INTRODUCTION

Situating Memory

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Commemorative fever is threatening to blanket the Vietnamese landscape with monuments to the worship of the past. Every year, it seems, another museum opens, a new memorial is dedicated. Temples are refurbished, and rural roads bristle with signs pointing to historical sites. Volumes of memoirs are constantly being churned out, cemeteries to the revolutionary dead dot the country from north to south. If it were not for the equally ubiquitous symbols of the global economy, such as Coca Cola bottles, karaoke bars, golf courses, and computers, Vietnam would appear to be living in the past.

This upsurge of commemoration is a paradoxical by-product of the program of economic reforms known as *Doi Moi* (lit., "changing for the new"), which was launched in the late 1980s. Coming barely fifteen years after the country was unified under communist rule, these reforms were designed to transform its economy from a socialist, centrally planned economy to one driven by the market. Yet the commemorative fever is not just a salvage operation designed to preserve traces of a fast-vanishing past before they are obliterated by the forces of relentless capitalist-style modernization. As the chapters in this volume suggest, the stakes involved in public memory are far more complex. What is being remembered? Who does the remembering? How is it done, and why? What is the context in which memory work is being carried out? These are some of the questions raised in the present volume. Its goal is to present analyses of how Vietnamese pasts have been constructed by

different actors over nearly four decades, with particular emphasis on the postwar period. I propose, in this introduction, to provide a glimpse into the historical and cultural contexts that are shaping memory and the study of memory in Vietnam.

READING THE FUTURE INTO THE PAST

Public memory in present-day Vietnam is characterized as much by confusion as by profusion. A key to understanding this situation lies in the difficulty of assigning historical meaning to the upheavals that form the raw materials of modern Vietnamese history. The divisions they have engendered suggest the need to follow in the footsteps of Maurice Halbwachs and study the social context in which Vietnamese public memory is constructed.[1] There is, however, another dimension of memory that needs to be attended to as much as the social one: it is the historical context in which remembering takes place.

The Greek playwright Agathon is reported by Aristotle to have declared: "Even God cannot alter the past." Samuel Butler answered back across two millennia: "It has been said that though God cannot alter the past, historians can."[2] Others, besides historians, can and do alter it as well. "It's a poor sort of memory that works only backwards," remarks Lewis Carroll's Queen in *Through the Looking Glass*.[3] Indeed, memory works forward as well as backward; the past is shaped by the future as much as the future is shaped by the past. Memory creates meaning for particular events or experiences by inscribing them in a larger framing narrative, be it personal or collective. Whether implicitly or explicitly, in this larger narrative is embedded a sense of progression and vision of the future for which the past acts as prologue. In *Penser la révolution française,* François Furet pointed out how the political sympathies of different actors, including historians, led them to conceptualize the French Revolution either as the end point of the narrative of the French nation or as the beginning of the Republican narrative.[4] In Vietnam, deciding how to remember a century's worth of historical change is a matter of grave difficulty for a society filled with uncertainty about its future and only just beginning to rethink its past.

The larger narrative capable of giving meaning to otherwise random experiences has changed abruptly over the course of the twentieth century. Vietnamese have experienced imperial and colonial rule and have gone through a prolonged struggle for independence, a Communist-led

revolution, and several wars. They are currently living through a slow and fitful transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-driven one. At the turn of the century, Vietnamese reformers thought they had found in social Darwinism the key to understanding their country's fall to colonial conquest. Three decades later, their spiritual heirs discovered in Marxism-Leninism a way out of the dismal national future that social Darwinism seemed to predict. And yet, only fifteen years after the country was unified under communist rule, the revolutionary leadership committed itself to implementing a market economy governed by the ethos of social Darwinian competition.[5] Each struggle to create a new future through revolution, war, and counterrevolution has been accompanied by attempts to redefine historical meaning and, in the process, to remake the past. The past, like the future, is an eternally unfinished project, constantly under construction and constantly being revised.

