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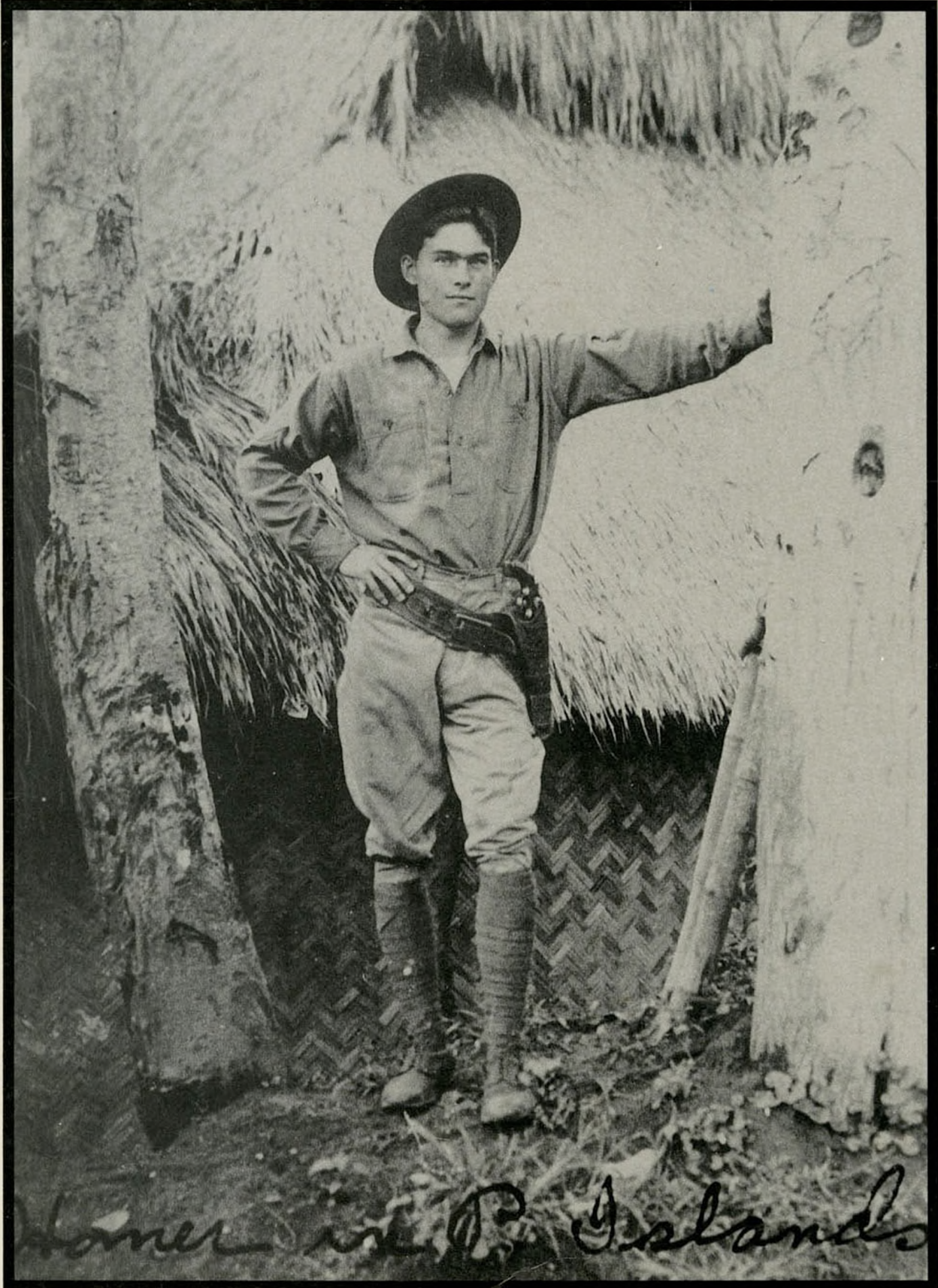
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VIET NAM GENERATION

A Journal of Recent History and Contemporary Issues

Volume 4

Number 3-4



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SUMMER-Fall, 1992

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IN THIS ISSUE

Here's how it works. There are four sections: **Announcements, Notices and Reports; Features; Teaching;** and Book Reviews. We place information with date deadlines at the front of the issue.

Announcements, Notices, and Reports does not have a table of contents. Many of the best articles in the issue are there, but you have to go in and get them. There is an explanation of the guy with a revolver on the cover, a report on AIDS in Viet Nam, a discussion of why *Scarlet*, the sequel to *Gone with the Wind*, is a bestseller in Ha Noi, and a perceptive and insightful discussion of the **25th Anniversary Commemoration of Vietnam Veterans Against the War** written by Jack Mallory, as well as 22 other items you're not going to read about anyplace else. In this issue, the **Announcements** section has grown from my private soapbox to a regular Hyde Park full of articulate people with something to say about the U.S. and Viet Nam and Cambodia.

Articles in the **Features** and **Teaching** sections and the **Book Reviews** are listed in the table of contents. **Features** starts with *Chin Bo Lam Muoi (Nine Down Makes Ten)*, a story by Pham Thi Hoai, a leading writer from Ha Noi. She was born in 1960. Her narrator describes nine men she has been with, leaving the reader with a sense of ten Viets who are substantially more vivid and complex than the characters who people my daily life. The translator, Peter Zinoman, contributed Nguyen Huy Tiep's *Vang Lua (Fired Gold)* to issue 4:1-2. By the kindness of Keith Taylor, that translation has been used by 35 college teachers this summer at Ann Arbor, in the intensive course on Southeast Asian Literature in Translation. We will bring as much of Zinoman's work to you as we can.

Next come four more narratives. Wayne Karlin's *The Last VC* evokes a young Afro-Viet American woman, followed by *Alice and Jimmy Mac*, a chapter from my story, *Spoils*. Alice was the narrator's wife, and Jimmy was his friend. *A Coward for One Minute*, by Stephen Banko III, tells the story of an unfortunate accident on recon. Jim Morrison's *Rock Star* explains what it felt like to carry the name of The Doors' lead singer to the war in Viet Nam. Sean Connolly closes this run of fiction with a REMF tale, *Viet Nam Nirvana: The Nine Steps*. Then there is a poem from Renny Christopher about knowing soldiers and fighting against men, and a collection of five poems by Horace Coleman—whose book of verse we will publish next year. Horace recently suffered a stroke and is slowly but steadily recovering. We wish him a speedy journey to good health.

Literary criticism comes next. Contributing Editor Alan Farrell discusses ways that the French and the Viets have used insect imagery to describe Viet people. *A People Not Strong* first appeared as a presentation at the 1992 Popular Culture Association conference in Louisville, KY. Phillippe Hunt's essay *Semiotic and Agonistic Reason in Thmenh Chey* was written after Cambodian friends invited Hunt to address them in Phnom Penh on Cambodian literature. *Thmenh Chey* is a centerpiece of Cambodian culture, in the literate and oral traditions.

Hunt is the first to point out that he does not even speak Khmer. When I obtain literary criticism from Cambodians, I'll publish it. Hunt's essay is an especially strong piece, in the best skeptical strain of his teacher Paul De Man. Then comes poetry from Lenard Moore, an Army veteran born in 1958, who writes of his career Marine father leaving for Viet Nam, and coming back.

Maria Damon leads off a section of general comment with *In The Belly of the Beast*, a consideration of the U.S. obsession with the physical remains of servicemen. She illuminates *The King's Two Bodies*, a classic of medieval studies, as a Cold War text. William M. King's *What Do We Want* discusses Black Power. King writes lucidly about power, a topic that usually prompts mystification, from those who don't have it as well as from those who do. Tadashi Mio, from Daito Bunka University, discusses *Viet Nam After The 7th Party Congress*. It is a thrill to publish an East Asian expert on contemporary Viet Nam. We hope to hear more from Professor Mio and his colleagues. The "comment" section ends with our spiritual leader, W.D. Ehrhart, on *Why My Daughter Won't Grow Up in Perkassie*. A well-meaning gladhandler in Ehrhart's hometown noticed that the poet had published a book of essays, and invited him to speak to the local Rotary. None of them had read the book. The speaking engagement led to a lively exchange of views between the poet and the people who sent him to war. After Ehrhart's essay is a substantial collection of poems from David Connolly. The first poem sounds like Rudyard Kipling's "Tommy" after an EST seminar. The last one addresses the PAVN vet Nguyen Ngoc Hung, with an image drawn from the end of *Kieu*. The middle poems are a textbook of infantry attitude. We'll be publishing a book of David's verse next year. Kali and I wish to congratulate our friend on his recent marriage.

Next we have history. Actually, we don't publish anything that doesn't approach the past with arguments shaped by evidence, but don't get me started. Peter Brush leads off with *'Home is Where You Dig It': Observations on Life at the Khe Sanh Combat Base*, in which he argues for the right of millions of small, furry, fanged creatures to take their proper place in history. We introduce here, to illustrate Brush's text, the work of artist Dana Kaufman. *Doves in a Hawk's Nest: Viet Nam and the American Peace Movement 1965-75*, provides both narrative and analysis on an essential topic. Especially valuable is the foregrounding of religious and ethnic groups as forces in the anti-war movement. Miriam Jackson's *Viet Nam War Refought: Kent State, 1977* documents a public struggle over the meaning of the past. Two poems from a welcome new contributor, James Scofield, round off this section.

Features concludes with a collection of Criticism, or Cultural Studies, or well... just go ahead and read Tony Williams' final essay, *Viet Nam War Studies: A Cultural Materialist Approach*. He rounds up the recent works of Auster and Quart, Rowe and Berg, Gilman and Smith, and Phillip Beidler, calling on the reader to maintain an oppositional stance against the lies that surround state-sponsored violence. Preceding Williams' essay, drama editor David DeRose writes on Sam Shepard's *States of*

Shock. Shepard wrote the play to denounce Desert Storm. The New York critics panned him for being stuck on the war on Viet Nam. In *The Margins of the Viet Nam War* Frédéric Pallez takes a cultural theorist's perspective on the task of studying the Viet Nam War. After Williams' essay, the *Features* end with poems from Rod McQueary, who seems to have achieved some peace of mind.

Steve Potts, new on our staff, inaugurates his *Teaching* section with *Teach Your Children Well: Raising the Next Generation on the Viet Nam War*. The essay offers insights and detailed information from an experienced college instructor, on resources for teaching junior high and secondary level classes on the war.

Book Review Editor Dan Scripture presents Barbara Tischler on Michael Steven Smith's *Notebook of a Sixties Lawyer, An Unrepentant Memoir and Selected Writings*, and our fiction columnist Renny Christopher on two novels infused by the war—Allan Gurganus' *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All* and John Irving's *Prayer for Owen Meany*. Kali Tal rounds out the issue with a discussion of detective fiction involving veterans.

That's the issue. It was a lot easier to put together than my first fourteen-page newsletter, because now I know what I'm doing, and because so many of you have learned what we're trying to accomplish with Viet Nam Generation, Inc. That's good because I will be turning a great deal of my attention to my new job at the Yale Council on Southeast Asia Studies as Executive Editor of their journal *Viet Nam Forum* and the *Lac Viet* monograph series. Nguyen Huynh Sanh Thong, the founder of the prizewinning publications, has devoted himself to assembling the insights of his career into several books on world culture. He will remain as Consulting Editor to the series but I'll be making things happen.

Viet Nam Forum and *Lac Viet* grew out of the Southeast Asia Refugee Project at Yale, to focus attention on the written record of the Viets in diaspora. Thong's journal and book series lent the prestige of a famous Western university to the efforts of refugee literati and to extreme dissidents within Viet Nam. The *Forum* also gave a home to a generation of Western scholars after 1975. Most importantly, the journal showcased Thong's own translations of Viet poetry and his groundbreaking articles on the basis of Vietnamese culture in folk tradition.

I hope to continue serving the established communities of the Yale publications and to add to them. For the first issue of the new *Viet Nam Forum*, I am trying to put together a collection that shows that we are interested in perspectives from refugees, second generation overseas Viets, established Western scholars, emerging Western scholars and intellectuals now active in Ha Noi and Sai Gon. I like variety. I want authors from Orange Country, Melbourne, Paris, Hong Kong, and Tokyo. Ben Kiernan is closely associated with the new project, so we hope to gather outstanding work on and from Cambodia as well as Viet Nam. We would like to publish on Laos too. We would even call the journal *Indochina Forum* if the "I"-word wasn't such a loaded term. We hope that Thong's continued interest in the folk

culture of Viet Nam will attract manuscripts on the many "ethnic minorities" of, shall we say, "mainland Southeast Asia." His anti-Confucian stance brought articles from Women's Studies into past issues, a presence we both hope to expand.

If you trip over anyone who can supply smart, passionate writing from one of the above-mentioned points of view, on any topic, in any manner of speaking, from personal narrative to fiction to poetry to literary criticism to history to bean-counting demography, please put him or her in touch. Please don't tell anyone who knows how to wire a car bomb. If you want to subscribe or contribute to *Viet Nam Forum*, send me a note at the Yale Council on Southeast Asia Studies, Box 13A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520. If *Viet Nam Forum* sounds like a good idea, you should also subscribe to the outstanding new journals *Horizons: Vietnamese Thought and Experience* (45 South Park Victoria, Suite 350, Milpitas, CA 95035; quarterly; \$12/year) and *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* (GPO Box 2918DD, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia).

—Dan Duffy, *Viet Nam Generation*

PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

This Is Really Important!

Just as I was resigning myself to digging deep into my quickly emptying pockets once again in order to pay the printer's bill for this issue of *Viet Nam Generation*, I received a call from the Santa Monica College Bookstore. They wanted to order 100 copies of Volume 1, Number 2, *GI Resistance: Soldiers and Veterans Against the War*, edited by Harry Haines. That single \$1000 order pays for half of the printing costs for the issue which you now hold in your hands.

I hate to keep harping on money matters, but I think that you all should understand exactly how this works.

We have about one hundred regular institutional subscribers. They pay us \$75 a year. That means we can count on \$7500 a year, firm money. We have about 150 individual subscribers, but that isn't firm. Individual subscribers don't pay up at the beginning of the year. They send in their money when they remember, or when they realize they haven't been getting their journal issues, or when I call them up and bug them. Individual subscribers pay \$40 a year, and we can count on between \$4000 and \$6000 from this source. We sell individual issues of books, and some of our publications are used as classroom texts. This can bring in as much as \$5000 a year, but it comes in erratically and can't be counted on. A very few people send us donations. This year we've received slightly less than \$1000 in gifts. If everything goes right, we can count on about \$17,500 a year. Of course, everything does *not* go right, and we usually gross around \$15,000.

Here's where your money goes.... Printing 1000 copies of a 144-page issue costs about \$2200. Shipping to us costs about \$350. Mailing the journals out to you folks (plus about 200 reviewers, authors, board members, etc.) costs about \$600. Printing 1000 copies of a book like Asa Baber's *Land of a Million Elephants* or Leroy Quintana's *Interrogations* costs about \$3000. We'd like to do four journal issues and four books a year. That comes out to somewhere around \$30,000. I failed "Math Without Anxiety" twice in college, but even I can tell what those numbers mean. Those numbers mean that we print fewer books and journal issues, and that I continue to spend my own money to keep *Viet Nam Generation* going while I drive around my 1981 Datsun 4x4 pickup which needs a new clutch. I don't mind doing this, but I have to confess that there are limits to the amount of money I can come up with to meet our costs.

Viet Nam Generation is something really special. As far as I know, it's the first academic journal to be started by a graduate student, independent of a university or a professional organization, and supported entirely by subscriptions and individual donations. It's survived four years in a very tough market. It's published some of the best scholarship in its field. A lot of people read it cover to cover. I've run into graduate students at conferences who are writing dissertations related to the Viet Nam war, and who have said to me that *Viet Nam Generation* was an invaluable resource, that the articles and bibliographies we publish have contributed a great deal to their work. More than anything, I think we've managed to bring a whole community of scholars together, to introduce new writers to that community, to put people in touch with each other. I've really enjoyed watching *Viet Nam Generation* grow and change, and I've been delighted to be able to delegate authority to people like Dan Duffy and Dan Scripture, to step back and let them take over many of the editorial responsibilities of the journal while I concentrated on the business end of things. The 1993 *Sixties Generations* conference is tremendously exciting. But I have to warn you. None of this is sustainably without more funding.

So I am asking all of you to think hard about what you can do to help us out. A few of you might have disposable income. Send us a check. We're a 501(c)3, so your donation is tax deductible. Many of you teach college courses. Make an effort to use some of our excellent anthologies as course textbooks. All of you should browbeat your institutions into becoming subscribers if they are not already. All of you should be telling your friends and colleagues that they really need to subscribe to *Viet Nam Generation*. Buy gift subscriptions for your local Veteran's Outreach Center or hospital. If you are a whiz at grant writing, or you know people at granting agencies, get in touch with us. Dan and I publish and edit *Viet Nam Generation* because we think it's important work. Keeping *Viet Nam Generation* alive has to be a communal effort. We can't do it without you.

ENTERING THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

I admit it. I am a techno-fetishist. And it's a good thing for all of you that I am, because it would be impossible for me to produce *Viet Nam Generation* if I didn't use the latest in desktop publishing technology. I spend a lot of time in front of glowing blue screens. Often it is solitary work, but it doesn't have to be. To my enormous surprise, I've found that I can gain access to a whole community of folks interested in the Viet Nam war *through my computer*. I've discovered the universe of e-mail, and my life will never be the same.

I live with a computer scientist. If you are acquainted with computer scientists, you know that they are connected to their terminals by a cord which plugs into their navel, and that if you disconnect them for any length of time they first grow weak, and then sick, and then they die. It's an addiction. Personally, I had never felt like that about my computer. I thought it was because I was morally superior, but I found out that it was because I just wasn't using it properly.

About two years ago Lydia Fish, *Viet Nam Generation* Advisory Board member, folklorist and Viet Nam war scholar, mentioned to me that she was interested in setting up an "electronic bulletin board" for people interested in discussing the Viet Nam war and sharing resources for teaching and research. Her idea was that anyone, anywhere in the country, could access such a bulletin board with a personal computer and a modem. The project sounded good to me, but as I didn't own a modem at the time, I didn't think much more about it.

Lydia being Lydia, she went ahead and did it. "How's it going," I'd ask. "Great," she'd say, and then smile sweetly and add, "Kali, dear, you really *should* try it out. You'll like it." And for almost a year she wheedled, cajoled and persuaded until I gave in and said, all right, already, how do I sign up? And I bought a modem and asked my in-house consultant about accessing this "VWAR-L" on "Bitnet" and he said smugly, it's about time you learned how to do this, and proceeded to "teach" me (computer scientists are *not* patient with stumbling humanities scholars). Three frustrating hours later I had it under control enough to read and send my first messages. Three *days* later I was completely convinced that if you unplugged the cord from my navel I would first grow weak, and then sick, and then die.

Because I understand that not every reader of *Viet Nam Generation* has a live-in technical assistant, I'm going to explain, slowly and carefully, how you can 1) get an e-mail account, 2) sign on to the *VWAR-L*, and 3) get the most out of the e-mail environment.

How to get an account

If you are a faculty member or a student at a university or college, chances are that there is a computer services center on campus. Most likely, your institution is connected to either "Bitnet" or "Internet." Ask your friendly, helpful computer services technician how you can get an account on either Internet or Bitnet and they will, no doubt, immediately leap to assist you. Do not be intimidated by all the shiny machinery in the computer

center. Do not be intimidated by all the people in there who look like they know what they are doing—soon you will look like that, too. Although the stereotypical computer "techie" is both unkempt and lacking in social skills, I've found that the real item is almost universally personable and kind. They *want* to assist you; it's their job. Tell them that you want the account specifically to get onto a Bitnet list, and they will ask you, "Which list?" and set you up.

If you are not affiliated with an educational institution, or your school does not have Bitnet or Internet access, do not despair. There are a number of commercial vendors who will sell you access to the electronic mail system for a moderate price. The most popular of these vendors is CompuServe, though there are a number of others including MCI Mail, Well, and PeaceNet. The latter is run by the Institute for Global Communications, which is located in San Francisco (415/923-0900). Most of these large commercial vendors allow you to access your e-mail with a local phone call from any city in the country. [Right before we went to press I discovered this announcement in MacWorld: "InterCon's (703/709-9890) WorldLink provides software and dialup access privileges to the Internet. An E-mail account is \$19.95 per month.]

If you have a personal computer and a modem (today you can get an inexpensive 2400 baud modem for about \$80) you can usually access your school's e-mail system from home. In order to use the commercial systems you *must* have a personal computer and a modem.

Subscribing to the VWAR-L

When you set up an e-mail account, you have, in effect, created an electronic "mailbox" which collects incoming and sends outgoing "mail." When you subscribe to *VWAR-L*, you will get "mail" from everyone who *sends* mail to the list. If you decide to send mail to the list, your message will go out to all *VWAR-L* subscribers. Think of it this way.... You subscribe to *VWAR-L*. The next day, you turn on your computer and check your account and you have six, or ten, or fifteen "letters" in your mailbox from people who sent "posts" (letters) to the list. You can read through these letters, and reply to any letter which interests you. When you reply, you have a choice. You may send a letter to the entire list (which is sort of like making a public statement), or you can send a letter directly to the person who wrote the original letter.

Subscribing is very simple. Simply send mail (which your friendly techie will have taught you how to do) to this address:

listserv@ubvm.cc.buffalo.edu

Your message should read simply: SUBSCRIBE VWAR-L.

What you've done is told the listserver at Buffalo that you would like to become a member of the *VWAR-L*(ist), and receive all the mail sent to that list.

The listserver is where you direct all commands. For example, if you are going on vacation and you want to make sure you don't come home to three hundred letters

in your mailbox, you can send the command SETVWAR-L NO MAIL to the listserver. Or if you want to see who is on the list, and get their e-mail addresses, you can send the command REVIEW VWAR-L to the listserver. Lots of new users get confused and wind up sending these commands to the VWAR-L itself. General commands about the list go to the listserver. Letters you want everyone to read go to the VWAR-L. Simple.

The VWAR-L Community

Currently, there are about 160 people signed on to the list. Of these 160, perhaps twenty or thirty post messages. The rest are what we call "lurkers"—people who read the mail they get from the list, but don't often contribute to the conversation. (From what I understand, this is a very common phenomenon.) New people are always joining the discussion, and sometimes old members will depart or fall silent. There are often multiple discussions occurring between various list members at any given time. Each posting has a "Subject" header to alert the reader which conversation (or "thread") the letter addresses. For example, there might be one discussion raging about recent findings on Agent Orange—those headers will likely have "Agent Orange" in the Subject field. Another current discussion might be about a particular new book or movie, which will also be identified in the Subject field. You may answer any, all, or none of these postings, either privately or publicly.

As far as I can tell, many of the folks who post regularly to the VWAR-L are academics of one kind or another. Represented are disciplines as diverse as history, literature, film, Southeast Asian Studies, criminology, anthropology, and library science. Quite a few members are Viet Nam veterans or Viet Nam era veterans (representing every branch of the service), and I know we have at least a couple of Korean war veteran subscribers. Some are currently in the military, others are antiwar activists. Non-academic subscribers represent professions from systems designer to airline pilot. All share an interest in the Viet Nam war and the Viet Nam war era, all of them like to read, and many of them are talented writers. (We've published the work of five VWAR-L contributors in this issue.)

Many posts regard requests for information, references or assistance in researching particular topics. That, in fact, is one of the great uses of the net generally. You can ask a question, and chances are that out of hundreds of readers, one will have a useful answer. Other posts are part of a lively exchange of opinions. Still other posts make available information on resources which might be unknown to readers. Some VWAR-L members post copies of articles or narratives which they have written. A fair amount of poetry finds its way onto the net, along with song lyrics and the occasional joke.

The friendships which develop between members of VWAR-L are similar in many ways to those formed through other sorts of interpersonal contact. In my own case, I've found that the process of "meeting" people on the VWAR-L works this way.... First I read something which catches my interest, and to which I am attracted by some combination of style, tone and content. I will either

reply publicly or privately, depending upon the content of my response. If I get an answer back, I suddenly find myself engaged in "conversation" with a virtual stranger, with whom I know I share some common interests. At this point, most often, the conversation will move to the private sphere so that we can sound each other out and begin to discuss issues which might not be relevant to all members of the VWAR-L.

The textual nature of the exchange gives e-mail relationships a distinct shape. The normal questions of gender, race, class and ethnicity are not immediately raised, since neither conversant can see the other and must base his or her concept of the other person sheerly on what they read. In fact, in the electronic environment, it is possible to constitute one's persona in any fashion one chooses, to construct different personae for different purposes. You might think that such "invisibility" makes it hard to form meaningful connections with other people, but I have found that this is not the case. "Invisibility" confers a certain freedom from restraint, and so the conversations which take place privately on e-mail tend to have a rather intimate character. In my own experience, I've found that it's easy to "make friends" through an exchange of text, and that it is as clear to me which folks I like and which I dislike on the network as it is in person. Since joining the VWAR-L some five months ago, I've made about ten new friends—all people with whom I now regularly exchange professional and personal information, ideas and thoughts. I've also found that it's a pleasure to be able to keep in touch with old friends who are on the list, including Lydia and Cynthia Fuchs. (Although Cindy lives, literally, across town, we usually send each other e-mail more often than we talk on the phone—and we talk on the phone a lot. E-mail is just a better medium for transmitting requests for information, references, etc.) There are a number of (perhaps apocryphal) stories circulating on the net about people who have met through e-mail and fallen in love during their correspondence. (Raises interesting questions about the construction of gender and sexuality, doesn't it?)

My own experience is that meeting people I have befriended through e-mail is invariably pleasant. As Jack Mallory writes in his report on the *VVAW 25th Anniversary Commemoration* (concluding article in the *Announcements, Notices and Reports* section of this issue), several VWAR-L members encountered each other face to face for the first time. It was a bit disorienting to find that familiar text suddenly attached to an unfamiliar visage, but after a few minutes the textual and physical impressions merged into a whole person, and we simply picked up our discussions where we had left off on the net. Friends are friends, no matter how you meet them. In a field like ours, where we are used to being isolated from our peers, where we look to our annual conferences as the place to hang out with and talk to our colleagues, e-mail is a wonderful gift. No one is more than a local telephone call away.

