

The Reinvention Of Distinction Modernity And The Middle Class In Urban Vietnam 2 Ari Springer Asia Series

Marginal Modernity traces the emergence and dissemination of a new aesthetic paradigm from the periphery to the core of European culture. This "aesthetics of dependency" is distinct from the aesthetics of autonomy and fragmentation usually relied on and provides a different structure, philosophical foundation and historical condition for modernist works.

A footprint materializes mysteriously on a deserted shore; a giant helmet falls from the sky; a traveler awakens to find his horse dangling from a church steeple. Eighteenth-century British fiction brims with moments such as these, in which the prosaic rubs up against the marvelous. While it is a truism that the period's literature is distinguished by its realism and air of probability, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder* argues that wonder is integral to--rather than antithetical to--the developing techniques of novelistic fiction. Positioning its reader on the cusp between recognition and estrangement, between faith and doubt, modern fiction hinges upon wonder. *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the*

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Reinvention of Wonder's chapters unfold its new account of British fiction's rise through surprising new readings of classic early novels—from Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* to Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*--as well as bringing to attention lesser known works, most notably Rudolf Raspe's *Baron Munchausen's Narrative of His Marvellous Travels*. In this bold new account, the eighteenth century bears witness not to the world's disenchantment but rather to wonder's re-location from the supernatural realm to the empirical world, providing a re-evaluation not only of how we look back at the Enlightenment, but also of how we read today.

This volume explores how climate change impacts interact with poverty and vulnerability to increase the risk for urban residents in Southeast Asia. It combines knowledge from both academic literature and action research to explore the creation of climate resilient urban governance that is both inclusive and equitable. The book contains contributions from researchers in different cities in Southeast Asia involved with the major research project *Building Urban Climate Change Resilience in Southeast Asian Cities (UCRSEA)*. The authors respond to three urgent questions: How does climate change interact with poverty and vulnerability to create risk for urban residents in Southeast Asia? What does knowledge, from both academic literature and action research, tell us

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about creating climate resilient urban governance that is both inclusive and equitable? How can we strengthen the agency of individuals, groups and institutions to improve economic, physical and social well-being in urban areas, particularly in response to climate change? The book hopes to answer to current challenges posed by climate change. In the volume, the authors discuss how the agency of individuals, groups and institutions can be strengthened to improve economic, physical and social well-being in urban areas, particularly in response to climate change.

The relationship between tradition and innovation in Orthodox Christianity has often been problematic, filled with tensions and contradictions starting from the Byzantine era and running through the 19th and 20th centuries. For a long period of time scholars have typically assumed Greek Orthodoxy to be a static religious tradition with little room for renewal or change. Although this public perception continues, the immutability of the Greek Orthodox tradition has been questioned by several scholars over the past few years. This book continues this line of reasoning, but brings it into the centre of contemporary discussion. Presenting case studies from different periods of history up to the present day, the authors trace different aspects in the development of innovation and renewal in Orthodox Christianity in the Greek-speaking world and among the Diaspora.

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Over the last decade, infectious disease outbreaks have heightened fears of a catastrophic pandemic passing from animals to humans. From Ebola and bird flu to swine flu and MERS, zoonotic viruses are killing animals and wreaking havoc on the people living near them. Given this clear correlation between animals and viral infection, why are animals largely invisible in social science accounts of pandemics, and why do they remain marginal in critiques of global public health? In *Viral Economies*, Natalie Porter draws from long-term research on bird flu in Vietnam to chart the pathways of scientists, NGO workers, state veterinarians, and poultry farmers as they define and address pandemic risks. Porter argues that as global health programs expand their purview to include life and livestock, they weigh the interests of public health against those of commercial agriculture, rural tradition, and scientific innovation. Porter challenges human-centered analyses of pandemics and shows how dynamic and often dangerous human-animal relations take on global significance as poultry and their pathogens travel through global livestock economies and transnational health networks. *Viral Economies* urges readers to think critically about the ideas, relationships, and practices that produce our everyday commodities, and that shape how we determine the value of life--both human and nonhuman.