The political liberalization that is a by-product of economic reforms is widely credited with opening a space for revisiting the past. Yet it is not only the loosening of state control over cultural life that has allowed discrepant interpretations of the past to come to the fore; new historical conditions are forcing them into the open. In opting for Doi Moi, Vietnamese leaders were implicitly setting aside a socialist vision of the future that had sustained them through decades of struggle; nonetheless, they did not abandon their claim to historically based legitimacy, continued monopoly on power, or formal commitment to Marxism-Leninism. Even now that the need to mobilize for war is gone, the leadership retains a stake in promoting a version of the past that inscribes it as the legitimate inheritor of the Vietnamese patriotic tradition and the dominant force in the recent history of the country. Such a version of the past tends to empty the historical stage of alternative scenarios and actors. Yet the decline of High Socialist orthodoxy, relative prosperity, and prolonged peace have encouraged other actors besides the state to try to occupy the space of memory. The new visions of the past must take their place alongside old ones that continue to give solace not only to the state but also to important segments of Vietnamese society. The deconstruction of the official past is thus an untidy, sometimes surreptitious, seldom openly confrontational by-product of economic reconstruction.

UTOPIA AND ITS AFTERMATH

To understand how the past is being reimagined, it is important to know how it was constructed to begin with, for the socialist telos of the old historical narrative has never been repudiated, and new visions of the future—and thus, discrepant versions of the past—must be told around it rather than in open challenge to it.

In the midst of the War of National Salvation Against the Americans (Chien Tranh Chong My Cuu Nuoc), as the Vietnam War was known in North Vietnam (and now in the whole country), the scholar-activist Pham Huy Thong gave an interview in which he declared: "History is a source of comfort to us."[6] Previously an aide to Ho Chi Minh and later director of the Institute of Archaeology, Pham Huy Thong was a key actor in the efforts of the North Vietnamese state to use history as an instrument for mobilizing popular support during wartime. By the time the interview took place in January 1973, on the eve of the signing of the Paris Peace Accords, decades of living through war and revolution had turned these experiences into seemingly normal states rather than extraordinary events. Making history serve wartime purposes was achieved by writing the past (history in the lower case) as a narrative of heroic and ultimately triumphant struggle against foreign domination and inscribing the future as a vision of communist utopia achieved through the inexorable workings of History with a capital *H,* Marxist-style.[7] Both time past and time future, so it seemed, was on the North Vietnamese side and firmly under control.

When peace finally came, socialism was on the wane worldwide. Even in Vietnam, where the revolutionary generation remained in power, the future had to be rethought. The Doi Moi reforms saved the Vietnamese communist leadership from historical irrelevance when other socialist regimes throughout Europe were being toppled. But with Doi Moi, History lost its capital *H.* If revolutions aim to transform the future, and in so doing rewrite the past, so do counterrevolutions. The end of utopia has taken away the telos that had made possible a particular writing of Vietnamese history. One Vietnamese historian told me: "Now we are at peace, we need a new theme around which to organize our historical narrative." Unlike history, memory is not weighted by the need to unify the past, and its production is proceeding at a faster pace than the rewriting of history. Yet memory does not exist without reference to history. The unmooring of the historical past from its predicted end has undone the carefully erected structures of memory.

GEOGRAPHIES OF MEMORY

Nearly a century after the end of the American Civil War, William Faulkner wrote: "The past is never dead, it's not even past."[8] In Vietnam as in the American South, the past remains a live presence, impossible to ignore, difficult to assimilate. With its share of winners and losers in what, increasingly, is recognized to have been a civil conflict as much as a war against foreign intervention, postwar Vietnam, at first glance, offers striking parallels with postbellum America; yet the issues involved in grappling with the past are quite different in the two countries.

Some Vietnamese families begin their collective narratives of living with and through conflict in the nineteenth century, when the French conquered Vietnam. For many, that narrative did not end until 1990, when Vietnamese forces finally pulled out of Cambodia. While some rejoice in their improved situations, others mourn accumulated losses. Answers to queries about a person's current circumstances are often prefaced with "After 1975" or "Before Doi Moi." Temporal references such as these function not merely as markers of time gone by but also as indices of economic and political gains and losses and of personal experiences of war and revolution. Gains and losses, triumph and tragedy, however, do not align neatly and predictably on either side of the national divide that was the seventeenth parallel. The postwar era has also become the postrevolutionary era, in which it is unclear who won and who lost, as it was in the American Civil War. This complicated geography of triumph and setbacks has a profound impact on how the past is reimagined.

