



# REENACTMENTS

## HAI-DANG PHAN

### READER'S GUIDE

#### TEN QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What have been some of your influences, literary and otherwise?
2. Why did you choose to include translations in the collection? Why is translation important to your work?
3. How have war and immigration impacted the poet's family?
4. Why do you think the collection is called 'Reenactments'? How do the poems and translations explore the theme of 'reenactments'? What ways does literature reenact life?
5. Why do you think it is important for the poet to not only attempt to tell his family's history, but also to also dramatize the act of retelling in and through poetry?
6. Many of these poems are portraits of other people, including family members, neighbors, and strangers. What do these portraits suggest about how the poet sees identity?
7. The poems are formally various and versatile, taking on numerous voices and perspectives as well. Why do you think the multiplicity of poetic forms and voices is important to the vision of the book?
8. How do the different sections relate to each other and develop from one to the next? What themes and motifs to you notice across the sections?



9. A number of these poems recount moments of tensions between family members. How would you say the poems negotiate these tensions?
10. How do the poems' images of the Vietnam war and country of Vietnam differ from those often encountered in popular media and culture?

#### WRITING EXERCISES

1. Write a poem that uses language drawn entirely from historical documents or recorded interviews.
2. Write a poem in the form of an extended catalogue of images, scenes, and details gathered from a week of looking and observing.
3. Write a heartbreaking poem.

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