet Bridge*: online daily English-language newspaper, translator of some Vietnamese-language news articles
13. *The Vietnam News*: see Media and Internet chapter and Reference List
14. Huu Ngoc: see Prependix 2 and Reference List
15. Dinh Dien: SRV scholar and pioneer in Vietnamese Machine Translation (MT)
16. Radio The Voice of Vietnam: daily broadcasts of news in 12 languages (English and French since 1945)

### **Section 2: EU-based**

17. Pham Thi Hoai (Germany): intellectual dissident, writer, researcher, lecturer, founder of literary website that features a section on translations into Vietnamese
18. Phan Huy Duong (France): writer, Vietnamese-to-French-and-English translator (with Nina McPherson for English)
19. Nina McPherson (France): Vietnamese-to-English translator (w/ Phan Huy Duong), Vietnam scholar
20. Duong Thu Huong (France): writer, former Communist Party member, and high-profile political dissident. Moved to France in 2006.
21. Robert Templer (UK): journalist, AFP bureau chief in Hanoi during late 1990's
22. Georges Boudarel (France): scholar, translator, joined Viet Minh revolution in 1948, remained in Vietnam until 1966
23. Nguyen Van Ky (France): scholar, translator
24. Claire Duiker (Italy): French to English translator, daughter of William J. Duiker
25. Kim Lefèvre (France): prolific Vietnamese-to-French translator of Nguyen Huy Thiep and other contemporary SRV writers. Ascribes to practice of "translator invisibility"
26. Bui Tin (France): High-profile SRV exile, writer. See Appendix 4, Section 2, Subsection 2
27. Janine Gillon (France): translator of Ho Anh Thai (2003). See Appendix 4, Section 2, Subsection 2
28. BBC Radio, Radio France International: daily broadcasts and online print media translated into Vietnamese

### **Section 3: USA-based**

29. Huynh Sanh Tong (USA): scholar, translator
30. Linh Dinh (USA): poet, writer, translator
31. Nguyen Ba Chung (USA): scholar, translator, writer
32. Hue Tam Ho Tai (USA): scholar, editor, writer
33. Wayne Karlin (USA): scholar, translator, publisher
34. Dan Duffy (USA): scholar, runs website devoted to Vietnamese literature in translation

35. Peter Zinoman (USA): scholar, translator
36. Nguyen Nguyet Cam (USA): scholar, translator, spouse of Peter Zinoman.
37. John Balaban (USA): scholar, poet, translator
38. Mark Sidel (USA): scholar
39. William J. Duiker (USA): scholar, preeminent US Badinhologist, father of translator Claire Duiker
40. Ly Lan (USA): translator, author
41. Robert Shaplen (USA): journalist, writer, and longtime resident of French Indochina and the RVN
42. Embassy USA, Hanoi website (US Department of State-supervised): translator into Vietnamese of US propaganda on democracy, updates on bilateral relations, information about studying in USA
43. Radio Free Asia: Daily broadcasts in Vietnamese territory, designed to solely undermine Vietnam's current political regime. Voice of America's Vietnamese radio service is now less SRV-hostile

#### **Section 4: Other Anglosphere-based**

44. Greg Lockhart (Australia): scholar, pioneering translator, and literary critic
45. Monique Lockhart (Australia): scholar, translator, and wife of Greg Lockhart
46. Theo van Leeuwen (Australia): Communications scholar, See Media and Internet chapter
47. Carlyle Thayer (Australia): scholar, defense specialist, leading Badinhologist
48. Frank N. Trinh (Australia): independent translation scholar and researcher, translator
49. Ngo Thanh (Australia, SRV): first translation studies scholar to publish retrievable discipline-based paper concerning Vietnamese language; has likely completed Master's thesis and Doctoral dissertation since
50. Nayan Chanda (India, USA): journalist, long time Badinhologist

#### **Section 5: Translator roles observed in research**

##### **Subsection 1. Western translator roles observed**

- Translator-scholar
- Translator-traitor (to anti-SRV *Viet Kieu* communities mostly in US, France, and Australia)
- Translator-activist
- Translator-promoter (see Delamaide 2007 on Reference List)
- Translator-*fonctionnaire* (governmental or corporate)
- Translator-literati
- Translators-duos: Euro-Viet ethnic combination (professional or matrimonial)
- Translator-dynasty: William J. Duiker and his daughter, Claire Duiker