The complex intertwining of geography and time in Vietnamese memory is illustrated in one of the earliest novels of the Doi Moi period, Duong Thu Huong's *Paradise of the Blind*. This book was published in 1988, when the Doi Moi reforms were just being launched, and is widely seen as a revisionist account of over forty years of Communist rule in North Vietnam by a veteran of the War Against the Americans.[9] At the end of the novel, the heroine decides not to accept the house bequeathed to her by her aunt because she is unwilling to take on the burden of bitter memories that goes with it. The house in question had been confiscated during the Land Reform campaign of the 1950s, and the once prosperous lineage to whom it had belonged had been destroyed. Later, thanks to the Doi Moi reforms and her own unceasing efforts, the aunt was able to rebuild the family fortune and recover the house. It is thus full of ghosts and painful memories, a reminder of the toll of revolution

on a single lineage as well as the eventual triumph of a lone individual. It is also concrete testimony to that individual's insistence on passing on her memories of bitter loss and vengeful triumph to the new generation. The narrator thus speaks for many when she decides to refuse "to stay here beneath the roof of the ancestors," as enjoined by her aunt: "I can't squander my life tending these faded flowers, these shadows, the legacy of past crimes."[10] The rejected house functions as an ambiguous symbol of the past. For the heroine, it contains the bitter ghosts of the revolution, but for her aunt who had schemed for decades to recover it, it had represented as well the glory days of her family before Land Reform.[11]

While it is conceivable that alternative interpretations of the past would not have surfaced into public life had it not been for the reforms, it would be misleading to infer that the "orthodox" narratives all belong to the pre–Doi Moi period. As some of the chapters in this volume suggest, the perpetuation of the state narrative—though sometimes modified—is made possible by enduring collective and personal concerns that have not been rendered moot by reforms even as other actors with different interests have come forth with their own re-visions of the past. Everywhere, the prerevolutionary tradition is being revived (and, in many cases, invented wholesale), but its function is highly ambiguous. It is revived by some as an alternative to the cultural legacy of the communist era, and by others as a means of entrenching that legacy even more firmly in the national consciousness. As the heroine of *Paradise of the Blind* realizes, the struggle over the past is an aspect of the struggle to control the future.

A complicating factor is the emergence of an art market and the growth of the tourist industry. These are allowing international actors as well as domestic ones to play a role in this work of re-vision. The battle sites visited by French tourists are not the same as those that bring back American veterans, to cite two groups of foreign visitors with their own time-specific memories of "Vietnam," while others without personal ties to the country are drawn to the "timeless" beauty of its landscape and recreational facilities. More important, there is a definite tension between the uses of the past as a legitimating device and as a means of constructing community and its repackaging as a marketable commodity.

OWNING AND DISOWNING THE PAST

"Who owns the past?" Scholarly attempts to address this question began with a critical look at the politics of historiography and have since

moved on to the study of the politics of memory. Efforts to rescue the past from the clutches of the state or of national elites have led some scholars to discern a tension between history and memory. The latter is considered more authentic and more democratic because it is more dispersed and, supposedly, less likely to be controlled from above. This, however, is to ignore the interest of the state in shaping not only written history but popular memory as well. In socialist systems, public activities are ordinarily conducted with close reference to official cultural policies. But a state-imposed narrative that was totally at odds with preexisting beliefs and practices would have a short shelf life. Moreover, the strict dichotomy between official history and personal memory overlooks the ways in which particular social contexts and historical conjunctures help shape memory and how often it aligns itself with the national narrative.[12] Official history and public memory thus are as likely to coexist in symbiotic fashion as to be in tension with each other.

