



MAJOR BOOKS
Publishing Catalogue



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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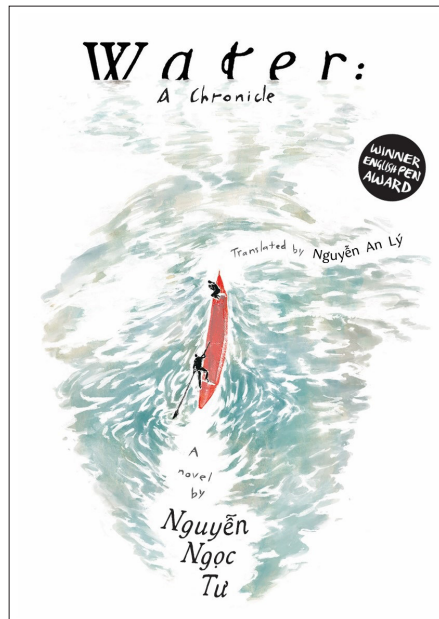


Water: A Chronicle

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



Cover art by Nguyễn Thanh Vũ



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, and a desperate mother 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 the great river.

A trans woman who wants to be 'whole', 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 122 pages
Genre	Fiction
ISBN	978-1-917233-00-2
Release Date	30 th October 2024



The Author

NGUYỄN NGỌC TƯ, 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 Field*) has received numerous awards, including the LiBeraturpreis Prize 2018. Other works of her have earned her the 2018 ASEAN Literature Award, and the 2024 Outstanding Southeast Asian Literature Award. She was listed by Forbes magazine as one of the Top 50 most influential women in Vietnam of 2018. Nguyễn Ngọc Tư's works have been translated into Korean, English, Swedish, and German.



Translated by

NGUYỄN AN LÝ lives in Hồ Chí Minh City. Her translations into Vietnamese include works by Margaret Atwood, Kazuo Ishiguro, J. L. Borges, Amos Oz, and the poetry in *The Lord of the Rings*. She won English PEN Translates Awards for *Chinatown* (Tilted Axis Press, 2022) and *Elevator in Sài Gòn* (Tilted Axis Press, 2024) by Thuận, and *Water: A Chronicle* (Major Books, 2024) by Nguyễn Ngọc Tư. *Chinatown* also won the 2023 ALTA National Translation Award in Prose and was the runner-up of the 2023 TA First Translation Prize. She co-founded and co-edits the independent online Zzz Review.



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)

‘...an immediate and sharply observed modernist text.’

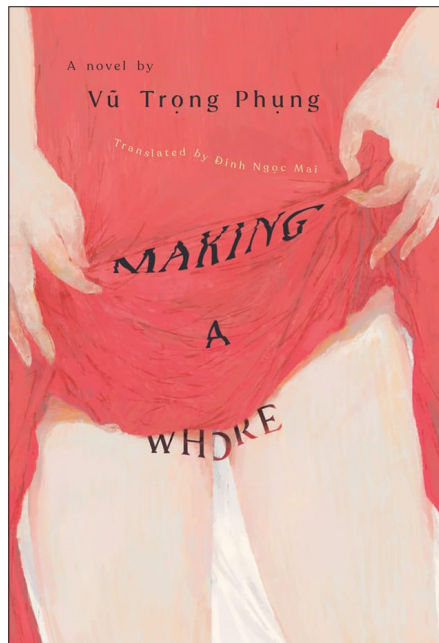
–Joshua Jones, author of *Small Fires*

Abstract

Heavily criticised upon publication and subsequently censored by the government, *Making a Whore* serves as a poignant defense for Huyền, its protagonist, deemed tainted by debauchery. 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.



Cover art by Nguyễn Thanh Vũ

Specification

Author	Vũ Trọng Phụng
Retail Price	£11.99 (e-book £6.99)
Format	Flexibound 14.5 x 20.5 cm 219 pages
Genre	Fiction
ISBN	978-1-917233-02-6
Release Date	30 th January 2025



The Author

VŨ TRỌNG PHỤNG (1912-1939) was a renowned Vietnamese writer and journalist, regarded as one of the most influential figures in twentieth century Vietnamese literature. In his short lifespan of 27 years, Vũ Trọng Phụng left an astonishing body of works across genres, from short story and novel to play and journalism. His writings are known for their bold and uncompromising portrayal of Vietnamese society under French colonial rule and for addressing taboo topics such as sexuality and sex work. Accused of ‘cultural damage’ due to the sexual content in his writings, he faced legal action, and his works were banned in the north of Vietnam, then nationally until the late 1980s.



