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## An Epistemology of Gender: Historical Notes on the Homosexual Body in Contemporary Vietnam, 1986–2005

This essay proposes to trace the meaning of same-sex sexuality in Vietnam from the Renovation period to the early years of the millennium. A growing body of scholarship has demonstrated the contingent character of sexuality. Scholars agree that although the specific relation between the sexual body and society remains in dispute, the body is nevertheless embedded in complex social and cultural processes.<sup>1</sup> Its function, potential and meaning is protean and shifting over time and space. As new idioms, technologies and societal developments emerge and impinge on the body, so too is the meaning that people attach to the body transformed. How people act, speak, desire and self-identify in a given time and place becomes an object of scholarly inquiry and interpretation.

In this study, I examine the meaning of same-sex sexuality in Vietnamese-language popular sources from 1986 to 2005 to argue that one dominant meaning prevailed: namely, the belief that homosexual identity is synonymous with gender-crossing. By “gender crossing” I mean a transgression of heterosexual gender norms. As feminists and queer scholars have shown, “sexuality” in certain times and places is tethered to an array of gender practices, fantasies and norms, what Judith Butler called the “grid

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of intelligibility through which bodies, genders and desires are naturalized.”<sup>2</sup> In some cultural regimes, for instance, a heterosexual man in order to be a “man” is expected to behave in gender-specific ways. Conversely, if a man behaved or was perceived to behave otherwise, he would not be considered a heterosexual man.

The idea that sexuality is gender transitive—that the subject (sexuality) requires a predicate (gender)—is in fact a culturally specific idea. Scholars studying homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan have shown that male same-sex sexual relations were not predicated on gender compartment but on other vectors, such as status and power.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, in the contemporary West, gender has increasingly been de-coupled from homosexual definition. As scholar David Halperin explains, the male homosexual in the West is arguably the “straight-acting and –appearing gay male, a man distinct from other men in absolutely no other respect besides that of his ‘sexuality.’”<sup>4</sup> Eve Sedgwick has similarly remarked that, “the study of sexuality is not coextensive with the study of gender.”<sup>5</sup> Gender and sexuality, in other words, are not ontological correlates. Their relationship, if any, to one another, the ways and means by which they are organized, and the meaning attached to them depend in large part on the cultural and historical context.

In the Vietnamese context, the sources insist on the gender transitivity of homosexuality. The popular discourse of this period exhibited a persistent anxiety surrounding the epistemology of gender. In its anxiety, this discourse produced a morphology of the homosexual embodied in the ambiguous figure of the gender-crosser. I shall suggest two primary factors that helped shape and explain the production of this figure. The first is a late nineteenth-century European medical discourse that entered the Vietnamese discourse and survived through the period in question. This discourse, in turn, contained two different paradigms of homosexuality: one which conceived of it as a form of hermaphroditism; the other which conceived of it as a case of gender inversion, the idea of the man “trapped” in a woman’s body and vice versa. The second factor that helped propagate the idea of the homosexual as gender-crosser is the state. After Vietnam’s integration into global markets, the discourse of revolutionary liberation lost political and cultural traction. In response, the state turned its gaze towards governing the ideals of the “cultured” nuclear family, a historical shift that is heavily documented in

Renovation and Post-Renovation scholarship. These ideals carry with them specific norms of gender recognition and constitution. In enforcing these norms, the state simultaneously had to produce constitutive exclusions, one of which is incarnated in the figure of the gender-crossing homosexual. These two discourses, one medical and the other state-sponsored, converged in this period in Vietnam to produce the imagined contours of the homosexual body.

This essay will be divided into five main sections. First, it situates the research within the scholarship of queer theory and Vietnam studies to suggest the continuing need to historicize the subject of sexuality. Second, it provides an overview of the documents gathered including a discussion of the genre, quantity and quality of the sources. Third, the essay contextualizes the two aforementioned discourses that, I suggest, help explain the figure of the gender-crosser. Fourth, it draws on archival sources to survey the vocabulary used to name homosexuals. This survey provides not only a lexical key to the analysis, but also furnishes evidence of the centrality of gender in Vietnamese homosexual definition. Finally, the essay drives home these claims by presenting evidence from popular sources.

## Historicizing the Subject of Sexuality

### QUEER THEORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

This essay takes the constructivist approach as a premise of its research over and against other methodologies that sidestep the question of history. Such a project takes desire, sexual or otherwise, not as a universal constant across time and space but as a cultural practice that is far less uniform and more context-based. Much of the work of queer critique has been to denaturalize the social regimes that organize gendered and sexual life and analyze what David Halperin has called the “cultural poetics of desire,” by which he means the “processes whereby sexual desires are constructed, mass-produced, and distributed among various members of human living-groups.”<sup>6</sup> The critical purchase of such a project, according to Foucault, is in “making visible a *singularity* at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant.”<sup>7</sup> If gender and sexuality have a history, so the logic goes, then they are no longer immutable truths but contingent forms of social and

cultural organization that have assumed the status of timelessness. It follows, therefore, that other forms of social organization are possible, forms that hold open the promise of alternative and viable visions of gendered and sexual personhood.

This historicist approach, however, has been critiqued by some scholars. Most notably, Eve Sedgwick in *The Epistemology of the Closet* has criticized this approach for its overemphasis on discontinuities. She characterizes this approach as delineating the “supersession” of one historical model of homosexuality and the “withering away” of another.<sup>8</sup> Such a historiography, Sedgwick argues, fails to capture prior forms of gendered and sexual life that endure in a given time frame. She advocates an alternative framework whereby contradictory and multiple meanings of same-sex sexuality can accrue within the same historical frame, what she calls the “unrationalized coexistence of different models during the times they do coexist.”<sup>9</sup> But Sedgwick’s critique does not stop there. Her point is not simply to seek a more refined historiography but to propose that one sidestep the historicist project altogether in favor of her approach. She writes: “This project does not involve the construction of historical narratives alternative to those that have emerged from Foucault and his followers.” She continues: “Rather, it requires a reassignment of attention and emphasis within those valuable narratives—attempting, perhaps, to denarrativize them somewhat by focusing on the performative space of contradiction,” which she explains is the “unexpectedly plural, varied, and contradictory historical understandings” of same-sex relations in the present.<sup>10</sup> Because the historicist project counterposes the alterity of the past to a present that Sedgwick claims scholars take for granted as already knowable, Sedgwick seeks to underscore not the alterity of the past but that of the present and to explore whatever enduring resonances of the past that may (or may not) exist in the present.

While I acknowledge Sedgwick’s critique of a certain version of historicism, I reject her proposal to sidestep the historicist project. The coexistence of dissonant meanings need not lead to the proposition that one cease if not eliminate altogether the practice of historical reconstruction. Rather, as David Halperin suggests, the recognition of dissonance raises anew precisely what are historical questions: the conditions under which the dissonance was animated, the degree and the relative period in which it

was experienced in a culture.<sup>11</sup> Hence, in this essay I shall continue the practice of historical reconstruction, even as I draw on Sedgwick's valuable concept of the "performative space of contradiction" in the analysis.

CONTEXTUALIZING RESEARCH ON GENDER AND SEXUALITY  
IN RENOVATION VIETNAM

Much of the scholarship on Renovation Vietnam takes as its point of departure an understanding of gender that is defined by the State. Since Vietnam's open-door policy and transition to a market-economy, this body of scholarship has demonstrated how the State has shifted its fundamental regulatory target to the "household" or "family" unit.<sup>12</sup> As a result, scholars have appropriated this unit as a concept through which to examine social problems related to gender. Danièle Bélanger and Jane Werner note that even though this unit is not the only site of gender's constitution, they nevertheless take the family unit as the locus of analysis because it is where the "state and the global/market economy currently meet to regulate constructions of gender."<sup>13</sup> For example, scholars have explored issues such as the deleterious effects of the market on women-run households,<sup>14</sup> which in turn are linked to the effects of widespread prostitution. Still, other scholars have looked at how the new economy has opened up opportunities, allowing women to support themselves, choose to remain single, or look towards other horizons in the transnational marriage market.<sup>15</sup> Generally speaking, in the current scholarship, cultural analysis tends to begin—and often end—with this foundational concept of gender that links it definitionally to marriage and the household.<sup>16</sup>

In taking up the State's fundamental definitions, however, scholars both gain and lose certain kinds of knowledge. They gain insight into the contours of the proper subject recognized by the State in this period, namely heteronormative gender constructions and intimate relations. However, they lose sight of those gendered and sexual subjects that in no way conform to official standards of recognition, and so fail to understand that an alternative history of gender emerged within this period that is bound up with cultural ideas about homosexuality. Bélanger and Werner, in fact, acknowledge that there is a gender continuum. They observe: "Gender' . . . comprises the set of practices, meanings, and symbols, based on sexual difference, which are expressed or made manifest in congruence with specific sites in the institutional matrix

of society.” They continue: “In this volume, we focus on one end of the fulcrum (womanhoods), but this by no means excludes moving along the scale. The full scale runs from femininities to masculinities, passing through a transgender zone in the middle.”<sup>17</sup> Building on Bélanger and Werner’s study, then, my research extends the purview of the gender continuum to argue that the prevailing meaning of same-sex sexuality in Vietnam during this period was inextricably bound up with the discourse of gender-crossing.<sup>18</sup>

Yet few studies exist that look at the issue of same-sex sexuality in Vietnam historically. There is scholarship on spirit mediumships and the potential for such rituals to create a viable space for same-sex sexual practices.<sup>19</sup> There are studies that examine homosexual identities within the limited scope of HIV/AIDs prevention measures.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, recent NGO studies on media representations of homosexuality focus on the more recent years of the twenty-first century and examine primarily online sources.<sup>21</sup> One notable study is Natalie Newton’s research on lesbians in Saigon. In this study, Newton critiques the contemporary discourses and institutions that claim to work on behalf of the lesbians who are the focus of her research. In examining their experience, Newton shows the vexed ways in which her informants are triangulated by local and global forces: first, by the rising global LGBT human rights movement; second, by the transnational Vietnamese NGOs which need these subjects on behalf of whom they represent in their appeal for international funding; finally, the Vietnamese State, which is angling to make a case for its improved human rights record. In the process, the real efforts of these Saigonese lesbians in building a “civil society” and “queer community” becomes silenced or forgotten.<sup>22</sup>

My research complements Newton’s study by historicizing some of the discourses that Newton critiques. As Newton points out, the embrace of a global “LGBT” human rights vocabulary has usurped much of the limelight in Vietnamese discourse on same-sex sexuality. In the wake of the government’s consideration to legalize same-sex marriage, NGOs and activist groups held Vietnam’s first ever gay “pride parade” in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City and flash mobs in which young Vietnamese proudly displayed sticker slogans, such as “I love LGBT.”<sup>23</sup> Although the primary purpose of this essay is not to address these contemporary issues, it can nevertheless furnish a critical perspective on some of the events in the present. By tracing the historical

meaning of same-sex sexuality, this study can illuminate the context in which the global “LGBT” vocabulary first emerged in the Vietnamese discourse and reconstruct the *prior* discourses that this global one appears to be rapidly supplanting. In short, there are both scholarly and activist reasons to historicize the subject of sexuality in Vietnam.

## Overview of Archival Sources

I base my analysis on more than 292 primary sources culled from a wide variety of cultural texts and genres published in Vietnam between 1986 and 2005. The date 1986 was chosen because it is the year that marks the beginning of Renovation. The year 2005 was chosen because it demarcates the conclusion, though not the end, of two decades of Vietnam’s experiment with an open-market economy. Such a stretch of time is arguably substantial enough to trace continuity or discontinuity of values and meaning. I draw on evidence from popular sources including sex education manuals, health-related news items, dictionaries, reportage, memoirs, serialized fiction, non-fictional works and letters-to-the-editor. By “popular sources,” I borrow Pflugfelder’s formulation to refer to written texts on the commercial market—the “system of utterances and silences that is to be found in written texts bought and sold . . . consisting chiefly of books and periodicals.”<sup>24</sup> Finally, I also draw on secondary sources.

