

READING THE WORD AND THE WORLD: A CRITICAL LITERARY AND  
AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL  
RENOVATION IN VIETNAM.

by

Hien Ta

---

Copyright © Hien Ta 2006

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the  
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE, READING AND CULTURE  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
In the Graduate College  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2006

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
GRADUATE COLLEGE

As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Hien Dang Ta, entitled *Reading the Word and the World: A Critical Ethnographic Study of Educational Renovation in Vietnam* and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teresa L. McCarty Date: 5/27/05

\_\_\_\_\_  
Prosper Sanou Date: 5/27/05

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patricia L. Anders Date: 5/27/05

\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard Ruiz Date: 5/27/05

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.  
I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dissertation Director Teresa L. McCarty Date: 5/10/06

## STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

This dissertation has been submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for an advanced degree at the University of Arizona and is deposited in the University Library to be made available to borrowers under rules of the Library.

Brief quotations from this dissertation are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate knowledge of source is made. Requests for permission for extended quotation from or reproduction of this manuscript in whole or in part may be granted by the copyright holder.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Hien Ta

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all teachers, colleagues, and friends, known or unknown, American and Vietnamese, who have, directly or indirectly, inspired, guided, encouraged, and assisted me to do this long-cherished project.

My sincere thanks go to my committee members, Dr. Teresa McCarty, Dr. Richard Ruiz, Dr. Patricia Anders, and Dr. Prosper Sanou, for their insightful suggestions.

I owe a great debt to my mentor, Dr. Teresa McCarty, for her long days of helping me to revise and refine my manuscript.

Many thanks to Koomi Kim for her typing of my handwritten draft.

Thanks to Nguyen Thanh Tam, my most married unmarried wife.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	8
ABSTRACT .....	9
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	10
“A Wedding Without a Marriage Certificate,” or Pre-Renovation Education as Mirrored in a Novel.....	12
Educational Renovation .....	16
Research Context and Questions .....	19
The Organization of the Study.....	21
CHAPTER 2: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY, CRITICAL LITERACY AND FREIREAN PHILOSOPHY OF LIBERATION .....	24
Critical Literacy Pedagogy .....	24
Critiques of Critical Pedagogy .....	30
Reader-Response Theories and Expressivist Writing as Critical Literacy .....	33
Summary .....	39
CHAPTER 3: METHOD AND METHODOLOGY: DOING CRITICAL LITERARY ANALYSIS AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHY IN VIETNAM.....	41
Conventional Ethnography and Autoethnography .....	41
Public Documents and Literature as Data Sources .....	45
Mining the Documents .....	46
The Research Journey .....	47
The Vietnamese Context .....	49
Data Analysis.....	50
Dealing with Validity, Reliability, and Ethics.....	52
Language Issues.....	55
Leaving Vietnam.....	56
Returning to Vietnam.....	56
Summary .....	57
CHAPTER 4: THE POLITICS OF POLITICAL EDUCATION: CLASS-BASED OR HUMANISTIC HUMAN BEING?.....	58
Summary .....	66

TABLE OF CONTENTS—*Continued*

CHAPTER 5: THE POLITICS OF LITERATURE: WHY WE READ/WRITE. LITERATURE FOR PARTY-MINDEDNESS OR HUMANISTIC AIMS?.....	68
Literature and the “New Socialist Human Being” .....	68
Literary Writing as Reproduction .....	71
Summary .....	73
CHAPTER 6: THE POLITICS OF LITERATURE: WHAT TO READ/WRITE. ILLUSTRATIVE OR SOUL-SEARCHING LITERATURE?.....	74
Illustrative Literature.....	75
Soul-Searching Literature.....	83
Separation .....	83
Against the Current Stream.....	84
Fired Gold .....	87
Broken Promise .....	91
Summary .....	95
CHAPTER 7: THE POLITICS OF LITERATURE: HOW TO READ/WRITE BANKING STYLE OR READER-RESPONSE/EXPRESSIVIST? .....	97
Model Literature Lessons .....	97
Banking Style of Teaching .....	103
Banking Style and Its Consequences .....	105
Reader-Response and Expressivism .....	108
Summary .....	110
CHAPTER 8: SOCIALIZING OF EDUCATION AND EQUALIZATION OF EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY: THE UNROYAL PATH.....	112
Socializing of Education .....	112
Fake Diplomas, Tracking, and Equality of Opportunity Structure.....	117
Summary .....	123
CHAPTER 9: THE MATTER OF ALL MATTERS AND THE POLITICS OF AMBIGUITY .....	124
The Matter of All Matters .....	124
The Politics of Ambiguity .....	129
Now and Then.....	143
Summary .....	147

## TABLE OF CONTENTS-Continued

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUDING MEDITATIONS: FROM A LOVE POEM TO EDUCATIONAL RENOVATION .....	149
APPENDIX A: THE ARHATS OF TAY PHUONG PAGODA.....	155
APPENDIX B: “MR. KNOW-ALL,” A SHORT STORY BY SOMERSET MAUGHAM .....	158
APPENDIX C: AP BUC VA GIAI PHONG [OPPRESSION AND EMANCIPATION].....	164
REFERENCES.....	177

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. “Model Lecture” on a Short Story .....	101
---	-----

## ABSTRACT

This study, informed by critical pedagogy literacy, inquires into the accomplishments of the policy of *Doi moi Giao duc*, or Educational Renovation, in Vietnam. The study, which occurred over two years, uses critical literary analysis and autoethnography as primary methodologies; it focuses is on the author's personal experience and the analysis of literature and public documents to inquire into educational polices and practices. How the key tenets of Renovation – democratization and modernization, socialization and equalization – have been translated into practice was the center of the investigation.

This study indicates that there has been a wide difference between the Renovation manifesto and its practice. This in turn has been the genesis of a critical literacy or resistance against that disparity by many teachers and learners. The study also suggests that schools are not only sites of dominion but also of contestation and that the oppressed have the ability to be self-conscientized.

The study sought to understand the inconsistency and the ambiguous attitude about a Freirean praxis, and interpret this as an inescapable product of cultural and political circumstances. In this way, the study emphasizes the power of Paulo Freire's theory of critical education and at the same time suggests the possibility of its being reinvented in this sociopolitical context.

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

“Renovation is the matter of life and death.”  
(Truong Chinh, Late Secretary General of  
the Communist Party of Vietnam)

In this chapter, I give the key tenets of educational renovation in Vietnam as manifested in the resolutions of the Communist Party (CPV) and Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Dominant concepts, such as democratization and modernization, socialization and equalization in education, are analyzed. I then offer a brief description of the study’s context and methods and an overview of the research questions. To provide the information necessary to understand education before the era of renovation, which began in 1986 and which forms a central focus of the dissertation, I introduce the novel *Wedding Without a Marriage Certificate* (Ma Van Khang, 2000), as a description of pre-renovation teaching and learning.

A brief personal history, however, will provide the factors that drew me to this study.

I was born and brought up in poverty. When I was 6 years old, my father left our family, leaving behind my mother and me. Since then and until the day she died, my mother raised me and sent me to school with a vague hope that, by receiving a good education, I could transcend the social barriers constructed by human classes.

I graduated from Saigon University in 1975 when the Vietnamese communists came. Not trusting my political reliability, the new government gave me only temporary

jobs, and not always in the cities. I lived all over South Vietnam, especially in the Mekong Delta for more than 15 years, teaching and working. This time changed my conception of education. I came to question the role of education in general, and literacy in particular. They do not always humanize; education can oppress and dehumanize.

As I worked toward a Ph.D. in Language, Reading and Culture at the University of Arizona, memories were conjured up, old problems were illuminated, and forgotten thoughts were refreshed. I burst out crying one night when reading chapters in my course books on “critical pedagogy,” or “teaching for social justice.” Yes, literacy can liberate people by giving them critical consciousness of their lived reality. Yes, democratization can start with the democratization of schools. In modern Vietnam, there is a strong possibility that transformation of education can function as “finger pointing to the moon of truth” as stated by the Buddha; it can enlighten the people about their earthly misery and empower them so that they can proclaim the beginning of the end of that very misery.

The fact that education renovation was declared by Vietnam supplied me an opportunity to put this insight into operation. I decided to conduct my dissertation research in Vietnam, motivated by the ideas I had learned in America about liberatory education. But it would be dishonest to say that this was the only driving force. To a certain degree, I want to give voice to those who, like myself, were denied the right to have a voice in Vietnamese-style education. In undertaking a study that combines critical literary analysis with autoethnography, I have sought to convey those silenced voices

within my own voice. This “bias,” so to speak, was always a challenge in my research. I will discuss this problem and its attributes wherever relevant in this dissertation.

“A Wedding Without a Marriage Certificate”  
or Pre-Renovation Education as Mirrored in a Novel

Ma Van Khang’s *Wedding Without a Marriage Certificate*, which was first published in 1989 and republished in 2000, immediately caused a stir among the general public in Vietnam, especially among those who work in the field of education. The novel is about a high school in a province of communist Vietnam where education is supposed to occupy a noble place in the mainstream ideology, where teachers are idolized as “engineers of the soul,” and where education is designed to produce “socialist human beings” with such attitudes that distinguish them from and transcend those of the preceding eras. If tragedy is often defined as the unequal struggle between human freedom and external necessity, *A Wedding Without a Marriage Certificate* is quite a tragedy in the sense that the good and the beautiful are relentlessly destroyed. If happy people have no history, the people in this novel are not a bit happy. If life is a series of shattered dreams, life portrayed in the novel is a lost paradise. If the free development of all is conditioned by the free development of each individual, then Tu, the teacher of literature in the novel, exists in an antithetical condition. Tu’s life is, in the comment of another character of the novel, “an unfinished banquet, a misplaced book, a failed marriage, a marriage without the legal certificate” (Ma Van Khang, 2000, p. 325).

As an “engineer of the soul,” Tu lives in the midst of economic deprivation and degradation. The library with 10,000 books which Tu treasures and which his close friend Kha names the “kingdom of freedom” (p. 19) is decreasing in size when Tu decides to sell some of the books. The love affair with books comes to a tragic, inevitable end. His starving wage makes knowledge a luxury he cannot afford. Born and raised in a society in which, at least in theory, the role of the teacher has been ranked second on the scale of king-teacher-father, it is understandable that Tu feels bitterly humiliated by surrendering to the imperatives of bodily need. Although Tu does not spend much time philosophizing about it, he must have the common language with the cynical painter in Maugham’s (1978b) *Of Human Bondage*: “Money is like the sixth sense without which you cannot make a complete use of the other five” or “You will hear people say that poverty is the best spur to the artist. They do not know how mean it makes you. It exposes you to endless humiliation, it cuts your wings, it eats into your soul like a cancer” (p. 248).

No matter how hostile society may be to Tu, it pales in comparison with his domestic tragedy. It is his wife, Xuyen, a woman with a lust for earthly possessions, who reminds Tu constantly of the abyss of shame in which he has been trapped and from which he has no power to escape. The woman who shares with him the same dinner table, the same roof, the same bedroom, does not share with him the same dreams of happiness. One day, Tu discovers, not with much surprise but with a lump in his throat, that his wife has offered herself to one of his neighbors, a man of her dreams.

As an “engineer of the soul,” Tu lives within the confines of political oppression and stigmatization. When he gives a lesson in Vietnamese humorous tales, he incurs the

suspicion of regional bureaucrats. When he states that a human being is not determined solely by political reliability, he blacklists himself. The fact that the police break into his room and rummage through his books for those novels which are outside the officially prescribed curriculum is the inevitable consequence of a witch hunt against academic freedom.

The police, who represent the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” look more like representatives of the “dictatorship over the proletariat” when they ask him to confess. Tu refuses. They push him out in the schoolyard, telling him, “You’ll regret for your obstinacy” (Ma Van Khang, 2000, p. 209).

As an “engineer of the soul” Tu is disenchanted with and embittered by the reproductionist schooling. He is tireless in his appeal, “Free dialogues. That is the Platonic, Aristotelean method. Plato, Aristotle and Galileo employed it to reach the truth. Name the thing . . . we’re mature. After the exam, we’ll go into real life” (p. 44). Ironically enough, to that enthusiastic call, his students present a shield of indifference or silence. Also, Tu feels insulted by the tenets of school curriculum which are a far cry from social reality. Either he is a fool or a hypocrite. In the words of Thong, the janitor:

For many years now, we flatter each other, prettify each other. The exam topics, if they are not about revolutionary heroism then they are about new socialist man. Being a slave, then take up arms, fight a few years and turn into heroes, new socialist men. Why so easy? . . . Finally, everything goes back to the very start. Life is the same as the time [pre-communist period/French colonial period] of Pha and Dau. (p. 199)

As an “engineer of the soul,” Tu lives in the shadow of school educators embodied by Principal Cam, who is in charge of administration affairs, and Party Secretary Duong, who is in charge of political affairs. Products of the “ideological

oppressive apparatus” both men are chosen because of their reliability in terms of class-based political dossiers. Mr. Principal is famous for his stupidity, narrow-mindedness and petty jealousies. As for the Party Secretary, he is difficult to describe. Duong justifies the shortage of restrooms by saying, “It must be understood that one restroom for 50 people is the good condition for educating heroism and the enduring spirit” (p. 58). Duong equates collective ownership with dictatorship. Duong explains that Marxism is the name of Marx and Stalin put together. Duong cancels English classes because he is afraid the students will be indoctrinated with American imperialism. And he quotes Marxism-Leninism as a devil quotes the scripture for his own purposes. Listen to Thuat, a friend of Tu, and a rebel who declares war with these leaders:

The world is colorful but you; you want to forge human beings into a prefabricated world. Down with a rigid world. . . . He [Cam] and Duong destroyed my life. They are not leaders. They are Hitlers, Pinochets, Pol Pots. Oh, God, bastards clothed in morality. (p. 200)

The catastrophe comes in the shape of a letter sent to Tu by one of his former students. The ideas contained in it, written from the depth of the student’s heart, are alien to, even hostile to the dominant ideology. The letter falls into the hands of the Party Secretary. Taking advantage of this long-awaited opportunity, he decides to deprive Tu of his right to be a teacher: he fires Tu.

Being ill-treated. Being despised. Being deserted. Being trampled down upon. Being encircled on four sides. Being betrayed. Being robbed of everything. No money. No power. No separate place. And now no place on the teaching platform. . . . Never has any persecution been so complete. (p. 385)

Thuat, one of Tu’s confidants, will say that Tu’s life is “a wedding without a certificate.” He seems to mean that to be the acceptable bridegroom in the marriage with

his restraining and crippling life, Tu must remake himself in its image, which Tu, by nature and by faith, can never do.

In 1986, such a life was sentenced to a death of a thousand cuts by the era of educational renovation. In Vietnam, the communists proclaimed the end of a period burdened with dogmatism, bureaucratism, and monopoly of thought. They also announced the beginning of the period of democratization and modernization in the field of education. For teachers such as Tu, it seemed not too romantic to dream of the days when, leaving behind the past of political oppression, aesthetic alienation, and spiritual suppression, he and his kindred spirits could celebrate their marriage with life. This time, of course, with a legal “certificate.”

#### Educational Renovation

In 1986, the path of *Doi moi*, or Renovation, was formally adopted at the Sixth National Congress of Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). A reform process was ratified which embraced all society. Economically, it was a shift from state monopolization in which the state economy played the dominant role towards a socialist-oriented market economy. In the political sphere, this policy called for a limited democracy in which controls over the press and media were expected to be loosened and the role of the masses to be heightened. Educationally, the goal was dualist in the sense that it helped develop the “socialist person” and simultaneously train persons who are competent to contribute to socio-economic development (Duiker, 1995; Thayer, 1992).

A wave of renovation in educational thinking rose up from that historic Party Congress. A clear-cut manifesto, however, never came into being. The key tenets of educational renovation were embodied by party resolutions, governmental decrees, and the Educational Ministry's conferences. Based upon such official documents, the renovational line in education can be summed up as follows:

First, education and training must be highly politicized. Although "it is necessary to overcome the vision of education only as a part of the ideological-cultural renovation" (Pham Minh Hac, 1998, p. 29), politicization of education is repeated over and over in many documents. Hac, then Minister of Education, said: "The whole process of renovation of thinking on education must be stuck to the objective of education, namely, to shape and promote personality, to train men full of patriotism and the socialist ideals" (p. 30). The Resolution of the Ninth National Congress of CPV (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2001) also stated an objective: ". . . to revamp the teaching and learning subjects on Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought in universities, high schools, vocational secondary schools" (p. 52).

Second, renovation calls for the standardization of education. Standardization includes teacher education as well as educational curriculum. Schools must attain national and then international standards of modernization and industrialization (Nghiem Dinh Vy & Nguyen Dac Hung, 2002).

Third, education and training must be renovated in the direction of modernization and democratization. To modernize education, it is necessary to "promote the learner's creative thinking and self-training capacity . . . ownership of

knowledge rather than stuffing, parrotlike study . . . to uphold the autonomy of universities.” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2001, p. 227). It is also necessary to import and reinvent the “individualization” of pedagogical practices in order to “create in the learner the critical spirit . . . and lifelong learning spirit” (Nghiem Dinh Vy & Nguyen Dac Hung, 2002, p. 127).

Fourth, education and training must become socialized. Socializing is a means to implement democratization since it creates the favorable conditions for all citizens to acquire the benefits of education. By “demonopolizing,” “unfastening,” “loosening up,” education is diversified. Besides public schools, which are under the complete control of the state, the policy of socialization gives birth to semi-public schools, managed by the state but with a certain financial autonomy, and community-founded schools, which are under the management of a social organization. Even private schools, which are governed by individual investors, are encouraged to compete (Pham Minh Hac, 1998). All types of schools, however are under the uniform and sole management of Ministry of Education and Training. The socializing of education thus means rallying all the people in society to participate in education affairs.

Finally, there is the idea of equality in education. Since the ideal of communism is to create a society in which each person has the equal opportunity to education, this tenet has long been proclaimed. In the context of educational renovation, this tenet demands that educational policy designers pay attention to students in low-income families or in rural backwaters (CPV Ninth Congress Documents, 2001).

### Research Context and Questions

This study inquires into post-reform educational activity at the post-secondary level in Ho Chi Minh City. As the capital of the former government of South Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City is now remarkable for many reasons. It is said to be the most “Westernized” city in Vietnam, not only because it has a long tradition of contact with Western culture but also because it is less conservative than Hanoi, the current capital in the North. Moreover, the wave of renovation is rooted in a shared ideology within the South in general and Ho Chi Minh City in particular.

This dissertation is a critical literary analysis that also draws upon autoethnographic narrative as a form of inquiry. Autoethnography, described more fully in Chapter 3, is a genre of research and writing that links the personal with the cultural, emphasizing the writer’s experience as data in its own right and “the ways in which the [researcher] interacts with the culture being researched” (Holt, 2003, p. 2; Reed-Danahay, 1997). The study is therefore deeply intertextual, weaving together a personal experience narrative with the analysis of literary works and public documents. I focus on educational renovation as it has been implemented at the university level and as it affects the teaching of literature in South Vietnam.

To a considerable extent, the tenets of educational renovation are antithetical to the “banking style of education” (Freire, 1997) as vividly portrayed by Ma Van Khang in his novel. Moreover, these tenets come very close to critical pedagogical concepts, such as “learner-centeredness,” “critical literacy,” cherished by Freire and his proponents. What is more, educational *doi moi* was launched in the midst of a

comprehensive reform at the base of which was a radical shift from a central-planned economy to a socialist-oriented market economy which corresponds to a political *doi moi* in the superstructure. In such circumstances, as Facundo (1984) argued, literacy becomes a matter of life and death: reading the word is fatefully intertwined with reading the world. Literacy, then, “is an attitude towards history . . . a dream of a new society against the power of the old . . . or an insurrection of subjugated knowledges . . . a counter-hegemonic structure of feeling” (Shor, 1997, p. 2).

The critical inquiry informing this study aims at exploring the birth-pangs of this new era of education: the in-depth struggle between conservative forces and democratization and modernization in the education arena; of accommodation and resistance in the divided souls of teachers and students; and of “the demand to give up illusions about its conditions” and “the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions” (Marx, quoted in Fromm, 1990, p. 11).

The following research questions were designed to examine the experience of educational renovation in South Vietnam:

1. What tenets and values underlie the development of educational renovation in South Vietnam?
2. How are these tenets and values reflected in educational policies and practices?
3. To what extent are the tenets of critical pedagogy and critical literacy a part of the educational renovation (curriculum and pedagogy)?
4. What do the findings suggest for education in Vietnam and Freirean philosophy of educational liberation?

## The Organization of the Study

The first chapter introduced the key tenets of educational renovation as propagated in the official documents of the Communist Party of Vietnam [CPV] and the Government of Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Three dominant concepts--modernization and democratization, socialization and equalization in education--were analysed. Then I gave a brief description of the context and research questions for this study, foreshadowing the study's conclusions of the differences between the period of renovation and pre-renovation in education. I began this chapter with a brief analysis of the novel *Wedding Without a Marriage Certificate*.

The second chapter is a review and critique of critical pedagogy and critical literacy (critical literacy pedagogy), which includes critical theory, critical thinking, critical literacy and critical pedagogy. I devote considerable attention to the key themes underlying critical pedagogy, including the political essence of education and the liberatory message of critical pedagogy as seen through conscientization and problem-posing techniques. Through a critique of critical pedagogy, this chapter presents not only the difficulties in utilizing its methods but also the dilemmas of Freirean philosophy as argued by Gibson (1994). Transactional reading and expressivist writing are also included within the agenda of critical pedagogy because these theories are highly learner-centered in orientation.

Chapter 3 is a thick description of this study's methodology, which combines critical literary analysis and critical autoethnography. After listing the differences

between conventional and autoethnography, I describe the research journey, including data analysis, leaving Vietnam, and returning to the field.

Chapters 4 through 8 present the findings of the research. In Chapter 4, I examine resistance to political-ideological education policy, which is composed of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, Marxist-Leninist political economy, scientific socialism, and the history of CPV. Chapters 5-7 illustrate the accommodation to and resistance against the dominant educational ideology in teaching and learning literature. The analysis is presented under three themes: the reasons to read literature (Why read/write literature?), the literary works included and excluded (What to read/write?), and the approach to teaching literature (How to read/write literature?). Literature as seen in these chapters is not purely school-based; it has a lot to do with the renovational movements outside the classroom. In many respects, democratization and modernization of education, two tenets of educational renovation, are examined in these chapters.

Chapter 8 deals with the other tenets of educational renovation—socializing and equalization of education. It presents not only the discovery of the mixed blessing of the policy of socializing of education but also the ideal of equality of education, an ideal proclaimed by the regime and negated by the testimony of participants.

Chapter 9 records the reasons as to why educational renovation falls short of the people's expectations and fails to realize the officially mapped goals. I argue that the failure reflects the dilemma of educational leaders who know that an authentic renovation threatens their grip on power. In addition, looking back on my earlier review of the literature, I argue that the resistance documented in this study in fact reflects a

Freirean critical literacy pedagogy and that this “literacy-from-below” conveys a language not only of “critique” but also of “possibility.” The ambiguity in attitudes and reactions is interpreted as a measure adopted under the pressures of political and cultural factors. I also argue in favor of Freirean overemphasis on the power of ideas and ideology as a means to change. I argue against Gibson’s criticism of Freire on this key point.

Chapter 10 concludes by reiterating the overwhelming power of “conscientization” or critical consciousness in educational and social transformation and reaffirming the liberating power of consciousness in making social and educational transformation. But this chapter also suggests that Freirean philosophy of liberatory education should be viewed as an open system that is ready to embrace and absorb unexpected exceptions.

CHAPTER 2  
CRITICAL PEDAGOGY, CRITICAL LITERACY, AND FREIREAN  
PHILOSOPHY OF LIBERATION.

“There is no true word that is not at the same  
time praxis. Thus to speak a true word is to  
transform the world.”

(Paulo Freire, 1993, p. 68)

The aim of this chapter is to review critical literacy pedagogy, which includes critical theory, critical thinking, critical literacy, and critical pedagogy. I devote much attention to critical pedagogy’s tenets, such as conscientization and problem-posing and the problems raised by critics of this educational theory. Finally, I discuss transactional reading and expressivist writing and argue that these theories, promoting empowerment on the part of the learner, are critical literacy in orientation.

Critical Literacy Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy shares its key tenets with critical theory, which is usually associated with the Frankfurt School in Germany. At this research center, such committed Marxists as Marx Horkheimer, Jurgen Habermas and Erich Fromm developed political and cultural theories which are based on Marx’s theories that economics in large part dictates social and cultural relations (Greene, 1996; Klager, 1997; Wink, 2000). Fromm (1963), for example, theorizes that the modern individual, fearful of aloneness and powerlessness, has ceased to be himself and becomes exactly like an “automaton.” And

Horkheimer (1972) argues that theory should not be neutral but must take sides in the struggle for a better society.

According to Giroux (2003), critical theory creates stimulating implications for critical pedagogy. First, dialectical thinking of the Frankfurt School with its emphasis on the interaction between the social life and individual experiences challenges the positivist forms of social inquiry as well as the functionalist theory of education. Second, the Frankfurt School's theory of knowledge looks at knowledge critically and thus knowledge is not only a reflection of the existing reality but also the "fleeting images" (Giroux, p. 51) of a different and more satisfactory future. Third, because culture is conceived as closely related to power, the school becomes part and parcel of the wider society, which has the capacity of either restraining or liberating educational life. Finally, a depth psychology offered by the Frankfurt School paves the way for a critical psychology which promises to break the chains of psychological domination.

Critical pedagogy should be distinguished from critical thinking. While critical pedagogy is preoccupied with social injustice, critical thinking does not always give priority to this intention. While critical pedagogy holds that "individual criticality is intimately linked with social criticality" (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 55), critical thinking is more interested in individual action.

Critical literacy, to some extent, is synonymous with critical pedagogy, but it has more to do with reading and writing. Critical literacy thus asks people to use writing and reading as a means to name the world from their own perspectives and then transform social inequalities. In the words of Shor (1997):

Critical literacy, then, is an attitude towards history as Kenneth Burke (1984) might have said, or a dream of a new society against the power now in power, as Paulo Freire proposed (Shor & Freire, 1987), or an insurrection of subjugated knowledges in the ideas of Michel Foucault (1980), or a counter-hegemonic structure of feeling, as Raymond Williams (1977) theorized, or a multicultural resistance invented on the borders of crossing identities as Gloria Anzaldúa (1990) imagined, or language used against fitting unexceptionably into the status-quo as Audre Lorde (1979) declared. (Shor, 1997, pp. 1-4)

Critical literacy is thus about much more than learning to read the “word”; a learner must learn to understand the political and social practices that constitute their reality before she/ he can make sense of the written words that describe that reality (Freire & Macedo, 1987). In this critical sense, illiteracy does not exclusively mean not knowing how to read a written word but rather means the inability to read the “world.” “Also, there is a certain ideological aspect of the problem of cultural illiteracy . . . what is making them (famous people and intellectuals) cultural illiterates . . . is their prejudice against race, against class, against the nation” (Olson & Freire, 1992, p. 25).

Although many people have contributed to our understanding of critical literacy pedagogy, we must begin with an examination of the works of Paulo Freire, the “inaugural philosopher of critical pedagogy” (McLaren, 2000, pp. 1-22). Originally designed to deal with adult education in Brazil, Freire’s philosophy on teaching/learning has reached international dimensions.

Perhaps the red thread running through Freire’s pedagogy is the tenet that education is politics and that there are two kinds of politics, oppressive and liberatory, and that critical pedagogy sides with liberatory politics (Freire, 1997; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Giroux, 1997; Shannon, 1992; Shor, 1992). Education thus for Freire is never

neutral: it either domesticates the learners or liberates them, allowing them to reflect on the world and transform the world towards a more equitable and compassionate end (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). That education is political means that all decisions concerning educational programs, goals, and contents are inescapably decided by political purposes. It also means that educators should be politically conscious so that they can see through the relationships of power inherent in the dominant curriculum and the mutual relations between the school's culture and societal culture (Anderson & Irvine, 1993; Edelsky, 1996; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Giroux, 1997; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993). Critical pedagogy is liberatory by nature because it takes "conscientization" or "consciousness-raising" as the top of its educational agenda. This is a process, "in which men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deep awareness both of the sociocultural reality which shapes their lives and of the capacity to transform that reality" (Freire, 1970, p. 27). There are three stages of consciousness: intransitive, semi-transitive, and critical (Freire, 1973). Intransitive consciousness is a magical consciousness which lets one accept the world as it is without any questioning. Semi-consciousness is another level which permits people to realize that they can change things but in a limited way. The most sophisticated stage of consciousness is critical consciousness. Here, "one achieves an in-depth understanding of the forces that shape one's life space, and becomes an active agent in constructing a different, more just reality." (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 325). Shor (1992) summarizes critical consciousness with four qualities:

1. Power awareness, an understanding that any man-made structures can be changed by people;

2. Critical literacy, which goes beyond the surface into the deep-buried layers of ideology;
3. Permanent desocialization, an interrogation of the status quo in terms of power and inequality; and
4. Self-education, the knowledge to learn critically and to organize transformative projects with others. (pp. 129-130)

Critical consciousness, as Freire defines it, is not consciousness for consciousness's sake, no matter how revolutionary it may be. "To speak a true word is to transform the world," and "To name the world [is] to change it" (Freire, 1997, pp. 68-69). Critical consciousness must be wedded with action to transform the world or else it becomes mere "verbalism." But action must be reviewed and enlightened by reflection or else it turns into pure "activism." The dialogical relation between reflection and action in which both of them revitalize and nourish each other Freire calls "praxis" (Freire, 1997, p. 106).

To develop critical consciousness, two teaching practices are brought forth by critical pedagogues: dialogue and problem-posing. For Freire, dialogue is the practice of freedom and democracy. Shor (1992) sees dialogue as a means to change the authoritarian nature between teacher and student. Macedo sees dialogue as a matter of voice, which he calls a "human right" and a "democratic right" (Macedo, 1994, p. 4). A dialogical classroom should not mean having discussion in class where everyone is allowed to use their voice, but rather it is a place where the students are faced with the issues and problems that are important to them and are challenged to figure out ways to take them politically and solve them politically (Shor, 1992). Instrumental in approaches to dialogue are generative themes, topic themes and academic themes (Boyce, 1996).

Another teaching practice, problem-posing, is the antithesis of the “banking” style of education. Banking education, a metaphor for a traditional transmission-oriented method of education, suggests that teachers make deposits of knowledge taken from the central bank with its standardized materials and standardized curriculum into the empty accounts of students, and thus they reinforce the ruling ideas of the ruling class at the expense of students’ own knowledge. In contrast to and in defiance of such methodology, Freire proposes a problem-posing education, which offers all subject matter as historical products to be questioned rather than as central bank wisdom to be accepted. The responsibility of the problem-posing teacher is to diversify subject matter and to use students’ thought and speech as the basis for developing critical understanding of personal experience, unequal conditions in society, and existing knowledge. In this democratic pedagogy, the teacher is not filling empty minds with official knowledge but is posing knowledge in any form as a problem for mutual inquiry (Shor, 1992). In the same vein, Freire (1997) states, “Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality” (p. 66).

Critical pedagogy is inescapably learner-centered simply because it begins from the lived experiences of students. This, however, does not lead to the death of the teacher. He/she becomes a co-author of a teaching process and is on friendly, comradely terms with students. Existentially speaking, critical pedagogy solves the problem of “Hell is other people” by discarding “I-it” which refers to the relationship between a subject and

an object, and reviving “I-Thou” which refers to the relationship between subjectivities (Morris, 1990, p. 70).

Aronowitz (1996) criticizes those who regard critical pedagogy as just a classroom method of teaching and argues that Freire’s work is a “pedagogy of life,” a “theory of human nature” (pp. 11-12). Freirean humanism, as Aronowitz calls it, is “Existentialist Marxist” for it addresses the authentication of human beings by suggesting a transformation of the oppressed from “beings-for-others” to “beings-for-themselves” (p. 13). Freire, however, breaks with Marxist viewpoint in that he sees in the class struggle not the victory of one class over another but instead the humanization of both the oppressor and the oppressed. Moreover, he does not reproduce the Leninist dictum “according to which the task of the avant-garde intellectuals . . . is to lead the masses into liberation” (Aronowitz, 1996, p. 14). In this way, Freire argues for the possibility of self-emancipation by the oppressed and rejects the Leninist belief that only revolutionary intellectuals can bring revolutionary consciousness to the masses.

### Critiques of Critical Pedagogy

Giroux and McLaren (1995), two committed critical pedagogues, have provided the first critique of critical pedagogy. They are not happy with a critical pedagogy “overly concerned with developing a language of critique” (p. 32). According to Giroux (1994) “Critical pedagogy needs to regain a sense of alternatives by combining the languages of critique and possibility” (p. 41). The language of the “not yet,” or the “discourse of possibility” once emphasized, “allows for the possibility of a radical

democratic politics in which immanent critique and transfigurative desire mingle with one another” (Frazer, 1989, p. 107).

The potentially dangerous use of dialogue as a tool of emancipation is the central idea of Frank Margonis (1999). The dialogical dimension of human nature contradicts his project of teacher-student mutual empowerment because:

On the one hand, Freire pushed progressive pedagogy to reconceive the educational relationship as a social dynamic, shaped by the interplay of student and teacher as well as their respective social, cultural and political positions . . . on the other hand, Freire makes foundationalist claims concerning the centrality of dialogue to reaching full human development. (Margonis, 1999, pp. 10-11)

Maronis argues that “non-dialogue” can be the strategy adopted by oppressed groups to reduce the surveillance system of the dominant group.

Yagelski (1999) analyzes the teacher-student contradiction as a teacher. He talks about “the tricky ground a teacher treads in trying to address students’ needs at the same time that those needs are understood in terms of the teacher’s critical or liberatory agenda” (p. 40). He proposes that “embracing contraries” is what should be accepted.

What is missing from Freirean pedagogy is also addressed by poststructuralist, feminist, and psychoanalytic critics. These critics argue that Freire is still in the camp of modernism which promotes the ideal of universal emancipation, stresses the dualist thinking style, and ignores the contradictions inherent in a multiple, incoherent social as well as individual reality (Ellsworth, 1989; Hardin, 2001; Martin, 2001; Pennycook, 2001). These critics suggest that critical pedagogy should embrace the postmodernist spirit, which resists the idea of the fixity of discourse in favor of “hybridized discourse” (Hardin, p. 111), which proposes a multiple, shifting subjectivity bearing the imprint of

“the desire to be and the desire not to be” (Benjamin, 1987, quoted from Martin, 2001, p. 61).

Freirean philosophy of liberation is especially interrogated by Gibson (1994). Without denying that Freire is a great teacher and liberator, Gibson (1994) contends that Freire is essentially a reformist, a gradualist, not a true revolutionary, and that Freirean philosophy of education is primarily Christian-Hegelian and secondarily Marxist. “Freire believes that history is, above all, a process of human events. . . . Freire indicates that a class analysis is important to understand change, but he places this concept . . . under a humanistic sky” (Gibson, 1994, p. 62). To support his argument that the Freirean philosophy of education is far from liberatory, Gibson analyzes the trinity of literacy, consciousness, and political change, the pillars of Freirean critical pedagogy. In the sphere of literacy, Gibson says, no matter how highly charged politically it may seem, Freirean conceptions are not Marxist in that “he sees praxis as the simultaneous intersection of theory and practice, whereas a materialist base, which is the denominator of dialectical materialism, privileges practice” (p. 63). Further, Gibson asserts that “he believes that it is possible in Sao Paulo to build a democratic school system with special curricular reforms that transcend the rich and the poor” (p. 64). As for critical consciousness, the belief that critical consciousness grows out of a critical educational effort runs against the Marxist belief that consciousness is determined by social being and not the other way around. As for political change, Freire wants to accelerate production through modern technology and thus generate political change, but Marxism, according

to Gibson, states that change in the relations of production, not change in the forces of production, can bring about political transformation.

### Reader-Response Theories and Expressivist Writing as Critical Literacy

I am in support of the argument that expressivist writing and transactional reading should be within the critical literacy agenda. First, critical literacy “challenges the status quo in an effort to discover alternative paths for self- and social development”(Shor, 1980, p. 1). The slogan of the feminist movement that “the personal is the political” also shows the dialogical interaction between the individual and sociopolitical forces (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Interestingly enough, Freire himself defends the opinion that personal expressions should not be isolated amongst themselves nor should they be isolated from historical circumstances. When Freire (1996) said, “Identity is always personal and social . . . while we cannot predict the path of historical action or name human agency in advance, we can never give up the struggle for self-formation and self-definition” (xii), he stated that these two entities are interconnected. According to Kirklighter (2002), in an interview, when Macedo criticized those who emphasized “an overcelebration of one’s own location and history,” Freire said that he did not agree with those who performed “an overcelebration of theory” (p. 88). Personal experiences thus are not alien to the theory of the founder of critical pedagogy.