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.

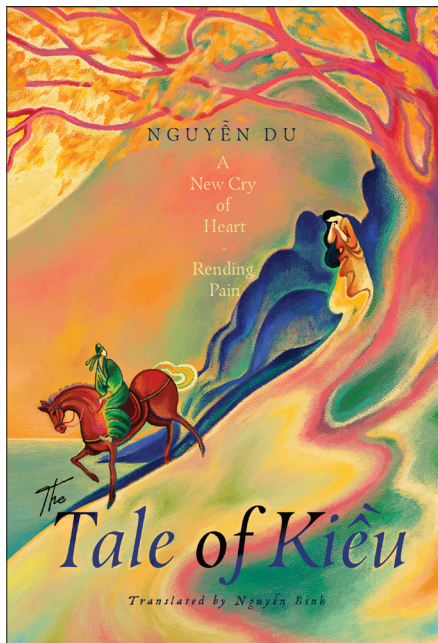


The Tale of Kiều

Truyện Kiều (19th century)

'The Tale of Kiều is the encyclopedia of a thousand emotions.'

–Phan Ngọc, 2001



Cover art by Dusse Bui

Abstract

A poetic classic that has captivated readers for generations is given a new life in Nguyễn Bình's translation.

The Tale of Kiều by Nguyễn Du is a timeless poetic masterpiece, revered as one of the greatest classics in Vietnamese literature. Through Thúy Kiều's years of wandering as a woman in 16th-century China, the epic delves into the complexities of human nature, gender, and sexuality.

With a new translation that is attentive to the folksy rhythms of the original form, and complete with detailed notes that position the original in its cultural context, *The Tale of Kiều* will appeal to lovers of a rich story, its couplets lingering and speaking to the most intimate of our human emotions.

Specification

Author	Nguyễn Du
Retail Price	£12.99 (e-book £6.99)
Format	Flexibound 14.5 x 20.5 cm 230 pages (est.)
Genre	Epic Poem
ISBN	978-1-917233-04-0
Release Date	8 th March 2025



The Author

NGUYỄN DU (1766-1820) was born in Hà Tĩnh Province, Vietnam. The son of a well-ranked family of elites, Nguyễn was well-versed in the Confucian classics, but his road to prosperity was cut short by a period of civil war, during which his village was burned, and he had to wander Vietnam in search of a new home. After peace was restored with the founding of the Nguyễn dynasty in 1802, he joined the royal court as an advisor to the Ministry of Rites, and later an ambassador to China. He died in Huế, the imperial capital, at the age of fifty-four.

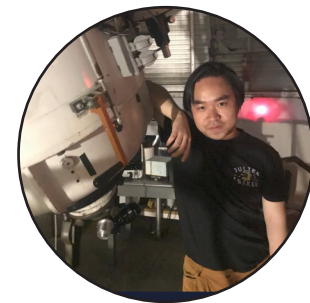
While dynastical records depict him as a quiet, timid mandarin, Nguyễn Du's writings show a bold, vocal and emotional man, angered by systemic abuses of power and moved to tears by the sufferings of people, from soldiers fighting meaningless wars to sex workers dying in solitude. Through his inventive use of traditional forms, Nguyễn Du detailed the agonies of his world and asked why injustice was so rampant, sometimes calling on the Buddha to bring salvation to those who had been wronged.



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 literary works 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 is the author of essays and poems in both Vietnamese and English, many of which have been published in magazines and anthologies in Vietnam and the United States. Currently, Bình is writing a novel, and completing the first Vietnamese translation of Vergil's *Aeneid*. They graduated from the University of Arizona in May 2023 with a BSc in Astronomy and BA in Linguistics, and are currently a PhD student in Astronomy at the University of Washington.