The bulk of my evidence, accordingly, derives from books and newspapers. All relevant non-fiction books written in Vietnamese at the National Library in Hanoi published during this period were identified. Newspapers were also examined. A range of papers was selected to ensure that the net was cast wide enough to yield both local and national coverage. This collection includes the following: *Security in the Capital* (An Ninh Thủ Đô); *People’s Police* (Công An Nhân Dân); *Ho Chi Minh City’s Police* (Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh); *The People* (Nhân Dân); *Youth* (Thanh Niên); *Age of Youth* (Tuổi Trẻ); and *Vanguard* (Tiền Phong). The year in which these newspapers began circulation is uneven. While almost all cover the beginning of the Renovation period, some, such as *The People’s Police* (Công An Nhân Dân), did not start circulating until 1988. Also, due to research contingencies, this study’s examination of *Youth* (Thanh Niên) starts in 1992, even though the paper began circulation in 1986.

That said, it should be noted that much of the coverage concerning homosexuality in this period did not begin until the early 1990s. This is true for both the sex education manuals and newspapers. The first manual to deal explicitly with homosexuality was published in 1992. The first article to address homosexuality in *Security in the Capital* (An Ninh Thủ Đô) appeared in 1990; *People's Police* (Công An Nhân Dân), 1994; *Vanguard* (Tiền Phong), 1991; and *Age of Youth* (Tuổi Trẻ), 1991. *Ho Chi Minh City's Police* (Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh) seems to be the exception: it kickstarted its coverage of Vietnam's open door policy by publishing an investigative report of homosexuality in 1987. It is no coincidence that the 1990s was also the era when the HIV/AIDS epidemic was on the rise, and therefore, societal and state anxieties centering on sex and sexuality were also in the air.

Three of the newspapers in the prior list are an apparatus of the police and army; likewise, *The People* is the venerable organ of the Communist Party. Hence, these newspapers are more likely to reflect the views of the State. By contrast, *Youth*, *Age of Youth* and *Vanguard*, though technically still owned by the State,<sup>25</sup> are relatively more "independent" in their choice of coverage and are considered Vietnam's general-interest newspapers.

Their relationship to the State nevertheless means that one cannot take them at face value. I do not assume that the documents I examine transparently reflect reality. Far from being unmediated sources of evidence about the meaning of same-sex sexual relations in this period, these documents raise complex issues about the interpretive frame through which they apprehend their objects and the ideologies that they, consciously or not, espouse and transmit. "The discursive process," as Pflugfelder explains, "is a complex negotiation of knowledge, practice, and power whose work lies precisely in obscuring the ontological gap that separates reality . . . whose effect is to close off certain forms of meaning in favor of others."<sup>26</sup> Such a process of meaning-making, as semiotic theories have suggested, is operative in discourse in general, whether written or oral.<sup>27</sup>

The fact that these are *written* texts in no way renders them any less valuable or less ideological than oral sources. Problematizing the oral versus the written distinction, Judith Halberstam asks: "[W]e must question whether there is a form of queer theory or sexual theory that is not textually based. Isn't a sexual ethnographer studying texts? And doesn't a social



historian collate evidence from texts? Sometimes the texts are oral histories, sometimes they might be interviewed material, sometimes they might be fiction or autobiography.” Halberstam continues, “[B]ut given our basic formulation of sex as ‘private,’ something that happens when other people are not around, there is no way to objectively observe ‘in the bedroom.’”<sup>28</sup> One could argue that the public and private distinction in Vietnam is reversed, as Lisa Drummond has shown,<sup>29</sup> and that in Vietnam sex may take place in public parks. But, as the textual sources in this essay will show, it usually takes place in a dark corner away from the public limelight.

Indeed, there is a case to be made about the value of print sources. For many locals the subject of sex and sexuality is an issue that, according to Khuất Thu Hồng, is “easy to joke about but difficult to discuss.”<sup>30</sup> Khuất Thu Hồng observes that the topic is quite popular among the Vietnamese but usually in the form of a joke. Describing the frustration of research on this topic, she asks: “How do you explain each person’s excitement in talking about sex in everyday conversation and the hesitation when one poses such questions as a serious research issue?” (“Giải thích như thế nào về sự hào hứng của mọi người khi nói về tình dục trong những cuộc trò chuyện hằng ngày và thái độ ngại ngẩn khi đặt vấn đề nghiên cứu một cách nghiêm túc về nó”).<sup>31</sup> While ethnography remains an important and useful method in scholarship and will continue to contribute to our understanding, in the circumstances that Khuất Thu Hồng describes the study of print sources can prove valuable in at least two ways.

First, print sources can be as revealing about people’s sexuality if not more so in permitting a level of anonymity. This anonymity, whether real or imagined, allows a degree of frankness for someone to write about his or her sexuality, a frankness that might not otherwise be possible in the specific context that Khuất Thu Hồng describes. The value of print sources becomes evident when this essay examines anonymous letters-to-the-editor by self-identified homosexuals or by those who are questioning their sexuality. Such written sources are just as important in capturing people’s “lived” experience in Vietnam as oral ones.

Second, and more importantly, the print media represents one of the key pedagogical resources about sexual norms available to the people during this period. As some scholars have suggested, the primary source of sexual

education in Vietnam derives not from schools, teachers and the home, but in fact, the print media. In her study of the modes of sexual education in the 1990s among Vietnamese men and women between fifteen and twenty-nine years of age, Marie-Eve Blanc concludes that “neither school nor parents were their main sources. Books and newspapers seem to be the information sources most consulted.” She continues: “Books and printed matter are more convenient for an individual use and appealed to a perceived need for privacy and intimacy. There is no real difference between boys and girls.”<sup>32</sup> After the print media, “schools” came in second in serving as the other primary source of sexual pedagogy for the demographic in question. Blanc acknowledges a difference among the farming class who relied more on television, but the print media remains the main source for those belonging to the craftsmen, merchant, shopkeeper and intellectual classes. Thus, an examination of print sources is vital in understanding the sexual discourses available to a substantial segment of the Vietnamese population in this period.

To grasp how representative this archive is, it is necessary to understand the distribution of the documents within and across the historical period. Of the seventy non-fiction books identified, at least fifteen explicitly address the issue of “homosexuality.”<sup>33</sup> Looking at news coverage within a twenty-year time span yielded a total of 277 articles.<sup>34</sup> If Renovation is defined as the years ranging from 1986 to 1996, the vast majority of the documents were published after Renovation. We can attribute this higher density, in part, to the Social Evils campaign which began in early 1996 and picked up speed in the subsequent years.<sup>35</sup> Despite this uneven distribution, there is no significant change in the overall *thematic* substance across this historical divide—only a shift in the quantity of publications.

There is, however, a qualitative difference between the sources. Non-fiction books culled at the National Library in Hanoi were comprised mostly of sex education manuals written by medical professionals and addressed to curious youth, parents and families. Of the fifteen books that were identified, twelve belong to this genre, while the remaining three are translations of foreign works.<sup>36</sup> In regards to newspapers, articles published by the police or security agencies were far more preoccupied with lurid crime stories, theft and murder. By contrast, general-interest newspapers like the *Age of Youth* (Tuổi Trẻ) and *Youth* (Thanh Niên), while still reporting on homosexual

crime, published other kinds of special interest stories, including sexual health and love advice columns. It is difficult to provide exact percentages because, in any given article, several different problems could be at work simultaneously, and we cannot account for differing degrees of emphasis, connotation, allusion, implicit references and ellipses. Thus, even though I present these numbers to glean some general trends over time, I eschew for the most part a strictly quantitative approach. That said, having looked at these print sources in their entirety, I can still draw some general conclusions. Notably, the majority of the documents begin with the implicit premise that “homosexuality”—however it is conceived—is a problematic condition. By contrast, very few believed that homosexuality was a foreign import, enacting what Jacob Aronson has called the translocation of homosexuality to some “exotic foreign place outside Vietnam.”<sup>37</sup> In fact, one can find no more than ten articles that explicitly make this rhetorical move. The majority of the documents begin instead with the belief that homosexuality is a condition to which almost anyone can be susceptible. If gender is understood not as an immutable attribute but as a form of embodied practice within a symbolic field, then the idea of homosexual susceptibility is consistent with this essay’s argument concerning the centrality of gender-crossing in Vietnamese homosexual definition.

## The Background and Context

Before examining the primary documents, I provide in this section some background and context to the medical and State discourses that I suggest inflected the meaning of same-sex sexuality in this period. The first is a medical discourse derived from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European sexology. The second discourse is from the State through its “Cultured Family and Social Evils” campaigns, the details of which shall be elaborated further on.

### THE HOMOSEXUAL BODY IN THE DISCOURSE OF EUROPEAN MEDICAL SEXOLOGY

Scholars have identified two different but overarching kinds of sexological discourse that circulated in nineteenth-century Europe. The first kind, an anatomical lexicon, was dominant in the first half of that century. In this discourse, physiological anatomy exhausted, and hence determined, one’s

sexual identity. For example, medical scientists would search the body for visible proof of its sex by examining its contours, orifices, or genitalia (or lack thereof). Before the 1880s, according to Robert Nye, the anatomical taxonomies of sexual type dominated French medical discourse; the markers of sexual identity were comprised of the “‘typicality’ of the genitals, secondary sexual characters . . . and functional potency with a normally constituted member of the ‘opposite’ sex.”<sup>38</sup> Within this framework, male homosexuals were classified somewhere on the lower end of the spectrum of gender identity along with their neighbors, the hermaphrodites and “masculine” women, subjects whose feminine and masculine features were blurred or indistinguishable. This particular paradigm of surveillance and regulation was made famous, in part, by Foucault’s study of the nineteenth-century French hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin.<sup>39</sup>

The second kind of discourse, a psychiatric notion, which arose in tandem with the rise of certain medical institutions, predominated in the second half of that century and, arguably, well through much of the twentieth and the present. The latter paradigm gave rise to the concept of “sexuality” according to which a field of psychology and a psychological disposition were attached to sexual identity. One of the great innovations of European sexology was to link the exterior world of anatomy and physiology with the uncharted world of interiority. With the rise of psychiatry, anatomy and physiology gave way to psychology. Within the binary sex/gender system of the time,<sup>40</sup> a system that seems to persist even today, European sexologists formulated a number of theories to explain away the so-called anomaly of same-sex sexuality. One such theory was the idea of inversion. Describing the first French text that developed this idea, Nye explains that inversion was a “weakening . . . of the affective faculties which produced a ‘strange order of ideas’ giving rise to a genital appetite for the same sex.”<sup>41</sup> To the medical establishment, the male “invert” was “sterile, repellently effeminate, unstable, and afflicted with a congenital disorder.”<sup>42</sup> His erotic desire for the same sex derives from his effeminate features that were mapped onto his physiology and psychology. Inverts, it was supposed, “preferred manly men to men like themselves, who were ‘really’ women.”<sup>43</sup> This abnormal sexuality, according to Nye, is then “hypostatized into a ‘mode of selfhood’ and a ‘category of identity.’”<sup>44</sup> Hence, toward the end of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, European

medical psychiatrists identified a series of sexual disorders that were labeled as “perversions”—psychic deviations that helped define the effeminacy of gay men and masculinity of lesbians, now famously known as the “elementary inversion” of the so-called normal qualities of sexual difference.

Although scholars have located the first and second half of nineteenth-century Europe, respectively, as the periods during which each paradigm of homosexuality prevailed, both paradigms appear in the Vietnamese sources with relative frequency, evincing perhaps Sedgwick’s claim concerning the “unrationalized coexistence of different models” of homosexuality in the present era. The army and police newspapers tended to mix and confuse both paradigms, while some of the health manuals and general-interest newspapers tended to presuppose the second one. For this reason, I have used the term “gender-crossing” to encompass both paradigms.<sup>45</sup>

The precise route through which this sexological discourse made its way into the Vietnamese context remains yet to be fully understood. Changes in the power structures of Vietnamese society during the post-socialist market period, however, furnish a clue. As Nguyễn-Võ Thu-Hương has demonstrated, this period was marked by the rise of experts in psychology, medicine, epidemiology, criminology, sociology, economics, social work and more.<sup>46</sup> These experts led to the emergence of a new modality of power, namely that of normalization. This form of power created prescriptive standards to which people were supposed to subscribe. In the field of medicine, these standards were popularized through a variety of sex education manuals that prescribed, as Nguyễn-Võ Thu-Hương explains, a “new healthy way of living centering on sex and sexuality.”<sup>47</sup> It is conceivable that these health experts, along with the discourses they produced, served as a significant vector in the transmission of the European sexological discourse which, I suggest, contributed to shaping Vietnamese conceptions of homosexuality in this period. Before examining those conceptions, this essay will now characterize the second contributing factor, namely the State.

