

**Olga Dror**

**This Side, the Other Side: Children's Literature during the War**

An entire generation of Vietnamese children had their identities shaped between 1960 and 1975. This is a unique opportunity to examine a dialogue between the "shapers" and the "shaped," that is, between those who created children's literature and children's writing found in the magazines and journals published by different schools and/or groups in both parts of the country. Children in the North, raised with such uncompromising songs as "Fire at and crush heads of American thugs," saw the cause of their suffering in the cruel foreigners who were assaulting their country. The works of Trang Dang Khoa, who started writing in 1966 at the age of eight, will serve as an example of a North Vietnamese child's reaction to the war and propaganda. The young generation in the South lived with a different concept, as seen in one of the poems published by students of Saigon's middle school for girls, Gia Long: "There are babies, who do not know what War is, what Communism is." This line exemplifies the difference between Americans as the embodiment of evil, which everyone could understand and visualize, and an abstract concept of Communism incomprehensible for children's minds. This issue is especially important because the "shaped" now are taking the place of the "shapers," and to a significant extent they will be the ones who will define the future of what it means to be Vietnamese.