Parallel

Song Song (2007)

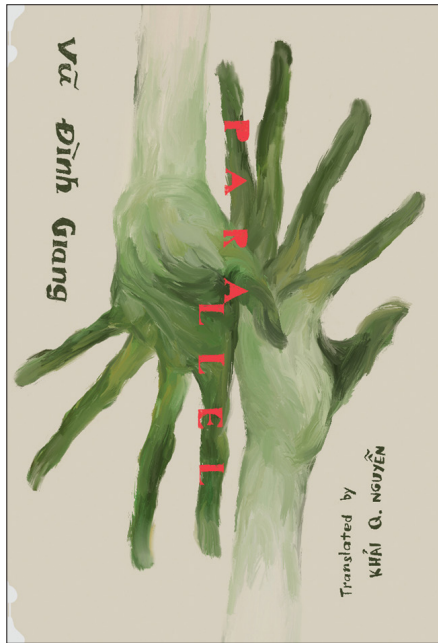
'I appreciated [Vũ Đình Giang's] innovations and audacious writing style. I was struck by the darkness of the text. I had the impression that I had in my hand what is called a "literary UFO"...And I told myself that I absolutely had to translate it.'

–Yves Bouillé, French translator for *Parallel*

Abstract

Unapologetic and daring, *Parallel* deserves to be on the same shelf with the sexiest works by some of the best living gay writers like Alan Hollinghurst, Colm Tóibín, Édouard Louis, Garth Greenwell, and Witi Ihimaera.

Parallel opens, and ends, with the news about the suicide of Asia's gay icon Leslie Cheung. The novel tells the story of life, love, lust, illusion, and violence revolving three characters with common jobs and common lives: G.g, H, and Kan. 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. 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 presenting its characters as sex workers or drag artists—people solely defined by struggle.



Cover art by Nguyễn Thanh Vũ

Specification

Author	Vũ Đình Giang
Retail Price	£12.99 (e-book £6.99)
Format	Flexibound 14.5 x 20.5 cm 275 pages (est.)
Genre	Fiction
ISBN	978-1-917233-06-4
Release Date	30 th June 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 Writers in Their 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. *Parallel* was translated into French as *Parallèles* by Yves Bouillé in 2014 (Riveneuve). His debut is widely regarded as one of the best works of gay fiction in the Vietnamese language.



Translated by

KHÀI 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

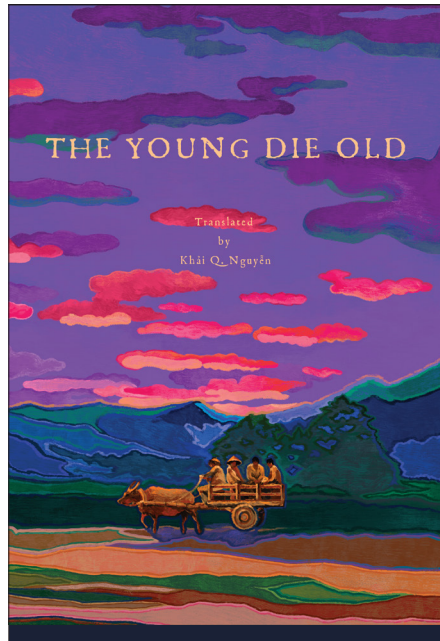
SAMUEL TAN is from sunny Singapore and is currently working as a translator in Tokyo. Though he lives for those perfectly cool spring and autumn days, sometimes all he really needs is a good old tropical thunderstorm.





The Young Die Old

Những đứa trẻ chết già (1994)



Cover art by Dusse Bui

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	£12.99 (e-book £6.99)
Format	Flexibound 14.5 x 20.5 cm 250 pages (est.)
Genre	Fiction
Release Date	Spring 2026



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*, *Ngôi*, and his latest novel, *Mình và họ* (*Me and Them*). In 2022, he received an award from The Vietnam Writers Association (Hội Nhà Văn Việt Nam) for his novel *Một ví dụ xoàng*.



Translated by

KHAI 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

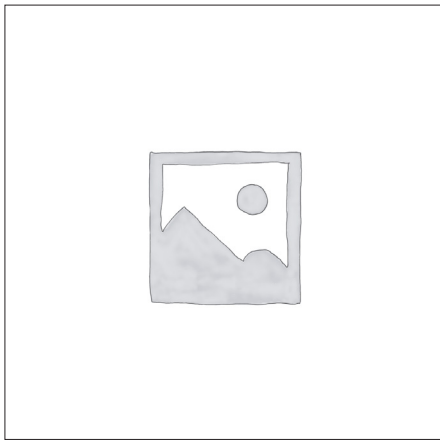
JOSHUA BLACK is a graduate of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, where he earned degrees in Southeast Asian Studies, Languages and Literatures of Southeast Asia, and a PhD researching queer identities in Vietnamese literature of the early 2000s. He has worked at universities 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 Hanoiian 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 revolutionising 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 Hồ Chí Minh's government gained total control of the North (1954–1958).





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