A reader-response approach to reading made its appearance as a counteraction against the insistence on authorial intention as the center of meaning as exemplified in

E. D. Hirsch's (1976) *The Aims of Interpretation*. The first battle cry was from Rosenblatt in 1938 when she wrote *Literature as Exploration*. Since that time, there have appeared many types of reader-response theories but the dominant, unchanging and unchangeable tenet has been the same: it is the reader who brings the text to life, who gives it the ultimate meaning. Although they intersect and overlap, five perspectives on reader-response can be formulated. According to Beach (1993), textual theories "focus on how readers draw on and deploy their knowledge of text or genre conventions to respond to specific text features" (p. 8). Experiential theorists "focus on the nature of readers' engagement or experience with texts" (p. 8). Psychological theorists "focus on readers' cognitive or subconscious processes" (p. 8). Social theorists "focus on the influence of the social context on the reader/text transaction" (p. 8). Cultural theorists "focus on how readers' cultural roles, attitudes, and values, as well as the larger cultural, historical context, shape responses" (p. 9).

Two major points emerge from Rosenblatt's (1995) transactional reader-response. First, by denying the formalist notion of the reading process, Rosenblatt defines this process as a transaction between the text and the reader. Rosenblatt argues that "reading is a constructive, selective process" and "the relation between reader and sign on the page proceeds in a to-and-fro spiral" and "in which each is continually being affected by what the other has contributed" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 26). Rosenblatt then identifies two reading stances of this transaction. While the reader in efferent stance focuses on the information contained in the text, the reader in "aesthetic" stance absorbs in a personal, existentialist relationship with the text. Although Rosenblatt tends to give priority to the

aesthetic stance, she does think that either of the two stances is adopted by the reader himself/herself, depending on his/her experiences and aspirations. The two stances, however, are not binary oppositions but rather a continuum (Rosenbatt, 1994). Reading *Madame Bovary* (1865) as a story about an adulterous woman is an example of an efferent stance toward the text. A transactional reader, however, can also read in an aesthetic mode in which he/she can experience the text through the subtleties and complexities of a romantic heart trapped in a petty-minded and mean-spirited world but forever yearning for wider horizons.

The reader as central to the act of reading is also theorized by Goodman's (1967, 1985, 1992, 1994, 1996) transactional socio-psycholinguistic theory of reading. According to Goodman, reading is making sense of the text and meaning is produced both by the text and what the reader brings to the text. The fact that readers made miscues--they produced unexpected responses to the text--led Goodman to believe that reading must be a receptive language process and readers are active users of language. Goodman argues that in transacting with the text, the readers make their own sense by using information from the graphophonic, the lexical-grammatical, and the semantic-pragmatic levels.

The divorce between the author and the reader is Barthes's preoccupation in his *S/Z* (1974). Barthes makes a distinction between the "readerly" and the "writerly" texts. While the readerly requires little effort on the part of the reader to interpret the meaning, the writerly text forces the reader to share in the meaning making; the reader is invited to decipher the ambiguity or multiplicity of textual meaning and thus he/she becomes the

co-author of the text. It is Barthes who famously proclaims that the author “enters into his death” when “writing begins” (Barthes, 1977, p. 142). When he talks about the death of the author and the birth of the author, Barthes wants to abandon the author-centered in favor of a reader-centered approach to reading. Applying Barthes’s theory, Suleiman (1983) argued that *romans a these*, with their inherent great amount of redundancy, belong to the readerly texts because these novels reduce plural meanings and seek to give the reader the only correct meaning.

Similar to Barthes’s readerly and writerly texts are Bakhtin’s (1981, 1984) monologic and polyphonic works of literature. According to this Russian theorist, Tolstoy’s works are cited as “monologic” because the multiple voices and consciousness within the text are reduced to a single version of truth imposed by the author. Dostoevsky, in contrast, is “polyphonic” because Dostoevsky does not create “fully formed and finalized characters; he lets his characters develop in dialogue with other characters and other consciousness” (Booker, 1996).

In *The Implied Reader* (1974) and *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1978), Iser argued that there are “gaps” or blanks in the texts which affect the reader and which force him/her to create their own interpretations. For Iser, the literary work is neither identical with the text nor with the realization of the text: the literary work lies somewhere in the middle. The relationship between the reader’s contribution to the text and the triggers in the text which invite the reader’s interpretive activity is solved by Iser through the “implied reader” and the “actual reader.” If the implied reader is invited

to respond by the structures embedded in the text, the actual reader brings into the text his/her experiences which fill gaps or develop the ambiguities.

The idea that meaning is never complete, never fully realized but always postponed or deferred, is implicated in the word *differance*, which means “deferment.” (Derrida, 1976, 1978). Meaning in a text is not a stable element not only because the language which makes up the text is not complete and liable to dissemination but also because the language of interpretation itself is subject to the condition of *differance* (Webster, 1990). The fact that the meaning of the text is an “indefinite, undecidable, plural conflicting arrays of possible meanings” (Tyson, 1999, p. 252) requires that the reader be active in deconstructing the text by revealing the text’s undecidability and, more important, by exposing the “complex operations of the ideologies of which the text is constructed” (Tyson, 1999, p. 252). A deconstructive reader, for example, can deconstruct the ideological project of the novel *The Great Gatsby* by proving that despite the condemnation of American decadence in the 1920s, the novel, through Gatsby, conveys its fascination with the world it harshly condemns (Tyson, 1999).

Historically oriented reception theory owes a great debt to the work of Hans Robert Jauss. In *Toward an Aesthetics of Reception* (1983), Jauss argues that the reception of a work or an author depends much on the reading public’s “horizons of expectation.” The novel *Madame Bovary*, for example, was put on trial in the oppressive climate of the time when it was published. But it was well received some time after that when the reading public became more open-minded and tolerant. The reader thus plays a

conspicuous role in deciding the value of a work if we pay more attention to the history of literary reception.

No less important is feminist reader-response, an effort to show the patriarchal resonances in literary texts and the differences between males and females in reading and evaluating literature. Radway (1991) illustrates the gap between man and woman in the reading process and strategies. Challenging the reader to become a “resisting reader,” Fetterley argues that female readers are alienated from the reading experience because literary texts usually convey male-dominated ideology. In “A Rose for ‘A Rose for Emily,’” Fetterley, represents feminist reader-response approach, strongly said, “It is a story of a woman victimized and betrayed by the system of sexual politics, who nevertheless has discovered, within the structure that victimizes her, sources of power for herself” (p. 120).

The development of “voice,” which encourages anti-banking concept of education by placing the student and his/her self-discovery at the center of the writing act, is the aim of expressivism or expressivist writing theorists. Expressivist rhetorics try to seek the learner’s authentic voice, an important concept in the works, for instance, of Peter Elbow (1973, 1994). This effort is intended to serve as a critique of the tyrannical conventions of society and of the ruling ideology. It also pursues the aim of dismantling the uninspiring pedagogies which make the learners empty vessels filled with knowledge imposed from the outside (Gradin, 1995). Expressivist writing can be both personal and social “because personal writing invites feeling does not mean that it leaves out thinking and because it

invites attention to the self does not mean that it leaves out other people and the social connections” (Elbow, 1990, p. 10). Elbow adds:

There is a sense . . . in which all language is social. But just as clearly, there’s a sense in which all language is private: the tapping on prison walls by individuals in solitary confinement with only slight chances of being heard, much less understood. The situation is not either/or but both/and. (p. 192)

In *Romancing Rhetorics: Social Expressivist Perspectives on the Teaching of Writing* (1995), Gradin called for a “social expressivism,” a rhetoric which problematizes social and political problems from the personal viewpoints. Gradin argued that this rhetoric “probably seems much more politicized than the expressivism that we have come to associate with people like Murray or Elbow” (p. 119). Gradin also argues that this social expressivism shares an important tenet with the liberatory pedagogy of Freire in the sense that expressivist pedagogues provide a method which is antithetical to banking style. Social expressivism thus “honor[s] writing as discovery, development of self and voice and the importance of the individual, but at the same time social expressivism do[es] not ignore the fact that selves are socially constructed” (p. 164).

### Summary

In this chapter, my aim has been to provide an overview of the theory of critical literacy pedagogy. There are intimate connections between critical theory, critical thinking, critical literacy, and critical pedagogy. Primarily a teaching method that aims at raising critical consciousness, critical pedagogy is at the same time a philosophy of human liberation. Some critics of critical pedagogy look upon it from the perspective of teaching techniques; others criticize it as a philosophy. I drew readers to Gibson’s

critique because of its radical attitude. I argued that expressivist writing and transactional reading should be part of critical pedagogy because those theories favor selfhood and human agency, without which resistance in education is hardly feasible.

CHAPTER 3  
METHODOLOGY: DOING CRITICAL LITERARY ANALYSIS  
AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHY IN VIETNAM

“Listening and telling *can* be forms of  
emancipatory practice.”

(McCarty, 2002, p. 6)

The methodology for this dissertation combines critical document and literary analysis with autoethnography. Autoethnographic accounts recognize “the researcher’s own experience [as] a topic of investigation in its own right” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 733). This is less a personal narrative, however, than it is an analysis that derives its claims from both personal experience (autoethnography) and a critical examination of literature and public documents. Specifically, I draw on my long-term experience as a native of Vietnam as well as autoethnographic contextualization of contemporary education reforms, and on a critical analysis of literary texts and public documents. In this chapter, I describe these methods and tell the story of how I conducted this research from the beginning to the time I returned to the field for a final revisiting of Vietnam and its education reforms.

Conventional Ethnography and Autoethnography

Originally referring to the fundamental research method of anthropology, ethnography is increasingly used to refer to any study that aims at understanding a cultural phenomenon from the native or “emic” point of view. According to McLaren and

Datnow (2002), ethnography possesses some common features. The first is participant observation of a group under study for a long time. The second is that the main techniques of collecting data are observation and interaction. The third feature is the naturalistic nature of the research. The fourth is that the ethnographer (or fieldworker) tries to build a contextualized view of life in the group. And finally is the mixture of a theoretical lens with a “thick” description (McLaren & Datnow, 2002).

Holism, or attending to context, a crucial feature of ethnographic research, takes into account “both the behavior of the individuals and/or groups under investigation” (Nunan, 1994, p. 57). While the horizontal dimension refers to the description of events and behaviors over time, the vertical dimension refers to what happens around such events and behaviors at the time of their occurrence. Figuratively speaking, Wolcott talks about the contextualization of observations in ethnography, “One’s focus moves constantly between figure and ground--like a zoom lens on the camera to catch the fine detail of what individuals are doing and to keep a perspective on the context of that behavior” (1988, p. 230).

“Thick” description is another distinguishing feature. It takes into account all the factors which can have impact on the phenomena under study. Geertz’s (1973) Balinese cock fight is a classic example of thick description.

Autoethnography and conventional ethnography share some basic characteristics; among these are reliance on qualitative interpretation, adherence to a symbolic interactionist paradigm, and a preference for developing “grounded theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As Holt (2003) notes, “ethnographers have acted autobiographically

before, but in the past they may not have been aware of doing so, and taken their genre for granted” (p. 18). Autoethnography breaks from conventional ethnography in several important ways, however. “Autoethnography is [a] ... genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural,” Ellis and Bochner (2000) explain:

Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. (p. 739)

Autoethnography has been recognized as a research paradigm within qualitative studies for more than two decades, often being characterized as personal experience narrative research, complete-member research, auto-observation, lived experience, autobiographical ethnography, and personal ethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). This approach originated within the discipline of social-cultural anthropology, but is becoming widely used in other disciplines as well. Autoethnography acknowledges the validity of the author’s own experiences within social-cultural contexts as a primary basis for reflexively and critically examining “self-other” interactions (Holt, 2003, p. 2). “By writing themselves into their own work,” Holt (2003) states, “autoethnographers [challenge] accepted views about silent authorship, where the researcher’s voice is not included in the presentation” (p. 2).

For this study, I adapted a framework for autoethnographic research from Ellis and Bochner (2000), Bennett (2004), and Reed-Danahay (1997). Accordingly, I define autoethnography as an analytical/objective but personalized account that:

- (1) acknowledges the self/writer as a critical social actor and as part of the cultural activity under study;
- (2) is often descriptive of conflicts or dialogic tensions;
- (3) is an opportunity to explain and critique from the inside; and
- (4) is written with the goal of explaining “within-group” experiences to others (i.e., not with the “self” as the major audience).

With this as a guiding framework, I take an explicitly *critical* approach to autoethnography; that is, I seek to “to identify where and how ideological masking takes place to tease out what a so-called natural or authentic event seeks to conceal” (McLaren & Datnow, 2002, p. 259). This form of autoethnography is “both a theory of experience and social structure” (p. 258); it is autoethnography “with a political purpose” (Thomas, 1993, p. 4). In this sense, critical autoethnography goes beyond the self to ask questions related to issues of policy, power, and dominance, including the role of education in reproducing social inequalities (Anderson, 1989; Anderson & Herr, 1993). Illiteracy or school failure, for example, might be viewed by conventional ethnographers as the failure of institutional arrangements; the critical ethnographer or critical autoethnographer, taking into account the macro-structural causes of social inequality, regards these phenomena as the inevitable result of unequal opportunity structure (Anderson & Irvine, 1993).

While “conventional ethnographers study culture for the purpose of describing it; critical ethnographers do so to change it” (Thomas, 1993, p. 4). In other words, the understanding goal of conventional ethnography, which tries to unearth the rules of the

game, is different from the emancipatory goals underlying the present study, which “seeks to analyze transformation of social life, both individuated and collective, personal and macropolitical” (McLaren & Datnow, 2002, p. 259).

To choose a critical autoethnographic approach from a number of qualitative methodologies is not accidental. I share with other critical researchers the orientation that oppression is a multifaced reality; that thought oppression is at times more destructive than economic oppression; that all forms of inequality, including the inequality in educational settings, should be opposed; that where there is oppression there should be resistance; and that social research should be used as an instrument of societal change. The discussions of critical autoethnography methodology (e.g., Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Reed-Danahay, 1997), critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996; Thomas, 1992) and critical document and literary analysis (Hodder, 2000) inform the framework used to structure this chapter.

#### Public Documents and Literature as Data Sources

Documents, public media, and literature constitute a second data set for this study. The study is thus deeply intertextual, weaving together personal narrative and experience with analysis of literary works and documents. As Frow and Morris (2000) write, the “‘text’ exists only within a network of *intertextual* relations”; it is an ontologically mixed entity that forces attention to the open-ended nature of social texts (p. 328).

*Mining the Documents*

When I was conducting the study, I fell into the habit of buying newspapers and magazines at the corner newsstands in Ho Chi Minh City. On average, I read 10 papers every day, and each day, I got at least one article relevant to my study. After 2 years, I possessed dozens of boxes crowded with newspaper clippings. A mini-library was also created in my rented apartment which I populated with novels and video films.

These documents, written or visual or physical, were specifically constructed for the research at hand. They augmented, validated, and extended the autoethnographic aspect of the research. In the words of Glaser and Strauss (1967):

When someone stands in the library stacks, he is, metaphorically, surrounded by voices begging to be heard. Every book, every magazine article, represents at least one person who is equivalent to the anthropologist's informant or the sociologist's interviewee. In those publications, people converse, announce positions, argue with a range of eloquence, and describe events or scenes in ways comparable to what is seen and heard during fieldwork. (p. 163)

Using documentary material as data was useful not only because these materials provided background information for autoethnographic reflections, but also because they confirmed, verified, and strengthened data from personal experience. The Ninth Congress of CPV, for example, supplied me with the manifesto of educational renovation with its emphasis on democratization and modernization, socialization and equalization in education. The education scandals, which shook the foundation of educational socialization as perceived through interviewing, were confirmed by a string of investigative articles published on government-owned newspapers. Furthermore, the soul-searching, self-interrogating literature, written in defiance to the mainstream ideology, published outside of classrooms, provided me with a chance to compare and

contrast with literature used in university classes. I found it very hard, if not impossible, to collect interesting and revealing data if I could not contrast the reproductionist literature in class with a highly critical literature produced in the limited free space of a nascent civil society.

### The Research Journey

As early as 1999, I made an exploratory journey to Ho Chi Minh City. As a rule, anyone who wants to conduct research in Vietnam must be allowed by a governmental institution first and this will suggest the Foreign Agency to issue a visa. Obtaining a research visa, I was thinking then, was a matter of formality, and I was told that I should apply for it with the Institute of Science of Education, a state-run institute in Ho Chi Minh City.

A short time later, from Tucson, I sent a packet which contained application forms for a visa, my proposal, and letters of recommendation by Dr. McCarty, my advisor, to The Institute of Science of Education. As a rule, I was later told, the letter fell into a kingdom of silence from which no reply returned. As a rule, I sent another packet. And as a rule, no answer. Devastated by the delay, I decided to use personal connections for help, and in a short time I was issued the visa to go to Ho Chi Minh City for my research. This was the first time I was reminded of the importance of *quan he* (connections) in Vietnamese social transaction, especially for an overseas Vietnamese as I am, whom the government usually eyes with suspicion.

But this is not the whole story, because the “scary silence” made its appearance once more when I began a sojourn through public educational spaces in Ho Chi Minh City. For 3 months I found myself face to face with the kingdom of scary silence, as the Saigonese would joke. I waited and waited until I was fed up with waiting, and I was afraid that my research was going to be ill-fated. I ultimately was given access to a university that constitutes the context for this autoethnographic account. This university was the one I attended and from which I graduated. This university was where I spent my eventful and idealistic youthful days. This university was where I made acquaintance with Eastern philosophies and Western literatures. This university was where I fell in love for the first time. Indelible memories were still there when I came back after 20 years. But the wounds were still unhealed. It was here that I drank the bitter cup of political discrimination. I was afraid I would forever be in the prison of that feeling. Swayed that the old days had gone by, and swayed by the awful certainty that longing for another chance was tantamount to “fishing the moonlight out of the water,” I came to the decision that I would be content with a wise solution rather wait for an ideal one and I began my research journey there. However, the fact that the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of CPV was around the corner and some political troubles flared up lengthened my waiting. No less than 5 months had passed by before I received the official approval. At that time, the National Congress of the Communist Party had successfully ended with a resolution that affirmed the continuation of the reformist tendency and its openness to the outside world. From that day on, as if by a magic, everything went well for me, and it was that way until the day I left Vietnam two years later. I have a clear feeling that, apart from well-

established personal connections, the victory of the reformist-minded group in the CPV had put an end to my waiting and allowed me to carry out the long-postponed project.

### The Vietnamese Context

Culturally speaking, there are differences between Western society and its Vietnamese counterpart. First, there is an in-group/out-group distinction. While in North American culture, for example, “allegiance to a group and mobility among groups are purely voluntary,” Vietnamese society requires that “one be affiliated and identify with relatively small and tightly-knit groups of people long periods of time” (Yum, 1998, p. 79). Secondly, there is a different conception of personal and public relationship. In the United States, for instance, “there is a sharp dichotomy between private and public life” (p. 50), whereas in Vietnam “there is a tendency to mix personal with public relationship. . . . If one develops a warm personal relationship, a good public relationship will follow” (p. 80). Finally, there are values concerning “doing” versus “being” In a “doing” culture such as the United States, where what a person does counts, the process of creating development is rapid while in Vietnamese “being” culture, “an individual’s birth, family background, age, and rank tend to be more important” (p. 89). Thus, people there take more time to explore others’ background information before creating a relationship (Javidi & Javidi, 1998, p. 89).

Politically speaking, Vietnamese society, in some conspicuous ways, is still the hostage of “totalitarian nihilization” (Havel, 1991, p. 330). There is an unceasing war between, on the one hand, the “tension and thrill in real events . . . the uniqueness of the

human creature” (p. 335) and, on the other hand, the ideology which proclaims that it “has fully understood the world and revealed the truth about it” (p. 335). Since the goal of totalitarian nihilization is to make everything “totally the same” and “the herd mentality” “undifferentiated people with undifferentiated stories” (p. 340), anyone

. . . who resists too much, despairs too much, insists too much on having something of his own . . . or who tries to escape the standard nothingness . . . is already on his way to a place where he will no longer disrupts the prescribed forms of social life: prison” (p. 341).

### Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred throughout my stay in Vietnam because “qualitative research is not a linear, step by step process” (Merriam, 1988, p. 152). During my first months back in Vietnam, I used the preliminary research questions and the related literature to initially code the autoethnographic narrative and documentary/literary data. With time, these “template” strategies--which rely on sets of codes to apply to the data – ceded their place to “editing strategies--which allow the interpreter engage the text naively, without a template” (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, pp. 17-20).

My analytic procedure began with the reading and rereading of the documentary data, relating this to the personal narrative. Getting rid of prefigured categories, and like the phenomenologists, I tried to submerge myself in the words and the world of my experiences in Vietnam, and what I had read. I began to understand the organization of education not, for example, as rows of tables in a classroom, but rather a microcosm of

power relations between passive, attentive students on one side and on the other side, all-powerful monopolists of knowledge.

In analyzing the multiple texts that constitute the data for this study, I employed the “constant and comparative method” elaborated by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

According to this method,

The researcher begins with a particular incident from ... fieldnotes or documents and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances. (Merriam, 1988, p. 159)

Efforts to code data and its ensuing sorting, sifting, constructing, and reconstructing these materials seemed to me a dialectical process in the sense that it was constantly modified, accepted and rejected, and reaccepted. For example, one prominent phenomenon that has captured my attention concerns teaching methods. I forced myself to refine this tentative coding since newly-emerging understandings involved teaching of literature, not teaching in general. Much later, I found it hard to locate experiences, reflections, and information in the category of teaching of literature. Another refinement had to be made. Still there were some exceptions. What finally grew out of this was not only a reaffirmation but also an expansion of the act of reading and writing literature. Based upon the enlarged data, I reframed the analytic categories. At the very end of this category generation, a core category was identified and named reading and writing literature; it had three subcategories: why to read/write literature, what to read/write, and how to read/write literature.

The same procedure was carried out for all the other categories generated.

### Dealing with Validity, Reliability and Ethics

The claims presented here represent insights gained from personal experience and a critical analysis of literature and public documents. Recognizing the criticisms that attend to the use of personal experience, Holt (2003) writes that “The use of self as the only data source in autoethnography has been questioned” (p. 3). Accordingly, I have also included public documents and literature as key components in this study. I make no claims to generalizability. A qualitative study’s generalizability to other populations—its external validity—are usually seen as “a direct function of the similarity between two contexts, what we shall call ‘fittingness.’ Fittingness is defined as the degree of congruence between sending and receiving contexts” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 124). In this sense, transferability is a more appropriate term; transferability assumes not only the degree to which what is learned in one context can apply to another but also the impossibility of claiming beyond their specific cases on the part of the researcher. The strikingly uniform and homogeneous nature of Vietnamese educational methodology and administration, however, convinces me that this slice of educational life as described in my study contains in itself transferable features. I hope that readers “will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred” (Merriam, 1988, p. 211).

Following McCarty (2002), I do not intend to speak “for” others. Within one’s personal experience, the voices of others nonetheless have a place; as Bakhtin eloquently observed, no utterance stands alone, divorced of history or social context. But even had I wanted to, my wish to “represent” others would have been doomed from the start. As an

overseas Vietnamese researcher, I came to Vietnam for a short time; I witnessed educational reformation in the university setting and then returned “home” to the United States. Whenever I hear the songs of birds in the streets of Tucson, I think of the birdless streets of Saigon, where the citizens are now waging a silent war against the forces that deny them the right to be human. Their world and mine, no doubt, are poles apart. How can I speak for them?

I want “to speak with and to them” as McCarty did with her research at Rough Rock (McCarty, 2002, p. 17). Is that a dictate of the heart or of a political orientation? Maybe both. Anytime I embarked on my writing once back in the U.S., I turned on a music disk performed by a Vietnamese singer. Abandoning myself to the sweet rhythms of *nhac que huong* (country music), I felt myself, like Marcel Proust, seeking for a lost time, the time when I was in that far-away country where the people are as easily moved to tears as to laughter. That music, however, did not sweet-talk me into forgetfulness; it, like the violent wind in a novel by Flaubert, loudly wailed, perhaps because it did not want to be forever imprisoned in an abandoned castle.

In order “to speak with” the teachers and literacy learners of South Vietnam, I decided to mix in my written report two types of writing styles. Besides easily recognized “realist tales,” I made the best use of “impressionist tales” (Van Maanen, 1988) in which my voice blurs with those of unnamed others, and in which I construct, from multiple personal experiences, “imagined” communities and classrooms that serve as pedagogical models of educational renovation. “Committing a class suicide” (Freire, 1973, p. 18) may be one reason for this. Another side to this choice was my intention to create a

“writerly text” (Barthes, 1974, p. 4) in which the reader, far from being a passive consumer of verified facts, enters into the transaction with the text and participates in producing the final meaning of the report.

As regards internal validity and reliability, I used the following criteria to promote the credibility of my study. First, I spent more than two years documenting and analyzing educational renovation, writing this up as a personal (auto)ethnographic account. This allowed me to “identify those characteristics and elements in the setting that are most relevant to the question being pursued and focus on their details” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). The prolonged engagement provided the dimension of breadth. Second, I made use of triangulation. In the words of Lincoln and Guba (1985),

As the study unfolds, and particular pieces of information come to light, steps should be taken to validate each against at least one another sources . . . No single item of information . . . should ever be given serious consideration unless it can be triangulated” (p. 283).

Denzin (1970) suggested that triangulation means using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data and multiple methods of collecting data. To confirm the phenomenon of the “banking” style of education, I also conducted a critical analysis of relevant literary texts, and read about 50 articles of daily newspapers and periodical magazines. Likewise, the phenomenon of “fake diplomas” was triangulated by reading documentary data at the same time.

In the early days of my research, I nurtured the aspiration that those who realized that education was only a handmaid to the state would easily agree with me that in order for education to be transformed, the state must in the first place be transformed. But I found that however conscious we may be of the subordinated status education occupies in

comparison to political structures, the conscientization of the people, not political violence, should be on top of the renovation agenda. Such was the final, inescapable message borne out through autoethnography and critical literary analysis.

### Language Issues

I am not a professional translator, so translating the documents and literature from Vietnamese into English was not always easy. I took two steps. First, I transcribed documentary material into Vietnamese, then, I translated it into English. Time consuming as it may be, this tactic permitted me to think on the best translation. As for poems and fictional pieces, I used those that had been translated into English by professional translators. Unfortunately, these works were in short supply and not always reliable. I decided to compare the Vietnamese original with the English versions available and chose the translation based on two criteria: *tin* [accuracy], and *nha* [elegance]. I gave priority to the first criterion, but the second criterion affected my choice, too, especially in poetry, the universe of images and sounds.

I reminded myself that translation is a kind of betrayal, so I tried to contextualize wherever I could, but this effort was not always fruitful. An interesting example was the pronoun *ho* used very often by speakers of Vietnamese. Literally speaking, it means “they” in English, a third singular plural form. Many individuals, however, use it to refer to the dominant group. In Vietnamese, the word *ho* is polite enough but not affectionate or comradely enough.

In this study, all translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

### Leaving Vietnam

I love the law of yin-yang. Yin stands in opposition to yang but at the same time yin contains the seeds of yang, and vice versa. Good luck and bad luck are the opposites, but they are interdependent. I saw the law of reversion, the true action of Dao, operating in my study. As I said in this part, I encountered so many problems in the early days of re-entering Vietnam that I more than once thought of quitting. But as I continued this autoethnographic journey, I was surprised at the insights and information that emerged. The atmosphere was hospitable; but for this cultural tolerance, but for this freedom of speech, I could not have achieved the insights from which this dissertation was distilled. All that weighed heavily on my heart when I said goodbye. But, as the law of Yin-Yang teaches me, leaving embraced in it the promise of a returning, a returning to the slice of life which has become part of me and to which I feel never sufficiently grateful.

### Returning to Vietnam

Sometime during the rainy season of 2004, I made a revisit to Vietnam. One year was a short time, but the changes in living standards were considerable. I shared in the delights of a lifestyle modified by the change in economic renovation. As for educational and cultural life, what I heard was nothing more than a confirmation of what I had heard one year before. I left Ho Chi Minh City with the happiness that this return to Vietnam validated the message in my study again, but at the same time with the sorrow that the message was not a message of happiness for those who continue to participate in “educational renovation.”

## Summary

Defining critical autoethnography as a genre of writing and research that connects the personal to the cultural and that simultaneously seeks to effect positive social change, helps explain the reasons I chose a hybrid methodology of personal narrative and document/literary analysis for this study. Steps taken by the researcher were described. Gaining successful access to the Vietnamese education system thanks to connections and the reformist atmosphere, my research went on with relative ease. Within this context I used documentation of and reflections on first-hand experience, public documentary data, and critical literary analysis to verify my claims. The analytic procedure was guided by Glaser's constant comparative method. Prolonged engagement and triangulation are criteria to help ensure the validity and reliability of this research. A revisit to Vietnam one year later served the same effort on the part of the researcher.

The next chapters present the findings of this study.

## CHAPTER 4

THE POLITICS OF POLITICAL EDUCATION:  
CLASS-BASED OR HUMANISTIC HUMAN BEING?

“Faith is intact, but it totters beneath an enormous load of problems and discoveries which Marxism had not foreseen. The new religion is once more confronted with Galilee: to preserve its faith, it must deny the sun and humiliate free man.”

(Camus, 1962, p. 212)

This chapter introduces the political education in South Vietnam’s educational reform. As required courses, political education takes a considerable part of the curriculum, and recently it has been included in the graduation exam for any university students. The tension caused by the philosophical viewpoints, particularly a philosophy of the human being, between the classroom political education and personal experiences will be documented.

Generally speaking, ideological training is part of the educational goal with its emphasis on socialist/communist ideals and socialist/communist patriotism. In the words of a leader in education:

The objective of education, namely, is to shape and promote comprehensive personality, to train men full of patriotism and socialist ideals, imbued with the fine traditions of the nation and the quintessence of human nature, endowed with good health, moral virtue and good qualification in one trade. (Pham Minh Hac, 1998, p. 30)

In university programs, ideological training is embodied in required courses which all students have to take: Marxism-Leninism, scientific socialism, Marxist-Leninist

political economy, and the history of the Communist Party of Vietnam. The ultimate goal of ideological training is stated clearly. First, it contributes to the clarification of socialist/communist theory and the route to socialism/communism in Vietnam. Second, it creates a consensus among students, teachers, and officials on the insistence that national independence is closely wedded to socialism/communism and that the foundation of everything is Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh thought and the leadership of CPV. Thirdly, it serves as the effective defense against the dangers evolved from within (Phan Thanh Pho, 2002, pp. 14-15).

Ideological indoctrination can be seen as involving the “red” values as opposed to “expert” values--the two sides of Vietnam’s state-run education. Although educational administrators have always tried to hold the values of “red” and “expert” in creative tension, “red” is almost always treated with high priority. In this respect academic excellence--“expertise”--is encouraged and welcomed, but political reliability or “redness” is “in command,” even in today’s Vietnam where the goal of modernization is in the ascendant. Listen to this public speech by Nong Duc Manh, Secretary General of the CPV, when he came to visit a university in Ho Chi Minh City in 2002:

I am not content with the phrase “catch up with” as one of the three breakthroughs of our city’s National University. As far as the quality is concerned, not knowledge but our greatest feat is to train the quality of the “new socialist human being”. “Catch up with” other countries in knowledge, material bases, level of scientific achievement . . . I agree . . . but is there any field in which we are on equal footing with other countries? Or so we are behind them in all respects? . . . In my opinion, there is one thing we catch up with other countries: we train a body of intellectuals both “red” and “expert.” (Nong Duc Manh, cited in Nguoi Lao Dong, 2002, p. Thoi su [*Current News*])

When analyzing data on these types of ideological statements and training, I thought of Maugham (1978a) when he concluded in one of his stories,

The tragedy of love is not death or separation. . . . Oh, it is dreadfully bitter to look at a woman whom you have loved with all your heart and soul, so that you felt you could not bear to let her out of your sight, and realize that you would not mind if you never see her again. The tragedy of love is indifference. (p. 420)

Indifference. So it seemed. Gone were the days when the communists marched into the cities proclaiming to the whole world the liberation of the oppressed. Gone were the days when the alliance of Marxism-Leninism and patriotism/nationalism, the roots of all victories, stirred up great enthusiasm amongst the people. Gone were the days when the word “socialism,” as intoxicating as a newly-found love, was a “mesmerizing synonym for a just word” (Havel, 1992, p. 383). A shrug of shoulders or an ironic smile were the familiar attitudes I perceived on Marxism-Leninism as a school subject. It is a subject which students do not want to study and which teachers do not want to teach. Because politics is in command, students must be given ideological training but this seems coercive because they must attend the classes or they cannot take the graduation exam. Because of this, students do not put their hearts and minds into the subject; the understanding of the materials is superficial.

The fact that students do not put their “heart and mind” in ideological indoctrination stems in part from a dogmatic teaching methodology. Books such as *Questions and Answers on Marxism-Leninism* (Department of Political Education, 2002), for instance, overpopulated bookstores. Any student who wanted to pass the exam simply bought one and memorized the answers or micro-filmed the book and brought it to the exam room. In exams students copy from textbooks as the examiners turn their eyes

away. Cheating is no longer a taboo; nor does it inspire a burden on one's conscience. It is increasingly becoming an acceptable part of the academic universe.

Teaching methodology, however, is just the tip of the iceberg. The underlying patterns of indifference on the part of students grow out of at least two reasons. First, the political courses are viewed as "silly." The fact that political courses are unattractive has something to do with disenchantment with Vietnamese Marxist-Leninist tenets, especially its philosophy of the human being.

No less stormy is the classic saying of Engel's concerning religion. Any religion is nothing more than the distorted reflection onto human mind the external forces which govern their everyday life. I would have liked to challenge Marx to explain this phenomenon, which some call a crisis of credibility and ideology. One can visit a pagoda and see the revival of religious beliefs. I was reminded of Marx's statements that religion is the complaint of the oppressed, the soul of a heartless society, the conscience of a society without conscience.

Only recently did I grasp the full significance of this. Marxism-Leninism as taught in Vietnamese schools is still confined by a dualistic/binary mentality whose features are polarized sets: negative/affirmative, reactionary/revolutionary/, form/content. Buddhist philosophy, with its non-dualism/non-binarism, not only deconstructs this mechanistic polarization but also supplies more humanistic solutions in which the opposite sets of categories could be dissolved and made the best of. This contrast represents a harsh critique of the dominant ideology of Vietnam.

The demythologization of the class-based orthodoxy was borne out in an analysis of contemporary literature. During my stay in Vietnam, I came across a book published in the early days of renovation era. The author of the book, Tran Duc Thao, stepping out of the darkness of long years of seclusion, created a bombshell by harshly criticizing the mainstream conception of humans which to him had led the whole country to the edge of corruption, home-grown hatred, and political oppression. I read the book with irresistible enchantment. Thao launched an attack on Althusser's structuralist Marxism, which he conceived as closely related to Maoism and Stalin's personality cult (Tran Duc Thao, 1989). From another angle, Thao wants to contribute to the movement for democratization in the era of renovation.

For a long period of time in Vietnam's recent history, "human-being-in-general" or "humanistic human-being" existed as a taboo or even as a reactionary concept. The CPV insisted that the concept is an instrument to poison or indoctrinate the people into getting far away from the "class struggle" which is supposed to be the main dynamism of human history. An individual was seen and judged from the angle of class or rather of political reliability. Everything is political; nothing is apolitical (Le Ngoc Tra, 1990; Phong Le, 1997).

As elaborated by Kolakowski (1965), "Class-consciousness" is usually identified with "party-mindedness." "The single choice world view which divides every field of life, every fact, thought or fragment which constitutes the substance of social life is eternally branded as belonging to our realm or the other" (pp. 360-361).