#### THE RENOVATION PERIOD AND AFTER: TRADITION, FAMILY AND THE RHETORIC OF PROPRIETY

In 1986 the Vietnamese Communist regime embarked on a new program (Đổi Mới)—also known as Renovation. Alarmed by a lagging economy and

fears of widespread hunger by its growing population, the regime adopted policies that altered agricultural means of production, welcomed foreign investment, attempted to reduce bureaucracy and curtail the one-Party's interference with many aspects of Vietnamese life.<sup>48</sup>

This transition also meant, however, that the State had to revise its political agenda to justify its ongoing authority. Before Renovation, the State would often invoke the banner of national liberation whenever it needed to call on its people's sacrifice. This sacrifice altered men's and women's lives dramatically. According to Harriet Phinney, this sacrifice meant a shift away from interpersonal love relationships towards a devotion to the State, leading to an entire generation of unmarried and childless women.<sup>49</sup> With the advent of Renovation and the shift to a market economy, the State no longer needed individuals to sacrifice themselves in the name of revolution. As a result, the State now had to devise other governmental means of exercising its power. One such means was to turn its gaze towards the ideals of the "happy" nuclear family.

The State created a diverse menu of popular mobilization movements to promote family values. Through its Cultured Family Program, for instance, the State targeted issues, such as health and hygiene, population control, general social conduct and, most importantly, women's behavior. In reproductive family matters, the government flexed its muscle and exercised its authority, perhaps even more so during Renovation than in previous eras.<sup>50</sup> Harriet Phinney explains: "Women were the principal targets of the family planning campaigns, the focal point for the state's efforts to produce a modern subjectivity. Women were advised when they could marry, what kind of man would be best to marry, when to bear children, and how far to space them apart. These prescriptions shape the timing and nature of family love." Phinney continues: "It is under the guise of helping people create and maintain happy families that the state maintains its authority through the microtechnologies of the family planning program, as well as through other programs implemented by the Women's Union."<sup>51</sup> The Cultured Family Program promoted, then, a rhetoric of modern propriety by encouraging, ironically, a return to traditional gender norms: "women" were thrust back to the domestic sphere and were required to demonstrate "feminine" attributes.

By 1996, the State initiated another program entitled the Social Evils Campaign. Decree 87/CP and 88/CP issued in late 1995 aimed at “consolidating the management of cultural activities and services and promoting the bans of some serious social evils.”<sup>52</sup> The State highlighted and waged a campaign to condemn such “vices”, including drugs, prostitution and pornography. The government first targeted foreign advertisements, cracked down on various forms of cultural production and then raided a variety of entertainment venues including rental stores, karaoke bars and dancing halls. As a response to the Pandora’s box the government itself helped unleash, this campaign partly reflected an anxiety over the erosion of the government’s power and influence. “Certainly the loss of control over society,” Templer explains, “troubled the Party and the government and their response was to launch the ‘social evils’ campaign.”<sup>53</sup>

The ostensible purpose of the campaign, however, was represented differently in the English and Vietnamese media. According to Wynn Wilcox, in the English press, this campaign sought to create a “drug-free, able-bodied workforce in compliance with international anti-trafficking efforts.” By contrast, the Vietnamese-language press saw the campaign as an effort to “reinvent the Vietnamese Communist Party as the gatekeeper of Vietnamese tradition.”<sup>54</sup> Regardless of its ostensible purpose, the campaign in both languages sought to regulate the ideals of the body, gender and sexuality. In this sense, we can interpret the Social Evils Campaign as the counterpart to the Cultured Family Campaign. In their insistence on traditional normative ideals, they are two sides of the same coin, mutually supporting each other’s rhetoric of propriety and impropriety. As we shall see, these State campaigns together with the medical discourses described in the prior section in turn affected the cultural construction of homosexuality in this period.

This brief excursion is intended to help provide the broader socio-political context for the primary documents in question. The essay now turns to an examination of those documents by looking at the labels used to name homosexuals. These labels will serve as the first piece of evidence in support of the claim that the prevailing meaning of homosexual identity in this period is synonymous with gender-crossing.

## The Characters and Players: the Categories of Homosexuality

Of the range of labels I shall survey, the term “pê-đê” (or “bê-đê”) represents the most enduring one in the Vietnamese cultural lexicon.<sup>55</sup> Used by the overseas community, the term reportedly hails from the period of the late 1960s to mid-1970s of the now defunct South Republic of Vietnam. It resurfaces during the Renovation period and makes perhaps its first appearance in a four-part reportage series entitled “Pede Love” (*Tình Pêđê*).<sup>56</sup> Published in 1987 by the *Ho Chi Minh City’s Police*, this report explains that the origin of the term “pêđê,” a diminutive for “pederasty,” referred to the “unnatural” relationships between a man and boy or another man. Although the phenomenon was ubiquitous under the former regime, according to this article, never has it been so widespread as it is now with the advent of the open-door policy. The article then warns that this “disease” is spreading rampantly. The epidemic is complicated by the fact that one cannot distinguish between the “real” and “fake” pedes (“pêđê bị bệnh thật sự và pêđê ‘dởm’”). Whereas the real ones are truly “ill,” the fake ones simply enjoy dressing up in the opposite gender: “men who pretend to be women or women, men” (“pêđê ‘dởm,’ nghĩa là trai mà giả gái hoặc gái mà giả trai”).<sup>57</sup> The implication is that the overt sign of a “pêđê”, whether real or fake, is his or her sex role reversal or gender inversion within a heterosexual regime. As George Chauncey has explained in a different context, the inverts’ desire for men was seen as a “manifestation of their fundamentally woman like character.”<sup>58</sup> Likewise, during Vietnam’s Renovation period, homosexuality was defined less by a distinct domain of sexuality as by one’s gender: the male homosexual’s practices, behaviors and desires belong more properly to those of a *woman*.

This idea is further supported by the prior article’s conclusion. After explaining that the “pêđê” phenomenon is an illness, the author then invokes the authority of the scientific community. Noting the frequency of these ambiguous bodies in both medical and penal institutions, the writer explains that it takes an “expert” to distinguish them. He states:

Science has referred to these half-male, half-female cases as inauthentic bisexuality (pseudo hermaphrodisme) which would require an expert’s hand



to separate the authentic from the fake ones. There is no clear-cut data in our country concerning this phenomenon but recently scientists discovered that in a village in Saint Domingue the population of inauthentic bisexuals comprised a disproportionate number . . . perhaps there were 38 cases infected with the . . . half-male, half-female disease. According to some foreign news sources, in cases where doctors have affirmatively diagnosed that someone as half-male/half-female, inflicted with the bisexual ‘disease,’ the doctor can intervene by way of surgery to help the ‘victim’ return to his or her proper gender” (French in original, my emphasis).<sup>59</sup>

Ở các cơ quan y tế hoặc ở các trại giam thỉnh thoảng vẫn gặp những trường hợp bán nam bán nữ mà khoa học gọi là hiện tượng lưỡng tính giả (pseudo hermaphrodisme) phải nhờ đến ‘bàn tay’ chuyên môn để kết luận đối tượng thuộc giới tính nào, xin hay là dờm. Ở nước ta, chưa có một thống kê rõ ràng về hiện tượng này, nhưng gần đây, các nhà khoa học phát hiện ra trong một làng Saint Domingue, những trường hợp lưỡng tính giả chiếm một tỉ lệ cao đến mức không ngờ . . . có đến 38 trường hợp bị bệnh . . . nửa đàn ông, nửa đàn bà. Theo một số tài liệu sách báo nước ngoài, gần đây các trường hợp bán nam bán nữ được khám nghiệm, xác định là mắc ‘bệnh’ lưỡng tính, bác sĩ có thể can thiệp bằng phẫu thuật để đưa ‘nạn nhân’ trở về với giới tính của mình một cách ‘hoàn chỉnh.’

I have provided the passage above to show how it moves seamlessly from a notion of “pêđê,” understood as gender inversion, to that of “bisexuality,” understood as hermaphroditism. There is no distinction between these terms except the distinction between the “real” and “fake” homosexual whose detection requires expert knowledge. “Bisexuality” in no way refers to the desire for one’s sexual object choice, that is, for both men and women, but designates the corporeal constitution of one’s gender. In this sense, the “bisexuality” of the pêđê refers to the fact that “he” acts much like a “she,” exhibiting a complex composite of both male and female attributes. Hence, sexuality in this context is not a separate domain of identity understood in the rhetoric of erotic object-choice. To the extent that one “has” a sexuality, it is intricately tied up with the cultural notions of gender.

Indeed, throughout the Renovation and Post-Renovation periods, the idea of “bisexuality” was often synonymous with the figure of the transgendered or hermaphroditic which was in turn one of the co-existing paradigms of homosexuality. This meaning of “bisexuality” is illustrated in another

document. Published in 1992, the article “A man gives birth” reported on the case of a Filipino hermaphrodite who was six months pregnant and, apparently, under the watch of the World Health Organization since 1985. The article states:

Carlo is a man from the Philippines who is pregnant and hopes to give birth in the next month after surgery to his uterus. Doctors state that this 32 year old man, a nurse, has been pregnant for six months. This man is of the *lưỡng tính* type, with a set of both sexual organs intact.<sup>60</sup>

Carlo một người đàn ông ở Philippines đã có chửa từ lâu và hy vọng ông sẽ đẻ vào tháng tới sau lần phẫu thuật tử cung. Người đàn ông 32 tuổi, làm y tá, mà bác sĩ nói ông đã có bầu cách nay 6 tháng. Ông này thuộc dạng **lưỡng tính**, có đủ cả 2 cơ quan sinh dục.

Although the report was taken from a foreign news sources, the vocabulary used in this piece reveals something of the historical character of the local lexicon. On the basis of the passage’s context, the term *lưỡng tính* is best translated to mean either “transgendered” or “hermaphroditic.” In fact, the latter meaning is what the Institute of Linguistics provides in its *Vietnamese-English Dictionary* first published in 1987: *lưỡng tính* is listed as “hermaphrodite”<sup>61</sup>—not “bisexual”, as it is now translated and understood to mean in the paradigm of erotic object choice.

The meaning of “*lưỡng tính*” understood as hermaphroditism is consistent with the usage of at least three other sex education manuals published in 1995, 1997 and 2001, respectively. The first two are penned by medical doctors. In the 1995 manual the doctor referred to the French term “bisexualité” not as *lưỡng tính* but as “having two sexual instincts” (“2 bản năng tính dục”).<sup>62</sup> The fact that the doctor did not translate the term bisexuality as *lưỡng tính* suggests that the latter term lacked meaning within the paradigm of erotic object choice. This point is further corroborated by the 1997 manual. One of the questions posed in the manual is whether *lưỡng tính* (or *lưỡng phái*) youth develop any problems at puberty. In response, the group of doctors state: “If one is using the term *lưỡng phái*, someone who is both male and female, then certainly there will be unusual issues in every aspect: appearance, secondary sexual development, psychology and behavior” (“Đã gọi là lưỡng phái, một người vừa nam lại vừa nữ, thì chắc chắn sẽ có nhiều

bất thường về mọi mặt: hình thái, phái tính thứ phát, tâm lý, hành vi).<sup>63</sup> The doctors thus disclose in their reply the meaning of the term *lưỡng tính* in *lưỡng tính*, or equivalently the prefix “bi” in bisexuality, to mean a mixture of male and female attributes. Finally, in the 2001 manual, the author explains that *lưỡng tính* refers to “people with both male and female sexual attributes or who have both male and female reproductive organs” (“người về mặt giới tính có cả tính nam và nữ hoặc cơ quan sinh dục có cả của nam và của nữ”). The author continues: “People tend to call them half male, half female” (“Người ta hay gọi là ái nam ái nữ”).<sup>64</sup> This meaning of the term *lưỡng tính* is consistent with the usage in the prior document concerning the case of the pregnant hermaphroditic man.

Yet, the term *lưỡng tính* is now often understood to mean “bisexual” in the paradigm of erotic object choice. To help bring this linguistic point into sharp relief, consider the changing definition of the word itself. A dictionary published in 2004 by the World Publishing House, long known for its translation of foreign works, translates the term *lưỡng tính* as “bisexual; ambisexual.”<sup>65</sup> This is also the translation provided by some of the other manuals that I consulted. One manual published in 2005 explains the term bisexual as, “people who have sexual and emotional needs from both sexes” (“đó là người có nhu cầu quan hệ tình cảm và nhu cầu sinh lý với cả hai giới”).<sup>66</sup> This definition of “bisexuality” is consistent with the contemporary global “LGBT” paradigm, which says one’s sexuality is defined by object choice. This current definition, however, fails to capture the earlier meaning of “bisexuality” understood as hermaphroditism which represented one of the co-existing paradigms of homosexuality in this period.