## Subsection 2. SRVietnamese translator roles observed

- Translator-literati
- Translator-propagandist
- Translator-dissident (-traitor) (jailed for dissemination of translations)
- Translator-*fonctionnaire* (historical [e.g. poet], governmental or corporate)
- Translator-founding-fathers (Ho Chi Minh, Truong Chinh)
- Translator-role model (male) (female)
- Translator-oddity
- Translator-journalist

## Appendix 3: Vietnam/ese/ness Online: “.vn” and Beyond

### Outline of online texts in printed corpus

- 1) **Part 1: Contemporary topics and the present moment.** I have indicated that the internet offers the best window into a micro-cosmopolitan assessment of SRVietnam/ese/ness available to the researcher outside the SRV. Drawing on a range of sources, both from Vietnam (“.vn”, a censored domain) and elsewhere, they provide a current look topics of interest in the SRV from a variety of STVs.
  - a) Part 1a: In-country ‘reality’ versus Western STVs. A series of seven articles, consisting of statistical reports, news articles, and personal assessments by long-term Vietnam experts. Offers substantiation for claims, found mostly in the paper’s introduction, on the impact of changes affecting today’s Vietnam.
  - b) Part 1b: Internet boon for translators. An example of individual, online effort at compiling a Vietnamese-French-English lexicon of Vietnamese words borrowed from French. Many such language-based, independent group projects exist concerning the translation of Vietnamese. Prior to the internet’s introduction to Vietnam, such inclusive language projects were rare and difficult to access.
  - c) Part 1c: War: the past, alive. Two news articles demonstrating the chasm between some *Viet Kieu* communities and the homeland due to views on the Second Indochina War. Contrasts the manner in which mainstream US and Vietnamese media outlets simultaneously discuss singular, war-related events.
  - d) Part 1d: Outbound globalization, via internet. Three texts: one a GVN sponsored advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal* (likely revised by non-native English speaker for political content); a local-government, internet-based, money-earning program for disadvantaged, remote ethnic minorities in the SRV; followed by a US account of a Vietnamese internet scandal, of the Hollywood variety.

- e) Part 1e: The pace of change, unabated. Several issues addressed in this paper since its initial submission to the School of Graduate studies have continued to develop. This topic-based category, composed of four articles, addresses issues that would not have been considered fit for foreign readers as little as a decade ago. They are still sensitive, as recent events indicate.
- 2) **Part 2: SRV translator identities.** A wide spectrum of translator identities, mostly from SRV sources
- a) Part 2a: Translator as marginal element. 4 articles
  - b) Part 2b: Marginal element as mainstream translator. 3 articles
  - c) Part 2c: Mainstream translator as male role model. 5 articles
  - d) Part 2d: Officialdom: translations by the Party, State, and People. 3 articles

#### **Appendix 4: Further Reading, Annotated**

##### **Section 1: Printed articles briefly summarized, in order presented.**

###### **Subsection 1: On Huu Ngoc**

Retirement of Huu Ngoc, with interview. Highlights importance of understanding Vietnamese identity via “stories [that] connect the past, present, and future”. Title of article shows greater concern for target-readership accessibility. Reported on February 3, 2008 by *Vietnam News* online.

Reference List (RL): Tran Quynh Hoa. (2008)

Article on Huu Ngoc. Highlights his past as chief of “Bureau for Education of Euro-African Prisoners and Deserters from the French Army”; his rise as “culturalist” under *Doi Moi*; and publishing success since the return of peace to Vietnam. Originally published in August 2005 issue of *Vietnam Pictorial* online, no longer accessible. Retrievable via “.vn” third party.

RL: Hoang Chuong. (2005)

###### **Subsection 2: On *Doi Moi***

Overview of *Doi Moi* and economic development published in 2006 by the Asian Development Bank (ADB)’s Public Policy Training Program in Hanoi. Offers positive assessment of Vietnam’s transition from centrally planned to market-based economy.