The more Viet Nam war scholars we get onto the list, the easier it will be to exchange information. Collaborations between research scientists commonly take place on the net. Entire working groups, separated sometimes by

continents, are formed to undertake new projects, share research, and set up databases of information. We humanities and social sciences folks ought to take advantage of the network resources that science money has funded (goodness knows we get little enough educational development money of our own). If you're teaching a course on the war, encourage all your students to get accounts and to subscribe to the **VWAR-L** (last year at least two classes did this). Lydia Fish has spent a great deal of time and energy building and maintaining the **VWAR-L** for our community. We all ought to take advantage of it.

I hope to find each of you in my virtual mailbox.

SIXTIES GENERATIONS

I'm going to be harping on this conference from now until next March. I hope that all of you will come.

This is what we envision happening. We are planning four sessions a day, in which two panels of academic papers, one workshop for artists and one workshop for activists will run concurrently. We're also planning to have a book display room open during the entire conference, so we'd encourage those of you who have books in print to make sure that you arrange to have copies to sell. We will have students working at the tables in the book room. We also anticipate two evening performances during the conference—either dramatic productions, concerts, or readings. My hope is that this will become a yearly event, a gathering place for scholars, artists and activists interested in the Viet Nam war, Viet Nam war era, and the effects of the war on subsequent generations. You can help make the project a success by volunteering to jury papers, submitting your work, suggesting artists or activists we ought to invite, and making sure that you and your colleagues all attend.

We're trying to arrange the conference so that it is as affordable as possible. We've signed a contract with the Holiday Inn, Fair Oaks (VA), near George Mason, and within easy metro distance of DC. They've agreed to an extremely reasonable rate of \$55 per room, either single or double rate. We have not yet determined how much of a registration fee we need to charge to cover our costs, but we're going to try to keep it under \$50. I'll keep you up to date on these matters as they progress. In the meantime, you can help us by sending us the names and addresses of colleagues and friends you would like us to invite to the conference.

THE FUTURE

Given that our health holds up and the money holds out, Dan and I have big plans for the future. This year we've got two more new books on the docket (included in your subscription price): Maggie Jaffe's collection of poetry, *Continuous Performance*, and a brand new novel by Viet Nam veteran Dan Barker, *Warriors of the Heart*. Barker's story, "The Rescue," appeared in the *Viet Nam Generation Newsletter* 3:4, and Jaffe's poems appeared in *Viet Nam Generation* 4:1-2. For 1993, we're planning to issue collections of poetry by Gerald McCarthy, Horace

Coleman, and David Connolly, as well as a collection of historical essays on the early years of U.S. involvement in the Viet Nam war edited by Robert Brigham. Lady Borton is working on assembling two anthologies of publications by Red River Press, the Foreign Languages Publishing House of Viet Nam; a collection of folktales, poetry and essays dealing with Viet culture, and a chronological compilation of Viet viewpoints on the progress of the Viet Nam war. We hope that at least one of these Borton anthologies will be ready to go to press in 1993. And, of course, we'll continue to bring you the best in contemporary fiction, poetry and scholarship in our regular journal issues.

—Kali Tal

ON STYLE

A few notes on language. Kali and I name our country "the U.S." As a business consultant I deal daily with Americans in Mexico and Argentina and Peru who really don't want to be dragged into U.S. national identity. So I got in the habit of using "America" carefully. We here also write "Viet Nam." Kali and I never mean a war by that unless we say so. We call Vietnamese people "Viets". I know, English-speaking Viets don't say this, but I think that's because too many of them are too kind and tolerant, or perhaps have too low an opinion of Western intelligence and courtesy, to demand the word they use in Vietnamese.

We don't have the time or the inclination to edit this publication with any consistency, but those are some goals. We'll start using diacritics sooner or later, for Viet names and words. We've got the technology, so go ahead and put them into your manuscripts. Finally, we absolutely do not copy-edit this publication into *Chicago Manual of Style* Standard English. If you have trouble understanding an article, just contact the author or me or Kali for help. Many of our authors have been deep in conversation with one another for several years. Some of them use idiom and reference and shorthand that may confuse you, especially if English is your second language, or you don't live in the States, or you haven't spent some time near a university, or you don't know many U.S. veterans. Don't be shy about asking for clarification. Just get in touch.

DATED NOTICES

MICHAEL BIBBY REQUESTS ARTICLES FOR A SPECIAL ISSUE OF *VIETNAM GENERATION* CALLED *THE VIET NAM WAR AND POSTMODERNITY*

Michael Bibby is editing an anthology for *Viet Nam Generation*. He is soliciting papers addressing the relations between the Viet Nam war and postmodernity. Theoretical, political, sociological, historical, philosophical, and/or cultural approaches and studies of the plastic arts, mass media, popular culture, cinema, music, literature, material history, etc. are welcome. The editor especially encourages papers that consider the way postmodern discourses on gender, race, class, and sexuality intersect with cultural discourses on the war in the U.S. Submit manuscripts (approx. 25pp) to Michael Bibby, Dept. of English, Univ of MN, Minneapolis MN 55455; (612) 377-4699 (home phone).

AMERICA AND VIETNAM: FROM WAR TO PEACE: AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

That's the name of an international conference to be held at the Center for Continuing Education, University of Notre Dame, December 2-4, 1993. The conference will be concurrent with the annual meeting of the Great Lakes American Studies Association which will extend the Conference theme of Reconciliation to include all aspects of the Viet Nam war and the Viet Nam war era. Deadline: May 1993. A program with conference and hotel registration forms will be mailed in October 1993. That's all from Dr. Robert Slabey, English, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, 46556-0368.

LORRIE SMITH SEEKS SUBMISSIONS FOR A COLLECTION OF FEMINIST READINGS OF VIET NAM WAR TEXTS AND REPRESENTATIONS

Essays should be theoretically situated and refined but written in engaging, jargon-free prose. They might address any of the following issues: canon formation and revision, cultural critique, representation theory and the writing of war, new historicism/gendered revisions of history, women's writing on war, critiques of masculine discourse and representation, positioning the female reader/viewer, the ways in which female texts challenge patriarchal hegemony. Please send title, one-paragraph abstract, and short biographical/bibliographical sketch by Oct. 31 to Lorrie Smith, Department of English, St. Michael's College, Winooski Park, Colchester, VT 05439.

REMEMBERING TET, 1968: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE ON

THE VIET NAM WAR

An Interdisciplinary Conference On the Vietnam War: Remembering Tet, November 19-21, 1992, Salisbury State University.

Schedule of Events

18 November:

7pm: Film: *T.V.'s Vietnam: The Impact of Media*
Moderators: Don Whaley, Peter Rollins, and Jim Welsh. Discussant: David Culbert.

19 November:

9-10:30am: "Official History of the Tet Offensive."
Moderator: Jack Shulimson

Presenters: Jack Shulimson, Graham C. Cosmas, William M. Hammond, George McGarrigle, Edward Marolda, Bernard Nalty

10:45-12:15: "Tet Offensive from the Communist Perspective"

Presenters: "Vo Nguyen Giap and the Tet Offensive," Cecil Currey; "The Chinese Communist Party and the Tet Offensive," John W. Garver; "The War Abroad: NLF's Foreign Relations and the Viet Nam Conflict," Robert Brigham.

1:30-3:15pm: "The Viet Nam War and Political Correctness"

Presenters: "Reading Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter*: Interpretation as Melting Pot," Frank Burke; "Dying (Gloriously) Like a Man: Sublime Death Images in Viet Nam War Films," Karyn Ball; "From Viet Nam Protest to Political Correctness: Little Big Man and Dances with Wolves," Laura Turchi; "Viet Nam Through Her Eyes: Reading/Seeing *Surname Viet, Given Name Nam*," Barbara Cantalupo.

1:30-3:15pm: "War, Politics and Southeast Asia"

Presenters: "Ramifications of Tet on the War in Laos," Sandra Taylor; "Counterinsurgency and the Viet Nam War: A Reassessment of the Malayan Emergency as a Model for Viet Nam," Albert Palazzo; "The Role of Religious Groups in the Quest for Popular Government in Viet Nam," John Alosi.

3:30-5:45pm: "Comparing the Viet Nam to the Gulf War"

Presenters: "Nothing Succeeds Like Failure? The Impact of Rolling Thunder on the Desert Storm Air Campaign," Susanne Gehri; "Through the Looking Glass: Comparing the Viet Nam and the Gulf Wars," William Head; "Perceptions Through a Seamless Web: Retrospectives on Air Power from Viet Nam and Desert Storm," Earl Tilford, Jr.; "Parallels and Contrasts Between the Viet Nam and the Gulf Wars," Samuel B. Hoff; "Lessons Learned: The Gulf War and Viet Nam," Thomas Dombrowsky.

7pm: "The Media Project and Desert Storm."

20 November:

9-10:30am: "Viet Nam War Resources at the National Archives"

Presenters: "Electronic Records and the Viet Nam Conflict: Leading Up to Tet," Diane Dimkoff; "Researching Tet: What Textual Records are Available?" Charles Shaughnessy; "Moving Images in the National Archives Relating to the Viet Nam War," Les Wafflen.

10:45am-12:15: "Teaching Tet"

Presenters: "Fighting Tet in the Classroom," Michael L. Krenn; "A Critical Thinking Approach to Understanding the Tet Offensive," Marc Gilbert; "Making Sense Out of Chaos: Recreating the Tet Offensive in the Classroom," Steve Potts.

10:45am-12:15: "Viet Nam Documentary"

Presenters: "Comments on *Television's Vietnam: The Impact of Media*," Thomas Slater; "Viet Nam and the Documentary: Reality and Dominant Frame," John Williams. Discussant: Peter Rollins.

1:15-2:15pm: "Lecture—Bui Diem."

2:30-4pm: "Literary Response to the War"

Presenters: "Disillusioned Patriotism: Firsthand Accounts of the Tet Offensive," Bradshaw Frey; "American Poetry Responds to the Viet Nam War: Robert Bly's 'The Teeth Mother Naked at Last,'" Gary Grieve-Carlson; "The Depiction of the Tet Offensive in Works of the Imagination," Steve Anderson.

2:30-4pm: "Ending of the War and the Homefront"

Presenters: "Nixon's War," Arnold Isaacs; "Tet and Middletown: The Impact of the Tet Offensive on Muncie, Indiana," Anthony O. Edmonds; "The Viet Nam War and the Neoconservatives," Avital Bloch.

4-5:30pm: "Remembrance and Reconciliation"

Moderator: Ray Stubbe
Presenters: "Discovering Viet Nam," Robert Dalton; "Viet Nam Legacy: Remembrance and Reconciliation," Michael Shafer; "The Politics of Memory of the Viet Nam War," Herbert Hirsh.

2:30-4pm: "The Viet Nam War on Film"

Presenters: "I Believe That God Believes in Claude," A. William Pett; "Making Art, Making History, Making Money Making Viet Nam," Kim Worthy; "Viet Nam Legacies in Film: The Paucity of Political Content of the War," Lois Vietri.

7:30pm: "Lecture—R.W. Apple, Jr."

21 November

9-10:30am: "Teaching the Viet Nam War"

Presenters: "A Review of Tet Scholarship," David Culbert; "Teaching the Viet Nam War to Freshmen and Other Fair Game," Gordon Munro; "Still Playing: The Viet Nam War as Cultural Drama," Pamela Hunt Steinle; "Reflections on Teaching the Viet Nam Conflict," Ellen Singh.

9-10:30am: "Military Intelligence and the Tet Offensive"

Presenters: "Pre-Tet Military Activities," Robert Nourse; "The Warning that Left Something to Chance: Intelligence at Tet," John Prados; "General Tran Van Tra: Reflections on Tet," James Gillan.

10:30-12pm: "Minorities and Viet Nam Veterans on Film"

Presenters: "Image vs. Reality: Hollywood's Changing Depiction of Viet Nam Veterans," Marc Leepson; "Images of Afro-Americans During the Viet Nam War," Frank Manchel; "Jackknife and Masculine Identity in the Hollywood Viet Nam Film," Michael Selig; "In Country," Stephen Crane.

10:30-12pm: "The Great Society and the 1960s"

Presenters: "The Great Society in Viet Nam: The Impact of Project 100,000 on the Marine Corps," David Dawson; "I Love You—I Hate You: Surviving the Sixties," Earl Tilford, Jr. and Elizabeth Kahn.

1-2:30pm: "Lecture—Marilyn Young"

2:30-4pm: "The Viet Nam War: Myth and Film"

Presenters: "American Film Images of the Indochinese War," Peter Lev; "Reinventing Viet Nam," Michael Anderegg; "When the City Burns, It's Serious; or, Tet and the Hyper-Epiphanies of Hue Burning," Owen Gilman.

2:30-4pm: "The Peace Movement"

Moderator: Phil Bosserman.

4-5:30pm: "LBJ and the Viet Nam War"

Moderator: Harry Basehart
Presenters: "Tet Reconsidered: The Politics of War in Viet Nam in Early 1968," Robert Buzzanco; "Tet and President Johnson's Decision to Curtail the Bombing of North Viet Nam," Mark Jacobson; "Johnson and His War Advisors During the Tet Offensive," David Barret.

4-5:30pm: "American Popular Culture and the Viet Nam War"

Presenters: "Black Men with Guns," Cynthia J. Fuchs; "Images of Vietnamese in American Film: The Mafia and the Super Capitalists," Renny Christopher; "White Authors/Black Characters: The Uses of the Black Character in Viet Nam War Literature," Kali Tal.

8pm: "The United States and Viet Nam: The Future."

Information on motels in Salisbury, conference registration forms and other details will be available by August 15. Registration fee, which must be paid by all participants, has been set at \$45. This includes dinner on Saturday evening.

Contacts: Professor Harry Basehart, Dept. of Political Science, Salisbury State University, Salisbury, MD 21801-6837; (410) 543-6242; FAX: (410) 543-6068. David Gano: (410) 543-6100; Gains Hawkings (410) 543-6030; Jim Welsh (410) 543-6446; Don Whaley (410) 543-6242.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, NOTICES, AND REPORTS

COVER STORY: Why David Willson Went To VIET NAM

For years I had no good answer for the people who asked me why I went to Vietnam. "Why didn't you go to Canada? Why didn't you go to prison? I would have killed myself before I would have gone to that war." These questions and comments were common in the 1970s, less common in the 1980s, never heard now. Of course, now I have a good and honest answer for them.

My Grandfather's photograph taken on the Philippine Islands in 1911 was well known to me when I was a child. This photograph of Homer Willson is reproduced on the cover of the VG you are holding in your hands. He wrote on the back, "This is the style when you go out walking in Camp Timpanan, Mind. Pl. Does it look natural. See the young cannon. Nipa shack in background is headquarters."

Many other photographs of the Philippine Islands kept it company in a trunk in my grandparents' attic in Thompson Falls, Montana. His letters were in the trunk as well. I spent hours in that attic digging through Willson family treasures.

Study the photograph, read the letters and tell me how I could have considered Canada, prison or suicide alternatives to service in the US Army.

First, two quotes from: *Our Islands And Their People* (1899):

"In many cases they [the Filipinos] are forced to give up fine fortifications because they have been outmaneuvered. Moreover, the old saying: "He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day," never had more value than with them; to stand their ground and get killed when they have the whole island, nearly as large as Illinois, to run over, would be poor tactics for a people who have no hope of expelling their invader, but who trust to the climate and nature of the country to wear their enemy out and bring them victory which they cannot achieve in open battle." (page 563)

Caption below a photo of Filipinos: "These people represent the lower orders and mixed races. Their squatting positions, similar to the monkey's favorite attitude, indicate no distant removal from the 'connecting link.'" (page 588)

Now, the letters:

Camp Keithley
Mindanao, P.I. April 1-10

Dear Mother

Received your letter of the 27 of Jan. about a week ago and was glad to hear from you. I also got a postal from Bert yesterday dated Feb. 3. Am sorry to hear that you have been sick and hope it won't occur again. I wrote a letter from Manila about the 15 of Feb. We arrived here on the 20 of Mar. after about 7 weeks in Manila in which we took part in the largest military samabal[sic] and manoeuvres which the U.S. ever held. We had a parade in the streets of Manila which was about 15 miles long and between 15 and 20 thousand men took part in it. All arms of the service were represented. We started at 10am and got back at 6pm and the tail end were just leaving. We passed in Review of Gov. Gen. Forbes and his staff. My company received the most applause for military bearing and etc. just as we reached the Reviewing stand the Gov. started the applause which was picked up by 20 or 30 thousand Americans and natives and continued till the next company reached the enclosure when it died out as fast as it started. A few days after we went up to Plongapo the US Naval base in the Orient and engaged in Mimic warfare for 2 weeks some moving picture firm got a photo of the parade and are exhibiting it in the states now. We are about a 1000 miles south of Manila now in the heart of the Moro country and the toughest post in the P.I.'s We are about 3000 feet above sea level and can sleep under 2 blankets and wear heavy underwear. Our post is a Regimental post and sets on top of a hill with miles of beautiful scenery every direction and surrounded by banana and coconut plantations. To the North is the famous Lake Lanao and Argus river with falls from 10 to 120 feet in height. The Spanish had 2 gun boats on the lake which is 15 by 30 miles. When the US came they sank them and left. To the east is the wonderful Sacred Mountain from which no white man ever came back. The natives worship this mountain. To the south is Pantar where a company of Scouts were massacred 2 months ago while walking along the road. On the west is Illigan bay 20 miles distant which can be plainly seen on clear days. The intervening space being large plantations employing thousands of slaves. Today is the 2 anniversary of my time. I have 9 months here yet. Manila is certainly a wonderful city with Oriental architecture the buildings hanging out over the side walk and the famous walled city surrounded by a moat which has been filled up on account of Malaria. The Pasig river flows through the center of the city. Would like to hear from the old man very well. The tropical rainy season starts here before long and then I guess we will all sprout feathers like a duck and get web-footed. There isn't anymore news so will close hoping to get a letter by the time you get this.

My Address is
Corp. Homer Willson
co L. 6th Infy.
Camp Keithley
Mindanao
P.I.

Pronounced Minda.now

Camp Keithley Mind.
Nov 29-10

Dear Mother,

Received your letter of Sept. and Oct 7—a few days ago and was very glad to hear from you. Bert wrote twice since the fire burned him out you said you sent him one of my pictures well I sent him some of each kind that I sent you and mailed them on the day that I mailed those you got. What did you have for Thanksgiving dinner? We had turkey from Kansas and sweet potatoes from the states also. I suppose the weather is pretty cold there now. It is just the same here as it was the day we landed here. You want to know where Tampanan is well it is about twenty miles from here and on the opposite side of Lake Lanao from where we are now we may go back there the fifth of Dec. This will be the last letter that I will write until the day before I leave here for the States. There is no use of answering this one as I wouldn't get it before I leave here anyway. And I don't expect to get any more here either. Never felt better in my life and had less and I hope that I will remain well until I leave here. Tell Frank that I will bring him a Bamboo Queen if he wants one as there is an over supply around here. Tell Mrs. Rice that I hope she had a good time in Helena. If you take a notion to write after you get this mail the letter to the address on the other side. Will close and write to Bert.

Homer Willson
Ft. McDowell
Casual California

Be sure and put Casual on the envelope. Tell Gordan and Granddad Hello. I won't get there until March 15, so no use to write much before that.

Merry Xmas and New Year

You ought to get this by the 10 of Jan.

4 months all told to do now. Ha. Ha.

David Willson, novelist and bibliographer, is a Contributing Editor of Viet Nam Generation, writing on REMF topics. Contact him at Holman Library, Green River Community College, 12401 SE 320th St, Auburn, WA 98002, 206-833-9111.

AIDS AND HIV IN VIET NAM

*Mark A. Bonacci, Ph.D., and his publishers have generously permitted us to reprint the section on Viet Nam from his book, **Senseless Casualties: The AIDS Crisis in Asia**. Perfect-bound 8 1/2 by 11, 121 pp, glossy cover with reproduction of "AIDS Series/ Geisha and Bath, 1988", by Masami Teraoka, watercolor on canvas, original 108" by 81", courtesy Pamela Auchincloss Gallery. This great graphic shows a geisha opening a condom in the bath with her teeth. Never ever open a condom with your teeth, by the way, unless you really want to transmit bodily fluids. **Senseless Casualties** is available for \$12.50 from Don Luce, International Voluntary Services, 1424 16th St. NW, Suite 204, Washington, DC 20036, and from Don Luce, Asia Resource Center, P.O. Box 15275, Washington, DC,*

*20003. Both publishers offer a discount for more than ten copies. The book contains substantial references, as well as narrative and exposition. Bonacci's previous publications include **The Legacy of Colonialism: Health Care in Southeast Asia**. The state of knowledge about HIV in Viet Nam is evolving rapidly. The number I have heard thrown around at conferences this summer is "53 infected," out of an unspecified number of Viets tested. For a sophisticated, updated figure, contact Bonacci via his publishers, or call 716-876-4006 (H), 716-731-3271, ext. 425 (W). Bonacci is Professor of Human Services at Niagara County Community College.*

In 1991, I was producing a documentary film on public health in Vietnam. One of the most enlightening interviews filmed was with the administrators of the Bach Mai Hospital in Hanoi.

They told me that Vietnam's Ministry of Health had tested 20,000 individuals and had found only one to be HIV-positive. They said (and this was later confirmed by other officials in the Ministry of Health) that this one individual was a young woman in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), who was believed to have had "intimate relations" with a man from Frankfurt. However, they said, this woman was placed on the "Orderly Departure Program" (ODP) and was presently residing in Australia. "You see, the problem of AIDS in Vietnam is no more. We have fixed the problem," I was told.

Assuming that the 20,000 people tested were indeed a representative sample, then extrapolating to Vietnam's population of 70 million people, there are in all probability a remaining 3,500 persons who are HIV-positive, that presumably have not emigrated under the Orderly Departure Program.

When I traveled to Vietnam in January of 1992, to consult to several Asia Resource Center Health Care projects there, World Vision was instituting a training program in AIDS education and several HIV testing centers in Vietnam

Mr. Wattonapong Santatiwat, vice president of World Vision in Asia, was quoted in the Bangkok post on January 1, 1992 as saying that 31 people had now tested HIV-positive in Vietnam. Throughout Vietnam, as I met health officials including those at the Cabinet level I was told either that "those tests were not properly done," of the 31, "30 were Thai fishermen fishing off the Vietnamese coast," or "the newspapers are making too much out of nothing." In short, the Vietnamese officials appeared to be emulating the Thai stance of several years prior: sheer denial.

Some were more realistic, however. Nguyen Dinh An, vice president of the People's Committee of Quang Nam Da Nang Province, stated, "I would say there are about 200,000 prostitutes in Vietnam. This is caused firstly by the unemployment problem... With our open door policy especially for tourism, the homecoming of 150,000 Vietnamese boat people under repatriation programs and other factors, the chance for AIDS to develop in Vietnam is very likely." Similarly, Dr. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Phuong, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and Vietnam's leading medical authority, told me, "We know that AIDS does not need a special visa to

enter Vietnam." Further, Dr. Xung, the Director of the Ho Chi Minh City Drug Rehabilitation Center, told me in a filmed interview, "The government says that there is only a handful of HIV positive but we have seen at our center many unexplained deaths amongst young drug addicts. We assume they died of AIDS, though they were never tested."

That Vietnam is not, in any way, prepared for an AIDS epidemic, is self-evident. Because Vietnam is the second poorest country on earth (only Laos has a lower per capita income) few resources will be available for HIV testing kits or for long-term hospital care. Vietnam's socialized medical system is already over-taxed by thousands of people who were disabled during the Vietnam-American war.

Vietnam's health officials are also hobbled by some rudimentary misconceptions. I have been told by these officials time and time again that "because there is no homosexuality here, AIDS is not a Vietnamese problem." Both tenets in this statement are equally absurd. While homosexual behavior may be culturally proscribed, a taboo of sorts, it would be ludicrous to suggest that it does not occur. Further, even in the presumed absence of homosexuality, high risk behaviors engaged in by heterosexual couples are as high risk as these behaviors engaged in by homosexual couples. That vaginal intercourse is not considered as high risk for the receptive partner as is anal intercourse is a moot point—the virus can still be transmitted in this way.

The concept that it is behaviors, not sexual preference that places someone at risk of infection does not seem to be grasped by these health officials. Further, the high risk behavior of IV drug use is very prevalent in Ho Chi Minh City and increasingly in other parts of the country.

Because Vietnam today, and to an even greater extent Cambodia and Laos, are countries in which deaths in the countryside from malaria, cholera and schistosomiasis are still commonplace, little attention has been focused on this microorganism, the HIV virus. Many of the poor in the countryside, faced with these more elemental and swift killers, may not hope to survive the five to ten years past infection that the HIV virus will take to claim them.

For several reasons, Vietnam will follow Thailand into this epidemic, albeit at a slower pace. First, Vietnam has tried, since the mid-1980's, to emulate Thailand's success in the tourism trade. Because of the U.S.-imposed trade embargo on Vietnam and the fact that Vietnam's currency, the Dong, is not recognized on the international monetary market, Vietnam desperately needs foreign currency. If the Ministry of Health of Vietnam wants to purchase pharmaceuticals from Italy, Holland, Germany, or Sweden (four countries that have in the past decade sent a great deal of medical aid to Vietnam) it must do so with the currency of these nations or with American dollars. Thus, the impetus to attract European and North American tourists to Vietnam has been very strong. If we assume that Vietnam presently has a rate of HIV infection of less than 1/10,000, we must realize that this rate will increase exponentially with the influx of European and American tourists. Several social and economic factors also indicate that prostitution will

become more endemic in Vietnam, to the degree that the economy hinges on the tourism trade. First, the increase in the numbers of prostitutes catering to the foreign tourists is already evident. Though officials of Vietnam Tourism have stated repeatedly to delegations I was on in 1987, 1989 and 1991, that there is no prostitution outside of Ho Chi Minh City ("and we are presently cleaning that up"), several male members of these delegations, including myself, received propositions in hotel lobbies, bars and from women knocking on our hotel room doors in Hanoi and Hue.

The extreme poverty facing these women dictates that they will ply their trades in even greater numbers as more and more tourists come to Vietnam. The prices we were quoted by these women ranged from \$10 to \$50—this in a country where a secondary school teacher earns approximately \$10 per month.