In Vietnam, international remittances from the Vietnamese diaspora are

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quantitatively significant and contribute important economic inputs. Yet beyond capital transfer, these diasporic remittance economies offer insight into an unfolding transformation of Vietnamese society through the extension of imaginations and ontological possibilities that accompany them. Currencies of Imagination examines the complex role of remittances as money and as gifts that flow across, and mediate between, transnational kinship networks dispersed by exile and migration. Long distance international gift exchanges and channels in a neoliberal political economy juxtapose the increasing cross-border mobility of remittance financial flows against the relative confines of state bounded bodies. In this contradiction Ivan V. Small reveals a creative space for emergent imaginaries that disrupt local structures and scales of desire, labor and expectation. Furthermore, the particular characteristics of remittance channels and mediums in a global economy, including transnational mobility and exchangeable value, affect and reflect the relations, aspirations, and orientations of the exchange participants. Small traces a genealogy of how this phenomenon has shifted through changing remittance forms and transfer infrastructures, from material and black market to formal bank and money services. Transformations in the affective and institutional relations among givers, receivers, and remittance facilitators accompany each of these shifts, illustrating that the socio-cultural work

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of remittances extends far beyond the formal economic realm they are usually consigned to.

The legacy and memory of wartime South Vietnam through the eyes of Vietnamese refugees In 1975, South Vietnam fell to communism, marking a stunning conclusion to the Vietnam War. Although this former ally of the United States has vanished from the world map, Long T. Bui maintains that its memory endures for refugees with a strong attachment to this ghost country. Blending ethnography with oral history, archival research, and cultural analysis, *Returns of War* considers how the historical legacy of a nation that only existed for twenty years is being kept alive by its dispersed stateless exiles. *Returns of War* argues that Vietnamization--as Richard Nixon termed it in 1969--and the end of South Vietnam signals more than an example of flawed American military strategy, but a larger allegory of power, providing cover for U.S. imperial losses while denoting the inability of the (South) Vietnamese and other colonized nations to become independent, modern liberal subjects. Bui argues that the collapse of South Vietnam under Vietnamization complicates the already difficult memory of the Vietnam War, pushing for a critical understanding of South Vietnamese agency beyond their status as the war's ultimate "losers." Examining the lasting impact of Cold War military policy and culture upon the "Vietnamized" afterlife of war,

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this book weaves questions of national identity, sovereignty, and self-determination to consider the generative possibilities of theorizing South Vietnam as an incomplete, ongoing search for political and personal freedom.

"Luxury and Rubble is the tale of two cities within a city. It is the story of two master-planned, mixed-use residential and commercial developments that are changing the face of Ho Chi Minh City. The two developments that Erik Harms examines are examples of urban development projects known in Vietnam as 'New Urban Zones.' These programs, which were born in the early 1990s, are steadily reorganizing the urban landscape in cities across the country. For many Vietnamese, they are a symbol of the country's emergence into global modernity and post-socialist economic reforms. However, they are also sites of great contestation, sparking land disputes and controversies over how to compensate evicted residents. This is a vivid portrayal of urban reorganization along deeply human terms, which delves into the complex and sometimes contradictory experiences of individuals grappling with the forces of privatization in a socialist country"--Provided by publisher.

Understanding the artistic bounty of modernist tensions over everyday life

This open access book approaches the anxieties inherent in food consumption and production in Vietnam. The country's rapid and recent economic integration into global agro-food systems

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and consumer markets spurred a new quality of food safety concerns, health issues and distrust in food distribution networks that have become increasingly obscured. This edited volume further puts the eating body centre stage by following how gendered body norms, food taboos, power structures and social differentiation shape people's ambivalent relations with food. It uncovers Vietnam's trajectories of agricultural modernisation against which consumers and producers manoeuvre amongst food self-sufficiency, security and abundance. Food Anxiety in Globalising Vietnam is explicitly about 'dangerous' food – regarding its materiality and meaning. It provides social science perspectives on anxieties related to food and surrounding discourses that travel between the local and the global, the individual and society and into the body. Therefore, the book's lens of food anxiety matters for social theory and for understanding the embeddedness and discontinuities of food globalizations in Vietnam and beyond. Due to its rich empirical base, methodological approaches and thematic foci, it will appeal to scholars, practitioners and students alike.--