Tran Duc Thao (1989) put the blame on Althusser for worshipping the class-based human being at the expense of the humanistic one. According to Thao, Althusser had distorted reality with the metaphysics of the theory of the inevitable polarization of social life; had absolutized the role of opposition and looked upon reality as stable, fixed and non-action; had divorced systems of structures from the dialectical interplay of society and nature; and had seen only class relations and reserved no place whatever for human agency. “Human beings are what are determined by class conditions” (Althusser as quoted by Thao, 1989, p. 101). Then by making use of Marx’s works, Thao contended that each person has two facets, “a class-based” individuality and a “personal” individuality or “human-being in-general.” Thao (1989) stated:

In sum, the viewpoint that class-based human beings and human beings-in – general are mutually exclusive, [that] there is just class-based, no human beings-in-general is antithetical to Marxism-Leninism. According to the dialectical vision of [Marxist] classical theorists, in a class period, class and universal characteristics exist side by side in each individual. (p. 136)

Thao argued that class nature is dominant while *tin h ng uoi* [human nature] occupies a secondary position. Human nature, however, does not wither away; it forms the foundation on which the class nature is based.

Some scholars hold that the class-based conception of human nature has been a shared tenet between Vietnamese Marxist-Leninists and Chinese Maoists. Despite the ups and downs in the diplomatic relationship between the two countries, Maoism has never lost its guiding luster in the ideological struggle in Vietnam (Hoang Nhu Mai, n.d.). Mao Tse-Tung (1942) said, “There is only human nature in the concrete, no human nature in the abstract. In a class society, there is only human nature that bears the stamp of a class,

but no human nature transcending classes” (p. 35). The class designation, however, is not determined by a person’s position in relations of production as suggested by Marxist conception of class. Mao expanded this concept by incorporating a “behavioral-attitudinal” component. In the end, according to the Maoists, class is not determined by property ownership but by political behavior (Ogden, 1992).

According to Thao (1989), the purpose of his book was to prove that the simultaneous existence of class-based and humanistic-based human beings is the condition for democratization, which, first and foremost, means the respect of human rights--rights of human beings in general, rights of every citizen no matter what social class he/she represents.

Thao’s book seemed to awake long buried thoughts. There is the “class-based” perception of regarding humans one-dimensionally; this perception may be useful during the war, when hatred for the class enemy motivated each person to fight, but not now, when the people should live in peace and mutual affection. I was fascinated that Confucian thinkers of all sects believed human nature could be transformed through education. In this way, they were on the same barricade with those who affirm the malleability of humans. The Confucians, however, tended to highlight the universality of human nature in that they talked about some “innate attributes” of that nature. In this way, the Confucians do not have the same ground with the class-based concept which simplifies human nature as class nature only. The most fatal consequence of the class-based conception is that it breeds and intensifies hatred amongst the people simply because there should be no sympathy or empathy between members of different classes.

A class-based “great wall” was established in society; politics seems to be identified with the class struggle, but the definition of “class enemy” is not clear-cut and is changeable with the changing party line. The greatest consequence of such a class struggle was the fact that it had destroyed family, the basic structure of Vietnamese society.

Existentialism, whether articulated by Jean-Paul Sartre or Merleau Ponty, at least until recently, has been a lightning rod for the anger of Vietnamese mainstream academics. It seems as if existentialist phenomenology, which idolizes “*La vie vecu*” [Lived life]--the direct experience between the knower and the known--is not reconciled with those who put their faith in a prior, absolute knowledge. It seems as if existentialism, when it puts an emphasis on human freedom, cannot find the same language with those who believe that human beings are determined by the necessities of history where there is no place for a chance or ambiguity. It seems as if existentialism, where the individual subject’s anxiety is given first priority and where the dialectical tension between the subject and the subject’s social subjection are located, cannot be allied with those who are bent on thinking of human beings in terms of collectivity and collective mentality.

One beautiful afternoon in the university cafeteria, I was transported back to the fine nuances of human heart, back to the human frailties, loveliness and its boundless melancholy, the melancholy which Dostoevsky, the Russian novelist, named “the melancholy of this earth,” which Li Po, the Chinese poet, called “the-one-hundred-year-old sorrow,” back to the time when the ancient defined the purpose of poetry as being to remind the politicians that the governed were “people with faces, not anonymous members” (Ohmann, 1964, p. 176), back to the time when Sartre declared,

Existentialism has been able to return and to maintain itself because it reaffirmed the reality of men as Kierkegaard asserted his own against Hegel . . . Marxism has absorbed man into the idea, and Existentialism seeks him everywhere where he is, at his work, in his home, in the street. (1966, p. 195)

As to whether the restoration of individual dignity is intertwined with democratization and modernization, two goals of the Renovation manifesto, it is often said that if individual problems can be solved, so can those of everyone; even the communists seem to realize this. There is no doubt that they realize this, for although existentialism was still excluded from school textbooks, I saw a number of its texts published by the government and although “they” still reminded readers that existentialist works should be read in the light of Vietnamese Marxism-Leninism, the readers would, of course, read them in the light of their experiences and values. No longer was existentialism thrown into the same category with “theories of decadence and fast living.” No longer was it defined as the hopeless efforts at curbing the tide of revolutionary ideas. No longer was it ridiculed as the ideology of the sick petty bourgeois (Pham Van Si, 1986; Le Dinh Ky, 1987).

### Summary

To sum up, political education not only did not fascinate those who were its intended consumers, it also seemed to trigger resistance. The first reason for this was the banking style of teaching, but the main reason was widespread rejection of the mainstream philosophy of the human being. Using their experiences or interactions with books published outside the classrooms, students reject a class-based conception in favor

of a more humanistic conception of the human being, supplemented by existentialism or Buddhism.

The next chapter will continue the same analysis in the area of literary education.

## CHAPTER 5

## THE POLITICS OF LITERATURE: WHY WE READ/WRITE.

## LITERATURE FOR PARTY-MINDEDNESS OR HUMANISTIC AIMS?

“On this sheet a child has written, ‘Our home.’ But why not, ‘Our victory’? Think. What surely should be the first words on a child’s lips today? They should be ‘Our victory,’ isn’t that so?”

(Chingzi Aitmatov, 1988, p. 192)

There are a many reasons for reading literature and writing about literature. Some people read for exams. Some read for instruction. Others read to impress other people with their knowledge. Still others read for entertainment, for pleasure. In Vietnamese schools, the first and foremost function of teaching literature to students is to indoctrinate them with dominant consciousness and to prepare them for the roles of ruling cadres. In other words, the school serves as a part of, in Louis Althusser’s term, an “ideological state apparatus.” Even in foreign languages/literature classes, this goal is given first priority:

Through the teaching materials, the students need to be conscious of the matters about the qualities of the new socialist human beings . . . the instrument of foreign language is employed to effect the building and defense of socialist fatherland. (Bui Hien, 1999, p. 33)

## Literature and the “New Socialist Human Being”

The “new socialist human being,” as discussed in Chapter 4, infiltrates into the fabric of educational life in Vietnam. Literature, with its inherent sympathetic and

empathetic power, is entrusted with the burden of reinforcing the “red” side of the communist educational goal. This seems to be a mockery of democratization and modernization, two values of educational renovation.

Concerning the differences between literature before and after 1986 (the first year of renovation), after 1986, besides being a service to a politically charged function, literature served also as a means to entertain the public. Literature for policies’ sake was not as tyrannical as it had been before 1986, but the dominant tone was still the old one. The purpose of education was still to shape the “new socialist human being” or “red expert,” even if the communists do not say this openly. In the *Teacher’s Guide to Teaching Literature*, for example (an official text), curriculum designers consider “unorthodox” literary pieces to contribute to shaping political reliability while possessing highly aesthetic qualities.

Contrary to the conventional assumption that the overemphasis on the ideological function of literature in communist Vietnam is the continuation of Confucianist literature for morality’s sake, some have argued for the multifaced reality of literature under the Confucian ideology in imperial dynasties. Accordingly, in the times of royal dynasties, when Confucian ideology reigned absolutely, “art for morality’s sake” existed side by side with “art for self- expression’s sake.” In those days, in the darkness of feudalism, a literature that “instructed” coexisted with a literature that “pleased.” There was once great free space for individual taste and emotions.

Reading books and essays written by teachers or writers reminded me of the great price Vietnamese students have to pay, emotionally and aesthetically, for the dogged

pursuit of political content and scant attention to artistic form imposed by the curriculum designer (Eagleton, 1967, p. 20). In this respect, teachers have many things in common with reformist-minded critics. Like Phong Le (1997), a literary critic, some teachers object to the inferior status of the aesthetic function of literature as compared to the all-powerful ideological function of literature. And like Nguyen Duc Nam (2001), a professor of literature, they call for the depolitization of literature and for the termination of the identification of literary values and political values. Like Vygotsky (1995), the Russian scholar, they argue for the fact that the content of a short story can be transformed by the form and not the other way around as stated by orthodox Marxist critics.

During part of my stay in Vietnam, I heard sung the poem, “The Violet Myrtle Flower,” written by Huu Loan. For all its popularity amongst the people, it was banned until 1986. But I could not forget its political nuances or fail to come to it with virgin aesthetic vibrations. The poem still lingers in my heart and mind:

She’s got three big brothers  
in the Army.  
her little brothers  
hadn’t learned to talk  
when her hair was blue-black.

I’m in the National Defense Army  
I’m a long way from home  
I love her  
On our wedding day  
she didn’t ask for a bridal gown.

From the front far away  
I cast my mind sadly back  
Getting married in wartime  
How many men go and return?

Suppose I don't return:  
 Poor wife waiting  
 Tiny, at evening, in the country

But it wasn't the man  
 in the smoke and fire who died  
 it was the girl  
 behind the lines. (Huu Loan, 1972, pp. 61-62)

### Literary Writing as Reproduction

If reading is aimed at pursuing ideological content, the act of writing about literature does not go beyond the act of reproduction. Writing is synonymous with buying “political insurance” and proving the “ready-made axioms” (Phan Trong Luan et al., 1999, pp. 288-290). Student essays confirm that fact that without the name of the student-writer, all the essays are the same. There is something faceless, voiceless, personless amongst the writings of Vietnamese students, whether at high school or the college level.

Some, including me, have tried to explain the absence of personal identity in writing by looking towards the Confucian ideology with its emphasis on collectivity at the expense of individuality. This age-old mindset makes it difficult for Vietnamese students to realize themselves as autonomous, independent entities, In a sense, I share the same opinion with Hoai Thanh and Hoai Chan (1988) that:

In general, the entire spirit of ancient times . . . and the present time . . . maybe summed up in two words “I” and “We.” . . . When the word “I” appeared . . . many people viewed it with disfavor. Even though it always followed words like “older brother,” “uncle,” and “grandfather,” it seemed improper. Let alone now, when it shows up by itself. (p. 185)

Some insist that during the long era of Confucianism, there existed two parallel schools of writing, one called “art for morality’s sake” and the other called “art for self expression.” Whereas the former is keen on embellishing the ruling ideology, the latter is a sort of deviance from the beaten track, giving free rein to individual impulse and feelings of the moment. Some also describe the non-communist period (before 1975) in affirmative terms, as far as students’ artistic creativity is concerned, remembering that essay topics were not only academic but also gave wide scope to the students’ knowledge, emotions, and creative thinking.

This reminded me of elements of democracy in Confucian pedagogy which some believe are absent in communist pedagogy: There is the belief, for example, that if one reads and learns literature, he or she may not be entitled to think about literary pieces in his or her own way; students must understand in accordance with what the teacher says, because even if they are right, they can still fail the exam.

“Danger, danger”—those words resonate in my personal narrative, reflective of the absence of personal voice in writing. The present-day methodology does not provoke criticality or discussion; no one dares to take their own route--it is so dangerous. It is so dangerous that if a teacher says differently, he or she can be fired.

In reading and writing about literature in contemporary Vietnam, “I” is always living in the shadow of “we.” It is an echo of “safe talk” practiced in South Africa “as a means of avoiding the oppressive constraints of apartheid education system” (Chick, 1996, p. 37).

I wondered if teachers, the sons and daughters of a society whose primary feature is “the loss of confidence in the values of one’s own opinion” (Pasternak, 1981, p. 405), had ever looked outside the narrow corner where they are trapped. They might answer by comparing Vietnamese society and its education to “other” places where there is the “new” methodology of reading and writing with its emphasis on reader-response and expressivism.

### Summary

Since reading literature was aimed at pursuing mainstream ideological content and writing did not go beyond the act of reproduction, literary education during the time of this study was essentially “banking” as far as the purpose of learning literature. To resist these tendencies, many teachers in Vietnam seek alternatives in transactional reading and expressivist writing. A transaction between the text and the reader was suggested, both the “aesthetic” stance and “efferent.” As for writing, mainstream reproductionist writing should be replaced by a kind of expressivist writing in which the voice of the writer was heard. Teachers do not think that the absence of personal face in classroom writing was a legacy of Confucianism, but it really was the product of contemporary education where the uniqueness of each was sacrificed for the sake of herd mentality.

In the next chapter, I will continue with the story of the politics of literature but pay attention to the gap between the uninspiring illustrative literature in the classroom and the highly critical soul-searching literature outside which has captivated the minds and hearts of many in Vietnam today.

## CHAPTER 6

## THE POLITICS OF LITERATURE: WHAT TO READ/WRITE.

## ILLUSTRATIVE OR SOUL-SEARCHING LITERATURE?

“. . . Grown up to find all gods dead, all wars  
fought, all faiths in men shaken.”

(F. Scott Fitzgerald)

During my stay in Vietnam I was given a compact disk recording of romantic songs written by musicians who are non-communists or who are outside the tyranny of communist ideology. The recording consists of love songs that were banned by the government, at least until recently. As a marginalized literacy, it has survived despite being censored for a very long time. Under the era of renovation, it is reborn and is in a continuous feud with mainstream music. In literature the same phenomenon occurred. A great number of literary works which have long been excluded from the school curriculum doggedly live on in the hearts of generations of readers/students while the canonical works have been rejected by them due to their glaring irrelevance, even hostility to the newly-emerging aesthetic needs of the people.

This chapter is a continued effort at drawing the picture of literary education, but the focus is on what is taught and what is excluded from the curriculum. As I said in Chapter 3, the soul-searching works published in the wake of renovation, with their timeliness and interrogational weight, find a welcome from at least some. I was introduced to this world of novels or short stories, which, step by step, help build the

“language of critique” and the “language of possibility.” What seemed to be excluded has returned to unsettle the “illustrative” literature which was securely guarded by educational designers.

### Illustrative Literature

In Vietnamese schools, the texts which are accorded canonical status should belong to critical realist and socialist realist works. I will discuss critical realism in the next section. The following deals with socialist realism (sorealism) as it appears in literary classrooms and the transactional process with fiction or poetry written under its aesthetic laws.

In his July 1948 speech, Truong Chinh, then Secretary General of the CPV explained:

As we understand it, socialist realism is a method of artistic creation which portrays the truth in a society evolving towards socialism according to objective laws. Out of objective reality we must spotlight the “the typical features in situation” and reveal the inexorable motive force driving society forward and the objective tendency of the process of revolution. (Truong Chinh, 1977, p. 212)

There is a great distance between sorealism as practiced in Vietnam and that of Western sorealism, say, employed by Aragon, the famous French communist writer. Although Aragon basically approved sorealism, he still distinguished himself by sticking to two points. The first is that sorealism cannot be only the echoing of Party slogans. The second point is that sorealism should never lose its critical aspect (Adereth, 1968, p. 196-207).

Sorealism thus should be understood in the words of Tertz: “They are panegyrics on Communism, satires on some of its enemies, or descriptions of life in its revolutionary

development,” i.e., life moving toward communism . . . they all develop in one direction, and a direction well-known in advance” (1960, p. 172).

The communist “party-mindedness” or the communist ideological commitment is the main and highly required quality of surrealism.

The party-mindedness requires of the artist and the writer the adoption of the ideological position of the party, of the working class and of the laboring masses in their cognition and judgment of reality since that ideological position is the most revolutionary and best suited to the truth, to the interests of the people, and to the ideal of human society. (Truong Chinh, 1997, p. 199)

As for characterization, surrealism aims at describing and extolling the “positive hero”:

The positive hero is not simply a good man [sic] He is a hero illuminated by the light of the most ideal of all ideals. He has either no fault at all or else but a few of them. For example, sometimes he loses his temper a little. These faults have two fold functions. They help the hero to preserve a certain likeness to real men [sic], and they provide something to overcome as he raises himself even higher and higher on the ladder of political morality. The most important thing of course is the clarity and directness with which he sees the purpose [of communism] and strives toward it. (Terzt, 1960, p. 172)

Psychologically speaking, the “positive hero” is distinguished by a special, even unreal structure:

It is not easy to enumerate the basic qualities of the positive hero: ideological conviction, respect for women, self-sacrifice. . . . Hence the amazing precision of all his actions, thoughts, tastes, feelings and judgments. He firmly knows what is right and what is wrong: he says plainly “yes” or “no” and does not confuse “black and white.” For him there are no inner doubts nor hesitations, no secrets. Faced with the most complex of tasks, he easily finds the solution, taking the shortest and most direct route to the purpose [of communism]. (Terzt, 1960, p. 173)

As far as texts are concerned, surrealist fiction or poetry can be termed “readable” texts. While the writable text is playful, fluid, open, triumphantly plural, and hence

impervious to the repressive rule of structure or grammar or logic, the readable text is serious, closed, structured, constrained, authoritarian; it imposes meaning, it makes the reader a consumer, not producer of the text (Suleiman, 1983, p. 149).

Seen from the distinction “*ecrivant-ecrivain*” held by Roland Barthes, the surrealist writer should be classified as the “*ecrivant*” for whom writing is a transitive verb. To put it another way, the “*ecrivant*” will not tolerate anyone that reads it as something other than what he/she means. He/she works with certainty, he/she makes affirmations. The “*ecrivain*,” in contrast, “works with multiple meanings and ambiguities; he/she ascends to the theater of language” (Suleiman, 1983, p. 199).

This identification of literature and politics, the controlling of literature by party lines originated in Maoist theory of literature (Hoang Nhu Mai, n.d.). Quang Dam et al. (1983) argued that Maoist aesthetics is rooted in both Confucianism and Legalism, the two competing schools of thought in ancient China. From Confucianism, Mao drew the precept that “literature is used to convey morality.” The ideological function of literature occupies a central role in both Confucianism and Maoism. If “morality” in Confucianism is feudalist ideology of which the driving force is royal loyalty, Maoist “morality” is obedience to the communist party ideology and political line. From Legalism, Mao learned the lesson that independent thinking is harmful and the success of the ruler is based on the ignorance of the ruled. Mao himself did not hide his fascination with Qin Shihuang, the first Chinese Emperor, who had unified China politically and aesthetically thanks to the support of Legalist theorists.

The Maoist theory of literature, however, has never easily won the hearts of the Vietnamese people. As early as 1956, resistance against surrealism took on the dimension of an intellectual uprising despite its short-livedness. One poet decried:

Placing police stations and machinery in the center of the human heart  
Forcing feelings to be expressed according to a set of rules promulgated by the government. (Hoang Van Chi, 1959, p. 24)

A writer predicted the outcome of monopolizing culture and art:

Each of us possesses his own art and reflects his own personality in it. Only this kind of art and personality can create the spectacle of a hundred flowers reviling each other in charm. On the contrary, if one compels all writers to write in the same style, there may come a day when all the flowers will be changed into chrysanthemums. (Hoang Van Chi, 1958, p. 79)

What happened to these writers above could be predicted beforehand; they were destroyed: either they were put under house arrest or they were sent to reeducation camps.

When the era of renovation arrived in 1980s, the “literature of chrysanthemums” was under heavy attack again, this time, not only by writers and poets but also by teachers and students who were daily interacting with surrealist literature in the classroom.

During my ethnographic journey in Vietnam, I came across the poem, “The Coralvine,” by T.T.K.H., an anonymous authoress. A young female, under the pressure of tradition, marries for convenience; living with a husband who is “stern and old,” she harbors a longing for the ideal man of her youth who shares with her a love for the coralvine:

I am walking on the edge of life  
And my husband’s love is a cold lie  
Yet as autumns die and autumn die

One man's image is my dark relief  
(1972, pp. 54-55)

All of a sudden, one day, the young woman reads a story that conjures up memories of that kind of unforgettable flower. The love that she has buried under layers of time wakes up, and together with it remorseful tears for a long lost love that is still as fresh as ever:

One day when for once my heart was calm  
Someone brought a heart-shaped coral-vine  
Let me squeeze the trickles that remain  
To fall weeping into a poem  
(1972, pp. 54-55)

The fate of the woman was not exactly similar to that of contemporary Vietnamese women, but some can, to a great degree, understand the tears that trickle into the poem. As a matter of fact, romantic poetry, long accused of being “reactionary” in nature, had in part crept into the curriculum, but it still falls short of many teachers’ expectations. Either it was introduced not in its totality or it was interpreted in accordance with the mainstream ideology. The curriculum thus remained in the kingdom where surrealism reigned almost absolutely. But the “grand-narratives” of that kingdom were being desecrated by my research participants.

Curriculum courses are far divorced from social reality: School literature follows the same path with no turning points; it does not provoke reflection on the diversity of life. Love, friendship, the “hot” issues of society are not included in textbooks. In a similar fashion, there is the gap between school literature and current events in students’ lives – literary pieces are far removed from everyday life. The Vietnam war is long gone, yet many literary texts in the curriculum are still about that theme.

Some are harshly critical of surrealism literature in school and the “unwomanly” face of women in such poems as “The Twin Mountain,” which is about two soldiers, one female and the other male, during the resistance war against the French. They are lovers. They live in a region where the twin mountain stands out on the horizons. They like to think of the mountain as a husband-mountain and a wife-mountain standing side by side. The female is killed in the war, leaving the male alone. Missing her, the male usually looks up at the twin mountain, feeling sorrowful. Missing her, he consoles himself by thinking:

You live forever beside other patriots  
 Under white gravestones in the rice fields  
 From my heart’s depth I call you--“comrade”  
 Loving heart among so many hearts. (Vu Cao, n.d., p. 766)

Why comrade? Comrade is a political title. She does not even have a name and the lost love does not make her special in his cherished memory.

Or consider the false prophecy manifested in another school poem, “The Song of the Perfume River.” Written by one of the highest-ranking poets of surrealism, the poem accuses the old decadent society of generating and spreading prostitution and predicts the end of this evil when the (communist) revolution wins:

Why not? Young girl on the Perfume River?  
 Yes, tomorrow, from your deepest heart to the palms of your hands  
 You shall be filled with the sweet essence of jasmine.  
 Clean as wellspring at dawn in the depths of the forest.  
 Tomorrow a new wind will sweep down from a thousand horizons  
 Carry you to a garden filled with spring. (To Huu, n.d., p. 701)

More than 20 years under communism, prostitution makes a great comeback. Why continue to affirm something untrue? Why teach students that prostitution is the product

of the pre-communist regimes while they see it every day with their own eyes at every street corner?

The harshest attack of surrealism, ironically, came from a surrealist writer whose works were included in the curriculum. That man, Nguyen Minh Chau, distinguished himself by asking other people to say goodbye to this school of writing in his “Please Deliver the Funeral Oration to an Era of Illustrative Literature” (2002). By doing so, Chau not only dealt a death-blow to surrealism but also negated his own literary career.

This explosive text begins with Chau’s description of his sorrow at being a writer in Vietnam. Contrasting Vietnamese literature with that of other countries, he perceived that while the characters of foreign writers have torments of some stature, those of Vietnam experience slightly trivial torments. Comparing the status of the writer in contemporary Vietnam with the pre-communist regime, Chau discovered that, despite supposedly being oppressed, the writers of those times at least had some freedom to reflect life as it really was. Under communism, in contrast, a writer must resort to tricks of evasion, or “beat about the bush” in order to conform to the party line and to please cultural commissars. Then, in an elegant way, Chau gives flesh and blood to the so-called “illustrative writing,” which has long enthroned and which has given its practitioners position, prestige, and material benefits. “Illustrative” literary works, in Chau’s vision, are one-sided reflections of life; they are unjustifiable deception as compared to real life. What is called “creative freedom” is in reality a luxury preserved for those writers who practice the act of illustrating. To survive, to feel security, almost all writers, step by step, belittle and demean themselves by conforming to the deceitful, narrow path of

“illustrative literature.” The disastrous consequence of this attitude, which can be synonymous with what Fromm (1963) termed as “mechanisms of escape” (p. 208), is the loss of the writer’s self, the loss of the soul. It goes without saying that Chau felt ashamed because he, as well as his colleagues, had fallen into the abyss of cowardice. He recalled:

A veteran writer, holding up a glass of wine amongst the junior writers, said, “The reason why I live until now is that I know how to be afraid.” Then, he looked up at the sky, laughing bitterly, tearfully--one drop of tear fell down on the ground, another flew into his heart. (Nguyen Minh Chau, 2002, p. 135)

Just as cowardice cannot give birth to great writers, so illustration, glorification and prettification can hardly produce great works of literature. Chau (2002) mentioned *Don Quixote* and *The Official Story of A.Q.* to prove his point that both Spain and China were not blackened although both novels did not embellish Spanish and Chinese society. In other words, criticality, not illustration, should be the signal of a great literature. Chau concluded by calling for a breakup with illustrative literature, for a creation of free space for literary creativity, and for a literature which tells us “the temporary amongst the timeless, the evil in the middle of the human, the extremist in the middle of the tolerant, the insolent amidst the simple, the enduring and thoughtful responsibility” (p. 139).

From that fateful day when illustrative literature or rather surrealist literature was proclaimed dead by one of the leading figures of surrealists, Vietnam’s literature has ceased, at least to some extent, to be the legal handmaid to the ruling ideology. A critical soul-searching literature was born. The dominant note of this movement is to deconstruct, demystify, demythologize the communist tenets and to problematize many things which have been taken for granted. Schools, no matter how fiercely they may be guarded, have

been shaken by the literary revolution rising with mounting wrath beyond the four walls of the classroom.

By talking about fictional characters, students indirectly touch upon sensitive problems of real life. One by one, myths are debunked: myths of socialist, charitable, communal life in Vietnamese villages; myths of the 1960s' agrarian reforms which opened the way to agricultural collectivization; myths of the class struggle as the motivating force of history; myths of socialist justice; myths of the noble role of socialist intellectuals; myths of the liberation of women; and myths of mythologized history with mythologized figures. The list can go on, but here I will focus on the timely and significant matters that suggest how isolated and unnatural the officially mandated school curriculum is.

### Soul-Searching Literature

#### *Separation*

Tran Khuat Nguyen's anger in the novel *Separation* (Tran Manh Hao, 1989) was highly infectious. He said: "We sacrificed millions of people to make a revolution against injustice, why does that revolution give birth to a privileged stratum?" (Tran Manh Hao, 1989, p. 326). I heard an echo of this opinion on Vietnam's social stratification. There is great unanimity in the condemnation of the ruling class for its corruption and lack of fairness. Such phrases as *con ong chau cha*, *cau am co chieu*, or *con chau cac cu*, (VIPS or princes and princesses) can be heard again and again. These lifestyles reflected the

embourgeoisement of the dominant group; the dominant group in Vietnam today are CPV members and their allies

As many know, corruption had become an acceptable part of a natural order--too familiar to shock even an idealist. A Vietnamese folk song says, "My little children, remember. Pirates are the bandits of the night. But mandarins are bandits in broad daylight." Many people illustrate their viewpoints by quoting this timely proverb. The other side of the matter, however, still troubles me. According to Lin Yutang (1983), a Chinese scholar, the phenomenon "A man who is a mandarin benefits all the clan," is the product of a society in which the family mind takes the better of the social mind. Since the family system is the root of society, it breeds and amplifies the family mind whose "mutual helpfulness is developed to a very high degree, encouraged by a sense of moral obligation and family honor" (p. 181). Lin Yutang says that if a successful man, especially if he happens to be an official, always gives the best jobs to his relatives, then nepotism and cronyism inevitably develop. Connections, relations or *quan he*, as it is usually called in Vietnam--whether blood connections or friendly or clientalist--contribute to the perpetuating of socially-prescribed inequalities and inequity. Since the family system, the main pillar of which--filial piety--reflects Confucian ideology, we can see the disastrous phenomenon of "VIP's princes and princesses" as the vestiges of the Confucian era.

### *Against the Current Stream*

If the novel *Separation* (Tran Manh Hao, 1989) served as a trigger for reflection and resistance against social corruption, the same thing occurred when I spoke with

individuals about *Against the Current Stream* a novel by Ma Van Khang (2000b). The main character, a writer by profession, chooses to swim against the current so that he can be worthy of being a human being. Somewhere in the novel, he cries to himself and perhaps to the whole world:

Against the stream! Against the stream! It means tightly squeezing two rows of teeth, letting blood flow from two eyes, swallowing the unendurable shame, flexing the muscles, tightly control human character to swim across the deluge of barbarianism, victorious flattery and opportunism. (Ma Van Khang, 2000b, p. 298)

To a considerable degree, this fictional character found that his voice was not a voice in the wilderness of indifference.

In Vietnamese traditional society, *ke si* or the “intellectual” or “literati-scholar,” was granted the respectful status rarely seen in any other land. “First, the intellectual; second, the peasant” was a popular saying. It is said that long ago, a royal king, dethroned by the rebels, had to flee from the capital, wandering all over the country. Along the escape route, the first question he asked anyone he met was: “Is there any literati-scholar around here?” To a king in hiding, temporarily stripped of royal power, fumbling his way around with a price hanging over his head, this question testified to his faith in the inherent fidelity and courage of the intelligentsia. This attitude can also be seen in a poem by Nguyen Cong Tru, a renowned 19<sup>th</sup> century poet, who always lived on the pride of being an intellectual:

Scholars and soldiers marshaled in two files  
Scholars rank high, soldiers not far below.  
Red sunshades and blue hammocks scholar’s pride.  
Gold swords and silver badges--soldier’s power  
Scholars flap phoenix-wings and keep the peace.  
Soldiers roar tigers’ roars and quell all strife

To scholars soldiers must defer in peace  
 With men of letters warriors can't compose.  
 (Nguyen Cong Tru, 1996, p. 353)

I heard the following story, which is derived from *Records of the Historian*, a historical masterpiece by the great Chinese historian writer Ssu-ma Chien.

In his audiences with the emperor, Master Lu on numerous occasions expounded and praised the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of Documents* until one day Kao-tsu [the emperor] began to rail at him. "All I possess I have won on horseback!" said the emperor. "Why should I bother with the "Odes" and "Documents?" "Your Majesty may have won it on horse back, but can you rule it on horse back?" asked Master Lu, "Kings T'ang and Wu in ancient times won possession of the empire through the principle of revolt, but it was by the principle of obedience that they assured the continuance of their dynasties. (Ssu-ma Chien, 1965, pp. 219-220)

The conception of the intellectual as seen as above still influences the thinking of many; they still live under the shadow of Confucianist ideology regarding the mission of the intellectual. The conception of *quan tu* [gentleman or superior man] expounded by Confucius as the intellectual model should be complemented and enforced by the conception of *truong phu* [hero] valorized by Mencius, the democratically-oriented proponent of Confucian ideology. In his view, the intellectual as envisioned by Mencius should be given preference especially in times of chaos and uncertainty as today.

This can be traced back to traditional conceptions of the intellectual. And all of this can be traced back to the pair of lovers in Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms* who refuse to take part in a war they do not support by seeking a separate peace. What happens to Hemingway's war resistant characters, we do know. But what will become of program participants' attitudes remains to be seen. In any case, by making their choice, they consciously or unconsciously allied themselves with the dissident intellectuals, and

inescapably maintained an oppositional stance as regards to state or “courtier intellectuals.”

For example, some refuse to look upon state intellectuals with sympathetic or respectful eyes. They cite cases of educational scandals to disclose reactions to the ruling “courtier intellectuals.” Contemporary intellectuals, from this perspective, should be named “degree-holders,” for the very reason that they use degrees as a vehicle to promote their power and material well-being. In contrast with the vulgarity of the “courtier intellectuals,” there is the “genuine” intellectual. Such phrases as “pacify the world, manage the nation, regulate the family, cultivate oneself,” which are reminiscent of the Confucian ideal of the gentleman, reoccurred in these portrayals.

### *Fired Gold*

Just as the novel *Against the Current Stream* triggered the problem of the mission of the intellectual, so a short story *Fired Gold* by Nguyen Huy Thiep (1989) has given rise to suspicion of and resistance against long-held opinions about Vietnamese history. Dogmatic finality and rigidity given to historical figures was defamiliarized and balanced by a mindset more nuanced.

According to Zinoman (1993), history in Vietnam is an “intensely politicized field of discourse” (Zinoman, 1993, p. 37). Party historians, by applying historical materialism to the assessment of historical figures, classify the great men and women of Vietnam according to the revolutionary/reactionary dichotomy. Seen in this vision, Nguyen Du, the great poet and author of *The Tale of Kieu*, has been idolized as the greatest man of

letters and his long poem-in-verse has been considered an indispensable part and parcel of school curriculum. Like Balzac and Tolstoy, Nguyen Du, a high level imperial courtier, was supposed to rise above his class stand with its reactionary ideology and powerfully describe the suffering of the downtrodden masses as well as angrily criticize the feudalistic exploitation of man by man.

A vivid contrast to this progressive figure of Nguyen Du is Nguyen Anh, or Emperor Gia Long, the founder of the Nguyen Dynasty. This emperor was painted as a traitor or an historical villain because he relied on the French to defeat the Tay Son Dynasty, a revolutionary regime made up of peasants and proletarian-peasants. In school textbooks, Gia Long is despicably portrayed as a man who “invited the snake to bite his own hens” (proverb).

There is little doubt that the story *Fired Gold*, published in 1987, shocked and electrified the literary climate. Nguyen Huy Thiep stirred up the tension when he pointed his demythologizing finger at those two historical figures. He gave a “defaming” portrayal of the national poet of Vietnam whose stature could only be paralleled with only Britain’s Shakespeare:

[Vietnam] is like a virgin girl raped by Chinese civilization. The girl concurrently enjoys, despises and is humiliated by the rape. . . . Nguyen Du is the child of this same virgin girl and the blood which flows through his veins contains allusions to the brutal man who raped his mother. . . . Nguyen Du’s mother (the polity of that time) has, through supreme restraint and self-control, concealed her own shame and anguish from her child. Only in three hundred years more will we understand this meaningless gesture. (Nguyen Huy Thiep, 1989, p. 5)

Beside Nguyen Du's pathetic, incompetent appearance brilliantly stands out the first Emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty, which is characterized as a charismatic and self-possessed agent of history:

Nguyen Du displays a deep sympathy for the people. He loves the people and is himself representative of their most lyric and melancholy characteristics, but also of their most pitiable ones. Gia Long is representative of no one other than himself. Herein lies his glory but also something horribly vile. . . . The king is aware of his own pain. But Nguyen Du is numb to his pain. (Nguyen Huy Thiep, 1989, p. 6)

And:

I see that the King realizes Nguyen Du's helplessness in the face of his impoverished life and stagnant nation. He does not believe that the scholarly arts can transform his race. Priority must be given to the material situation. Unproductive economic activities offer the people only a meager and insecure existence. The problem at hand is how to rise up and strengthen the country. . . . Decrepid Confucian practices and political masturbation will never result in pure or wholesome relations. (Nguyen Huy Thiep, 1989, p. 7)

The weight of this reevaluation of historical problems could be felt from all sides. Pham Xuan Nguyen, a literary critic, collected a variety of diverse opinions in the book, *In Search of Nguyen Huy Thiep* (2001). At the one end of the spectrum, Ta Ngoc Lien could not resist the temptation to attack Thiep's heretical view of Vietnamese cultural identity. Lien quoted the paragraph, "The Vietnamese community suffers from an inferiority complex. How small it is next to Chinese civilization, a civilization equally glorious, vile and ruthless" (Nguyen Huy Thiep, 1989, p. 7) and argued that in spite of its smallness, the Vietnamese people had escaped the danger of assimilation into Chinese civilization. Lien suggested that Thiep should be more reflective on this matter. At the other end of the spectrum, Nguyen Xuan Mai and Truong Hong Quang counterbalanced Lien's accusation with the thesis that "patriotism," especially narrow patriotism which

has been defined as one of the most prominent features of history of Vietnam, can backfire and hypnotize the people into priding themselves on their weaknesses and narrow-mindedness.

I was personally visited by a feeling of anxiety when I first read the short story. The “habitualization” process that had been instilled in my mind was suddenly destroyed by a new way of perception. I mean the concept of “defamiliarization” as coined by Victor Shklosky (2001) when for the first time, I, with virgin eyes and pure mind, discovered familiar things in their pristine nature (Rice & Waugh, 1996). Personal experience convinces me that not everyone in Vietnamese society has been so surprised by Thiep’s demythologization.

