



MAJOR BOOKS
Publishing Catalog

Major Books

Our Mission

Major Books is an independent publishing company dedicated to bringing Vietnamese literature to the English-speaking world.



Our Vision

Our name, Major Books speaks as a clear, bold, and audacious resistance against the “minor” status attributed to certain languages and their literature in the global publishing scene. Our hope is to contribute, no matter how little, to growing awareness that there are no ‘lesser’ voices in world literature.



Our Ethics

With the acute awareness of translation as an art form bearing immense potentials and challenges, our primary goal is to offer translations that are not only faithful but also true to the essence of the source book. Our translators, editors and illustrators, being mostly native speakers themselves, are committed to preserve the integrity and convey the originality of the author’s work.



We take immense pride in providing our authors, translators, and all stakeholders with fair and equitable compensation for their invaluable contributions, with the hope of fostering a thriving Vietnamese literature and creative ecosystems.

Our First Chapter

Between literary treasures that have been overlooked or worse, poorly translated, and brilliant pieces yet to be written, we will bring a curated selection of works from a variety of authors, periods, and genres. Ranging from critically acclaimed post-war fiction, national epic poetry, to contemporary LGBTQ+ writings, we hope to present a well-rounded portrait of Vietnam and our diverse voices.



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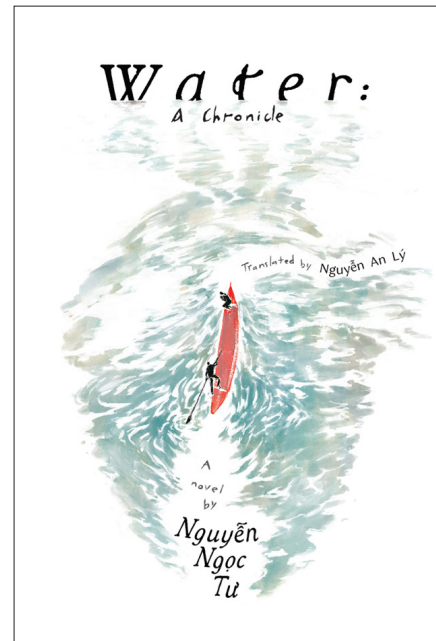
centralbooks.com

Water: a Chronicle

Biên sử nước (2020)

“At once mythical and ultra-modern, this is a compelling story of the strange fluidities and tenacities of human identity and behaviour in the media-saturated environments of the twenty-first century, as ever.”

Rachel Bowlby FBA, Professor of Comparative Literature, UCL



Abstract

After an eight-year long hiatus, Nguyễn Ngọc Tú comes back with her second novel. Mesmerising, poignant, lyrical, existential, yet claustrophobic, *Water: A Chronicle* encapsulates the beauty of what contemporary Vietnamese writing has to offer.

At the heart of this watery ‘chronicle’ is a dual mystery: a holy man on an island empire, once a con artist, and a desperate mother named Phúc (Fortune) seeking his heart to cure her child. The mosaic novel of nine stories circles this enigma like the river’s currents, carrying with it fragments of myth and life from timeless Mekong. A trans woman who wants to be “full”, a shadow bride who wants to be fleshed, a mad woman with a colicky infant, a words-eating-woman shielding her child from a fly apocalypse.... The ghosts and ghouls that reflect upon the water surface may well be the everyday reality of river life, or simply the universal haunting of womanhood.

Specification

Author	Nguyễn Ngọc Tú
Retail Price	£11.99 (e-book £6.99)
Format	Flexibound 14.5 x 20.5 cm 160 pages (est.)
Genre	Fiction
ISBN	978-1-917233-00-2
Release Date	October 2024



The Author

NGUYỄN NGỌC TÚ, a talented and highly acclaimed female writer of the Vietnam Writers Association (Hội Nhà Văn Việt Nam), was born in 1976. With passion, she writes tirelessly and diligently, choosing the most familiar and endearing subjects from her life as basis for her stories, with a quintessentially Southern tonality that has become a signature of her writing. Her short story collection *Cánh đồng bất tận (Endless Fields)* has received numerous awards, including the LiBeraturpreis Prize 2018, and has been adapted for the stage and screen. In 2019, she was listed by Forbes magazine as one of the Top 50 most influential women in Vietnam of 2018. Nguyễn Ngọc Tú’s works have been reprinted many times and translated into Korean, English, Swedish, and German.