Historically (as in Thailand) prostitution in Vietnam has been viewed almost as an acceptable means of helping the extended family economy. There are legions of folk stories of young Vietnamese women going to work in the bars and brothels to prevent their families' loss of their ancestral farms. Indeed, the *Tale of Kieu*, Vietnam's most famous and legendary 19th Century folk tale by Nguyen Du, is about a beautiful young woman who is sold into prostitution to save her family's farm and to prevent the starvation of her parents and siblings. Characteristically, she is philosophical and asks, "What does it matter if the flower falls, if the tree stays green?"

In this very romanticized view of prostitution, Kieu ultimately comes home a heroine, surrounded by an adoring and grateful family. The Vietnamese view of prostitution seems similar to that held by most Thais; pragmatic and almost non-judgmental. In this milieu, the combination of extreme poverty and acceptance of prostitution, dictates that the profession will continue to flourish.

The extent of the rise of the tourism industry in Vietnam should not be underestimated. According to the Saigon Times of January 8, 1992: "in 1991, there were 180,000 foreign visitors to Vietnam... The number of overseas Vietnamese coming to Vietnam this year is 56,000. These figures represent a three-fold increase from last year's figures."

Further, there has been a tremendous influx of foreign investment, which will no doubt be accompanied by non-Vietnamese administrators and personnel from many foreign countries. Since the Law on Foreign Investment was liberalized in 1988 foreign capital investment in Vietnam has risen from 359 million dollars U.S. (in 1988) to 1.2 billion dollars U.S. (in 1991) (*Saigon Times*, January 8, 1992, p. 8). A release of January 2, 1992 from Reuters stated that approximately 20,000 Japanese, British, French and Singaporean investors will have traveled to Vietnam in 1991.

With the Vietnamese government's announcement in early January of 1992 that "vast deposits" of uranium had just been discovered outside of Da Nang and that marketing this and its offshore oil deposits would be a "major emphasis" in 1992, one can guess that the influx of foreign visitors will continue to rise rapidly.

Vietnam suffers from an additional dilemma, vis-a-vis condoms. Culturally, they have rarely been used in Vietnam, where up until recently the infant mortality rates (400/1,000 in 1954) were so high, and children a much-needed agrarian work force, that contraception was rarely an objective. Further, Vietnam presently has a large Catholic population and for this large minority group, religious prohibitions against use of contraceptives will have to be overcome. Vietnam does not manufacture high quality condoms, and importing these is impeded by both the U.S.-imposed trade embargo and by the lack of foreign currency.

According to most Vietnamese health officials that I interviewed and most Vietnamese people I met, the one condom factory, at ho Chi Minh City produces condoms of such "roughness and tendency to rupture" that using these particular condoms is very unpopular.

One silver lining to this predominantly dark cloud is that public health education in Vietnam has, in the past forty years, been conducted with a great deal of sophistication and success.

In 1954, after the first independence war, ending with the Vietnamese victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu, the Vietnamese Ministry of Health mounted an extensive public health educational campaign. At this time, millions of Vietnamese suffered from malaria and from trachoma (which sometimes causes blindness) and hundreds of thousands from tuberculosis, venereal disease and leprosy. There was only one physician for every 180,000 citizens.

The major emphasis of the public health campaign was on preventive measures, because machinery and medicines which prior to this had been obtained from France became unavailable or exorbitant at black market prices. President Ho Chi Minh recommended that medical personnel should "focus their attention on the countryside where the overwhelming majority of the population live, and combine as closely as possible, Western 'modern' medicine with traditional medicine, with a view to building up a national scientific and popular medicine."

The major focus of the preventive medical program was general hygiene: cleanliness of food and water, clothes and home. An educational campaign was launched, stressing the need to sink deep wells, drink only boiled water and for midwives to attempt to deliver babies under as aseptic conditions as possible.

Vietnam was very successful in bringing down infant mortality from its prior rate of 400/1000 births and life span was significantly extended for the average Vietnamese.

In more contemporary times, Vietnam has relied on public education for an anti-smoking campaign and an attempt to slow the burgeoning population growth rate. The Ministry of Health has attempted to use public education to slow the annual population growth to 1.5 percent. The "Three Lates," late marriage, late pregnancy, and late second child are heavily emphasized in government programs, policies and communications to the general public.

If some of the expertise and resources in public health education were directed toward an anti-AIDS campaign, many lives would be saved. The author has

suggested to the Vietnamese health officials that the most effective way for public health education to proceed on this issue, would be to travel to Thailand and the Philippines and study public health there, particularly the Empower Program in Bangkok and the Gabriela Network based in Manila. While these public health education programs will have to be modified to be appropriate for use in Vietnam, some of the techniques have been very successful—working directly with the bar-women and prostitutes, the use of psychodrama and organizing the men and women to demand more humane working conditions.

Unfortunately, Vietnam is following the American pattern—too little, too late.

MUHAMMED ALI

I missed this event: "Mohammed Ali and American Culture," the E.E. McClellan Symposium, hosted by the Department of History, Miami University, Oxford, OH, on April 10 and 11, 1992. Funding for the conference was provided by the E.E. McClellan Lecture Fund, with the assistance of the Department of History, The American Studies Program, the Provost's Office, The Department of English, The College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Physical Education, Health and Sport Studies, the Religion Department, the Affirmative Action Office, the Office of Student Affairs, the Office of University Relations, and the Black World Studies Program. Everybody loves Ali.

The program: Friday April 10, 1992, Robert Lipsyte, speaker, *New York Times*, "When You're With Me, Bob, You've Always Got Something to Write About." Saturday, April 11, 1992, lectures by various speakers. Convener: Elliott Gorn. Randy Roberts, "The Wide World of Muhammed Ali"; Othello Harris, "Ali and the Revolt of the Black Athlete"; Michael Eric Dyson, "Athletes and Warriors"; David Wiggins, "Ali, The Nation of Islam, and American Society"; Gerald Early, "Ali and Autobiography"; Michael Oriard, "The Sports Hero in the Media Age"; Alison Dewar, "Ali, Sports, and Gender"; Tom Hietala, "Last of a Dynasty: Ali, Joe Louis, Jack Johnson"; Jeffrey Sammons, "Muhammed Ali, Rebel with a Cause". Nice set-up: a speaker every half hour, a discussion period after every two speakers, a break after each discussion.

These people all sound so interesting: Alison Dewar is a professor in the Physical Education, Health and Sport Studies department at Miami University. She specializes in sport sociology, with emphasis on the study of feminism and gender. Michael Eric Dyson is a professor of religion at the University of Chicago. Cultural criticism and African-American life are two of his main interests. Gerald Early is a professor in the departments of English, American Studies, and African-American Studies at Washington University, St. Louis. He is a widely published cultural critic, especially on the subjects of blacks in music and sports. Othello Harris is a professor in the department of Physical Education, Health, and Sport Studies at Miami University. He specializes in the sociology of the black athlete. Thomas Hietala is a professor of history at Grinnell College. Robert Lipsyte is a columnist for the *New York Times* and formerly a correspondent for

CBS. He has covered a variety of sports and written several books; he is especially interested in the role of sport in society. Michael Oriard is a professor of English at Oregon State University. He has written on the sports hero in American culture; he is currently at work on a book about early football. Randy Roberts is a professor of history at Purdue University. He has written biographies of Jack Johnson, Jack Dempsey, and numerous textbooks. He is currently at work on two projects, a biography of John Wayne, and one on Muhammed Ali. Jeffrey Sammons is a professor in the history department at New York University. His work has encompassed American boxing in the twentieth century, sport in South Africa, and, most recently, the history of golf. David Wiggins is an historian and chair of the department of Physical Education, Health and Sport Studies at George Mason University. He has specialized in the history of sports among African-Americans.

I would have driven to Ohio for this conference but I first heard of it after it happened, when I read Robert Lipsyte's "Backtalk: The Key to Understanding Ali." *New York Times*, Sunday, April 26, 1992: 9. I scan any article I see on the great man to see if the journalist mentions that Ali gave up his career, abandoned millions of dollars, and defied the government because he thought that killing was wrong. They usually don't. Lipsyte did, but made a gratuitous and untrue distinction between the conscientious Moslem and the dirty longhair peaceniks who only opposed the U.S. commitment in Viet Nam because they were high on dope. Get a life, Bob, or at least read a few books. There's a conversation about Ali in W.D. Ehrhart's memoir *Vietnam-Perkasie*, by the way. Ehrhart shows himself in a tent plotting targets for that night's H & I fire, when Floyd Paterson taps him on the shoulder. The champ is there on a tour to cheer up the troops. The soldier asks the fighter what he thinks about Ali defying the draft. Paterson makes some gracious, positive statement that downplays Ali's remarks without at all disparaging a fellow athlete.

I wrote to Gorn asking if we could print the essays from the conference. He told me that Larry Malley at Duke University Press already has them. I asked a university press maven about Malley and learned that he is the editor to follow if you like sports history.

A LONG WAY FROM TARA

A. Carey Zesiger was mistakenly reported in the last issue as "Kerry Zeffiger." He had phoned me on his way Ha Noi, looking for contacts. The following report came to life as a class assignment, and was revised for publication in a Ha Noi newspaper. It came to me with a letter, dated June 1, 1991, via a relative in the States. Zesiger has renewed his visa for an extended stay in Viet Nam. He has been in touch with Dana Sachs and Tran Quoc Vuong. Sesto Vecchi thinks that Carey may be teaching English for UNDP there. Contact: A. Carey Zesiger, International PO Box 72, Ha Noi, Viet Nam, or c/o Judy Zesiger, 936 Fifth Ave, NY NY 10021, 212-737-9040)

Scarlet was the media darling of the publishing world in 1991. As the sequel of *Gone With the Wind* it was heir to a popularity and notoriety that few contemporary novels or characters could touch. Moreover, it was a book that couldn't help but make waves in the publishing world. It signaled that publishers were following the lead of Hollywood in looking for a "sure thing," for sequels and big budget concepts that with the right publicity campaign just could not miss. It also reflected the way publishing has increasingly become a global enterprise, a sign of the prominent place American culture, media and entertainment occupy on the world stage. On the surface, *Scarlet* and Rhett might seem quintessentially American characters, unlikely vehicles for a world-wide media coup, but thanks to the film's popularity, these characters and their antics are now known on six continents. It was in the embrace of such notoriety that *Scarlet* was conceived, amid talk of movie rights, reissues and of course the inevitable translations... including at least one the publishers, with all their foresight, might not have foreseen.

The world of Madison Avenue and media glitz into which *Scarlet* was born could not be further removed from the reality of everyday life in Vietnam. In Vietnam, marketing, best-sellers and even commercial publishing are all recent innovations, but times are fast changing. Thanks to a booming market in Western translations that has developed over the past few years, you can go to any bookstore and pick up a copy of *Scarlet* in Vietnamese. The Vietnamese publishers may lack sophistication compared to their Western brethren, but they know a sure thing when they see it. Given that *Gone With the Wind* is probably the best-loved movie of all time in Vietnam, it didn't take a Ph.D. in marketing to realize that the sequel would be a money-maker here.

Gone With the Wind's popularity in Vietnam may come as a surprise to many Americans. It is not an easy phenomenon to explain and the reasons behind it are fertile ground for speculation. No doubt melodrama and romanticism play a role as does its enduring status here as a "classic." A historian might look to the resonance of the Civil War setting with Vietnam's own recent history, while a psychologist might speculate on the attractiveness of its willful and individualistic protagonists. Whatever the reasons, *Scarlet* is alive and well in Vietnam and selling briskly. The first printing of 3,000 copies sold out in a matter of months and an additional printing of 5,000 is now on order. While such figures would hardly be cause for celebration in the boardrooms of New York, they are considered quite strong in today's market in Vietnam, particularly when you factor in that it was printed in four volumes and thus the circulation figures are really four-fold. To get an accurate picture of the book's success one must also consider its unusually high price of 70,000 Dong for a complete set. While this is only roughly equivalent to six U.S. dollars, the deputy director of the publishing house in Hanoi put it in more proletarian terms: "If a peasant sold 100 kilos of rice, he still could not afford one new *Scarlet*, and my salary here at the publishing house for a whole month is only enough to buy

one." Fortunately for him he is allowed a free copy, but less fortunately, he says with a smile, he is not allowed to resell it.

The publication of *Scarlet* shows a considerable amount of ingenuity and dedication, and reveals how competitive the translation business has become in recent years. The publishing house in Ho Chi Minh City called on the talents of four different translators to bring the book to press in under three months. Throughout this time the project was shrouded in secrecy and fear some competitor would get the book to press first. Predictably there are a few rough spots in the translation and some critics complain that since the translator worked from a French translation it is really a copy of a copy. Where copyrights are concerned the book also occupies something of a gray area. When asked about the subject of royalties, the deputy director of the publishing house shrugged and cited the economic embargo the U.S. has maintained against Vietnam since the fall of Saigon in 1975. Under this embargo, the book probably should not be sold here at all, in any language, but it is doubtful the publisher could repatriate royalties to the U.S. if they wanted to. There are signs however that the U.S. is slowly moving towards lifting the embargo and so this excuse may not last much longer.

The fact is that for some years now the embargo has done little to stop the flood of American goods into Vietnam as witnessed by countless novels, videos, cans of Coke and packs of Marlboro cigarettes that line the streets here. Once the Vietnamese declared the period of Renovation in 1986 and stopped resisting the influx of such goods, they appeared virtually overnight, through such indirect sources as Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia, with the result that the embargo has become a one-way funnel. Plenty of goods and information from the U.S. come into Vietnam, but very little ever goes out. In this one-way isolation, Vietnam harbors a quiet obsession with the U.S. which goes beyond the initials U.S.A. that adorn many a hat, T-shirt or pair of socks, beyond *Gone With the Wind* and the oft-repeated questions about the embargo. The United States in Vietnam as in many parts of Asia, has acquired a mythic dimension for what it symbolizes in terms of freedom and fast-living, largely through images provided by its entertainment industry. This fascination stands in stark contrast to the mood on the other side of the Pacific, where America seems to want to forget Vietnam or to recreate it through the lens of that same entertainment industry. In America, the word Vietnam conjures up ghosts from the past that often obscure the Vietnam of the present. Such dynamics make the U.S. and Vietnam the oddest of couples, more incongruous than Scarlet and Rhett on the worst of days. While Vietnam courts the U.S. as a vision of a potential future, the U.S. shuns Vietnam as a painful reminder of the past.

It is little wonder then that following the market reforms of Vietnam's Sixth Party Congress in 1986, when book publishing was liberalized along with many other industries, there was a precipitous drop in the number of Russian books translated and the American best-seller exploded on the scene. Although several American novels

had been translated previously, they had been few in number and tended to be more literary in nature. Ernest Hemingway, Jack London, Mark Twain, and John Steinbeck, all translated before in limited quantities, now gave way to the likes of Harold Robbins, Danielle Steel and Xtiven King (sic). It took the industry some time to adjust to the new demands of the market, but it did not take long to realize that there was a huge demand for the sort of mass-market fiction that is popular at many an airport bookstand in the West. This fiction presented a whole range of attractions to Vietnamese audiences starved for information and entertainment. First it had all the proven plot elements of sex, violence, romance and intrigue that made it so popular in the West. Coupled with this was the cachet of being Western and foreign in a country which had lived in virtual isolation from the West for some years. Finally, the fact that this sort of fiction had long been banned gave it a novelty and a prurient appeal that was hard to beat.

During the early years of the boom more and more publishers got into the act and each became adept at procuring novels through associates in Bangkok and elsewhere. The translators of Russian and East European language found themselves displaced at the publishing houses by upstart translators of English. Where all these translators came from, in a country where English was rarely if ever taught is something of a mystery, but from 1986 to 1991 over 150 American novels by 90 different authors made their way into translation. This does not include another hundred-odd books from Great Britain, including such popular authors as James Chase, Agatha Christie, and Erle Gardner. The popularity of these novels in the early years due to their novelty and lack of competition led to soaring circulations, but such conditions could not last forever. The appetite for mass-market fiction seemed at first insatiable, but sometime about 1989 the bloom fell off the market. Translator and editor Thai Ba Tan of the Writer's Union Publishing House estimates the average circulation of a best-seller from the West is now about 2,000 copies compared to 30,000 or more a few years ago.

The turning point seems to have been about the time of the publication of Mario Puzo's *The Godfather*, which appeared in 1988 and soon became legend in Vietnam's small publishing world by selling close to a million copies. "What happened?" I asked Professor Nguyen Lien of Hanoi University, who said simply, "There are too many books. The reader is tired." The deputy director at the Literary Publishing House which brought out first *The Godfather* and now *Scarlet*, put it slightly differently: "Too much information. It is a boom of information, newspapers, TV, video, radio..." There is no doubt some truth to this. Market reforms have transformed the news media in Vietnam, bringing to the previously dull and colorless newspapers, investigative reports of corruption, gossip, photos culled from western magazines, and a spate of "human interest" stories. This coupled with the growing presence of video cafes, VCRs and video rentals have cut into what little leisure time the Vietnamese have at their disposal. Finally, the cover prices of these books have climbed out of reach of many Vietnamese, who have chosen to rent rather than buy their books. They can now

rent eight or ten different books from a neighborhood store for about the cost of buying one.

While liberalized strictures on publishing have made it possible for the first time to publish the great authors of the West, they have in the same stroke made these authors unmarketable because of competition from thrillers, romances and detective novels. Translator Thai Ba Tan complains there is not enough interest in serious literature in Vietnam today, so that while Harold Robbins has been translated in bulk, such writers as William Faulkner have not been translated at all. Mr. Tan said he would like to personally translate *The Sound and the Fury* and *Light in August*, two of his favorites, but in today's market they are unpublishable. "We want to publish such books," he said, "but the taste of the readers is not for that.... There is no publishing house now that can publish poetry. It's the market mechanism, it's very sad." Right now Mr. Tan is working on a translation of the *Canterbury Tales*, which he also may have trouble getting published. If so, he might choose to bankroll the project himself as he did last year with a collection of translations of Classical Japanese poems which he published himself at a cost of one million Dong. "Ten years ago people read serious books," he laments, "before 1986 the government would tell the publishing house what to print and they would print it." The people then had no choice, because there was nothing but "serious" books to choose from.

Mr. Tan also had some things to say about the influence this literary invasion is having on Vietnam's domestic writing. "Our writers now tend to write books with exciting plots. Thrillers you see. Then some started to write about sex from their point of view. Not so openly as in the U.S., but..." As he listed off subjects of sexuality, violence, social problems, rape and murder, I began to wonder if anything was still taboo. He replied that often the publisher will opt to tone down some of the more graphic scenes. "In a publishing house such as ours we have to consider everything carefully, from a pedagogical point of view for the whole society." If they are not careful, he said some "old people" have been known to write letters of complaint to the authorities which can lead to fines or other problems for the publisher. The subject of domestic politics is also dangerous ground, and advocacy of democracy and a multi-party system is still strictly off-limits.

Now is a difficult time for the publishing houses. The competition between the various publishers has grown cut-throat and it seems there is a glut in the market and declining demand. Mr. Tan hopes perhaps some foreign sponsors can help him in his ambitious project of creating a library of the world's best authors, translated into Vietnamese. Despite the recent downturn, he is hopeful for the future. "I am not a prophet," he said, "I am concerned about translating to make money, but I think the problem will be solved. The good novels will be popular again. The ballooning popularity of cheap books is because they were forbidden for so long. We were thirsty, hungry for this... Maybe soon it will be balanced according to the laws of market economy."

Whether or not the Vietnamese readers acquire a taste for more literary fare, or the publishers find their

way out of their current fiscal problems, something irrevocable has taken place in Vietnam. In a few short years the publishing houses have gone from being bastions of conservatism and Party ideology to being the heralds of Western influence. In the process old dogmas have been jettisoned like so much excess baggage in the haste to meet the demands of the market. The deluge of mass-market American fiction that has come rushing in to fill the vacuum cannot help but have cultural repercussions here, though exactly what they will be, or what form they will take is hard to say. Clearly not all the effects will be positive. Already reading of more serious fiction has sharply declined and it is increasingly difficult for even the most talented local writers to find readers.

I spoke with Dr. Phan Cu De about some of the potential implications of this spree of translation. Dr. De has read the translations of some forty or fifty American best-sellers as part of his research on the American novel in Vietnam. From his bookshelves he produced stacks of books by Sidney Sheldon, Jacqueline Susann, even a novelization of the TV show *Dallas* that bears a gunslinging rabbit on its cover. According to Dr. De, when the Vietnamese reader picks up one of these books, he is making an imaginative voyage to America: "The young students [of Vietnam] don't know anything about life in America and the West. That's why they read. They don't have the opportunity or the money to visit." In talking to many Vietnamese youths I have gathered a similar impression. Their curiosity about American society is so great and their knowledge so uneven that every new bit of information becomes another piece of a vast puzzle. Never mind that the pieces come from sources of widely different reliability, here fact and fiction comfortably intermingle. America is a catch-all name for the place where Scarlet, Michael Jackson, George Bush and Rambo all coexist amid a landscape of fast cars, vast mansions and untold wealth. At first I did not understand why science fiction was the one popular genre that seemed notably unsuccessful here, then I realized that ALL these books serve as science fiction. When readers here want to indulge in the escapist urge to travel to a futuristic technological society, they need look no further than the next continent. From the vantage of Vietnam and much of the developing world, the America of pop-fiction, film and TV is a curiosity, an oddity, a strange world populated by alien beings who inhabit a landscape that is as breathtaking as it is unreal.

When the Vietnamese look in on this alien world, Dr. De suggests that one of the things that catches their interest is the range of personal freedoms they see. Dr. De explains: "What interests me in these [American] books is freedom. In the Vietnamese family there are many feudal ties and the young people are subject to a lot of pressure from the old and also from society. But in the American family they have freedom. They can make their own decisions and choose their own future." While the youth of America might dispute this claim, to the Vietnamese students who can expect to live at home until marriage and beyond, the freedom of American youth is readily apparent. For these youths, America offers a vision of the possibility of freedom without responsibility: individualistic, willful, monetary, sexual. Buried deep

beneath these dreamed-of personal freedoms one occasionally hears a whisper of longing for political freedom, but often more as an afterthought. Except with a very few thinkers and intellectuals it seems the draw of conspicuous spending, consumerism and free living is so much more tangible that it all but eclipses political concerns.

It is significant perhaps that while the government feels the need to control some of its more avante-garde local writers and artists, it has very little need to interfere with the business of translation. So little thought is involved in many of these books from the West that there is very little of substance to censor. Rather they are effectively self-censored for they present America and the West in its most dissipated and fetishized form and generally eschew questions that might demand that the reader stop and think. Whether the book in question is a self-indulgent romance or an action-packed thriller, the political content of the average best-seller insofar as it might concern the government here is virtually nil. It is one of the outstanding ironies of the transformation that has taken place here, that the same aspects of Western capitalism that were vilified a few short years ago as signs of "decadence" are now put on a pedestal in the pop media and admired as "freedoms." One may wonder if they were completely wrong.

The perception of America here in Vietnam is in many respects distorted and incomplete. Under the circumstances it could hardly be otherwise. What is disturbing, however, is that these distortions have little to do with a War that was fought many years ago and still less with government organs of propaganda. We in the U.S. are printing our own propaganda and painting our own likeness. If it amounts to little more than a crude caricature of our ideals, our beliefs and ourselves, we have no one but ourselves to blame. In Vietnam they merely translate, however imperfectly, the scripts and the plots we provide. As entertainments spun for our own amusement, perhaps these stories have their place, but when held up to the world audience they become tokens of our society, often taken as a model for imitation. This is a role to which they are poorly suited. It seems there is a chasm, if not an outright contradiction between the role America wants to play on the world stage and the way it wants to behave at home. This disparity is particularly crucial in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. If we are to be a role-model in the widely proclaimed New World Order, we should take care to put our best foot forward and offer a role worth emulating.

I attended a party recently in Hanoi where I spoke with several Vietnamese college students. One student told me about her favorite film, *Gone With the Wind*, which she was proud to have seen four times. She had read the sequel she said, but it wasn't as good. After a while another student asked about a more topical subject: he wanted to know more about the recent events in Los Angeles.

Unlike their Chinese neighbors to the north the Vietnamese press was notably silent on the recent events in Los Angeles. They seemed to want to play it down and scorned the kind of grandstanding the Chinese indulged in. However, news travels fast these days with the

liberalized press and so they ran, without editorials, the facts as they came in off the wire. Again it was mainly our cameras that did the filming and our press that did the reporting and again the Vietnamese could only translate what we gave them. But perhaps something was lost in the translation. These Vietnamese students approached me as if seeking an explanation for the events. How could such a thing happen in America, they wondered, weren't the police in control? Above all they seemed to want to know what to do with this latest incongruous piece of their jigsaw Americas. How was this latest snapshot of urban America to be reconciled with the vision of gleaming and prosperous consumer society from sea to shining sea? I looked at the pieces they held before me and saw their confusion and I suddenly found myself at a loss for words.

CALL NAM

AT&T signed an agreement with Viet Nam officials to reopen direct communications service between the U.S. and Viet Nam for the first time in 17 years. The signing took place 3 days after the U.S. announced a decision to lift its ban on telecommunications with Viet Nam. AT&T said the start of service hinges on acquiring all necessary U.S. regulatory approvals, but that it hoped to offer a limited direct-dial service in a few days by sending calls through third countries. The company said direct links could be available in a matter of weeks. (From the *Wall Street Journal*). AT&T will offer international direct dialing, operator-assisted and AT&T Calling Card calls to Viet Nam from the U.S. and collect and AT&T Calling Card calls from Viet Nam. Eventually, the company also is planning to offer AT&T USA Direct Service and fax service. AT&T will use 210 undersea-cable, microwave and international satellite circuits to provide service. AT&T said its service will be priced from \$1.77 to \$2.91 a minute, based on time of day and length of call. Once phone service is restored to Viet Nam, only North Korea and Cambodia will remain cut off from U.S. phone lines. AT&T recently received US approval to restore service to Cambodia and now is trying to negotiate an agreement with Cambodian authorities. (*NY Daily News*). Excerpted from *AT&T Today*.

CECIL B. CURREY WRITES:

I recently received my copy of *Informed Dissent: Three Generals & the Viet Nam War* and was mildly offended. In his essay, Dan Duffy described Edward Lansdale (page 5) as an "intrepid Army Colonel" and "an executive" of the CIA. He was, of course, wrong on both counts. Lansdale was Air Force and never held an executive position with the Company, not even as chief-of-station (which, after all, would be pretty far down the totem pole). Then on page 6 Duffy asserts that "Harry Summers, colonel of infantry was negotiating the U.S. exit from Sai Gon." He never did. He was a very low-level assistant to an assistant.