The dogmatic view that history is just the history of class struggles has made Vietnamese Marxist-Leninist historians conceive Vietnamese history in terms of either/or opposites, between which they recognize no intermediate possibility: The Tay Son’s rebellion was, no doubt, peasantry-driven and peasantry-led, so it must be no doubt “progressive.” And any historical movement that was against it must be no doubt “reactionary.” There is no room for the third party or third route. The side on which a historical figure was will automatically place him in the rank of heroes or villains. This oversimplification has driven historians to the one-sided views of history and to the extreme of distorting historical figures.

The second reason why Nguyen Huy Thiep is rebuked by party bureaucrats is that Vietnamese Marxist-Leninist critics have mistakenly identified historical figures with literary or fictional characters. “Literature is literature and literature should be conceived

as product of the imaginative world even when the writer talks about himself/herself and uses the first person.” “A writer does not have to reflect history as seen by a historian. You can measure literature by any standard you want, but first and foremost it must be measured by literary standards.” The dogmatic conception that political identity overshadows everything else contributes to the false anger against Nguyen Huy Thiep’s portrayal of historical figures. As Marx said, a human being is a synthesis of all social relations.

Last but not least, the “crusade” against Thiep has a lot to do with the political sensitivity on the part of the power-holders. “They” are highly sensitive to any covertly political overtones, proclaiming themselves as present day heroes as compared to ancient heroes. The profanation of any long-cherished historical figure suddenly threatens them. If this can be said about Nguyen Du, the same can be said about contemporary “heroes,” demythologizing the long-standing legend of certain leaders. The leaders, obviously, do not like this.

### *Broken Promise*

I was brought into contact with the culture of the contemporary village and the rural way of life and with the modern tragedy of love through the story *Broken Promise* (Ta Duy Anh, 1995).

At least until recently, about 80 percent of the Vietnamese population was peasantry. The Vietnamese countryside, with its prominent bamboo-hedge, with outward simplicity and inner honesty, with its devotion to traditional values, has long been an

inspiration for generations of poets. In one folksong, we see the image of a woman scooping water into the field: “Why, girl, when you irrigate. Do you scoop yellow moonlight away?” (Nguyen Binh, 1972, p. 35). In another folksong, we see the filial piety pushed to graceful dimensions: “You marry a man who lives far away. You do not marry a man who lives in the neighborhood. One day your parents will grow old. Who will offer them bowls of rice and cups of tea?” In modern poetry, we hear the sobbing of a young silk-weaver when she fails to meet her date in a village theatrical performance:

The village celebrates all night  
 But I am busy looking for you  
 Surely tonight the loom is feeling cold  
 The ivory shuttle is missing my hand . . .  
 I waited and waited: you did not come  
 Yet the other day at that other play  
 Five times, seven times, you promised to come;  
 You have broken the promise of all Spring time.  
 (Nguyen Binh, 1972, pp. 51-52)

Such a highly romanticized portrayal of the village life and peasantry, I should think, would capture the hearts of generations to come. Such a highly romanticized version, however, ignored another reality of rural that was depicted in this short story. Students first introduced to “Broken Curse” may be impressed by it because of its troubling fidelity to contemporary life, described as exactly similar to feudal times.

The proverb, “The king’s laws cede before the customs of the village,” reflects the relative autonomy of the village in the face of the royal government in the old days. But they were at times the vehicle through which the communal tyrants enchained its villagers in their subjection and arbitrary jurisdiction. The sense of tragedy becomes even

more tragic when we realize that the age-old customs live on even in today's Vietnamese village.

The I-narrator introduces a traditional taboo in his village:

I don't know when the village established the taboo against girls and boys within the village marrying. . . . A love tragedy once occurred in Dong Village. A girl descended from the thief clan pledged her love to some youth who had recently settled on the outskirts of the village . . . The girl's family held council: they threw her on her back, shaved her head and smeared it with lime, and threatened to drown her as if she were an adulteress if she did not publicly accuse the youth of seducing her. The boy was marched off to receive one hundred curses from the People's Assembly in full seating. He was offered two alternatives: either kneel down and beg forgiveness or go back to the place where his miserable parents gave birth to him [his former village]. Although my father was at the time reported a far-sighted man, he just clicked his tongue when consulted for his opinion and said, "If that's the village custom, that's what we should do." In his heart he knew this was wrong, but he had an unbending sense of duty to his family name. . . . One night the boy and the girl agreed to meet at the village ancestor hall. There they cursed heaven and earth; made love and died naked on the worship altar. (Ta Duy Anh, 1995, pp. 153-155)

The two lovers "took the one less traveled by. And that has made all the difference" (Frost, 1968, p. 260). The I-narrator of *Broken Promise* and his youth lover, Quynh Anh, face the same taboo in communist society, but now it has political dimension and moreover, they, through their moral fortitude, victoriously escape from the restraining conditions which drove their predecessors to death. Quynh Anh, the beautiful daughter of a former landlord, the mortal enemy of communist revolution whose blood is politically dirty, is no match for the I-narrator, who is descended from a politically pure family. Miraculously, the harsh, highly challenging environment, far from crushing their spirit, inspires them to tear down the wall of cramped, narrow-minded ideological construct:

I remember that terrible night . . . that night there was no moon but the sky was full of stars and the sweat smell of the harvest wafted up from the ground. . . . Quynh Anh and I were as pure and as guilty as each other, and with the angels for witnesses, we broke the curse and forgave each other. Late that night, the villagers encircled us with knives and lances, with senseless hatred, . . . but as they surrounded us more closely with the fires of hell, I yelled, “Come on, stab us! You’ll see that her blood is as salty and as red as mine . . . for we were carried by a more compassionate mother than the ones who gave birth to you! None of the villagers . . . dared advance another step. I was still yelling, “All you know how to do is spy on each other. . . . You don’t care if anyone is poor and miserable. You respectfully haul the dead out to worship them and ruthlessly force down into the grave those who live and love. We hate you and we pity you. (Ta Duy Anh, 1995, p. 55)

The curse has been broken? The answer is both yes and no. I was told that since the Renovation, the environment is improving; but love and sex, generally speaking, are still dominated by political criteria. There is talk of communist party members who have lost their position because they fell in love with someone whose political records were not “pure.”

The similarities between the communist village and the pre-communist village, however, bothered me. Is it a coincidence that the patterns of blood connections, a product of Confucian ideology, play a vital role in the communist social machinery? Is it a coincidence that familialism, a feature of Confucian society, does not fade away or wither under communism? Is it a coincidence that the subordination of the individual to collective authority, a manifestation of village civilization, lives in harmony with the communist credo which proclaims the liberation of the individual subject?

There is some truth in the opinion that Vietnamese communism in Vietnam is a kind of Confucianism in disguise. The evidence for this is clear. Village tyrants perform the same job as village notables of long ago; the party apparatus is running the village not

differently from the communal hierarchy of long ago; social alienation amongst the peasantry is considerable as compared to the pre-communist era. However, this does not mean that individuals did not share the conception that “somewhere along the way the . . . [Confucian] heritage began to catch up with them” [communists] (Butterfield, 1990, p. 69). For these individuals believe that the communists purposely misuse and abuse Confucianism for their own sake, just as imperial dynasties did in the past. Moreover, The idea that we must distinguish Confucianism from imperial Confucianism as an ideological instrument used by politicians for the purpose of advancing and socializing their own agenda struck me as quite original.

### Summary

Written under the guidance of mainstream ideology, sorealist literature has dominated the literary curriculum until today, a decade after the era of renovation was proclaimed. Ridiculed by Nguyen Minh Chau as a kind of “illustrative literature,” sorealist pieces in education settings seemed to outlive their welcome. Students are likely to find them not relevant to everyday reality and even hypocritical and to demand a new curriculum which includes soul-searching literary works such as Tran Manh Hao’s *Separation*, Ma Van Khang’s *Against the Current Stream*, Nguyen Huy Thiep’s *Fired Gold*, and Ta Duy Anh’s *Broken Promise*. The demystifying criticality of these works suggests that learners should be given opportunity to be critical and autonomous in their thinking. In other words, the existing functional literacy needs to be terminated and in its place a critical literacy should come into being.

When I revisited Vietnam one year later, I learned that the struggle to bring soul-searching literature into literary curriculum had been launched openly in newspapers. What had only been dreamed of was solidifying into an issue demanded by reformist-minded people as a whole.

## CHAPTER 7

## THE POLITICS OF LITERATURE: HOW TO READ/WRITE.

## BANKING STYLE OR READER-RESPONSE/EXPRESSIVISM?

“It’s not true that our students do not like literature; rather, they do not like the literature taught in classrooms; it’s not true that they are bad at writing, they are bad at writing as a way of paying [the teachers] an academic debt.”

(Hoang Nhu Mai, 1999, p. 1)

The aim of this chapter is to characterize the teaching method employed in literary classes as well as resistance to it. I do this by providing two classroom reconstructions; these are models constructed from personal experience in many classroom settings in Vietnam. After that, I will discuss the elements of such a teaching method as well as its consequences in terms of academic honesty and teacher-student relationships. Finally, I discuss the emergence of reader-response and expressivism.

## Model Literature Lessons

The Vietnamese people love literature, especially poetry. They write and recite poetry when they go to war, build houses, flirt with ideas, and even when they are under the gallows. Not only is literature a passion of the intellectuals, the common people also abandon themselves at least once in their lifetime to the poetic impulse. I have never heard of any poet, no matter how bad he/she may be, who has been offered a wreath and

driven out of the country as Plato wished in his ideal Republic. In Vietnamese folklore, when a young girl meditated upon her fate in a male-dominated society, she hummed to herself: “My fate is like a piece of red silk fluttering in the marketplace. [It] does not know to whom it will belong?” When a mandarin left home for an official position at the imperial court, he wrote to his wife: “The path of clouds laughs at me for my passion for social mobility. The curtain of willows pities you for your solitude” (Phan Thanh Gian, n.d., p. 427). When a married woman wept for a lost love, she recited: “One day when for once my heart was calm. Someone brought a heart-shaped coralvine. Let me squeeze the trickles that remain. To fall weeping into a poem” (T.T.KH. [anonymous poet], 1972, pp. 54-55). When a teacher was imprisoned unjustly, he satirized himself by composing a poem: “Because I was so talkative, so I am here. I did not get trouble if I kept my mouth shut. The people are happy, why did I say they are miserable? The nation is secure, why did I say she is in danger?” (Tran Van Huong, 1974, p. 7). Ho Chi Minh, when he was in prison during the time when he was fighting for national independence, gave some thought to the function of poets when he said: “The ancients used to sing about natural beauty. Snow and flowers, moon and wind, mists mountains and rivers. Today we should make poems including iron and steel. And the poet should know to lead an attack” (Ho Chi Minh, 1971, p. 100).

Given this passion for literature that almost takes on obsessive dimensions, it seems difficult to interpret the hostility students often present toward classroom literary lessons. There is something in the teaching methodology, theories of literature, and

classroom processes that forbids the age-old, traditional transaction between students and works of literary art.

I will begin by presenting two model literature lessons. These are not actual lessons or classroom vignettes; rather, they are models constructed from personal experience of what I found to be typical in such settings. The first model is representative of a high school lesson. The second is representative of a literature lesson at the university level.

The first model begins with the poem, “The Arhats of the Tay Phuong Pagoda,” by Huy Can (Appendix A). The poem was written in the 1960s in accordance with surrealism composition theory, the mainstream theory of that time. The poet, Huy Can, on a trip to Tay Phuong Pagoda, saw the statues of the arhats, a special kind of Buddha. He wrote this poem not only to portray the misery and dilemma of the former regimes but also to express his pride in the communist regime which he believed would put an end to all earthly misery as embodied in the faces and bodies of the statues.

The model goes like this: Students rise when the teacher enters. The teacher bows and the students sit down. Each student has a textbook and a notebook. The teacher writes on the chalkboard, using a lesson plan and telling students that today they will investigate a poem that deals with the statues of the arhats in Ha Tay Province written by Huy Can. The teacher dictates a prepared biography; the students write it down. The teacher asks students to provide the origin and genre of the poem. Stanza by stanza, students read the poem aloud; the teacher asks questions and students respond. In the first stanza:

Arhats of Tay Phuong Pagoda  
 I can't get you out of my mind  
 Here you are in the realm of the Buddha  
 Why your faces full of agony?

Why is the poet surprised? What types of devices are employed to achieve the artistic descriptions of the suffering of the statues? The teacher rearranges, clarifies, and synthesizes students' responses; the same procedure continues until the last stanza.

As for the political meaning of the poem, what achievements did Vietnam make at that time? During the 1960s, socialist North Vietnam achieved great economic victories because the poet saw the faces of the arhats refreshed, devoid of shadow of smoke and sunset. In this respect, Huy Can wanted to convey to us the joy and happiness of the [communist] new regime:

The arhats of the Tay Phuong Pagoda  
 Today our society has set out on a trip forward.  
 The faces of the statues seem to be refreshed  
 The darkness of smoke dissolve and the shadow of sunset is chased away

Huy Can wrote the poem after he had attended an 18-month course in Marxism-Leninism. Thanks to this ideological training, he had enough insight to look at the changing life under communism and felt deeply the happiness of our new society.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher instructs students to prepare for the next lesson. As the teacher leaves the room, the students again rise to say goodbye.

In the second model, the university lesson, the focus is the short story, *Mr. Know-all* by Somerset Maugham (Appendix B). Table 1 reflects a model lecture centered on this piece of literature..

Table 1

*“Model Lecture” on a Short Story*

<b>ARGUMENTS</b>	<b>QUOTATIONS FROM THE READING</b>
1. The I-narrator is a British citizen who does not like to be involved with other persons.	1. “I should have looked upon it with less dismay if my fellow passenger’s name had been Smith or Brown.”
2. The boastful man makes the narrator disgusting. Mr. Know-all is the nickname for Mr. Kelada.	2. “You don’t think I look like an American, do you? British to the back bone, that’s what I am” I did not like Mr. Kedala!
3. What kind of person is he [Mr. Know-all]? Outgoing, superficial insensitive.	3. “It never occurred to him that he was not wanted.” “In your own house you might have kicked him downstairs and slammed the door in his face.” “He was everywhere and always.”
4. What kind of person is Mr. Ramsay? Dogmatic, argumentative, tall, ready-made clothes heavy fellow.	4. “He was as dogmatic as Mr. Kedala.” “He bulged out of his ready-made clothes.” “He was a great heavy fellow from the middle west.”
5. What kind of person is Mrs. Ramsay? Pretty, pleasant manner, dress simply, modest	5. “You could not look at her without being struck by her modesty. It shone in her like a flower on a coat.”
6. When Mr. Know-all pointed to the chain Mrs. Ramsay was wearing and commented on its value, why? What does this mean?	7. “Mrs. Ramsay in her modest way flushed a little and slipped the chain inside her dress.”
8. Why “of course”?”	8. “I didn’t buy it myself, of course.”

ARGUMENTS	QUOTATIONS FROM THE READING
Because Mr. Ramsay is in the American Consulate Service; and he is ill paid, how can he buy something so expensive for Mrs. Ramsay?	[Mrs. Ramsay said]
9. Mrs. Ramsay doesn't want them [Mr. Know-all and her husband] to bet on the value of the chain.	9. "Mrs. Ramsay hesitated a moment. She put her hands to the clasp 'I can't undo it.'"
10. Mr. Ramsay undid it himself and gave it to Mr. Know-all. Why is there a change of attitude from "a smile of triumph" to "I'm mistaken"? Because of the color of Mrs. Ramsay's face.	10. "He handed the chain to Mr. Kelada. The Levantine took a magnifying glass from his pocket and closely examined it. A smile of triumph spread over his smooth and swarthy face . . . suddenly he caught sight of Mrs. Ramsay's face. It was so white that she looked as though she were about to faint. She was staring at him with pride and terrified eyes." "I was mistaken," he [Mr. Know-all] said.
11. Were the pearls real? Yes, maybe one of her suitors gave her as a goodbye gift. So Mrs. Ramsay is not really virtuous or modest; she commits adultery. This is the irony of the story. The meaning of the story is the negative side of the human nature.	11. None.
12. Because of this, the I-narrator changes his attitude towards Mr. Know-all.	12. "I did as he asked."

In my experience, I found that students do not believe it is necessary to listen to the lecture; they can borrow notes from friends who took the course in the past, knowing that the model lecture will be faithfully followed from year to year. Exam questions also

are the same from year to year. There are many ways to pass the exam even when one does not listen to the lecture.

### Banking Style of Teaching.

These models for the teaching of literature come very close to Freire's (1997) conception of "banking education." According to the Brazilian educator, the banking style of teaching occurs when "education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat" (Freire, 1997, p. 53). There exists a relation of power explicit in the banking conception since in it "knowledge is the gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (Freire, 1997, p. 53).

As far as ontology is concerned, the banking conception of education is closely wedded with a concept which regards human beings as malleable because "the more completely they [students] accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited to them." (Freire, 1997, p. 54). As far as political praxis is concerned, the banking approach is utilized by the ruling oppressors to keep the oppressed under total control. The "humanism" of the banking approach "masks the effort to turn men and women into automatons," and "to avoid the threat of students' conscientizacao" (Freire, 1997, p. 55).

Although they never use the word “banking,” Vietnamese reformist-minded scholars notice the reproductionist elements of this method. Dao Quoc Toan (1999), a teacher, presented a sentence to describe the dominant method reigning supremely in Vietnamese schools, high school and college level: “Teacher is tired from speaking; students are tired from writing” (Dao Quoc Toan, 1999, p. 5). This method is also likened to *chiec ao tu than* (four-flapped dress, a traditional dress), which is no longer becoming to a modern girl. The emphasis on *biet* (knowledge, memorizing) at the expense of *hieuc* (creativity, criticality) leads to the subordination of students on the “model” essays and undermines self-directed learning, an urgent need of the age (Le Ngoc Tra, 2001b). University education is just an “advanced” level of high school where students come to listen to lectures and “return” to the teacher what they have memorized. Education thus runs counter to the development of the Information age in which creative thinking is more important than good memory (Ho Thieu Hung, 2001). Education methodology is accused of being highly dogmatic (Phan Trong Luan, 1999).

In respect to literary education, some scholars have warned about the great distance between classrooms and society on the whole. It is manifested by the irrelevance of literary pieces from the students’ interests and aspirations, by the dogmatic, indoctrinaire education of politics with literature, by the valorization of hatred as opposed to human heart and compassion, by a methodology which stunts, deforms, and stifles criticality and creativity (Phan Trong Luan, 1999). Hoang Nhu Mai, a professor of literature, said bluntly,

It’s not true that our students don’t like literature; rather, they don’t like the kind of literature taught in the classrooms. It is not true that they bad at writing; rather

they are bad at writing as a way of paying [the teacher] an academic debt. (1999, p. 1)

Trinh Xuan Vu, another professor, listed five current approaches to literature teaching and concluded that no matter how modern and democratic they look, all of them were far from placing the student at the center of the process of creativity (Trinh Xuan Vu, 2003). The teacher-centeredness is perpetuated by such books as *Teacher's Guide to Teaching Literature*, an academic "Bible," which weighs heavily and inescapably on the fate of each and every class period. Any teacher who ventures to transcend rigidly-fixed lesson plans designed by this "sacred" book will earn punishment for violation of academic discipline. This necessarily gives birth to an absolute uniformity or consensus in the quest of literary meaning in any literary lesson. The same phenomenon occurs in students' written essays which are the reproduction, at times very shallow and crude, of what they have been taught.

### Banking Style and Its Consequences

To survive in this banking academic world, students resort to some micropolitical tactics. The most visible is cheating, which, like an epidemic, afflicts many students. For example, cheating is a very familiar sight, and I had near to hand many documents to substantiate this. According to Nguyen Thieu Tong, 70 percent of students confessed to cheating on a test or an exam (Dang Tuoi, 2001, p. 7). A favorite technique is micro-photocopying of texts and cutting them and carrying them in the palms during the exam. The reason for cheating is that "everybody does, why I don't?" (Tu Anh, 2002, p. 3). When asked about this, most students say that they do not take cheating seriously.

Besides cheating, students resist teacher-centered education through the “culture of wining and drinking” which dates back from the imperial days when literari-scholars drank away “the sorrow of one thousand years” with beautiful and talented courtesans. Old-time scholars went to the “quarter of smoke and flowers” (red-light districts) not because they needed a satisfaction of the flesh, but because they were motivated by a desire for human communication denied to them by the rigidity of the hierarchical order of those times. It was in the world of artistic courtesans that the serious-looking scholars unmasked themselves emotionally and socially, and, temporarily, reached out of the human-made prison of social conventions. Something in the meeting of teachers and students at restaurants where beer and wine were served made me feel nostalgic for those long gone times. Teachers behaved in a more friendly manner; the social distance between teacher and student was narrowed down; modern courtesans--beer marketers--appeared in miniskirts. But was there any five-thousand- age-sorrow to be drunk away? I am afraid not. Wine was used here to grease the machinery of *quan he* (connections), which could not be established in school and which was the beginning of trustful, personal ties, the “social capital” of Vietnamese communist society.

I became involved in the establishing, maintaining, and nurturing of “social connections”--the red thread running throughout human transaction in a society bereft of social trust. On the one hand, it would be oversimplification to think of this “culture of wining and drinking” as a pure strategy of winning the teacher’s heart for possible use in the foreseeable future because both students and teachers, over cups of wine, and for a fleeting period of time, establish a holy alliance of authenticity: they cease to be the

oppressed and the oppressors. On the other hand, it would be overcharitable to regard this culture as merely the embodiment of a longing for human, reciprocal understanding.

Thus, in restaurants, on wining tables, over glasses of wine, something like a micropolitical perspective on student-teacher relationships unfolded before my eyes. In an educational setting devoid of power-with and burdened with power-over (Kriesberg, 1973), in a situation saturated with uncertainty and dissensus (Pfeffer, 1981), micropolitical measures are manipulated to achieve the preferred goals of gaining access to and drawing the attention of the teachers.

The remainder of this section is devoted to a heartbreaking and soul-shattering event that took place a few weeks before I left Vietnam. It is very difficult for me to be “objective” in telling this “feudal” story. So I decided to translate a newspaper article written by Pham Kim Son and printed on Tuoi Tre Chu Nhat (Sunday Youth Magazine) (2003). I do not think this story is a manifestation of banking education itself, but the dehumanization of the learner, a major characteristic of the banking philosophy, is undeniable.

#### THE LESSON NOT IN THE SYLLABUS

One April 17, 2003, when coming into class 71, Ms. Tran Thi Phuong Lan, English teacher of Lien Hoa Middle school, Nghi Xuan District, Ha Tinh Province, discovered chalk scribbles on the teacher’s chair. After a short time of interrogating without any result, teacher Lan forced the whole class to lick clean all those scribbles. Although some students stood up and apologized and offered another chair, the lady teacher did reject the proposal--one by one, 47 students, male and females, lined up to perform the exceptional penalty. After that, not only did Ms. Lan not resume the class session but also demanded the students to denounce the culprit by secretly writing down his/her name. The result: 47 blank papers. The same punishment--licking the chair until it was cleared of its chalk--was repeated by each member of the class. Ms. Lan did not leave the classroom until the last student finished the act of licking. (Pham Kim Son, 2003, p. 19)

### Reader-Response and Expressivism

Students confess that they belong to a “culture of silence,” and they perform the act of passive recipients of school knowledge. Seen in the light of reproduction theory in education, the students are subjects being “interpolated” by ideology. In this manner, Vietnamese schools reproduce the ideology of the Vietnamese ruling group (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

However, as Foley (1996) discovered among the Mesquakis, “silence is this political retreat into a separate cultural space and identity far from the white world” (Foley, 1996). Beneath the surface of obedience to authority lurks a world of resentment, anger and potential rebellion. It seemed to me that the silence was like a shield presented to an world hostile to them, like an intentional concession students make in an unequal battle in which they are in no place to set the terms. For their golden silence is often broken when they talk beyond the confines of the classrooms. There is a burning cry for a new approach to literature, especially for a receptionist theory of literature reading. The meaning of a text should reside with the reader/learner not with the author or the teacher. In the following section, I describe the oppositional interpretations of some literary works between mainstream critics and those who resist the banking style of education.

Nguyen Du’s *Tale of Kieu* (1983), a Vietnamese classic, deals with the plight of a beautiful lady from a middle-class family who, under the “sweet” pressure of conventional filial piety, sells herself to save her family and her father from the risk of imprisonment orchestrated by corruption-ridden bureaucrats. Throughout Kieu’s long journey as a courtesan, she undergoes and transacts with almost all kinds of people and

environments. The picture of a whole oppressive society is seen through the eyes and the pulsations of a sensitive heart of a woman. Is it sufficient to say that this novel-in-verses, which has wide fascination for generations of readers in Vietnam, is just a reflection of a pre-communist corrupt and perverse social order? There seems to be some similarities between the social problems posed in “Tale of Kieu” and those of today.

Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is a story about the prince of Denmark in the Renaissance whose brilliance stands out against the darkness of the Middle Ages. Man, the great work of art, comes into being in the mist of a new dawn. Is it sufficient to say that this great play is just a reflection of the unequal struggle between two social forces, one emphasizing individual freedom and the other the prison of the prevailing patriarchy? It appears not. “To be or not to be--yet who is not listening now? The time when nations hesitated thus is past. . . . Look . . . life is quick and green like orchard grass. Flows forwards with the force of the Red River,” Che Lan Vien, a Vietnamese poet says so (Che Lan Vien, n.d., p. 715).

Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1857) revolves around the desires and efforts of a sensuous and sentimental woman in the quest of mental horizons always beyond her reach. The intellectual and social climate of a small, dull, suppressed society drives her to the trap set up both by infidel lovers and the blood-sucking usurer. Is the novel just a reflection of a beautiful mind in defiance of French bourgeois society with its iron, exploitative necessities? It appears not. Why always blame bourgeois society for everything? How about our society? Is there no Madame Bovary in here?

Faulkner's *Rose for Emily* is the short story in which the reconstruction period of the American Civil War is portrayed through the haughty and crazy old lady who refuses to keep up with the Joneses. Alone and lonely, she fortifies herself against the whole town especially when she insists on loving a man despite the criticism of public opinion. Is it sufficient to say that Miss Emily is just reflection of a vanishing order, the slavery order, which futilely and crazily clings to illusions deserving no better destiny? When the Northern [communists] ran over the South, many Southern women defied stereotyping. They thought that even in defeat, they could not be forced to be on their knees. Are there connections to "real life" and Vietnamese history here?

As far as writing strategy is concerned, some try to escape the academic plague of teacher-centeredness. What would occur if learner-centered classrooms had been re-established? What would have occurred if students had been given a voice of his/her own? What would have occurred if democratization had been translated into practice? If . . . If . . . Sadly enough, there is no "if" in history and the story of banking education continues.

### Summary

This chapter led us through model or typical classroom processes in which a Vietnamese poem and a British short story were taught at two levels. The models emphasize a "banking" style pedagogy that gives birth to academic disasters such as cheating and bribing teachers. However, a critical literacy exists, too, in this

reproductionist milieu. Students often resist with the rhetoric of reader-response and expressivism.

Two other tenets of educational renovation--socializing and equalizing of education—are the content of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 8

## SOCIALIZING OF EDUCATION AND EQUALIZATION OF EDUCATION

## OPPORTUNITY: THE UNROYAL PATH.

“Socializing of education signifies the attachment of the school to society. To have a democratic society, we must democratize the school first.”

(Duong Thieu Tong, 2000)

“In our universities, there are only children of the rich; who are the rich if not the majority of our cadres. There are still classes, aren't there?”

(Nguyen Minh Hien, Minister of Education, 2000, p. 3)

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the socializing and equalization of education. I will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of socializing as an effort at demonopolizing education, mobilizing the people's resources and support in the pursuit of more opportunities and choices for students. I will then tell a story of fake diplomas, tracking, and “connections,” which debunk the myth of equality in the process of educational renovation.

## Socializing of Education

Tomorrow when the motherland is unified,  
 Tomorrow, you will come back and give me lessons  
 And we shall not have to write on the wall with coal anymore.  
 Or dread the horror of police searches,  
 You will say to me, “Come on, big brother, courage.”  
 And I shall smile, remembering the moonlight  
 And our motherland, that gave you wings and the honor of marching with  
 those up at the front.

I shall need to keep a long sleepless night  
To tell you about the South and its struggle and agony:  
In those days, little sister, I had but one school on earth--The Revolution.  
(Giang Nam, 1985, p. 175)

Writing the above poem during the Vietnam War, the poet Giang Nam, a (communist) revolutionary, told his little sister that the authentic and greatest university for him was the revolution. To put it another way, the (communist) revolution existed as a university which trained and educated him, and this “praxis” seemed to replace and transcend any higher learning institutions. During the war, the communists recruited any person who sympathized with their political ideal and showed political loyalty. Since the revolution was regarded as a great university, a revolutionary was not required to have a university degree. However, as soon as the war ended, revolutionaries realized that building the nation was impossible with political reliability only. Many universities were set up by the revolutionaries but for the revolutionaries and their offspring only. Since the era of renovation of 1986, the revolutionaries declared that universities are set up by the revolutionaries not only for the revolutionaries but also for the people, because the revolutionaries have no other interests but the interests of the people. The non-party people were invited to enroll in universities and to financially contribute to the existence and development of such higher institutes. Socialization of education signifies nothing more than that. Some took the view that socialization of education resulted from the failure of monopolized, state-controlled education.

Socializing of education is thus a regrettable necessity on the part of the dominant group. This regret helps us to understand the ambiguity, even the paradox, in educational practices ensuing from it.

The search for an official definition of “socializing of education” is described in Chapter 1. This has been described as more choices and chances for students.

These “more choices and more chances” can be easily seen at the university and high school levels. Before 1986, these two programs were the exclusive territory for those cadres who had good political dossiers and wanted a degree to secure or promote their own positions. For instance, to maintain the position of a director, he/she must have a B.A or B.S. degree. Nowadays, these two programs welcome any student who wants to enhance their academic competence or to study for self-interest. To a certain extent, socializing undermines the state monopolization of education.

However, it would be a great mistake to assume that the diversification of forms of education is synonymous with the de-monopolization of curriculum materials. A student is instilled with the same class syllabus whether he/she attends a “public school,” which is completely governed by the state, or a “community-founded school,” which is organized by a state-run social organization. So, the differences between these schools are more or less organizational and have a lot to do with financial matters, which means that tuition fees increase in proportion as the school becomes less public. The “banking” ideology long challenged by critical educators is still unchallenged.

Socializing of education arose firstly out of the lack of state funds. The state must appeal to the people for their participation in the financial support of the school. Since that fateful moment, money has become the means to solve the problem of the state monopoly of education and to justify the ends of education. Parents of high school

students, for instance, are encouraged to contribute financially to the building of material foundations of the school. But in most cases, they are presented with “a fait accompli.”

Granted that these “encouragements” are motivated by good intentions on the part of school administrators, school construction is so embroiled in corruptive practices that the term “construction” in Vietnamese connotes “dirty eating” or corruption. And I heard the story of newly-built schoolhouses in Ca Mau, built with one billion Vietnamese piasters. As soon as it was finished, a student incidentally kicked the wall with his foot and a portion of that wall was broken.

The dividing line between money as a means and money as an end in itself looks blurred in the phenomenon of “giving extra lessons, having extra lessons,” which has spread like an academic influenza in the educational atmosphere for many years. Students, usually at the high school level, are required to take extra hours from their teachers for a fee. These extra lessons are parts withheld from the curriculum. Not going to those classes can result in failing the class exam and incur the wrath of teachers. Commercialization of education caused by a for-profit market economy has been used to explain this practice. Most with whom I spoke did not believe this was the cause.

Some hold that to eliminate the “extra lessons,” it would be necessary to take the burden of making a living wage off the teacher. When they are better off, they do not need to take on extra lessons.” Some teachers abandoned education ideals in pursuit of material benefits because they saw the gap between classroom teachers and those teachers in administrative positions.

There is also the pressure of the curriculum and, to some degree, the overly high expectations on the part of students' parents. As children fall prey to negative elements in society (drugs), parents feel more at ease sending their children to tutorial classes than letting them "hang out" with peers. The teachers, in many cases, are forced to give extra lessons to catch up with the quota given by education administrators. To please their superiors, to guarantee the percentage of students passing an exam, for instance, administrators turn their eyes away from the extra lesson-giving.

Seen from this perspective, "more choices and chances" for learners, as promised by the efforts at socializing of education, look and sound like the eternal story of "old wine" contained in "new bottles." Distance learning, a newly designed style of learning, sheds further light on this situation.

The underlying philosophy behind distance learning is the argument for self-directed, learner-centered learning, something overlooked, even forbidden in the pre-renovation era (Nguyen Duy Can, 1999; Nguyen Thi Oanh, 2001; Phan Trong Luan, 1999). Nguyen Canh Toan (2002), a pioneer in this field, developed this model as a "royal road" leading to autonomy and creativity for the learner. Although this model is closer to "correspondence learning" than "online learning," it is instrumental in affording "more choices and more chances" to a great number of learners, especially if they live in isolated and distant locales. A person denied by fate the right to be literate has struggled against fate and won. Nguyen Canh Toan (2002), however, conceded that to fight against student passivity in support of independent thinking and learner autonomy, his model was not a "miracle drug." Not a "miracle drug," or an effective drug either, so Pham Quang

Tuan (2002) said in his argument against the overexaggerated impact of distance learning in the Vietnamese context. An overseas Vietnamese professor, Tuan was keen on demythologizing the tenet that Vietnamese students are studious or fond of learning:

All the arguments based on slogan-like virtues and traditions such as smart, studious, carry little persuasive weight. Is that true that our people are studious or amorous of learning? I think it would be truer to say that our people are amorous of degrees. (2000, p. 7)

Then Tuan suggested that a change in pedagogy was more vital than the “science of thinking” as held by Toan:

Professor Toan suggested that we should focus education on “science of thinking.” This phrase is rather strange to me, but to my way of understanding, this phrase is used to describe the need to think scientifically, realistically, instead of stuffing the knowledge [inside the minds of learner] . . . we should be vigilant that this “science of thinking” is hard to communicate across a distance; it needs face-to-face and long-term communication. The main thing is how to bring modern pedagogical concepts and pedagogical practices into the curriculum from the lowest level to the highest. (2000, p. 7)

The inescapable message concerning socializing of education is that it falls short of the expectations of those who wait for a de-monopolization of education organization or democratization of education methodology. “More choices and more chances” seem to be at worst a curse and at best a mixed blessing.

### Fake Diplomas, Tracking, and Equality of Opportunity Structure

In *Time* magazine, June 11, 2001, Tim McGirk wrote:

Most of the fakes originate in Asia, where everything, absolutely everything, is counterfeited . . . . You name it, and it can be faked. Asthma medicine, Viagra, peanut butter, shampoo, music and film discs, software, garments, handbags . . . even entire motorcycles and cars. (p. 32)

Living in Vietnam for nearly 3 years during my ethnographic journey, I was seasoned enough to say that there is a great deal of truth in such a statement. I want to add to the list another item: phony diplomas. Metaphorically speaking, Vietnam is being deluged with fake diplomas.

In Ca Mau province alone, 642 people used “questionable” degrees, including 328 people in the educational sphere. Those who were involved in spurious degree-holding usually had high-level positions such as Director of provincial office or justice of provincial court (Hong Dao, 2002). On the national level, as of April 2001, a total of 3,168 counterfeited degrees were exposed; one-third of those who used them were cadres or governmental officials as high-ranking as chief of people’s bureau of investigation and justice of the people’s court (Khin Khinh, 2001).

Sometimes it is difficult to imagine the comic-tragic qualities of this phenomenon. A vice-director of a provincial office hired one of his employees to write his master’s thesis. The vice-director promised to pay about one million VN piasters for the writing and gave an advance of 200,000 VN piasters. After successfully defending the thesis and obtaining the master’s degree, the vice-director forgot about the debt. The employee wrote to his superior a letter in which he asked for 4 million VN piasters instead of the million as agreed. The vice-director wrote a reply, eloquently arguing that the price of 4 million for writing was groundless and agreeing to pay one million because it seemed to him more reasonable. This reply was proof that the vice-director was using fake diploma, and that he had not written the thesis himself. But he was “honest” enough to declare that

he had been so much tied up with his official business that he had no time to write it (Hong Dao, 2002, p. 5).