Translated by

NGUYỄN AN LÝ lives in Hochiminh City and co-edits the online literary journal Zzz Review. She has over 20 translations under her various belts, mostly from English to Vietnamese, including works by Margaret Atwood, Kazuo Ishiguro, J. L. Borges, Amos Oz, and the poetry in *The Lord of the Rings*. Her debut translation into English, *Chinatown* by Thuận, won a PEN Translates Award and was shortlisted for the Republic of Consciousness Prize 2023.



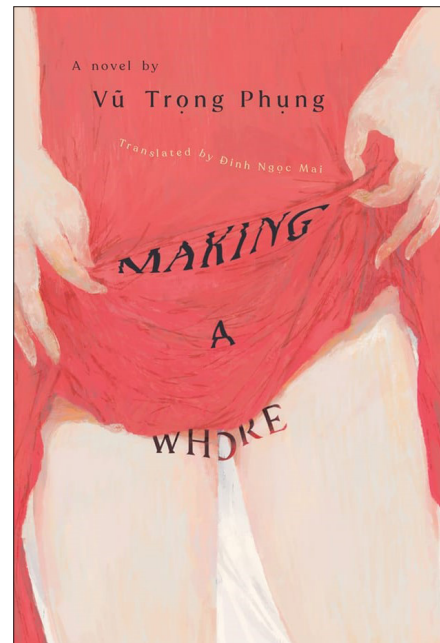
Edited by

DEBORAH SMITH yearns to support and participate in literary cultures that are liberatory, not complicit in structures of violence. This desire informed her founding Tilted Axis Press and translating from Korean, but also subsequently quitting both. These days she is feeling her way tentatively, in the uneven rhythms and nonlinear trajectories of neurodivergent living. She is grateful for every opportunity to do this work relationally.



Making a Whore

Làm Đĩ (1937)



Abstract

Heavily criticized upon publication and subsequently censored by the government, *Making a Whore* serves as a poignant defense for Huyền, its protagonist, deemed tainted by debauchery. With his uniquely satirical and irreverent tone, Vũ Trọng Phụng sharply exposes societal norms.

This long-awaited translation introduces English-speaking readers to a bold and influential voice, offering a unique window into a tumultuous period of history.

The novel follows the life of Huyền, a young woman born into Hà Nội's upper-class, whose innocent interest in her mother's pregnancy is kept at arm's length: "You'll find out when you get married", so they say. Lacking sexual education from her family, Huyền turns to her peers for answers, opening up a world of childish whispers about physical pleasure.

As polite society demands Huyền to remain virtuous, she enters into adulthood with both the will to know and the will to suppress a young woman's burning physical desires. The torments of her sexual frustration spiral Huyền into a life of debauchery, one she might not ever want to turn back from.

Specification

Author	Vũ Trọng Phụng
Retail Price	£11.99 (e-book £6.99)
Format	Flexibound 14.5 x 20.5 cm 230 pages (est.)
Genre	Fiction
ISBN	978-1-917233-02-6
Release Date	November 2024

The Author

VŨ TRỌNG PHỤNG (1912-1939) was a renowned Vietnamese writer and journalist, widely regarded as one of the most influential figures of 20th century Vietnamese literature. Despite his short lifespan of only 27 years, Vũ Trọng Phụng left behind an astonishing body of works across genres, many of which are considered to be masterpieces. Vũ Trọng Phụng's works are known for their unflinching portrayal of Vietnamese society during the French colonial period. Deemed as "morally degraded" at the time, his writings led to his imprisonment in 1937. He never fully recovered from his time in prison, and he died at the age of 27, two years after being released for poor health.



Translated by

REN N. DINH (MAI) is a non-binary writer of both academic and creative texts. They graduated from Mount Holyoke College with a Bachelor's in English Literature, and Hanoi National University of Education with a Master's in Literary Theory. Their research focuses on queer theory and queer Vietnamese and Asian American literature, tapping into the intellectual excitement and critical empathy that a queer Asian diaspora can enable and liberate.