In the two major essays by Buzzanco and Ismi I count many references to Lansdale and at least eleven citations in their notes. Ismi, in particular, deals with the efforts of Lawton J. Collins to get rid of Ngo Dinh Diem and asks "Did Lansdale disobey Collins' explicit order....?" He ends with the observation that "evidence that could conclusively answer the above question remains in documents still classified by the CIA."

It is not a mystery at all for I dealt with the matter in my *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988). It astonishes me that so many "sage" comments would be offered about this man without even a basic reference to my well-received biography of the man. Perhaps that explains the many errors contained in the essays of Duffy, Buzzanco and Ismi.

Sincerely,
Cecil B. Currey
3330 Lake Crenshaw Road
Lutz, FL 33549

Dan Duffy replies: Lansdale was Air Force officer. He was an executive of the CIA, that is, he acted under that agency's authority, for their interests, at his own initiative, and supervised agents in their employ. Summers' role in the withdrawal was small. I tried to make that point with sarcasm, but Cecil Currey's blunt statement is more exact and powerful. It was a substantial oversight not to mention Currey's authoritative biography of Lansdale in the volume. Our valued subscriber and contributor has not specified any errors in Buzzanco's essay or in Ismi's.

RESIDUAL DIOXIN IN VIET NAM: CURREY REPORTS

American advisors in Viet Nam during the early days of U.S. intervention there often complained about the ability of Viet Cong warriors to hide within the jungle fastness of the land where they could not be seen. As early as 1961, Walt Whitman Rostow and Robert McNamara discovered that army chemists were experimenting with powerful herbicides, based upon a compound of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T laced with dioxin. McNamara and Rostow believed use of this defoliant in Viet Nam might solve the problem of guerrilla lairs. Tons of this substance were sent to Viet Nam in different color-coded barrels; each color striped on a barrel designated a separate strength or compound. The most commonly used was shipped in orange containers, and thus the phrase "Agent Orange" passed into the English language. Beginning in January 1962, the Kennedy administration ordered the Air Force to dump defoliants on selected areas of the Ca Mau Peninsula, the southernmost region of that Asian land. C-123 aircraft made thousands of such sorties in this program which was designated "Ranch Hand." Pilots chuckled that their motto was, "Remember! Only you can prevent forests." They soon turned thousands of acres of jungles and rice paddies into mud wallows.

In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson ordered an increase in the use of herbicides for defoliation and crop reduction. If the enemy could not eat, neither would he be able to fight. The Air Force willingly complied. In 1966,

Ranch Hand planes sprayed 850,000 acres of jungle. In 1967 they dumped the deadly powders on one and a half million additional acres. Army helicopters were equipped with special tanks and nozzles and sprayed around the perimeters of fire support bases to keep killing zones free from obstacles. The same lands were repeatedly sprayed as the tough jungle vegetation tried to reclaim its own. Even in generally quiet and safe locations, American troops regularly ducked under cover to avoid low-flying helicopters as they buzzed about their business of spraying the ubiquitous ground cover. In their hooches at eventide, these soldiers had to shake powder residue from herbicide sprayings out of their blankets before climbing into bed.

Warnings of the possible dangers to humans from contact with such herbicides were made known at least as early as the administration of Richard Nixon. His science adviser, Dr. Lee A. DuBridges, called Nixon's attention to a 1969 National Institute of Health report claiming that high dosages of 2,4,5-T caused stillbirths and malformations in mice. Yet by 1970, 200,000 gallons a month of Agent Orange were being used in Viet Nam. Some suggested substituting Agent White, but it was more expensive and persisted longer in the soil, increasing the possibility of long-term ecological damage.

Defense Secretary Melvin Laird considered curtailing the use of such herbicides, but General Creighton Abrams, commander in Viet Nam, and his boss, Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, as well as Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reaffirmed the necessity for its use. General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, added his voice to those of his colleagues. Ending defoliation would take away from the military its ability to expose enemy encampments, storage depots, and main supply routes. Despite that pressure, David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense, announced that use of Agent Orange was to be suspended. Planes of the Seventh Air Force flew their last defoliation sortie on 7 January 1971, although they continued to spray crops. (Later there was at least one unauthorized use of Agent Orange in the provinces of Quang Tin and Quang Ngai to defoliate base perimeters and to destroy crops.)

Official figures indicate that the planes of Operation Ranch Hand ultimately poured nineteen million gallons of chemical poison on over twenty percent of the entire land area of the Republic of South Viet Nam; nearly six million acres. President Nguyen Van Thieu announced that herbicides had destroyed twenty percent of his nation's forests. An additional 150,000 acres were destroyed in Laos and an uncounted number in Cambodia. One and one-third million gallons of unused Agent Orange were retrieved from South Viet Nam by April 1972, to be stored with an additional 850,000 gallons that had not yet been sent to Asia from depots in the U.S.

Department of Agriculture standards for the use of herbicide spraying with the U.S. limited the average concentration of dioxin to one-half to one part per million. Agent Orange contained two to four times that allowable amount. The compounds were finally destroyed on 3 September 1977 aboard a ship in the North Pacific, equipped with special furnaces for destroying toxic substances. The cost was eight million dollars. To the

last, military chiefs maintained that here was little or no danger to human beings from use of such herbicides.

In 1970, a four-man task force composed of scientists from the American Association for the Advancement of Science went to Viet Nam to investigate the long-term effects of Agent Orange but were kept from having access to necessary data by the military. Their preliminary report, issued 30 December 1970, indicated little forest regrowth even after three and more years. Bamboo had spread to reclaim forest floors where once hardwoods had grown. Coastal mangrove swamps were destroyed, nearly all trees dying after one spraying, not expected to return to their former state for at least a hundred years. Thirty-six percent of all mangrove forests were gone. Records were inadequate, they said, to conclude that herbicides caused birth defects, but they noted that it had been the civilian population rather than enemy troops who had consumed nearly all the food sprayed under the crop destruction program.

And there the matter of defoliants rested for me until 1988 when, at long last, the government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam finally gave me permission, after four years of requests, to visit that country and to travel its length and breadth, talking with people at all levels and photographing whatever I wished. I was a colonel in the Army Reserve, a professor of military history at the University of South Florida, and the author of nine books. As a youth I had resisted church-sponsored service as a missionary in foreign lands. That trip to Viet Nam caused me, a man nearing sixty years of age, to reconsider that youthful decision!

During that March trip, I requested a visit to Tu Du Obstetrical and Gynecological Hospital in Sai Gon, for I had heard from others of a sad and mysterious exhibit kept there within a locked room. I wanted to see it for myself. I already knew that medical needs in Viet Nam are immediate and drastic. Its citizens are generally vitamin and protein-starved. Intestinal parasites and malaria are endemic. Polio, diphtheria, and other diseases afflict a large proportion of the population. Many people suffer from what their physicians believe may be the after-effects of American use of defoliants, for the residue of that outpouring of herbicide has entered the food chain. In that land of problems, Tu Du and other hospitals fight a lonely battle.

Tu Du is a primary health care facility of 750 beds serving the women of sixteen southern provinces around the former capital city of the southern republic—and there I came into first-hand contact with what may be the after-effects of Agent Orange. Founded over fifty years ago, the present physical plant, located inside a walled compound, consists of three pleasant buildings constructed during the French occupation in 1937, in 1965 while U.S. forces were beginning their build-up, and in 1985, after unification. Oleander bushes dot the courtyard and that day blooms hung in profusion from the branches. It provides care without cost. In 1987, hospital physicians examined 1,800,781 women who needed maternal care and delivered 17,002 infants. The institution is divided into four sections: gynecology, obstetrics, neonatology, and family planning.

Upon our arrival on Thursday, 24 March 1988, my interpreter, Le Hong Lam, and I were met by a delegation consisting of a man, Professor Dr. Bui Sy Hung, Director of Tu Du, and two women: Professor Dr. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Phuong, Chief Gynecologist, and Dr. Le Diem Huong, Chief Pediatrician and the head of neonatology—all assembled to greet their western visitor. We seated ourselves in a nearby conference room, plain and starkly utilitarian. On the long table around which we gathered, however, sat a beautiful flower decoration which I admired while we were served refreshments: tea and small bananas. The director gave a few words of welcome and then excused himself for urgent business elsewhere, leaving Dr. Le Diem Huong in charge of our visit.

A woman of about fifty, she had the face of a saint and the dedication of a missionary. She was a woman comfortable with herself and her work. As I listened to my interpreter translate her words, I watched her kind eyes and careworn expression and was impressed by her inner strength. She spent some time on her briefing and then gave me a tour of the hospital.

Tu Du faces unique problems. The sixteen provinces from which it draws the bulk of its patients also happen to be those which received the largest amount of defoliants used in Viet Nam during the period when U.S. military forces fought there. Dr. Huong believes dioxin is now in the food chain in that area, an inextricable part of all the water and meat and vegetables the inhabitants there consume. American soldiers came in contact with defoliants for one year (unless they extended their time in Viet Nam—an option exercised by only a few men). For the Vietnamese, the land is theirs for life, with all the dangers that continued exposure may bring to them.

Neonatology, the area Dr. Huong knows best, contains 150 beds reserved for difficult and premature births. During 1987, the hospital supervised the delivery of seventeen thousand babies of which 30 percent were either difficult or premature. In areas north of the 17th parallel, she said, the incidence of such problems is much less significant. An example: 18 percent of births at the hospital were premature; for Sai Gon, the incidence was only 12 percent. For all of the south, the figure was 10 percent, and for Viet Nam as a whole, 8 percent.

Birth defects are common. I was shown several premature infants huddled in their outmoded incubators, and saw tiny babies with gross cleft palates, marked with absence of limbs or ears, hydrocephalic—all abandoned by their horror-stricken mothers. One sweet premature baby girl lay in her incubator, a picture of beauty until a nurse turned her and I saw that she had been born without a left shoulder and left arm. Another with a dismaying cleft palate lay nearby.

In 1987, Dr. Huong told me, forty infants suffered from neural tube defects, forty from cleft palate, thirty-two from malformation or absence of arms or legs, and every year since 1975 the hospital has been the site of five or more conjoined ("Siamese") births. I visited with one such twin, seven year old Nguyen Viet-Duc, born at Gia Lai-Kontum on 25 February 1981. Abandoned by their mother when she realized what she had delivered, Viet-Duc had since remained at the hospital. They were conjoined at the pelvis: one anus, one penis, one urinary

tract, one bladder, two kidneys, three legs—two of them tiny and stick-like—that rose from the pelvic area; the other twisted and atrophied, and separate torsos. On 22 May 1986, Viet fell prey to acute anencephalopathy and by October of that year had lost cerebral cortex and reaction functions. He suffered from constant respiratory and urinary infections. Since Viet had no sensations when eating, his food often diverted into his trachea. He remained hydrocephalic, comatose and ill; his system pouring poisons into his twin. Duc, on the other hand, was lively and bright, but increasingly subject to illnesses given him by his twin. Dr. Huong spoke of her hopes of interesting a team of foreign physicians in coming to Viet Nam to operate on Duc-Viet. (I again visited Tu Du in December 1988 and found that the previous September a group of Japanese physicians had performed the surgery. Both twins still survived, although there was no hope for the vegetative one; Viet was near death, kept alive only by extraordinary measures. Duc—who for the first time in his life now had mobility in a wheelchair—smiled and told me that one day he hoped to become a soccer goalie.)

Every two or three days, physicians at Tu Du deliver another deformed fetus. Dr. Huong ushered me into a large room, perhaps twenty-five feet long by fifteen feet wide, its walls covered with floor to ceiling shelves. Other, free-standing shelves filled much of the floor space. Everywhere were two-and-a-half gallon, formalin-filled Bell jars, in each of which floated an aborted or full-term fetus. The hospital administration had, for a time, ordered all such specimens to be preserved for later scientific tissue studies, but has not done so of late because of lack of funds to purchase even so cheap a material as formaldehyde. Many were genetic monstrosities: twinned or triple conjoined, hydrocephalic, some covered with cancerous growths, their eyes staring blankly through the glass at sights they would never see. Dr. Huong, who spoke French, waived her hand at the shelves of grossly deformed beings and sadly told me in that language, "They're not babies. They're monsters." And they were. The genetics of one fetus had gone so awry that its genitals were growing out of the middle of its face! The Vietnamese wonder whether this great incidence of deformity has not been heightened by the toxic poisoning of their land during the war from the widespread use of defoliants.

Tu Du does more. It also cares for women suffering from hydatidiform mole and choriocarcinoma. The former causes a woman to believe she is pregnant, but it is not a fetus inhabiting her body but rapidly developing cysts within the uterus. The latter is an extremely rare, very malignant neoplasm of the uterus. It can happen to women of any culture, but usually strikes them in their fourth or fifth decade or even later, and in the West, this malignancy is regularly cured through chemotherapy. Ninety-two percent of such patients in America, for example, are still alive five years after the disease has been detected, unless it has metastasized to the brain, while in Viet Nam it is simply and inevitably fatal, for Viet Nam has little access to chemotherapy drugs. In all countries of southeast Asia, choriocarcinoma accounts for one of every two thousand female patients. In southern Viet Nam, that figure doubles and for the sprayed areas the figure is six per cent or higher.

In the thirteen provinces around Sai Gon, young women of eighteen and nineteen fall prey to this cancer—and there are no chemotherapy medicines to save them. I visited their ward of sixty beds which normally contains between eighty and ninety patients. Some women lay two to a bed. Many of these sad creatures simply lie there passively waiting to die; their cancers had metastasized to their lungs and elsewhere even after removal of their uteruses. Most had not been told that further efforts were hopeless, but their expressions showed they knew they would die soon.

Somewhere on the grounds that day, impressed with her work, I told Dr. Huong, "*Vous ete la mère Thérèse de Ho Chi Minh Ville.*" She looked blank, either because of my French pronunciation or because she had not heard of Mother Theresa or her work in Calcutta and elsewhere. When I explained, she disclaimed any accolade, saying she was not worthy of such an honor—a most Mother Theresa-like response.

As I took my leave, Dr. Huong told me that many had come as visitors to Tu Du, listened gravely to her and even sometimes promised to send help. She had not heard from them again, she remarked, without any trace of rancor or bitterness. I did not say so aloud, but inwardly pledged myself to help. Upon my return to the U.S., in company with my accountant, my lawyer, a Vietnamese friend who works in the public health sector in California, and a Thai businessman I had met, I formed "American Medical Help for Viet Nam." We were fortunate. On my second trip to Viet Nam in December 1988, I took with me nearly a ton of donated medicine and supplies, twenty-two boxes worth approximately \$25,000 and distributed the material between Tu Du Hospital and another I had visited earlier in the north—the Institute for Protection of the Mother and the Newborn in Ha Noi (Professor Dr. Duong Thi Cuong, Director).

Other non-governmental agencies have also pledged themselves to provide aid to Viet Nam despite obstacles placed in our way by various agencies of the U.S. government acting on orders of successive American presidents: Ford, Carter, Reagan and Bush—they have all obstinately refused to allow direct aid or shipment of goods to Viet Nam. After all, that nation had the temerity to defeat us in combat. In the meantime, while we passively wait for such agencies to change their policies, thousands upon uncounted thousands of Vietnamese die unnecessary, slow and lingering deaths—many of them due to our poisoning of their soil. Most caught in the coils of that persevering compound were once citizens of the Republic of South Viet Nam—our ally in the fight against the government in the north. In April 1975 their land was occupied by troops of the People's Army of Viet Nam, their government collapsed, their leaders fled. They remained behind and have experienced repeated punishment because of where they lived: re-education camps, poverty and inflation, unemployment and health problems linked to our use of herbicides. And we have turned our backs.

Cecil B. Currey, Founder, American Medical Help for Viet Nam, Address 3330 Lake Crenshaw Road, Lutz, FL 33549

D.S. LLITERAS

In a Warrior's Romance by D.S. Lliteras, a book of photos and haiku, nine inch by seven inch blue paperback, Hampton Roads Publishing Co., Inc., 891 Norfolk Square, Norfolk, VA 23502, 804-459-2453, 800-766-8009, 1991. Cover has a long vertical photo of a soldier in cammies and boonies and two bandoleers of great big rounds, one hand on a pole flying Stars and Stripes. By the photo is a blurb from E.R. Zumwalt, Jr., Admiral, U.S.N., (ret.). On the back is a wide horizontal snap of five more guys in cammies, none facing the camera, one boonie hat, one beret, a grenade launcher, some rifles, a lot of stacked sandbags, and a blurb from Donald S. Beyer, Jr., Lt. Governor, State of Virginia. Pages 2-199 are facing-page compositions w/a snapshot on the left and a poem on the right. Alarming snaps—apparently someone gave military weapons to a bunch of teenagers and turned them loose in a tropical country. All photos black and white. There is a long vertical gray block toward the outside of each page, a black outline on the top and bottom of each block and around all four edges of most of the photos. The snaps themselves are well-composed, in some cases by the photographer and other times by his subjects. The photographer is not identified and neither is anyone else. The varying uniformity of the page design twenty years later lends both immediacy and artfulness to what might have been a jumbled shoebox of fading keepsakes. Each poem goes with its photo—as a caption or a comment or a reaction. There is an effect of timelessness, and sure enough the author makes clear in his "Preface" that he's innocent of history. He thinks "history" is "campaigns and casualty statistics. . . the broad brush stroke." Sigh. Well, leaving alone what Lliteras hasn't done, he sure has made a lovely book. According to the author's note at the back of the book and to what he told me on 30 May 92 at the VVAW reunion, Lliteras enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1967. He served in Viet Nam in 69-70, earning a Bronze Star with a Combat "V" as a hospital corpsman attached to the First Reconnaissance Battalion, First Marine Division. He earned an M.F.A. in theater from Florida State University, worked in the theater in the 1970s and wrote several plays. He sailed on merchant vessels, then earned a commission at Navy OCS and worked as Diving and Salvage Officer. He is now a firefighter for the City of Norfolk. His haiku have been published in the US, Canada, Japan, and India. The page facing the title page gives acknowledgment to previous publishers. The author looks a lot like the soldier on page 32 who is not an Asian. Whoops, Lliteras just phoned in to say that his novel, *In the Heart of Things*, is now out from Hampton Roads Publishing Co, 800-766-8009, \$8.95 trade paperback. It's about two homeless vets living in the streets of Baltimore, Maryland who embark on a spiritual journey. Lliteras says "It's not about depravity. It's about the conditions men live in and the conditions they can rise out of."

THE WORLD'S A STAGE WE GO THROUGH

From David DeRose, our drama editor: In the December 1991 issue of *Viet Nam Generation*, I reported on a new drama by Steve Tesich, *The Speed of Darkness*, in which two Viet Nam veterans are united after a separation of almost twenty years. Recently, in a *Village Voice* interview, actor Stephen Lang, who played Lou, the homeless veteran, in the original production of *The Speed of Darkness*, talked about a rather disturbing incident which occurred in performance.

The play dealt with Vietnam veterans, and one night there was this disturbed guy in the audience. "I saw that on *Geraldo*," he calls out in a deep voice at one point. And a few minutes later, he says in an even more sepulchral voice, "I hope I don't have to come up there." Needless to say, we're all getting a bit tense.

So I'm into my big monologue, about using a can opener to scratch my name onto the wall of the dead in Washington, when suddenly I see on one of the actors' faces a look I've never seen in my life—a look of unmitigated horror. I turned around and emerging from the penumbra is this huge, fucking guy, bearded, flannel shirt, the classic Vietnam vet who came back to the States and went to live in the woods with nothing but a knife. And the expression in his eyes?—I mean this could have been explosive.

I was terrified—what if the guy had a gun?—but something told me to stay in character, and I turned around, walked over to him, reached up to put my hands on his shoulders and said, "No, no, no, you can't be here now. This is my house, and you can't be here now." He just stood there, so I repeated what I'd said as firmly as I could—I mean my cylinders were really firing. "We'll talk later," I went on, "but we can't talk now. You understand? *You have to go!*" Well, finally, without saying a word, the guy just turned, walked offstage, walked out of the theater, and we never saw him again. (*Village Voice*, 31 March 1991: 104)

Speaking of plays and of vets who "went to live in the woods," a new Viet Nam veteran drama by (non-veteran) playwright Lanford Wilson has recently been produced in Seattle and Philadelphia. *The Redwood Curtain* is about a young Amerasian woman who travels to the redwood forests of Northern California because she believes her father is among the Viet Nam veterans living as hermits in the woods there. She encounters a man named Lyman whom she decides, despite his silence, is her father.

I promise to give you the lowdown on *The Redwood Curtain* as soon as I am able to locate a copy of the script.

—David DeRose, Theater Studies, Yale, New Haven, CT, 06520, 203-432-1308.

FROM PETER DALEY

I have just arrived back in Australia but before I left LA I spoke by phone with Bill Short and amongst the many names and addresses on Viet Nam, he gave me yours, and I think the editor is Dan Duffy. My notes are a little rushed so I hope I got it right.

Dan, I'm a Viet Nam vet and an artist from Australia and I'm currently involved in organizing "DOGTAGS" an exhibition of approx. 30 Americans, 20 odd Australians, plus several Vietnamese artists. We also have approx. 20 American, Vietnamese & Australian Women Poets in the show. It opens on the 11th Aug. at the COACH HOUSE GALLERY SYDNEY and at the DRILL HALL GALLERY THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CANBERRA ACT. 12 Sept. and will coincide with the V. Veterans Memorial Dedication (early October.)

Could you send me some info, maybe a couple of back copies of your newsletter I can forward more complete details on the art show if you would like. I look forward to your reply. Best regards—Peter Daley, 44 Rival Street, Kareela, 2232, N.S.W., Australia.

GULF WAR CRIMES TRIBUNAL IN NEW HAVEN: JOEL SCHECHTER REPORTS

Joel Schechter of the Yale School of Drama and the *New Haven Advocate* reports: Dissenter and actress Margo Kidder joined other witnesses at an International War Crimes Tribunal hearing in New Haven, Connecticut, on October 30, 1991. The open public forum was one of some thirty hearings to be sponsored across the country this fall by a Commission of Inquiry, which seeks evidence of American war crimes committed in the Persian Gulf War last winter.

The Commission of Inquiry began last May, when one of its founders, former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, said that the conflict in the Gulf "was not really a war. It was the use of technological material to destroy a defenseless country. From 125,000 to 300,000 were killed." Commission evidence suggests that the United States government planned the war against Iraq before that country invaded Kuwait, and the Pentagon then employed excessive and indiscriminate force resulting in considerable civilian casualties.

Margo Kidder spoke on behalf of her friend, Dr. Yolanda Huet-Vaughn, a U.S. Army physician sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison because her oath as a doctor made her refuse the call-up to serve in the Gulf. Another speaker, *Nation* magazine writer Bruce Shapiro, reported on the Pentagon's censorship of the media and loss of free expression by American dissenters as a result of the Gulf War. He said that the military expected volunteer soldiers to leave their consciences behind when they entered the Armed Forces; by his count at least fifty-four soldiers are now serving prison terms for refusing to fight in the Gulf. John Jones, a Vietnam veteran and now a housing rights leader in New Jersey, discussed how

American domestic needs have suffered from neglect while the government wasted billions of dollars on war.

The Commission of Inquiry can be contacted at 36 E. 12th Street, 6th Floor, NY, NY 10003, or by phone at (212) 254-5385, FAX (212) 979-1583. They've got a book out, described on p. 47 of issue 4:1-2.

TOUR GUIDES

Carol Miller at Lonely Planet was nice enough to send a complimentary copy of *Southeast Asia: On a Shoestring* (7th edition. ISBN 0-86442-125-7, \$19.95, 928 pages, Lonely Planet Publications, 155 Filbert St, Suite 251 Oakland, CA 94607, tel. 510-893-8555, FAX: 8563) after we published Dana Sachs' review of Lonely Planet's *Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia: A Travel Survival Kit* in VG issue 3:3, pp. 75-6, so I'll put in a plug here. All sources agree that the Lonely Planet guides to Asia are the best ones for student and budget travelers. The Southeast Asia title is the firm's first and flagship book, first issued in 1975. New editions are regularly updated from sources in the field, giving specific directions for places to stay and eat and things to do. Having a guide to the whole region is an advantage, since anyone who goes to Viet Nam will almost certainly pass through Thailand at least. The SE Asia book covers Thailand, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and Macao. The history sections are reliable and insightful, phrased with forthright delicacy. Daniel Robinson is credited with two of the Indochina chapters, but Joe Cummings, an RPCV who served in Thailand, who holds an M.A. in SE Asian Studies from Berkeley, seems to have played a hand here as well. For a guidebook devoted to Viet Nam alone, with more cultural information and less about cheap travel, see Barbara Cohen's *Viet Nam Guidebook* (Houghton Mifflin, 2nd ed., 1992) also reviewed by Sachs in VG 3:3. Dana and Barbara are both in Ha Noi now, by the way. Dana is studying Vietnamese with the formidable Nhu Y Nguyen of the Institute of Linguistics (Vien Ngon Ngu Hoc, 20 Ly Thai To, Ha Noi, Viet Nam) and teaching some English to the family of economist Hong Lan Tran. Barbara gave up her medical practice, put her house on the market, and moved to Viet Nam this March. There is nothing more precious than freedom and independence. The retired psychiatrist organized the non-profit Southeast Asia Cultural Association just before leaving the States. She has established herself at the old Esperanto Club in Ha Noi. She recently wrote asking for anthologies of U.S. literature. Send books to Barbara Cohen, c/o "Espespen", 79E Hang Trong, Ha Noi, VN, tel: 2.66856, FAX: 84 42 56562, fax must include her above address. If you're planning a trip to VN, it would be worth your while to do Dr. Cohen a favor now. She's a good friend to have in Ha Noi.

MultiCultural Review Launched

In January 1992, Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., launched *MultiCultural Review*, "an interdisciplinary forum of multimedia citations, informative articles, and incisive critiques representing the full spectrum of American ethnic, racial and religious diversity. Educators, administrators, and librarians in school, public, and academic facilities will finally have a single, authoritative selection tool for outstanding work from the breadth of American cultural traditions."