Much has been written about public memory and commemoration in various geographic and temporal settings. By "public," I refer to ritual performances, speech acts, visual media, and other cultural activities that are articulated and made available or accessible to others rather than kept secret. These representations may be the works of single individuals or the products of collective efforts. I am thus not referring to clandestine counterhegemonic communities of memory on which Milan Kundera or James C. Scott focus,[13] but to individuals and groups who openly try to claim a piece of the past. It would be tempting to study the relationship between history and memory in Vietnam in terms of hegemony and counterhegemony pitting the state against individuals, losers against winners, North versus South. But, although it is certainly possible to study memory and countermemory through these analytic lenses, Vietnamese attempts to come to grips with the legacy of a century's worth of war and revolution raise issues that are far more complex than a simple story of tension and opposition might suggest.

Since Ernest Renan, scholarly attention has been paid to the "collective amnesia" that makes possible national memory.[14] Milan Kundera considers memory a powerful weapon against the totalitarian conspiracy of silence: "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."[15] This struggle can be waged by constructing a counternarrative out of the suppressions and silences in official history. This counternarrative would have to be lodged in the realm of private memory or to circulate among small, clandestine, counterhegemonic communities in order to endure. In Kundera's novella "Lost

Letters," the hero began by openly taking notes at meetings and keeping a diary; in other words, he tried to construct his own counterhistory. But soon "he decided he'd better put the incriminating papers in a safe place."[16] While these secreted papers may allow future generations of historians to reconstruct a past that is more in line with the hero's own interpretation, in the present they cannot become the stuff of public memory. Yet, resistance to an oppressive and ubiquitous master narrative may manifest itself differently: not by fighting one's way out of the enveloping shroud of official history into the refuge of private memory but through willed amnesia. While Kundera's hero is concerned with filling the silences of official history, it is as well to remember the coercive intensity of totalitarian commemoration. It is this very intensity that provokes its opposite, the wish to escape into oblivion. This may explain why public memory in Vietnam combines two distinct and opposite phenomena: hyper-mnemosis and willed amnesia. By hyper-mnemosis, I allude not just to the inability or refusal to let go of the past but also to the intense, even obsessive, effort to keep it at the forefront of consciousness, to shape it and to exploit it for a variety of purposes. Forgetting may be the only escape from the tyranny of enforced memory, a refusal to internalize the script that is being pressed by a totalitarian state or overbearing individuals. Easier said than done. As the heroine of *Paradise of the Blind* laments, "Memory refuses to die."[17]

Depending on their age, sex, regional origins, political sympathies, and experiences, different Vietnamese have different versions of what happened over the last century and different ways of dealing with its legacy of memories. The aging southern revolutionaries in Christoph Giebel's chapter, who fought to extend the revolution southward, are now engaged in the struggle to have their contribution to local history remembered by a grateful nation and incorporated in its larger narrative. The desire to make local, and even personal, history align with the national script may explain the production of southern revolutionary memoirs well after 1975, in which the tropes that are used are remarkably similar to those discussed by Peter Zinoman in his analysis of northern revolutionary prison memoirs from the 1960s. *Paradise of the Blind,* however, features a heroine who embodies a totally different attitude toward this revolutionary past. She belongs to a younger generation of North Vietnamese who do not strive to preserve the revolutionary legacy or to rebuild a prerevolutionary culture they have never experienced. Whereas for her aunt, undoing the revolution had meant restoring the family's fortune, for her it means vowing to "sell the house and leave

all this behind."[18] She seeks closure to her family's encounter with revolution and even tries to take herself outside the national geography of memory by forging for herself a global identity: "I sat down, cupping my chin in my hand and dreamed of different worlds, of the cool shade of a university auditorium, of a distant port where a plane could land and take off . . ."[19] Revising the past is thus a matter not only of disagreement over what is supposed to have happened but also the expression of yearnings for different futures, however inchoate.