RL: Chu Thi Trung Han & Dickie P. M. (2006)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ website offers commentary on (then) Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung’s comments at the country’s “First High Level Roundtable Meeting of the 20 Year Review of *Doi Moi*”. Dung is now prime minister of Vietnam. The meeting

was held under the auspices of the GVN and UNDP. Introduces current political and economic jargon as used by high-ranking officials.

RL: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

*Thanh Nien* reports on poverty via “Western-recognized” credible source, in an article by the World Bank’s in country representative. Article discusses success of equitable development in Vietnam, whose population remains 70% rural. The quality of journalistic English at *Thanh Nien*, as well as its reliance on internationally credible sources, have made the publication the SRV’s paper-of-reference for the Anglospheric media. As of 2009, the paper had been heavily sanctioned (the editor fired, reporter jailed) for “abuses of democratic freedoms” in their coverage of high-level corruption.

RL: Chhibber, A. (2008)

Excerpt of paper highlighting *Doi Moi*’s impact (reproduced in *Word document* format). Testimony from US State Department representative’s paper on current USG concerns, read to US House of Representatives Subcommittee on November 6, 2007. Focusing on the “dramatic and striking changes” in the country since 1993, Marciel’s account is likely the most flattering document produced by USG sources concerning the SRV, representing a shift in US official thought on the nation.

RL: Marciel, S. (2007)

### **Subsection 3: Contemporary topics**

#### Part 1: The Present Moment

##### Part 1a. (in-country reality versus Western STVs)

Global Peace Index’s extensive statistical rankings for the USA and Vietnam (lowest score is best, ranging from 1-5 in each area investigated). Index developed in conjunction with Index’s publisher, Vision of Humanity, and “The Economist Intelligence Unit, an international panel of peace experts from Peace Institutes and Think Tanks, [and] the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, Australia”. Vietnam’s Global Peace Index Ranking – 35<sup>th</sup> out of 121, immediately following that of France – is considerably better than the US’ slot at 96<sup>th</sup>.

RL: Global Peace Index (GPI)

AFP article describes the current blogging phenomenon, and its SRVvietnamese popularity. Of note: compared to many in the region, including China and the Philippines, the Vietnamese have substantially better access to the internet. Since publication, the SRV has made some vague statements on regulating (censoring) the increasingly boisterous “blogosphere”, though most observers feel that this is beyond the authorities’ capacity to monitor the internet.

RL: Short Name “Blogging sweeps Vietnam”

BBC report on rehabilitation of poets banned in 1956, explaining enthusiasm for *Doi Moi* Literature as a phenomenon of *younger* literati – their elders remembered the government’s last call for more openness, and its consequences. Other rehabilitations

have taken place without fanfare, such as modernist works by Vu Trong Phung and the 18<sup>th</sup> century works of Ho Xuan Huong.

RL: Hayton, B. (2007)

The author interviewed, known only as “Thuan”, an SRV citizen, wrote a novel while in France but published it in the SRV (a very rare occurrence). Her comments provide a wealth of information on the current status of SRV literary notions and conditions – and how these relate to a globalizing Vietnam. Posted on *VietnamNet Bridge* online newspaper in Jan. 2007.

RL: Short name “Vietnamese language”

This article describes unusual restraint on the part of Vietnamese authorities. It is likely that such restraint would not have been the case before the turn of the century. It is also likely that in the current economic crisis, this restraint will recede. The deceased ranked near the top of the government’s most-loathed internal political dissidents, and has been officially harassed since the mid-1960s. Of note: Jailed translator Pham Hong Son has obviously been released from custody early, free enough to attend this ‘political’ event and comment to AFP reporters.

RL: Short name: Hundreds at funeral

“Web of misunderstanding” is a *Thanh Nien* editorial/reportage on Western media impressions of SRV internet accessibility and fear of “government spying”. Article supports the notion that reality of “on the ground” aspects of life in Vietnam are often quite different than commonly held Western STVs, and that this gap is generally confirmed by Westerners who spend time in the country. Describes a certain “black and white thinking” among Western journalists, and offers local perspective that speak to the concerns of *most* SRVietnamese.