Publishers are encouraged to submit current and forthcoming titles, catalogs, or title specifications, for review consideration. Submission guidelines, as well as the editorial statement and editorial calendar, are available upon request.

Inquiries and submissions should be directed to *MultiCultural Review*, 10 Bay Street, Department 205, Westport, CT 06880. Please direct editorial inquiries to Brenda Mitchell-Powell, Editor-in-Chief; direct customer service, subscription fulfillment, and advertising inquiries to GP Subscription Publications, 88 Post Road West, Box 5007, Westport, CT 06881.

Randy Rowland Announces Real Heroes Poster Series

When the Gulf build-up began, we started a project to uphold, celebrate, and support military resisters to that war. This took the form of an art project of duotone mini-posters of various GI resisters.

I recently got a photo of Glen Mulholland from him, and have now released the newest poster in the series, #43. Glen is doing an 18-month sentence in the Camp LeJeune Brig for refusing to participate in the Gulf Slaughter. He was in the Marines for 11 years before that, serving in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. He saw a lot that he disagreed with and the Gulf War was the final straw for him. The photo of him on this poster shows him kissing his son.

Posters in the series are printed using a duotone laser print process which I developed for the project. Each poster features one GI resister to the Gulf war. Each mini-poster is 8.5x11"

The Real Heroes series is produced for *Collective Media a non-profit collective in Seattle. If you would like a copy of the new poster or of the entire series, email "rrowland" on PeaceNet, write to Collective Media, PO Box 20213, Seattle WA 98102, phone (206) 521-0327, or fax (206) 325-7794.

We have been asking for a donation of \$2 per individual poster, or \$40 plus postage for the entire set. (Payable to Collective Media)

I can make a set of the posters available on Macintosh disk to progressive publishers for \$25 for the 10 disk set. These are Pagemaker files with accompanying tiff files of the resisters.

Through the Eyes of One Vet: Dan Okada Reports on Hunter College Conference

Having just attended the 10th Annual Hunter College, School of Social Work's conference on "Vietnam Veterans the Hidden Client," I walked away with a feeling of dismay. As with most multi-faceted programs the good as well as the bad were in evidence. The good was okay; the bad was abysmal. If this gathering of social workers, therapists, veterans, program administrators, and others presumably interested in the plight of the Vietnam veteran was indeed representative of the support and services available to vets, perhaps vet-isolationism is not such a terrible alternative.

As a preface, the intent of this conference, that is, the reason for its existence, was manifold: to help those who work with vets better understand their client; to discuss various methodologies that might better provide assistance to the vet; and to provide the vet who needs services with resource information and clinical support.

Having missed the first nine conferences, I am assuming that was indeed the focus. Unfortunately, in year ten, the clinical participants appear to have taken over and the vet has successfully become "interesting," as in, "Aren't these guys interesting?" This is not necessarily to criticize legitimate concern, it is however, an indictment of the therapeutic process that compels those dealing with the problems of the vet to "fit" vet symptoms into psycho-analytic clichés. The manner in which trained social workers have determined that treatment should be administered to vets-in-need is to look up our ailments in the therapeutic bible, DSM-III, and promote the prescribed "appropriate" treatment. Is this true concern?

A short performance of the current play "A Piece of My Heart" by one of the cast members opened the conference. This is a work based on Laura Palmer's anthology *Shrapnel in the Heart* which in turn is based on messages/letters that have been left at the Wall. It was moving. The keynote address was delivered by the famed pioneer and inspirational leader of the PTSD and the Vietnam veteran movement, Dr. Chaim Shatan. Dr Shatan presented an eloquent history and analysis of the plight of the vet. He is a good one to have on our side. Unfortunately, the focus of the conference—the workshops—did not equal the emotion or content of Novella Nelson's reading or Dr Shatan's overview.

Workshops were divided into two areas: one was recommended for veterans and novice clinicians, the other for "veteran" clinicians experienced with PTSD. Since I thought I knew something about PTSD I attended two workshops for the latter group. While the workshop leaders may truly care for those they assist, that concern was not transmitted to the audience. Upon hearing the process these folks have initiated with vets and their families I very much felt that the vets who sought aid from these clinicians would have been better served by buying a dog. In one workshop, the clinicians boasted of having had one vet and his family for over four years and have now gotten them to the point that they are considering divorce!

The case study presentations in two workshops offered little or no insight into the issues being discussed and did not demonstrate much appreciation of the vet under scrutiny. Instead of humanizing the vet, discussing the reality of being a vet and the symptoms that could be generated because of this status, the presenters chose to objectify the vet and treat him as any other social service client. In fact, there was a presentation of a case of a 35 year-old substance/child abuser. When asked about his age, the case worker was not sure, but she "believed" the client to be a Vietnam combat vet. Not. In this case, rather than simply saying the methodology they were presenting could be appropriate for vet populations also, the message was that vets definitely should be treated with the model being discussed.

Perhaps this is the therapeutic milieu, clinicians must remain detached from their charges; but there is detached and then there is detached. Rather than relating the need for compassion, the presenters voiced the need for compelling methodology. Rather than outlining what made the vet unique, they described what made him/her similar. Given the make-up of the audience, vets and social service providers, the presentations were almost insulting.

In other workshops, participants who were actually doing something for the vet had significant discussions with their audience. One was a former Qui Nhon MP, who, like most others who have sought assistance for Vietnam vets, found none and organized a vet self-help organization without the benefit of agency backing or institutional support. The Vietnam Veterans Hootch Group was his creation and attempts to find housing and provide focus for displaced vets in the greater Brooklyn area. Another workshop addressed the problem of substance addicted vets and was led by a former convoy driver/social worker. The lessons presented in this workshop were also compelling. This is the issue: those clinicians who seem to be most empathic are former vets. Is the Vet Center cry of "Vets Helping Vets" still true? It certainly was at this conference.

It is categorically impressive that for the past decade Hunter College has sponsored this event. Organizers, presenters, and participants are to be congratulated for recognizing a need and trying to provide a service. It is too bad the theoretical focus of the conference was not carried out in practice. In examining the conference-reality from the two perspectives presented, the therapist and the veteran, the vet once again got screwed; issues were introduced but not discussed, dispassion rather than compassion was exhibited. For the therapist, products of their education and not their heart, process rather than substance was stressed. Maybe if the therapist already knows the jargon and has successfully detached him/herself from the vet then learning alternative methodologies is relevant, but if that was the intent the leaders also did a poor job of educating the audience. Clearly the twain was not meeting in New York's Upper East Side.

The workshops did identify the areas in which vets and their families need assistance. Vets do have problems related to homelessness, substance abuse, and other psycho-social disorders. They need an arena and an

advocate to so these issues can be raised, discussed, analyzed, evaluated, and resolved. This annual conference can be that vehicle and the participants can be that advocate, but the organizers need to reflect on their original mission, i.e., aiding those who are/were reluctant to seek aid.

It might be argued that after ten years, the passion surrounding vet issues has cooled. Perhaps it is time to move on in the therapeutic world and seek other groups-in-need. Unfortunately, there are still many brothers and sisters "out there" who need the services of the compassionate and skilled. Ultimately, if this conference is to progress to years eleven and twelve and beyond, it must regain its initial integrity and purpose. We are still in need of consideration and are still seeking answers to questions we do not know how to ask. I hope this conference is not a harbinger, because if it is then to paraphrase the song, "We are looking for help in all the wrong places..."

Dan Okada, Assistant Professor, Criminal Justice, Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601, (914) 575-3000 x2952, e-mail: JZHQ@MARISTB.BITNET

FROM PALMER HALL

I contacted Bill Ehrhart two weeks ago about including some of his poems in a new anthology of poetry I'm editing for the Pecan Grove Press. It's called *A Measured Response* and is including recent poems written on the Persian Gulf War and poems about Viet Nam written within the last few years. My own impression was that the Gulf War reawakened a lot of emotions among those of us who were in Viet Nam during the war years. I was there in 1967—1968 as an interpreter/translator and much of what I had experienced came back to me. I didn't find the Gulf War healing in any way.

At any rate, I contacted Bill (I had read his Perkasio novels and some of his poems) to ask if he would care to contribute to the anthology. He told me about the book he had done for your group and I got a copy from him. That's a long story, for this medium [e-mail]. But I very much enjoyed the book and the cover art.

Attached to this is something I wrote about my first few days in Viet Nam. I left Chu Lai for Pleiku and Dak To in August, 1967.

Best to you and your project,

Palmer Hall,

E-mail: ACADHALL@VAX.STMARYTX.EDU

PALMER HALL'S STORY

Once, in a small hamlet outside the large Army/Marine installation at Chu Lai, early in 1967, I stood with a group of techies from the 601st RRU—that's a group of linguists and Morse code operators plus a few other MOSes for those who do not know. We were haggling over the cost of this and that, things like genuine jade chess pieces that would bleed the green right onto your fingers if you were sweating and you were always sweating in Chu Lai.

Vietnam, Republic of. We stood up above the rice canal that ran behind the small hamlet, all the shops perched precariously on the edge, and haggled for chess men, jackets, genuine Ming vases, and for the rental of female companionship.

I remember clearly a guy from Seattle, Dale something or other, the last name is not important, he was frightened—his first time out of the base camp, though not more than half a klick out—and I think, to cover his fright, he “acted out” the bad guy image. He was not, at heart, a bad guy, just frightened and even more frightened of letting any of us know he was frightened.

Let me describe her for you. She was about four feet tall and could not have been older than twelve—obviously poor, there were no middle class people in Chu Lai, at least not Vietnamese people. She had long brown/black hair and was very slender, breasts just beginning to bud and carried her baby brother on her hip. But she was clean and her brother was clean. He had on a shirt and in the way they did things, no bottom. It made sense. If you're not old enough to go to the bathroom, why not just let the urine and shit fall onto the ground? The girl was tired, had obviously been kept awake by the shelling the night before and had come to the little market for something—fish, vegetables, maybe even to beg from the American long noses she knew would be there.

Let me talk about Dale again. He was also young, filled with American innocence and that kind of tough/naive bravado that is common among 18-year-old American men when they are in groupings of other men near their age or older. He was not, and I want to stress this, he was not a bad person. In Seattle, he had fished and hunted, had played baseball, had dated, had managed somehow to retain his virginity and continued to resent it even the day after the first night he had ever heard the shrill whistle of 105mm rockets grow awesomely silent, to be followed by the loud boomings and the cries from men like him but whom he did not know and, now, would never know. Dale was big, right at six feet two inches and burly, with kinky hair sitting above his normally too red face. He was not well-educated, but had graduated from high school, one of the first people in his family to have done so.

On this day after the night of the rockets, Dale was even worse off than he had been the day before and the day before he had thrown himself under his bunk when the housegirl had walked through looking for boots to clean. I mean he was so cherry his face could have been used on a box of Smith Brothers cough drops. But on this day, Dale was swaggering. He had survived last night. It didn't matter that almost everyone had survived last night. All but three men out of approximately 6,000. Dale No Last Name had been through his trial by fire and had come out the other end ready to boast about being a man.

Her name, we found out later, was Chuyen. Bang Van Chuyen. And her little brother was named Ngo. Her father was an ARVN captain and was stationed on the base at Chu Lai. I still remember her vividly. No ao dai, just those long silky-looking pants, not new, but with a matching blouse, with worn spots all over it. She didn't have a conical, bamboo hat on, but one of those Australian bush hats that the REMFs had taken to wearing to

pretend they actually went out in the bush. The hat's important, you know. Not because it was a hat, but because it was that kind of hat, that kind of bush hat.

You have to understand, too, that Vietnamese women always looked younger than they were or much, much older. Chuyen looked as well developed as some of the prostitutes who worked in the bars on Tu Do Street in Saigon and along Le Loi Street in Pleiku, but then again, no one really knew how old those prostitutes were. So when Dale saw Chuyen he saw more than a young girl holding her baby brother, he saw more than a child holding another child and he was scared in spite of the bullshit and he was embarrassed to be the only one, he thought, in the whole fucking detachment not to have found some woman to “make him a man” when he was still in the States and, be assured, that's how Dale thought of it, of sex, of releasing into a vagina instead of into a handkerchief. Dale saw Chuyen and began to walk toward her.

“How much?” he asked.

“Toi khong biet,” she said.

“I said ‘how much?’ you fucking whore!” Dale screamed.

“I no whore,” she said.

“How the fuck much?” he asked again and grabbed at her shoulders.

“Di di mau, G.I. I no whore,” Chuyen said again.

That's pretty close to the whole conversation. It didn't get really bad until we all started laughing. “Hey, Dale,” someone screamed, I don't know who, not me. “Hey, Dale, CherryBoy! Can't even buy it!” “Show her your money,” someone else screamed at him.

The whole group roared, laughed, tormented him.

Dale's face turned cherry red and he grabbed Chuyen hard and pulled her towards him. Chuyen spat in his face and Ngo began crying. “Sonofabitch!” Dale screamed in her face and pushed her hard. Chuyen and her baby brother fell to the ground.

I was, as is so often the case, the oldest person in the group—a Spec 5 linguist who would rather have been anywhere else. I managed to grab Dale and shove him back to the ditty-boppers and calm Chuyen down. It always amazed me that just the fact of an American speaking the language could make the Vietnamese people want to listen and trust. I don't mean speak the patois that most Americans could speak, but actually converse in Vietnamese.

The White Mice (ARVN MPs) showed up shortly after I had Chuyen on her feet and Ngo back to her (he was still crying—it sometimes took years before the Vietnamese had cried so much that there were no more tears available. That's one of the reasons we American soldiers resented them: they seemed so emotionless most of the time).

When we got back to the company area, the Captain had already heard about Dale's problems from the ARVN. Probably if Chuyen's father had not been an officer, the whole thing would have been dropped. Dale was still lucky; he received an Article 15 and was restricted to the company for fifteen days.

A true story: anticlimactic, certainly. If I were doing it as fiction, it would certainly not have ended this way. I mean Dale's still alive somewhere. I don't know, though, about Chuyen and Ngo.

Since her father was an officer, she probably became a secretary on the American base—I mean the “war” didn’t end for eight more years. If she didn’t become a secretary, she probably became a prostitute. But, then, we didn’t win, so her father and her and, even, Ngo probably wound up being “re-educated” in some camp. True stories are often as sad as fiction.

REESE & Co.

Another fine catalogue from the firm discussed on pp. 36-7 of VG 4:1-2. #109: *Literature* has an “Addenda: Vietnam Literature. Fiction, Non-Fiction, Poetry and Photojournalism.” 138 items listed. I sorted through the stock at the firm’s offices—the books are almost all bright and clear, in stunning condition. Other items of interest scattered through the main body of the catalogue. Write to *Reese & Co. 409 Temple St, New Haven, CT 06511, 203-789-8081, FAX 203-865-7653.*

Whoops. Here’s another Reese catalogue in the mail. *Catalogue 111: Poetry and Poets. Verse and Versifiers. Including Images Poets, Soldier Poets, New York Poets, Beat Poets, Academic Poets, Great Poets, Good Poets and Failed Poets. Part 1: A through Mc.* A real keeper, this catalogue reminds me of my education in 19th and 20th century U.S. poetry, when I fingered through the stock at Hugh Miller’s and Matthew and Sheila Jennet’s warehouses, and took whole shelves of random books from the right part of the Sterling Memorial Library stacks over to a chair in the corner.

Here is Terry Halladay’s note, from the back of the title page. “This the first of two catalogues devoted to listing a portion of our inventory of poetry and books by or about poets. It is neither a catalogue of highspots, nor a catalogue devoted to the standard field of collected or approved poets. To the contrary, it is a somewhat heterogeneous sampling of the field of the great, the good, and, in a few unspecified cases, the admittedly awful practitioners of the genre. Included herein are a few books which would never have seen the light of day in one of our regular catalogues, and their fate, if unsold from this venue, has yet to be finally decided. Without an open shop, we cannot seek relief in sidewalk bins or the dim corner of a bookbarn. However, these are in the minority, and the greatest portion of the items that follow are worthy at least of readers. Some titles have sought dim corners on their own and have not appeared in one of our catalogues in years (the blessing and the curse of the computer is that such books are not irrevocably lost, simply overlooked, or ignored or misplaced). Apparent duplication of titles between the catalogue and our last literature catalogue (#109) is a consequence of multiple copies of both recent publications and older titles, or of simple accident. This catalogue and its successor are summer experiments on our part in presenting what amounts to about 65% of our inventory, for better or worse.” Many, many war titles. I’m afraid that David Willson or I have already purchased all the items I would recommend to you, but there are lots more. See the write-up of this firm in the in last issue, and get your own catalogues.

JEFF STEIN WRITES

Dear Kali,

Thanks for responding to my note about my forthcoming book, *A Murder in Wartime: The Untold Spy Story of that Changed the Course of the Vietnam War*. I would of course be very pleased if you chose to review it in the journal.

But I’m really writing to tell you how impressed I am with the latest issue of *Viet Nam Generation*. I’ve edited or worked on many low-budget publications through the years (including launching the *VVA Veteran*), so I know how hard it is to reach such a high level of quality. To start with, the design and typefaces are not only beautiful but functional. The material flows nicely from one subsection to the next. The absence of overly dramatic, magazine-style section heads is also refreshing and works very well.

Editorially, the *Journal* is rich and informative. So much is going on—it’s incredible, and satisfying, to learn that so many people are toiling away on these issues. Overall, though, it’s like coming upon a *samizdat* publication of the 1970s Russian underground; despite George Bush’s whining cry to put Vietnam behind us, *Viet Nam Generation* makes clear that many good people are doing important work to come to grips with the legacy of Viet Nam and other uncured ills of the 60s. From the mainstream press, you’d never know so many people cared so much. Or even that the work was worthwhile.

Many thanks for reminding me that writing my book was a worthwhile endeavor, no matter what the reviews or commercial sales are. I’ll look forward to contributing to *VNG* in the future.

Sincerely,

Jeff Stein, Route 3, Box 510, Harpers Ferry, WV 25410.

OH, WHAT A LOVELY WAR: JEFF STEIN ON THE GREEN BERET MURDER CASE

The whiff of political assassination is in the air again, as President George Bush toys with the future of Saddam Hussein. It seems as good time as any for him—and other Americans inclined to embrace “simple” solutions for complex foreign affairs—to remember that old chestnut, “What goes around comes around.”

Twenty-two years ago this June, a Green Beret intelligence unit in Viet Nam decided on a “simple” solution to the discovery of a suspected North Viet double agent in their ranks: after seeking approval from the CIA, they took him out in a boat, wrapped him in chains and tire rims, shot him in the head, and dumped him into the South China Sea.

In that single act, one among many during more than a decade in Viet Nam, their lives and careers were ruined.

It could have been me. The so-called Green Beret Murder Case broke into the news when I was running my own military intelligence operation out of the French colonial villa in Da Nang, a once-lovely port city on the

South China Sea. Just when the Green Beret case surfaced, I received evidence that my own agent was working for the other side. I pondered what to do.

In the Green Beret case, the Army had announced only that it had arrested Col. Robert Rheault, commander of all Special Forces troops in Viet Nam, and seven of his men, on charges of first-degree murder of "a Vietnamese civilian male." The press soon reported that the victim had been working for the Green Berets in sensitive espionage operations in Cambodia when a captured photo showed him in the company of high-ranking North Viet officers. His name was Thai Khac Chuyen.

My own agent had just failed a polygraph examination dealing with his allegiances. When we asked him if he was "loyal to the government of South Vietnamese president Nguyen Van Thieu," his affirmative answer showed attempts at deception—lying.

The Green Beret case made me wonder what I should do if, in fact, my own spy was really working for the communists. Under the rules, the very existence of our operation was supposed to be kept secret from our South Vietnamese "allies"; turning him over for prosecution and trial was impossible. Would I take him out in a boat and shoot him in the head with a silencer-equipped pistol, as the Green Berets had just been charged with doing?

As anyone who spent time in-country knows, it was nearly impossible to establish the truth of these matters in Viet Nam, where a kind of frontier justice prevailed.

I had been in Viet Nam long enough, and I spoke the language well enough, to know something about the society and its history. I soon learned that the political loyalties of most Viets were splintered along family, clan, religious, and multiple ideological faults. It had been foolhardy to try and fit Viet Nam into our Cold War box. It was impossible to define any Viet, with certainty, as "procommunist," pro-Saigon, or "pro-U.S." (which, viewed from the perspective of Nguyen Van Thieu, might define such a person as a traitor), unless they were in uniform and armed. That, in a nutshell, was the whole problem of the war: defining who the enemy was.

Sad to say, and it has been said many times, the U.S. failed utterly at culling the communists from the crowd, but that didn't keep us from trying through such odious methods as the Phoenix Program. Meanwhile, with an initial guilt that soon gave way to desperation, the U.S. bombed and strafed rural villages (concluding that the murder of innocent civilians was worth the price of a few dead communists).

So it was that the arrest of Rheault and his men in July 1969, at the height of the war, sparked widespread curiosity and cynicism among us in the war zone. Why would the Army arrest such high-ranking Green Berets for executing one North Viet double agent? Wasn't that their job?

The Army's straight-faced explanation that the defendants had violated the Geneva Convention and killed someone they weren't sure was an enemy spy rang hollow. The idea that the Green Berets should have turned their suspected spy over to the South Viets for a trial was laughable. To U.S. intelligence in Viet Nam, the Saigon government was every bit as much the enemy as the Viet Cong—often they were the same thing.

Yet the Rheault case was troubling. The summary execution of the suspected spy seemed to symbolize the anarchy that had overtaken much of the conduct of the war. While one part of the war was being fought above-ground with uniforms and rules, the other was being carried out in the dark with terror and assassination. The killing of Thai Khac Chuyen and the later sight of his grieving widow and children begging for justice outside the United States Embassy rang the knell once again that it was time to leave.

To others, however, the Army's prosecution of the men seemed to symbolize the political limits Washington had put on winning the war. If only the Green Berets could be encouraged to execute *more* spies, the argument went, the U.S. might win.

Both sides, in their own way, were right. And wrong.

All this went through my mind as I pondered my own spy's fate in the late summer of 1969, as the Green Beret affair bloated into a spectacle in Saigon and the Army announced a date for the courts martial of the eight men. The Viet Cong, to whom assassination was old hat, were having a propaganda holiday with the case.

Would I kill my own spy, I wondered, if it turned out he was working on the other side, if the lives of all my other agents were thrown into jeopardy? My own commander, I was sure, would not want me to ask him what to do.

Luckily for me, the decision was aborted when further interrogations revealed that my agent had not "bounced" the polygraph because he was a communist, but because he was a member of a *right-wing* political movement conspiring against the Saigon government! Such were the perilous currents of Viet politics that a 22-year-old college dropout, as I was then, was supposed to fathom.

The CIA, as it turned out, had no appetite for a Green Beret court-martial that would have put a spotlight on the agency's own record of assassination in Viet Nam (or anyplace else). It finally persuaded President Nixon to quash the charges. Revelations about the "excesses" of the Phoenix Program and other seamy intelligence activities were left for another day's scandal.

Like most veterans, I came home and tried to forget about the war. The Green Beret case continued to haunt me, however, with its beguiling paradox of defining moral standards while in the service of illegal, government-sponsored, activities.

The Cold War romance of the time, fed by James Bond and other patriotic caricatures, held that assassination was a necessary and even glamorous concomitant to the West's twilight struggle for democracy. That began to crack with the Viet Nam war, and was obliterated by Watergate.

For me, however, it was demolished by the publication of the Pentagon Papers in 1971. The classified study, leaked by Pentagon consultant Daniel Ellsberg, revealed that the main product of America's Cold War obsession with intrigue and deception in Viet Nam was self-hypnosis: The government had talked itself into believing it knew what the Viet Nam war was all about, and how to solve it—even as it discarded one losing strategy after another, lied to Congress, and ignored wiser heads.

The Pentagon Papers, along with the Nixon administration's invasion of Cambodia, finally spurred me to get off the sidelines and I began writing articles on U.S. intelligence operations in Viet Nam (despite the security pledges I had signed never to discuss such subjects). My first pieces were on the U.S. intelligence connection to the Cambodian coup plotters who ousted Prince Sihanouk.

I soon enrolled in a graduate school with the goal of trying to find the roots of our appalling ignorance and folly in Indochina. On a more personal level, I was searching to understand how I had ended up carrying out such fruitless and morally questionable activities myself. Not surprising, I found the answer in our corrosive addiction to secrecy and deception during the Cold War.

The case of the Green Berets was never far from my mind. In 1978 I saw a movie, *Breaker Morant*, that reignited my interest in the affair. It was a true tale of Australian commandos executed for carrying out an approved assassination while serving in the British Army during the South African Boer War. The story seemed to mirror the Green Beret case in its portrayal of a government frame-up. I took a stab at getting the Green Beret documents declassified, but the affair remained deeply buried in secret government archives.

A few years later I learned that the character of Kurtz played by Marlon Brando in *Apocalypse Now* was modeled on Col. Rheault, the enigmatic former commander of the 5th Special Forces Group and chief defendant in the Green Beret case. Like Kurtz, Rheault was a product of Phillips Exeter Academy and West Point, fluent in French, with a Master's degree in international relations from the University of Paris. He was a paradigm of the Kennedy-era Green Berets, in fact, an upper-class, brilliant soldier as comfortable in a classroom as the straps of a parachute, a guy who could kill in five languages while discoursing on the virtues of Sun Tzu. With the advantage of a post-Viet Nam war, post-Watergate hindsight, I saw him as a metaphor for the kind of hubris that led us into the swamp of Viet Nam.

In the early 1980s, I took another stab at finding the former defendants, but they had scattered to the winds, and the word was that none of them would ever talk about the case, especially the stoic Rheault, whose career and marriage had been ruined by the affair.

Finally I heard he was running an Outward Bound program for troubled Viet Nam vets in Maine. I began writing letters, to which he politely, but firmly, responded with no interest in a book. He had no interest in digging up an episode that reflected so badly on the U.S. Army, he said, which he had loyally served for 26 years. He wanted to get on with his life, he said, and who could blame him?

I respected his reasoning, I told him, but I argued that in the era of *Top Gun* and Rambo, and an astonishing (to me) enthusiasm from liberals for the Contra War in Nicaragua, a generation that had hardly been born during the Viet Nam war needed to know what counterinsurgency war was really all about.