STYLISTICS OF COMMEMORATION

Studying memory in Vietnam presents its own set of challenges. Vietnam today is characterized by neither full-blown totalitarianism nor total democracy. In democratic societies, it is possible to explore the commemorative project from the initial proposal through the process of negotiation among various groups of actors to the end result: a new public holiday, a monument, or the naming of an already existing structure. This can be achieved by following records of public debates over budget, design, siting, timing, and wording, reports of protests as well as rituals of celebration. In the United States, monuments such as the Vietnam War Memorial ("The Wall"), special displays such as the Enola Gay exhibit, commemorative occasions such as the Christopher Columbus quintecentennial, the decision to honor Martin Luther King Jr. through a public holiday, and attempts to create theme parks out of hallowed sites such as Gettysburg have all been the focus of intense scrutiny, negotiation, and contestation. Debates over each of these projects reveal profound and lasting disagreements over the meaning of important historical moments, however far removed in time. The Vietnamese, however, do not have a similar tradition of public participation in decisions over official commemoration. Lacking a sanctioned outlet for debating political and cultural differences, Vietnamese public discourse often has an oblique quality; it is full of hidden meanings and allusions. Since substance so often must be presented in oblique fashion, the stylistics of commemoration are an important marker of meaning. Obliqueness depends on deep cultural familiarity.

Through their checkered history, the Vietnamese have acquired a wide array of cultural resources with which to construct discrepant representations of the past, each fraught with multiple interpretive possibilities. The experiences of over a century and a half of exposure to imperial rule, colonial conquest, war, revolution, communism, and

capitalism have made of Vietnam a true contact zone. Its culture has been shaped by influences from China (both classical and revolutionary), France, the Soviet Union, and the United States as much as by internal sources. The complexity of these experiences and encounters ensures an abundance of commemorative resources. The chapters in this volume draw on a wide range of evidence: memoirs, fiction, poems, public pronouncements, paintings, tourist brochures, films, architectural structures and public sculptures, funerary rites, and other commemorative occasions. The decline of socialist realism, with its promotion of linear narrative and surface unity, has made recourse to different types of resources acceptable: among those discussed here are Vietnamese folk art, Sino-Vietnamese elite classical culture, French romanticism, and the global popular culture that has spread since the launching of reforms.

THE ESSAYS

This book is divided into three parts. The first three essays focus on what might be termed an orthodox construction of the past. They are followed by two analyses of the effect of the emerging art market and tourism on representations of the past. The last two essays focus on the use of gendered images to discuss both remembering and forgetting.

In the first chapter, Peter Zinoman takes a new look at a peculiar literary-historical subgenre called the revolutionary prison memoirs and shows that, despite their first-person presentation, they are far from unmediated. Instead, they seek to advance a political agenda; they are structured along a specific model and draw on a variety of literary sources for inspiration. As Zinoman points out, production of these memoirs began in 1960, just as the population of North Vietnam was fully mobilized in preparation for the War Against the Americans. The memoirs were thus an important tool in generating support for the government and Communist Party. Since they were intended to shine the spotlight on the heroic sacrifices of their leaders during the War Against the French, they created a certain vision of the prison population as a microcosm of the larger revolutionary community, which excluded not only common criminals but also anti-Communist or merely non-Communist political inmates. Similarly, the everyday texture of prison life was largely absent from narratives of prison-as-school designed to bolster the leadership credentials of their authors. To construct these variations on a single master narrative, Zinoman suggests, the Vietnamese Communists drew on a wide variety of literary inspiration, including

socialist realism, but also Sino-Vietnamese classical culture and French romantic literature. To the extent that they succeeded, therefore, the memoirs did so because they drew on familiar plotlines and images.

This narrative of revolutionary heroism constructed through the memoirs continues in the commemoration of Ton Duc Thang, the southern revolutionary who succeeded Ho Chi Minh as president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and became the first president of a unified Socialist Republic of Vietnam. In his chapter, Christoph Giebel shows that the museum-shrine that has been erected in Ton Duc Thang's native village in the far south harks back not only to communist practices and symbols but also to a far older commemorative language. And while the memoirs analyzed by Zinoman were produced by members of the Communist Party with a view to securing its monopoly on power during wartime, Giebel suggests that an important aspect of the Ton Duc Thang shrine, constructed just as the Renovation policy was being launched, is to preserve the revolutionary legacy in times that have become decidedly unrevolutionary. One may ask who is the intended audience for the message embedded in the cult of Ton Duc Thang. Unlike the memoirs, which can be considered as emanating from the center of power, the museum-shrine represents an appeal by individuals who have been doubly marginalized—by their southern origins and the turn toward a market economy—to keep alive the revolutionary flame. Their message is not necessarily addressed to the southern population, but to those in power in faraway Hanoi, reminding them of the contributions of southern guerrillas. The shrine thus stands not as a counternarrative but as a corrective to the Hanoi-centered interpretation of war and revolution.