Somewhat inspired by the behavior of spurious degree-users, a journalist pen-named Do Bi wrote a treatise entitled “Getting Ph.D.s by Researching Fake Ph.D.s.” (2001). In this humorous work, Do Bi traced the long route which had led him from innocence to critical awakening. There should not be any counterfeited degree-users in such a “civilized” nation as Vietnam, he insisted. An investigative trip allowed him to discover the great extent of fake diplomas, starting with high school graduation diplomas, then B.A./B.S., and to his consternation, fake Ph.D.s. Do Bi wrote,

Many people say that drug addicts or streetwalkers are more vulnerable to AIDS. Wrong. I dare to affirm that the “research” of false professors and doctors, who are teaching in some universities are much more vulnerable. That’s because their knowledge is false. (2001, p. 57)

The “earth-shaking” discovery of fake degrees allowed Do Bi to write his own Ph.D. dissertation on false Ph.D.s. He informed the world in his commentary that Cambridge and Harvard University have invited him to teach a course called “How to Get a Ph.D. Degree Without Passing High School Graduation Exam” (2001, p. 57).

I trace this bustling counterfeit business back to the pre-communist times, when credentialism reigned, where love for learning and love of degrees had no clear-cut dividing line, where degrees were the only loyal route to earthly power and social status. No matter how insignificant he may be, an individual could pass the imperial exam and attain the privilege and honor of a mandarin that was forever denied to a common person. Degrees, in this respect, were the twin sister of political power and socioeconomic benefits. This obsession with a degree is exemplified in the poem, “In the Old Days,” in

which the poet describes the mindset of a woman of long ago. To ensure that her husband passed the imperial exam, she sacrificed everything, including desires of the flesh. “No degree, no sex,” she said to her husband. The night of marital intimacy comes only when her husband, as a successful examinee, returns to the village and is welcomed by the whole villagers. “This night is the night. Who spreads the moonlight on the tea garden?” (Nguyen Binh, 1991, p. 12).

In China, from which educational institutions were replicated by Vietnamese dynasties, the fact that “the fish has crossed the Jade Gate” (the gaining of a degree) could throw a person off balance and made him/her temporarily insane:

Clapping his hands again, he [Fan Chin] let out a peal of laughter and shouted. “Aha! I’ve passed! I’ve passed!” Laughing wildly, he ran outside . . . not far from the front door he slipped and fell into the pond. When he clambered out, his hair was disheveled, his hand muddied, and his whole body dripping with slime. But nobody could stop him. Still clapping his hands and laughing, he headed straight for the market. (Wu Ching-Tzu, 1973, p. 34)

Many would disagree with this interpretation. Such a renowned poet and mandarin as Nguyen Cong Tru, for example, did not pass the imperial exam until he was over 60, but he never thought of purchasing a fake diploma. Thus counterfeiting has to do with the privileged groups rather than with ordinary people since the latter rarely hold powerful posts. In a way, fake degrees are the tragedy of the ruling class, but seen from the angle of social justice, this phenomenon has entrenched social inequality because it fortifies the status-quo and mitigates against the principles of status by achievement and reward for meritorious performance.

The relationship between educational injustice and social-political injustice can easily be detected if we investigate the dose of medicine allied to cure this disease. As I

said, almost all degree-purchasers are party members, and because party members are privileged citizens, the process of disciplining them reaches beyond the control of governmental agencies, executive or judicial. Law is thus applied only to those who have no power to buy fake diplomas.

Many students who earn degrees by honest hard work are, unfortunately, labeled as second-rate intellectuals. To what extent have they been hypnotized by the “achievement ideology” (MacLeod, 1995, p. 3)? To what extent do they recognize a “hidden curriculum” (Anyon, 1989; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Whitty & Young, 1976)?

The disastrous consequences of tracking do not stop there. Experience, the textbook of an adult learner, is given no place. One of the defining features of adult learning is experiential learning because “adults have more experiences, adults have different kinds of experiences, and adult experiences are organized differently than those of children” (Kidd, 1973, p. 46) because “this growing reservoir of experience” serves as “a rich resource for learning” (Knowles, 1980, p. 44). But as for applying lived experiences in schoolwork, in the current situation in Vietnam, it is not workable. The fact that there is an “organic connection between education and personal experience” (Dewey, 1938, p. 12) may exist somewhere else but is non-existent in Vietnamese classes. Self-expression was still viewed as taboo.

The concept of educational equality is not limited to equality of access; it has been gradually extended to include some notion of equal educational results, which is concerned with how the learners use their learning in the labor market (Farrell, 1992). Accounts about blatant injustice in education outcome seem to validate the opinion that

“because it shrouds class, race and gender barriers to success, the achievement ideology promulgates a lie, one that some students come to recognize as such” (MacLeod, 1995, p. 262). The problem of “educated unemployees” has increasingly been a great social problem in the midst of a society demanding, by means of education, democratization. The promise that if an individual has a good education, he/she can maximize their occupational choice is typically revealed as a lie. Education, instead of being the midwife to a new social order, is producing long lines of applicants nervously waiting at job centers. The failure on the part of government to formulate a well-thought-out policy in education was seen as the main reason for this waste of “gray matter” and the crisis of educated unemployment.

The difference between MacLeod’s “Brothers,” operating in a context in which occupational connections were “racially rooted” (MacLeod, 1995, p. 222), and the situation in Vietnam, is that in Vietnam they are politically rooted. To be connected with high political decision-makers is indispensable to social promotion. The saying, “Son, let me tell you. A bandit at night is the enemy, but a bandit in broad daylight is the mandarin,” should be judged together with another critical saying, “A mandarin can benefit the whole clan.” Equality of education outcome is hardly possible as long as professional meritorious performance takes a backseat to non-achievement factors such as blood or political connections. But Bi (2002), a former teacher, wrote about this sorrow when he was invited to a wedding party of one of his former students. At the wedding, But Bi met a number of his former students who were occupationally successful. He was not happy, however, because all the students he had known as

excellent students did not have good and suitable jobs; they did not have good connections with influential people (But Bi, 2002).

One Sunday morning, a few weeks before I left for the United States, I was given the book, *Habits of the Heart* (1996), which had just been translated into Vietnamese. The book criticizes American individualism, which is regarded as the deep roots of moral and social crisis and calls for the communalism or social capital, commitment to community, etc. Thinking about this theme, I recognized that an overemphasis on individualism can alienate people. On the other hand, as I was to appreciate much more fully later, a cult of collectivism at the expense of individual talent also alienates people. As I was writing this, I felt myself pulled to the understanding that “collectivism” can signify more than its literal meaning.

### Summary

Geared toward creating more chances and more choices for students, socializing of education achieved limited results in diversification of education forms and allowing more students to get schooling. While the more important goal--democratization of methodology and demonopolization of organization--is still unattained, corruption in construction and the disastrous phenomenon of “extra lessons” were on the rise. Equality of educational opportunity was hardly a reality because of the discrimination against non-traditional students, because of the fake diplomas easily bought by wealthy cadres, and because of “connections” in getting jobs.

CHAPTER 9  
THE MATTER OF ALL MATTERS AND THE POLITICS  
OF AMBIGUITY

“If violence is the midwife of history, then it is idea that makes history pregnant.”

(Luiz A. Costa-Pinto, in S. L. Brown, 2003, p. 1)

In this chapter I will explain why critical literacy pedagogy has not been integrated into school educational processes. With a nascent civil society emerging, with a rising tide of self-conscientization amongst the participants, the failure to renovate education lies with the leaders of the political apparatus. The contradictions in critical awareness and their solutions will be interpreted by historical, cultural, and political factors.

The Matter of All Matters

When I wrote this chapter, I recalled two American critical pedagogues, Ira Shor and Tom Heaney. Their lives do not parallel each other in many respects, but they came to view education in rather similar ways. Shor grew up in a working-class neighborhood and after becoming a university intellectual, he taught Open Admissions students for 6 years at Staten Island Community College. His book, *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life* (1980), is an attempt at reflecting upon the obstacles encountered in the United States by those who want to practice liberatory education. Tom Heaney is a descendant of a middle-class family and his longing for the formation of a theory of liberatory

education in the United States is conveyed in his dissertation, *Adult Learning and Empowerment: Toward a Theory of Liberating Education* (1980). Both Shor and Heaney came to the conclusion that “obstacles to the development of critical consciousness are far more formidable in the United States than in the Third World,” and that “most attempts to develop liberatory education in the United States have failed” (Facundo, 1984, pp. 5-7). While Shor seemed to attribute the difficulty of liberatory education to “false consciousness” (Facundo, 1984, p. 7) internalized in the minds of the people, Heaney justified the failure to create any liberating program by charging the lack of a “broad social movement of social transformation” (Facundo, 1984, p. 13).

Before I began my autoethnographic inquiry in Vietnam, I had been convinced that the obstacles to the integration of critical consciousness and critical literacy pedagogy in Vietnamese schools stemmed from the passivity of teachers and students and from the “brainwashing” of their minds. My experience and the analysis of documentary data and literature led me elsewhere and forced me to embark on a journey of self-reflection. The Vietnamese voices and experiences that became bound up with my own perceived, sometimes not very clearly, the roots of their earthly misery and their oppressors. Achilles’ heels did not escape their vision. Far from being a hostage to a Marxist “false consciousness,” Sartrean “bad faith,” or Freirean “magical consciousness,” they recognized the oppressors’ vulnerability. Had he been deluded by “false consciousness,” they would not have noticed the blocking weight of bureaucratic apparatus in the renovation efforts; they would not have recognized that renovation contains in it a great variety of things in which the teacher occupies only a fixed and

modest position.

Had people been deluded by false consciousness, there would not be recognition that change must occur from the top to the bottom; recognition that the party and the state must do something so that people have a chance to develop. Had people been deluded by false consciousness, there would not be recognition that while many theories of renovation exist, they had yet to be put into practice – or that practice is not the sole responsibility of government. Had people been deluded by “false consciousness,” there would be no thought of the “millennial theme of world upside down” (Scott, 1990, p. 80) in a folk saying, “The son of the king becomes king. The son of the pagoda caretaker knows only how to sweep the leaves of the banyan trees. When the people rise up, the son of the king, defeated, will go sweep the pagoda” (Scott, 1990, p. 80).

According to Scott (1990), there is a “hidden transcript” which characterizes the discourse of the oppressed and which takes place far beyond the direct observation of power holders. The antithesis is an “official transcript”--a discourse done by the oppressed in the presence of the oppressors. If the “official transcript” is used as a mask, a disguise of resistance, the “hidden transcript” is the resistance itself. Seen in this light, “false consciousness” is sometimes identified with the “official transcript,” where the oppressed show an attitude of obedience, complicity, and an avoidance of any direct confrontation with the oppressors. In the words of Scott,

Thus the peasantry, in the interest of safety and success, has historically preferred to disguise its resistance. If it were a question of control over land, they would prefer squatting to a defiant land invasion; if it were a matter of taxes, they would prefer evasion than a tax riot; if it were a question of rights to the product of the land, they would prefer poaching or filtering to direct appropriation. (1990, p. 86)

This theory helps explain the seeming conformity, obedience, and resignation that many present in formal settings, and the torrents of “critical literacy” when they express themselves at the cafeteria, for instance. To put it differently, “society is a very mysterious animal with many faces and hidden potentialities, and it’s extremely short-sighted to believe that the face society happens to be presenting to you at a given moment is its only true face” (Havel, 1990, quoted in Scott, 1990, p. 206).

According to Thayer (1992), there evolved in Vietnam a “nascent” civil society that “awaits the erosion of mono-organizational socialism before developing further” (Thayer, 1992, p. 112). The combined effects of economic and political reform starting in 1986 has led to the birth of a civil society,

. . . A realm of free social and cultural space to be carved out of the all-encompassing matrix of the totalitarian, communist Party-State by conscious intellectual and social action. It was to be a sphere of autonomous, ostensibly non-political, social activity, which did not seek to challenge the state’s control over the main levers of power and, indeed, obtained its status through a tacit social contract with the authorities of the ruling state party. (Miller, 1990, quoted in Thayer, 1992, p. 112)

Only in such a civil society, no matter how limited and nascent, could “a wide variety of activity conducted independently of party control” (Thayer, 1992, p. 115) be executed. Only in such a free space unfolding beside the mono-organizational socialism would a woman, a peasant at that, rise to the challenge of being a free human being. A newspaper story I read while in Vietnam is illuminating in this regard. Mrs. Lun, 48 years old, was not an intellectual; she was just a trader of piglets. Her education must be elementary school level. She was an unknown citizen in society. Looking at her picture in the newspaper, I found her rather “manly” by Vietnamese standards. She had a large

mouth not appreciated by Vietnamese readers of faces. But Mrs. Lun caused a political bombshell when, defiantly and suddenly, she wrote a letter petitioning the district authorities to give her, for 2 months, the post of the district chief in order that she could eliminate, root and branch, the evil of corruption. After that short period, after “sending to jail all the corrupt officials,” she would return back to the position of an ordinary citizen and would buy and sell piglets for a living. The petition was inevitably rejected. But the wrath and the courage of a woman in the struggle against the rampant corruption amongst party officials resounded throughout the country. In “A Challenge with Solid Ground” (2001), Tran Bach Dang, a communist writer, highly appreciated the attitude of Mrs. Lun which he called “a treasured aspiration” (p. 6) and blamed the district authorities for their inability to solve the problem of corruption.

Since the facts above carry much weight, I would be obliged to find other reasons for the absence of critical consciousness/critical pedagogy in Vietnamese educational renovation. What kept education in Vietnam from escaping its banking style of schooling? What allowed the “feudal method of teaching” (Trinh Xuan Vu, 2003, p. 36) to reign supreme in Vietnamese schools long after the end of the Dark Ages? What left such tenets as democratization, and equality . . . outside school life?

The key principles of educational renovation, in the eyes of some, have great potential for a real cultural and educational revolution. Democratization and modernization, for example, promise the return of the learner as the center of the teaching process. And the socializing of education paves the way for the democratization of the management of education. The equalization of education invites the enthronement of real

values. Unfortunately, educational reform is an integral part of the modernization of politics; education reform rarely evolves independently. In Vietnam, education has been a handmaid to politics, not an end in itself. Since the beginning of the communist revolution, there have been three educational reforms, including the present one. This renovation is born of a market-based economy and corresponding political interests. What so uniquely complicates the Vietnamese case is a class-based structure as embraced by the Vietnamese Marxist-Leninists which mitigates against the humanistic values of genuine educational reform.

This opinion is echoed again and again, like a refrain: “Reform must go from top to the bottom,” “. . . must be done by the government,” “. . . if the Ministry of Education does not do it, only God can.”. A striking similarity could be seen in suggestions as to how Renovation tenets can be put into practice and translated into reality.

In this context, the dream that education is the midwife of a new social order remains a dream and the suggestion that democratization of society must begin with the school remains a deceit; “education, which has been stated time and again as the national prime policy, . . . is a goal to be achieved in the future” (Nguyen Xuan Oanh, 2001, p. 149). That “lovely” future can be from 50 to 100 years ahead.

### The Politics of Ambiguity

A long time ago, when I was a university student in Vietnam, one of my professors, a Vietnamese-Marxist, talked with me about the ambiguity in Chekhov’s short stories. “The House with the Mansard” was used to prove his point. The story is about an artist, the

I-narrator, who lives on the estate of a landed proprietor and who has just made an acquaintance with a family--the Volchanivovs--a mother and two daughters, Lida and Zhenya. The artist falls in love with Zhenya for "her way of meeting me and seeing me off, for the tender, admiring glances she casts at me" (Chekhov, 1979, p. 156). He dislikes Lida, the elder sister, because Lida is severe and wants to transform the life of the poverty-stricken peasants by teaching them to read and build up hospitals. The artist is against Lida because these good intentions are of no use in a society based on forced labor and spiritual oppression. "In my opinion, medical-aid ports, schools, libraries, dispensaries only serve the cause of enslavement under existent circumstances" (Chekhov, 1979, p. 152).

Moreover, Lida embodies, in many visible ways, a tyrannical nature in dealing not only with her mother and Zhenya but also with social affairs; she arrogantly terminates the romance between her younger sister and the artist by taking Zhenya abroad. The sorrow of an ill-fated love plus the resentment against Lida, strangely enough, does not deter the artist from showing admiration towards his victimizer, "Lida and Missus [Zhenya's pet name] made the atmosphere seem pure and youthful and everything breathed integrity" (Chekhov, 1979, p. 146), and "she [Lida] was lively, sincere, strong in her convictions. She was an interesting talker, though she spoke a great deal and very loud" (p. 146). My professor, analyzing the text from the standpoint of Vietnamese Marxist, confidently told me that the artist's attitude exemplifies that of the petty-bourgeois ideology--hesitation, vacillation, and ambiguity. On the one hand, he resists the illusion of good intentions under an oppressive regime and on the other hand, he admires the commitment of Lida, the bearer of that illusion. The petty bourgeois, the intermediate class sandwiched between the oppressive

capitalists and the oppressed proletariat, is by nature vacillating, compromising and not revolutionary, my professor concluded. Either you are a revolutionary or you are a reactionary. There is no “both-and” possibility. And the petty-bourgeois attitude resides somewhere in this territory of “both-and.”

My internalization of this philosophy has led me to view Turgenev, the Russian writer, as petty bourgeois, since Turgenev proclaimed, through his works, a “politics of hesitation” (Howe, 1987, p. 120):

He speaks to us for the right to indecision, which is almost as great a right as the right to negation. He speaks to us for a politics of hesitation, a politics that will never save the world but without which the world will never be worth saving. (pp. 137-138)

My internalization of the above philosophical view also led me to think of Camus as the apologist for the middle-of-the-way petty-bourgeois ideology in his reflection on art and the artist. On the one hand, existentialist writer Camus calls an art which surrenders to the demands of society as “meaningless recreation (Camus, 1988, p. 253). But on the other hand, Camus ridicules these artists who take refuge in their own dreams as “formal grammarians” (Camus, 1988, p. 253). The authentic artist must accept the ambiguity of not negating the real and at the same time interrogate it “in its eternally unfinished aspects” (Camus, 1988, p. 254). As Camus eloquently put it, “Art is neither complete rejection nor completely acceptance of what it is. It is simultaneously rejection and acceptance. . . . The artist constantly lives in such a state of ambiguity” (Camus, 1988, p. 264). By calling for an arbiter “between yes-no,” Camus regards “formalist art” as a deceptive luxury and [communist] “realist art” as suppression. The tyrants, whether of the right and of the left, persecute and crush authentic art because of its

ambiguity.

My internalization of the above philosophical view also led me to agree with Gibson (1994) that Freirean philosophy of liberation is inescapably petty bourgeois. When interviewed by Olson (1992) and asked how a progressive educator like himself could work inside a not very progressive system, Freire (1992) tried to explain through a metaphor, “he planted his left foot to one side and his right to the other” (p. 27). Freire suggested that one foot implied actuality, today's reality, and the other foot implied the future, the utopia:

. . . Yes, this is exactly my case: for example, now I am the Secretary of Education in the city of San Paulo . . . A progressive teacher a progressive thinker, a progressive politician, many times has his/her left foot inside the system, the structure, and the right foot out of it. . . . Life is like this. This is reality and history. . . . *Reality makes us, from time to time, ambiguous, precisely because reality is ambiguous.* (Olson & Freire, 1992, p. 26; emphasis mine)

Immersed in my ethnographic voyage, I came to question my long-held bias against Freirean realism. If all the contradictions, inconsistencies and ambiguities exposed in research data are traced back to the petty- bourgeois ideology, I will make the mistake of providing evidence for pre-determined social categories, which my participants repeatedly pointed to as weaknesses in the Vietnamese Marxist method of literary criticism. In the following section, I discuss the ambiguities in this analysis and examine the underlying politics and aesthetics of such an ambiguous attitude, and argue that, as I understand it, Freirean philosophy of liberation finds its true expression in this ambiguity.

This study's inescapable message is that there exists a large dose of critical literacy pedagogy in the hopes and hearts of many teachers, as envisioned by Freire and

other critical educators. A “literacy-from-below” (Ohmann, 1987) or a “parallel structure,” (Havel, 1991) has evolved and in opposition to the mainstream culture and its dominant functionalist literacy. Questioning the way things are and imagining alternatives (Giroux, 1997), this culture and literacy is, in Havel’s words, “an area where a different life can be lived, a life that is in harmony with its own aims” (1991, p. 194). Diametrically opposed to the “banking” concept and practice of classroom teaching, a “learner-centered” methodology exists in the hearts and minds of many, in which the lived experiences of the learner play a central role in the learner’s interaction with the texts and in producing expressivist texts. Negating the constraints of a monocultural literacy curriculum, this pedagogy is a multicultural one in which works of censored authors are on equal footing with more privileged authors. Embittered and disappointed with the ruling philosophy of human beings, advocates for this approach pose the problem of the mainstream class-based concept and envision a new concept which views human beings as more human and more complex. Adopting a critical stance towards social institutions, this approach challenges the privileges established by “feudalism” and strengthened by a one-party system. Escaping from the chains of “false consciousness,” the advocates of this approach realize that the absence of real renovation in education is human-made, and thus malleable, not destiny. In short, there is a resistance movement that connects the tenets of educational renovation to a critical stance toward political and social structure. This involves what Freire calls “reading of the world and reading of the word. Not a reading of the word alone, nor a reading only of the world, but both together, in dialectical solidarity” (Freire, 1994, p. 105). Seen in the light of Giroux ‘s (1983)

distinction between “oppositional behavior” and “resistance,” this critical attitude comes closer to the territory of “resistance.” Resistance has “ a revealing function, one that contains a critique of domination and provides theoretical opportunities for self-reflection and for struggle in the interest of self-emancipation and social emancipation” (Giroux, 1983, p. 109).

This “conscientization” was hardly the result of any outside intervention by avant-garde intellectuals for the simple reason that most of state intellectuals did not enjoy flirting with rebellious ideas. The few “dissident intellectuals” were better known abroad than inside the country. It would be both a great distortion and offense to say that this critical consciousness was “raised” by someone. Conscientization resulted from individuals’ lived experiences, their brush with the institutions that despised human beings. Conscientization was sharpened by a constant comparison with their experiences, with pre-communist social and educational reality. As a humanist, Freire saw the possibility of self-emancipation of the oppressed when he refused to reproduce the Leninist formula that only the intellectuals, the “conscientizers,” could bring revolutionary consciousness to the oppressed (Arnowitz, 1996).

There is, however, a discrepancy and inconsistency between individuals’ theorization of problems and their solutions. While lucidly demystifying the political roots of his misery, some insist on perfecting themselves as the best approach in a world that denies the possibility of such an aspiration. While being suspicious of the infallibility of the mainstream ideology, some feel powerless to do anything constructive. The ambiguity and inconsistency becomes very clear in the expressed confidence in

transforming education as a precondition for transformation of larger social structure. This confidence is contradictory since individuals realize that Vietnamese schools are the tools of the ruling class. To put it another way, on the one hand, they agree that “the demand to give up illusions about its conditions is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions” (Marx, quoted in Fromm, 1990, p. 111). But on the other hand, they share the “Christian-Hegelian” Freirean conviction (Gibson, 1994) that critical consciousness represents the development of awakening of critical awareness. “It will not as a natural byproduct of even major economic changes but must grow out of a critical education effort” (Freire, 1973, p. 19). Such an attitude, in Gibson’s (1994) eyes, is petty bourgeois or “reformist” because it gives priority to ideology, or education, in transforming reality. A revolutionary attitude, Gibson said, should focus first and foremost on a political or an economic agenda.

On the one hand, this attitude could be easily deconstructed as an “overt ideological project is undermined by their own ambivalence towards the binary oppositions upon which the ideological project rest” (Tyson, 1999, p. 260). No sooner do we demystify the underlying sources of cultural and educational oppression than we immediately remystified it by stating that there is nothing to do about it. On the other hand, this ambiguous attitude reminds me of the ambiguous characters which populated the pages of Camus’s (1957) *The Exile and the Kingdom*. Janine, for example, is always torn between the dream about a vast life, the eternal kingdom promised to her, and the exile, her life with her husband, a life of habits, and conventions but also of safety. Reflecting on ambiguity, Simone de Beauvoir (1948) said,

The notion of ambiguity must not be confused with that of absurdity. To declare that existence is absurd is to deny that it can ever been given a meaning; to say that it is ambiguous is to assert that its meaning is never fixed, that it must be constantly won. (p. 129)

Ambiguity in this sense means freedom because in acting, a human being cannot fully take into account all the knowledge needed to justify the necessity of his/her action. An uncertainty pervades the process of acting and, in this way, helps human beings become “more receptive to other points of view” (Brown, 2003, p. 170).

Another possible explanation comes from the postmodernist theorists. I paid special attention to the persistent voice of Martin (2001) when this teacher examined the contradictions between the failure to act even when consciousness has been raised in schools as well as in society around her. Rejecting “false consciousness” as insufficient to explain this phenomenon, Martin turned to poststructuralist and psychoanalytic theories for enlightenment. She finally discovered that a conception of “multiple and shifting subjectivities” (p. 60) and “the tension between autonomy and dependence” (p. 61) can illuminate the ambiguity. A similarity exists between that American teacher and her own experience and my experience in Vietnam.

Seen from Giroux’s (1983) perspective, the ambiguity to which I refer mirrors the fact that individuals live between accommodation and resistance. Torn between their quest for emancipation and a need for inclusion in the mainstream culture, they are sometimes self-contradictory and their fragmented resistance suggests that the patterns of accommodation and resistance “resemble less the regular, tidy grid of a Midwestern landscape than the tangle of intersecting curving highways and roads of New England” (Ritchie, 1992, p. 9).

To describe this phenomenon, Paul Smith in his (1988) *Discerning the Subject*, proposes the term “subject/individual” and gives the definition:

The “individual” is that which is undivided and whole, and understood to be the source and agent of conscious action and meaning which is consistent with it. The “subject,” on the other hand, is not self-contained . . . but is immediately cast into a conflict with force that dominate it. . . . The subject, then, is determined . . . whereas the individual is determining. (pp. xxxiii-iv)

In the dialogical tension between the interpellation of dominant institutions and the singular experience of the subject, Smith argues in favor of the agency of humans and thus for human resistance, although he does not deny the postmodernist position that the self is never autonomous nor unitary and that the individual is culturally constrained, politically determined, and socially subjugated.

Seen in the light of Scott’s (1990) theory of the “hidden transcript,” these ambiguous attitudes were impregnated with revolutionary significance. According to Scott (1990), resistance to the oppression should be investigated as two kinds of “transcript”: the “official transcript” and the “hidden transcript.” While the official transcript records the official, easily scanned features, usually populated with obedience or reverence to the dominant authority, the hidden transcript exposes resistance. Scott called this strategy the “arts of resistance” employed when there are unequal relations of power and when the direct confrontation with the powerful inevitable incur defeat on the part of the oppressed. Ideological resistance, for instance, is “disguised, united and veiled for safety ‘s sake” (Scott, 1990, p. 137). This disguised resistance is a “twin sister” of open resistance which “aims at the strategic goal but whose profile is better adapted to resisting an opponent who could probably win any open confrontation” (Scott, 1990, p.

184). Speaking of the hidden transcript, the “safety-valve” theorists agree that it is at best of little consequence and at worst an evasion. Scott does not share this view since he believes that “petty acts of resistance have dramatic economic and political effect” and that “under the appropriate conditions, the accumulation of petty acts can, rather like snow flakes on a steep mountainside, set off an avalanche” (Scott, 1990, p. 192). Scott argues that the driving force behind the 1917 Bolshevik revolution was the reformist goals such as an 8-hour day or cooking facilities. In my ethnographic inquiry, the resistance against the dominant ideology never took the form of any open negation of its key tenets, but only asked for a return to the humanistic orientation of “authentic” Marxism. The class-based nature of human beings, for example, was viewed as the result of not “real” Marxism; the “real” Marxism required the addition of another dimension, human-being-in-general. Such a “hidden transcript,” no matter how petty and harmless it may be, helped to tear the fabric of ideological hegemony and “much as a body of water might press against a dam, the hidden transcript is continually pressing against the limit of what is permitted on stage” (Scott, 1990, p. 196).

Underlying this ambiguity could also be the national yin-yang credo as expounded by Jamieson (1993). In *Understanding Vietnam*, Jamieson (1993) argues that

The yin and the yang were complementary dimensions of a single cultural system that was essentially shared by all Vietnamese, and that, as a folk religion, this philosophy exists in all aspects of Vietnamese life: in families, in villages and religions and economics, and so on. (p. 16)

According to this scholar, the Vietnamese believe that the yang, which represents the mind, the strong, the bright, the action, and the yin, which represents the heart, the weak, the dark, the inaction, are in a dynamic interplay and their blended harmony constitutes

the reality of life. These polar forces, however, embrace each other and struggle against each other: “Each time one of the two forces reaches its extreme, it contains in itself already the seed of its opposite” (Capra, 1980, p. 97) and “the yang having reached its climax retreats in favor of the yin; the yin having reached its climax retreats in favor of the yang” (Capra, 1980, p. 96). Seen in this light, Vietnam’s harmony has long been unbalanced due to the yang orthodoxy of CPV which prioritizes collectivity, centralization, rationality at the expense of yin-elements. According to the law of reversion of yin-yang, a yin-reaction must come as a necessity to restore the much-needed balance. A new cycle is unfolding where individuality, decentralization, and emotionality will take the place of their opposite features. The fact that Buddhist and existentialist philosophy whose tenets are essentially personalist and individualist lived experiences was the manifestation of this foreordained but very lawful change.

As far as multiculturalism is concerned, many adults in South Vietnam occupy a middle ground between a conservative and radical view. To put it another way, they are conventional, pluralistic multiculturalists rather than radical multiculturalists. Although both schools seek to empower the oppressed, the former seeks an inclusive common culture while the latter wants to write anew prior narratives (Farber & Sherry, 1997). Long embittered and disenchanted by the overwhelming force of hyper-sociality and hyper-collectivity, adult learners are preoccupied with the revitalization of a human, personal face and voice within Vietnamese society. This inclusive project is very liberal in terms of its philosophical foundation. No matter how enraged they might be at the distorted and infantilized, unwomanly face of women in literature written by communist

writers, even the most “feminist” adult learners still have many things in common with traditional women in the sense that they characterize a woman’s identity by the virtue of “sacrifice.” Like Mai in the romantic novel *In the Midst of Spring* (Khai Hung, 1933), they find no happiness in the pursuit of their own happiness at the expense of family and her relatives. Philosophically speaking, if a class-based concept of the human being came under scrutiny and critique, they want to enrich it with a Western liberal concept in which uniqueness and autonomy of each person is respected. Individualism as understood in the West is not highly appreciated here.

Seen from Giroux’s (1983) classification, this is advocacy of “interaction ideology and literacy” (p. 216). It throws down the gauntlet to the Vietnamese regime’s practitioners and educators of “instrumental ideology and literacy” (Giroux, 1983, p. 209), agreeing that “instrumental ideology expresses a view of literacy that posits an indialectical relation between knowledge, skill, and human subject” and that “students [in this] are relegated to a relatively passive role in the pedagogical process” (Giroux, 1983, p. 216). This position demands that instead of being cogs and screws in a mindless and heartless machine, each person in the pedagogical process should have the right to a name, a voice, and a face; instead of being a statistic, each learner should be seen as embodying valued lived experience. Critical literacy, in this case, belongs to the “romantic tradition in interaction ideology,” which contains in itself “a deep regard for the individual’s ability to construct his or her own meaning through a process of self-affirmation” (Giroux, 1983, p. 218).

After decades of living in the shadow of the tyrannical collectivity artificially constructed to perpetuate the ruling group, the emergence of selfhood, personhood in reading and writing is absolutely revolutionary because in such a monistic and highly politicized society as Vietnam, the personal is political, because it takes large doses of courage to be alone and to be unique and because standing alone before an approaching tank like the young man in Tiananmen Square is a unique choice of an individual, but it is a choosing for the whole nation.

I also spent some time reflecting on the power of memoir writing, a very individual task, as it is seen through a Soviet novel *The Day that Lasts a Century* (Aitmatov, 1988). This novel is about many things, but indelible in my mind is the image of Abutalip, a former teacher, who accidentally comes to an isolated train station with his wife and two children after he was dismissed due to a lack of political reliability. He manages to live like a railroad worker, but every night, by the lamplight, he writes an autobiography. Asked by Yedigei, his boss and benefactor, Abutalip says that his writes about his life and for his children: “My legacy will bring no harm to anyone. My legacy is my soul, my writing . . . I have no greater riches to leave to my children” (Aitmatov, 1988, p. 161). He philosophizes, “Of course there is a general truth for everyone, but anyone has his own understanding about things” (Aitmatov, 1988, p. 160). That small truth, unfortunately, has no place in a society where the personal is the political. Abutalip is arrested because, in the words of the security cadre, “so every person has the right to express whatever comes to his head. . . No, my friend, we do not allow that” (Aitmatov, 1988, p. 200).

It seems as if many in South Vietnam believe in a common culture, a common ground for the Vietnamese to understand each other, but the common culture of today is too narrow and full of aching gaps. Forgotten perspectives, unsanctioned literacy, silenced voices, should be included and glorified. In this sense, many adult learners are conventional because they think in terms of “having differences” rather than “being different.”

Last but not least, this ambiguity can be interpreted as the “objective idealism” which Gibson (1994, 1996) characterizes as Freirean philosophy. The deep conviction of the modernizing and democratizing force of thought and education pervaded my inquiry even though individuals are not blind to the blocking structural force. Unconsciously, they may adopt the Christian-Hegelian trinity of literacy, consciousness, and political change as expounded by Freire. First, like Freire, there is a great conviction in the power of literacy as a transformer of the mind. Literacy is “a highly charged political process, an act which exposes the design of oppressors on the one hand, yet creates and recreates the new literate on the other” (Gibson, p .14); for them, “There is no true word that is not the same time praxi. Thus to speak a true word is to transform the world” (Freire, 1997, p. 68). Moreover, like Freire, there is too much emphasis on the value of ideology and not enough on the matter of transforming economic structure: “Critical consciousness represents the development of awakening of critical awareness. It will not appear as a natural by-product of even major economic changes but must grow out of a critical educational effort based on a favorable historical condition “ (Freire, 1973, p. 19) and “the towering role of ideology, the crucial task of educational effort, is an important

signpost of . . . vision of the power of political ideas” (Gibson, 1994, p. 19). Like Freire, some have lost sight of the class struggle when they believe that it is possible to build a democratic school system “where children rich or poor are able to learn to create, to take risks, to ask questions, to grow” (Freire, 1993, p. 37) and that “the voice of oppression is not exploitation but dehumanization” (Gibson, 1994, p. 63).

Gibson (1994, 1996) traces this conviction to the petty-bourgeois ideology which he characterizes as a “key thread of Freire’s efforts towards literacy, consciousness and political change” (p. 118). In contrast, I believe this conviction results from the individuals’ consciousness of the need to attack the communist mindset, which to some, is a “disguised feudalism.” (Nguyen Van Chien, 2001, p. 490).

#### Now and Then

If Vietnamese communism is just Confucianism in disguise (Hue Tam Ho Tai, 1985; Nguyen Gia Kieng, 2004), the demand for “change . . . through new consciousness, gained through literacy,” (Freire, 1985, p. 78) is nothing more or less than the prolonged struggle for “*nang cao dan tri*” [raising the mind of the people] initiated in the first part of the 20th century. This renewal movement, developed under the French occupation, geared towards resisting the then dominant Confucianist and feudal culture and education, called for the raising the consciousness of democratic rights among the people. Remarking on Phan Chu Trinh, a leader of this movement, Nguyen Ngoc (2002) argued that Trinh, a proponent of non-violence, had even thought that raising the democratic awareness of the Vietnamese people was more important than achieving national

independence from French colonialists. This movement, however, was sacrificed for the violent struggle for independence. Ironically enough, the Vietnamese communists, who liberated the country from foreign yokes, do not complete this democratic movement; they resurrect and fortify the traditions and institutions condemned by the progressive thinkers of long ago. For this reason, the problem of *nang cao dan tri* is still as hot and timely as ever.

It is no accident that there is a striking resemblance between the rhetoric of criticism used by adult learners within the university and their predecessors of long ago; between the present-day modernizers and democratizers and their counterparts of those days.