This book inspects higher education reform in market-oriented socialist Vietnam, with a focus on newness narratives and enquiry. Engaging in dialogic conversations with global and regional forces and exploring convergences in the domains of policy, curriculum, research, pedagogy, and society, chapter authors analyse ideologies that have entered Vietnam's educational landscape. Chapters include discussions of post-Soviet legacies, socialist thought, privatization, neoliberalism, global rankings, academic freedom, autonomy, and elitism, as well as the actors, discourses and practices through which they manifest. In so doing, authors' commentaries juxtapose phenomena in Vietnam with other national contexts such as the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, Japan, Australia, and Trinidad and Tobago.

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The call by German Early Romantic writers for a new mythology is one of the boldest and most unusual demands by any literary theorist. This study asks how an age which variously saw mythology as a historical phenomenon or a collection of artistically useful images came to see the need for its renewal at all. The author traces the evolving role of mythology in the writings of Winckelmann, Herder, Moritz and Schiller and argues that the late eighteenth century saw the emergence of a new conception of mythology which depended less on an established iconography and cultural context and more on the poetic and linguistic functions of mythology. This dehistoricized view of mythology formed the basis of the Romantic project and the author examines the works of Friedrich Schlegel and Schelling as well as the *Älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus* against that background.

Uses an innovative conceptual approach to explore the way in which processes of globalization transform and impact upon everyday life. Engaging with a range of theories and concepts, the book provides an accessible discussion of modern issues for students of Globalization and Sociology.

Considering the endurance of socialist spaces in contemporary, political, and cultural environments, this book investigates key aspects of socialist urbanism.

Accessories to Modernity explores the ways in which feminine fashion accessories, such as cashmere shawls, parasols, fans, and handbags, became essential instruments in the bourgeois idealization of womanhood in nineteenth-century France. Considering how these fashionable objects were portrayed in fashion journals and illustrations, as well as fiction, the book explores the histories and cultural weight of the objects themselves and offers fresh readings of works by Balzac, Flaubert, and Zola, some of the most widely read novels of the

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period. As social boundaries were becoming more and more fluid in the nineteenth century, one effort to impose order over the looming confusion came, in the case of women, through fashion, and the fashion accessory thus became an ever more crucial tool through which social distinction could be created, projected, and maintained. Looking through the lens of fashion, Susan Hiner explores the interplay of imperialist expansion and domestic rituals, the assertion of privilege in the face of increasing social mobility, gendering practices and their relation to social hierarchies, and the rise of commodity culture and woman's paradoxical status as both consumer and object within it. Through her close focus on these luxury objects, Hiner reframes the feminine fashion accessory as a key symbol of modernity that bridges the erotic and proper, the domestic and exotic, and mass production and the work of art while making a larger claim about the "accessory" status—in terms of both complicity and subordination—of bourgeois women in nineteenth-century France. Women were not simply passive bystanders but rather were themselves accessories to the work of modernity from which they were ostensibly excluded.

Explores the complex interactions between French medicine and Vietnamese childbirth traditions, documenting the emergence of a plural system of maternity services that incorporated both biomedical knowledge and local birthing traditions.

Markets and traders in Vietnam are on the move, literally and figuratively. The chapters in this volume offer rich ethnographic exploration of daily interactions among small-scale traders, suppliers, customers, family members, neighbors, and officials within contemporary Vietnam and across its borders.