Like the discourse of “pêđê,” the term used for lesbian sexuality exhibits a strikingly parallel trajectory. “Ô-Môi” is purportedly derived from the name of a tropical fruit in Vietnam. Due to the way it is consumed, it is also the informal Vietnamese argot for “lesbian.” Others believe, however, that the term has nothing to do with a tropical fruit but represents a diminutive of the French term “homosexuelle.”<sup>67</sup> Whatever its origin, the term “ô-Môi” traveled with the overseas community and was later appropriated as the name of a southern California ethnic support group of lesbians, bisexuals, and female-to-male transgenders.<sup>68</sup> Like “pêđê,” the term “ô-môi” also remained in circulation in the Saigonese Renovation press. One article

explains that while these “gangs” of lesbians appear perfectly “feminine” at birth, they later come to look increasingly masculine and at times even more mannish than men. The writer explains:

When their parents bore them, these young women exhibited all the feminine attributes of the female sex. But as they grew up, they enjoyed wearing men’s clothes, displaying men’s behaviors and mannerisms, enjoyed befriending and courting other women to be their girlfriends so that they could love each other just like boyfriends and girlfriends. In order to distinguish the word ‘pede’ which refers to male homosexuality, people called these types ‘ô-môi,’ that is, female homosexuality.<sup>69</sup>

Khi cha mẹ sinh ra, số thiếu nữ này có đầy đủ đặc điểm, giới tính của phái nữ. Nhưng khi lớn lên họ thích mặc đồ con trai, có những tác phong cử chỉ như con trai, thích làm quen tán tỉnh các cô gái khác để căn bô, để yêu đương như con trai với con gái. Để phân biệt với chữ ‘pêđê’ chỉ đồng tính luyến ái nam, người ta gọi những người này là ‘ô môi,’ tức đồng tính ái nữ.”

Just as the term “pêđê” is embodied in the effeminate cross-dressing male homosexual, so too the term “ô-môi” refers to one kind of lesbian sexuality and gender identification. I say “one” kind, because needless to say, there can be a broad spectrum. Yet, in the dominant press, the definition of a lesbian in no way adheres to what Esther Newton has wryly called the “first” principle of lesbian feminism: “woman-identified woman.”<sup>70</sup> Rather, according to these documents, the “ô-môi” is a woman whose sex, gender, practice and desire ought to belong more properly to those of a man. Consider, for example, the rhetoric that a recent document deploys in describing this population. “In the World of the Ô-Môi,” a report published in 2005, we observe the recurrence of the topos of authenticity: “People refer to female homosexuality as ‘ô-môi’. There are the real ô-môi and there are the . . . fakes ones.”<sup>71</sup> The writer continues, “The world of the ô-môi is fairly complex with constant changes in psycho-physiology.”<sup>72</sup> Whereas the “real” ones exhibit “congenital” (“bẩm sinh”) bodily features resembling that of a man, the “fake” ones merely enjoy behaving and dressing like one. In describing this phenomenon, the article supplies an illuminating first-hand account of an ô-môi. S/he explains:

Since I was growing up, I had always felt that I was not normal like most other girls. Even though everyone considered me a girl, in my own mind, I always thought I was a boy! In the countryside, I was afraid of the gossip, so I was

always ‘acting’ the role of someone else. Here [in Ho Chi Minh City], nobody knows anyone and so I can live as I truly wish.<sup>73</sup>

Từ lúc mới lớn, tui đã cảm nhận mình không bình thường như những bạn gái khác. Mặc dù ai cũng coi tui là con gái, nhưng trong thân tâm, tui luôn nghĩ mình là con trai! Ở quê, sợ mọi người bàn tán nên tui luôn phải ‘đóng vai’ một người khác. Còn ở đây, chẳng ai biết ai nên tui được sống thực với những gì mình muốn.

The prior speaker represents one of the so-called “fake” *ô-môi* insofar as she appears to lack overt male bodily features. Nevertheless, this example of the *ô-môi* shows how, within the terms of the dominant culture, “she” ought to be a “he”—and a “fake” one at that. Hence, even as late as 2005, the discourse of gender-crossing still powerfully governed the understanding of homosexuality in these documents.

Besides “*pêđê*” and “*ô-môi*”, there are at least two other prevalent terms used to describe homosexuality. The first is “female contaminated shadow” (*bóng lại cái*), or simply “shadow” (*bóng*), commonly used in reference to homosexual men. In this study, the first source that I found employing this term appears as early as 1987 in the “*Pêđê Love*” reportage series, whose writer suggests that the term, in fact, can be traced to the former southern regime: “[T]he phenomenon of ‘homosexuality,’ half-male/half-female, shadow, *pêđê* also existed in the former regime”.<sup>74</sup> This expression parallels its other sister names in referring to the gender of the homosexual. As another article explains, these “shadows” can be divided into two groups: the “open” (*bóng lộ*) and “closed” (*bóng kín*) ones. Whereas the “closed ones” appear masculine on the outside, they are actually “weak” on the inside—“just like a woman.”<sup>75</sup> By contrast, the “open shadows” are presumably woman-like throughout. “Shadow” is also the title of a homosexual autobiography<sup>76</sup> published in Hanoi and the name of the supposedly first play about this subject in the overseas community—dramatized in Little Saigon, Westminster, California on October 3, 2009. “When the Shadows Assume a Figure” (*Khi Bóng Đã Say Hình*) was written and directed by Nguyễn Thị Minh Ngọc, a renowned Saigonese playwright. In the advertisement for the drama,<sup>77</sup> the narrator states that the play is the first overseas production about the “third sex.” The “third sex” (“*giới tính thứ ba*”), by which is meant a woman “trapped” in a man’s body (or vice versa), is the

other prevalent term for homosexuality.<sup>78</sup> Both terms—“shadow” and the “third sex”—are used interchangeably. They acquired linguistic currency in the Post-Renovation period in May of 2005 when the State passed a law permitting sex-change operations.<sup>79</sup>

Finally, the words “gay” and “lesbian” seem to lack traction in these documents. They do surface now and then and increasingly so today with the rise of the global “LGBT” discourse. But within the historical period under examination (1986 to 2005), their usage is in competition with a range of other discourses that have longer and more complex histories. The evidence bears out this point. Among the news sources culled, the first article to invoke the word “gay” was published in 1997.<sup>80</sup> Since then, there have been only a dozen articles, more or less, that used this term. Of the non-fiction books garnered, the earliest publication that touched on homosexuality appeared in 1992 but made no use of these terms whatsoever; instead, the writer employed the formal term “homosexuality” (đồng tính luyến ái).<sup>81</sup> The first book to use the phrase “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered” was published in 2001.<sup>82</sup> Hence, within the time frame of this study, the vocabulary of “gay” and “lesbian” lacked popular usage. In retrospect, this outcome is not surprising given that these terms themselves were relatively recent products within U.S. history<sup>83</sup> and that their emergence as a set of global discourses<sup>84</sup> would not have influenced Vietnam substantially prior to the two countries’ economic and political normalization in 1995.

Although the evidence I have offered thus far is by no means comprehensive,<sup>85</sup> it does provide a general overview and lexical key to the documents ahead. It also demonstrates how the European sexological discourse of gender-crossing has somehow survived in the Vietnamese one throughout the 1980s and 1990s. As an exemplary piece of this body of evidence, I would like to turn to a memoir by a young local queer author. In *Not Alone in a Strange Land* (Không Lạc Loài),<sup>86</sup> Phạm Thành Trung recounts his trials and tribulations living in Hanoi’s queer subcultural life through the eighties and nineties. Reflecting on the episode when his father discovered the son’s queerness, the author notes, “But when he discovered that I loved and entered into relationships only with men, all those dreams of his suddenly collapsed.” Phạm Thành Trung continues, “In reality, he was unable to overcome the prejudices that society at large had singled out for homosexuals in such

contemptuous terms it had created for them, such as: ‘pê-đẻ’, ‘shadow’, ‘hermaphrodite’ (At that time, the term ‘gay’ was not yet in common usage).<sup>87</sup> In this passage, Phạm Thành Trung does not mention the lesbian term *ô-môi* or the more recent coinage, the “third sex.” Despite these omissions, he nonetheless helps distill—and further substantiate—the contention that the prevailing perception of the homosexual is filtered predominately through terms that demonstrate the centrality of gender to the cultural construction of homosexuality. This particular understanding of homosexuality is not in itself pernicious. Yet, as Phạm Thành Trung indicates, these terms are far from neutral denominations, serving rather as pregnant signifiers conveying social contempt (*đầy miệt thị*).

### The Contours of the Homosexual Body in Vietnamese Popular Discourse

In this section I provide further evidence of the meaning of homosexuality by examining in closer detail the popular sources that were gathered. This section is organized into three categories of evidence: 1) sex education manuals, 2) police and army newspapers and, 3) general-interest newspapers. To make the case that the prevailing meaning of homosexuality in these documents is synonymous with gender-crossing, I present examples from each category, highlighting themes that are distinctive to each. Sex education manuals were usually employed for the explanation of the etiology of homosexuality. The police and security newspapers were preoccupied with lurid crime stories. Finally, general-interest newspapers, while still reporting on homosexual crime, published sexual health and love advice columns. By demonstrating examples from across the textual genres, it is hoped that one can glean something of the circulation and sheer ubiquity of the gender-crossing discourse in the construction of homosexual definition.

#### THE GENDER-CROSSING HOMOSEXUAL IN SEX EDUCATION MANUALS

Some of the sex education manuals have already been introduced in the prior section on terminology. Here I drive home the argument concerning the meaning of homosexuality by looking at some of the manuals more closely.

One manual that stands out in particular is *Sexual Education* (Giáo Dục Tính Dục). Published in 1995 by Đào Xuân Dũng, a medical doctor affiliated with the Institute for Research on Gender, Family and Development (Trung tâm nghiên cứu giới tính, gia đình và môi trường trong phát triển), the manual devotes a chapter to the topic of homosexuality entitled, “The Aberrations of Sexual Activity” (Những Sai Lạc Về Hành Vi Tình Dục). The chapter is organized much like a medical report with a description of the problem, symptoms, diagnosis and prognosis. One of the sections of the chapter is entitled “abnormal morphology,” in which the doctor states the following:

For the most part both male and female homosexuals have normal interior and exterior reproductive organs and are capable of normal sexual intercourse and can reproduce. The male homosexual has a feminine appearance and the female homosexual a masculine one revealing her sexual preferences even more clearly.<sup>88</sup>

Phần lớn những người đồng tính luyến ái của cả 2 giới đều có cơ quan sinh dục ngoài và trong bình thường, đủ khả năng để có hoạt động tình dục bình thường và có thể sinh sản. Những người tình dục đồng giới nam có dáng nữ và những người tình dục đồng giới nữ có dáng nam bộc lộ sở thích tình dục của họ còn rõ rệt hơn.

It is not clear, at first, whether the doctor is implying that homosexuals who display abnormal morphology exhibit opposite-gender attributes or whether opposite-gender attributes are constitutive of homosexuals in general. But given that the purpose of the chapter is to elaborate on the “aberrations of sexual activity” and that homosexuality is grouped under this heading, the interpretive weight seems to fall on the second reading. Indeed, the rest of the chapter provides an overview of the nature versus nurture account of homosexuality. The doctor writes: “The most important issue is to determine whether the cause of homosexuality is due to bodily constitution or acquired from elsewhere” (“Điểm quan trọng nhất là phải xác định tình dục đồng giới do cấu trúc của cơ thể [constitutionnelle] hay mắc phải [acquire]”) (French in original).<sup>89</sup> The doctor will conclude in favor of the biological account, enumerating various theories concerning hormones, genes and other mechanisms to explain the problem of “misplaced object choice” (xu hướng sai



lạc). The doctor's attempt to resolve the "aberration" of homosexuality mirrors the efforts of early-twentieth-century European sexologists who tried to account for this phenomenon by endowing the male homosexual with effeminate attributes and female homosexuals with the opposite. In so doing, they were able to reinforce the prevailing binary sex/gender system. As Foucault has written, the homosexual becomes for these experts a "personage, a past, a case history" that brings into being a "morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy . . . a mysterious physiology."<sup>90</sup> In this document, it is now clear that opposite gender attributes are not atypical but fundamental to the homosexual's constitution. Hence, the homosexual's morphology is understood through a gender-crossing discourse.