The deliberate attempt made by Tran Quoc Vuong, a reformist-minded scholar, to record the bad habits and customs of the Vietnamese in *The Ugly Vietnamese*, for example, is a mirror of the attempt made a long time ago in his *Examining Our Faults* series, where Nguyen Van Vinh attacked “a broad spectrum of alleged faults of the Vietnamese people” (Jamieson, 1993, p. 77). As editor-in-chief of *Dong Duong Tap Chi* [The Indochinese Review] published in 1913, Nguyen Van Vinh popularized reformist ideas and offered a critique of traditional Vietnamese learning styles and customs. Vinh demystified and charged the Vietnamese smile which is supposedly appreciated as a signal of gracefulness and subtlety:

People in our country have the strange habit of laughing at everything. Laughing at praise, laughing at criticism. If it is good, we giggle. If it is bad, we giggle. We twist our mouths, let out one giggle, and the seriousness is gone from everything. There are people who say we should laugh at everything, that is the mark of a good-natured person. . . . But upon examination there is often unintentional

cruelty in our laughter. There is a kind of insolent contempt for other people in it, some insulting quality in it. (1993, p. 76)

When Ta Duy Anh, the soul-searching writer of the 1990s, broke the curse of the class-based concept of love in favor of individual freedom, he continued the struggle of Self-Reliance Group writers of the 1930s whose works of fiction conveyed the message that “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” (Marx, 1988, p. 75). In *Breaking the Ties* [Doan Tuyet], a novel published in 1930 and written by Nhat Linh, one of the leading members of such literary group, the defense lawyer, in rebutting the testimony against Loan, the heroine, argues:

These people who have absorbed the new culture have been imbued with ideas of humanity and individual freedom, so quite naturally they seek to escape from that system. This desire is very legitimate. But escape is not so easy as we might imagine. Except for those who patiently live in submission, like Loan here, how many others are there who rashly sacrifice themselves to escape the burden? . . . We have these people learn new ways and then do not create for them an environment that is appropriate to their new concepts. (Nhat Linh, 1995, p. 145)

When suggestions arise for putting an end to the linked identification of patriotism and communist ideology, they echo the description given by Phan Chu Trinh (1925) of the unholy alliance between patriotism and loyalty to the feudal king: “a subordinate to the King, a slave to the King, a henchman to a King . . . in short, a person who sells cheaply the body and the mind to the King” (p. 771). When the democratic factors of early Confucianism are raised, they seemed to share with the reformers in early 20<sup>th</sup> century that in order to revive the progressive and democratic spirit of Confucianism, Vietnamese society must be transfused with the Western concept of democracy:

Confucianism is dead, now we want to have a solid morality and ethics, nothing is better than importing European democracy. Democracy is a miracle drug to cure

our country's illness of authoritarianism. To bring home Western democracy is tantamount to insurrecting genuine Confucianism. (Phan Chu Trinh, 1925, p. 784)

From the angle of modernization and democratization, Phan Ke Binh (1913) was relentless in assaulting the feudalist “peasantry mentality,” which he regarded as an umbrella term for the negative values keeping Vietnamese back in backwardness. In the same way, many ridicule the remnants of that mindset which obstinately lived in the depth of national psychology . They join in the chorus which sang, “Goodbye, the village bamboo-hedge” (Nguyen Quang Than, 2001, p. 355).

In the educational sphere, a common project links these protests to their Dong Kinh Nghi Thuc forebears (1907-1908) and other modernizing intellectuals. Both communist and feudal education is “banking style” in the truest sense of the word. Fifty years ago, Nguyen Van Huyen commented on traditional educational practice:

Very little attention was given to developing the critical spirit which was of no avail in a system based on the absolute respect of books. . . . Books, Mr. Lê Thuốc . . . wrote, contained all the principle of ethics and sciences. . . . This exaggerated respect of books inevitably made old teachers transform their students into veritable receptacle[s] . . . committing to memory was an absolute priority, . . . written exercises were only aimed at consolidating the memorizing of the formulas of the book. The students, . . . being constantly in this passive role, became incapable of reflection and personal judgment. They tried less to understand the authors than to read and remember the sentences through which ideas were expressed. By some strange taste, a composition was all the better marked all the more quotations and ready-made phrases it contained. (1995, p. 293)

By an irony of fate, this account is not different from what some adult learners describe as the “medieval” style of teaching they had undergone in contemporary Vietnamese schools. They shared the opinion that

So, the medieval methodology . . . obstinately exists in present-day [Vietnamese] schools . . . Metaphorically speaking, it is like a “magical” machine used by an old witch to “produce” persons who do not know how to feel nor think nor converse and who have no ability to reflect and act and create. Thus, . . . this methodology has never forged persons who are worthy of being a “human being.” (Trinh Xuan Vu, 2000, p. 114)

In short, the conscientizers of the modern era of renovation were somehow inheritors of an unfinished mission of the conscientizers of the past. Is it a happy accident of history, or is it an unhappy irony of history? Nguyen Ngoc (2004), a reformist-minded writer, seemed to take the second position when he reflected on the bitter heritage of feudalism and communism which are intertwined and which blocks the way toward modernization and democratization. According to Nguyen Ngoc, the lofty ideals of modernization and democratization were deferred or rather ignored, by the communists. Although he did not completely blame the communists, Nguyen Ngoc did not hide the fact that the communist mentality contained in itself similar features of Confucian feudalism which they publicly denounced. History seems to Nguyen Ngoc bitter in that it forces the Vietnamese to do from the beginning the task which they would have finished a century ago if the communists had chosen a different way.

### Summary

The emergence of a nascent civil society and the self-conscientization I witnessed in this study suggest that the failure to put into motion the tenets of critical literacy pedagogy is rooted in the reluctance of the ruling party. Realizing keenly the close relationship between education and politics, learners, however, content themselves with purely educational solutions. There are reasons for this. Culturally, they may believe in

the cycle of yin-yang. Politically, they are playing the smart game of the “hidden transcript.” The most persuasive reason is that, contrary to Gibson’s notion of the petty-bourgeois ideology, they translate into practice the Freirean idea of “conscientization,” and in this manner, they resume the struggle for raising the minds of the people started long before and erased by the victory of the Vietnamese communists.

CHAPTER 10  
CONCLUDING MEDITATIONS: FROM A LOVE POEM TO  
EDUCATIONAL RENOVATION

“Like the whole of modern arts, literary writing contains in itself both history’s alienation and history’s dream. As necessity, it verifies the tearing up of language and with it, the tearing up of class. As freedom, it is the consciousness of that tearing up and the attempt to go beyond that state.”  
(Barthes, 1997, p. 129)

I began this dissertation by discussing a Vietnamese novel. I decided to end it by discussing a Vietnamese poem.

A rural boy is obsessed with a young woman 8 years older. The woman condescends to marry him if he brings her the *dieu bong* leaf, a very rare plant. In his first attempt, the boy finds the leaf and offers it to her. The woman shakes her head, saying it is nothing like the *dieu bong* leaf. For the second time, when the boy comes with the leaf, the woman rejects it. Finally, on the day of the woman’s wedding to another man, when the leaf is brought to the woman, she fans her face with her fingers as if ignoring it. From that time on, the boy, carrying the leaf with him, travels far and wide, loudly crying for the fool he has made of himself.

The poem, titled “The Dieu Bong Leaf” (Hoang Cam, 1996) is quite popular in Vietnam for its tantalizing beauty. The poet Hoang Cam, seems to convey to readers his own love story--the main reason it stirs the soul and captures the hearts of those who read it. There are, however, two kinds of readers who are tempted to view the poem as the expression of political trickery. The cultural commissars of the regime, who keep an eye

on any potential manifestation of political rebellion, find in the poem visible signs of hostility towards the regime. According to Hoang Cam, “They [the communists] said: ‘Did I mean to imply that the communist party tricks people all the time, like the woman tricked the boy?’” (Crossette, 2003, p. 73). Another kind of reader looks at the poem as a “writerly” text and finds in it what is buried inside his heart. Another reader may think of the poem not as a fixed entity with a single meaning; it is pregnant with meanings. This perspective is eye to eye with Barthes’s (1974) classification of literary texts as “readerly” and “writerly.”

This study confirms in strong terms that democratization, modernization, socialization and equalization of education--the key tenets of Vietnamese renovation--are at worst just slogans and at best “operative changes” (Guo, 2000). Although important changes have been made, the fundamental or “hard core” features (Guo, 2000, p. 21) remain unchanged, at least until recently. Although non-communist theories have been incorporated into the training programs, they exist as an embellishment of a predesigned curriculum; they do not change the fundamental features of the dominant ideology or the identity of the educational regime. These changes at the “developmental level,” to be sure, showed no clear or hopeful, immediate prospect for “the breaking the vicious cycle” of Vietnamese education (Guo, 2000, p. 204). However, these changes do contribute to the erosion of the banking philosophy and practice of teaching. And to be equally sure, these changes offer a long-awaited opportunity for the oppressed to create for themselves a kind of civil society or “secondary society” ideology (Hankiss, 1988) by the dialectical strategy of “reading the world” and “reading the word” at the same time. Although the

critical literacy pedagogy is not always consistent, its existence, side-by-side with and face-to-face with reproductionist pedagogy and literacy, shows the demise of the hypnotizing power of the ruling structure of “false consciousness.”

What will occur when the “conscientization” process is complete remains to be seen. But this inquiry into public educational reform in Vietnam suggests several possibilities and I conclude with a meditation on these possibilities.

As regards education in Vietnam, the study suggested to me something like this, “History has shown that it is not men’s [sic] social being that determines their consciousness but, on the contrary, their consciousness that ultimately determines their social being” (Fu, 1993, p. 365). It is strange that many decades after the new society was established, feudalist ideology and thinking styles have been so “healthy” in such an unhealthy way. It is still stranger after decades of renovation, human thought seems not to catch up with the breathtaking pace of social being. This autoethnographic inquiry has taught me that the core matter is that the oppressors, seduced and imprisoned by their privileges, refuse to change their consciousness. The solution thus should be constantly ideologically struggling for the renovation of thought, for the humanization of the oppressors. There seems to be no “royal road” to this goal.

Secondly, as Freire argues, the oppressed have great capacity for self-conscientization. Contrary to much structuralist thought, human beings are not completely imprisoned by ideology. As strongly seen in this study, human agency, the voice and self of each individual affirms the vibrance of concrete lived experiences. In the shadow of collectivity and group consciousness, I witnessed the monuments of

individual resistance. I was once told that the concept of self is meaningless because the self is never autonomous or unified. I am afraid that I cannot agree. At least in this study, I touched the heart and the nerves of concrete selfhood. Of course, each individual is complicated in his/her own way, but each is meaningful, full of “sound and fury” but signifying more than nothing. I share with Freisinger (1994) the argument that when Giroux affirms the voice and the self of students in resistance, he is struggling for a theory of self that has been erased by critical theorists and without which a theory of resistance cannot be envisioned.

The study also suggests that “reading the world” exists even beyond the realm of Freirean thought. In Appendix C, I introduced a chapter written by Freire and translated in a Vietnamese book of philosophy. As a reference, the book was intended for a few intellectuals to read among themselves. Few persons “on the street” have read this book. But the philosophy of educational liberation cherished and developed by Freire runs through each line of this study. This seems to me of great value because it speaks volumes for the greatness of this liberatory theory. Many in South Vietnam today are not satisfied with merely “reading the word.” They contrast the word--especially as represented in literature--with the world outside and raise their voices for justice against dehumanization. The ambiguous nature of these reader responses reflect the ambiguity of this world, as Freire notes, but their perception of reality is revealing and insightful.

The last suggestion from this study concerns the interpretation of Freirean philosophy. Critical literacy pedagogy should be considered as a guide rather than a dogma. My experience in Vietnam told me that the process of conscientization does not

necessarily result from the acting of conscientizers since the oppressed in many cases are able to conscientize themselves. In Vietnam's education system, the teachers seldom play the part of initiators of change. If we always think that the teacher must empower the learner, how can we explain the fact that conscientization did occur in Vietnam while the teachers there mainly perform the task of deferring, even destroying it?

As I conclude this writing, I let myself dream for a few seconds. As far as educational renovation is concerned, I share with many Vietnamese teachers the insight that the spring of renovation will never come unless Vietnamese leaders make a comprehensive and radical change consisting of a new philosophy of education in particular and a philosophy of human beings in general. If the existing philosophy, which stresses the class-based, collectivist conception of the human being, has generated the passive, submissive students and citizens, the new philosophy, which emphasizes the activeness, autonomy, and creativeness of each student, will achieve the goals of education renovation. As I said more than once, the introduction of such a philosophy into the educational sphere challenges the whole sociopolitical structure and for this reason challenges the power of the ruling class. A genuine educational renovation is synonymous with a political revolution.

As a researcher, I believe that further research needs to be conducted on this important and interesting topic. Education renovation in Vietnam has many things in common with the tide of reform surging in other Asian countries in which the Confucian heritage is being problematized by more and more self-conscientized people. Education renovation in Vietnam, however, should not be divorced from post-communist countries

in East European in which former traditions are still part of the national mentality. From this perspective, one of the most fascinating topics for research may be the role of collectivity and selfhood in education. I think that “herd mentality” is the common denominator for pre-communist collectivity and communist collectivism. The fact that “traditional, feudalist spirit of collectivity strangely corresponds with socialist collectivism” (Nguyen Ngoc, 2004, p. 3) needs to be carefully examined because, if sufficiently interpreted, it would clarify the existing problems of education but also map out the direction education must take.

Closely related is the well-known view given by Huntington (1993) of “the clash of civilizations.” It would be very exciting to find evidence for and against the assumption that the Confucianist ideology will take the place of a political ideology in the coming war with Western culture and that the culture matters will predominate the world arena when the cold war was over.

I hope to have a chance to continue exploring these inviting and little-charted theoretical and political territories in the near future. I also nurture the intention to carry out narrative research because this strand of qualitative research focuses on the self, which is meekly emerging amidst a circumstance devoid of selfhood, and because personal narratives in Vietnam inescapably illuminate socio-political contexts due to the hyperpoliticality of and hypersociality contained in and solidified by these contexts.

APPENDIX A  
THE ARHATS OF TAY PHUONG PAGODA

Huy Can, n.d., In Nguyen Khac Vien & Huu Ngoc,(Eds.), Vietnamese Literature, (pp. 686-688). Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishers.

Arhats of Tay Phuong Pagoda

I can't get you out of my mind

There you are in the realm of Buddha

Yet your faces are faces of agony

Here you stand, skin stretched over thin limbs  
What fire burns in your emaciated frame  
What infinite suffering carved out the hollow eyes?  
A long time you have stayed there  
Holding folded in you such a voiceless grief

Here you stand gazing with tragic eyes  
Brows obliquely frowning  
From bearing the endless turmoil of metempsychosis  
Your lips withering and your nerves  
Twisting your hands where boils an ancient blood

Here you wait, limbs folded  
As though to slip back into the womb of time  
The long lobed ears touching against the knees  
Hearing unendingly the groans of human life

Here you are, motionless and silent  
Yet seem to hear tempests and storms  
That batter forever shaken by the shades  
In the dark caverns under the lives of men

Faces sculpted by destiny, faces strangely lit

Boiling volcanoes bursting with grief endured  
Oh what strange brotherhood of shuddering pain  
Is it sweat that beads like tears from those graven form?

Faces bent earthwards, leaning and twisted  
Turned every way to all horizons to shout  
The one great question that gets no answer  
Faces frozen still in holy agony  
Or is it true that on the road of trial  
In one last fevered hour of human life  
You tried to cast away the garment of earth's cares  
Enduring only that simple change that takes us all?

Oh master craftsman sculptor where are you gone?  
Come back, resolve for us the weird enigma  
You who carved these lives in torment here  
Is this an image of Buddha's kingdom?

Or are these souls crying out from storm and strife  
A truth that we must know of every day  
Our very fathers in their bones and blood  
Our very fathers and their lives of torment

Their backs bent by the burden of those tunes  
They lived in the age of Nguyen Du  
Heart and soul in the destroying fire, face to the flame  
Fathers compassionate but powerless

Oh our fathers how you burned with pain  
In those days when life was marking time  
And hope and aspiration died  
Like buds that wither for lack of sun

The misty dusk of time obscured the way  
Of our good fathers seeking still  
Issue and remedy. On those faces of these images  
T trace there still the darkness of the past

Arhats of Tay Phuong Pagoda

Today our society has set out on a trip forward  
The faces of the statues seem to be refreshed  
The darkness of smoke dissolve and the shadow of sunset is chased away.\*

\*the translation of the last stanza is mine.

## APPENDIX B

## “MR. KNOW-ALL,” A SHORT STORY BY SOMERSET MAUGHAM.

In Le Van Diem (1993) (Ed.). British literature. Photocopied documents. English Department. University of Social Sciences and Humanities. National University of Ho Chi Minh City. Pp. 52-58.

I was prepared to dislike Max Kelada even before I knew him. The war had just finished and the passenger traffic in the ocean-going liners was heavy. Accommodation was very hard to get and you had to put up with whatever the agents chose to offer you. You could not hope for a cabin to yourself and I was thankful to be given one in which there were only two berths. But when I was told the name of my companion my heart sank. It suggested closed port-holes and the night air rigidly excluded. It was bad enough to share a cabin for fourteen days with anyone (I was going from San Francisco to Yokohama), but I should have looked upon it with less dismay if my fellow-passenger's name had been Smith or Brown.

When I went on board, I found Mr. Kelada's luggage already below. I did not like the look of it; there were too many labels on the suitcases, and the wardrobe trunk was too big. He had unpacked his toilet things, and I observed that he was a patron of the excellent Monsieur Coty; for I saw on the washing-stand his scent, his hair-wash and his brigantine. Mr. Kelada's Brushes, ebony with his monogram in gold, would have been all the better for a scrub. I did not at all like Mr. Kelada I made my way into the smoking-room. I called for a pack of cards and began to play patience. I had scarcely started before a man came up to me and asked me if he was right in thinking my name was so-and-so.

“I am Mr. Kelada,” he added, with a smile that showed a row of flashing teeth, and sat down.

“Oh, yes, we're sharing a cabin, I think.”

“Bit of luck, I call it. You never know who you're going to be put in with. I was jolly glad when I heard you were English. I'm all for us English sticking together when we're abroad, if you understand what I mean.”

I blinked.

“Are you English?” I asked, perhaps tactlessly.

“Rather. You don’t think I look like an American, do you? British to the backbone, that’s what I am.”

To prove it, Mr. Kelada took out of his pocket a passport and airily waved it under my nose.

King George has many strange subjects. Mr. Kelada was short and of a sturdy build, clean-shaven and dark-skinned with a fleshy, hooked nose and very large, lustrous and liquid eyes. His long black hair was sleek and curly. He spoke with a fluency in which there was nothing English and his gestures were exuberant. I felt pretty sure that a closer inspection of that British passport would have betrayed the fact that Mr. Kelada was born under a bluer sky than is generally seen in England.

“What will you have?” he asked me.

I looked at him doubtfully. Prohibition was in force and to all appearances the ship was bone-dry. When I am not thirsty, I do not know which I dislike more, ginger-ale or lemon-squash. But Mr. Kelada flashed an oriental smile at me.

“Whisky and soda or a dry Martini, you have only to say the word.”

From each of his hip-pockets he fished a flask and laid them on the table before me. I chose the Martini, and calling the steward he ordered a tumbler of ice and a couple of glasses.

“A very good cocktail,” I said.

“Well, there are plenty more where that came from, and if you’ve got any friends on board, you tell them you’ve got a pal who’s got all the liquor in the world.”

Mr. Kelada was chatty. He talked of New York and San Francisco. He discussed plays, pictures, and politics. He was patriotic. The Union Jack is an impressive piece of drapery, but when it is flourished by a gentleman from Alexandria or Beirut, I cannot but feel that it loses somewhat in dignity.

Mr. Kelada was familiar. I do not wish to put on airs, but I cannot help feeling that it is seemly in a total stranger to put mister before my name when he addresses me. Mr. Kelada, doubtless to set me at my ease, used no such formality. I did not like Mr. Kelada. I had put aside the cards when he sat down, but now, thinking that for this first occasion our conversation had lasted long enough, I went on with my game.

“The three on the four,” said Mr. Kelada.

There is nothing more exasperating when you are playing patience than to be told where to put the card you have turned up before you have had a chance to look for yourself.

“It’s coming out, it’s coming out,” he cried, “The ten on the knave.”

With rage and hatred in my heart I finished. Then he seized the pack.

“Do you like card tricks?”

“No, I hate card tricks,” I answered.

“Well, I’ll just show you this one.”

He showed me three. Then I said I would go down to the dining-room and get my seat at table.

“Oh, that’s all right,” he said. “I’ve already taken a seat for you. I thought that as we were in the same state-room we might just as well sit at the same table.”

I did not like Mr. Kelada.

I not only shared a cabin with him and ate three meals a day at the same table, but I could not walk round the deck without his joining me. It was impossible to snub him. It never occurred to him that he was not wanted. He was certain that you were as glad to see him as he was to see you. In your own house you might have kicked him downstairs and slammed the door in his face without the suspicion dawning on him that he was not a welcome visitor. He was a good mixer, and in three days knew everyone on board. He ran everything. He managed the sweeps, conducted the auctions, collected money for prizes at the sports, got up quoit and golf matches, organized the concert and arranged the fancy dress ball. He was everywhere and always. He was certainly the best-hated man in the ship. We called him Mr. Know-All, even to his face. He took it as a compliment. But it was at meal times that he was most intolerable. For the better part of an hour then he had us at his mercy. He was hearty, jovial, loquacious and argumentative. He knew everything better than anybody else, and it was an affront to his overweening vanity that you should disagree with him. He would not drop a subject, however unimportant, till he had brought you round to his way of thinking. The possibility that he could be mistaken never occurred to him. He was the chap who knew. We sat at the doctor’s table. Mr. Kelada would certainly have had it all his own way, for the doctor was lazy and I was frigidly indifferent, except for a man called Ramsay who sat there also. He was as dogmatic as Mr. Kelada and resented bitterly the Levantine’s coxsureness. The discussions they had were acrimonious and interminable.

Ramsay was in the American Consular Service, and was stationed at Kobe. He was a great heavy fellow from the middle west. With loose fat under a tight skin, and he bulged out of his ready-made clothes. He was on his way back to resume his post, having been on a flying visit to New York to fetch his wife, who had been spending a year at home. Mrs. Ramsay was a very pretty little thing, with pleasant manners and a sense of humor. The Consular Service is ill paid, and she was dressed always very simply; but she knew how to wear her clothes. She achieved an effect of quiet distinction. I should not have paid any particular attention to her but that she possessed a quality that may be common enough in women, but nowadays is not obvious in their demeanor. You could not look at her without being struck by her modesty. It shone in her like a flower on a coat.

One evening at dinner the conversation by chance drifted to the subject of pearls.

There had been in the papers a good deal of talk about the culture pearls which the

cunning Japanese were making, and the doctor remarked that they must inevitably diminish the value of real ones. They were very good already; they would soon be perfect. Mr. Kelada, as was his habit, rushed the new topic. He told us all that was to be known about pearls. I do not believe Ramsay knew anything about them at all, but he could not resist the opportunity to have a fling at the Levantine, and in 5 minutes we were in the middle of a heated argument. I had seen Mr. Kelada vehement and voluble before, but never so voluble and vehement as now. At last something that Ramsay said stung him, for he thumped the table and shouted:

“Well, I ought to know what I am talking about. I’m going to Japan just to look into this Japanese pearl business. I’m in the trade and there’s not a man in it who won’t tell you that what I say about pearls goes. I know all the best pearls in the world, and what I don’t know about pearls isn’t worth knowing.”

Here was news for us, for Mr. Kelada, with all his loquacity, had never told anyone what his business was. We only knew vaguely that he was going to Japan on some commercial errand. He looked round the table triumphantly.

“They’ll never be able to get a culture pearl that an expert like me can’t tell with half an eye.” He pointed to a chain that Mrs. Ramsay wore. “You take my word for it, Mrs. Ramsay, that chain you’re wearing will never be worth a cent less than it is now.” Mrs. Ramsay in her modest way flushed a little and slipped the chain inside her dress. Ramsay leaned forward. He gave us all a look and a smile flickered in his eyes.

“That’s a pretty chain of Mrs. Ramsay’s, isn’t it?”

“I noticed it at once,” answered Mr. Kelada. “Gee, I said to myself, those are pearls, all right.”

“Oh, in the trade somewhere round fifteen thousand dollars. But if it was bought on Fifth Avenue I shouldn’t be surprised to hear that anything up to thirty thousand was paid for it.”

Ramsay smiled grimly.

“You’ll be surprised to hear that Mrs. Ramsay bought that string at a department store the day before we left New York, for eighteen dollars.”

Mr. Kelada flushed.

“Rot. It’s not only real, but it’s as fine a string for its size as I’ve seen.”

“Will you bet on it? I’ll bet you a hundred dollars it’s imitation.”

“Done.”

“Oh, Elmer, you can’t bet on a certainty,” said Mrs. Ramsay.

She had a little smile on her lips and her tone was gently deprecating.

“Can’t I? If I get a chance of easy money like that I should be all sorts of a fool not to take it.”

“But how can it be proved?” she continued. “It’s only my word against Mr. Kelada’s”

“Let me look at the chain, and if it’s imitation I’ll tell you quickly enough. I can afford to lose a hundred dollars,” said Mr. Kelada.

“Take it off, dear. Let the gentleman look at it as much as he wants.”

Mrs. Ramsay hesitated a moment. She put her hands to the clasp.

“I can’t undo it.” She said. “Mr. Kelada will just have to take my word for it.”

I had a sudden suspicion that something unfortunate was about to occur, but I could think of nothing to say.

Ramsay jumped up.

“I’ll undo it.”

He handed the chain to Mr. Kelada. The Levantine took a magnifying glass from his pocket and closely examined it. A smile of triumph spread over his smooth and swarthy face. He handed back the chain. He was about to speak. Suddenly he caught sight of Mrs. Ramsay’s face. It was so white that she looked as though she were about to faint. She was staring at him with wide and terrified eyes. They held a desperate appeal; it was so clear that I wondered why her husband did not see it.

Mr. Kelada stopped with his mouth open. He flushed deeply. You could almost *see* the effort he was making over himself.

“I was mistaken,” he said. “It’s a very good imitation, but of course as soon as I looked through my glass I saw that it wasn’t real. I think eighteen dollars is just about as much as the damned thing’s worth.”

He took out his pocket-book and from it a hundred-dollar note. He handed it to Ramsay without a word.

“Perhaps that’ll teach you not to be so cocksure another time, my young friend,” said Ramsay as he took the note.

I noticed that Mr. Kelada’s hands were trembling.

The story spread over the ship as stories do, and he had to put up with a good deal of chaff that evening. It was a fine joke that Mr. Know-All had been caught out. But Mrs. Ramsay retired to her state-room with a headache.

Next morning I got up and began to shave. Mr. Kelada lay on his bed smoking a cigarette. Suddenly there was a small scraping sound and I saw a letter pushed under the door. I opened the door and looked out. There was nobody there. I picked up the letter and saw that it was addressed to Max Kelada. The name was written in block letters. I handed it to him.

“Who’s this from?” He opened it. “Oh!”

He took out of the envelope not a letter, but a hundred-dollar note. He looked at me and again he reddened. He tore the envelope into little bits and gave them to me.

“Do you mind just throwing them out of the port-hole?”

I did as he asked, and then I looked at him with a smile.

“No one likes being made to look a perfect damned fool,” he said.

“Were the pearls real?”

“If I had a pretty little wife I shouldn’t let her spend a year in New York while I stayed at Kobe,” said he.

At that moment I did not entirely dislike Mr. Kelada. He reached out for his pocket-book and carefully put in it the hundred-dollar note.

## APPENDIX C

## AP BUC VA GIAI PHONG [OPPRESSION AND EMANCIPATION]

(Vietnamese translation of a chapter by Paulo Freire)

In Tresdey, G. & Struhl, K. & Olsen, R. (. Luu Van Hy & Nguyen Minh Son trans.) (2000). *Truy tầm triết học* [In quest of philosophy]. Hanoi: Nhà xuất bản văn hóa thông tin. Pp. 724-733.

**Lời nhà xuất bản**

“ . . . Trong nhiều năm qua, nội dung đào tạo đội ngũ lý luận hầu như chỉ bó hẹp trong các bộ môn khoa học Mác-Lênin, chưa coi trọng việc nghiên cứu các trào lưu khác và tiếp nhận những thành tựu khoa học của thế giới. Hậu quả là số đông cán bộ lý luận thiếu hiểu biết rộng rãi về kho tàng tri thức của loài người, do đó khả năng phát triển bị hạn chế . . . ”

**(Trích Nghị quyết của BCT ĐCSVN về công tác lý luận trong giai đoạn hiện nay-- số 01/NQ-TN ngày 28 tháng 3 năm 1992)**

Xuất bản cuốn **Truy tầm triết học**, chúng tôi nhằm giới thiệu nhiều trào lưu triết học ngoài triết học Mác-Lênin, làm phong phú hơn kho tàng lý luận của các nhà nghiên cứu và nhiều người ham hiểu biết hiện nay.

Tuy nhiên, cũng trong Nghị quyết của BCT-ĐCSVN số 01/NQ-TN nói trên còn chỉ rõ: “*Đối với những học thuyết khác--ngoài chủ nghĩa Mác-Lênin về xã hội, cần được nghiên cứu trên quan điểm khách quan, biện chứng*”. Đó cũng là điều chúng tôi xin lưu ý bạn đọc khi đọc tập sách này, nhằm đáp ứng mục tiêu xây dựng một nền văn hóa Việt Nam hiện đại, đậm đà bản sắc dân tộc, đúng định hướng XHCN.

**NHÀ XUẤT BẢN VĂN HÓA THÔNG TIN**

Sự làm mất tính người, không những chú ý đến những người có nhân tính bị mất cấp, mà (mặc dù theo cách thức khác) còn cả đến những người lấy cấp được nó, là sự **xuyên tạc** thiên hướng của việc trở nên con người đầy đủ hơn. Sự xuyên tạc này xảy ra trong phạm vi lịch sử; nhưng nó không phải là một thiên hướng lịch sử. Thực ra, việc thừa nhận sự làm mất tính người như một thiên hướng lịch sử hoặc dẫn đến tính hoài nghi hoặc dẫn đến nỗi tuyệt vọng hoàn toàn. Cuộc đấu tranh giành sự nhân tính hóa, giành sự giải phóng lao động, giành việc khắc phục sự thóa hóa tâm tính, giành sự khẳng định con người như các con người sẽ có thể là vô nghĩa. Cuộc đấu tranh này có thể chỉ vì sự làm mất tính người, mặc dù là một biến cố lịch sử cụ thể, song vẫn

**không** là số phận quy định ngoại trừ kết quả của một trật tự bất công sinh ra bạo lực nơi các người áp bức, rồi đến lượt nó làm cho những người bị áp bức mất nhân tính. Vì nó là sự xuyên tạc sự tồn tại nhiều tính người hơn, nên sớm muộn gì sự tồn tại ít tính người hơn cũng sẽ dẫn người bị áp bức đến cuộc đấu tranh chống lại những người làm cho họ thành như thế. Để làm cho cuộc đấu tranh này có ý nghĩa, người bị áp bức, trong khi tìm cách giành lại nhân tính của mình (đây là một cách tạo ra nó), không cần phải lần lượt trở thành các người áp bức, mà đúng hơn là người khôi phục lại nhân tính cho cả hai.

Vậy thì, đây là nhiệm vụ thuộc về lịch sử và thuộc về chủ nghĩa nhân văn nhất của người bị áp bức; tự giải phóng chính mình cũng như những người áp bức họ. Các người áp bức, những người dựa vào quyền lực mình mà áp bức, bóc lột, và hãm hiếp, không thể tìm được trong quyền lực này sức mạnh để giải phóng hoặc kẻ bị áp bức sẽ không đủ mạnh để giải phóng cả hai. Bất kỳ cố gắng nào nhằm “làm yếu” quyền lực của người áp bức chiều theo tình trạng yếu đuối của kẻ bị áp bức hầu như luôn luôn tự biểu lộ theo hình thức của sự khoan hồng giả tạo; thực sự, sự cố gắng không bao giờ vượt quá điều này. Để có được cơ hội liên tục biểu lộ “hành động khoan hồng” của mình, những người áp bức cũng phải duy trì hành động bất công. Một trật tự xã hội bất công là nguồn gốc thường xuyên của “hành động khoan hồng” này, điều này được nuôi dưỡng bởi cái chết, nỗi tuyệt vọng, và cảnh nghèo nàn. Đó là lý do vì sao các nhà sáng chế ra hành động khoan hồng giả tạo lại trở thành tuyệt vọng nơi mỗi đe dọa mong manh nhất đối với nguồn gốc của nó.

Hành động khoan hồng thật đúng là ở chỗ chiến đấu phá hủy các nguyên nhân nuôi dưỡng lòng khoan dung giả tạo. Lòng khoan dung giả tạo chế ngự những người sợ hãi và những người bị khuất phục, những người “bị loại khỏi cuộc sống,” để mở rộng cánh tay run rẩy của họ. Hành động khoan dung thật nằm ở việc cố gắng phấn đấu để các bàn tay này cho dù thuộc về cá nhân hay toàn thể nhân loại càng ngày càng cần ít mở rộng sự van xin, để càng ngày chúng càng trở nên các bàn tay làm việc của con người, làm việc và biến đổi thế giới.

Tuy nhiên bài học này và thời gian thực tập này phải đến từ chính những kẻ bị áp bức và từ những người thực sự đoàn kết với họ. Như các cá nhân hay như các dân tộc, bằng việc đấu tranh giành lại sự khôi phục nhân tính của mình, họ sẽ đang cố gắng khôi phục lại hành động khoan hồng thật. Ai được chuẩn bị tốt hơn nhữn kẻ bị áp bức trong việc hiểu được ý nghĩa khủng khiếp của một xã hội áp bức? Ai phải chịu đựng các hậu quả của sự áp bức hơn những kẻ bị áp bức? Ai có thể hiểu rõ tính cần thiết của sự giải phóng hơn? Họ sẽ không giành được sự giải phóng này qua sự tình cờ nhưng qua **thói quen** (praxis) truy tìm để có nó, qua việc họ công nhận cần thiết phải đấu tranh giành được nó. Và cuộc đấu tranh này, do mục đích được kẻ bị áp bức đưa ra, sẽ thực sự thiết lập hành động yêu thương chống lại sự không có tình yêu nằm nơi

tâm hồn đầy bạo lực của các người áp bức, không có tình yêu ngay cả khi được che phủ trong hành động khoan hồng giả tạo.

Nhưng gần như luôn luôn, trong suốt giai đoạn ban đầu của cuộc đấu tranh, kẻ bị áp bức, thay vì cố gắng giành được sự giải phóng, lại có khuynh hướng biến mình thành người áp bức, hay “đại diện người áp bức”. Chính cấu trúc suy nghĩ của họ tùy thuộc vào các mâu thuẫn của tình huống tồn tại cụ thể mà bởi chúng họ được hình thành. Mẫu người lý tưởng của họ là đàn ông; nhưng đối với họ, là đàn ông; nhưng đối với họ, là đàn ông tức là người áp bức. Đây là mô hình nhân tính của họ. Hiện tượng này xuất phát từ sự kiện kẻ bị áp bức, tại một khoảnh khắc của kinh nghiệm tồn tại, làm theo quan điểm “dính bám vào” người áp bức. Trong hoàn cảnh này, họ không thể “coi” ông ta rõ ràng là đủ để khách thể hóa ông ta nhận ra ông ta “ở ngoài” chính họ. Điều này không nhất thiết mang ý nghĩa là kẻ bị áp bức không biết rằng họ bị áp bức. Nhưng việc họ nhận thức chính mình là kẻ bị áp bức, bị sự ngập chìm trong thực tại áp bức làm cho yếu đi. Ở mức độ này, việc họ nhận thức chính mình là sự phối đối lập với người áp bức chưa biểu thị sự ràng buộc trong một cuộc đấu tranh để khắc phục sự mâu thuẫn; một thái cực không mong mỗi sự giải phóng, nhưng mong mỗi sự gắn bó chặt chẽ với thái cực đối lập của nó. (Trong sách này, thuật ngữ “sự mâu thuẫn/contradiction” bao hàm ý nghĩa cuộc xung đột biện chứng giữa các lực lượng xã hội đối lập).

