

# *The Quiet American* Glossary

*Aimer a loisir/ Aimer et mourir/ Au pays qui te ressemble:* To love Leisure/ To love and die/ For the country that resembles you.

**Annamite:** a person from the eastern coastal portion of Indochina, which became part of Vietnam in 1946.

**Berkeleian:** from George Berkeley (1685-1753), an Anglo-Irish bishop and idealist philosopher. His earliest thinking encompassed the idea that visual experience did not constitute proof that something existed, hence Fowler's comment to Pyle..

**bonnet:** (British English) hood of a car.

**boot:** (British English) trunk of a car.

**bowls:** a sport, similar to bocce, in which bowlers roll balls strategically, usually on a grassy surface.

**Baudelaire:** Charles Pierre Baudelaire (1821-1867) was a French poet, translator, and literary and art critic. Known for his highly controversial, and often dark poetry, as well as his translation of the tales of Edgar Allan Poe, Baudelaire's life was filled with drama and strife, from financial disaster to being prosecuted for obscenity and blasphemy. Long after his death, many look upon his name as representing depravity and vice: Others see him as being the poet of modern civilization, seeming to speak directly to the 20th century.

**Binh Xuyen:** river pirates who controlled virtually all of Saigon's opium dens and dominated the distribution of prepared opium throughout Cochin China (the southern part of Vietnam).

**bren:** a series of light machine gun modeled after the Czechoslovakian ZB vz. 26 (Československá zbrojovka v Brně vzor 26), adopted by Britain in the 1930s.

**Byron, Lord:** George Gordon Byron (1788-1824) was an English Romantic poet. He became impassioned with his desire to free the Greeks from their subjugation to the Turks, but he died of fever in Greece before he saw any military action on their behalf. Lines from his poem “Don Juan” are used as a preface to the novel, and the ideas they embody clearly inform much of Greene's thinking. Fowler reads from Byron's “The Eve of Waterloo” during his last meeting with Pyle.

**Caodaism:** indigenous Vietnamese religion centered in Tay Ninh (Tanyin) Province, southern Vietnam. It was founded and initially propagated by Ngo Van Chieu, a minor official who, in 1919, claimed to have had a series of spiritual revelations. The faith grew under the leadership of Le Van Trung, its first “pope” or Supreme Chief, chosen in 1925. Doctrinally, the religion is a blend of Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Western nineteenth-century romanticism. Before the fall of Saigon, the Cao Dai had about 1 to 2 million adherents.

**cauchemar:** nightmare

**C'est defendu:** It is forbidden.

**Cholon:** Chinese section of Saigon. At the time *The Quiet American* is set, it was

dominated by organized crime and was home to many brothels.

**Clough, Arthur Hugh:** English poet (1819-61) whose poetry questioned the doctrinaire attitudes of his day. It is from his poem, *Spectator Ab Extra*, that Fowler reads as he gives the signal that will lead to Pyle's death. Lines from another of Clough's poems, "Amour de Voyage," Canto II, preface the novel along with those from "Don Juan" by Byron.

**colonialism:** a complex process that became prevalent amongst major world powers from the fifteenth century onwards. Used as a means of expanding territory, resources and/or influence, it turned the world into a sort of giant Monopoly game where humanity was seen as expendable in the face of the covetous desire for wealth and power. It was a system much deplored by Greene.

**Comment?:** What do you mean?

**Continental Hotel:** a hotel in Saigon.

**Crane, Stephen:** (1871-1900) American writer of poems and novels, noted for his daring journalistic exploits. His most famous book, *The Red Badge of Courage*, an "eye-witness account" of the American Civil War, won him enormous acclaim and set a standard (to which Granger refers on page 36) for managing to write convincingly about a war in which he was not involved.

**Dakow bridge:** a bridge in Saigon.

**dégagé:** uninvolved

**De Kock, Paul:** Charles Paul de Kock (1793-1871) was a French novelist who focused Parisian life and celebrated his greatest success during the Restoration and the early reign of Louis Philippe.

**De Lattre, General:** Jean Joseph Marie Gabriel de Lattre de Tassigny (1889 -1952) commanded French troops in the First Indochina War. Initially he had great success against the Vietminh. He died of cancer in January 1952.