This gender-crossing discourse recurs in another sex education manual. Penned by a medical doctor and published in 2004, *Mother, Why?* (Mẹ ơi, tại sao?) contains answers to a variety of questions that are presumably addressed to young adults. One of the questions posed is the following: "Why are some people disparagingly called a 'pê-đê'?" (Tại sao có người bị gọi là 'pê-đê?'). In reply, the doctor states:

There are some people with clearly broad shoulders and muscles yet walk and stand gracefully even putting on lipstick and powder before going out and when they speak they deliberately raise the pitch of their voice, and then there are some girls who stand and walk slowly and cut their hair short like a tomboy and wear men's clothes. People commonly call those kinds of people homosexuals, gay, or pê-đê with condescension.<sup>91</sup>

Có những người vai u thịt bắp rõ ràng nhưng lại đi đứng yếu điệu, thậm chí tô son đánh phấn khi ra ngoài và khi nói thì cổ tình uốn éo giọng nói hoặc có những cô gái lại đi đứng khệnh khạng, cắt tóc tém, mặc quần áo con trai. Người ta thường gọi những người đó là kẻ đồng tính luyến ái, gay, hay pê-đê với sự coi thường.

The doctor then proceeds by distinguishing between two types of homosexuals: the "fake" and the "real" ones. Whereas the "fake" homosexuals desire people of the same-sex due to social or cultural conditions, the "real" ones exhibit such desire due to hormonal imbalances. As an example of the first type, the doctor suggests the case of a girl who is raised by her family to embody the gender comportment of a "boy." The doctor explains:

The condition of homosexuality has many different causes. The most basic one stems from external forces, such as when there is a family full of girls, the family decides to raise the youngest one as a boy, dressing her up as a boy, applying “coercion” or “propaganda” as pedagogical measures leading the girl to behave like a boy. Such cases would be called ‘fake’ homosexuality.<sup>92</sup>

[T]ình trạng đồng tính có nhiều hình thức khác nhau, đơn giản nhất là do tác động của bên ngoài, như trong một gia đình sinh toàn con gái đến cô con út bèn quyết định cho cô bé thành con trai, bằng cách mặc đồ con trai và áp dụng các biện pháp giáo dục ‘cưỡng chế’ hay ‘tuyên truyền’ khiến cho cô bé có thể sẽ có những hành vi như con trai . . . Các hình thức này gọi là đồng giới ‘giả.’

The distinction between the “real” versus “fake” homosexual echoes the rhetoric observed in the “Pede Love” series in the *Ho Chi Minh City’s Police* newspaper. In both cases, the documents imply that homosexuality can be visibly manifested and detected through gender-crossing practices and behavior. Thus, in the case of the young woman in the prior passage, the sign of her “fake homosexuality” is demonstrated by the way her family raises her and dresses her up like a “boy.”

Conversely, the “real” homosexual, according to the doctor, is affected by biological conditions such as hormonal imbalances. In such circumstances, a young man may fail to develop distinct male features. This lack of developmental growth in turn impacts his psychology leading him to become attracted to other men who exhibit more “masculine” qualities. The doctor explains:

There are other types [of homosexuals] who are affected by hormones. They are biologically male with male reproductive organs but do not mature and develop properly. They lack a beard and their voice still has the pitch of a child . . . That in turn affects their psychology leading them to be interested in other young men who exhibit more masculine qualities. The reverse is true with young women who enjoy associating themselves with those of the same-sex. . . . These are the real homosexuals.<sup>93</sup>

Còn những người khác do tác động của hormone sinh dục là con trai nhưng các bộ phận sinh dục nam lại không phát triển, không có râu, tiếng nói vẫn cứ như lúc còn con nít . . . Điều đó tạo nên những tác động về tâm lý, khiến cho cậu thanh niên này lại quan tâm đến những người thanh niên có nam tính mạnh mẽ. Hay ngược lại có những người cô gái nhưng chỉ thích quan hệ với những người cùng phái với mình . . . Đây là những người đồng tính ‘thật.’”

This explanation again bears a suspicious resemblance to the etiological theories of European sexology, namely the theory of sexual inversion. In the prior passage the doctor resolves the problem of homosexuality by linking the failure of “male” physiological development, the lack of a beard, the high-pitch voice—that is, the display of so-called effeminate attributes—with psychological conditions that predispose him toward more “masculine” men. In any case, my point is that the meaning of homosexuality in this and other sex education manuals is filtered primarily through a gender-crossing discourse.

That said, not all manuals understood homosexuality as gender-crossing. A minority of them attempted to clarify to their readers a distinction between the two. *Answers to Questions about Gender*, for example, makes a distinction between homosexuality and transsexuality. Published in 2001, one of the questions posed in the manual is the following: “Are men who put on lipstick and makeup and who speak like a woman, those who are often referred to as *pêđê*, homosexuals?” (“Những người đàn ông phấn son lòe loẹt, ăn nói như phụ nữ mà ta hay gọi là *pêđê*, có phải là đồng tính luyến ái không?”) In response the manual states:

Actually to call people described above as *pêđê* is not correct. *Pêđê* has its origins in the French language. *Pédéraste* refers to male-male homosexual relations. People described above are not homosexuals but are *xuyên giới tính* (trans-sexual). In terms of appearance male homosexuals are no different than ordinary people and may sometimes appear even more ‘manly.’<sup>94</sup>

Thực sự gọi những người được mô tả ở trên là *pêđê* thì không đúng. *Pêđê* bắt nguồn từ tiếng Pháp. *Pédéraste* chỉ những người có quan hệ đồng tính nam-nam. Những người được nêu ở trên không phải là đồng tính ái mà là xuyên giới tính (trans-sexual). Về ngoại hình, người đồng tính ái nam chẳng có gì khác biệt với người bình thường, nhiều khi còn vẻ ‘đàn ông’ hơn nữa”

My point here is not to adjudicate which theories or categories most correctly describe people’s sexuality or gender (or both). Scholars have demonstrated how the relationship between discursive categories and human subjectivities are complex and shifting.<sup>95</sup> The point rather is to reconstruct the categories available in Vietnam during this period and to place them in historical context. In the context of the times, I argue, the meaning of homosexuality was predominately understood through a gender-crossing discourse.

THE GENDER-CROSSING HOMOSEXUAL IN POLICE  
AND SECURITY NEWSPAPERS

Like the sex education manuals, the police and security newspapers were also fixated on the corporeal constitution of the homosexual. Like the medical experts who delineated and categorized the homosexual, his physiology, his anatomy, his psyche, the army and security newspapers also positioned themselves as experts equipped with the knowledge to detect, expose and prevent crime. In her study of the State's regulation of female prostitution, Nguyễn-Võ Thu-Hương has observed that the "police created categories of criminals, building a knowledge of types of criminality." She continues: "The police's own sensational accounts of the perpetual contest between criminal tactics and police response built up the ever more intricate science of policing and criminology."<sup>96</sup> In this section, I suggest that the defining feature of the homosexual, indeed its criminality, in this newspaper genre was embodied precisely in its gender-crossing morphology.

A core group of documents, for example, recounts the narrative of the homosexual as a deceptive prostitute. Like the names used to refer to homosexuals, these documents display a heightened fixation over the prostitute's gender. The male homosexual, dressed as a woman, is portrayed as beguiling his "innocent" clients. The clients, usually straight men, are portrayed as artless consumers who have received "fake goods." Let us look at a typical narrative. In an article entitled "A Flower Seeks Clients,"<sup>97</sup> the homodiegetic narrator "Mr. H" rides his bicycle through the parks of Hanoi one summer evening. He bumps into a young woman and asks her for directions. She glances "coquettishly" (*lúng liếng*) at him, and the two decide to head to a dark corner. Before they exchange "confidences" (*tâm sự*), the man hands her a sum of money. No sooner does she accept the cash than she runs off without having delivered the "goods" ("hàng hóa"). He chases after her only to find rubber garters falling from her breasts. The man pauses and stands "transfixed" and "stupefied" ("sững sờ"; "lặng người"). At this point, the diegesis also stops. Like a government health advisory, the authorial narrator intervenes to warn his audiences to beware of young male "pêđê" or homosexuals who dress up as "fake women" and "fake prostitutes" ("đóng giả phụ nữ và làm giả nghề 'mại dâm'"). As another article asks, "Why do they dress up as women? Yes! They are sick people carrying in their body the illness of

homosexuality” (“Tại sao chúng lại đồng giả đàn bà? Vâng! Họ là những người bệnh hột mang trong mình căn bệnh đồng tính luyến ái”).<sup>98</sup>

At issue here is the rhetorical style in which these narratives are written and the way it conducts an ideology of sexuality and gender. In the prior article, why is the emphasis on the marked body of the prostitute and homosexual? Why is the headline not: “Heterosexual man purchases sex in the park”? Rather than focus on the heterosexual man’s actions, the narrative is concerned about his interest as a client. The periodical does not warn its implied male audience to obey the law and avoid purchasing sex, as one might expect from the police and army; the article functions instead much like a consumer report. In these reports, the anxiety follows not from the sexual act or stolen valuables so much as from the prostitute’s gender. The homosexual cross-dresser enacts her female role so well that “innocent” men are falling prey to false advertising. As the title of one article makes clear, these prostitutes are selling “fake flowers,”<sup>99</sup> a euphemism for their sex. The climax of these narratives usually takes place when the male client stands frozen—“stunned” upon learning that he has been “duped” by a “fake” prostitute. The figure of the fake prostitute, in turn, is repeatedly associated with the “homosexual” as if both are one and the same.

This fixation over the ambiguous body of the homosexual is further dramatized in the fictional detective-thriller, “The Crime that does not Wear a Woman’s Face.”<sup>100</sup> Serialized for six months from March to August of 1990, this twenty-one part story opens with a dead female prostitute lying on a table.<sup>101</sup> Doctors, nurses, and the police surround the corpse that is covered over by a blanket. As one of the nurses unveils the corpse, everyone is struck with bewilderment. Another nurse remarks, “Perhaps a pede?” (“Chắc là pê-đê?”). Another cries out, “A woman but with . . . guns!” (“Đàn bà nhưng có . . . súng!”).<sup>102</sup> Needless to say, “guns” here is used as a euphemism for the male sexual organs. It is not entirely clear why the body in question is considered a “woman;” perhaps the nurse’s judgment was based on a prior expectation or on the presence of certain bodily features; or perhaps the victim is a hermaphrodite. Whatever the case, the story leaves the gender identity of the corpse a mystery and as a leitmotif. Forensic scientists are called in, charged with the task of determining the body’s true sex, which in the context of the story is presumed to be aligned if not

synonymous with gender. As a work of fiction, this serialized novella allegorizes the perceived inscrutability of the homosexual and his gender-ambiguous body.

In another article, the reader is introduced to the “tricks” deployed by this growing population of *pê-đê*s. In the center is a picture of two young men sitting at the police station accused of “pretending” to dress as women. The article begins with a familiar narrative: You are taking a leisurely stroll in the park and decide to rest your feet on some stone benches. You see some attractive young ladies approaching you. “If you are fawn that cannot tell the difference between a real and fake ‘lady,’” the narrator warns, “who knows what the night will hold for you?” The narrator continues: “Maybe you will escape her trap, or perhaps you will have gone nowhere before finding that your wrist watch has been snatched, your wallet missing, your bicycle gone.”<sup>103</sup> The point of the story cannot simply be to alert readers of this impending social disease and to warn straight men to keep up their guard. Rather, the article also implies that the “fawn” must learn how to be far more experienced in sexual matters. Like a vigilant consumer, he must now be able to distinguish between the real and fake goods. And this article—along with the many others that grew explosively during this period—would instruct him on how best to discern this nascent and emerging character, notorious for his or her gender inscrutability: the homosexual prostitute.