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In the United States, we now take our ability to pay with plastic for granted. In other parts of the world, however, the establishment of a "credit-card economy" has not been easy. In countries without a history of economic stability, how can banks decide who should be given a credit card? How do markets convince people to use cards, make their transactions visible to authorities, assume the potential risk of fraud, and pay to use their own money? Why should merchants agree to pay extra if customers use cards instead of cash? In *Plastic Money*, Akos Rona-Tas and Alya Guseva tell the story of how banks overcame these and other quandaries as they constructed markets for credit cards in eight postcommunist countries. We know how markets work once they are built, but this book develops a unique framework for understanding how markets are engineered from the ground up—by selecting key players, ensuring cooperation, and providing conditions for the valuation of a product. Drawing on extensive interviews and fieldwork, the authors chronicle how banks overcame these hurdles and generated a desire for their new product in the midst of a transition from communism to capitalism. Southeast Asia, an economically dynamic and strategically vital region, seemed until recently to be transiting to more democratic politics. This progress has suddenly stalled or even gone into reverse, requiring that analysts seriously rethink their expectations and theorizing. The *Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian Democratization* provides the first book-length account of the reasons for democracy's declining fortunes in the region today. Combining theory and case studies, it is structured in four major sections:

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Stunted Trajectories and Unhelpful Milieus Wavering Social Forces Uncertain Institutions Country cases and democratic guises This interdisciplinary reference work addresses topics including the impact of belief systems, historical records, regional and global contexts, civil society, ethnicity, women, Islam, and social media. The performance of political institutions is also assessed, and the volume offers a series of in-depth case studies, evaluating the country records of particular democratic, hybrid, and authoritarian regimes from a democratization perspective. Bringing together nearly 30 key international experts in the field, this cutting-edge Handbook offers a comprehensive and fresh investigation into democracy in the region This timely survey will be essential reading for scholars and students of Democratization and Asian Politics, as well as policymakers concerned with democracy's setbacks in Southeast Asia and the implications for the region's citizens.

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African, American and European Trajectories of Modernity asks why, from some moment onwards, 'Europe' and 'the rest of the world' entered into a particular relationship: one of domination, conceived as a kind of superiority and as an 'advance' in historic

This wide-ranging and accessible contribution to the study of risk, ecology and environment helps us to understand the politics of ecology and the place of social

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theory in making sense of environmental issues. The book provides insights into the complex dynamics of change in 'risk societies'.

Every year migrants across the globe send more than \$500 billion to relatives in their home countries, and this circulation of money has important personal, cultural, and emotional implications for the immigrants and their family members alike. *Insufficient Funds* tells the story of how low-wage Vietnamese immigrants in the United States and their poor, non-migrant family members give, receive, and spend money. Drawing on interviews and fieldwork with more than one hundred members of transnational families, Hung Cam Thai examines how and why immigrants, who largely earn low wages as hairdressers, cleaners, and other "invisible" workers, send home a substantial portion of their earnings, as well as spend lavishly on relatives during return trips. Extending beyond mere altruism, this spending is motivated by complex social obligations and the desire to gain self-worth despite their limited economic opportunities in the United States. At the same time, such remittances raise expectations for standards of living, producing a cascade effect that monetizes family relationships. *Insufficient Funds* powerfully illuminates these and other contradictions associated with money and its new meanings in an increasingly transnational world.

This pioneering collection brings together an international group of scholars to explore the Vietnamese middle class. From the leisure pursuits of the colonial middle class to the impact of the new urban rich on landscape of the countryside, this interdisciplinary

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volume explores the ways in which middle classness has been practiced in a wide range of contexts throughout the 20th century and into the 21st. In addition to offering insights into how middle classness was and is constituted and negotiated, this collection illuminates the cultural and social conditions of two distinctive periods in Vietnamese history. Three historical chapters consider how middle class status was experienced and displayed under French colonialism and in 1960s republican. These chapters offer examinations of middle classness through recreation, consumption, and associational life. Six contemporary studies examine the modes of experimentation and practice within middle class urban Vietnam. Still a sensitive topic politically, the contemporary middle class, nascent but increasingly powerful, is exerting a strong impact on the shape of contemporary society and culture, as well as on urban and rural landscapes. This volume offers a series of studies which critically interrogate the practices of those who engage in or aspire to urban middle-class lifestyles in Vietnam both in the past and in the present.