**dont l'humeur est vagabonde:** whose mood is vagabond.

**engagé:** committed.

**Extreme Orient:** a French language newspaper.

**godown:** (chiefly in India and East Asia) warehouse.

**Gott sei dank:** (German) Thank God.

**Grand Monde:** a ballroom in Saigon where Phuong worked as a taxi dancer and first met Fowler.

**High Church:** a group in the Anglican Church that emphasizes the Catholic tradition.

**Ho Chi Minh:** Nguyen Sinh Cung (1890-1969) was a Vietnamese Marxist-Leninist revolutionary leader. He would hold office as both prime minister and president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

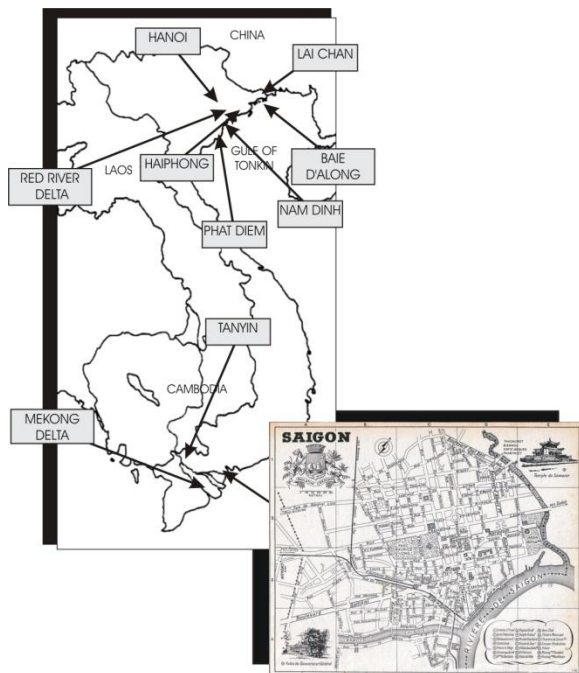
**Hoa Hao:** indigenous Vietnamese religion centered in An Giang Province, southern Vietnam. It was founded in the 1930s by Huynh Phu So, the son of a village elder in Chau Doc Province. Doctrinally, the faith is a variant of Mahayana Buddhism, but unlike Caodaism, allows no intermediary between man and the Supreme Being. Before the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Hoa Hao had more than 1 million adherents.

**House of Five Hundred Girls:** a Saigon brothel.

**Ike:** Dwight David Eisenhower (1890-1969), 34<sup>th</sup> U.S. President and Supreme Commander of Allied Troops in Europe during WWII. His campaign slogan in 1952 was “I Like Ike.”

***Il faut absolument que je voie Monsieur Heng:*** It is imperative that I contact Mr. Heng.

**Indochina:** French Indochina was a federation of French colonies in southeast Asia from 1884 to 1954. The State of Vietnam was a transitional government in which France granted Vietnam partial autonomy, beginning in 1949 and ending in 1955. French administrative presence in Vietnam ended with the loss of the First Indochina War following the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 (after the conclusion of this narrative). The map below shows locations utilized as settings in *The Quiet American*.



***Je ne comprends pas:*** I don't understand.

***Je reviens, tout de suite:*** Be right back.

***Je suis un vieux:*** I am an old man.

***Je t'ai vu seul à la fenêtre:*** I saw you alone at the window.

**juju:** an object used as a charm to protect oneself from evil. African in origin

**Kinsey Report:** a human sexual behavior study conducted by Alfred Kinsey over a number of years and published in 1948 under the title *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. This was a pivotal study that brought a previously taboo subject into mainstream discussion and was the precursor to the sexual revolution of the 1960s.

**lorry:** (British English) truck.

***M. Flic:*** a derogatory term for police similar to cop.

**mah jongg:** a game originating in China played with 136 tile, usually between four players.

**Majestic Hotel:** a hotel in Saigon.

**Marseillaise:** French national anthem. Adopted in 1795.

***métisse:*** mixed race person.

***Mon enfant, ma soeur:*** My child, my sister.

**napalm:** invented in 1943 by Dr. Louis Fieser, napalm is a highly incendiary liquid used in fire bombs and flame throwers. It is used as an anti personnel weapon and a defoliant.

**oleograph:** a 19th century process in which an ordinary color lithograph was varnished and impressed with a canvas grain to make it look like an oil painting.

**Opium:** a derivative of a particular sort of poppy, opium forms the basis for some modern medicines and banned drugs such as heroin. In Asian countries it was freely available until the middle of the twentieth century and smoked for its stimulant, intoxicant, or narcotic effect. Wars have been fought over opium, and, whilst Fowler believes it sharpens his senses and makes his head clearer, Greene also shows its devastating effect through Mr. Chou who “smokes one hundred and fifty pipes every day.”