Trong tình huống này, kẻ bị áp bức không nhìn thấy “con người mới” như con người được sinh ra từ sự giải quyết sự mâu thuẫn này, như sự áp bức cung cấp con đường dẫn đến sự giải phóng. Với họ, con người mới tự chúng trở thành người áp bức. Ảo tưởng của họ về con người mới mang tính chất cá nhân; vì sự gắn bó chặt chẽ của họ với người áp bức, họ không có ý thức về chính mình như con người hay như các thành viên của giai cấp bị áp bức nữa. Việc họ muốn cải cách ruộng đất không phải để trở thành con người tự do, nhưng để giành được đất và do đó trở thành địa chủ hay, chính xác hơn, là các ông chủ trên các công nhân khác. Người nông dân hiếm, người trước kia “được đẩy mạnh” thành đốc công, không còn trở thành bạo chúa đối với các người bạn trước kia của ông ta hơn chính chủ nhân. Đây là vì bối cảnh tình huống của nông dân, nghĩa là, sự áp bức, vẫn giữ nguyên không thay đổi. Trong thí dụ này, người đốc công, để nắm chắc công việc của mình, phải cứng rắn, hà khắc như một chủ nhân và còn hơn thế nữa. Do vậy, sự khẳng định trước tiên của chúng ta được minh họa là, trong suốt giai đoạn ban đầu của cuộc đấu tranh của mình, kẻ bị áp bức nhận thấy trong người áp bức cái mô hình “nhân tính”.

Ngay cả cuộc cách mạng đã biến đổi tình huống áp bức cụ thể bằng việc thiết lập quá trình giải phóng, cũng phải đương đầu với hiện tượng này. Nhiều người trong số kẻ bị áp bức, trực tiếp hay gián tiếp tham gia vào cuộc cách mạng, đều có ý muốn làm cho nó thành cuộc cách mạng riêng của mình tùy thuộc vào các thần thoại về trật tự xưa cũ. Hình bóng của người áp bức xưa kia vẫn bao phủ trên họ.

“nỗi sợ tự do” (fear of freedom) làm đau đớn kẻ bị áp bức, nỗi sợ hãi mà có thể khiến họ ao ước vai trò người áp bức hay trốn buộc họ vào vai trò kẻ bị áp bức, phải được nghiên cứu kỹ. Một trong các yếu tố căn bản về mối quan hệ giữa người áp bức và kẻ bị áp bức là mệnh lệnh. Mỗi mệnh lệnh trình bày sự bắt phải chịu sự chọn lựa của một người trên người khác, biến đổi ý thức về con người được quy định trong con người thích nghi với ý thức của người ra lệnh. Do đó, thái độ của kẻ bị áp bức là thái độ bị ra lệnh, theo sau nó là các nguyên tắc chỉ đạo của người áp bức.

*\* (Nỗi sợ tự do này cũng có nơi nhưn người áp bức mặc dù rõ ràng có thể có được trong hình thức khác. Kẻ bị áp bức sợ ôm lấy sự tự do; người áp bức sợ đánh mất “sự tự do” áp bức người khác.)*

Kẻ bị áp bức, chủ quan hóa hình ảnh kẻ bị áp bức và làm theo các nguyên tắc chỉ đạo của ông ta, sợ sự tự do. Sự tự do đòi hỏi họ phải tống khứ đi hình ảnh này và thay thế nó bằng sự tự do ý chí và trách nhiệm. Sự tự do được đòi hỏi bằng sự truy tìm, không phải bằng quà tặng. Nó phải được theo đuổi liên tục và có trách nhiệm. Sự tự do không phải là mô hình lý tưởng được định vị phía ngoài con người; cũng không phải là một ý niệm sẽ trở thành thần thoại. Đúng hơn, nó là điều kiện bắt buộc dành cho sự truy tìm, dành cho sự hoàn thành con người.

Để khắc phục tình huống bị áp bức, con người trước tiên phải nhận thức các nguyên nhân của nó theo cách chỉ trích, để qua việc biến đổi hành động mà họ có thể tạo dựng một tình huống mới, một tình huống có thể tạo ra sự theo đuổi một nhân tính đầy đủ hơn. Nhưng một cuộc chiến đấu có tính đầy đủ hơn đã bắt đầu trong cuộc chiến đấu đích thực biến đổi tình huống. Mặc dầu tình huống bị áp là toàn bộ được nhân tính hóa và đang nhân tính hóa ảnh hưởng đến cả những người áp bức và những người bị người áp bức, chính những người bị áp bức, từ nhân tính bị áp bức của họ, phải tiến hành cho cả cuộc chiến đấu lẫn một nhân tính đầy đủ hơn; người áp bức nào tự làm mất nhân tính mình vì làm mất nhân tính người khác, không thể lãnh đạo cuộc chiến đấu này.

Tuy nhiên, kẻ bị áp bức mà thích nghi với cấu trúc thống trị họ đắm chìm vào, và trở nên sẵn sàng chịu đựng nó, bị ngăn cấm không được tiến hành cuộc đấu tranh giành tự do bao lâu họ cảm thấy không có khả năng liều lĩnh theo như nó đòi hỏi. Hơn nữa, cuộc chiến đấu của giành tự do của họ đe dọa không những người áp bức, mà cả những người bị áp bức của riêng họ, những con người sợ sự đàn áp vẫn còn lớn hơn. Khi họ khám phá ra trong phạm vi chính mình sự khao khát được tự do, họ nhận thức rằng sự khao khát này chỉ có thể được biến đổi thành thực tại khi cùng một khát khao như thế được khuấy động trong các người bạn của họ. Nhưng trong khi bị thống trị bởi nỗi sợ sự tự do, họ từ chối không kêu gọi những người khác, hay không lắng nghe các lời kêu gọi của các người khác, hay không lắng nghe cả những lời kêu gọi của lương tâm của riêng họ. Họ thích sống giao du đàn đúm hơn tình bạn đích thực; họ thích sự an

toàn phù hợp với trạng thái không tự do của họ hơn sự quan hệ sáng tạo do sự tự do và cả chính sự theo đuổi sự tự do sản sinh ra.

Kẻ bị áp bức chịu đựng tính hai mặt mà nó tự thiết lập trong sự tồn tại ở tâm thần tâm họ. Họ khám phá ra rằng nếu không có tự do họ không thể đích thực tồn tại. Nhưng, mặc dù họ ước muốn sự tồn tại đích thực, song họ vẫn sợ nó. Họ cùng lúc vừa là chính họ vừa là người áp bức mà họ chủ quan hóa ý thức của ông ta. Sự mâu thuẫn nằm ở sự chọn lựa giữa việc là toàn bộ chính họ hay việc bị phân chia; giữa việc tống khứ người áp bức vào phía trong hay không tống khứ ông ta; giữa tình đoàn kết con người hay bệnh tâm thần; giữa việc vâng theo các mệnh lệnh hay việc có các chọn lựa; giữa việc là khán giả hay diễn viên; giữa việc hành động hay việc có ảo tưởng hành động qua hành động của các người áp bức; giữa việc nói lớn lên hay im lặng, họ bị cắt xén trong quyền lực tạo dựng và tái tạo dựng, trong quyền lực tạo dựng và tái tạo dựng, trong quyền lực biến đổi thế giới. Đây là thế tiến thoái lưỡng nan theo kiểu bi kịch của kẻ bị áp bức mà sự giáo dục của họ phải quan tâm đến.

Cuốn sách này sẽ trình bày một số khía cạnh về cái mà tác giả gọi là khoa sư phạm của kẻ bị áp bức, một khoa sư phạm phải được rèn luyện với (with), không phải dành cho (for), kẻ áp bức (dù là các cá nhân hay các dân tộc) trong cuộc đấu tranh không ngừng để giành lại nhân tính của họ. Khoa sư phạm này làm cho sự áp bức và các nguyên nhân của nó thành các đối tượng phản ảnh của kẻ bị áp bức, và từ đó sự phản ảnh sẽ hóa thành sự ràng buộc cần thiết của họ trong cuộc đấu tranh giành sự giải phóng. Và trong cuộc đấu tranh khoa sư phạm này sẽ được làm đi làm lại.

Vấn đề trọng tâm là thế này: Làm thế nào kẻ bị áp bức, như các bản thể không xác thực và bị phân chia lại có thể tham gia vào việc phát triển khoa học sư phạm giải phóng của họ? Chỉ khi họ khám phá chính họ là các “đạo quân” người áp bức, họ mới có thể góp phần vào việc khai sinh khoa sư phạm giải phóng của họ. Chừng nào mà họ còn sống trong tính hai mặt trong đó tồn tại (to be) là tồn tại như (to be like), và tồn tại như (to be like) là tồn tại như người áp bức (to be like the oppressor), sự đóng góp này là bất khả thi. Khoa sư phạm của kẻ bị áp bức là một công cụ dành cho việc khám phá phê phán của họ mà cả họ lẫn người áp bức họ đều là các sự biểu thị sự làm mất nhân tính . . .

Khoa sư phạm của kẻ bị áp bức, như khoa sư phạm của nhà nghiên cứu khoa học nhân văn và tự do chủ nghĩa, có hai giai đoạn riêng biệt. Trong giai đoạn thứ nhất, kẻ bị áp bức trình bày công khai thế giới áp bức và qua thói quen cam kết biến đổi nó. Trong giai đoạn thứ hai, thực tại áp bức đã được biến đổi, khoa sư phạm này thôi thuộc về kẻ bị áp bức và trở thành khoa sư phạm của mọi người trong quá trình giải phóng lâu dài. Trong cả hai giai đoạn, việc văn hóa thống trị bị đối đầu về phương diện văn hóa luôn luôn qua hành động có chiều sâu. (Đây có vẻ là khía cạnh nền tảng của cuộc Cách mạng Văn hóa của Mao). Trong giai đoạn thứ nhất, sự đối đầu này xảy ra qua sự thay đổi trong cách thức kẻ bị áp bức nhận thức được thế giới áp bức; trong giai

đoạn hai, qua sự tổng khứ các thần thoại được tạo dựng và phát triển trong trật tự cũ, điều này giống như các bóng ma ám ảnh cấu trúc mới nảy sinh từ sự biến đổi cách mạng.

Khoa sư phạm của giai đoạn thứ nhất phải giải quyết vấn đề ý thức của kẻ bị áp bức và ý thức của người áp bức, vấn đề các con người áp bức và các con người chịu áp bức. Nó phải quan tâm đến thái độ của họ, quan điểm của họ về thế giới, và đạo đức của họ. Một vấn đề đặc biệt là tính hai mặt của kẻ bị áp bức: họ là các bản thể mâu thuẫn, tách biệt, được hình thành bởi và tồn tại trong một tình huống áp bức và bạo lực cụ thể.

Bất kỳ một tình huống nào trong đó “A” khách quan bóc lột “B” hay cản trở B theo đuổi sự tự ý thức về bản thân như một con người có trách nhiệm, đều là một tình huống áp bức. Một tình huống như thế tự nó thiết lập bạo lực, ngay cả khi được xoa dịu bởi hành động giả tạo, vì nó gây trở ngại cho thiên hướng lịch sử và bản thể học trong việc trở thành có nhân tính đầy đủ hơn. Với sự thiết lập mối quan hệ áp bức, bạo lực đã bắt đầu rồi. Bạo lực chưa bao giờ được bắt đầu trong lịch sử bởi kẻ bị áp bức. Làm thế nào họ có thể là người khởi xướng được nếu chính họ là hậu quả của bạo lực? Làm thế nào họ có thể là người đề xuất một điều gì đó mà sự mở đầu khách quan của nó đã làm cho sự tồn tại của họ như kẻ bị áp bức? Không có kẻ bị áp bức nếu không có tình huống bạo lực trước thiết lập sự khuất phục họ.

Bạo lực được khởi đầu bởi những người áp bức, những người bóc lột, những người không công nhận người khác là con người không phải bởi những người áp bức, bị bóc lột, và không được công nhận. Không phải người không được yêu khởi đầu sự không thân thiện, nhưng là những người không thể yêu vì họ chỉ yêu chính mình. Không phải người không nơi nương tựa, người lệ thuộc vào sự khiếp sợ, khởi đầu sự khiếp sợ, nhưng là người hung bạo, người có quyền lực tạo dựng tình huống cụ thể sinh ra những người “bị loại khỏi cuộc sống”. Không phải người bị hành hạ khởi đầu chế độ chuyên chế, nhưng là những bạo chúa. Không phải kẻ bị khinh miệt khởi đầu sự căm thù, nhưng là những người khinh miệt. Không phải những người có nhân tính phủ nhận những kẻ phủ nhận con người, nhưng là những kẻ phủ nhận nhân tính (do vậy cũng phủ nhận nhân tính của riêng họ). Quyền lực được sử dụng không phải bởi những người trở nên yếu đuối dưới sự trội hơn của kẻ mạnh, nhưng bởi kẻ mạnh đã làm cho họ yếu đi.

Tuy nhiên, đối với người áp bức, luôn luôn kẻ bị áp bức là kẻ khó ưa, kẻ “hung bạo,” “dã man,” “độc ác,” hay “dữ tợn” khi họ phản ứng lại bạo lực của người áp bức (rõ ràng người áp bức không bao giờ gọi kẻ bị áp bức là “kẻ bị áp bức” nhưng tùy vào việc họ có là người đồng hương hay không se là “những người ấy” hay “quần chúng mù quáng và đố kỵ” hay “người man rợ” hay “thổ dân” hay “quân phiến loạn”).

Nhưng, dù nghịch biện như nó có vẻ, song biểu hiện tình yếu có thể được tìm thấy chính xác trong sự đáp lại của kẻ bị áp bức đối với bạo lực của người áp bức họ. Dù

có ý thức hay không có ý thức, hành động nổi loạn của kẻ bị áp bức (hành động luôn luôn hay gần như luôn luôn, là bạo lực như bạo lực khởi đầu của các người áp bức) có thể khởi đầu tình yêu. Ngược lại, bạo lực của người áp bức ngăn cấm không cho kẻ bị áp bức được là con người đầy đủ, sự đáp lại của kẻ bị áp bức đối với bạo lực ngày được truyền thụ trong niềm mong ước theo đuổi quyền được làm người. Khi người áp bức làm người khác mất nhân tính và xâm phạm quyền lợi người khác, thì chính họ cũng trở nên bị mất nhân tính. Khi kẻ bị áp bức, vì đấu tranh để được làm người, lấy đi quyền lực thống trị và đàn áp của người áp bức, sẽ hoàn trả lại cho người áp bức nhân tính mà họ đánh mất trong khi thực hiện sự áp bức.

Chỉ kẻ bị áp bức là những người, bằng việc tự giải phóng chính mình, có thể giải phóng các người áp bức họ. Người áp bức, như giai cấp áp bức, không thể giải phóng người khác cũng không thể giải phóng chính mình. Do đó, tất nhiên là kẻ bị áp bức tiến hành cuộc đấu tranh để giải quyết mâu thuẫn mà họ vướng vào; và mâu thuẫn sẽ được giải quyết bằng sự xuất hiện một con người mới: không phải người áp bức cũng không phải kẻ bị áp bức, nhưng là con người trong quá trình giải phóng. Nếu mục đích của kẻ bị áp bức là để trở nên con người đầy đủ, họ sẽ không giành được mục đích của họ chỉ bằng cách hạn chế các điều kiện mâu thuẫn, chỉ bằng cách thay đổi các thái cực.

Điều này có thể là giản dị thái quá; có thể là không. Sự giải quyết mâu thuẫn giữa người áp bức và kẻ bị áp bức thực sự ngụ ý không còn các người áp bức như giai cấp thống trị. Tuy nhiên, các kẻ bị áp bức trước kia sẽ kiểm chế các người áp bức, để người áp bức không thể đảm đương lại địa vị trước kia của họ, không thiết lập được sự áp bức nữa. Một hành động là hành động áp bức chỉ khi nó ngăn cản không cho con người được trở thành con người đầy đủ. Theo đó, các sự kiểm chế thiết yếu này tự chúng không có nghĩa là kẻ bị áp bức của ngày hôm qua đã trở thành người áp bức của ngày hôm nay. Các hành động ngăn cản sự khôi phục chế độ áp bức sẽ không thể được so sánh với các hành động tạo dựng và duy trì nó, sẽ không thể được so sánh với các hành động được một ít người sử dụng để phủ nhận phần lớn quyền được làm người của họ.

Tuy nhiên, khoảnh khắc mà chế độ mới làm cho cứng rắn trong một “chế độ quan liêu” thống trị chiều hướng cuộc đấu theo nghiên cứu của khoa học nhân văn bị mất và nó không còn có thể nói về sự giải phóng nữa. Do đó, việc chúng ta cứ khẳng định rằng giải pháp đích thực cho mâu thuẫn giữa người áp bức và kẻ bị áp bức không chỉ nằm ở sự đảo lộn vị trí, ở việc chuyển động từ thái cực đến thái cực khác. Nó cũng không nằm ở sự thay thế các người áp bức trước kia bằng các người áp bức mới tiếp tục nô dịch hóa kẻ bị áp bức tất cả đều vì quyền lợi giải phóng họ.

Nhưng ngay cả khi mâu thuẫn được giải quyết xác thực bởi một tình huống mới do các công nhân được giải phóng thiết lập, các người áp bức trước kia vẫn không cảm thấy được giải phóng. Ngược lại, họ thực lòng tự coi mình là bị áp bức. Tùy thuộc vào kinh

nghiệm áp bức người khác, đối với họ bất kỳ tình huống nào ngoài các tình huống trước kia của họ đều có vẻ giống như sự áp bức. Trước đây, họ có thể ăn, trưng diện, mang giày, được học hành, đi du lịch, và nghe nhạc Beethoven; trong khi hàng triệu người không được ăn, không có đủ quần áo hay giày dép, cũng không được học hành hay đi đây đi đó, và rất khó được nghe nhạc Beethoven. Bất kỳ sự hạn chế nào về lối sống này, nhân danh quyền lợi của cộng đồng, đối với các người áp bức trước kia đều có vẻ là sự vi phạm sâu sắc các quyền lợi cá nhân của riêng họ mặc dù họ không có sự kính trọng đối với hàng triệu người phải chịu thiệt hại và chết đói, vì đau đớn, vì bất hạnh và tuyệt vọng. Đối với người áp bức, “con người” là ám chỉ tới chính họ; còn các người khác là “sự vật”. Với người áp bức, chỉ tồn tại một quyền lợi: quyền được sống trong hòa bình, đối lập lại quyền được tồn tại của kẻ bị áp bức, không luôn luôn được công nhận, mà chỉ được nhượng bộ. Và họ nhân nhượng chỉ vì sự tồn tại của kẻ bị áp bức là cần thiết cho sự tồn tại của riêng họ.

Thái độ này, cách thức hiểu biết thế giới và con người (điều này cần thiết làm cho người áp bức chống lại sự sắp đặt một chế độ mới) được giải thích bởi kinh nghiệm của họ như giai cấp thống trị. Một khi tình huống bạo lực và áp bức được thiết lập, nó gây ra toàn bộ một lối sống và thái độ dành cho những người mắc phải nó người áp bức cũng như kẻ bị áp bức. Cả hai đều bị nhận chìm trong tình huống này, và cả hai đều đeo mặt nạ áp bức. Sự phân tích các tình huống áp bức tồn tại tiết lộ rằng sự khởi đầu của chúng nằm ở hành động bạo lực được khởi đầu bởi những người có quyền lực. Bạo lực này, như một quá trình, được duy trì từ thế hệ người áp bức này tới thế hệ người áp bức khác, những người trở thành người thừa kế của nó và được hình thành trong xu hướng chung của nó. Xu hướng chung này tạo dựng nơi người áp bức một ý thức chiếm hữu mãnh liệt chiếm hữu thế giới và chiếm hữu con người. Ngoài sự chiếm hữu vật chất, cụ thể, trực tiếp thế giới và con người ra, ý thức của người áp bức không thể hiểu được chính nó thậm chí còn không thể tồn tại nữa. Fromm nói về ý thức này là, nếu không có sự chiếm hữu như thế, “nó sẽ đứt liên lạc với thế giới.” Ý thức của người áp bức có khuynh hướng biến đổi mọi thứ bao quanh nó thành đối tượng của sự thống trị của nó. Trái đất, của cải, sự sản xuất, các tạo vật của con người, chính con người, thời gian mọi thứ bị giảm xuống trạng thái của các vật thể tùy ý sử dụng.

Trong việc họ háo hức chiếm hữu không hạn chế, người áp bức phát triển niềm tin rằng đối với họ, việc biến đổi mọi thứ thành các vật thể của quyền lực theo đuổi của họ là điều có thể; đó là khái niệm hoàn toàn duy vật về sự tồn tại. Tiền bạc là dụng cụ đo lường mọi vật, và lợi nhuận là mục đích đầu tiên. Đối với người áp bức, cái gì đáng giá thì phải có nhiều hơn nữa luôn luôn nhiều hơn nữa cho dù phải trả bằng giá là kẻ bị áp bức có ít hay không có gì cả. Với họ, tồn tại là chiếm hữu (to be is to have) và là giai cấp có “những cái có” (and to be the class of the “haves”).

Nhưng những người hưởng lợi từ tình huống áp bức, người áp bức không thể hiểu được rằng nếu việc có (having) là điều kiện của việc tồn tại (being), thì đó là điều kiện tất yếu cho mọi người. Đây là lý do vì sao hành động khoan hồng của họ là giả tạo. Nhân tính là một “vật” (thing) và họ chiếm hữu nó như một đặc quyền lợi lộc nhất, như tài sản được thừa kế. Đối với ý thức của người áp bức, sự nhân tính hóa “các người khác”, dân tộc khác, có vẻ không là sự theo đuổi nhân tính đầy đủ, nhưng là sự phá hoại.

Người áp bức không nhận thức tính độc quyền của họ về việc có nhiều hơn (having more) như một đặc quyền làm mất nhân tính người khác và chính mình. Họ không thể hiểu rằng, trong sự theo đuổi ích kỷ việc có (having) như một giai cấp chiếm hữu, họ ngạt thở trong các vật chiếm hữu của riêng họ và không còn tồn tại (are) nữa, họ chỉ có (have) thôi. Với

họ, việc có nhiều hơn (having more) là quyền lợi không thể chuyển nhượng, một quyền lợi mà họ giành được qua “nỗ lực” của riêng họ, với sự “can đảm dám liều lĩnh” (courage to take risks). Nếu các người khác không có hơn, là vì họ bất tài và lười biếng, và điều tệ hại nhất là sự vô ơn bạc nghĩa không thể lý giải được của họ đối với các “động tác khoan hồng” của giai cấp thống trị. Chính vì “vô ơn” và “đổ ky” mà kẻ bị áp bức được coi là kẻ thủ tiềm tàng rất cần phải canh chừng.

Điều này không thể khác được. Nếu sự nhân tính hóa kẻ bị áp bức có nghĩa là sự phá hoại, thì sự tự do của họ cũng có nghĩa như thế; do đó, nhất thiết phải kiểm chế không ngừng. Và người áp bức càng kiểm chế kẻ bị áp bức thì họ càng biến người bị áp bức thành các “vật” có dáng vẻ vô tri vô giác. Khuynh hướng của ý thức của người áp bức về mọi vật và mọi người “không sinh khí” (inanimate) mà nó chạm trán, trong sự ham muốn chiếm hữu, rõ ràng phù hợp với khuynh hướng về tính tàn bạo.

Khoái lạc trong sự thống trị hoàn toàn trên người khác (hay trên tạo không sinh khí khác) chính là bản chất của xu thế tàn bạo. Nói một cách khác, mục đích của tính tàn bạo là biến đổi một người thành một vật, một cái gì đó có sinh khí thành một cái gì đó không sinh khí, vì bằng hành động kiểm chế hoàn toàn và tuyệt đối, người sống mất đi một đặc tính cốt yếu của cuộc sống sự tự do. (Eric Fromm, *the heat of Man/Trái tim con người*).

Tình yêu tàn bạo (sadistic love) là tình yêu lâm lạc (perverted love) tình yêu sự chết, không phải tình yêu sự sống. Một trong những đặc tính của ý thức của người áp bức và quan điểm bệnh hoạn của nó về thế giới là tính tàn bạo. Khi ý thức của người áp bức, để thống trị, cố gắng ngăn chặn xu thế tìm kiếm, tình trạng hoang mang, và năng lực sáng tạo biểu thị đặc điểm cuộc sống, nó sẽ giết chết cuộc sống. Người áp bức càng ngày càng sử dụng khoa học và kỹ thuật như các công cụ có công hiệu rõ ràng cho các mục đích của họ: duy trì trật tự áp bức qua sự vận động và đàn áp. Kẻ bị áp bức, như các đối tượng, như các “vật”, không có các mục đích nào ngoại trừ những mục đích mà người áp bức họ lệnh cho họ.

Căn cứ vào bối cảnh có trước, một vấn đề quan trọng rõ ràng khác nảy sinh: đó là sự kiện các thành viên nào đó của giai cấp áp bức gia nhập vào giai cấp bị áp bức trong đấu tranh giành sự giải phóng, do vậy, sẽ chuyển động từ thái cực mâu thuẫn này đến thái cực mâu thuẫn khác. Vai trò của họ là một vai trò nền tảng, và tồn tại xuyên suốt lịch sử của cuộc đấu tranh này. Tuy nhiên, khi họ thôi không còn là người bóc lột và chuyển sang phía người bị bóc lột, thì họ hầu như vẫn luôn luôn mang theo họ các dấu hiệu chứng tỏ nguồn gốc mình: các định kiến và sự biến dạng của họ, điều này bao hàm sự thiếu tự tin tưởng vào khả năng suy nghĩ, mong muốn và hiểu biết của con người. Theo đó, những người gia nhập vào sự nghiệp của dân tộc luôn luôn liêu lĩnh rơi vào một loại hành động khoan hồng cũng ác độc như hành động khoan hồng của người áp bức. Hành động khoan hồng của người áp bức được nuôi dưỡng bởi một trật tự bất công, điều này phải được duy trì để biện hộ cho hành động khoan hồng đó. Nói cách khác, những người thay đổi chính kiến của chúng ta thực sự mong ước biến đổi cái trật tự bất công, nhưng do tầng lớp xã hội của họ, họ tin rằng họ phải là người thực hiện sự biến đổi. Họ nói về nhân dân nhưng họ không tin nhân dân; và việc tin nhân dân là tiền đề không thể thiếu để có thể biến đổi cách mạng. Một người ủng hộ chủ nghĩa nhân văn thực sự có thể được nhận biết bằng việc ông ta tin vào nhân dân, điều này cuốn hút ông ta vào cuộc đấu tranh của họ, hơn bằng việc ông ta thực hiện một ngàn hành động ủng hộ họ nhưng lại không tin họ.

Những người đích thực cam kết đi theo nhân dân phải không ngừng tự xem xét lại mình. Sự chuyển biến này hoàn toàn không cho phép một thái độ nhập nhằng mơ hồ. Việc khẳng định lời cam kết này nhưng lại xem mình là người sở hữu sự hiểu biết cách mạng điều này phải được bày tỏ (hay được áp đặt) cho nhân dân thì vẫn là duy trì các đường lối cũ. Người tuyên bố cống hiến cho sự nghiệp giải phóng nhưng lại không thể tham gia vào sự cảm thông (communion) với nhân dân, là những người mà ông tiếp tục coi là hoàn toàn ngu dốt, sẽ là người tự lừa dối mình một cách nghiêm trọng. Người thay đổi chính kiến tiếp cận nhân dân nhưng lại cảm thấy hoảng sợ ở mỗi biện pháp họ sử dụng, mỗi ngõ vực họ phát biểu, mỗi đề nghị họ đưa ra, và cố gắng áp đặt “địa vị” (status) của mình, sẽ vẫn luyến tiếc hương về nguồn gốc lai lịch của mình.

Sự chuyển biến thành nhân dân đòi hỏi sự tái sinh hoàn toàn. Những người trải qua nó phải đảm nhận một hình thức tồn tại mới; họ không còn là họ trước kia nữa. Chỉ qua tình đồng chí với kẻ bị áp bức, những người thay đổi chính kiến mới có thể hiểu được các lối sống và lối cư xử đặc trưng của họ, điều này trong các khoảng khắc thay đổi khác nhau phản ánh cơ cấu thống trị. Một trong các đặc điểm này là tính hai mặt tồn tại đã đề cập đến trước kia của kẻ bị áp bức, những người cùng một lúc vừa là chính mình vừa là người áp bức mà hình ảnh về người áp bức đó được họ chủ quan hóa. Theo đó, cho tới khi họ cụ thể “khám phá” (discover) ra người áp bức họ và sau đó là

ý thức của riêng họ, họ gần như luôn luôn bộc lộ các quan điểm dựa vào thuyết định mệnh về thân phận của họ . . .

Chỉ khi kẻ bị áp bức tìm ra người áp bức và để hết tâm trí vào cuộc đấu tranh có tổ chức giành sự giải phóng, thì kẻ bị áp bức mới bắt đầu tin vào chính mình. Khám phá này không thể là thuần trí óc mà phải bao hàm hành động; cũng không thể chỉ bị giới hạn vào chủ nghĩa tích cực, mà phải bao hàm sự suy nghĩ thấu đáo: vậy thì nó sẽ chỉ là một hành động dựa vào lý thuyết.

Cuộc đối thoại phê phán và giải phóng, bao hàm cả hành động, phải được kẻ bị áp bức xúc tiến ở bất kỳ giai đoạn nào của cuộc đấu tranh giành sự giải phóng. (Dĩ nhiên không phải công khai; điều đó chỉ khiến người áp bức giận dữ và dẫn đến sự đàn áp thậm chí lớn hơn). Nội dung cuộc đối thoại đó có thể và nên biến đổi phù hợp với các điều kiện lịch sử và ở mức độ mà kẻ áp bức nhận thức được thực tại. Nhưng việc thay thế cuộc độc thoại, các khẩu hiệu, và các thông cáo cho cuộc đối thoại là việc cố gắng giải phóng kẻ bị áp bức bằng các công cụ khai hóa. Và cố gắng giải phóng kẻ bị áp bức mà không có sự tham gia suy nghĩ của họ trong hành động giải phóng là đối xử với họ như các khách thể phải được cứu thoát khỏi một tòa nhà đang cháy; nó phải dẫn họ vào hầm bẫy của chủ nghĩa dân túy (populism/chủ nghĩa dân túy [chính trị] nhận là đại diện cho quyền lợi của người dân thường) và biến đổi họ thành quần chúng có thể vận động được.

Ở mọi giai đoạn của sự giải phóng, kẻ bị áp bức nhìn thấy chính họ như những con người tiến hành thiên hướng bản thể học và lịch sử của việc trở nên con người đầy đủ. Sự suy nghĩ và hành động trở nên cấp bách khi người ta không cố gắng phân đôi nội dung nhân tính từ các hình thức lịch sử của nó một cách sai lầm.

Sự khẳng định cho rằng kẻ bị áp bức cần tiến hành suy nghĩ về tình huống cụ thể của họ, không phải là lời kêu gọi một cuộc cách mạng trong phòng. Ngược lại, sự suy nghĩ sự suy nghĩ thật sẽ dẫn tới hành động. Nói cách khác, khi tình huống kêu gọi hành động, hành động đó sẽ thiết lập một hành động dựa vào lý thuyết đích thực (authentic praxis) chỉ khi nào các hậu quả của nó trở thành đối tượng của sự suy nghĩ phê phán. Theo ý nghĩa này, hành động dựa vào lý thuyết là lý do tồn tại (raison d'être) mới của kẻ bị áp bức; và cuộc cách mạng mở đầu khoảnh khắc lịch sử của lý do tồn tại này, không thể thực hiện được ngoài tình trạng có ý thức cùng xảy ra của họ. Về mặt khác, hành động là chủ nghĩa tích cực thuần túy (pure activism).

Tuy nhiên, để có được hành động dựa vào lý thuyết này, nó cần thiết phải tin vào kẻ bị áp bức và vào khả năng suy luận của họ. Bất kỳ ai thiếu sự tin tưởng này sẽ không thể khởi đầu (hay sẽ từ bỏ) cuộc đối thoại, sự suy nghĩ, sự truyền thông, và sẽ rơi vào việc sử dụng các khẩu hiệu, các thông cáo, và các hướng dẫn. Các chuyển biến nông cạn thành sự nghiệp giải phóng sẽ mang theo mối nguy hiểm này.

Hành động chính trị đứng về phía kẻ bị áp bức phải là hành động sự phạm theo ý nghĩa đích thực của từ, và do đó hành động với kẻ bị áp bức. Những người hoạt động

cho sự giải phóng phải không lợi dụng tính lệ thuộc tình cảm của kẻ bị áp bức tính lệ thuộc là kết quả của tình huống thống trị cụ thể bao quanh họ và sinh ra quan điểm không xác thực của họ về thế giới. Việc sử dụng tính lệ thuộc để tạo dựng tính lệ thuộc thậm chí lớn hơn chính là mưu kế của người áp bức.

Hành động tự do chủ nghĩa phải nhận ra tính lệ thuộc này như một điểm yếu và phải cố gắng qua suy nghĩ và hành động biến đổi nó thành tính độc lập. Tuy nhiên, không phải cả sự lãnh đạo có ý tốt cũng có thể ban tặng tính độc lập như một quà tặng. Sự giải phóng kẻ bị áp bức là sự giải phóng con người, chứ không phải là sự giải phóng vật. Theo đó, trong khi không ai tự có thể giải phóng chính mình chỉ bằng các nỗ lực của riêng mình, cũng không ai có thể được giải phóng bởi người khác. Sự giải phóng, một hiện tượng của con người, không thể được thực hiện bằng những nửa con người (semihumans). Bất kỳ cố gắng nào đối xử với con người như các con người một nửa đều chỉ làm mất nhân tính của con người. Khi con người đã bị làm mất nhân tính cho sự áp bức mà họ phải trải qua, thì quá trình giải phóng họ không cần phải sử dụng các phương pháp làm mất nhân tính nữa.

Do đó phương pháp đúng đắn dành cho người lãnh đạo cách mạng sử dụng trong nhiệm vụ giải phóng không phải là “sự tuyên truyền tự do chủ nghĩa” (libertarian propaganda). Sự lãnh đạo chỉ không thể “in sâu” vào kẻ bị áp bức sự tin tưởng vào sự tự do, tới mức độ suy nghĩ cách chiếm được sự tin tưởng đó. Việc kẻ áp bức tin chắc rằng họ phải đấu tranh giành sự giải phóng cho họ, không phải là một quà tặng được ban tặng bởi sự lãnh đạo cách mạng, mà là kết quả của conscientização của riêng họ (conscientization: một quá trình mà nhờ đó người ta học được cách nhận biết các hoàn cảnh chính trị, xã hội, kinh tế, dẫn đến việc hành động chống lại các nguồn đàn áp). Các nhà lãnh đạo cách mạng phải nhận thức rõ ràng không ai khác có thể cung cấp được cho họ sự tin chắc điều cần thiết cho một cuộc đấu tranh (một chiều hướng không thể thiếu của sự hiểu biết cách mạng). Sự tin chắc này không thể được đóng gói và rao bán; đúng hơn là nó được đạt tới bằng toàn bộ phương tiện suy nghĩ và hành động. Chỉ có sự để hết tâm trí vào thực tại của riêng người lãnh đạo, trong phạm vi hoàn cảnh xã hội, mới khiến họ phê bình hoàn cảnh này và khiến họ muốn thay đổi.

Cũng như thế, kẻ bị áp bức (kẻ không cam kết đi theo cuộc đấu tranh trừ khi họ tin tưởng, và những kẻ nếu không cam kết như thế, sẽ từ chối các điều kiện rất cần thiết cho cuộc đấu tranh này) phải đạt tới sự tin chắc này như các Chủ thể, không phải như các khách thể. Họ cũng phải can thiệp sâu vào hoàn cảnh bao quanh họ và mục đích của nó mà họ chịu đựng; việc tuyên truyền không thể đạt được điều này. Trong khi sự tin chắc vào điều cần thiết cho một cuộc đấu tranh (nếu không có nó thì cuộc đấu tranh không thể thực hiện được) là không thể thiếu được đối với sự lãnh đạo cách mạng (thực ra, chính sự tin chắc này thiết lập sự lãnh đạo đó), nó cũng cần thiết cho kẻ bị áp bức nữa. Nghĩa là, nó cần thiết trừ khi người ta có khuynh hướng thực hiện sự

chuyển đổi dành cho kẻ bị áp bức hơn là với họ. Niềm tin của tôi là tin rằng chỉ hình thức chuyển đổi sau là có giá trị.