This is the first scholarly collection to examine the social and cultural aspects on the worldwide interest in the faded remains of advertising signage (popularly known as 'ghost signs'). Contributors to this volume examine the complex relationships between the signs and those who commissioned them, painted them, viewed them and view them today. Topics covered include cultural memory, urban change, modernity and belonging, local history and place-

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making, the crowd-sourced use of online mobile and social media to document and share digital artefacts, 'retro' design and the resurgence in interest in the handmade. The book is international and interdisciplinary, combining academic analysis and critical input from practitioners and researchers in areas such as cultural studies, destination marketing, heritage advertising, design, social history and commercial archaeology.

This wide-ranging and innovative book develops an original theory of the media and their impact on the modern world, from the emergence of printing to the most recent developments in the media industries.

Vietnam's shift to a market-based society has brought about profound realignments in its people's relations with each other. As the nation continues its retreat from the legacies of war and socialism, significant social rifts have emerged that divide citizens by class, region and ethnicity. By drawing on social connections as a traditional resource, Vietnamese are able to accumulate wealth, overcome marginalisation and achieve social mobility. However, such relationship-building strategies are also fraught with peril for they have the potential to entrench pre-existing social divisions and lead to new forms of disconnectedness. This book examines the dynamics of connection and disconnection in the lives of contemporary Vietnamese. It features 11 chapters by

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anthropologists who draw upon research in both highland and lowland contexts to shed light on social capital disparities, migration inequalities and the benefits and perils of gift exchange. The authors investigate ethnic minority networks, the politics of poverty, patriotic citizenship, and the 'heritagisation' of culture.

Tracing shifts in how Vietnamese people relate to their consociates and others, the chapters elucidate the social legacies of socialism, nation-building and the transition to a globalised market-based economy. With compelling case studies and including many previously unheard perspectives, this book offers original insights into social ties and divisions among the modern Vietnamese.

This collection brings together cutting-edge work by established and emerging scholars focusing on key societies in the East Asian region: China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, North and South Korea, Mongolia and Vietnam. This scope enables the collection to reflect on the nature of the transformations in constructions of sexuality in highly developed, developing and emerging societies and economies. Both Japan and China have established traditions of 'sexuality' studies reflecting longstanding indigenous understandings of sex as well as more recent developments which interface with Euro-American medical and psychological understandings. Authors reflect upon the complex colonial and economic interactions and cultural flows which have affected the East Asian

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region over the last two centuries. They trace local flows of ideas instead of defaulting to Euro-American paradigms for sexuality studies. Through looking at regional and global exchanges of ideas about sexuality, this volume adds considerably to our understanding of the East Asian region and contributes to wider discussions of social transformation, modernisation and globalisation. It will be essential reading in undergraduate and graduate programs in sexuality studies, gender studies, women's studies and masculinity studies, as well as in anthropology, sociology, history, cultural studies, area studies and health sciences.

How transnational modernity is taking shape in and in relation to Asia Fashion and Beauty in the Time of Asia considers the role of bodily aesthetics in the shaping of Asian modernities and the formation of the so-called "Asian Century." S. Heijin Lee, Christina H. Moon, and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu train our eyes on sites as far-flung, varied, and intimate as Guangzhou and Los Angeles, Saigon and Seoul, New York and Toronto. They map the transregional connections, ever-evolving aspirations and sensibilities, and new worlds and life paths forged through engagements with fashion and beauty. Contributors consider American influence on plastic surgery in Korea, Vietnamese debates about "the fashionable," and the costs and commitments demanded of those who make and

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wear fast fashion, from Chinese garment workers to Nepalese nail technicians in New York who are mandated to dress "fashionably." In doing so, this interdisciplinary anthology moves beyond common characterizations of Asians and the Asian diaspora as simply abject laborers or frenzied consumers, analyzing who the modern Asian subject is now: what they wear and how they work, move, eat, and shop.