A similar urge to complement rather than contest can be discerned in the dual sets of commemorative rituals designed to honor the war dead in northern Vietnam. While Shaun Malarney details the elaborate measures the North Vietnamese state took to honor the war dead and succor their survivors, he also shows why these measures did not address some fundamental concerns of the latter and describes the steps they took to remedy the situation. In particular, while the state ensconced fallen soldiers in a national pantheon of heroes, their relatives were often more interested in ensuring their safe passage into the otherworld through the proper performance of funerary rites. Yet, as Malarney explains, these rites, which were appropriate for times of peace, were inadequate when it came to the violent deaths far away from home of young men whose remains were not always available for burial or were not intact. There was another area in which the state's concerns did not neatly dovetail

with those of the families of the dead soldiers. In a nutshell, this was the definition of community that was constructed through the two sets of rituals. From the perspective of the state, those who died fighting the French and the Americans belonged to a national pantheon of heroes. This pantheon united the recent dead and the heroes of bygone eras in a community of unrelated strangers; but, while proud of the honor bestowed on their own dead, the survivors also sought to incorporate them in a different community, made up of kin, both heroic and unheroic: the blood that had flowed in their veins being more important than the blood they had shed. In both cases, the dead and the living were united in a great chain of being, but the continuity they represented was different: one was national, the other patrilineal and local. This difference replicated earlier tensions between state and society, tensions that certainly antedated the advent of communism but were played out in North Vietnam during the 1950s in particular, when the state tried to substitute class for kinship as a basis for social organization. Heroism replaced class in this new attempt to transcend the bonds of kinship and locality through patriotism rather than ideology.

Although the remaining chapters in this collection address a wide variety of issues, they share one theme. In one way or another, different pasts are offered as alternatives to the narrative of heroic sacrifices in the noble cause of war and revolution explored by Zinoman, Malarney, and Giebel. In Nora Taylor's study of the art scene since World War II, one can see clearly the continued politicization of aesthetics, even or especially when a particular painting seems to lack overt political content. As she explains, when the dominant style was socialist realism and the task of the artist was to support the war effort, portraits of gaunt artists or paintings of empty city streets were considered unacceptably decadent. But now the zeitgeist has changed, and what was once deemed lacking in "national essence" is currently praised as more true, more authentic, than the heroic and cheerful paintings of now discredited masters. There is no better illustration of the idea that while the past may live in the present, it is the present that constructs the past and is constructed in the past. The empty streets in Bui Xuan Phai's paintings are reminders of the dire poverty of wartime Hanoi, and their bare electric poles subtly mock Lenin's description of communism as "Soviet power plus electrification of the whole country." But this recasting of wartime as a period of unheroic privations would not have been possible had the people of northern Vietnam not jettisoned the revolutionary ethos of self-sacrifice in favor of the ethos of acquisitive capitalism.

While the emergence of an art market replacing the previous system of semiofficially sponsored art may have something to do with the decline of socialist realism, it does not quite explain the embrace of folk art. Nora Taylor sees a likely reason for this phenomenon in the desire of artists to strike out into new artistic directions while still working within the context of "national essence." One can also detect in this rediscovery of folk art an attempt to leapfrog the recent revolutionary past in favor of a more ancient and idealized one, emptied of both ideology and conflict.