Edited by



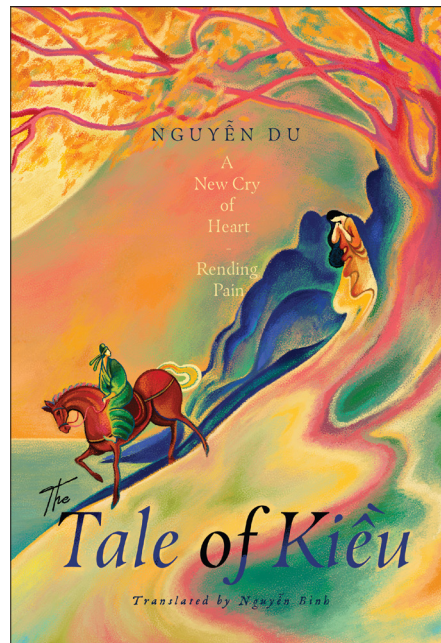
ALINA MARTIN is a writer and journalist living in London. She has graduate and undergraduate degrees in comparative literature and critical translation from University College London and the University of Oxford.



DƯƠNG MẠNH HÙNG is an independent art translator & writer. Hùng's interest in the dynamics between literature, visual arts, and translation is informed by their close observation of global and Southeast Asian socio-political and ecological histories.

The Tale of Kiều

Truyện Kiều (19th century)



Abstract

Nguyễn Bình, through Major Books, unveils a new translation in verse of a classic that has enchanted readers across generations, and offers a window into the cultural values and literary traditions of Vietnam.

Truyện Kiều by Nguyễn Du is a timeless masterpiece of Vietnamese literature, revered as one of the greatest poetic epics in the country's history. Set against the backdrop of 16th-century China, the narrative follows the tragic journey of Thúy Kiều, a talented and virtuous young woman, as she endures a series of trials and tribulations.

Nguyễn Du's poetic prowess shines through in elegant verses and explores profound themes such as love, fate, honor, and the pursuit of happiness. Through Kiều's poignant story, the epic delves into the complexities of human nature and the moral dilemmas faced by individuals in a society shaped by tradition and societal expectations.

Specification

Author	Nguyễn Du
Retail Price	£11.99 (e-book £6.99)
Format	Flexibound 14.5 x 20.5 cm 230 pages (est.)
Genre	Epic Poem
ISBN	TBC
Release Date	Spring 2025

The Author

NGUYỄN DU (1766-1820) was a brilliant poet and cultural figure in the early Lê and Nguyễn dynasties of Vietnam. He is widely revered as the "National Poet Laureate" (Đại Thi hào Dân tộc) and honored by UNESCO as a "World Cultural Figure" (Danh Nhân Văn Hóa Thế Giới).

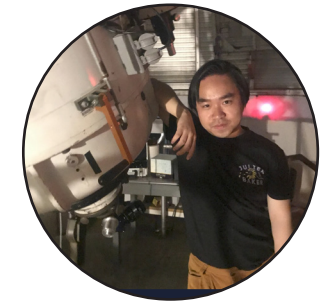
His epic poem, *The Tale of Kiều*, is considered a literary masterpiece, one of the most representative achievements in medieval Vietnamese literature. It remains imbued with influence in contemporary Vietnamese thought and culture. It is safe to say that one cannot truly learn modern Vietnamese language and culture without learning *The Tale of Kiều*.



Translated by

NGUYỄN BÌNH is a writer native to Hanoi, Vietnam. Born into a family of historians and anti-colonial revolutionaries, Bình grew up with a belief in literature as an art that depicts and confronts the conditions of society. Their poetry, fiction and translations all aim to connect ancient traditions and canons in order to motivate a look into what it is like to be human in the modern world.

Bình's verse translation of Nguyễn Du's *The Tale of Kiều* received the Young Writers Award for Translation from the Vietnamese Writers' Association. Their poetry in Vietnamese and English has been featured in magazines and anthologies in Vietnam and the U.S. Currently, Bình is seeking to publish their debut novel *The Drum Comes Home*, a magical realism retelling of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight centered on art repatriation and belonging in the twenty-first century. They are also working on the first Vietnamese translation of Vergil's *Aeneid*.



Parallel

Song Song (2007)



Abstract

Song Song (Parallel) is Vũ Đình Giang's debut novel, and is widely considered as the best gay fiction in the Vietnamese language. Unapologetic and daring, this work deserves to be on the same shelf with the sexiest works by some of the best living gay writers. *Parallel* has been translated into French as *Parallèles* by Yves Bouillé.