Finally, as one last example, in a five-part series, the *Ho Chi Minh City's Police* tracked the story of a lesbian love murder. “The Ending of a Rare Kind of Love” was first reported in December of 1988 and followed up in August of 1989.<sup>104</sup> After relating the circumstances in which the two women, Ngọc Hà and Đức Thuận, met and fell in love, the author describes their break-up. Đức Thuận confesses to Ngọc Hà that she no longer loves her. The latter “drops” her head, looks up and then cries: “Have you forgotten our cup of sororal blood?” A flash of jealousy seizes Ngọc Hà who plots to kill her ex-girlfriend. The diegesis pauses at this moment of suspension, as the intrusive narrator tries to explain: Ms. Ngọc Hà is no longer moved by the seductions of the opposite sex; she is struck with the “diabolic disease of homosexuality” (“căn bệnh quái ác đồng tính luyến ái”). “The homosexual disease which is commonly known as PD [*Pê-đê*],” the narrator continues, “is presently a problem in the fields of medicine, ethics and psychoanalysis,

a disease which does not yet have a cure.”<sup>105</sup> The article then fast forwards to the murder scene. After slitting her ex-lover’s throat, Ms. Ngọc Hà looks at the palm of her hands “soaked” in Ms. Đức Thuận’s blood which was “spurting out like a red stream.” One need hardly remark on the article’s attempt to implicate homosexuality and homicidal conduct wherein one becomes the external marker for the other. As if the pathology of the homosexual were not clear enough to the reader, in the final article of the series, the writer drives home the point: “Ms. Đức Thuận’s death is the alarm bell reminding people who have a responsibility to monitor ‘unnatural’ love relationships in boys and girls; their responsibility is to teach proper sex and gender education.” As a warning to parents everywhere, the author concludes: “families who enjoy dressing up their girls as boys and vice versa could cause their children psychological problems.”<sup>106</sup> The implication is clear: homosexuality led Ms. Ngọc Hà to commit murder, and if one dresses children up like a homosexual, they may commit murder like Ms. Ngọc Hà. Through a circular logic, gender-crossing homosexuality becomes both the cause and effect of Ngọc Hà’s murderous behavior.

#### THE GENDER-CROSSING HOMOSEXUAL IN GENERAL NEWSPAPERS

Further evidence of the twinning of homosexuality with gender-crossing surfaces in the letters that people send to the editor. Most of these documents come from “queer and questioning” readers who write in search of advice about their “strange” sexual feelings. In the process, they furnish us with evidentiary traces of the lived experience of homosexuality in this period.

At this point, it is worth introducing Trần Bồng Sơn, a medical doctor and well-known advice columnist in the Vietnamese print media. Until his death in 2004, Dr. Trần Bồng Sơn was known for almost two decades for his column in the *Age of Youth* (Tuổi Trẻ), the title of which is roughly translated as, “I have questions but don’t know whom to ask” (“Thắc mắc biết hỏi ai”).<sup>107</sup> With respect to the number and kinds of inquiries he receives, Dr. Trần Bồng Sơn once remarked in 1996: “So far, I have received over three thousand letters through the newspaper columns, and five thousand calls through [the radio program] Central Station 108. Over 95% percent of them are inquiries about sex and husband-and-wife activities”<sup>108</sup>

His column was also one of the few public outlets where people could turn to for questions about their homosexuality or that of their loved ones—as well as a place to which self-identified queers, in their anguish, submitted suicides notes. For example, in one article, a 24-year-old Ho Chi Minh City reader explained his problem. He confesses: “When I was very young, I had always sensed that something was not right about me, as if I had a woman’s soul trapped in a man’s body.”<sup>109</sup> The writer continues: “Oh Doctor! . . . I am very afraid of people’s advice: Just get married and your illness will be cured! Stop imagining things!”<sup>110</sup> After rejecting marriage as a viable solution, he ends his note with suicidal thoughts. The doctor responds to the note, admitting that he is somewhat perplexed because he does not know whether the writer is attracted to men or women. He then states, “I suspect you are probably a homosexual” (“Theo tôi nghĩ thì em là người đồng tính ái”). The doctor then explains that in the twentieth century there is no cure for the “illness of homosexuality.” Unlike hermaphrodites, the doctor explains, homosexuals exhibit no overt bodily symptoms. Therefore, there is no need for surgery.

The prior exchange evinces the efficacy if not power of the twin discourses of medicine and the State to inflect the meaning of homosexuality. The medical discourse is reflected in Dr. Trần Bồng Sơn’s response which can be interpreted differently depending on the context. Is the doctor *clarifying* to his reader the difference between homosexuality and the condition of “being a woman trapped in a man’s body”? Recent scholarship, for instance, argues that the latter condition is distinct in and of itself.<sup>111</sup> Or is the doctor implying that a common symptom of homosexuality is to feel trapped in the wrong sexed body? The latter interpretation seems more plausible. The prior exchange took place in 1992. In another article of the same year, the doctor explains that homosexuality is a problem of “misdirected object choice” (“lệch lạc đối tượng”).<sup>112</sup> Five years later, in another document, the doctor admits that medicine had once considered homosexuality a “mental” problem but that the World Health Organization has now removed it from the world’s list of “diseases.”<sup>113</sup>

If the doctor’s reply above reveals traces of the sexological discourse, the State’s ideology is likewise reflected in the reader’s inquiry. The reader notes that people are encouraging him/her to get married: “Just get married and



your illness will be cured!” Even though the reader believes marriage would merely exacerbate his/her problem, everyone else seems to think the opposite: the family form has become not only the ideal to which all proper subjects ought to aspire, but also the unquestioned remedy to one’s sexual problems. Writing on the cultured family campaigns of this period, Lisa Drummond has observed that the “slogans and exhortations of mobilization campaigns are an unavoidable feature of the physical and social landscape.” She continues: “[I]n some areas, households which have attained the Cultured Family standards are given plaques which serve to designate their house as sheltering a Cultured Family.”<sup>114</sup> The rhetoric of marriage in the prior exchange between the doctor and the reader most likely represents a manifestation of the State’s discourse of the cultured nuclear family.

Indeed, the power of the twin discourses of medicine and the State is illustrated in another article. Consider the example of a 27-year-old woman who writes to the editor for help. She was in a blissful relationship with another woman until she started feeling guilty and impious for having the “homosexual disease.” So she decided to break up with her girlfriend and forced herself to have a boyfriend, but to no avail. She writes:

This year I am 27, a teacher at an elementary school. Since the tenth grade, I knew that I was struck with the homosexual disease . . . After several meetings with H [girlfriend’s abbreviated name] I felt as if I had wronged H’s parents, and H herself . . . I had asked H to help me forget about our relationship, but when H did exactly as I asked, I felt sunken and suffered miserably . . . Why can’t I seem to desire any man whatsoever, even though according to shared public sentiments I still desire to have a family.<sup>115</sup>

Năm nay em 27 tuổi, là giáo viên dạy ở trường tiểu học. Từ năm lớp 10, em phát hiện ra mình đã mắc bệnh đồng tính luyến ái . . . Sau những lần gặp H em thấy mình thật đáng trách và cảm thấy mình có lỗi với bố mẹ H, với H . . . Em đã nhờ H giúp em quên đi mọi chuyện nhưng đến khi H thực hiện đúng theo lời em yêu cầu thì em thấy mình suy sụp và đau khổ vô cùng . . . Tiên Phong ơi, tại sao em lại không thể luyến ái với bất cứ người con trai nào, mặc dầu theo lẽ thường tình em vẫn mơ ước có một mái ấm gia đình.”

The woman feels torn between her desires and her moral conscience. But her conscience, far from being a private matter, is crafted by social determinants, not least of which are the discourses of medicine and the State. Although she

does not make an explicit reference to the idea of gender-crossing, the rhetoric of “disease” that she associates with her condition is likely an effect of medicine’s pathologizing discourse; likewise, the woman’s compulsion to find a man and form a family, her “shared public sentiments,” most likely reflects the efficacy of the state’s “civilized” way of life and “cultured” family discourses.

Finally, consider the case of a male reader who reveals that he is struck with the “homosexual disease.” This disease has tormented him and his family. Despite being a “man,” he confesses, he psychically identifies as a “woman.” He explains:

For the past ten years, I have been placed in the strange circumstance of living as a man on the outside, but deep down I am a woman on the inside. I have no feelings for women, only for men . . . but this homosexual disease has taken over my life, making my wife and I feel deeply unhappy.<sup>116</sup>

Đã 10 năm qua tôi sống trong tình trạng ngoài vỏ là đàn ông nhưng trong ruột lại là đàn bà, Tôi chẳng thiết tha với đàn bà mà lại gần gũi với đàn ông . . . song căn bệnh đồng tính đã lấn át tất cả khiến tôi lẫn người vợ tội nghiệp đều cảm thấy bất hạnh.

Now, it is unclear whether this is a case of a homosexual man or a transgendered man who dis-identifies with his or her assigned gender or some other complex configuration. Either way, the writer subsumes his problem under the rubric of homosexuality. “Homosexuality” in turn refers to the man’s condition of feeling “trapped” in the wrong-sexed body, consistent with the idea of gender inversion. Hence, the meaning of homosexuality in this case is clearly filtered through a gender-crossing discourse. Providing a solution to the man’s problems, the editor states:

Once you have made the resolve to be a real man, then there is no better way than to self-adjust one’s own feelings so that they are re-directed towards women, especially towards your young wife who loves you with all her heart and who carries within her a piece of your own flesh. Only firmness of purpose and self-resolve will help you return to the character of a real man and to the right gender, so that you can overcome the ‘diseased’ desires of homosexuals.<sup>117</sup>

[M]ột khi bạn đã tự nhận thức muốn trở thành một đàn ông thật sự, thì còn cách gì tốt hơn là tự bạn phải điều chỉnh tình cảm của mình, sao cho cán cân

tình cảm nghiêng hẳn về phía nữ giới, nhất là với người vợ trẻ đang yêu bạn hết mực và đang mang trong mình cốt nhục của bạn. Chỉ có nghị lực và sự quyết tâm của bạn mới giúp bạn trở về với bản năng của một người đàn ông thực thụ, của giới, để vượt qua được những ham muốn ‘bệnh hoạn’ của người đồng tính.

As these documents demonstrate, even among some members of the public, homosexuality was understood through a gender-crossing discourse. The norms that both medical and State institutions had established powerfully shaped the meaning of homosexuality and of people’s beliefs about themselves, their condition and the possibility for a livable life. Far from maintaining a “happy” family, the State’s norms led paradoxically to much suffering for those gendered and sexual subjects who found themselves unable or unwilling to live up to those norms.

## Conclusion

Historians of sexuality have demonstrated the contingent character of homosexual identity. The meaning that people attach to the sexual body, its function, its shape, and its potential may shift in different times and places. As societies undergo new developments and as new technologies and idioms emerge, so too evolve the meanings that people attach to the sexual body. At the same time, queer scholar Eve Sedgwick has cautioned that such an historical approach places undue focus on discontinuities and thus fore-closes the potential co-existence of prior, even incompatible, models of sexuality.

Drawing on the insights of both historiography and queer theory, this essay has traced the meaning of same-sex sexuality in popular Vietnamese-language sources published from 1986 to 2005 to argue that one dominant meaning prevailed: namely, the belief that homosexual identity is synonymous with gender-crossing. By “gender-crossing,” the essay refers to a transgression of heterosexual gendered norms. This transgression, as the Vietnamese sources suggested, can take place in a number of different ways but most notably by exhibiting physiological attributes or displaying gender practices, behaviors or psychologies that ought to belong more properly to the opposite gender. This essay has also suggested two factors that contributed to the production and circulation of the figure of the gender-crossing

homosexual. The first is the persistence of a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European medical discourse. The second is the State's Cultured Family and Social Evils Campaigns during the Renovation and Post-Renovation periods, respectively. The medical and State discourses converged in this period to produce norms of gender recognition and constitution. In enforcing these norms, the State simultaneously had to produce constitutive exclusions, one of which was incarnated in the figure of the gender-crossing homosexual.

