

1. Title of the panel:

MEMORY AND IDENTITY IN VIETNAMESE MIGRANT LITERATURE IN EUROPE

2. Convener:

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3. Panel abstract:

Vietnamese people in Europe account for about one-fifth of the overseas Vietnamese population with diverse groups. The Vietnamese group of students or workers in France during the period of French colonialism can be considered as the first Vietnamese residing outside of Vietnam. The second group of Vietnamese is the refugees who escaped from Communist in South Vietnam in 1975. The former contract workers, who lived and worked mainly in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 also made up a significant number of the Vietnamese community in Europe. In addition, the wave of Vietnamese students choosing Europe to study and work after graduation forms the intellectual Vietnamese community. Last but not least, the group of Vietnamese arriving in Germany in the form of family reunion and of political asylum contributed to the diversity of the Vietnamese community in Europe.

Corresponding to the varied groups of the Vietnamese community, Vietnamese literature in Europe has a clear distinction. The first literary sector, which was formed and developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, is the literature of the refugees, or diaspora literature. The waves of Vietnamese migrants going overseas after 1990 for many reasons transformed the nature of Vietnamese migrant literature. From the starting point as the literature of the refugees, the Vietnamese literature now has authors leaving Vietnam but was not dissent with the communist government. For example, most works by authors as former contract workers focused on their lives in host land, i.e their struggle with surviving and working in Europe. In contrast, writings by other groups of Vietnamese touched upon the spiritual lives of migrants between two worlds, host land and homeland. In such an in-between-space, memory and identity of the migrants reflected through their writings become the core issues in the quest for the significance of migrants. The expression of memory in the migrants' writings is not just the way for the writers to reproduce a lost homeland in the past but also to the query, thereby forming their identities in the future. By organizing this panel, the convener seeks to provide a forum for the latest research in Vietnamese migrants literature in Europe. Presenters are welcomed to explicitly discuss the methodological and practical issues of memory and identity represented in Vietnamese migrants literature, such as the issues of collective memory, cultural identity, hybridity or in-between-ness.

Single session panel