Finally, one day in 1989, the telephone rang at my desk at UPI, where I was the foreign news features editor. It was Rheault, calling to explain once again why he didn't

want to cooperate with a book on the Green Beret affair. As we talked then and in subsequent conversations, however, it became apparent that he had shed his hawk's feathers long ago.

"The Cold War was a waste, a fraud, and a hoax," he now said. He explained that his suspicions had grown over many years of personal study, but it was capped by a trip to the Soviet Union in 1988, where he led a joint wilderness expedition of Viet Nam veterans and Soviet veterans of Afghanistan. During days of mountain climbing and nights around the fire, his conversations with the once-feared Russian enemies convinced him that the Soviet threat had been deliberately overblown by the Pentagon and the CIA. For their part, the Russians said the Red Army had drummed the threat of an American invasion into their heads, too.

Reluctantly, over several more conversations and correspondence, Rheault finally agreed not to stand in the way of a book on the incident that had caused him, and his beloved Special Forces, so much agony and pain. Now, with their former commander's green light, the other defendants who I had located also agreed to talk.

Finally, in 1990, a thick brown package containing nearly all the once-secret Army documents on the case arrived in my mailbox. Heavily blacked out, the documents only hinted at the government's treachery in the case. It would take scores more interviews and documents to establish that the CIA had indeed encouraged the Green Berets to execute Thai Khac Chuyen—it was "the most efficient solution," as one CIA agent admitted to an Army detective. Yet when the Army initiated the prosecution, of course, the CIA denied any responsibility for the killing. The Army command, eager to rein in the rambunctious Green Berets, went along with the lie.

The Green Beret case thus stands as a cautionary tale for those who would seek to get rid of Saddam Hussein by the "simple solution" of assassination. Most likely, a military unit would be picked to carry out the hit for the CIA. And when the inevitable flap comes, the military guys will be hung out to dry.

The overwhelmingly positive reaction to *A Murder in Wartime: The Untold Spy Story that Changed the Course of the Vietnam War*, has been gratifying, especially since it was a labor of love for my country, as well as younger generations that may be called on to carry out spurious operations in some far-off country for ill-defined goals. Young Americans especially deserve to know what our diddling around in the murky politics of, say, Iraq, is all about. (Certainly, by now, the hapless Kurds do.)

For me, the circle has already been closed. A year ago, halfway through my research, I learned that it was the Army's inept handling of the Green Beret case that prompted Daniel Ellsberg to leak the Pentagon Papers. What a great surprise! It was a perfectly ironic ending not only to the book, but to my long, personal odyssey in this affair: Except for Ellsberg's stunning act, I probably would not have become a journalist. And I would not, of course, twenty years later, have written this book.

Even more stunning, if not for the Pentagon Papers, Nixon might not have loosed "the plumbers" on Ellsberg and later, the Democrats at Watergate. The debacle that

followed, of course, ruined the president, but it also opened the CIA's sewers for all the world to see.

All because of the Green Beret case.

There is an easy lesson in this for George Bush, the CIA, and of course, a future hit squad of Green Berets. Just remember. What goes around, comes around.

SWORDSMAN?

Item one: "In private she called him 'lover' and she was one of those females who could simulate wild, runaway passion so skillfully that her husband fancied himself a sexual *swordsman*." Item two: "In honor of Beaupre who was acknowledged the resident *swordsman*." Italics mine. The first quote is from *The President's Plane is Missing* (Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, 1967, citation from p. 25), the second published novel of Robert J. Serling. The second is from David Halberstam's second published novel, *One Very Hot Day* (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1967, citation from p. 5, parts previously appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*). I have never once in my whole life heard a man refer to another as a swordsman, in reference to what he does with his penis. I am foul-mouthed, and have spent as much time as anybody talking about sex with young apes and old boys. I never was a young professional man in the 1960s, still I do have an ear for dead jargon, and this sounds to me like it never was alive.

Is "swordsman" an Eagle Scout thing to say, something Halberstam used to convey the lifer ambience he was not party to? It has a science-fiction nerd ring, like "Blast!" Who knows, maybe in New York and Washington in the 60s young reporters did keep track of who was getting any, and called him a "swordsman." In both novels, lean young straight-arrow authors are trying to evoke fat, tough men in middle age who frequently have had their faces shoved in the shit. Does the bogus word betray an anxiety about sex or age or class? What anxiety exactly?

I don't like printing questions but I have been thinking about this word for some time and it is a tough nut. Has anyone ever heard it used in conversation? Is it a Norman Mailer word? From Harvard, maybe? It is not a Hemingway word. Is it a Dan Wakefield word, some Midwest thing? We know from transcripts that Richard Nixon did not talk this way. Is it a defunct convention of brief fashion in literary publishing, like printing "loving" for the adjective "fucking?" Does "swordsman" stand in for "cocksman", another word I have never heard aloud? Why do two male journalists, contemporaries, both use it in a novel in 1967? Was there a reactionary emphasis on gender roles at work, minting dirty words and jokes to reinforce mythical verities? There is a lot of tittering in the Serling book about how newlywed husbands come to work late and leave early, and scenes of sexy talk from the ex-stewardess wife of the character who most closely resembles the author in career details. In his author's note, Halberstam tells the world he just married "after a tempest of red tape—the leading actress of the Polish theater," i.e. "I legally fuck a hot and professionally

successful babe from a captive nation of the enemy." It's all icky, in a way that only prudes can achieve. I'm trying to take it seriously.

Robert J. Serling, by the way, is Rod's brother. The men collaborated on TV dramas, according to the dust jacket. Robert was UPI aviation news editor in DC. His first novel was *The Left Seat*, and two nonfiction books are *The Electra Story* and *The Probable Cause*. Halberstam's first novel was *The Noblest Roman*, and his brief on the war, *The Making of a Quagmire* (1965) preceded the war novel, which is set entirely among the US advisers to an ARVN company, with action that doesn't date precisely but seems pre-escalation. Serling's and Halberstam's novels both have the author photo on the back of the d.j. in the book club edition, with similar haircuts and very nearly the same glasses, dark tie, and button-down shirt. Halberstam hasn't got a jacket on, and Serling is jowly.

One Very Hot Day is a lean and deliberate novel from the man who later settled in to writing big fat chunks of bedtable reading. The characterization of the Vietnamese lieutenant Thuong is as reasonable as that of the three-war captain, Beaupre. The officers and ARVNs lend a different tone than you find in Hasford *et al.* Halberstam takes you on a big military operation in Viet Nam, rather than a patrol in what Philip Melling calls the Puritan Imagination because dragging in poor old Cotton Mather is what Americanists do when they want people to think that what they write about is important. Serling clunks along the time-honored path to mediocrity in narrative, giving a thumbnail sketch for each character on first appearance. But his book is readable, if say for instance you can read Eugene O'Neil's stage directions, and the President of the title has a son dead in Viet Nam, where the alternate history of the novel posits that a Korea-like settlement has been reached. Both novels are "procedurals", to borrow a term from crime-novel crit, as concerned with the workings of an organ of social order as with individual character.

The President's Plane is Missing focuses on the wheels within wheels of national wire-service reporting. The story is set in the DC bureau against a background of nuclear brinkmanship and Cabinet antics, altogether a silly literary project that highlights the unlikeliness of writing in praise of society's machinery in the U.S. in 1967. The President arranges to duck out of sight for a week to negotiate a mutual defense pact with the USSR against the PRC, only to precipitate a crisis when his stage double dies in a plane crash on Air Force One. The story plays on the memory of the Truman and LBJ successions, the JFK assassination, and the Cuban missile crisis, without offering any organizing vision except allegiance to authority and Amurrican values. *One Very Hot Day*, in contrast, looks I bet even better now than when it appeared. It follows a lieutenant and captain and their Vietnamese counterparts as they walk their company-sized element of a battalion operation into an ambush. The procedural form mutes Halberstam's shrill personal ambition and puts his fascination with established institutions to good effect. He explains the U.S. Army and ARVN as reasonable men doing bad things for clear reasons, a vision more soberly frightening than

that of *Catch-22* and so on. Okay, I've been responsible and given you a sense of the books. Now, my real question. What was going on among men like Halberstam and Serling in the 1960s that led them confidently to put before the public such a counterfeit word, with such a load of embarrassing baggage, as "swordsmen?"

INTO MEMORY, B.D. TRAIL

Bernard Doss Trail died on January 1 of this year. He was called "Ben" and signed his work "B.D. Trail." He was the son of Col. Charles D. Trail, USAF (retired and deceased) and Dr. Billie Marburger Trail. He was born August 3, 1940 in Bryan, TX, and raised in Japan, England, Nebraska, and Texas. He earned a B.A. in English and a U.S. Army commission at Texas A & M in May 1962. In seven years of service he reached the rank of Captain, Military Intelligence. He served in Europe, and finished two tours in the Republic of Viet Nam. In Quang Tin Province he earned the Bronze Star and the Combat Infantryman's Badge. He returned to A & M in 1969 for a Masters of Education degree. He worked at I.M. Terrell High School and Dunbar High School in Fort Worth. In 1973, he joined the faculty at Tarrant County Junior College where he taught literature and writing for 18 years. He began publishing poetry in 1962. He published 200 poems, of about 300 known to exist. He is survived by his mother, two sisters (Charlotte and Anne), their children, and other family.

Trail's work has earned him respect among those who know vet poetry. His perspective is unusual: Trail writes as the officer son of an officer, who meant to stay for a career but left the Army after Viet Nam service, who now teaches English Literature to college students who don't care for it. Sadly, he died before seeing a book into print to establish his reputation and leave a durable resource for future readers. But Trail was so fortunate as to have a friend, Docke Burke, who has assembled a Complete Poems on disk, with a bibliography of publications. *Vietnam Generation* will publish the bibliography, with a biographical note, some critical essays, and a brief selection of poems, when we can afford to. We are arranging to have disks and typescripts of Burke's compilation placed on deposit at John Baky's collection of *Imaginative Representations of the Viet Nam War* at La Salle University, and at David Willson's collection at the Holman Library, Green River Community College, Auburn, WA. Baky will see to it that the archive is cited in all the relevant indices and databases.

A note by Trail to David Willson dated 22 Jan 91, accompanying a selection of his work, points to one poem from the chapbook *Flesh Wounds* (*Samisdat*, Volume 54, #4, 216th release, ISSN 0226-840x, Box 129, Richford, VT, 05476) as "my best war poem." Here it is, one last postcard from a community college at the edge of a SAC base, from a professor who used to teach ARVNs:

The Grenading

The ARVN Major beat the boy
with the captured rifle sling
glancing proudly at us,
his American advisors.

An uninteresting event to everyone
except the boy who silently cringed
and shook from blow to blow.

In the madness of the war
today was near-to-normal.
There had been the usual dance to snipers,
the suck-up in the chest,
the dash across manioc fields,
the crack and whip of bullets
in time with running feet.

Looking at the photos now,
the sand is light like snow.
But then, the sand was griddle-hot
and hard to run across.

And there had been the usual harassment
of the villagers,
the pig killings and gold tooth grinnings
of the chicken thieves,
the stolen rice boiling in black cauldrons.

In our little corner of the war
the major beat the boy,
we Americans smoked cigarettes,
the Vietnamese village women cooked rice
for ARVNs down on the ground
spread out in casual circles.

The stick grenade was lobbed out of a bunker
with all the surcty and disguised slowness
of a softball. And it seemed to move towards
a cookfire with measured, casual directness.

A village woman heavy in her pregnancy
caught the rolling blast of the grenade.
The fragments plunged into the soldiers.
For her the blast was a sonic scalpel
slicing, filleting, cutting
deep, deep into her belly.

Something clicks in time of crisis,
a switch to surreal slow motion.
We Americans froze in place
while the Vietnamese,
as if coming up for air,
floundered and fumbled.

Still half-frame, the image slowed
to show her baby,
her corded baby,
caseooze
from her fish-gutted belly
and fall into the fire.

The madness was not just the fetus in the fire.
No, that was just a novelty-of-horrors.
to men who had seen minings and other mutilations.

The madness was the mother was still alive.
 Split from throat to crotch,
 the mother was alive and
 screaming screaming screaming

I didn't shoot her and I don't know why.
 No one shot her. And she kept on
 screaming screaming screaming.

Dragged over the white-hot sand
 on a red-wet poncho,
 she screamed for two hours on the landing zone.

She died before a helicopter came.

I died back at the fire.

JOURNAL of URBAN and CULTURAL STUDIES

Ben Kiernan passed along a xerox of the TOC of Vol. 2, No. 1, 1991 of this journal, and of pp. 115-117, Laurie Sears' "Authoritative Voices and the Vietnam Experience: Teaching About Vietnam During the Gulf War." Sears teaches a course about "the Vietnam wars" in the history department at the University of Washington. Over two years, course titles have included "Colonial Backgrounds of the Vietnam War," "Introduction to Modern Southeast Asian History," "The Vietnam Wars," and, with Susan Jeffords of the English Department, "Images of the Vietnam War in History, Literature, and Film." Sears has also lectured to high school students and teachers. She has proposed a new course on war and society. Go, Dr. Sears. Her teaching sounds good, her interests are alive, and she quotes "novelist and Vietnam veteran David Willson." She doesn't give his titles and publisher, though (*REMF Diary* and *REMF Returns*, Black Heron Press; regular column, *Vietnam Generation*), and there must be a more authoritative source than David for the useful nugget that "90% of those who went to Vietnam in the various branches of the US military were not involved in combat." I don't know where that source is, but David could have told her. Picky, picky—it's a good essay, maybe we could reprint it. I see that the *Journal* reprinted George Lakoff's "Metaphor and War: the Metaphor System Used to Justify War in the Gulf" from PeaceNet, as we did (Vol. 3 No. 3). Other articles from this issue: "The Gulf Crisis" and "The New World Order" by Noam Chomsky. A section called "Theorizing Postmodern War" includes "Postmodern Wars: Phallomilitary Spectacles in the DTO"; "On Wimps" by Donna Haraway; "Nuclear War, the Gulf War, and the Disappearing Body" by Hugh Gusterson; "Bring the Tropes Home: (Academic) Life During Wartime" by Mark Driscoll; Lakoff's piece and "The Imperialist Subject" by Judith Butler. A section called "Teaching Postmodern Peace" includes: "Notes on the Gulf War, Racism, and African-American Social Thought: Ramifications for Teaching" by John Brown Childs; "Men in Suits" by Carol Becker; "Political Pedagogy and Democratic Discourse: Bringing War and Peace into the Classroom" by Greg Reinerman; "Countering the Disempowerment of War" by Giovanna Di Chiro and

Marita Sturken; Sears' article; and "Peace Studies, the Gulf War, and Peace" by Carolyn M. Stephenson. My gut reaction to calling wars "postmodern" is that it's just more confusing words, that war should be referred to as bluntly as possible, but I suppose that is just a Modernist stance I assume when appropriate, an unmistakably postmodern procedure. Sigh. God knows, I don't have to get my life approved by any English Department, so I should keep my mouth shut and let the grownups do what they have to do to get over. Looks like a great issue of a good journal. Sorry, no contact information on the xerox Ben gave me.

VIET NAM AND VIETNAMESE ON THE NET

Many of the items in the *Announcements, Notices, and Reports* came to us through our subscribers' active participation in VWAR-L, a computer bulletin board devoted to the issues related to the U.S. war in Viet Nam. Here is a report from computer scientist John Sutherland, on bulletin boards and similar electronic venues for discussion of topics relating to Viet Nam and Viets. This is not an explanation for the uninitiated, but an address book for those already involved in computer-linked discussions. If you want to get involved, talk to the computer support people at your university. If you're not associated with a university, call Kali and ask her how she does it. For more information on VWAR-L, see the Publisher's Statement in this issue.

VIET NAM ON-LINE: A LIST OF ELECTRONIC BULLETIN BOARDS AND RESOURCES

CS-TEXT

Address: nguyen6@husc.harvard.edu
 Request: nguyen6@husc.harvard.edu

Explanation: Cs-text is a mailing list for Vietnamese, who are working on producing a text book a complete overview of Computer Science in both Vietnamese & English, for Computer Science majors, geared toward high school level reading.

Questions to: nguyen6@husc.harvard.edu

SOC.CULTURE.VIETNAMESE

Address: soc-culture-vietnamese@media.mit.edu
soc-culture-vietnamese@ics.ucl.edu

Request: Contact your system administrator for access to USENET or else subscribe to the VietNet Mailing List.

Explanation: soc.culture.vietnamese is a newsgroup on SCV/USENET, accessible from internet/uucp. Its purpose is to discuss subjects related specifically to Viet Nam and its culture. It is a public newsgroup that is read/posted worldwide by anyone with access to USENET. The newsgroup soc.culture.vietnamese is sometimes abbreviated as SCV in postings. Charter and the frequently asked questions are posted monthly.

Questions to: hung@phsys.com or hho@usc.edu

TRICHLOR-TALK

Address: trichlor-talk@haydn.stanford.edu
Request: trichlor-talk-request@haydn.stanford.edu

Explanation: TriChlor is a group of volunteers whose common interests are providing free utilities, codes, libraries for use with the Vietnamese language, and to integrate Vietnamese language to current computing environments. Trichlor's members are Vietnamese software developers working all over the world to develop public domain Vietnamese software with Vietnamese characters set on X-window, Unix, DOS, MAC, Microsoft Window 3.1, Sunviews, etc... Please join trichlor if you are working on any type of software.

Questions to: trichlor@haydn.stanford.edu

VIETNAM

Address: vietnam@cco.caltech.edu
Request: vietnam-request@cco.caltech.edu

Explanation: I am looking for a charter for this group.
Questions to: phibang@cco.caltech.edu

VIET-NET

Address: soc-culture-vietnamese@media.mit.edu (East USA)
soc-culture-vietnamese@ics.uci.edu (SouthWest USA)
soc-culture-vietnamese@saigon.com (West USA)
soc-culture-vietnamese@haydn.stanford.edu (West USA)
soc-culture-vietnamese@berkeley.edu (West USA)
soc-culture-vietnamese@physys.com (SouthWest USA)
Request: scv-request@media.mit.edu (with SIGN-ON in subject)
scv-request@saigon.com (with SIGN-ON in subject)

Explanation: Viet-net was the predecessor of soc.culture.vietnamese. Viet-net had served over 800 Vietnamese overseas worldwide for over 4 years, with 4 servers at mit.edu, bu.edu, uci.edu, and sun.com. On Mar 5, 1992 at 1am EST, Viet-net was replaced by a more powerful network for Vietnamese to connect: Soc.Culture.Vietnamese on USENET.

Viet-net is now a network of mail links between mail<->SCV/USENET for netters without access to USENET. Mail from SCV are forward directly to your mail box. If you have access to USENET, Do NOT use Viet-net, else subscribe to Viet-net to receive mail from SCV.

Contacts: viet-net-info@media.mit.edu

VIET-STD

Address: viet-std@haydn.stanford.edu
Request: viet-std-request@haydn.stanford.edu

Explanation: Viet-std is a mailing list for computer professionals who are trying to ensure that new world wide standards efforts take into account the needs of the Vietnamese language and customs. Viet-std have been very active in character set standardization efforts and in creating a "locale" for the ANSI/ISO C and IEEE/ISO POSIX standards. It also works to standardize all

Vietnamese character codes between VN software houses and users. Viet-std has just released VISCII standard April 1992.

Contacts: viet-std@haydn.stanford.edu

VN-ATNP

Address: vn-atnp@saigon.com
Request: listserv@saigon.com

Explanation: This is "A(n Tu.c No'i Phe't". It is a mailing list for people to talk about whatever "No'i Phe't". The conversation can get rather racy, risqué at time, please use your own discretion in joining.

Question to: tin@saigon.com

VN-SINGLES

Address: vn-singles@Saigon.COM
Request: listserv@saigon.com

Explanation: VN-Singles is a mailing list for Vietnamese singles, professionals or students. Although there are a number of married people in it. The focus is on issues relating to the Vietnamese singles life (dating, interracial marriage, marriage custom, loneliness etc). It is small and well focused on these kind of topics.

Question to: tin@saigon.com

VN-SXNET

Address: vn-sxnet@saigon.com
Request: listserv@saigon.com

Explanation: This list was originally created because of the sexually explicit jokes and talks being posted to VietNet. Many people complained and flame wars started because of this. So the list was created as a place for people to post and share these kinds of jokes or stories/talks whatever they want. Lately, a lot of this kind of conversation has migrated to vn-atnp.

Question to: tin@saigon.com

All this infomration came from Tua'n (John) Sutherland, of Seattle, Washington. E-mail address: JFT%NCCIBM1.BITNET@NCSUVM.CC.NCSU.EDU

VVAW 25TH REUNION: JACK MALLORY REPORTS

Mike Phelan and I headed north up the Pacific Coast Highway. We were on our way to San Francisco International to catch a flight to Houston, and make a connection to La Guardia. Our destination: the 25th anniversary of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. As we passed Año Nuevo, I looked out to sea and saw a Cobra helicopter paralleling our route. When I mentioned it to Mike, he said he hadn't seen it—but it was there, it really was.

For most Americans, helicopters are simply a strange form of aircraft. For Vietnam vets they either whisper, or shout: logbird, medevac, gunship, pink team, hot lz, big orange tracers going down, big green tracers going up... Like every chopper I've seen or heard in over 20 years, the

Cobra took me back to that place where green was the predominant color: green grass and jungle, green uniforms and tents, green tanks and ACAVS. Even corpses seemed to pass through a green stage on their way to being not much more than dark stains on the ground.

I thought about Vietnam every day when I was a full-time VVAW organizer. Now it comes to mind perhaps once a week. What's the difference between who I am now, and who I was then? Am I now "normal," or at least a "normal" VVAW type, whatever the hell that means? I came reluctantly to the reunion, in search of an understanding of what normal might mean. I hoped to see myself in the context of the political vets I once knew.

I heard about the reunion two weeks before it happened. I immediately got in touch with my old VVAW partner, Mike Phelan, who lives in the next town. Mike and I had been VVAW regional coordinators for Washington, DC during the '71 V-vet's demonstrations (Dewey Canyon III), Mayday, and other political actions of the early 70's. We both burned out by '72, before the Miami Convention actions. I was peripherally involved with VVAW during the mid-70's, but had been out of contact for about 15 years.

Mike and I were both very doubtful about attending: I pushed, and Mike resisted; then Mike pushed, and I resisted. With some prodding from Kali Tal, support from Peg, my wife, and free frequent flier tickets from Mike's brother, we talked ourselves into it. Kali and I then went to work on Dan Okada and voodoo chile—both even more nervous about going than Mike and I. All the communication between Kali, Dan, voodoo, and myself was by e-mail: although Dan and voodoo are colleagues at the same university, Kali and I had never met them, or each other, in person. (E-mail is a unique form of communication: there are simply no physical constructs on which to build assumptions about people. One of my major motivations in going was to meet these folks, who seemed like such kindred spirits when their messages appeared on my terminal.) It was comforting to know that other old VVAW members were equally reluctant to attend this event.

Everyone I questioned at the reunion recounted similar strong hesitation to attend. Some of this is common to all reunion situations, I gather, but I think something special was happening here. The war used to permeate our lives. It was our daily reality for years after the war—it was a reference point by which we evaluated every issue, defined every value, reacted to every new acquaintance. For many it was an unconscious process, or a process carried on closeted, hidden from all others; for VVAW folks, luckily, I think, it was a conscious and public process. If I may borrow an idiom, we came out early.

Vietnam no longer permeates my life at the surface, daily level. It's not gone—and I'm glad, in many ways, that it's still there—and I'll come back to ways that the war continues to reappear, the way shrapnel can continue to pop from the skin, or malaria reoccur unexpectedly years later.

But I no longer put my VVAW pin on my shirt in the morning, or wear my jungle fatigue jacket daily. Perhaps

it is the disappearance of the war as a well-known checkpoint that made us nervous about coming together with people we had known during those constantly conscious, angry days. Would they still be what we had once all been—would they have that focused rage, that energy, that bitterness, that consumed us and gave us the purpose to survive those brutal years? And if they were still so consumed, what would that say to and about us, who now live our lives in at least a semblance of normalcy: we go to work, we raise our families, we drag ourselves to the polls to choose between tweedledum and tweedledee, we take our children to the latest round of demonstrations for peace here, and justice there, and leave early to get the laundry done.

I think much of the apprehension that Mike and I felt about going to this reunion paralleled our feelings about our VVAW friend RK, who was so fucked up by the war (two years as a teenage medic with the 101st). We love R dearly but he makes us feel extremely uncomfortable. In fact, he drives us fucking nuts much of the time, but we would never cut him off—he'll always be a part of our Vietnam war experience. Mike and I discussed this throughout the reunion, without resolution. Do we suffer some kind of survivor's guilt vis-a-vis R? Do less-fucked-up vets in general feel this way about the truly fucked-up? It's not just "there but for the grace of god or luck go I," but a very strong unease in his presence. We can appreciate where he's coming from, what he's been through, but cannot share it fully—does it make us feel less a v-vet than he? Is this a common feeling of those who saw less combat about those who saw more? Do we worry that R resents us, thinks less of us? I don't think R feels that way, but does the possibility bother us? I don't know, but Mike and I did worry that we were going back to a reunion of RK's.

RK called last night. He missed the reunion because he is back in the hospital again, and the doctors fear some form of chronic (lung) transplant rejection. Got me to thinking again: is it R's death, always rumored to be or truly potentially imminent, that bothers? I came out of Vietnam with a strangely dichotomous attitude about death: I was aware of the fragility of human life (more specifically, that the human body is so easily separated into a few large, or many small, pieces). At the same time, back in the States, I felt invulnerable for many years—what else could life do to me that hadn't already been done, or nearly done? Now, in middle age, I have lost that invulnerability in the face of such mundane things as high cholesterol and marginally high blood pressure. Does R remind me that any of us can go anytime—and certainly will go, eventually? Is it R's mortality that Mike and I are bothered by?

So, we spent the night with Mike's brother in Dutchess County, and took the train down from upstate into Manhattan. A toddler I never saw was crying behind me in the car, with a sound that identified him as just Devlin's age—somewhere around 20 months. It made me think of Devlin at home with Peggy, and it brought tears to my eyes. It also made me think of kids and wars, and how in the US many people think of war solely as a military phenomenon—failing to see that all wars engage civilians, and children, in ways that fortunate Americans

have not understood since the Civil War, if then. Later that weekend I saw very explicit news footage of the mortar attack on the Bosnian city market: people lying in enormous pools of blood, limbs missing—things I have seen, but can no longer see vividly: both a blessing and a curse—I am glad I cannot see, but fear forgetting.

