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## Excavations translated by Linh Dinh

Phan Nhien Hao

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# Phan Nhien Hao

## Excavations

Wearing a civilizing hat and modern water-proof shoes  
I step ashore from a fat ship,  
a river-plying ship that does not reach the sea  
I am an artist with feathers stuck under the armpits  
who flaps his wings walking in the night  
beneath the stars to reach a garden  
where he digs all night

At sunrise, I have gathered:

The breakages of a child growing up during war, a contempt of ostentatious  
games, the enduring loneliness of a wandering exile, a half Western-half  
Vietnamese knowledge mixed with cooking oil and sprinkled with black  
peppers, the ambition of one who stands in the wing watching the clowns  
dance amid foolish applause,

and my own skull,  
smeared with dirt and sand.