This volume seeks to propose a reinvention of freedom under contemporary conditions of globalization, cross-border mobility, and neo-liberal dominance. There are currently two predominant myths circulating about freedom. The first is that in a global age growing numbers of citizens are less concerned with freedom than they are with security. Secondly, there is the presumption that freedom only refers to market freedom and consumerism, implying that the ideas of choice and consumption are interchangeable with ideas of freedom. Stevenson argues that while these arguments are significant, they are deeply misleading. More 'authentic' ideas of freedom such as self-realisation, participating in politics and seeking a meaningful life of self-reflection have not been entirely displaced but have instead become reinvented in our global times. The cries of freedom can still be heard in a multitude of places from the Arab Spring to the Occupy Movement and from the protests against European austerity to the current

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automobility and development in a pan-Asian comparative perspective. The book seeks to integrate the policies, production forms, consumption preferences and symbolism implicated in emerging Asian automobilities. Using empirically rich and grounded analyses of both comparative and single-country case studies, the authors chart new approaches to studying automobility and development in emerging Asia.

Taking apart the ideology of the "middle class" Tidings of a shrinking middle class in one part of the world and its expansion in another absorb our attention, but seldom do we question the category itself. *We Have Never Been Middle Class* proposes that the middle class is an ideology. Tracing this ideology up to the age of financialization, it exposes the fallacy in the belief that we can all ascend or descend as a result of our aspirational and precautionary investments in property and education. Ethnographic accounts from Germany, Israel, the USA and elsewhere illustrate how this belief orients us, in our private lives as much as in our politics, toward accumulation-enhancing yet self-undermining goals. This original meshing of anthropology and critical theory elucidates capitalism by way of its archetypal actors.

Since Vietnam introduced economic reforms in the mid-1980s, domestic service has become an established sector of the labour market, and domestic workers have become indispensable to urban life in the rapidly changing country. This book analyzes the ways in which the practices and discourses of domestic service serve to forge and

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contest emerging class identities in post-reform Vietnam. Drawing on a rich and diverse range of qualitative data, including ethnographies, interviews, and narratives, it shows that such practices and discourses are rooted in cultural notions of gender and rural-urban difference and enduring socialist structures of feeling, which, in turn, clash with the realities of growing differentiation. Domestic workers' experiences reveal negotiations with class boundaries actively set by the urban middle class, who seek distinction through emerging notions and practices of domesticity. These boundaries are nevertheless riddled with gender and class anxiety on the side of the latter, partly because of the very struggles and contestations of the domestic workers. More broadly, Minh T. N. Nguyen links the often invisible intimate dynamics of class formation in the domestic sphere with wider political economic processes in a post-socialist country embarking on marketization while retaining the political control of a party-state. As a pioneering ethnographic study of domestic service in Vietnam today, this book will be of great interest to students and scholars of Southeast Asian culture & society, social anthropology, gender studies, human geography and development studies.

Comprises 34 essays from leading scholars in history, classics, philosophy, and political science to illuminate Greek and Roman political thought in all its diversity and depth. Offers a broad survey of ancient political thought from Archaic Greece through Late Antiquity Approaches ancient political philosophy from both a normative and historical focus Examines Greek and Roman political thought within historical context

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and contemporary debate Explores the role of ancient political thought in a range of philosophies, such as the individual and community, human rights, religion, and cosmopolitanism

Introduction : Vietnam is a country, not a war -- "Not only those on the battlefield" : (extra)ordinary sacrifice -- Rituals and routines of sacrifice : respect those above, yield to those below -- Troubling love : models for gender (in)equality? -- Waiting as care? sacrifice and tinh c?m in troubled times -- Children and lovers : marriage, morality, and motherhood -- Conclusion : mourning in silent sacrifice.

