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Tan Hinh Thuc Publishing Club
P. O. Box 1745
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World Wide Web Site
<http://www.thotanhinhthuc.org>
Email: tanhinhthuc@yahoo.com

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Blank Verse
An Anthology of Vietnamese New Formalism
Poetry

Edited by Khe Iem and Dr. Carol Compton
Translated by J. DoVinh

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TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

Đỗ Vinh

With the encouragement of our Editor, the poet Khe Iem, I would like to share a few thoughts with the authors and readers of this collection (anthology) of poetry. First, let me thank all the poets who have given me the opportunity to befriend them through their poetry. Although I did not embrace and adore each word, each verse, each poem, as the poets had when they wrote their poems, I did my best to bring clear meaning and to do justice to your carefully chosen poems through my very meticulous, mindful, respectful and refined art of translation. The act of translation is in itself a creative endeavor, not entirely mechanical and principle-driven. Yet, regardless of my skills, I could not translate a "bad" poem into a "good" poem— I could only do the opposite. Thus, if I had accomplished the translation task that our Editor and poets had assigned to me, then I would be entitled to all the honor and satisfaction of a doula who have eased the transition from the poets' mother tongue to 'new flowery-butterfly life of different colors' (a verse from the poem 'Early Spring Days', Green Plums by Do Vinh). If I had erred and stifled the poems, causing them to take on strange forms, then the mistakes are mine alone and I accept full responsibility. Please let me apologize now to our poets and readers and ask for your forgiveness. Finally, let me thank our readers, supporters and especially our editor, Khe Iem, who had given me the opportunity to witness history in the making with the publication of an anthology of over 60 poets and 70 poems. It is my conviction that this publication will not only launch

Vietnamese poetry into the mainstream of world poetry-literature, but squarely place us in the forefront of achievement in this field from the 21st century onward into the indefinite future. Only now can we claim a true watermark for the advancement of our country's poetry-literature, for the Vietnamese language, and for world poetry-literature. Please allow me to humbly congratulate our poets, readers and friends, and again, thank you all for this once-in-a-lifetime chance to shine with you in this brave, bold movement.

INTRODUCTION

NEW FORMALISM THE BEAT OF A NEW ERA

Đặng Tiến

Vietnamese New Formalism is a new school of poetry which has been spreading in recent years, beginning with the Vietnamese Journal of Poetry (Tạp Chí Thơ) which is published in the United States. Most notable was the publication of issue 18, spring 2000, "The Change of Centuries», demonstrating its growing influence with the enthusiastic participation of many writers and poets from within Vietnam and abroad. The name "Vietnamese New Formalism" coined from New Formalism which was flourished in USA during the 1980-1990 period.

Vietnamese New Formalism poetry has these particular characteristics:

- Consists of non-rhyming verses, entirely different from the rhyme-schemes of classical poetry, yet presented on the page in a manner similar to that of a traditional poem; easily recognizable as a poem.
- Each classical verse of poetry includes five, six, usually seven, or eight words (syllables), sometimes alternating 6-8 syllable verses, organized into stanzas of four lines or of multiple lines. Enjambments occur at the exact number in the syllable count, without deference to the grammar or to the meaning of a sentence. From the

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