AN UNEXPECTED CLASH
adapted by Jason Rainey from A Dragon Child: Reflections of a Daughter of Annam in America by Lucy Nguyen-Hong-Nhiem

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
at AMHERST - 1976

During this time, I also taught a course in French.

It was a morning class, and students often arrived tired or late.

This would lead to another surprise for me.

When I began my dissertation, my advisor suggested I focus on Vietnamese Francophone literature.

While researching authors, I discovered PHAM VAN KY.

PHAM VAN KY was a Vietnamese novelist who had lived in Paris since 1939.

I wrote to him requesting information about his life and work. We began a correspondence, and I even had a chance to meet him.

JE represents the Western perspective, where individuality is prized over being one with a group. The self is nurtured through exploration and progression, moving away from one's original state of being.

In PHAM VAN KY's novels, characters that embody JE and MOI are set against each other. This also reflects the author's inner struggle - to reconcile these dualities within himself.

His novels deal with the clash of Eastern and Western notions of self - the MOI and JE.

This is a struggle shared by many who have immigrated to the West. We strive to incorporate our innate selves and the culture of our new homeland.

MOI represents the innate Asian point of view, where one's identity is tied to a place in a community, whether family, institution or homeland. While an individual can adapt to outside forces, their sense of self always relates to their immediate world.

I FINISHED MY DISSERTATION, AND IN 1982 GRADUATED WITH A PH.D. IN FRANCOPHONE LITERATURE.

I HAD ACHIEVED MY GOALS, AND SOON BEGAN MY NEW CAREER.

However, when I spoke about this with the director of my department...

A DOCTORATE WON'T NECESSARILY HELP YOUR CAREER.

IT MAY EVEN MAKE IT HARDER TO FIND WORK.

THIS WAS A SHOCK, SINCE I BELIEVED A HIGHER EDUCATION WAS ESSENTIAL FOR TEACHING. EVEN MY FATHER HADANTED ME TO OBTAIN THE BEST EDUCATION I POSSIBLY COULD.

SO EVEN THOUGH IT DIDN'T SEEM IMMEDIATELY PRACTICAL, I DECIDED TO KEEP PURSING A PH.D.