

# ”paradise of the blind” by duong thu huong essay sample

[Politics](#), [Communism](#)



In the novel, *Paradise of the Blind*, written by Duong Thu Huong originally in Vietnamese and translated into English by Phan Huy Duong and Nina Mcpherson, the author constructs characters Aunt Tam and Uncle Chinh as analogs of conflicting political ideologies of 20th century Vietnam in order to display her opinions on its effectiveness in attaining proclaimed paradise. The characters are constructed to differently express the author's voice towards extremist ideologies, Uncle Chinh representing the communist ideology, and Aunt Tam representing the capitalist ideologies.

Uncle Chinh, within the novel, has been classified as an epitome of communism, and primarily constructed as a authoritative figure with an antagonistic nature. " He was intoxicated with himself. His satisfaction was that of a creeping parasitic vine." (Hang, page 26). Duong demonstrates her opinion towards Uncle Chinh's power lust through the diction within the phrase " intoxicated" and " parasitic vine", providing her criticism towards his nature. His contribution towards the communist ideologies reasoned with its potential to elevate him towards a higher position in the party, which was provisional towards his characterised greedy nature. The hypocrisy within the execution of the communist ideology could be represented within Uncle Chinh's actions of greed and power lust within the play, which defies the moneyless and classless movement of communism. Manipulation of Que, Uncle Chinh's kin sister within the novel represented his power lust. " You realise that you're sabotaging my authority." (Chinh, page 32).

In order to represent the hypocrisy of Uncle Chinh, the author had utilised the relationship between Uncle Chinh and his sister, Que, to be analogous to

the relationship of authority and the peasant in the Vietnamese communist environment of the 20th century. Uncle Chinh's assertive tone of speech was a technique used by the author to represent his extent of dominance over Que, as an imbalance of power, constructing a hierarchical relationship. The author's use of diction in the phrase, "my authority" represented Uncle Chinh's thirst for power and through the word "my" hints place an emphasis on Uncle Chinh's selfish considerations towards the intended audience. Uncle Chinh was portrayed to be more concerned of his own reputation and authority than the well-being of his sister, which symbolises appointment of weak authority figures. Uncle Chinh, was an analog for the appointed authority figure in Vietnam that came into power in the defiance against their own parties' interest, enforcing the communist ways.

The repression of Que, whom represented the peasantry for Uncle Chinh's own selfish desires and eventually lead to Que's vulnerable state, as she concludes with loss of limb. The author constructs the event of the loss of limb is symbolic within the novel in portraying the effect of communist ideologies of the peasantry, that it had stripped them away from their firm position within the society, and in turn, created disability within their lives. The author has characterised Uncle Chinh to represent the yearning for a paradise through communism. "They don't know what heaven is made of, let alone how to get there... they are their own tragedy, ours as well." (Travelling Companion, page 225). Duong, through the travelling companion, gave her opinion on the reason on the reason behind Uncle Chinh's failure in succession in the communist party, which could be translated as her

symbolic meaning behind the reason for the actual failure of the communist ideology in the Vietnamese culture. " Heaven" within the quote is a representation of the supposed future of communism, has similar meanings with the word " Paradise" within the title of the novel, Paradise of the Blind, however " tragedy" within the quote represented the result of communist implications.

The author has used the juxtaposition to represent the disillusioned result of a successful employment of communism, heaven, to the reality of communism, tragedy, the result of failure in the employment of communism. Duong also provides her opinion about the capitalist ideologies through the characterisation of Aunt Tam. In contrast to Uncle Chinh, Aunt Tam was constructed as a character with protagonist nature. " Aunt Tam was beautiful. Few women could boast such fine features." (Hang, page 250) Aunt Tam was conveyed by the author as a metaphor of beauty and was represented by the author to be an example in the successes in achieving the capitalistic goal of wealth. The emphasis on the word " few" could be placed as the idea that success in capitalism belonged with a minority and suggests impracticality of the capitalistic ideals. The disregard for capitalist ideals by 20th century Vietnam however has been constructed by the author throughout the novel. The effect on the peasantry had been constructed by Duong in relation to the character Que.