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#### ABSTRACT

*This article traces the meaning of same-sex sexuality in Vietnamese-language popular sources from the Renovation period to the early years of the millennium to argue that one dominant meaning prevailed: the idea that homosexual identity is synonymous with gender-crossing. Historical studies have shown that in certain times and places, same-sex sexuality was predicated on other variables, such as status and power, not gender. Yet, the Vietnamese sources insist on the centrality of gender in homosexual definition. This article discusses two historical discourses, one medical and the other state-sponsored, that contributed to the shaping of this definition.*

KEYWORDS: *gender, homosexuality, queer, renovation, history, epistemology*

#### Notes

1. See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Judith Butler, "Performativity's Social Magic," *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999); and Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge), 1993.
2. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 151.
3. See Gregory M. Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600–1950* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999); Gary P. Leupp, *Male Colors: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

4. David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love*. (New York: Routledge, 1989), 8–9.
5. Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 27.
6. David M. Halperin, “Is There a History of Sexuality?” In *The Lesbian Gay Studies Reader*, eds. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 426.
7. As quoted in Robert Nye, “On Why History Is So Important to an Understanding of Human Sexuality,” in *Sexuality*, ed. Robert Nye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6.
8. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 47.
9. *Ibid.*, 47–48.
10. *Ibid.*, 48
11. David M. Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002), 12.
12. See Jayne Werner and Danièle Bélanger, eds., *Gender, Household, State: Đổi Mới in Vietnam* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Nguyễn Huỳnh Châu, “Women and Family Planning Policies in Postwar Vietnam,” in *Postwar Vietnam: Dilemmas in Socialist Development*, ed.; David Marr and Christine P. White (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University 1988); David W. Haines, *The Limits of Kinship: South Vietnamese Households, 1954–1975*, Southeast Asia Publications (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University, 2006); Danièle Bélanger and Magali Barbieri, “Introduction: State, Families, and the Making of Transitions in Vietnam,” in *Reconfiguring Families in Contemporary Vietnam*, ed.; Danièle Bélanger and Magali Barbieri (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), Lisa Drummond and Helle Rystrom, eds., *Gender Practices in Contemporary Vietnam* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004); Phạm Văn Bích, *The Vietnamese Family in Change: The Case of the Red River Delta* (Surrey: Curzon Press and Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 1999).
13. Werner and Belanger, eds., *Gender, Household, State: Đổi Mới in Vietnam*, 23.
14. Xavier Oudin, “Household Structure and Employment Strategies in a Changing Economy,” in *Reconfiguring Families in Contemporary Vietnam*, ed. Magali Barbieri and Danièle Bélanger (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
15. Hung Cam Thai, “The Legacy of *Đổi Mới*, the Legacy of Immigration: Overseas Vietnamese Grooms Come Home to Vietnam,” in *Reconfiguring Families in Contemporary Vietnam*, ed.; Magli Barbieri and Danièle Bélanger (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
16. As of this essay’s writing, same-sex marriage has not yet been legalized in Vietnam. Some of the gender scholarship in Vietnam include the following:

- Nguyễn-Võ Thu-Hương, *The Ironies of Freedom: Sex, Culture, and Neoliberal Governance in Vietnam*, ed.; Charles Keyes, Vincente Rafael, and Laurie Sears (Seattle: University of Washington, 2008), Oudin, “Household Structure and Employment Strategies in a Changing Economy”; Hung Cam Thai, *For Better or for Worse: Vietnamese International Marriages in the New Global Economy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008).
17. Werner and Belanger, eds., *Gender, Household, State: Đổi Mới in Vietnam*, 23.
  18. Some scholars question the premise that sexual difference ought to be the ground on which to define gender. See Michael G. Peletz, “Gender, Sexuality, and the State in Southeast Asia,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 71, no. 4 (2012): 895–917.
  19. See Karen Fjelstad and Nguyễn Thị Hiền, eds., *Possessed by the Spirits: Mediumship in Contemporary Vietnamese Communities*, Southeast Asia Program Publications (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2006).
  20. Marie-Eve Blanc, “Social Construction of Male Homosexualities in Vietnam: Some Keys to Understanding Discrimination and Implications for HIV Prevention Strategy,” *International Social Science Journal* 57, no. 186 (2006); Donn Colby, Nghia Huu Cao, and Serge Doussantousse, “Men Who Have Sex with Men and HIV in Vietnam: A Review,” *AIDS Education and Prevention* 16, no. 1 (2004).
  21. Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment, *Portrayal of Homosexuality in Vietnamese Press* (Hanoi: Thế Giới Publishers, 2011).
  22. Natalie Newton, “A Queer Political Economy of ‘Community’: Gender, Space, and the Transnational Politics of Community for Vietnamese Lesbians (*Les*) in Saigon” (PhD dissertation, University of California Irvine, 2012).
  23. “Hanoi’s Flash Mob for Equality,” <http://www.advocate.com/arts-entertainment/pride/2012/09/24/hanoi-gay-flash-mob#slide-1> (accessed February 24, 2014).
  24. Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire*, 9.
  25. Nguyễn-Võ Thu-Hương writes: “The media enjoys various degrees of autonomy from governmental dictates, although all publicist organs are owned by units of either the government or the party . . . [N]ewspaper editors . . . are ultimately answerable to the party’s Ideological Committee.” Nguyễn-Võ Thu-Hương, *The Ironies of Freedom: Sex, Culture, and Neoliberal Governance in Vietnam*, ed.; Charles Keyes, Vincente Rafael, and Laurie Sears, *Critical Dialogues in Southeast Asian Studies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 120.
  26. Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire*, 8.
  27. See Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).
  28. Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 12.

29. Lisa B.W. Drummond, “Street Scenes: Practices of Public and Private Space in Urban Vietnam,” *Urban Studies* November, no. 37 (2000), 2377–91.
30. Khuất Thu Hồng, Lê Bạch Dương, and Nguyễn Ngọc Hường, *Tinh Dục: Chuyện Dễ Đùa Khó Nói* [Sexuality: Easy to Joke About, Difficult to Discuss] (Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Trí Thức, 2009).
31. *Ibid.*, 10.
32. Marie-Eve Blanc. “Sex Education for Vietnamese Adolescents in the Context of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic: The NGOs, the School, the Family and the Civil Society,” in *Sexual Cultures in East Asia: The Social Construction of Sexuality and Sexual Risk in a Time of Aids*, ed., Evelyne Micollier (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 243.
33. **Table 1**

Non-Fiction Books National Library	1986–1996	1997–2005	Total
	3	12	15

34. **Table 2**

Name of Newspaper	Renovation (1986–96)	Post-Renov ('97-'05)	No.
An Ninh Thủ Đô (Security in the Capital)	5	35	40
Công An TPHCM (Ho Chi Minh City Police)	27	34	61
Công An Nhân Dân (People’s Police)	4	66	70
Tuổi Trẻ (Age of Youth)	10	30	40
Tiền Phong (Vanguard)	1	18	19
Thanh Niên (Youth)	9	38	47
Nhân Dân (The People)	0	0	0
No. of Items	56	221	277

35. Wynn Wilcox, “In Their Image: The Vietnamese Communist Party, the ‘West,’ and the Social Evils Campaign of 1996,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 32, no. 4 (2000).
36. These works include Elizabeth Badinter, “Nhân Dạng Nam (On Masculine Identity)” (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Phụ Nữ [The Women’s Publishing House], 1999); Gilbert Tordjman. *Giới Tính Theo Cuộc Đời* [Gender According to Life]; Trans. Đức Anh and Ngân Đăng (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Phụ Nữ [Women’s Publishing House], 2002); Đàm Đại Chính, “Chương 10: Tranh Luận Xưa Nay Về Vấn Đề Đồng Tính Luyến Ái (Chapter 10: Historical Debates About Homosexuality),” *Văn Hóa Tính Dục và Pháp Luật* (Sex, Culture and the Law) (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Thế Giới [The World Publishing House], 2005), 415–52.

37. Jacob Aronson, "Homosex in Hanoi? Sex, the Public Sphere, and Public Sex," in *Public Sex/Gay Space*, ed., William L. Leap (New York: Columbia University, 1999), 206.
38. Robert A. Nye, "Sex Difference and Male Homosexuality in French Medical Discourse, 1830–1930," in *Homosexuality and Medicine, Health, and Science*, ed.; Wayne R. Dynes and Stephen Donaldson (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992), 175.
39. Michel Foucault, *Herculine Barbin, Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).
40. For an alternative to the binary sex/gender system, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1990).
41. Robert A. Nye, "Sex Difference and Male Homosexuality," 177.
42. *Ibid.*, 185.
43. Robert A. Nye, "Inversion," in *Sexuality*, ed.; Robert A. Nye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 150.
44. Robert A. Nye, "Sex Difference and Male Homosexuality," 185.
45. Even though there may be other sources that contributed to the deviancy of gender-crossing homosexuality, "confucianism" and "yin and yang" do not appear with any substantial frequency if at all in the sources that I gathered. Indeed, "confucianism" and "yin and yang" were arguably prevalent in certain eras in pre-twentieth century China. Yet, scholars have documented a preponderance of same-sex erotic practices. Charlotte Furth has suggested that the meaning of "yin and yang" in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century China symbolized not heterosexuality but one's fundamental androgyny as the normative order. See Charlotte Furth, "Androgynous Males and Deficient Females: Biology and Gender Boundaries in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century China," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed.; Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 479–97. For same sex-erotic practices in China, see Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1990).
46. Nguyễn-Võ Thu-Hương, *Ironies of Freedom*, 79.
47. *Ibid.*, 95.
48. William Duiker, "Vietnam: The Challenge of Reform," *Current History* 88, no. 537 (1989).
49. Harriet M. Phinney, "Objects of Affection: Vietnamese Discourses on Love and Emancipation," in *positions: east asia cultures critique* 16, no. 2 (2008).
50. Catherine Scornet, "State and the Family: Reproductive Policies and Practices," in *Reconfiguring Families in Contemporary Vietnam*, ed.; Magali Barbieri and Danièle Bélanger (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).



51. Phinney, “Objects of Affection: Vietnamese Discourses on Love and Emancipation,” 348.
52. Robert Templar, *Shadows and Wind: A View of Modern Vietnam* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 247.
53. *Ibid.*, 247.
54. Wilcox, “In Their Image: The Vietnamese Communist Party, the ‘West,’ and the Social Evils Campaign of 1996,” 15.
55. Gina Masequesmay notes that rather than being a variant of “pê-đê”, the term “bê-đê” may have derived from the French argot “berdache” to refer to effeminate homosexuals or transvestites. Gina Masequesmay, “Becoming Queer and Vietnamese American: Negotiating Multiple Identities in an Ethnic Support Group of Lesbians, Bisexual Women and Female-to-Male Transgenders” (PhD dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 2001), 56.
56. Võ Thu Sơn, “Tình Pêđê, Phần 1 (Pede Love, Part 1),” *Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Ho Chi Minh City Police], February 18, 1987, “Tình Pêđê, Phần 2 (Pede Love, Part 2),” *Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Ho Chi Minh City Police], December 25, 1987, “Tình Pêđê, Phần 3 (Pede Love, Part 3),” *Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Ho Chi Minh City Police], March 4, 1987, “Tình Pêđê, Phần 4 (Pede Love, Part 4),” *Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Ho Chi Minh City Police], March 11, 1987.
57. Sơn, “Tình Pêđê, Phần 1 (Pede Love, Part 1),” 5.
58. George Chauncey, Jr., *Gay New York* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 48.
59. Sơn, “Tình Pêđê, Phần 1 (Pede Love, Part 1),” 5.
60. PV, “Một Người Đàn Ông Đẻ (a Man Gives Birth),” *Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh (Ho Chi Minh City Police)*, June 3, 1992.
61. “Lưỡng Tính,” in *Từ Điển Việt-Anh (Vietnamese-English Dictionary)*, ed.; Đặng Chấn Liều, Lê Khả Kế, and Phạm Duy Trọng (Ho Chi Minh: Nhà Xuất Bản Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh [Ho Chi Minh Publishing House], 2000 [1987]), 448.
62. Đào Xuân Dũng, “Giáo Dục Tính Dục (Sex and Gender Education)” (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Thanh Niên [The Youth Publishing House], 1995), 221.
63. Bùi Xuân Vinh, Ngô Gia Hy, and Ngô Văn Quý, “Hỏi Đáp Về Sức Khỏe Và Bệnh Tật: Bệnh Trẻ Em, Những Vấn Đề về Giới Tính Và Phụ Sản [Question and Answer about Health and Disease: Children’s Diseases, Gender and Gynecological Issues]” (Ho Chi Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Trẻ, 1997), 192.
64. Anphong Nguyễn Công Vinh, “Đồng Tính Luyến Ái Là Gì? [What Is Homosexuality?],” in *Giải Đáp Thắc Mắc Về Giới Tính* [Answers to Questions About Gender], Ho Chi Minh Nhà Xuất Bản Tôn Giáo (The Religion Publishing House, 2001), 20.
65. Bùi Phụng, “Lưỡng Tính,” in *Từ Điển Việt Anh [Vietnamese English Dictionary]* (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Thế Giới [World Publishing House], 2004).