RL: Ngoc Think (2007)

Tom Hayden considers translators as experts on long term changes in his 2008 article “The Old Revolutionaries of Vietnam”. Hayden was a US Congressman during Vietnam’s ‘American War’, and was one of the most effective anti-war Americans of the time, having made unauthorized trips to Hanoi. Translators or translations are mentioned 5 times in the 6-page piece on his recent first trip back in 3 decades. The impact of *Doi Moi* is evident, from Hayden’s historical perspective, in Hanoi at the end of 2007.

RL: Hayden, T (2008)

#### Part 1b. Internet boon for translators

An example of individual researchers availing themselves of internet interactivity to inventory French lexical influence on Vietnamese and its translation into English. Printed version of Jubinell’s *Lexicon of Vietnamese Words Borrowed from French*:

*Vietnamese/French/English* has been reformatted. Many such independent sites exist concerning the Vietnamese language.

RL: Jubinell (2008)

### Part 1c. War: The past, alive

An example that part of the *Viet Kieu* community in California's Orange County is still roused by an extreme anti-communist STV, as reported in the *Los Angeles Times* in 2007. Article's subtitle: "Right-wing exiles in Orange County are on an increasingly desperate mission to root out any hint of communism". Anti-SRV articles appear more frequently in the *San Jose Mercury News*, as ethno-demographic statistics would likely predict.

RL: Schou, N. (2007)

Typical *Nhan Dan* communist couleur-locale journalistic triumphalism, 2008-style. Tet Offensive 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The same commemoration occurred in the US media, in terms of what it meant to the USA at that time, and today. The SRV remained essentially invisible in US coverage.

RL: Short name: 1968 general offensive

### Part 1d. Outbound globalization, via internet

Wall Street Journal 'advertorial'<sup>84</sup>. SRV outward globalization effort directed at liberal economics' major US broadsheet. Retrieved from website of American public relations and branding firm that commissioned author for the four page "report". It is evident that SRV revisers had final say in this marketing text that was published at considerable expense.

RL: Delamaide, D. (2007)

Example of local initiative in outward globalization via internet. A local government program creating wealth via the online sale of handicraft for an economically-disadvantaged rural region, emphasizing the local, village-level, and ethnic-minority identity of the wares. Article demonstrates growing entrepreneurial savvy of Vietnamese authorities, and evidence that they are using translation to promote wealth creation.

RL: Hoang Lan (2008)

Outbound globalization backfires, on occasion. Vietnam's recent "Paris Hilton moment": the SRV has provided the nation with the information tools to become more like the market economies it hopes to emulate as a WTO member. The SRV media covered the scandal much in the way the US media covers celebrity scandals. This could not have happened in pre-internet Vietnam.

RL: Stocking, B. (2007, October 25)

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<sup>84</sup> "Advertorial" is a "special advertisement" that often mimics the editorial tone (and formatting style) of the publication in which it is placed. It may be hoped that readers associate or confuse the advertorial with the journalism (or standards) of the host publication.

### Part 1e. The pace of change, unabated.

Evidence that homosexuals have attained permission to gather in approved groups indicates that space is being created for a Vietnamese homosexual identity within SRV-sanctioned civil society. This has been incrementally publicized over the last three or four years. The article shows the changing attitudes of Vietnamese officials and points to a rise in tolerance of homosexuality among urban Vietnamese.

RL short name: Things looking up

Like the above, this article addressed Vietnam's HIV transmission issues among men who have sex with men (MSM). The editors appear to have taken a more aggressive stance on this (ultimately) political health issue, in seeking texts from lesser-known publications to translate into English. In discussing the facilitation of sexual encounters due to the internet; male-male prostitution among university students; and sexual topics and statistics still socially taboo, it is likely that *Thanh Nien News* risked the ire of the more doctrinaire elements among the many interests within the government structure that are responsible for monitoring such controversial issues. Such drastic changes have been said to be contributing to a growing backlash against the SRV's more ardent reformers. A noteworthy aspect of this article is that it directly addresses 15-year-old translation concerns about apparent contradictions.