Within the book, the close paternal relationship of Que and Hang had deteriorated since the beginning of her relationship with Aunt Tam. "

Because Aunt Tam had taken me under her protection...a kind of indifference

had slipped into our relationship." (Hang, page 136). The author has inserted tragic tone of voice used to express the strain in Hang and Que's as Hang's relationship with Aunt Tam strengthened, this was analogous towards Vietnamese cynical attitudes towards the pursuit of capitalism. The authorial intent was to negatively commentate on the static beliefs of Vietnamese citizens towards other ideologies such as capitalism. " I didn't know why, but there was something sinister about all this finery, like throwing flower petals on an abandoned grave" (page 88, Hang). The author uses simile to represent her view on materialism, as Hang describes the experience of receiving lavish gold earrings from her Aunt Tam as being " sinister". The author places negative connotations on the golden earrings to represent one of the cons in pursuing capitalism, as an over emphasis on greed and materialistic items.

The author uses Aunt Tam to represent also the results of capitalist successes. " In fact to live like you do is really happiness. The whole village dreams of having these...calm peaceful days far from all the sound and fury." (Page 152, Vice President Duong) Juxtaposing the misery imposed upon most peasantry in the 20th century whom glorified the communist ideologies, the capitalist, Aunt Tam, had received the most successes in providing herself stability and living the " dreams" of the villagers by. Duong had constructed the irony in the differing successes of capitalist and communist ideologies to inform the reader of the possible to propose the reason to their misery as the reliance towards the communist ideology. She prompts the readers to ponder upon aspects in the capitalist ideologies that

might promote their yearning for happiness. "...this woman, this loneliness, this backwardness, was all one." (Page 143, Hang). The author uses the repetition of " this" create an emphasis towards the readers to the observations of Aunt Tam, as she throughout the novel showed subtle signs of loneliness.

The author uses contrast in Aunt Tam's life between the interpretation of the villagers and the interpretation of Hang to represent the pretentious happiness seen as the success of capitalism; the accumulation of wealth, and questions the ability for materialism to provide happiness. Duong has throughout the novel contrasted the interpretations of extremist communist and capitalist ideals in 20th century Vietnam. Uncle Chinh, represented failures of communism through failed appointment of leadership. " They're just a bunch of illusionists" (page 215, Bohemian). The author had used the description of illusionist to describe Uncle Chinh within the novel to represent the disillusionment of the successes of communism in. She provides her critique on the unfeasibility within the ideology to be due to human nature of imperialism that will lead to inadequate enforcement of the selfless communist environment. In contrast, capitalistic ideologies had been observed as a more positive input of ideology as Aunt Tam was given protagonist nature.

However, the cons of extremist capitalism might be due to its impracticality due to limitations of human abilities, and could only satisfy and succeed for some but not all. " Desires locked in the secret embrace of an old trunk" (Hang, page 254) In the pursuit of capitalist ideals, the author reinforces the

idea that one may have let go of their desire because of their obsession with wealth, and that a con of capitalism is the sacrificial of happiness one has to make. Duong Thu Huong, in the novel Paradise of the Blind had outlined the failures of enforcing extremist ideologies in 20th century Vietnam. Duong subsequently outlines negative aspects of communism and capitalism, therefore suggesting her opinion on the failures in over conformity of ideologies which will always lead to a lust for a created paradise, displayed in the character, Uncle Chinh. The author also believes that even when the proclaimed "paradise" is attained by obsessively conforming to ideologies, it will conclude with dissatisfaction if personal desires are disregarded. In conclusion, Duong provides the reader with her belief that ideologies have to be made to fit individualistic nature, not all can conform to the formal capitalistic and communist ideologies.