66. Hà Hoài Dung, ed., *Kiến Thức Về Tình Yêu Và Giới Tính* [Knowledge About Love and Gender] (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Từ Điển Bách Khoa [The Science Dictionary Publishing House], 2005), 102.
67. Như Lịch, “Trong Thế Giới Ô Môi” (in the World of The “Tamarind” [Lesbian]),” *Thanh Niên* [The Youth], April 4, 2005.
68. Gina Masequesmay states that this “slang term was popularly used to refer to lesbians in the late 1960s to mid-1970s in Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. About twenty years after the fall of Saigon and the mass exodus of Vietnamese to the U.S., term ‘ô-môi’ re-emerged as the name for a newly found support network of Vietnamese lesbians, bisexual women, and female-to-male transgenders.” Masequesmay, “Becoming Queer and Vietnamese American: Negotiating Multiple Identities in an Ethnic Support Group of Lesbians, Bisexual Women and Female-to-Male Transgenders,” 56.
69. Lan Anh, “Chuyện Tình Ô-Môi [A Lesbian Love Affair]” *Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Ho Chi Minh City Police], April 11, 1990: 4.
70. Esther Newton, “The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman,” in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed.; Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and Jr. George Chauncey (New York: New American Library, 1989), 281.
71. Lịch, “Trong Thế Giới Ô Môi (In the World of the “Tamarind” [Lesbian]),” 6.
72. *Ibid.*, 6. The original quotation: “Người ta gọi những người đồng tính luyến ái nữ là ‘ô-môi.’ Có những ‘ô-môi’ thật, có những ‘ô-môi’ . . . giả. Thế giới của các ‘ô-môi’ khá phức tạp với những đổi thay thất thường về tâm sinh lý.”
73. *Ibid.*, 6.
74. Sơn, “Tình Pê-đê, Phần 1 [Pédé Love, Part 1],” 5. The original quotation: “Và hiện tượng ‘đồng tính luyến ái’, ái nam ái nữ, bóng, pê-đê v.v. ở chế độ cũ cùng có.”
75. Andy Trương, “Vâng, Tôi Là Gay Đấy (Yes, I Am Gay),” *Tiền Phong* [Vanguard], July 21, 1998: 8. The original quotation: “‘bóng kín’ . . . nghĩa là có vẻ ngoài đầy chất nam tính hết sức kín đáo nhưng bên trong là tình yêu ốt của một người đàn bà.”
76. Hoàng Nguyên and Đoàn Trang, *Bóng: Tự Truyện Của Một Người Đồng Tính* [Shadow: Stories Told by a Homosexual] (Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Văn Học, 2008).
77. “Khi Bóng Đã Say Hình Trailer,” Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPZcvoZueQA> (accessed February 24, 2014).
78. Among the print sources examined for this study, the term “third sex” was first used in 2004. See Đào Trung Uyên, Anonymous, and LTHP, “Chia Sẻ của Người Ngoài Cuộc (The Confidences of Outsiders),” *Tuổi Trẻ* [Youth], May 15, 2004.

79. VH Quỳnh and NV Hải, “Công Nhận Quyền Hiến Xác, Quyền Xác Định Lại Giới Tính (Accepting the Right to Determine One’s Gender),” *Tuổi Trẻ* [Youth], May 20, 2005.
80. Cù Mai Công, “Những Sàn Nhảy Đặc Biệt (Special Kinds of Dance Floors),” *Tuổi Trẻ* [Youth], Nov 8 1997.
81. Trương Ngọc Hân, M.D. “Người Con Trai Cần Biết (What Boys Need to Know),” (Ho Chi Minh: Nhà Xuất Bản Trẻ (Youth Publishing House), 1992).
82. Anphong Nguyễn Công Vinh, *Giải Đáp Thắc Mắc Về Giới Tính* [Answers to Questions about Gender] (Ho Chi Minh: Nhà Xuất Bản Tôn Giáo [The Religion Publishing House], 2001), 20.
83. See the entry for “gay” in Scott Speirs, “Gay,” *Gay Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopedia*, ed.; George E. Haggerty (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000). Also, pages 12–23 in George Chauncey, *Gay New York*.
84. Dennis Altman, “Rupture or Continuity? The Internationalization of Gay Identities,” in *Post-Colonial, Queer*, ed.; John C. Hawley (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001).
85. For an extended list of the argot based on ethnographic research, see Duc Anh Ngo et al., “Male Homosexual Identities, Relationships, and Practices among Young Men Who Have Sex with Men in Vietnam: Implications for HIV Prevention,” *AIDS Education and Prevention* 21, no. 3 (2009). See also Khuất Thu Hồng, Lê Bạch Dương, and Nguyễn Ngọc Hường, *Tình Dục: Chuyện Dễ Đùa Khó Nói* [Sexuality: Easy to Joke Difficult to Talk About] (Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Trí Thức, 2009).
86. Phạm Thành Trung, *Không Lạc Loài* (Not Alone in a Strange Land) (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Hội Nhà Văn [The Writers Association Publishing House], 2009).
87. *Ibid.*, 105. The original quotation: “Nhưng khi biết tôi chỉ yêu và quan hệ với đàn ông, thì tất cả những mơ ước đó sụp đổ. Nói đúng ra, ông không vượt qua nổi những kỳ thị mà thiên hạ đã dành cho những người đồng tính thông qua những danh từ đầy miệt thị như: ‘Pê đê’, ‘bóng’, ‘ái’ (Hỏi đó từ ‘gay’ còn chưa phổ biến).”
88. Đào Xuân Dũng, “Giáo Dục Tính Dục (Sex and Gender Education), 218.
89. *Ibid.*, 220.
90. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol 1* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 43.
91. Lê Khanh. *Mẹ Oi, Tại Sao* [Mother, Why?]. (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Phụ Nữ [Women’s Publishing House], 2004), 65.
92. *Ibid.*, 66.
93. *Ibid.*, p.66
94. Anphong Nguyễn Công Vinh, *Giải Đáp Thắc Mắc Về Giới Tính* [Answers to Questions about Gender], 20–21.

95. See, for example, Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire*.
96. Nguyễn-Võ Thu-Hương, *Ironies of Freedom*, 147.
97. Quách Tuyền. “Hoa Tim Khách (A Flower Seeks Clients).” *An Ninh Thủ Đô* [Security in the Capital], May 27, 1990: 3.
98. Nguyễn Thái Thăng Long, “Những Cô Gái Bán Hoa Rôm (Girls Who Sell Fake Flowers),” *An Ninh Thủ Đô* [Security in the Capital], January 20, 1997: 3.
99. Ibid.
100. Huỳnh, Nguyễn. “Tôi Ác Không Mang Khuôn Mặt Đàn Bà, Phần 1 (The Crime That Does Not Wear a Woman’s Face, Part 1),” *Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Ho Chi Minh City Police] March 21, 1990: 7.
101. Huỳnh, Nguyễn. “Tôi Ác Không Mang Khuôn Mặt Đàn Bà, Phần 2 (The Crime That Does Not Wear a Woman’s Face, Part 2).” *Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Ho Chi Minh City Police] Mar 28. 1990: 7.
102. Huỳnh, Nguyễn, “Tôi Ác Không Mang Khuôn Mặt Đàn Bà, Phần 3 (the Crime That Does Not Wear a Woman’s Face, Part 3),” *Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Ho Chi Minh City Police] April 4, 1990: 7.
103. Sơn, “Tình Pêđê, Phần 4. [Pédé Love, Part 4],” 5. The original quotation: “Ở Công viên Quách Thị Trang, công viên trước rạp Bến Thành, công viên trước nhà hát thành phố, dọc các công viên bến tàu khi bạn tha thả dạo chơi tình cờ ngồi xuống một ghế đá nghỉ chân. Lập tức dưới ánh đèn ngồi quanh, bắt chuyện, hỏi thăm ‘tình hình thế giới’ ngay. Nếu bạn là một nai tơ, nhìn ‘nàng’ thiết cũng giống như ‘nàng’ giả thì ai biết con đường đêm đó dẫn bạn đi tới đâu? Có khi thoát khỏi cái bẫy của ‘nàng’ hoặc chưa đi tới đâu hết, bạn sẽ bị lột cái đồng hồ đeo tay, bị rút cái bóp tiền, bị cuỗm mất chiếc xe đạp, chiếc xe hon da v.v.”
104. Nguyễn Thiện, “Đoạn Kết Của Cuộc Tình ‘Hi Hữu,’ Phần 1 [The Ending of a Rare Kind of Love, Part 1],” *Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Ho Chi Minh City Police], December 28, 1988: 4–5.
105. Ibid., 5. The original quotation: “Căn bệnh đồng tính luyến ái mà mọi người quen gọi là PĐ [Pêđê] đang là mối quan tâm của ngành y học, đạo đức học, phân tâm học, một căn bệnh nguy hiểm chưa có thuốc trị.”
106. Phạm Tường Niệm, “Trở Lại Vụ Án Hai Cô Gái Yêu Nhau, Phần 5 (Returning to the Case of Two Women Who Loved Each Other, Part 5),” *Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Ho Chi Minh City Police], August 30, 1989: 5. The original quotation: “Phải chăng cái chết của Đức Thuận là một tiếng chuông báo động nhắc cho những người có trách nhiệm phải quan tâm đến hiện tượng trai, gái ‘yêu nhau’ không bình thường này để có biện pháp giáo dục giới tính, và cách giải quyết tốt hơn, tránh hậu quả xấu. Đồng thời những gia đình nào, các bậc cha mẹ nào có con cái mang tâm lý ‘không bình thường’ cũng phải đặc biệt quan tâm, chăm sóc, giáo dục. Có nhiều gia đình thích mặc đồ con trai cho con

- gái của mình, hoặc ngược lại, cũng là một tác nhân gây tâm lý bất bình thường trong quá trình phát triển tâm sinh lý của đứa trẻ.”
107. See “Chào tiễn biệt bác sĩ Trần Bồng Sơn: “Thắc mắc” biết hỏi ai bây giờ” [Farewell Dr. Trần Bồng Sơn: ‘Whom to ask if one has a question now’], <http://vietbao.vn/Doi-song-Gia-dinh/Chao-tien-biet-bac-si-Tran-Bong-Son-Thac-mac-biet-hoi-ai-bay-gio/45137583/111/> (accessed February 24, 2014).
  108. As quoted in Nguyễn-Võ Thu-Hương, *Ironies of Freedom*, 107.
  109. Trần Bồng Sơn, “Bác Sĩ Oi! Em Muốn Thay Đổi Giới Tính (Hello, Doctor! I Would Like a Sex Change),” *Tuổi Trẻ* [Youth], July 16, 1992: 8. The original quotation. “Kể từ lúc âu thơ em đã thấy mình có tâm trạng khác thường, như là mang tâm hồn của con gái trong một thể xác con trai.”
  110. *Ibid.*, 8. The original quotation: “Bác sĩ ơi! Em biết phải làm gì bây giờ? Em rất sợ những lời khuyên theo kiểu: Hãy cưới vợ đi bệnh sẽ hết! Đừng có tưởng tượng nữa!”
  111. See, for example, Gayle Salamon, *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
  112. Trần Bồng Sơn. “Lại Đồng Tính Ái (Homosexuality Once Again),” *Tuổi Trẻ* [Youth], May 7, 1992: 8.
  113. Trần Bồng Sơn, “Thắc Mắc Biết Hỏi Ai (I have questions, but don’t know who to ask?)” (Hồ Chí Minh: Nhà Xuất Bản Trẻ [The Youth Publishing House], 1997), 42.
  114. Lisa Drummond, “The Modern ‘Vietnamese Woman’: Socialization and Women’s Magazine,” in *Gender Practices in Contemporary Vietnam*, ed.; Lisa Drummond and Helle Ryndstrom (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), 162.
  115. Hà Anh, “Hãy Vượt Qua Chính Mình (One Ought to Overcome Oneself),” *Tiền Phong* [Vanguard], November 7, 2000: 9.
  116. Hà Anh, “Tình Yêu Và Đứa Con Sẽ Giúp Bạn Chiến Thắng ‘Bệnh’ Đồng Tính (Love and Bearing a Child Will Help You Overcome Your Homosexual ‘Disease’),” *Tiền Phong* [Vanguard], February 29, 2000: 2.
  117. *Ibid.*, 2.