War is disastrous in an infinite variety of ways: simply typing that statement is so weak a representation of the horror of war as to make me cringe. It is impossible, on paper or film, to let the reader or viewer know what war is "really" like. But I must at least try. I owe it to my son, to someday tell him the horrible things my father never told me, in the hopes that he will never be able to tell his sons and daughters those things. I must tell him about RK, about how a boy was sent to save other boys' lives in a real war, at an age where they were but a few years from "bang, yer dead" in children's games. About how that real war destroyed R's life, although he kept on living and is trying to build a new life.

I must tell him about the day of the dead girl and the dead ARVN. Leaving our base camp in a jeep, headed into Quon Loi during the time that I was the 11th ACR's liaison to the Vietnamese District Chief. On a side road immediately outside our camp, I noticed several children—I couldn't tell what was happening, but something was "wrong" enough to turn down the road to check it out. When we got there, we found some kids standing around a young girl, perhaps 8-10 years old, lying under a tree. She appeared unharmed, but was quite dead. I checked her out, and found a single, fingernail-sized hole in the center of her chest. She must have died instantly, as there was little blood. My interpreter quizzed the kids, and told me that she had been up in a tree, breaking off dead limbs for firewood. An explosion knocked her from the tree and killed her.

The local VC had placed a grenade in the tree, with a wire across the road intended to catch the radio antennae of any military vehicle passing below and pull the pin. She got there first. One of those meaningless, random deaths—the VC hadn't meant to kill her, but she was dead just the same. She wasn't the first wounded child I had seen—I spent a lot of time running MedCAPs in the villages—but she was the first dead child.

Later that day, coming back from Quon Loi, we pulled up behind a long line of stopped vehicles. Not caring much to sit there exposed, we pulled up to the head of the column and found more random death. One of our cowboy deuce-and-a-half drivers, renowned for their speed and carefree ways driving through villes, had hit an ARVN pedestrian on the side of the road. He, also, was quite dead. Another meaningless, random death—the American hadn't meant to kill him, but he was dead just the same.

I must tell my son that day kind of summed up the war for me. People, kids, dead for piss-poor reasons. None of the rhetoric, none of the justifications, whether from Kennedy, Johnson, or Nixon, added up to a pile of shit in the face of those two dead Vietnamese, or the dead and wounded Americans I saw.

But the war went on, for me and everybody else. And I continued to do my part, because people depended on

me, and I didn't know what else to do, and because I didn't want to go to LBJ. And more bad things happened, and I came home in early May of 1970 as the Cav rolled into Cambodia, and my family asked me about the war, and I said, I think, "It sucks." And a day or two later I spoke against the war at my old high school's post-Kent State/Cambodian invasion demonstration; and six months or so later I was a full-time organizer for VVAW. I have heard others say that VVAW saved their lives, and I suspect that's true for me: only among people who shared a similar degree of rage, bitterness, sorrow, guilt, and heartfelt opposition to the war could I have worked out those feelings and come all the way home. It was VVAW and our struggle against the war that brought me home, not that afterthought of a parade in Washington, or tips of the hat to veterans after the Gulf War.

These are the things I must tell my son. And I must tell him that wars are only ever over for those who didn't go to war, or have war come to them. For those who saw war, it goes on, and on, and on. It fades, like old film footage, but it never ends. We can live with it, most of us, but we will never live without it.

I will tell my son these things. I told these things to other children, to high school and college kids when VVAW was speaking in schools during the war. And I told these stories to other vets, years ago when they were almost our sole form of conversation. But these are not easy things to tell, and I no longer tell them readily. Perhaps another reason so many of us approached the reunion cautiously is that we wanted neither to listen to nor tell these stories again.

So Mike and I got to the city, and walked from Grand Central down to the hotel, which I had understood to be somewhere in lower Manhattan. Along the way we stopped in a liquor store and sprang for a bottle of Glenlivet (livin' high in the Big Apple). In the liquor store a singularly decked-out black dude (leather shorts, vest, roller skates, multiple earrings) noticed my VVAW patch and asked if I was a V-vet. He said he was also, and at my question said he had been with the 11th ACR—my old unit. Now, I haven't run into more than half a dozen people from the Blackhorse since leaving Vietnam, and running into this guy on the way to the reunion was a little like having that Cobra accompany us up the coast.

Given the reasonable room costs at someplace called the Vista Hotel where VVAW had booked a block of rooms, Mike and I had been afraid that we were headed for some sleaze-ball dive (anyone remember the DeSoto Hotel, outside Ft. Jackson?). VVAW was never a high-rolling operation in terms of the organization's budget or the finances of its members. Sleeping bags on the floors of church basements and sympathizers' living rooms were the usual accommodations for VVAW events.

In fact, that had been an option for the reunion, but Mike and I swore that we had put our floor-sleeping days behind us, and that our hard-won credit ratings would treat us to our own room in the Vista, and we'd just hope the toilet flushed. But the Vista Hotel turns out to be the World Trade Center hotel! If someone had told me in 1972 that we'd be holding a reunion at the World Trade Center in 20 years, I'd have told them to lay off the Thai stick for a while. This should have been my first hint that we were

no longer what we once were: not only Mike and I, but many or most of the vets attending had VisaMaster-AmExDiscover cards in their wallets, families, pets, mortgages, etc. All of these were pretty rare, 20 years ago.

I said to Mike as we approached the towering glass and steel hotel that this *must* be an FBI sting operation—they were going to clamp on the cuffs as we registered: “This case has been 20 years in the making, and we’ve got you commie motherfuckers now!” But no; a 21st floor room with an enormous window overlooking the Hudson: a staggering view. Hospitality suite with free drinks in the pm, and free breakfast in the am. It later occurred to me that this was the only VVAW event I’d ever been to where no one was concerned about who might be a cop, about who the informers or undercover agents might be. We had once spent an inordinate amount of time worrying about whether or not so-and-so was a cop; most of those we suspected weren’t, some of those unsuspected were. It don’t mean nothin’ anymore.

Friday night there was a reception (read party) upstairs in a local “Irish” bar—a place much more like what we had expected: dark, noisy, smoky. About 60 people there: v-vets, families, and an element unfamiliar to me: non-veteran academics, interested in the war and the era from both personal and intellectual perspectives. Among these were Lydia Fish, a folklorist; and Dan Duffy and Kali Tal, editors of *Viet Nam Generation*. I had read my first issue on the plane, and found it a fascinating compendium of non-fiction, fiction, poetry, and what might even be referred to as chit-chat about a wide range of Vietnam-related issues.

I was looking forward to meeting Kali, whose e-mail self-description as a redhead with numerous earrings, a tattoo on her left shoulder, looking like a body builder gone to seed suggested that I would have no trouble recognizing her. And that was the case: shortly after arriving, as Mike and I drank our scotches (another break with tradition: the old days were days of pot and Rolling Rock) and scanned the room for familiar faces, Kali was quietly evident at a table with several other folks. While her self-description had included a little about her background and the context of her interest in the Vietnam war and Vietnam vets, I was still curious as to why a 32-year old woman would be devoting a substantial portion of her life to understanding an era and a group of people so seemingly irrelevant to her (teaching university students can produce the impression that, to anyone under 30, irrelevance is anything that happened last year, to anyone other than themselves). I will let Kali explicate her interests herself; suffice it to say that it is undoubtedly ageist and sexist to be surprised that a young woman might be interested in Vietnam, in the widest possible sense. Talking to Kali, I quickly realized that the motives for her interests were irrelevant; what was relevant was the content. She has thought long and hard about the war, what it did to people and what it means to people. There is no romanticizing of veterans, and in fact she wields a sensitive bullshit detector, which she is kind enough to characterize as “an interest in myth.” Our conversation unfolded over the weekend, as we both dropped the defenses necessary when two people, formerly known only by e-mail addresses, meet in person. Trust

between those of different ages and genders can be hard to come by, in these troubled times.

All in all, it was a very pleasant, normal evening. Much to our relief, tiger-stripe cammies were almost not to be seen (Mike, myself, and other v-vets we talked to are all amused by an interesting phenomenon: to hear some folks strut their stuff, Vietnam was occupied by about 2 million recon marines and 2 million green berets at any given time during the war). In fact, at the VVAW reunion there were more tweed sport jackets than camouflaged fatigues.

So we sat, and drank—some cokes, some booze; and some smoked—a lot of cigarettes (come on, you guys, give it up—don’t die for R.J. Reynolds!), and a *far* smaller amount of pot than would have been the case 20 years ago. Lot of folks got pleasantly high, and no one got trashed as far as I could tell, but I left around midnight, as I saw a long weekend in sight. Joe Bangert was there, indistinguishable from the Joe of old except that his beard was gone, and he was accompanied by his 8-or so year old son, who was a real trooper about putting up with us boring old folks. And we talked, and talked, and talked.

And you know what? We are a really normal, decent, sane, pleasant, likable group of people. A paucity of war stories, even of old VVAW stories, at least where I sat. Most of the talk was about now, and where we were, what we were doing, politically and personally: our spouses, our divorces, our children. I don’t know why this should seem surprising. But while we were immersed in VVAW, as much as we loved each other for what we had been through, and although many of us worked together daily, we seldom if ever had the time and sense of ease to sit down and appreciate each other as friends. And we now have the opportunity to do this, and it’s just lovely.

The next morning, some a bit the worse for wear, we shambled rather than marched on down to the NY Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial. After some milling around at the memorial, during which I met Dan Okada and voodoo chile, a memorial ceremony took place, involving statements by Barry Romo, Dave Dellinger, Dan Berrigan, and others. Folks carried flags of the various countries in which the US has been recently involved; along with placards giving casualty figures. We then marched to Memorial Park: someone passed out cadences to chant, but it just wasn’t that kind of an occasion. Again, folks were just talking amongst themselves.

The scene at Memorial Park was very like the “Old Days.” Speakers spoke, singers sang—Country Joe McDonald very well, as usual, others not so well, as usual. Mike moved through the crowd, stopping and chatting; I hung around the outside of the crowd where I have always been most comfortable, talking to Dan Okada, voodoo chile, Kali, her intern Ben, Dan Duffy, and Lydia: all of us academic V-vets or students of the era—participant observers, rather than full participants, in many ways.

Later that afternoon it was off to a local church for lunch, scheduled for 2:00, preceded by 25 toasts which turned into 25 speeches. The Vietnamese Ambassador to the UN spoke so long that I thought we’d have to call in an air strike to get him off the podium. I’m afraid I tuned

out—as at the Memorial Park, I've just heard too damn many speeches. I'd rather talk with than be talked at. Folks towards the back did begin to talk among themselves, although various school-teacher types up front frequently turned and "shushed" the crowd sternly. It was getting on to about 3:30 when a popular movement in the direction of the kitchen started, and soon enough turkey, roast beef, and other items had been liberated to make sitting through the speeches bearable. Saturday evening saw the "Concert," which actually meant Country Joe and a couple of other groups playing at a bar in Soho. I thought at first that VVAW had taken the place over for the evening, but as the regular crowd began to arrive around midnight, I realized that it was just an age-distribution phenomenon, with the middle-aged vets arriving and mostly leaving early, and the younger folks then taking over. It was a pleasant time, but again with a bit too much smoke and noise for me. Very difficult to talk to folks, and Kali, Ben, and I tottered back to the hotel around midnight, with Mike following later.

The next morning a number of topics were scheduled for discussion in a local church. This could have been the occasion for some interesting introspection about where we've been and where we're going (a bit like this piece, come to think of it). Skip Delano had set up a display of FBI files about VVAW, retrieved under the FOIA. I was amused to see my name crop up in a newspaper article, quoting me on the aims of the veterans' demonstration in DC in 1971 (Dewey Canyon III). I had gotten my own file many years ago, and had been amused to see that much of the "Confidential," 400-page file consisted of copies of newspaper articles, press releases, leaflets, and other publicly distributed material. When I think of the millions of dollars wasted in accumulating that stuff... It's apparent that it's the process of collecting it that's important, that's intended to frighten people into inactivity; the "intelligence" itself is meaningless.

Folks were a bit worse the wear from the previous evening; it was pouring rain, and people were moving slowly. A lot of people had already left for home. The seating of people in pews didn't contribute to discussion; what we ended up with was Quaker meeting style testimony. A number of people spoke about the need for continued work for peace and justice; but Jack McCloskey reminded us that we needn't let that work consume our lives completely, that we have as much right to a normal life as anyone. I was reminded of demonstrations when the cry, "Vets to the front" would go up as confrontation with the cops neared, and veterans were expected once again to make a sacrifice others were unwilling to make. We did it, then, but I don't think we're willing to keep doing it. Much of this was very moving, but the "theme" of the reunion for many of us had been conversation: the testimony style didn't fit the mood, and the church pew didn't fit my butt. About midday, the "'Original' Stage Door Deli" across the street overcame our dedication, and Mike, Kali, Ben and I ran through the rain toward the pastrami.

After lunch, we parted ways rather quickly. There was no need for any extended farewell, as we knew we'd be in touch. As mundane as all of the foregoing seems,

what it was doing for me was providing an important reality check. We have been so bombarded by media visions of Vietnam vets, and our images of our own "vetness" have undergone so many changes over the years, that it can be hard for us to know who "we" as a group are, and what "we" are really like. This is especially true for people like Mike and me, who have been separated from other VVAW folks for so long. This event allows us to check ourselves against each other, to remind ourselves who we are, what we are really like; to tell ourselves that we made it, we are sane survivors, as normal as one can be given our experiences. It is a chance to check myth against reality, to the degree that is possible, to make ourselves comfortable with the parts of the myth that approximate reality, and reject what we feel to be "false" myth.

One evening, while taping my reactions to the day's events, I expressed my inability, perhaps reluctance, to pick it all apart and analyze what it all meant. I knew I felt comfortable with everyone at the reunion. They were "my" folks, folks who, not matter how alienated, had once understood the world like I did, and as no one else seemed to. And now, they are still "my" people. We were a crazy crew then, desperate in our own way, and we are now such a *settled* bunch of people, most of us. Listening to my voice on the tape, there is a sense of surprise that we were having such a good time, that people seemed so normal, and happy. And I went on to say, "I guess we've *earned* it. We earned it in Vietnam, we've been paying dues ever since . . . and, what the hell do you pay dues for unless you get something out of it, get something in return? And maybe that's it—we're happy now because we have paid for it—we did our duty as the country defined it in Vietnam, and we did our duty as we defined it afterwards, and maybe that should buy us a bit of happiness.

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CONGRATULATIONS TO JOHN BAKY

John Baky, *Viet Nam Generation* Advisory Board Member, has been promoted to Director of Library Services at La Salle University. John has been the driving force behind La Salle's superb special collection, **Imaginative Representations of the Viet Nam War**.

Congratulations, John, and best wishes in your new position. We value your contribution to the field.

FEATURES

CHIN BO LAM MUOI (NINE DOWN MAKES TEN)

A story by Pham Thi Hoai

Translated by Peter Zinoman, History, Cornell University

The first man in my unhappy life was slender and gentle with an honest face. His was an honesty easy to find at any time, mainly in people who have lived continually and without interruptions in a sheltered environment. From an ordinary and uneventful childhood, to a college life, really no more than an extension of high school, and on to years as a government employed technician, he displayed diligence, trustworthiness, and benevolence. It seemed that his was a kind of innate goodness, god-given and protected. It seemed that he had always been righteous and good, but in a modest way, throughout a life untouched by self-doubt. I often thought of his goodness as a small thimble of fire, incapable of contributing much heat to the world, but occasionally heart-warming, though only in a symbolic way. And everyone, especially me, would strain towards this warmth; this effort eventually becoming a habit and later on, a moral imperative. Actually, I could perhaps have lived the kind of life most suitable for a woman by his side, in an apartment somewhere with that small flame. I'd give birth to well-fathered children, and sit nightly clutching a ball of colorful wool, knitting colorful clothes, oblivious to self-doubt. Moreover, I would never fear unfaithfulness from him as he could barely conceptualize adultery. But then, I was too young, and I saw him as a sort of precious chessman, fortunate to have been moved by some unseen hand toward the safe squares and away from the violent battles. It seemed he would remain like this until a natural death finally seized him—and of course he'd remain honest, even in death. At that time, I considered my own birth some kind of cruel prank. I underestimated the size of his thimble of fire and failed to realize that his conventional honesty was no less believable than other things in life. Lacking skepticism, how could he understand science, art or religion and in short, how could he understand love, that which I considered the most fundamental craving for a person such as myself. I grew dissatisfied because he was too respectable and secure with his own respectability.

The second man was frivolous and merry, an urban child who had yet to go through a period of spiritual crisis characteristic of civilized society. He was crazy about music from Beethoven to the Beatles, possessed a good singing voice, but couldn't bear to practice. He also loved soccer and had a decent kicking foot but no concentration for workouts. Generally speaking, he had no concentration for anything, not even love. It's difficult to trust such a man as it's never clear where the vectors of his personality are going. He gave off a first impression of someone tremendously frivolous, one who possessed rare and peculiar notions of life, often found puzzling by those who met him. His face was so natural it provoked suspicion and I believed that under that layer of wonderful skin, lay

hidden an extraordinary nature. How else to explain the perfect harmony existing between himself and his environment, a final symbol of his capacity to live so deeply and so freely. But after only three sentences had uttered forth from his lovely smiling mouth, this first impression quickly evaporated. He was one of a countless number of fortunate young men who live an unexamined life, not because of some conscious principle, but simply due to circumstance—frivolity as a habit, as a way of life; frivolous in all details and only details concerned him. His frivolity manifested itself in the care he took in striking a relaxed pose, and in the attention he devoted to celebrations, feasting, and to appearing knowledgeable; this all in the context of a larger existence which was not at all frivolous, but serious and substantial. At a certain age, those as extroverted and unaffected as he sink into the cloudy chaos of life's problems. But, nevertheless, he was a person who brought me many pleasant hours, almost my happiest ever. I learned several important things from him, namely the discovery that I have a body and my body has a voice, a voice initially timid, then passionate, sometimes daring and profane, and progressively harder to please. He was the first man to show me that I am a woman, and for long after, how long I'm not sure, I am still grateful to this ordinary man. Life will certainly be impoverished if lacking such merry and superficial men. Furthermore, he loved good food, and that truly is a worthwhile quality.

Man number three was around for less than a week but made me the most miserable. He was extremely handsome, so handsome that expressions of envy clogged up the throats of those who met him. I immediately forgot who I was, and experienced my first near-death state. After that I remained struck by a sensation both dangerous and seductive. This feeling stayed with me throughout the remainder of my life, flooding and overwhelming smaller emotions, causing them to shrink and shrivel up. Recovery would demand a very large dose of optimism, and an ability to adjust to new extremes. I knew that he was an inarticulate dullard, useless except for giving pleasure to the eyes, over-reliant on his unusually gorgeous appearance and frightfully uninteresting. But in his presence, I completely forgot and forgave everything, even though he was genuinely uncouth, foul, and cruel. After one week, I abandoned my urge not to indulge my self-pity and cried like a child whose toy has been stolen before she gets a chance to play with it. He would continue to be so gorgeous and useless for his entire life, and I, throughout my life, would flee from the desire to give myself to him, tormented by the absurdity of god and myself even more. That affair was perhaps my only experience with true platonic love, especially the time I timidly ran my fingers through tufts of hair so beautiful they seemed not to belong to him, and then abruptly jerked away as if stung by an electric shock.

After that, I had an old man, experienced and worldly. He was born into a family whose members had for many generations participated in great historical events. They were thoughtfully educated, upwardly mobile, skilled at rubbing shoulders wherever they went and never ruffled

by callous twists and turns of fate. His handsomeness had a majestic air, and his every gesture suggested a profound awareness of his own value. I lived with him the longest, it seemed more than two years, and I grew much during this period. He knew how to answer all of my questions, whether about politics, love, religion or the psychological taboos of bygone eras. He knew the way to sit cross-legged, drinking and composing poetry with literary friends; or dignified and serious with academic friends, simple and easy-going with old women and children in the neighborhood, and brutish and cocky with the scum of the street. Many women revered him as some sort of idol. Old people found him loving and affectionate; he never said anything to hurt them. I enjoyed his generosity until it gradually became like a solid gold chain clamped round my neck. "What right do you have to be so generous?" I protested. And his answer suggested, "Just carry on with your life little girl. You are still so small." Perhaps his brand of perfection was like a perfectly baked earthenware vase, adorned with brightly colored and completely proportioned designs; but its basic components, earth and rocks, originally loose, dirty, and unformed, would remain essentially unchanged forever. When describing him, it's important to emphasize that he seemed profoundly satisfied with himself. Due to his advanced age and precious experience, plus a certain humorlessness, he did not dare or perhaps was unable to reject any part of the status quo. He gave me many things, or he almost gave me many things; affection to a nearly affectionate extent; warmth to a degree almost heartwarming. The whole of his perfect existence symbolized the limitless limitations of mankind. Not only did he unconditionally accept those limitations, but he used them to justify his behavior. He adroitly maintained a cozy family life, while simultaneously offering his generosity to me. He explained that people are truly small creatures, fettered by the environment at birth, and by various obligations as an adult. Thus they can only maneuver in a limited way, and within the confines of some predetermined grid. I hated those grids, and harshly mocked the way he struggled with his limitations. Up until the final moments, he still offered me a generous smile, and it really seemed that compared with other men, he cared about me the most. Countless times thereafter, I longed to abandon my high pressure work and relationships and run back to him, hiding my face in his solid chest and conceding that he had always been right. But, I clicked my tongue and decided against it. Moreover, this flexible man was idealized as a model citizen by the majority, but we must accept that their reasoning is often skewed. While extreme persons may sneer that he is essentially harmless and not worthy of notice, they will concede, if pressed to be sympathetic, that as egotists go, he's not really so bad.

Man number five was an idealist. He belonged to that breed of men not born for women, money, or pleasure, and this made me curious. My curiosity did not last long, however, for contrary to my expectations, he was insipid and shallow. His ideal world—to be brought about by either a struggle to reform educational science, protect the environment, or reestablish a tradition of sarong

wearing among ethnic minorities (what a big deal)—perhaps could really exist some day. I never doubted its attractiveness, and sometimes in a highly inspired state, he could transmit a bit of his passion and emotion to the non-believers. But in general, his view of life suggested a narrow corridor which was periodically repainted but nevertheless remained cramped and dreary. In a calculating way, I studied and applied tactics of love, and bearing the costs of lost time and more annoyance than happiness, I contrived to prove the bulwark of his idealism, to test its endurance. This plunged him into an overwhelming spiritual crisis. He received emergency first aid and was injected with 10,000 units of an antibiotic used to treat men who suffer from self-inflicted inflammation of the bone-marrow, and all because he could not choose between his love and his ideals. He was the kind of person possessing only enough internal strength to devote himself to one thing at a time. Leaving the hospital, he embarrassingly thanked me and disappeared down one of his mysterious corridors, this one concerned with the public reform of morning exercises for people too physically unfit to work. However, my calibrated burst of love had misfired and his ideals gave him an easy way out. That was the only affair in which I actively played the role of seductress from beginning to end, and after he was gone I was genuinely sad and regretful. After thinking a while, it became clear that he had chosen his dreary and narrow world over me. A lesson for simple curiosity. But I must admit, he was the purest man I have ever met.

The sixth man was extremely complex, almost irrationally so, in the context of this most poor and backward society. I met him, after he had achieved an undeniable level of prestige in the diminutive intellectual world of Ha Noi, a place where one can meet the most famous people without a prior appointment, and use intimate terms of address immediately upon striking up a conversation. I immediately surrendered before him—this human labyrinth—this infinitely dimensional zone cluttered with the disorder of contradictions, ideology, experience, and ambition. But I couldn't help wondering: do all these interesting and complicated things really exist or are they only an expensive and ultimately meaningless drama which people feel compelled to stage in order to cope with their fellow men and themselves. Conventional geniuses never seem to have personalities; who would dare say that Shakespeare, for example, was melancholy, bitter, or sharp-tongued. Therefore, I concluded that my sixth man was no genius. He had too much personality and was too worried about his own originality. His complexity seemed the natural outgrowth of the uncontrolled interaction between two currents. On the one hand was the traditional educational system, in which the value of everything—romanticism, historical method, even slipping cushions under the bed before a night of love-making—is fixed according to a guaranteed standard of truth, goodness, and beauty. And on the other hand there was real life—vivid, crowded, subverting all conventions regardless of tradition, undermining all ideologies and naturally overturning all values. Because he was sensitive, he found it hard to overlook clashes between the two, but

because he was at the same time intelligent, he refused to take sides. Gradually, he found that the best way out was to situate himself somewhere above the fray, and contentedly gaze down. Consequently people who participated in progressively more public discussions claimed that, in fact he systematically rejected everything. They were wrong. He was too complicated and lost in his own complexity to reject everything. However, he did become a somewhat legendary and original figure, and as people stood anxious and sweaty in his presence, time passed, and I grew tired. During the time I lived with him, I tended to dwell obsessively on my own sadness. I uttered strange and often contradictory phrases, ate and dressed on purpose in a slovenly manner and lavished praise on only those books that no one understood. When we broke up, I felt the world to be shallow and its people superficial. It seemed that there was never a time that I received from this famous man a soulful kiss, meaning one both natural and pure. Afterwards, I heard that he had become a radical moralist, preaching about the nature of three distinct roads: the acceptance, rejection, and escape from conventional morality. Later on he became a kind of popular sage, a dialectician who approached society's intricate problems through dialectical methods and by applying extract of oriental and occidental knowledge. In the end he became a recluse, and in an unrelated development, the intellectual life of Hanoi contracted and no one spoke further of him.