RL short name: Statistics needed

To my knowledge, the Vietnamese press has never *internationally* expressed opposition to legal action taken against its employees. From the perspective of 15 years' hindsight, I remain shocked at the publication of such an article in English translation. Even more surprising is that it is still accessible (see Reference list), as it has caused a stir among reputable Western news agencies. In the past, such articles were removed – as was the case with the article covertly demonizing Ly Lan (featured below), the translator of the Harry Potter series at a time when there was pressure to ban the series in Vietnam. Ly Lan has been rehabilitated to a respectable degree. The journalist discussed in this article was sentenced to a 2-year prison term; he was released after 4 months. The editor of *Thanh Nien* was fired over the stir caused by this case. Nonetheless, as of early 2009, this article remains in the paper's online archives.

RL short name: Free the honest

The *Economist* discusses the political ramifications of the press' ardent support for the journalists mentioned in the article above, even in the face of accusations from high levels in government.

RL short name: Shooting the messenger

### Part 2: SRV Translator Identities

#### Part 2a. Marginal elements

Article from US-based independent human rights group, Human Rights Watch (HRW), decrying the SRV's prosecution of translator "cyber-dissident" Pham Hong Son.

Various described since as a doctor, mathematician, democracy activist, writer, and translator, Son translated the US Embassy in Hanoi's "What is Democracy?" (USG propaganda) web article, which he was able to access online in the SRV. The Embassy now translates all its "democracy" and "freedom" propaganda into Vietnamese itself, and the website is accessible to internet users in Vietnam.

RL: HRW (2003, June 17)

Follow-up article from HRW, protesting the 13-year prison sentence (to be followed by 3 years of house arrest) handed down to Pham Hong Son 2 months after above article appeared. An earlier listing (Hundreds at funeral) shows that Son has been released early and permitted to attend a major anti-government event.

RL: HRW (2003, August 26)

I posit this example of "translator as marginal" reporting as SRV-generated and disseminated. My access has been via a Manitoba-based website that only credits the translator of this SRV Vietnamese article on an "accomplished" 13-year-old translator. Her age, at the time of publication, substantiates her marginality. The translator, Tran Hoang Lan, is now an adult, and known in both domestic and overseas Vietnamese translation circles (see Pham Thi Hoai's reputable "talawas" Vietnamese-language literary website).

RL: Tran Hoang Lan (2004, June 22)

Article no longer accessible online. This 2002 coverage of Ly Lan as a translator is interesting in that it *covertly* marginalizes the translator, *via* translation. In English, it is a reasonably sound interview that does not appear to jaundice one's view of Lan.

Backtranslated into Vietnamese, however, Lan is the unfathomable *opposite* of traditional Vietnam's Confucian views on femininity (see Hue Tam Ho Tai, 167-195).

RL: Culture Vulture. (2002, August 15)

#### Part 2b. Marginal element as mainstream translator

Translator-as-marginal-individual (blind), with a positive spin. Such acknowledgement is beneficial to two allegedly marginal groups (translators, the disabled), and introduces IT as tool for positive translational change.

RL: Short name: Blind translator

Dubious rehabilitation? Previously portrayed (covertly) as the opposite of Vietnamese femininity (for having translated the possibly-illegal first Harry Potter book in the early 1990's), US-resident SRV translator Ly Lan is now portrayed as woman with grand translation schemes. Compared to 2002 Culture Vulture interview (listed above), Lan is portrayed as less marginal, though still somewhat suspect.

RL: Short name: Interview with Harry

Article on aforementioned 13-year-old translator (Tran Hoang Lan, 2004), Truong Que Chi, from 2005, then a student at a prestigious Hanoi secondary school.

RL: Short name: Young translator

Part 2c. Mainstream translator

SRV male Translator gets award from Spanish government. Translation portrayed as noble profession, though article offers little detail.

RL: Short name: Vietnamese translator

Male translator as newsworthy figure in outbound globalization process, disseminating mainstream “SRVietnamese translator identity”.