**O.S.S.:** Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.) was a United States intelligence agency formed during World War II. It was the wartime intelligence agency, and it was the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). This agency was formed in order to coordinate espionage activities behind enemy lines for the branches of the United States military.

**Ordre de Circulation:** a permit to travel to certain places.

**Paris-Match:** a magazine published in Paris covering fashion, gossip and current affairs.

**Pascal, Blaise:** (1623-1662) French mathematician, physicist, and moralist. His literary reputation rests on two works: *La Provinciales* and *Pensées*, an incomplete defense of the Christian religion. These two texts form a survey of the contradictions of human existence. Vigot is reading Pascal's *Pensées* when we first meets Fowler, and it is this fact that allows Fowler to see him in the guise of a priest to whom he feels tempted to confess.

**pauvre:** poor

**petrol:** (British English) gasoline.

**piastres:** currency of French Indochina

**pied-à-terre:** a small apartment or unit usually in a large city located at a distance from the owner's primary residence.

**Place Garnier:** Place Francis Garnier is a green area and escalade in Saigon.

**planchette:** an instrument though which people can supposedly communicate with the spirits.

***Pyle est mort. Assassine.:*** Pyle is dead. Murdered.

**Quai Mytho:** a quay along the Arroyo Chinois in the Cholon district of Saigon.

***Quatre Cent Vingt-et-un:*** a game of dice in which each player is allowed three throws of three dice. Each player has eleven counters to begin with, and the players share another stock of ten counters. The winner is the one who is left with no counters.

**Rops:** Félicien Rops (1833-1898) was a Belgian artist whose works often integrated motifs of sex, death, and Satan.

**Sampan:** a flat-bottomed, wooden boat.

***Sa douce langue natale:*** Her sweet native tongue.

***sans vaseline:*** without lubrication.

***Scaramouche:*** a 1952 MGM period film starring Stewart Granger (as Moreau), Janet Leigh (as Aline), and Mel Ferrer (as de Maynes). The film is set in France before the French Revolution. In the film Moreau

struggles with his romantic interest in Aline, who he believes is his half-sister, but she is not. And Moreau engages in several duels with de Maynes till he finally gains the upper hand, but he is unable to slay de Maynes. At the film's conclusion, Moreau learns that de Maynes is actually his half-brother, and Aline and Moreau discover they are in love.

**sten gun:** a 9 mm submachine gun developed by the British during WWII.

**Sûreté:** Criminal Investigation Department.

**Thé, Colonel Trin Minh:** (1922-1955) Cao daist army officer who favored neither the French nor the Communists. He set himself up as the leader of the National Resistance Front with whom the Americans were in contact before the French left Vietnam and the Americans moved in. Greene uses his connection with Pyle to express his disapproval of Thé and the Americans alike. Some believe, moreover, that without Thé, there would be no tragedy in the book.

**Third Force:** Pyle sees a Third Force as being the answer to the problems in Vietnam. This is something his hero, York Harding, has proposed, and Pyle zealously embraces this idea as a forerunner to America's involvement in the country. It is this "Third Force" that admits responsibility for the series of bicycle bombs.

**torch:** (British English) flashlight.

**trishaw:** a small-scale cycle, local means of transport, human powered, and used on a hire basis. It is provided with one or two seats for passengers. Very common in South Asia.

**Trop fatigue:** Too tired.

**Tu dis?:** You said? Pardon?

**Tu es trouble:** You are worried.

**Vichy:** Vichy France was the French state of 1940-1944 which collaborated with the Nazis. It was established after the country had surrendered to Nazi Germany in 1940. It takes its name from the government's capital in Vichy, south-east of Paris near Clermont-Ferrand.

**Viet Minh:** contraction of the term Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (Vietnam Independence League), a coalition of nationalist elements dominated by the communists and led by veteran revolutionary Ho Chi Minh. The movement first identified itself in May 1941, when it called for an uprising against the French colonial government. It proclaimed the independence of Vietnam on September 2, 1945 and led the anti-French guerrilla war that followed until the victory at Dien Bien Phu (1954) brought the conflict to an end. In *The Quiet American*, Pyle's allegiance is to the anti-communist forces led by General Thé whereas Mr. Heng's loyalty is to the Viet Minh.

**Vieux Moulin:** Literally "old mill." A restaurant in Saigon near the Dakow Bridge.