The same impulse may also underlie the colonial nostalgia documented by Laurel Kennedy and Mary Rose Williams. But it is not just a means of erasing war and revolution from memory, of turning Vietnam into "a country, not a war" in the fond slogan of the tourism industry. Tourism is the chief means by which the country is going to extricate itself from the poverty that Bui Xuan Phai captured in his paintings. Yet this strategy of modernization depends on the nostalgic exploitation of French colonial architecture. This strategy contains several implications: it projects an image of calm luxury, it helps to gloss over the last half century of warfare, and it replaces peasant guerrillas with sophisticated urbanites as the dominant image of the country. Longings for the trappings of modernity are expressed in a picture of urbanism of the past, while all around the future is being built. What better illustration of the cosmopolitan aspirations of postwar middle-class Vietnamese than the twin attempts to preserve the architectural relics of French imperialism and to erect high-rise towers in the new idiom of architectural internationalism? To be sure, the landscape is also an important lure, but it is a landscape emptied of menace. Where once Vietnamese peasants were mobilized to repulse foreigners, now they are expected to welcome them. Visual reminders are in fact everywhere, but the pain has largely been anaesthetized. In the Cu Chi tunnels, tourists—including returning American veterans of the Vietnam War—are greeted by young men and women clad in the drab guise of Communist guerrillas who point out the spots where American B-52s rained bombs on the site and the underground chambers where the Tet Offensive, with its memorable attack on the American embassy, was plotted. In the compound's kitchen, visitors are invited to taste samples of the grim diet of taro roots and salt that guerrillas ate every day; in the souvenir shops, they are invited to purchase silver opium pipes or wooden Disney figures. Shell casings are made into souvenirs tanks, empty soft drink cans turned into miniature helicopters. Commemorative sites such as these

play a double function: as building blocks in the state's narrative of glorious war and triumphant revolution, and as fodder for entertainment. In an uneasy combination of the epic and the ironic, they are expected to sustain memory and generate money all at once.

Tensions between images of Vietnam as either an urbanizing, modernizing country or a fundamentally peasant one are sometimes couched in gender imagery, as Mark Bradley and I suggest. In the last two decades, Drew Faust, Catherine Clinton, Claudia Koonz, Nina Silber, and others have tried to reinsert women's voices into overwhelmingly masculinist visions of war both as experience and as memory;[20] Maurice Agulhon has analyzed how the figure of Marianne has been utilized in French public discourse to galvanize the public behind efforts to save the embattled Republic.[21] Unlike in the West, however, Vietnamese images of war are not so overwhelmingly masculine, and women have long been symbols of heroism in the face of foreign conquest even as they also represent peace and stability. Both Bradley and I point out some ways in which female images can be deployed to symbolize remembering as well as forgetting, peasant Vietnam as well as the new consumerist cosmopolitanism. Issues of morality are also often presented in gendered terms, as Bradley's chapter demonstrates. This deployment of female imagery stands in contrast to the relative insignificance of women in commemorative rituals, alluded to in Malarney's chapter. It is to the parents of the dead soldier, not his wife, that the task of ensuring his safe passage to the world of the dead and the annual ritual of remembrance is entrusted by the community. His widow plays a secondary role in this commemorative exercise. In my chapter, I try to suggest why, when that is so, it is the mothers of dead soldiers who have been honored by the state, and who have become the keepers of memory. But, given traditional Vietnamese gender ideology and attitudes toward trade, I also suggest why young women can also represent contemporary amnesia. The acquisitive urge may be seen as a reaction against the poverty-stricken past, an antidote to the pain of memory. In families with divided loyalties and divergent pasts, poring over new purchases is a far safer strategy for retaining some semblance of unity than contemplating old wounds. Indeed, in order for family communities to include all their members, the dead and the living, it is necessary to forget, or at least to seem to forget, past divisions and rancor.

In the final chapter of the collection, Mark Bradley takes up a number of representational issues touched on in previous chapters. Here the representational language is that of film. Given that medium, it is not sur-