RL: Short name: Translator opens world

Portrayal of a “mainstream” male translator, one likely popular in the SRV, as evidenced by display of his artistically-rendered portrait, entitled “Translator Doan Tu Huyen” on a SRVietnamese-language literary blog. Avuncular-appearing Russian literature translator.

RL: Nguyen Thanh Kim. (2004)

Interview with Trinh Lu, award-winning male translator of Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* into SRVietnamese. Image conveyed is cosmopolitan (in lay terms).

RL: Nguyen Minh Huyen. (2006)

30. Interview with male translator Nguyen Thuy Toan. Avuncular, erudite.

RL: Translator opens worlds

Part 2d. Officialdom: translations by the Party, State, and People

February 29, 2008’s front page of the *Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper* (incomplete; some graphics missing; predominant colors of background layout: red and yellow). Note ‘Archives’ of prominent communist thinkers; NKKT is included in these links. Also, Ho Chi Minh’s most artistically elaborate GVN official portrait is featured above the date. The sidebar on the right highlights Hanoi’s annual “Poem Day”.

RL: Short name: Communist Party Online

February 29, 2008’s front page of the Embassy of Vietnam in the United States’ online news and information page. This useful resource is one of the Vietnamese State’s (as distinct from the CPV) savvier such sites, though many of its links are obsolete and updating is infrequent. A recent change of Ambassador may suggest that a transition period is underway in this website’s layout, as some minor format “updating” has occurred on the front page in the few months since Amb. Le Cong Phung arrived in Washington DC.

RL: Short name: Embassy SRV

February 29, 2008’s front page of *Nhan Dan* (“The People”), official “organ” (newspaper) of the People, in their official, state-represented identity. Many of these exemplify the journalistic workflow discussed in Van Leeuwen’s (2006) article. Note also the omnipresence of Ho Chi Minh, here in the standard, nationwide official portrait.

RL: Short Name: *Nhan Dan*

## Section 2: Selections from the Reference List

### Subsection 1: Non-individuals on reference list

All SRV newspapers and online organizational publications mentioned in Appendix 2.

### Subsection 2: Individuals' works on reference list

Balaban, J. (2000). Translation of Ho Xuan Huongs 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century poems. Introduction and endnotes very instructive on task of translator and cultural foregrounding of works translated.

Boudarel, G. & Nguyen Van Ky. (2002). Claire Duiker's translation provides information inaccessible to most Westerners. Concentrates on Hanoi's post 1954 management of DRV and SRV, from a variety of STVs. Contains considerable historical contextualization.

Bui Tin. (1995). Former editor of popular Sunday edition of *People's Army Newspaper* and one of the SRV's highest-ranking exiles. Provides insight into editorial decisions and upper-echelon politics, enhanced by anecdotes of daily life experiences.

Dinh Dien (2002). Article on the disambiguation of the Vietnamese language and efforts made by SRV-based Machine Translation (MT) workers to overcome the language's many challenges to the field.

Ho Anh Thai (2003). Of interest here is Janine Gillon's translator introduction, which implies that viewing literature from a Western perspective is likely to lead to confusion, and that there are ways to effect change in GVN practices via literature that causes a stir but does not directly challenge SRV politico-literary mandates.

Huu Ngoc (Author): *œuvre*.

Huynh Sanh Thong (Trans): *œuvre*.

Karlin, W. (Ed., Trans.): *œuvre*.

Lockhart G. & Lockhart M. (Trans.): *œuvre*.

Nguyen Ba Chung (2002). Article listed masterfully describes the *Viet Kieu* versus SRV politico-literary tension, its history, and its links to Vietnam/ese/ness. Mentions Montreal *Viet Kieu* literary community's pioneering efforts at reconciliation via the journal *Tram Con* ("A Hundred Children").

Pham Thi Hoai (2004). (Author, researcher, literary website manager) Article listed discusses state of SRV Vietnamese literature, self-censorship, (to-)Vietnamese translation, and impact of *Doi Moi*. Discussions in these familiar, academic, and literary terms remain

quite rare. She has long had problems getting published in Vietnam, though is free to travel there regularly from Berlin, where she resides. Also, œuvre.

