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English 3P Honors, Period #

Ms. Alba

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Summer Reading Annotated Bibliography for *The Sympathizer*

Fassler, Joe. "For Readers, Writing Is a Process of 'Emotional Osmosis'." *The Atlantic*. 7 July 2016. Web. 9 Sep 2016.

The interview features Viet Thanh Nguyen's views on the creative process and the literary influences which have pushed him beyond academic writing to explore fiction.

Most importantly, he cites Ralph Ellison's narrator in *The Invisible Man* as one of the primal influences of the main character and narrator of his novel *The Sympathizer*.

Additionally, of particular interest to my research is Nguyen's revelation that he wanted to develop narrator that was "able to draw the reader in, and accept that they were going to follow him, regardless of his actions—which might be objectionable in many different ways."

Ireland, Corydon. "Remembering the 'American War' of the '60s." *Harvard University Gazette Online*. 23 April 2009. Web. 20 September 2016.

The article reports on a talk delivered by Viet Thanh Nguyen to Harvard University Students. According to Ireland, Nguyen's talk focused on the comparing sentiments on the Vietnam/American War as represented through public art and memorials on both sides of the conflict. Much of his novel *The Sympathizer* is full of such intertextuality that represents the idea of memory as a site of continuous war. Most specifically, this applies to his use of popular song and film during important plot points of the novel. He

records Viet Thanh Nguyen stating, “Contrary memories are alive on both sides of the ocean—these also include to provide memories against the war.” This helps me begin to try to see *The Sympathizer* as a memory against the war.

Nguyen, Viet Thanh. “A Writer’s Solitude v. AWP: Viet Thanh Nguyen on what we share with others.” *Los Angeles Times*. 31 March 2016. Web. 20 September 2016.

The essay by Viet Thanh Nguyen argues for the value of the writer’s solitude. Nguyen’s description of solitude as essential to the process of creation reminds me of the narrator of *The Sympathizer*. It seems “the sympathizer” echoes the belief that “their [artists] solitary trade is at odds with the human need to gather in tribes.” I will use this to argue that the narrator sees himself as an artist and his identity an act of creativity that is composed of the rubble of war.

---. “Our Vietnam War Never Ended.” *The New York Times*. 24 April 2015. Web. 19 Sep 2016.

The essay was written in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Vietnam War. Nguyen describes the silence about the war among family members and the erasing of Vietnamese voices from American national discourse. Most pertinent to my research however, is the fact that he recalls most of his memories about the Vietnam war being provided by American popular culture including movies such as “Apocalypse Now” and “Platoon.” For this reason, he believes it is important for the public to recognize that, “Telling these kinds of stories, or learning to read, see and hear family stories as war stories, is an important way to treat the disorder of our military industrial complex.”

---. *The Sympathizer*. Grove Press: New York, 2015.

While told by one narrator, the novel attempts to describe the events during and after the Vietnam War through two perspectives. Because of the janus-like quality for the

narrator, the overall view of the war is never clear and leaves the reader with an overall feeling of moral and historical instability. For this reason, I will be paying close attention to the use of such a narrator to investigate the author's views about the Vietnam War.