## REFERENCES

- Adereth, M. (1968). *Commitment in modern French literature*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Aitmatov, C. (1988). *The day that lasts a century*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Anderson, G. L. (1989). Critical ethnography in education, current status and new directions. *Review of Educational Research*, 59, 249-270.
- Anderson, G. L., & Herr, K. (1993). The micropolitics of student voices: Moving from diversity of voices in schools. In C. Marshall (Ed.), *The new politics of race and gender* (pp. 58-68). Washington, DC: Falmer.
- Anderson, G. L., & Irvine, P. (1993). Informing critical literacy with ethnography. In C. Lankshear & P. McLaren (Eds.), *Critical literacy: Politics, praxis and the postmodern* (pp. 81-104). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Anyon, J. (1989). Elementary schooling and distinctions of social classes. *Interchange*, 12, 118-132.
- Aronowitz, S. (1996). Paulo Freire's radical democratic humanism. In P. McLaren & P. Leonard (Eds.), *Paulo Freire: A critical encounter* (pp. 11-12). New York: Routledge.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination* (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination*. C. Emerson & M. Holquist, trans. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics* (C. Emerson, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Barthes, R. (1974). *S/Z* (R. Miller, Trans.). New York: Hill and Wang.
- Barthes, R. (1977). *Image-Music-Text* (R. Miller, Trans.). New York: Hill and Wang.
- Barthes, R. (1996). The death of the author. In P. Rice & P. Waugh (Eds.), *Modern literary theory. A reader* (p. 122). New York: Arnold.
- Barthes, R. (1997). *Do khong cua loi viet* (Nguyen Ngoc, Trans.). Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Hoi Nha Van.

- Beach, R. (1993). *A teacher's introduction to reader-response theories*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Bellah, R. N., Sullivan, W. M., Swinder, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1996). *Habits of the heart. Individualism and commitment in American life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bennett, S. (2004). Susan Bennet on Autoethnography. Retrieved June 20, 2006 from <http://www.humboldt.edu/~cpf/autoethnography.html>.
- Booker, M. K. (1996). *A practical introduction to literary theory and criticism*. New York: Longman.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling in capitalist American: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Boyce, M. E. (1996, September). Teaching critically as an act of praxis and resistance. *Electronic Journal of Radical Organization Theory* 2(2). Retrieved September 3, 2004, from [http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/depts/sml/journal/vol\\_3/mary.htm](http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/depts/sml/journal/vol_3/mary.htm)
- Brookfield, S. (1995). Adult learning: An overview. In *Distributed Learning Website*, (pp. 9-10). Retrieved December 16, 2004 from [http://www.digitalschool.net/edu/adult\\_learn\\_Brookfield.html](http://www.digitalschool.net/edu/adult_learn_Brookfield.html)
- Brown, S. L. (2003). *The politics of individualism*. New York: Black Rose Books.
- Bui Hien. (1999). *Phuong phap hien dai day hoc ngoai ngu* [Modern methodology of modern foreign language teaching]. Hanoi: The National University of Hanoi Press.
- Burbules, N., & Berk, R. (1999). Critical thinking and critical pedagogy: Relations, differences and limits. In T. Popkerwitz & L. Feudler (Eds.), *Critical theories in education: Changing terrains of knowledge and politics* (pp.45-65). New York: Routledge.
- But Bi. (2002, March 28). *Noi buon cua ong thay giao* [The teacher's sorrow]. *Tuoi Tre*, p 2.
- Butterfield, F. (1990). *China. Alive in a bitter sea*. New York: Times Books, A division of Random House, Inc.

- Camus, A. (1957) *The exile and the kingdom* (J. O'Brien, Trans.). New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Camus, A. (1962). *The rebel. An essay on man in revolt* (A. Bower, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Camus, A. (1988). *Resistance rebellion and death. Essays* (J. O' Brien, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books. A division of Random House, Inc.
- Capra, F. (1980). *The Tao of physics. An exploration of the parallels between modern physics and eastern mysticism*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Carspecken, P. F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide*. New York: Routledge.
- Che Lan Vien. (n. d.). To be Hamlet in Vietnam. In Nguyen Khac Vien & Huu Ngoc (Eds.), *Vietnamese literature* (p. 715). Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishers.
- Chekhov, A. (1979). The house with the mansard. In R. E. Matlaw (Ed.), *Anton Chekhov's short stories. Texts of the stories. Background. Criticism* (pp. 146-156). New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Chick, J. K. (1996). Safe-talk: Collusion in apartheid education. In H., Coleman (Ed.), *Society and language classroom* (p. 37). Cambridge University Press.
- Communist Party of Vietnam. (2001). *The Ninth National Congress Document*. Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers.
- Cooper, D. E. (1998). Phenomenology. In M. Payne (Ed.), *A dictionary of cultural and critical theory* (p. 401). Blackwell Publishers.
- Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. L. (Eds.). (1992). *Doing qualitative research: Multiple strategies*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Crossette, B. (2003). What the poets thought. Anti-war sentiments in North Vietnam. *World Policy Journal*, 20(1), 73.
- Dang Tuoi. (2001, November 30). Khi sinh vien chan den lop [When the students are tired of getting to the class]. *Tuoi Tre*, p. 7.
- Dao Quoc Toan. (1999, March 22). *Day va hoc o truong Dai hoc Su pham: chiec ao tu than va co gai tan thoi* [Teaching and learning at the college of pedagogy: the four-flapped dress and the modern girl]. *The Gioi Moi*, (328), p. 5.

- de Beauvoir, S. (1948). *The ethics of ambiguity*. Don Mills: Citadel.
- de Man, P. (Ed.). (1965). *Gustave Flaubert. Madame Bovary. Backgrounds and sources. Essays in criticism*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Denzin, N. K. (1970). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Department of Political Education, College of Pedagogy (2002). *Questions and answers on Marxism-Leninism*. Ho Chi Minh City: Tre Publishers.
- Derrida, J. (1976). *Of grammatology*. (G. C. Spivak, Trans.). Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1978). Structure, sign, and play in the discourse of the human sciences. In P. Rice & P. Waugh (Eds.), *Modern literary theory: A reader* (pp. 176-191). New York: Arnold.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. London: Collier-McMillan.
- Do Bi. (2001). Lam the nao de co tien si ma khong tot nghiep trung hoc [ How to get a Ph. D. without a high school diploma]. *Phap Luat Thanh Fo Ho Chi Minh. New Year Edition*, p. 57.
- Duiker, W. J. (1995). *Vietnam: Revolution in transition*. San Francisco: Westview Press.
- Duong Thu Huong. (1993). *Paradise of the blind* (Phan Huy Duong & N. McPherson, Trans.). Perennial. An imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.
- Eagleton, T. (1967). *Marxism and literary criticism*. California: University of California Press.
- Ebb, F. (1972). Money. Song in Cabaret film. Quoted from R. Andrew (1998), *Dictionary of contemporary quotations* (p. 293). Cassel.
- Edelsky, C. (1996). *With literacy and justice for all: Rethinking the social in language and education*. Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis.
- Elbow, P. (1973). *Writing without teachers*. New York: Oxford University
- Elbow, P. (1990). Forward: About personal expressive academic writing. *Pre/Text*, 11, 10.

- Elbow P. (Ed.) (1994). *Landmark essays on voice and writing*. Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press.
- Elbow, P. (1994). The uses of binary thinking. In L. Tobin & T. Newkirk (Eds.), *Taking stock* (p. 192). Portsmouth, NY: Heinemann.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 733-767). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ellsworth, E. (1989). Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working the repressive myths of critical pedagogy. *Harvard Education Review*, 59, 297-324.
- Facundo, B. (1984). *Freire-inspired programs in the United States and Puerto Rico: A critical evaluation*. Retrieved December 8, 2004 from Brian Martin's website on suppression of dissent  
<http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/dissent/documents/Facundo/section5.html>
- Farber, D.A., & Sherry, S. (1997). *Beyond all reason. The radical assault on truth in American law*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Farrell, J. B. (1992). Conceptualizing education and the drive for social equality. In R. F. Arnove., P. G. Altbach, & G. P. Kelley (Eds.), *Emergent issues in education. Comparative perspective* (p. 112). New York: State University of New York Press.
- Fetterley, J. (1978). *The resisting reader. A feminist approach to American fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Fetterley, J. B. (2000). A rose for "A rose for Emily" In L.G. Kirszner & S. R. Mandell (Eds.), "A rose for Emily" *William Faulkner* (p. 120). San Diego, CA: Harcourt College Publishers.
- Fitzgerald, S. (1953). *The great Gatsby*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Flaubert, G. (1965). *Madame Bovary* (Paul de Man, Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Foley, D. E. (1996). The silent Indian as a cultural production. In B. A. Levinson, D. E. Foley, & D. C. Holland (Eds.), *The cultural production of the educated person. Critical ethnographies of schooling and local practice* (p. 88). New York: New York State University Press.

- Frazer, N. (1989). *Unruly practices*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). Cultural action for freedom. *Harvard Educational Review. Monograph Series, 1*, 27. Cambridge, MA: Center for the Study of Development and Social Change.
- Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Freire, P. (1985). *Politics of education: Culture, power, and liberation* (D. Macedo, Trans.). New York: Bergin & Garvey.
- Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the city* (D. Macedo, Trans.). New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (1994). *Pedagogy of hope. Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed* (R. R. Barr, Trans.). New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (1996). Foreword. In P. McLaren, & P. Leonard (Eds.), *Paulo Freire: A critical encounter* (p. xii). London and New York: Routledge.
- Freire, P. (1997). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*. Westport, VT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Freisinger, R. R. (1994). Voicing the self: Toward a pedagogy of resistance in a postmodern age. In K. B. Yancey (Ed.), *Voices on voice* (pp. 264-265). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English..
- Fromm, E. (1963). *The fear of freedom*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD.
- Fromm, E. (1990). *Beyond the chains of illusion: My encounter with Marx and Freud*. New York: Continuum.
- Fromm, E. (2000). *To have or to be*. New York: Continuum.
- Frost, R. (1968). The road not taken [Nga duong khong di]. In Le Ba Kong & Phan Khai (trans.), *Anh Ngu Thuc Dung cap VI* (p. 260). Saigon: Zien Hong.
- Frow, J., & Morris, M. (2000). Cultural studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), (pp. 315-346). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Fu, Z. (1993). *Autocratic tradition and Chinese politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description. In C. Geertz, *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Giang Nam (1985). Nghe tin em vao dai hoc [You have got into the university]. In M. M. Durand, Nguyen Tran Huan & D. M. Hawke (Eds.), *Introduction to Vietnamese literature* (p. 175). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gibson, R. (1994). *The Promethean literacy: Paulo Freire's pedagogy of reading, praxis and liberation*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University. Retrieved May, 7, 2002, from SOSIG database.  
<http://www.rohan.sdsu.edu/~rgibson/freirall.htm>
- Gibson, R. (1996). Promethean education: Liberation or chained to the same old rock? Paulo Freire and the contradictions of literate democracy. In *Rich Gibson's Education Page for a Democratic Society*. Retried December 12, 2004, from <http://www.pipeline.com/%7Ergibson/paulo.html>
- Giroux, A. H. (1983). *Theory & resistance in education. A pedagogy for the opposition*. New York: Bergin & Garvey.
- Giroux, A. H. (1994). Rethinking the boundaries of educational discourse: Modernism, postmodernism and feminism. In L. S. Myrsiades & K. Myrsiades (Eds.), *Margins in the classrooms* (p. 41). Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.
- Giroux, H. A. (1997). *Pedagogy and the politics of hope: Theory, culture and schooling. A critical reader*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Giroux, H. A. (2003). Critical theory and education practice. In A. Darder & M. Baltodano & R. D. Torres (Eds.), *The critical pedagogy reader* (p. 51). New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Giroux, H. A., & McLaren, P. (1995). Radical pedagogy as cultural politics: Beyond the discourse of critique and anti-utopian. In P. McLaren (Ed.), *Pedagogy, culture and the body* (p. 32). London: Routledge.
- Glazer, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine.
- Gold, R. (1958). Roles in sociological field observations. *Social Forces*, 36, 217-223.

- Goodman, K. S. (1967). Reading: A psycholinguistic guessing game. *Journal of the Reading Specialist*, 6, 126-135.
- Goodman, K. S. (1985). Unity in reading. In H. Singer & R. Ruddell (Eds.), *Theoretical models and process of reading* (pp. 813-840). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Goodman, K. S. (1992). *Reading, writing and written texts: A transactional sociolinguistic view*. Tucson, AZ: Literacy and Learning Center, University of Arizona.
- Goodman, K. S. (1994). Reading, writing and written texts: A transactional sociopsycholinguistic view. In R. B. Ruddell, M. R. Ruddell, & H. Singer (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (pp. 1057-1092). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Goodman, K. S. (1996). *Ken Goodman on reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishers.
- Goodson, I., & Sikes, P. (2001). *Life history research in educational settings. Learning from life*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Gradin, S. L. (1995). *Romancing rhetorics. Social expressivist perspectives on the teaching of writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Green, M. (1996). In search of a critical pedagogy. In P. Leistyna, A. Woodrum, & S. Sherblom (Eds.), *Breaking free: The transformative power of critical pedagogy* (pp. 13-30). Cambridge: Harvard Educational Review.
- Guo, S. (2000). *Post-Mao China. From totalitarianism to authoritarianism?* Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Hankiss, E. (1988). The second society: Is there an alternative social model emerging in contemporary Hungary? *Social Research*, 55(1), 13-42.
- Hardin, J. M. (2001). *Opening spaces. Critical pedagogy and resistance in composition*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Havel, V. (1992). *Open letters. Selected writings 1965-1990*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Heaney, T. W. (1980). *Adult learning and empowerment: toward a theory of liberating education*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago.

- Hirsch, E. D., Jr. (1967). *Validity in interpretation*. New Haven: Yale.
- Hirsch, E. D., Jr. (1976). *The aims of interpretation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ho Chi Minh. (1971). *The prison diary of Ho Chi Minh* (A. Palmer, Trans.). New York: Bantam Books.
- Ho Thieu Hung. (2001, May 1). Tu duy tich cuc hon nho gioi [Vibrant thinking rather than good memorization]. *Tuoi Tre Newspaper*, pp. 1-14.
- Hoai Thanh, & Hoai Chan. (1988). *Thi nhan Viet Nam 1932-1945* [Vietnamese poets 1932-1945]. Hanoi: Literature Publishers.
- Hoang Cam. (1996). La Dieu Bong [The Dieu Bong Leaf]. *Vietnamese Literature Website*, 1-3. Retrieved December 18, 2004 from <http://thanglong.ece.jhu.edu/Tho+/Hoangcam/ladieubong.html>
- Hoang Nhu Mai. (n.d.). Can xem xet lai mot so van de van nghe [It needs examining some literary problems]. *Dien dan doi moi bao chi* [Tribune for renovating journalism]. Ho Chi Minh City Association of Journalists.
- Hoang Van Chi. (1958). *The new class in North Vietnam* (N. L. Jamieson, Trans.). Saigon: Cong Dan.
- Hoang Van Chi. (1959). *A hundred flowers bloom on the Northern soil* (N. L. Jamieson, Trans.). Saigon: Mat tran bao ve tu do van hoa.
- Hodder, I. (2000). The interpretation of documents and material culture. In N.K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), (pp. 703-715). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Holt, N. L. (2003). Representation, legitimation, and autoethnography: An autoethnographic writing story. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2, Article 2. Retrieved June 25, 2006 from [http://www.ualberta.ca/~iigm/backissues/2\\_1final/html/holt.html](http://www.ualberta.ca/~iigm/backissues/2_1final/html/holt.html).
- Hong Dao. (2002, October 21). Cuoc noi loan cua bang gia [The rebellion of fake Diplomas]. *Phap Luat*, p. 5.
- Horkheimer, M. (1972). *Critical theory*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Howe, I. (1987). *Politics and the novel*. New York: New American Library.

- Hue Tam Ho Tai. (1985). Religion in Vietnam: A world of gods and spirits. *Vietnam: Essays on history, culture and society*. Retrieved February 1, 2005 from <http://www.askasia.org/frclasrm/readings/r000058.htm>
- Huntington, S. P. (1993). The clash of civilizations. *Foreign Affairs*, 72(Summer), 22-28.
- Huu Loan. (1972). Mau tim hoa xim [The violet myrtle flower]. In K. Bosley (Ed.), *The war wife. Vietnamese poetry* (pp. 61-62). London: Allison & Busby.
- Huy Can (n.d.). Nhung vi la han chua Tay Phuong [The Arhats of Tay Phuong Pagoda]. In Nguyen Khac Vien & Phan Ngoc (Eds.), *Vietnamese literature* (pp. 686-688). Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishers.
- Iser, W. (1974). *The implied reader: Patterns of communication in prose fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Iser, W. (1978). *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Jamieson, N. L. (1993). *Understanding Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Jauss, H. R. (1983). *Toward an aesthetics of reception* (T. Bahti, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.
- Javidi, A., & Javidi, M. (1998). Cross-cultural analysis of interpersonal bonding: A look at East and West. In L. A. Samovar & R. E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural communication. A reader* (p. 89). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Khai Hung. (1933). *Nua chung xuan* [In the midst of spring]. Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Doi Nay.
- Khinh Khinh. (2002, April). Viec su dung bang gia, khong lam gi noi [Using spurious university degrees: No way to cope with]. *Tuoi Tre Cui*, 207, p. 3.
- Kidd, J. R. (1973). *How adults learn*. New York: Cambridge Books.
- Kirklighter, C. (2002). *Traversing the democratic borders of the essay*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Klager, M. (1997). Marxism and ideology. In *Literary Criticism*. Retrieved December 17, 2003 from Literary Criticism Website: <http://www.colorado.edu/English/Engl2012klages/marxism>

- Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of education: From pedagogy to androgogy*. New York: Cambridge Books.
- Kolakowski, L. (1965). Conspiracy of an ivory tower intellectual. In A. P. Mendel (Ed.), *Essential works of Marxism* (pp. 360-361). Bantam Books.
- Kriesberg, L. (1973). *The sociology of social conflict*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Lankshear, C., & McLaren, P. (Eds.). (1993). *Critical literacy: Politics, praxis and the postmodern*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Le Dinh Ky. (1987). *Nhin lai tu tuong van nghe thoi My-Nguy* [Looking back on literary ideology of the US-Nguy era]. Ho Chi Minh City: Nha Xuat Ban Thanh Pho Ho Chi Minh.
- Le Ngoc Tra. (1990). *Ly luan van hoc va van chuong* [Literary theories and literature]. Ho Chi Minh City: Tre Publishers.
- Le Ngoc Tra. (2001a, January-February). Day tu duy, day tu duy sang tao [Teach how to think, teach how to think creatively]. *Tia Sang*, 49, 49-82.
- Le Ngoc Tra. (2001b, January 7). Doi moi giao duc [Renovation in education]. *Tuoi Tre Chu Nhat*, pp. 4-5.
- Lin Yu-tang. (1983). *My people and my country*. Taipei: Mei Ya Publications, INC.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Low, S. M. (2002). Lessons from imagining the World Trade Center site: An examination of public space and culture. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 33(3), 395-405.
- Ma Van Khang. (2000a). *Dam cuoi khong co giay gia thu* [Wedding without the marriage certificate]. Hanoi: Van Hoc Publishing House.
- Ma Van Khang. (2000b). *Nguoc dong nuoc lu* [Against the current stream]. Hanoi: The Association of Writers Publishers.
- Macedo, D. P. (1994). *Literacies of power: What Americans are not allowed to know*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

- MacLeod, J. (1995). *Ain't no makin' it. Aspiration & attainments in a low-income neighborhood*. San Francisco: Westview Press.
- Mao Tse-Tung. (1980). Talks at the Yenan forum on literature and art. In Kai-yu Hsu (Ed.), *Literature of the People's Republic of China* (p. 35). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Margonis, F. (1999). Relational pedagogy without foundations: Reconstructing the work of Paulo Freire. *The Philosophy of Education Society Yearbook* (p. 3). Retrieved May, 27, 2003 from [http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-Yearbook/1999/Margonis\\_body.asp](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-Yearbook/1999/Margonis_body.asp)
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Martin, R. (2001). *Listening up. Reinventing ourselves as teachers and as students*. Portsmouth, NH: Boyton/Cook Publishers. Heinemann.
- Marx, K. (1988). The Communist manifesto. In F. L. Bender (Ed.), *Karl Marx. The communist manifesto* (p. 75). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Maugham, W. S. (1978). *Of Human Bondage*. Penguin Books.
- Maugham, W. S. (1978). *Collected short stories*. Penguin Books.
- McCarty, T. (2002). *A place to be Navajo: Rough Rock and the struggle for self-determination in indigenous schooling*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- McDonald, K. J. (2000). Authorization of knowledge in the interview process. *Educational Insights*, 1, 32. Retrieved January 30, 2003, from <http://www.csi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/online/vo6no1/mcdonald.html>
- McGirk, T. (2001, June 11). Chasing the shadows. *Time*, p. 32.
- McLaren, P. (2000). Paulo Freire's pedagogy of possibility. In S. Steiner, H. Krank, P. McLaren, & R. Bahruth (Eds.), *Freirean pedagogy, praxis and possibility. Projects for the new millennium* (pp. 1-22). New York: Falmer Press.
- McLaren, P., & Datnow, A. (2002). Ethnography. In D. L. Levinson, P. W. Cookson, Jr., & A. R. Sadovnik (Eds.), *Education and sociology. An encyclopedia* (p. 255). New York: Routledge Falmer.

- Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Merriam, S. B., & Caffarella, R. S. (1999). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Michnik, A. (1998). *Letters from freedom: Post cold-war realities and perspectives*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Miller, J. E., Jr. (1968). Boats against the current. In M. Mack (Ed.), *Twentieth century interpretations of the great Gatsby* (p. 34). New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs.
- Ministry of Education of Vietnam (1991). *Marxism-Leninism Textbook. Lesson plans for college-university level*. Hanoi; Educational Publishers.
- Morris, V. C. (1990). *Existentialism in education*. Illinois: Prospect Heights.
- Nghiem Dinh Vy & Nguyen Dac Hung. (2002). *Phat trien giao duc va dao tao nhan tai* [Developing education and nurturing talents]. Hanoi: National Political Affairs Publishers.
- Nguyen Du. (1983). *The tale of Kieu. A bilingual edition* (Huynh Sanh Thong, Trans.). New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Nguyen Gia Kieng. (2004). *To quoc an nan. Nghi lai dat nuoc tren nguong cua mot the ky va mot thien nien ky moi* [The remorse of the motherland. Rethinking on our country at the threshold of a new century and millennium]. Paris.
- Nguyen Ngoc. (2002). Dan tri. Co so quyet dinh nhat cua mot xa hoi dan chu. Suc manh quoc gia [Raised consciousness of the people. The most decisive foundation of a democratic society. The strength of a nation]. *Xua va Nay*, 124.
- Nguyen Ngoc. (2004). Mot cach nhin hien thuc xa hoi Viet Nam [A realistic way of looking at Vietnamese society]. *Dan chim Viet Website*, 51, p. 3. Retrieved October 30, 2004 from [http://www.danchimviet.com/cacbaotruoc/dvc\\_51\\_MotCachNhinHi enThucXaHoiVietNam](http://www.danchimviet.com/cacbaotruoc/dvc_51_MotCachNhinHi enThucXaHoiVietNam)
- Nguyen Van Chien. (2001). Suy nghi ve di san [Reflecting on heritage]. In Thao Ngoc (Ed.) *Mot goc nhin cua tri thuc* [An intellectual's vision] (p. 490). Ho Chi Minh City: Tia Sang & Tre Publishers.
- Nguyen Van Huyen. (1995). *The ancient civilization of Vietnam*. Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers.

- Nguyen Van Trung. (1959). *Nhan dinh II* [Opinion II]. Saigon: Nam Son.
- Nguyen Binh. (1972). Mua xuan [ *The spring rain*]. In K. Bosley (Ed.), *The war wife. Vietnamese poetry* (pp. 51-52). London: Allison & Busby.
- Nguyen Binh. (1991). Thoi xua [The old days]. In Kieu Van (Ed.) *Love poetry by Nguyen Binh* (p. 12). Dong Nai: Dong Nai Publisher.
- Nguyen Canh Toan. (2002, March). Doc mot vai van de lien quan den hoc tu xa cua giao su Pham Quang Tuan [Reading some problems of long-distance learning by Professor Pham Quang Tuan]. *Tu Hoc*, 7, 7.
- Nguyen Cong Tru. (1996). Scholars and soldiers. In Huynh Sanh Thong (Ed.), *An anthology of Vietnamese poems. From the eleventh to the twentieth centuries* (p. 353). New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Nguyen Duc Nam. (2001). Hay tra lai ban chat nghe thuat ky dieu cho bo mon van trong nha truong [ Return wonderful artistic nature to classroom literature]. In Nguyen Huy Quat & Hoang Huu Boi (Eds.), *Mot so van de day-hoc van trong nha truong* [Some problems concerning learning-teaching literature in Vietnamese schools]. Hanoi: Educational Publishers.
- Nguyen Duy Can. (1999). *Toi tu hoc* [I teach myself]. Ho Chi Minh City: Tre Publishers.
- Nguyen Huy Thiep. (1989). *Vang lua* [ Fired gold] (P. Zinoman, Trans.). In Nguyen Nguyet Cam & D. Sachs, D. (Eds.), *Crossing the river. Short fiction by Nguyen Huy Thiep* (p. 200). Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press.
- Nguyen Minh Chau. (2002). Trang giay truoc den [The page by the lamplight]. In Ton Phuong Lan (Ed.), *Nguyen Minh Chau* (p. 138). Hanoi: Social Science Publishing House.
- Nguyen Quang Than. (2001). Luy tre lang, xin bai biet [Goodbye the village bamboo hedge ]. In Thao Ngoc (Ed.), *Mot goc nhin cua tri thuc* [An intellectual's vision] (pp. 350-355). Ho Chi Minh City: Tia Sang & Tre Publishers.
- Nguyen Thi Oanh. (2001, April 29). Xa hoi hoc tap. Van de la the nao va cai gi. [The learning society: The problem is how to and what to learn]. *Tuoi Tre ChuNhat*, 16, p. 1.
- Nguyen Van Vinh. (1993). Gi cung cuoi [Laughing at everything]. In N. L. Jamieson *Understanding Vietnam* (p. 76). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Nguyen Xuan Oanh. (2001). *Doi moi. Vai net lon cua mot chinh sach kinh te Vietnam* [Renovation. Some outlines of a Vietnam's economic policy]. Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh City Publishers.
- Nhat Linh. (1995). Doan tuyet [ Breaking the ties]. In N. L. Jamieson (Ed.), *Understanding Vietnam* (p. 145). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Nhom Phong Vien. (2000). Phuc va phan cua nganh giao duc. Phan 2. Hoi chung qua lac [The blessing and curse of education. Part 2: The pendulum syndrome]. [Interview with Nguyen Minh Hien, Minister of Education]. *The Gioi Moi*, 415, 3.
- Nong Duc Manh addressed students and teachers. (2002, March 14). *Nguoi Lao Dong*, p. Thoi su [Current news]
- Nunan, D. (1994). *Research methods in language learning*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ohmann, R. (1987). *Politics of letters*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Ohmann, R. M. (1964). Auden's sacred awe. In M. K. Spears (Ed.), *Auden: A collection of critical essays* (p. 176). New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Ogden, S. (1992). *China's unresolved issues. Politics, development and culture*. Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Olson, G. A. (1992). History, praxis and change: Paolo Freire and the politics of literacy. [Interview with Paulo Freire] *Journal of Advanced Composition*, p. 26. Retrieved December, 31, 2003 from <http://jac.gsu.edu/jac/12.1/Articles/1.htm>
- Pasternak, B. (1981). *Doctor Zhivago* (M. Hayward & M. Harari, Trans.). New York: Ballantine Books.
- Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Pfeffer, J. (1981). *Power in organizations*. Cambridge, MA: Pitman.
- Pham Kim Son. (2003, June 15). Bai hoc khong co trong chuong trinh [The lesson not in the syllabus]. *Tuoi Tre Chu Nhat*, 23, p. 19.
- Pham Minh Hac. (1998). *Vietnam's education. Current position and future prospects*. Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers.

- Pham Quang Tuan. (2002, March). Mot vai van de ve giao duc tu xa [Some problems concerning distance learning]. *Tu Hoc*, 7, 7.
- Pham Van Si. (1986). *Ve tu tuong va van hoc hien dai fuong Tay* [Ideology and modern literature in the west]. Hanoi: University and Vocational Schools Publishers.
- Pham Xuan Nguyen. (Ed.). (2001). *Di tim Nguyen Huy Thiep* [In search of Nguyen Huy Thiep] (p. 7). Hanoi: Cultural Information Publishers.
- Phan Chu Trinh. (1925). Dao duc, luan ly Dong-Tay [Eastern-Western ethics and morals]. In Nguyen Van Duong (Ed.), *Tuyen tap Phan Chu Trinh* [Collected works of Phan Chu Trinh] (pp. 771-784). Da Nang: Da Nang Publishers.
- Phan Ke Binh. (1913). *Viet Nam phong tục* [Vietnamese customs]. California: Xuan Thu Publishers.
- Phan Thanh Gian. (n.d.). Tu gia vo di lam quan [Farewell to my dear wife]. In Nguyen Khac Vien & Huu Ngoc (Eds.), *Vietnamese Literature* (p. 427). Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishers.
- Phan Thanh Pho. (2002). Tang cuong cong tac tu tuong, ly luan trong cac trung cao dang va dai hoc o nuoc ta hien nay [Reinforcing the ideological task in colleges and universities in our present country]. In Pham Van Nang (Ed.), *Giao duc tu tuong trong cac trung cao dang, dai hoc* [Ideological training in present-day colleges and universities] (pp. 14-15). Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Publishers.
- Phan Trong Luan, Truong Dinh, Nguyen Thanh Hung, & Tran The Phiet (Eds.). (1999). *Phuong phap day-hoc van* [Method of teaching-learning literature]. Hanoi: National University of Hanoi Press.
- Phan Trong Luan. (1999). *Doi moi day hoc van* [Transforming the literature class]. Hanoi: Educational Publishers.
- Phong Le. (1997). *Van hoc tren hanh trinh the ky hai muoi* [Literature on the journey to the twenty-first century]. Hanoi: National University of Hanoi Press.
- Phuc Tien. (2002). Hoc de lam quan hay lam dan? [Study to be a mandarin or a citizen]. *Thoi Bao Kinh Te Saigon (New Year edition)*, p. 33.
- Quang Dam, Phuong Luu, Nguyen Khac Phi, Tran Le Sang, & Luong Duy Thu. (1983). *Chu nghia Mao va van hoa, van nghe* [Maoism and culture and arts]. Hanoi: Ministry of Culture Publishers.

- Radway, J. A. (1991). *Reading the romance: Women, patriarchy and popular literature*. Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press.
- Reed-Danahay, D. (1997). *Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the self and the social*. Oxford: Berg.
- Rice, P., & Waugh, P. (1996). *Modern literary theory: A reader*. New York: Arnold.
- Ritchie, J. S. (1992, December). Resistance to reading: Another view of the minefield. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, p. 9. Retrieved February 12, 2004 from <http://jac.edu/jac/12.1/Articles/9htm>
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1994). *The reader, the text and the poem. The transactional theory of the literary work*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1995). *Literature as exploration*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.
- Sartre, J. P. (1966). Marxism and existentialism. In G. Novack (Ed.), *Existentialism versus Marxism: Conflicting views on humanism* (p. 195). New York: Delta Books.
- Schensul, S. L., Schensul, J. L., & LeCompte, M. D. (1999). *Essential ethnographic methods. Observations, interviews and questionnaires*. New York: Altamira Press.
- Scott, J. (1990). *Dominion and the arts of resistance. Hidden transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Shannon, P. (Ed.). (1992). *Becoming political: Readings and writings in the politics of literacy and education*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Seidman, I. E. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research. A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Columbia University Teachers College Press.
- Shklosky, V. (2001). Nghe thuat nhu la thu phap (Huyen Giang, Trans.). In Do Lai Thuy (Ed.), *Nghe thuat nhu la thu phap*. Hanoi: Association of writers Publishers.
- Shor, I. (1980). *Critical teaching and everyday life*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

- Shor, I. (1997). What is critical literacy? *Radical Pedagogy*, 4, 1-4. Retrieved July 4, 2002, from <http://www.lesley.edu/journals/jppp/4/shor.html>
- Smith, P. (1988). *Discerning the subject*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Suleiman, S. R. (1983). *Authoritarian fictions. The ideological novel as a literary genre*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Su-ma Ch'ien. (1965). *Records of the great historian* (B. Watson, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ta Duy Anh. (1995). Broken promise (V. Lowe, Trans.). *Manoa. A Pacific Journal of International Writing*, 2(Winter), 153-154.
- Tertz, A. (1960). *On socialist realism* (G. Dennis, Trans.). New York: Vintage Russian Library.
- Thanh Luu. (2001, December 7-9). Bon nam tiep xuc voi Internet: Van con ngan song cam cho [Four years of getting in touch with the Internet: Obstructed rivers, forbidden markets]. *Nguoi Lao Dong*, 3, p. 3.
- Thayer, C. A. (1992). Political reform in Vietnam; Doi Moi and the emergence of civil society. In R. F. Miller (Ed.), *The development of civil society in communist system* (p. 112). Allen & Unwin.
- Thomas, J. (1993). *Doing critical ethnography*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Thuy Nga. (1999). Van la mon hoc thich nhat trong truong pho thong, nhung tai sao . . . ? [Literature is the most interesting subject in public schools but why . . . ?] [Interview of Hoang Nhu Mai]. *Tuoi Tre Sunday*, 24, 1.
- To Huu. (n. d.). Tren dong Huong Giang [On the Perfume River]. In Nguyen Khac Vien & Huu Ngoc (Eds.), *Vietnamese literature* (p. 701). Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishers.
- Tran Bach Dang. (2001, September 8). *Mot loi thach thuc co co so* [A challenge with solid ground]. *Phu Nu*. p. 6.

- Tran Duc Thao. (1989). *Van de con nguoi va chu nghia ly luan khong co con nguoi* [The problem of human being and anti-human theory]. Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh City Publishers.
- Tran Manh Hao. (1989). *Ly than* [Separation]. Dong Nai: Dong Nai Publishers.
- Tran Van Huong. (1974). *Lao trung lanh van* [Cold lines in prison]. Saigon: No publisher.
- Trinh Xuan Vu. (2003). *Phuong phap day van trong truong trung hoc* [Method of teaching literatures in high school]. Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh City Publishers.
- Truong Chinh. (1997). About literature. In Nguyen Trung Tanh (Ed.), *An introduction to literary study. A college-level literary course* (p.199). Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh City Publishers.
- T. T. KH. (1972). *Hai sac hoa ti gon* [The coralvine]. In K. Bosney (Ed.), *The war wife. Vietnamese poetry* (pp. 54-55). London: Allison & Bushby.
- Tu Anh. (2002, May, 2). Sao chep;chung nao het [Cheating: when finished]. *Thanh Nien*, 122, p. 3.
- Tyson, L. (1999). *Critical theory today. A user-friendly guide*. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Van Maanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the field. On writing ethnography*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Vu Cao. (n. d.). Nui Doi [The twin mountain]. In Nguyen Khac Vien & Huu Ngoc (Eds.), *Vietnamese Literature* (p.766). Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishers.
- Vu Duong Le. (2001, January, 4). Hoc sinh Viet Nam: Nhung diem yeu [Vietnam's students: The weaknesses]. *Student Flowers*, pp. 18-19.
- Vygotsky, L. (1995). *Tam ly hoc nghe thuat* (Hoai Lam & Kien Giang, Trans.). Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishers.
- Wainwright, D. (1997, July). Can sociological research be qualitative, critical and valid? *Qualitative Report*, 2, 11. Retrieved February 17, 2004, from <http://www.nova.edu/sss/QR3-2/wain.html>
- Webster, R. (1990). *Studying literary theory. An introduction*. London: Edward Arnold.

- Whitty, G., & Young, M. F. D. (Eds.). (1976). *Explorations in the politics of school knowledge*. Driffield, England: Studies in Education LTD.
- Wink, J. (2000). *Critical pedagogy: Notes from the real world*. New York: Longman.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1988). On ethnographic intent. In G. Spindler & L. Spindler (Eds.), *Interpretive ethnography of education at home and abroad*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Wu Chung-Tzu. (1973). *The scholars*. Peking: Peking Foreign Languages Press.
- Yagelski, R. P. (1999, September). The ambivalence of reflection: Critical pedagogies, identity and the writing teacher. *College Composition and Communication*, 51(1), 32-50.
- Yum, J. O. (1998). The impact of Confucianism on interpersonal relationship and communication patterns in East Asia. In L. A. Samovar & R. E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural communication. A reader* (pp. 79-80). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Zinoman, P. (1993). Nguyen Huy Thiep's Vang Lua and the nature of intellectual dissent in contemporary Vietnam. *Vietnam Forum*, 14, 37.