Phan Huy Duong (& McPherson, N.) (Author, Translator/s, scholar/s): œuvre.

Shaplen, R. (1986). Book provides clear evidence from 1984 that *Doi Moi* was on the way. Author had access to highest-level leadership (who gently expressed views quite contrary to the “High Socialism” of the day) and resided in Vietnam for almost 30 years, prior to 1975.

Sidel, M. (1998). A book I consider to be a micro-cosmopolitan look at the city of Hanoi.

Snell-Hornby, M. (2006). Of interest to this paper is the hybridization and reworking of established translation theories that are the topic of the final chapter of her book. As has been seen, a micro-cosmopolitan perspective can indeed fuse with other areas of TS.

Thayer, C. A. (2003). Article on the political happenings during the outset of *Doi Moi*'s current, fruit-bearing era: SRV consumerism.

Truong Nhu Tang. (1985). Originally published in French (*Le goulag vietnamien*), the book discusses the fate of the RVN's anti-government guerrilla forces' (NLF) administration, from its inception until after 1976's declaration of the SRV, when the NLF was simply absorbed, and non-communists pushed aside. Having survived that dismissive purge to serve as Minister of Justice for the SRV, Tang became disillusioned with the post-reunification “High Socialism” and sought asylum in France in the early 1980s.

Van Leeuwen, T. (2006). Article is quoted at length in Media and Internet chapter.

Zinoman, P. (& Nguyen Nguyet Cam): (Ed/s., Translator/s, scholars), œuvre.

## Glossary

### Part 1. Acronyms

ADB: Asian Development Bank

APEC: Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation; Vietnam hosted 2006 summit meeting.

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations; Vietnam member since 1992.

COMECON: (former) Council for Mutual Economic Assistance; USSR-led trade group  
1949-'91.

CPV: Communist Party of Vietnam; current ruling Party in single-party state.

DRV: (former) Democratic Republic of Vietnam; once known as “North Vietnam”  
(1945-1976).

ESL: English as Second Language.

GVN: Government of Vietnam; to be understood as “Party and State”.

HCMC: Ho Chi Minh City; economic hub of SRV, includes former RVN capital, Saigon.

HRW: Human Rights Watch; New York-based human rights monitoring organization.

IT: Internet Technology.

NKKT: *Nhat Ky Trong Tu*; or *Prison Diary*, see chapter on Poetry in Translation.

ODP: (former) Orderly Departure Program; joint USG-GVN US-bound immigration  
operation.

PRG: (former) Provisional Revolutionary Government; of southern Vietnam (April, 1975-  
July, 1976).

RVN: (former) Republic of Vietnam; (also known as “South Vietnam”) (1954-1975).

SRV: Socialist Republic of Vietnam; (reunified nation) (1976-present).

TS: translation studies

UNSC: United Nations Security Council; SRV became non-permanent member, 2008.

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

USG: United States Government; usually “Executive and Legislature”.

WHO: World Health Organization.

WPV: (former) Workers Party of Vietnam; DRV name of CPV.

WTO: World Trade Organization; SRV became 150<sup>th</sup> member in 2007.

Part 2. Terms, idiom, neologism: Vietnam-related (if not included above)

Note:

~ ‡ indicates a relevant idiomatic expression

~ \* indicates a neologism or new construction

Article 88:	SRVietnamese constitutional article controversial in Western “freedom-supporting” democracies. Critics claim it criminalizes universal rights that the SRV is bound by under UN conventions. See Appendix 2, Section 1, note 9.
Badinhology	Study (political, historical, current affairs) of the GVN based around Ba Dinh Square in Hanoi. Etymology similar to Cold War’s “Kremlinology”.
boat people ‡	Exodus of Vietnamese refugees from <i>c.</i> 1977 to <i>c.</i> 1989; often under conditions of extortion and life-or-freedom-threatening peril. The second of three waves of emigration following the Second Indochina War (pre-May 1, 1975 evacuees, the ~ crisis, and ODP, now concluding).
chu nom	Complex ideographic script of Vietnamese literati and court for almost a millennium. It can now be read by perhaps as few as 30 persons. Romanized <i>quoc ngu</i> script became obsolete by the mid 20 <sup>th</sup> century (at the latest). This presents an urgent issue for Vietnamese Translation. International collaboration in archiving this script of the Vietnamese language is underway.
<i>Doi Moi</i> :	See Introduction.
DRVietnam/ese/ness *	
SRVietnam/ese/ness *	
RVNVietnam/ese/ness *	
D/SRVietnam/ese/ness *	Vietnam/ese/nesses particular to the DRV, SRV, RVN, and communist-led Vietnam, respectively. Example of acronymic prefix standardization as used throughout study.
grave errors serious mistakes	Current SRV official English terminology for the self-inflicted suffering under High Socialism, including the approach to introducing socialism to the former RVN.
High Socialism ‡	Era experienced in DRV from 1945 to 1975 and the SRV until 1986. In the former territory of the RVN, it is synonymous with the “pre- <i>Doi Moi</i> ” era of 1975 - 1986.

in-country ‡	In the US, from the mid 1960's to the early 1990's, this colloquialism was entirely synonymous with "in Vietnam" (during the Second Indochina War).
Indochina Wars	Known as the First, Second, and Third ~ , these summarize the conflicts faced by the Vietnamese over the latter half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century. Roughly, they correspond to the wars with the French, then the Americans, and then Cambodia and China. These conflicts began with Ho Chi Minh's declaration of independence in 1945 and ended, in my view, in 1991 (upon reestablishment of diplomatic ties between Vietnam and China).
<i>Kinh</i>	Vietnamese word synonymous with " <i>Viet</i> ", which translates into "Vietnamese" in terms of language, ethnicity, and identity.
Party hack ‡	PRG or D/SRV GVN sycophant.
pre- <i>Doi Moi</i> ‡	see "High Socialism".
socialist-oriented market economy	SRV's essential definition of its economic system under <i>Doi Moi</i> . A handful of other formulations are gaining currency in-country.
SRVietnamese *	Of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, its language, land, people, or identity. (reunified Vietnam, 1975/6 - present). See 'DRVietnam/ese/ness' for more on acronymic prefix configurations.
VC ‡ Viet Cong ‡ Charlie ‡	US names given to the RVN's National Liberation Front, an indigenous anti-RVN armed movement that eventually ran the PRG, but was abruptly brushed aside upon the creation of the SRV on July 2, 1976, when Hanoi's newly-named CPV became the sole political authority in the newly declared nation and decided that southerners were not trustworthy enough to implement socialism according to the capital's plans.
Vietnam/ese/ness: *	See Part 2 of Introduction

Viet kieu SRVietnamese word for expatriate (Overseas) Vietnamese. Generally applies only to expatriates themselves, not their foreign-born offspring.

### 3. Terms, idiom, and neologism: Miscellany

Anglosphere †	Unless otherwise specified, herein to be understood as the nations with the largest concentrations of monolingual Anglophones. Exceptions indicated as such in text.
Francosphere †	Unlike the Anglosphere, in this paper, ~ serves more as a case-specific translation of “ <i>la Francophonie</i> ”. This is due to the SRV’s participation in the organization. Also, there are communities of Vietnamese-speaking ethnic Kinh in West Africa, South America, Québec, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, the Caribbean, and ‘Cajun-speaking’ Louisiana (USA). Likely many of the aforementioned are also Francophone, if not trilingual. Given <i>la Francophonie</i> ’s diversity, the variegated and fractal cultural, linguistic, economic, diplomatic, and heritage-themed grouping seemed a better fit for this study. As it is indeed as globe-spanning as more liberal interpretations of the Anglosphere than defined above, I felt this needed to be emphasized, and did so via translation.
globalization	defined as used in text, though mostly understood in terms explained in chapter 5, on Media and Internet, and that of the Anglospheric mainstream media.
Hexagonal French	French as spoken or written in continental France.
Indochina	Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia; as per Vietnamese government-accepted borders (in this study). Term is anachronistic in English.
internet	herein used at times synonymously with: ‘internet-based’, ‘IT’, ‘online’, ‘virtual’, and ‘website’.
micro-cosmopolitan	See chapter 1.