In addition to its ambitious experiment with language use and its erosion of grammatical order, it is the first literary work written about homosexuals in Vietnam that goes beyond the cliché of sex workers, transvestites, or characters struggling with their own identity. *Parallel* also explores complex aspects of lust, BDSM, bestiality, and pederasty. It destigmatises mental illness, childhood abuse, sex and alcoholism. Violence is ubiquitous in *Parallel*: domestic violence, school bullying, animal cruelty; violence returns to incubate another life of violence. So is solitude, permeating every line.

Specification

Author	Vũ Đình Giang
Retail Price	£11.99 (e-book £6.99)
Format	Flexibound 14.5 x 20.5 cm 275 pages (est.)
Genre	Fiction
Release Date	Spring 2025

The Author

VŨ ĐÌNH GIANG is a Vietnamese novelist. He was born in Tiền Giang Province, and graduated with a Bachelor of Graphic Design from the Faculty of Industrial Fine Arts at Ho Chi Minh City University of Architecture. In 2000, he won the Fourth Prize in the second installment of the Literature in its 20s (Văn Học Tuổi 20) contest. He currently lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City. Giang's debut novel, *Song Song (Parallel)*, was first published in 2007 and republished in 2011. It is widely regarded as one of the best works of gay fiction in the Vietnamese language.



Translated by

KHẢI NGUYỄN is a Vietnamese translator. His writings have appeared in CounterPunch, Mekong Review, and Asymptote as well as been anthologised by great weather for MEDIA, among others. He holds master's degrees in comparative literature from universities of Perpignan, St Andrews, and Santiago de Compostela.



Edited by

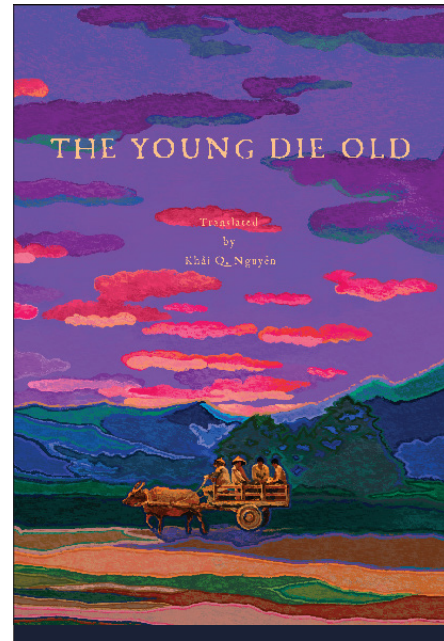
SAMUEL TAN is from sunny Singapore and is currently working as a translator in Tokyo. Though he lives for those perfectly cool spring and autumn days, sometimes all he really needs is a good old tropical thunderstorm.





The Young Die Old

Những đứa trẻ chết già (1994)



Abstract

The *Young Die Old* tells two parallel stories: the first one starts as Trường gets married to a woman of obscure origin, with all characters drawn together to find a treasure believed to open when Nghê (Vietnamese mythical animal with mixed features of lions and wild dogs) turns up. The other line of story is an expedition on a buffalo wagon, of unrelated, nameless people engaged in nonsensical dialogues, to a mysterious place in an unidentified permanent stasis of time and space. The two paths are woven together to represent the contrasts of life in a parallelism between harsh realism and magical symbols and illusions.

Idiosyncratic, seamlessly-crafted, daringly arresting and ambitious, full of wry humour, *The Young Die Old* is an evocation of love, memory, and of being a human.

Specification

Author	Nguyễn Bình Phương
Retail Price	£11.99 (e-book £6.99)
Format	Flexibound 14.5 x 20.5 cm 250 pages (est.)
Genre	Fiction
Release Date	Autumn 2025

The Author

NGUYỄN BÌNH PHƯƠNG, a Vietnamese writer from a military background, was born in Thái Nguyên and worked for many years at the Northern border. After graduating from the Nguyễn Du writing school, he joined the military theater troupe as a screenwriter and later the People's Army Publishing House as a literary editor. He is currently the editor-in-chief of the Military Arts Magazine. In the 1990s, Phương's novel *The Young Die Old* (*Những đứa trẻ chết già*) marked a major milestone for Vietnamese literature. Since then, he has continued to write in a unique style, with prominent works such as *Người đi vắng*, *Thoạt kỳ thủy*, *Ngồi*, and his latest novel, *Minh và họ* (*I and They*). In 2022, he received an award from The Vietnam Writers Association (Hội Nhà Văn Việt Nam) for his novel *Một ví dụ xoàng*.nt example).