prising that the idiom of gender would be deployed conspicuously to make points about both past and present. The films analyzed by Bradley use different generations of women to represent memory (the mother in *Brothers and Relations*), forgetting (the sister in the same film), heroic self-sacrifice (the peasant woman stricken by leprosy in *How to Behave,* the prostitute in *Girl on the River*), and capitalist greed (the middle-class woman in *How to Behave,* the sister of the dead man in *Brothers and Relations*). In *Brothers and Relations,* Bradley suggests, the keeper of memory is a relative by marriage rather than a blood kin of the dead man; his wish to recover the bones of his brother-in-law stems from his own war service. Through him, the military is presented as the bastion of revolutionary morality in a world where the amorality of the market (represented by his briefcase-toting wife) is on the rise. The climactic scene takes place in Noi Bai airport outside Hanoi. Since air travel from North to South was impossible during the War Against the Americans, airports are symbols of national unification and peace. They are also openings to foreign influences and thus represent a turning away from the national narrative of resistance against foreign conquest. In his discussion of another film, *When the Tenth Month Comes,* Bradley complicates the commemorative dichotomy set up by Malarney. To whom does the memory of fallen soldiers belong? In the film, the local party representative, the parents of the dead man, his grieving widow, his kin and neighbors, all are seen to have a claim. Whereas widows play a relatively minor role in the funerary practices of the patrilineal family and the nationalizing policies of the state, the bonds of conjugal love, the film director suggests, give them a starring role in the commemorative project. In another film, *Girl on the River,* gender gives a new twist to the regional perspective that Christoph Giebel discusses with respect to the commemoration of Ton Duc Thang. The film director Dang Nhat Minh (who also directed *When the Tenth Month Comes*) makes use of a stock figure in Chinese and Vietnamese classical culture, the patriotic prostitute, to critique postwar amnesia. The twist is that, though she is from the South, in her destitution she does not embody the supposedly southern ethos of corruption that has been widely blamed for the loss of morality among formerly upright cadres. Instead, it is the prosperous and powerful cadre who represents the careless forgetting by former revolutionaries of the services that ordinary Vietnamese once rendered them. The film's effectiveness rests partly on its upending of some stereotypes about region and about gender, which I discuss in my chapter.

No single collection of essays could possibly do justice to so contested a set of experiences as those of twentieth-century Vietnam or to the vast complexity of memory. This volume is thus offered as a small contribution to the ongoing Vietnamese search for usable pasts.

NOTES

I gratefully acknowledge helpful comments by Jeffrey Wasserstrom and Rubie S. Watson on an earlier version of this introduction.

1. Maurice Halbwachs, *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris: Mouton, 1976).

2. Samuel Butler, *Erewhon Revisited* (New York: Modern Library, 1955), 468.

3. Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (New York: Morrow, 1993), 95. "'That's the effect of living backwards,' the Queen said kindly: 'it always makes one a little giddy at first . . . but there's one great advantage in it, that one's memory works both ways.'"

4. François Furet, *Penser la révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978).

5. See Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 4–5, 20–22.

6. Quoted in John K. Whitmore, "Communism and History in Vietnam," in *Vietnamese Communism in Comparative Perspective,* ed. Wm. S. Turley (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1980), 11.

7. I am borrowing the elegant title of Nancy K. Florida, *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future: History as Prophecy in Colonial Java* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995).

8. William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Random House, 1968), 92.

9. Duong Thu Huong, *Paradise of the Blind* [*Nhung Thien Duong Mu*] (Hanoi: NXB Phu Nu, 1988), trans. Phan Huy Duong and Nina McPherson (New York: Morrow, 1991).

10. Ibid., 258.

11. Ibid.

12. William C. Spengemann and L. R. Lundquist, "Autobiography and the American Myth," *American Quarterly* 17 (fall 1965): 501–2. The authors explore the parallels to be found in individual autobiographies and what Benedict Anderson calls "national biographies." See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), 204. I am grateful to Benjamin Wilkinson for bringing this article to my attention.

13. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990).

14. Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?" (lecture given at the College de France, 1882), translated by Martin Thom in *Nation and Narration,* ed. Homi Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 19; Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* chap. 11; Mona Ouzouf, "Le Panthéon: l'Ecole Normale des morts," in *Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 1, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 157; John Gillis,

ed., "Introduction," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

15. Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (New York: Knopf, 1981), 3.

16. Ibid., 4.

17. Duong Thu Huong, *Paradise of the Blind,* 258.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Drew Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Catherine Clinton, *The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984); Catherine Clinton, *Tara Revisited: Women, War and the Plantation Legend* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1995); Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

21. Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne au combat: L'imagerie et la symbolique républicaines de 1789 à 1880* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979).