This book is an ethnographic case study, based on first hand observation, of family businesses in the northern Vietnamese village of Ninh Hi?p along the Red River Delta, which became a major hub for textiles in the wake of the country's shift towards market socialism. The author explores how the traders experience, negotiate and react to a marketization process that is markedly shaped by the state's morally ambivalent governance, and which can be thus characterised as an admixture of socialist and neoliberal ideologies. How are traders shaping the political economy of Vietnam? How has the labour force changed as textile-handling has become an increasingly profitable undertaking? Horat explores the relationships between traders and local authorities, as well as changing ideas of masculinity and femininity. Focusing on the redevelopment of the market landscape and the increasing share of private ownership that have given rise to great uncertainty, this book provides a well-timed inquiry into current debates of

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economic development in a uniquely shaped market environment.

This collection of essays addresses the perception that our understanding of modern China will be enhanced by opening the literature of China to more rigorous theoretical and comparative study. In doing so, the book confronts the problematic and complex subject of China's literary, theoretical, and cultural responses to the experience of the modern. With chapters by writers, scholars, and critics from mainland China, Hong Kong, and the United States, this volume explores the complexity of representing modernity within the Chinese context. Addressing the problem of finding a proper language for articulating fundamental issues in the historical experience of twentieth-century China, the authors critically re-examine notions of realism, the self/subject, and modernity and draw on perspectives from feminist criticism, ideological analysis, and postmodern theory. Among the many topics explored are subjectivity in Chinese cultural theory, Chinese gender relations, the viability of a Lacanian approach to Chinese identity, the politics of subversion in Chinese reportage, and the ambivalent status of the icon of paternity since Mao. At the same time this book offers a probing look into the transformation that Chinese culture as well as the study of that culture is currently undergoing, it also reconfirms private discourse as an ideal site for an investigation into a real and imaginary, private and collective encounter with history. Contributors. Liu Kang, Xiaobing Tang, Liu Zaifu, Stephen Chan, Lydia H. Liu, Wendy Larson, Theodore Hutters, David Wang, Tonglin Lu, Yingjin Zhang, Yuejin Wang, Li

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Tuo, Leo Ou-fan Lee

“My husband doesn’t have a head for business,” complained Ngoc, the owner of a children’s clothing stall in Ben Thanh market. “Naturally, it’s because he’s a man.” When the women who sell in Ho Chi Minh City’s iconic marketplace speak, their language suggests that activity in the market is shaped by timeless, essential truths: Vietnamese women are naturally adept at buying and selling, while men are not; Vietnamese prefer to do business with family members or through social contacts; stallholders are by nature superstitious; marketplace trading is by definition a small-scale enterprise. *Essential Trade* looks through the façade of these “timeless truths” and finds active participants in a political economy of appearances: traders’ words and actions conform to stereotypes of themselves as poor, weak women in order to clinch sales, manage creditors, and protect themselves from accusations of being greedy, corrupt, or “bourgeois” – even as they quietly slip into southern Vietnam’s growing middle class. But Leshkowich argues that we should not dismiss the traders’ self-disparaging words simply because of their essentialist logic. In Ben Thanh market, performing certain styles of femininity, kinship relations, social networks, spirituality, and class allowed traders to portray themselves as particular kinds of people who had the capacity to act in volatile political and economic circumstances. When so much seems to be changing, a claim that certain things or people are inherently or naturally a particular way can be both personally meaningful and strategically advantageous.

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Based on ethnographic fieldwork and life history interviewing conducted over nearly two decades, *Essential Trade* explores how women cloth and clothing traders like Ngoc have plied their wares through four decades of political and economic transformation: civil war, postwar economic restructuring, socialist cooperativization, and the frenetic competition of market socialism. With close attention to daily activities and life narratives, this groundbreaking work of critical feminist economic anthropology combines theoretical insight, vivid ethnography, and moving personal stories to illuminate how the interaction between gender and class has shaped people's lives and created market socialist political economy. It provides a compelling account of postwar southern Vietnam as seen through the eyes of the dynamic women who have navigated forty years of profound change while building their businesses in the stalls of Ben Thanh market.

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