Translated by

KHẢI NGUYỄN is a Vietnamese translator. His writings have appeared in CounterPunch, Mekong Review, and Asymptote as well as been anthologised by great weather for MEDIA, among others. He holds master's degrees in comparative literature from universities of Perpignan, St Andrews, and Santiago de Compostela.



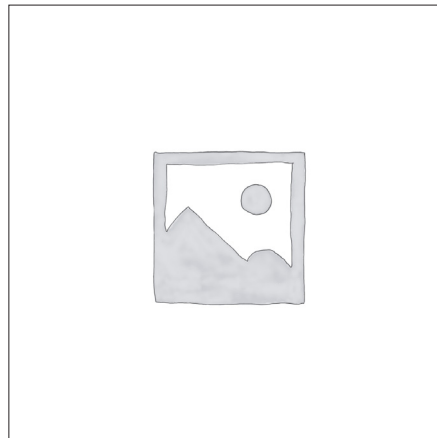
Edited by

JOSHUA BLACK is a graduate of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, where he earned degrees in Southeast Asian Studies, Languages and Literatures of Southeast Asia, and a PhD researching queer identities in Vietnamese literature of the early 2000s. He has worked at universities in the UK and Vietnam teaching courses related to Vietnamese language and culture, British and American literature, and translation studies. In addition to being passionate about Vietnamese literature, Joshua's research interests include gender and LGBTQ+ issues and refugees and forced migration.



Crossroads and Lampposts

Những ngã tư và những cột đèn (2010)



Abstract

In an era when Hồ Chí Minh's foot soldiers and socialist industrial workers represented the ideal Vietnamese men, the novel follows the life of an upper-middle-class Hanoi who deserted from the army of the disintegrating anti-communist state on the eve of the communist takeover of Hanoi in 1954. Patched from first-person accounts – diaries, interview transcripts, confessions – the narrative is as gripping as it is enigmatic.

Written in the early 1960s, *Crossroads and Lampposts* captures the vertigo experienced by many Vietnamese as the peace brought about by the Vietnamese victory at Điện Biên Phủ in 1954 proved to be short-lived. The novel not only sheds light on a little-understood yet crucial period in modern Vietnam but, above all, provides an extraordinary depiction of the universal human experience of navigating changes and searching for one's identity amidst turbulent times.

Specification

Author	Trần Dần
Retail Price	£13.99 (e-book £6.99)
Format	Flexibound 14.5 x 20.5 cm 400 pages (est.)
Genre	Fiction
Release Date	Spring 2026

The Author

TRẦN DẦN (1926-1997) was an influential Vietnamese poet and writer known for revolutionizing Vietnamese poetry through his innovations in both form and ideology.

Though many of his works faced censorship and banning from 1960-1990, Trần Dần persevered in his literary pursuit throughout his life. The origins of *Crossroads and Lampposts* can be traced back to a project sponsored by the Hanoi Police Department in the early 1960s. The handwritten manuscript was completed in 1966 and submitted to the Police Department for review. It was returned to Trần Dần 22 years later, in 1988, but remained unpublished until 2011. Trần Dần himself passed away in 1997.

In 2007, Trần Dần was posthumously awarded the prestigious National Prize for Literature and Arts, recognizing his significant creative legacy. During his lifetime, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hanoi Writers Association.

Translated by

UYÊN NGUYỄN is a historian of modern Vietnam, with a strong interest in modern Vietnamese literature. She holds a PhD in History from the University of California, Berkeley and is currently Lecturer in the College of Humanities and Sciences and Department of History, National University of Singapore. Uyên's current research project examines the communist takeovers of previously French-controlled cities in North Vietnam and the political and socio-cultural transformations that took place during the first four years after Ho Chi Minh's government gained total control of the North (1954–1958).





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