The seventh man brought me much excitement but also moments of my greatest uneasiness. He was not unusually attractive, short, with thinning hair and a small forehead. Only his voice was exquisite, deep, melodious, and full of unforeseen contingencies. Upon hearing his voice, difficult-to-please listeners, even those only impressed by outward appearance would be riveted and believe that before them, if not a genius in disguise, was some sort of otherworldly species of man, a being who only used this earth as a temporary dwelling. Or perhaps they would feel that this small man must deeply understand the quintessence of life, as if his existence had spanned scores of generations, and could consequently draw on the experience of both ghosts and men. It was said that he followed nihilist principles, but I didn't understand what this meant. I speculated that it was a unique philosophical idea which can never be fully grasped, or perhaps the final foundation of all foundations or a mode of behavior reserved especially for those without virtue, those both unhappy and very lonely. But this man refused to advertise his noble misery, the pain he felt for humanity, the loneliness in his blood, or the weariness with which he experienced the age. On the contrary, his expression suggested contentment and freedom from worry, the capacity to accept or reject circumstances with equal ease; or sometimes he was simply difficult to read. His one fascination was with the brevity of human existence and the only being who provoked him to fits of anger, and an enduring sensation of confusion and helplessness was god. He considered god to be his only worthwhile rival and lamented the fact that the great one so rarely showed himself. It was perhaps the complexity of his relationship with god that fundamentally

distinguished him from the mass of nihilists in the movement. Their lazy activism was habitually insignificant, and they always seemed prepared to shout, "I've found it!" after taking only half a footstep out the door. It was not easy to label him godless, immoral, or relativistic, and finally one could only say that he had a great sense of humor, his genius lying with his comic gifts. Many women went out with him. This small Don Juan was thoughtful and considerate towards them, and because of his skill in the various stages of love affairs, he earned a sultry reputation. After studying with him, many miserable women left and turning on him, denounced what they had learned. I also left him, after admitting to myself that I am to remain a weak woman, and will spend the rest of my life searching for strength outside of myself. In my present state of panic, I dare not enter into his zone, a zone wonderful for creating poetry and philosophy, but inappropriate for comforting the hearts of women. I'm afraid that I will forever grieve over this unhappy Don Juan, and only drive away my sadness by shrugging my shoulders and saying, "He was really pitiable, no emotion, no passion, no faith, in short he didn't know what to live for." But people say that during an era in which subsistence is no joke, to strive only for low-level satisfaction is a vain pursuit, like supporting the expansion of an aerospace program. It is not only an unoriginal idea but, one might say, a backward one.

The eighth man had the hair of a poet, the face of a poet, and soul especially given to poetry. Such qualities are found only in people who have a lot of time and no concrete obligations towards life. When engrossed in the rising and falling of his watery waves, and acquainted with his passionate love of writing, swiftly without semi-colons; I began to understand that the most worthwhile obsession is an obsession that is actually independent of the object of fixation. The object is only borrowed as a pretext, a means, an environment, through which or in which, the obsessed person can project his own eternal and essential hunger; thus fulfilling the requirements of death—the dissolution of the ego for some thing, anything, existing independently outside one's self. Perhaps that obsession should be controlled. At some point the most mundane catalyst, a skirt or a fallen leaf, is enough to provoke a series of captivating chain reactions; while at another time much more important objects will only inspire an absurd indifference. I did not know whether I was worthwhile or mundane, but this was not really the issue. I was grateful to this man, and enjoyed the taste of his affection, despite a small stubborn girl within me, who refused to cooperate. She said, according to this particular mode of obsession, all objects are equal, and therefore I am no different from a potato or an ant, but if people like to manufacture an obsession by constantly stoking their own engine, then by all means go ahead. Gradually I learned to repress that obstinate girl and ignore my uneasiness with the difference between artificially produced obsession and primeval obsession. Let Proust distinguish between the two or the column "Mothers Advise Daughters" in some women's magazine; I am only interested in my own obsession and its consequences. The most ironic aspect of its unforeseen

consequences, was that both he and I became pitiful victims of the obsession. It forced him to wait by every street on which I might pass, to pull me away from all activities no matter how fundamental to existence, eating, sleeping, seeking work. It interfered with all my relationships, my family, colleagues and friends, and expanded into all areas and times which I liked to save for myself. I no longer had my own spaces, times, or lifestyle; my environment was upset, my psychological state was upset, my language went out of control. The obsession was like the third character in a love triangle leading him and poking me in the back; it follows its own dizzying trajectory, changes obstinate people into slaves, oblivious to their limited abilities. In short, it swallowed us without chewing; he failed his examinations, unable to resist the rush toward inertia, and I turned blind like a Chinese lantern at a festival. In this situation, people can't help but annoy and grate on each other. The demands of individual liberation eventually transforms society into a mass of "I"s, each one desiring to control the others. This naturally provokes conflict. Exhausted after such a time-consuming conflict, he abandoned the relationship for the call of religion, but this new obsession exacted an even higher price. I returned to an original form of a potato or maybe an ant and heaved a sigh of relief. I felt sorry for God or Buddha as this poet will certainly grate on them. But perhaps those two gentlemen understand the essence of life more than I, and can look beyond him.

The ninth man was a man of action, few words, forthrightness, and pragmatism. He was intelligent, decently educated, and sensitive enough to appreciate the real value of such non-material activities as wordplay, pipe-dreaming, fortune-telling, or making love. However, the road he chose for himself, satisfied a predilection for certitude and controlled vigilance. He believed in no one, entrusted himself to no one, and struggled to force life itself to bend to his will. His profound desire to conquer life was impressive, vaguely like Don Quixote, both desperate and dauntless. He had held down many jobs, for many different reasons ranging from the desire to secure life's basic necessities to attempts to secure glory and power. But he was rarely satisfied, as work never quite met with his expectations. The only measure he took seriously was that of practical advantage, immediate material gain being optimal and the foregoing of useful future connections merely acceptable. He was strict and prompt in the repayment of debts. While people found him useful, they were often cool towards him because he was completely lacking in false ethics, those gastric juices which allow for the digestion of the inedible components in the relations between people. He promised little yet was so helpful with my unhappy life's most pressing problems (more so than all other men combined) that during those moments of satisfaction and gratitude, I confusingly asked myself if this really could be love? And could women like myself have lost such confidence in themselves and in this difficult-to-understand era that we need a love such as this? He did grant me three things: firstly, because he was always so busy, he did not have the time to undergo a period of spiritual crisis, something

which I had already been blessed with enough times before; secondly, as relations with women never took up his whole life, I enjoyed a notable degree of freedom; and thirdly, with him, I suddenly felt a daily sensation of being deeply and snugly attached to my life, a sensation which I thought about many times before but never actually experienced. I grew stronger, more contented, and began to seriously consider the prospect of marrying him. Life with such a thoroughly practical man would certainly promise a measure of success, like entering into a contract, in which both sides do not sap the other's vitality, as often happens with those claiming to be madly in love. There is certainly some advantage in avoiding excessive closeness and coolly carrying out contractual provisions. At our final meeting, he said, "In all areas including marriage, I am always faithful to a single measure of value: practical advantage." And upon considering this measure, he determined that I was not to be the one to satisfy his requirements. Now he must bear responsibility for his heartlessness.

Enough. He was the ninth man.

(1988)

Pham Thi Hoai, one of contemporary Viet Nam's most influential writers, was born in 1960 in Thanh Hoa province. She has a degree in Archival Studies from the University of Humboldt/Berlin and currently works at the Institute of Religion in Ha Noi. Her first novel, Thien Su, was translated into French as La Messagere de Cristal (Paris: Des Femmes) and published in 1991. She is also the author of Me Lo, a collection of short stories, and the translator of works by Kafka, Brecht and Durrenmat. Peter Zinoman, a doctoral candidate in Viet History at Cornell, is steadily translating Ha Noi's most advanced fiction writers. See his translation of Nguyen Huy Thiep's Vang Lua (Fired Gold) in issue 4:1-2 of Viet Nam Generation.

THE LAST VC

A story by Wayne Karlin, RR 1, Box 268K, Lexington Park, MD 20653.

"And what exotic isle d'ye hail from?" the innkeeper asks.

"Florida, muthafucka," K-K answers. The other girls crack up; the innkeeper has his act, she has hers. He wears white kneesocks, leather apron, rough looking red shirt, white wig. K-K wears black. Sweatband, t-shirt, jeans, beach shoes. Other people dressed in old history-type clothes parade back and forth on the lawn outside the window, melting long and tall and fat and thin like candles through the wavy glass. K-K there to see Historic Maryland with the other girls from Ruth's House, daffies, Disturbed Adolescent Females, the counselors think they don't know that label. They already finished the Nature Walk and the Founders' Ship, an old-time three masted ship, you can go aboard but nothing happens on it like Pirates of the Caribbean or anything, you just look at the sailors' hammocks and some barrels and go uh-huh. There wasn't much else. Just a visitor center that looked like a barn to K-K, and the inn where they are now, and a brick building supposed to be the first capital only she figures the historic people looked around said oh shit, the boonies, and moved. That was it. Except for some little roped off places with signs telling you to believe that buried under the dirt is a tavern or a plantation or a slave house or whatever they say is there. One little sign saying trash midden which to K-K's surprise is just what it says, trash: this window set into the ground like the glass bottom boat, what you see through it is four hundred years of dirty oyster shells and smashed up plates and cups, old chewed-on bones and pipes. This garbage under everything.

"A saucy wench," the innkeeper says, winking at K-K. She gives him her hooded, cool look, she in her all black, VCWA: Viet Cong With an Attitude, and then looks away, staring around the room: big dark beams in the low ceiling, stubbly white walls, long tables with wooden benches next to them. The room blinking into existence like the Star Trek holodeck where you can have any scene you want. For a minute, she plays with the room being different for each group or individual that came in, fitting these holes in their minds. She did a theme park, that's what it would be.

"K-K no saw-see 'xotic eye," Tonetta says to the innkeeper, putting her palms on both sides of her head and pulling up the skin, tilting her eyes up to show him what K-K is. "K-K jus a gook."

The other girls giggle, say gook, gook, like a flock of daffies, these disturbed dyslex-iac-assed ducks who fuck up their quack, K-K thinking Tonetta must have picked up the gook from the tape they watched last night, *Platoon*. Tonetta pushing her, K-K figures, to start Physical Confrontation so she'll lose her privilege level. She is cool though, smiles at Tonetta while she slips Mario mushrooms out of the top of her head. They arc through the air, smack Tonetta, she puffs to nothing with a blip. On K-K floats, to the next obstacle. Which is, Tonetta smiles back at her, rubs and pats her rounded tummy

with lovely tenderness. Bam. King Koopa zaps Mario, all five lives blink out. Tonetta came into the program too late for an abortion and now she rubs her big black melon belly in K-K's attitude every chance she gets, whenever she can't get at K-K with words or hands. Every chance, all the time, knowing the counselors were giving K-K BC pills, standing over her and watching her swallow because they knew she would swell, put a new mutant out in the world, she got the chance. She would too.

"Ladies," Louise the counselor says, "Behave. No verbal abuse."

"K-K started it," Tonetta says.

"That's Kiet, please," Louise says.

"Shee-it, whatever," Tonetta says and the other girls laugh again. K-K is pissed at Louise for bringing it up. Her name. She was Keisha when she came to Ruth's House from Crownsville Detention, but Larry got hold of her exotic-I-land papers and he found Kiet, drew that name up out of the muck at the bottom of the sea, this old bone-memory he had he wanted her to wrap her new skin around. She had to explain to him that name was all drowned, all blue and shriveled up and fish nibbling its eye sockets, so she tried being reasonable and said go with K-K, but he tells her no, you need to be proud of your heritage. Meaning the gook part she didn't know fuck-all about, meaning, she said to him, he was telling her not to be proud of the African part what came on a different boat. One at a time, he said, Larry, he's black but he's a vet, you peel his grape skin and what you see is green. Anyway in her head she was and still is K-K. Half-a-dink, half-a-splib, her third foster dad had called her, both his way of saying nigger.

But meanwhile the bana-gana bonana name game further pisses Tonetta off, Tonetta getting her name from the cat in the first or second or whatever foster home had tried to keep her. The way she had left that place, Tonetta the kid had hung Tonetta the cat with a lamp cord to which K-K can relate, but still it wasn't the cat's idea. Animals get fucked over. Like, her last ex-foster father she'd run away from, in Florida, he let her go to Sea World once and she'd smoked some dope before she went and then watched the *Flipper* show. Flipper this dolphin who did all these kissy-ass doggy tricks for these people in wet suits that were supposed to be its TV family, though she never saw the sitcom, it was supposed to be famous. She watched and she started to identify and cry from the dope opening her up to things, lighting up things it touched like a pinball game. Like what do you suppose that dolphin's real name was? Something like Glub-Click. Or Fuck Luck. Or Kiet. Swimming around. Thinking to itself: what's this Flipper shit?

"Come on, ladies," Larry says. "We'll be late for the Historical Reenactment."

They shuffle out of the inn. Near the door they pass a woman wearing a white hood and an apron sitting in front of a kind of small barrel, stirring a stick in it. K-K stops, to look, but really to let Larry get in front of her. She feels Larry's stare on her neck-skin like dirty spiderwebs, this kind of pretend sideways interest in her he got, like always looking at her for something, booby traps, she doesn't know what.

Stir, stir, stir. Like last night, they were watching the *Platoon* tape and she had just not been able to take this scene where the bad sergeant Tom Berenger blows away this mother and threatens to kill her kid. The other daffies going burn or giggling, they're so bone ignorant, but K-K thinking what if this was some scene they sucked out of the garbage under her memory and that was how someone did her real mom? On the screen all the GIs fighting with each other whether they should waste the gooks or not and she started wondering which side her real dad would have been on, some of the splib soldiers in the movie on Berenger's side, some on the good sergeant's side, and she was Charlie Sheen, split in half, she could feel them all inside of her. Stir, stir, stir. Willem Dafoe, he played the good sergeant.

So she got up and out of the room and sat on the couch in the office upstairs, in the dark. Sure enough Larry came up after her. He went to switch on the light. Leave it off, she told him.

"Bad movie," he said, sitting down next to her, big and heavy, and kind of leaning into her, not in any kind of coming on way, but like he was really trying to see her, in the dark, moonlight coming in the window, splitting her face, Keisha blacked out and only the tipped-up Kiet eyes showing, like the eyes of his enemy. Or maybe a woman he remembered, some lover he left swollen with a half-a-dink half-a-splib mutant to come swimming after him one day. When she'd run away from Florida to DC, she'd run to the Wall she'd seen on TV. The Wall took the high yellow out of her face and gave it back to her black, black with the white names scrawled all over it. She had walked along it slowly, letting the names write themselves across her skin, if her daddy's name was there it would have stayed on her skin when she turned from it.

"Who cares," she'd said.

Larry shifted his weight, a creaking black heaviness next to her, the sounds of the movie drifting up to them in the darkness like a Historical Reenactment, screams and explosions and voices from this place where they each had first become some kind of garbage under each other's life.

"Know what I read?" His voice was a whisper tickling inside her brain under the sounds from the other room, screams and laughing and the crack of gunfire. "Read where this preacher in Florida wants to open a new theme park for the tourists, going to have a village, booby-trapped trails, everything. Hire local refugees to play the villagers and VC. Come on down."

K-K just sat there.

The sound of gunfire and laughter came into the room.

"Don't mean nothin'," he'd said, a saying from the war.

Now a couple, the man in a leather shirt and baggy canvas pants, the woman in a bonnet and hoop skirt, drift by K-K, talking "ye's" and "doth saids" to each other, not breaking out of it even though their backs were to her, their act swallowing them. She drifts after the others. In the Visitors' Center, Larry and Louise herd the daffies into a little room that says Sensurround Theatre over its door. The inside walls are covered with pictures that show the inside of the old time Founders' Ship. The daffies sit

on benches. The doors shut. The light goes out. A voice starts whispering, trickling into her brain like Larry's whisper. The movie plays on all the walls around her. Sensurround. Creaking ropes. Waves. A voice says: "Hardship and starvation." She sees flickering people packed into the thin space of a wooden boat, hears their screams and moans, smells their sour puke, piss, the stink of nuoc mam fish sauce. Sensurround. "The New World," the voice says.

The lights flash on. The movie's over.

"Let's go," Larry says.

They go to an open lawn in front of the big brick government house. A thick old man wearing a steel helmet that has feathers on it like a rooster's head struts by K-K, his armor-plated chest puffed up. "They really get into it," she hears Louise whisper to Larry.

"Playing war," he says.

K-K sees some white tents set up in a row, little fires and pyramids of three old time guns leaning against each other in front of each tent. People are taking pictures of other people, some in the tents, some bent over, their heads and arms held in wooden gates. "Stocks," Louise whispers, explaining the New World to K-K. A man is stuffing a little boy into the mouth of one of the old cannons. The kid's mother is taking pictures.

"Look terrified, Jason," she says. "Stop grinning like a dork."

A group of men dressed up in helmets and armor march by, led by the roostery old man K-K had seen before. Some of the them are carrying the old time guns. "Muskets," Louise says. Others carry long spears. "Pikes," Louise says. A voice comes over the PA system and explains that this is the volunteer militia, here to protect the settlers from Indian attack. The volunteers are all white and waddley, fat bellies pushing out their armor at the cracks, fat old men daffies led by a rooster. They're too old to be soldiers. Or they're like soldiers kept forever in the army for a forever war.

Somebody beats a drum. The militia gets into a kind of raggy box formation, facing K-K. The half of them with muskets point them at her. The three muskets, barrels leaned against each other in front of the tent near her, are the same model. The old men with the pikes point them at her. For a few seconds, nobody says anything. Then the rooster man pulls out a sword and yells, readyaimfire. The flash and the noise split her in half. Blow Kiet away from Keisha. Dink from splib.

She looks back at the militia. They load and fire again. If she worked here she'd play a VC. She'd squat down near the entrance to a reconstructed straw hooch, rocking her baby, waiting while the tourists, dressed as GIs, came into her village. Then she'd rise up, reveal the weapon hidden under her baby and pretend to blow them away. Then one day she'd forget where she really was. She'd put real bullets into the gun. She'd have a flashback and shoot a tourist, thinking he was a GI come to rape and murder. Then, before anyone realized what happened, she'd run. She'd hide in the marshes. She'd be the last VC.

The militia load and fire again, shooting invisible Indians. Then they lower their pikes, point them at her and charge, yelling, their faces twisted.

She backs up from the faces and stumbles into Tonetta, who cusses her and pushes her into the stacked muskets. They fall with a clatter. The militia men stop a few feet from her and threaten with their pikes. She picks up one of the fallen muskets.

"Look terrified, bitch," she says to Tonetta.

"Kiet, put it down," Larry says. He steps in front of her. For an instant, she sees herself reflected in his shades: black-clad, holding a weapon.

"We're here now," she tells him. She points the gun at him.

He looks at her and backs up, funny smile on his face.

"Don't mean nothin,'" she tells him.

"For your own safety," the announcer on the PA says, "please do not handle the weapons."

The musket is heavier than she thought it would be. She wonders what will happen. Everybody is looking at her. You can't trust the gooks, she'd say. Then she'd pull the trigger. The flash would leap out and hit Larry's chest. Maybe he'd have a heart attack and die, his last sight: her face. Or maybe he'd jump at her. She'd club his hands and turn and run.

Even as she thinks this, she clubs down at his hands and she's turning and then she is running, a part of her still running in her head but her feet really pounding against the grass. She zig-zags in the direction of the parking lot, holding onto the musket. Behind her she hears Louise and Larry calling K-K as if to please her, but she keeps on running: what's this Flipper shit? If she looks over her shoulder now, she knows she'll see the two of them and the volunteer militia chasing her, pikes and muskets in their hands, their faces red and angry, their armor flapping. She knows she'll see armies of mad old men, all dressed like soldiers, all chasing after her.

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ALICE AND JIMMY MAC

From the novel **Spoils** by Dan Duffy, *Viet Nam Generation*.

I came home and my wife was gone. I knew she was gone because my car was there. It was a black Alfa Romeo from my bachelor days with a sun roof and if Alice were home she'd be out driving. We had a long driveway and I had time to think about this. Then I notice two guys in cheap suits fucking with my car. Fucking blue suits and tie. I didn't see them, I was thinking about Alice.

I did a one-eighty and I jumped uphill out of my car. One was already at the driver's seat. The other jumped in his side and stood up on my seats out the sunroof and shouted to me, "We got papers." I was running right up

to the front of the car. The driver hit it. The guy standing disappeared into the sunroof hard because when I jumped over the hood and to the side to get him all I caught was the edge of the opening. I held on. I guess it was a ninety I did when I parked. What I meant was that the Chevy blocked the driveway horizontally. It was Alice's car and they swerved around it, straight out the driveway and this collection agency goon floored it with me hanging on for the sake of my property.

The guy inside beat my hands to get them off to dump me, then my elbows, then my shoulders. He pointed a gun to my face when I got halfway in. I kept coming. I grabbed across for the wheel, shouting, "I'm a crazy Vietnam veteran. I am an insane Vietnam veteran. I am a lunatic and give me my car back I paid for it." They weren't loony enough to shoot me. The driver wasn't strong enough to stop me from grabbing the wheel and skidding us into a guard rail broadside to stop. I'm still suing those two, and the collection agency, and the bank. I pay what I owe.

My friend Jim McKinney Jr. had a hard lifetime. He was short, and ugly, and when he was little his dad was often in jail. He got a bad start, but his life was a lot harder than it need have been. He took a lot of trouble for his friends, and got a lot of it from other people.

I owe little Jim a lot. He grew up with me. It was always given that we had each other in mind. I met Alice through the wake I held to pay something back to Jim. I held that wake over Jimmy to get back at his business associates, his partners, clients, and competitors who put the squeeze to him gratuitously, and never let up.

Jim got bullied the first day of first grade, every day of the whole first week by the same third grader. After Friday he told his mother he would never go to school again in his whole life, he was not going to school on Monday. His ma told his dad. Jim's dad told him he was too going, every day. Jim's dad got the story of the bully out of Jim. Big Jim said not only was Jimmy going to school, he was going to go up to that big kid every time he saw him and punch.

Jim did that. Every time he saw his persecutor he ran after him, and jumped him, swinging his arms around like kids do. He got thrown off, and kicked down, and sat on three or four times every day at school. Jimmy'd come home with his clothes torn and with bruises, all dirty. His dad ate it up. Jim went back every morning and did the same thing. After two weeks, the bully turned and caught little Jim, while they waited in line to enter the building, just as Jim made his first attack. The bully caught him in two hands and promised never to ever bother him again. He was exasperated from being hunted all the time, and tired of catching a lick or two every time he creamed Jim, three or six licks a day, every day.

Jim had the special charm ever afterwards of not tolerating grief. Except when he was in the Navy it never was much of a problem to have Jim mad at you—he was really tiny. Not a real problem, but it was a threat and an aggravation. Most people who give you grief do it gratuitously, for no reason, and if you give them any kind of a reason to let you alone they will.

I wish I could have got the government to attend the wake.

When he was sixteen, police caught Jim way inside another man's house. He had two short crowbars he'd made himself, and some rolled weed in his jacket pocket. He'd brought some smoke along against the shakes but got so excited about breaking in that he forgot to either do it or dump it.

At the station house the officer on duty spread the burglar tools and the narcotic out on the desk. A passing cop gave Jimmy's right name. The officer on duty asked if he was Big Jim McKinney's son.

You've got to remember, this is long before every minor jackass who broke the law had rights. Torture's simple. You have to teach infantry about blisters, and even then you have to inspect their feet every day, but torture comes naturally to those who want to do it. They opened a telephone book on Jim's head and beat the yellow pages with a club. In the morning they told him he could go to Vietnam or go to prison. He pitched what was in his slop bucket on them through the bars when they came back for his decision. So they took him to the recruiting station, but the Marine Corps wouldn't take him, even as a favor to the cops. He was too scrawny, his teeth were too rotten, and he was morally degenerate. They took him back to the precinct, and let him use the phone. His dad's motorcycle club bailed him out. The sergeant at arms of the club told him about a new crab boat going north that needed a cook. That Saturday Jim sailed from Seattle for the Bering Sea, where he stayed two full crabbing seasons.

Jim seldom mentioned his days crabbing. Alice told me about the industry. Alaskan crabbers work a sixty hour day, sleep four hours, and do it again, following their line of pots back and forth fifty miles out from land, as long as the season lasts. The season is in winter. Calm seas is fifty foot swells. There are usually storms. The Fish and Game closes the season when fifty million ton have been taken, it doesn't matter by which ship. So sometimes in competition for the crab the men don't sleep at all.

In the early days when Jim sailed there was big big money in it. It was the kind of work you can't pay someone to do. Men getting thirty dollars an hour would have quit. No wage is worth dying for. Crabbers work for profits.

Jim's share as cook for his first two month season was ninety thousand dollars. Jim was lucky and had a skipper who believed in money he could spend. Lots of ships went down from the crew's overwork. They'd overload, or pull up two crab pots at one time and capsize, or just get so tired they couldn't help when the boat iced up. Men commonly went overboard to rest.

They also shot each other up. No one was ever calm and rested, and there were always a gun around. The boats carried a lot of cash. The big port was Kodiak, where inland there's a Marine base where they send you if you ball up too bad to court-martial. A friend who trained there told me that he was off-duty in the port once when the fleet was in, and he saw a machine gun mounted on one bridge, and still-drunk crabbers firing on gulls with their M-16s.

I think Jim enjoyed the life. He came back to Seattle after two years to spend some money. The police were still interested in him and he joined the Navy. He went

overseas. He did underwater demolition and reconnaissance.

Think of what it must be to have someone else's memories!

Jim and I never lived in the same house, but we were neighbors after the war, as we had been as kids. We lived nearby each other in several small settlements in Humboldt county. Martin was in and out those four years, and other friends from home or from outfits overseas and in the states were nearby as well.

My parents moved to an island in San Francisco Bay while I was in Laos. I drove down Route One slowly to see them, from Seattle, where I'd flown to as quickly as I could manage, after discharge. My parents brought me near the Bay Area, and I may have attracted my friends, but that might not be the cause of our living there. We might have settled there anyways. There was tract housing, very cheap to rent, built in speculation, out in the country and sometimes almost all vacant. There were young families with kids. There was lots of easy money around for young men.

Just about anyone who drives down Route One through northern California wants to live nearby.

Jim came to do business. I was living by diving when he came. There was an oil spill in the Bay, and I was paid to swim across the bottom from day to day to keep track of the oil pools that accumulated there. Jim taught me things about diving that helped me do that. He wouldn't dive himself. Many of the men who survived the kind of work Jim did for the Navy died as civilians doing jobs for the oil company. Jim wanted money he could spend.

He came to Kelseyville on his bike. He had some Alaska money, and his service pay. He rented a house and bought a Chevrolet. He drove down to San Bernadino in his crewcut, with a dope farmer's whole crop boxed up the back, sloppily, with clothes and kitchen stuff hanging out. He stopped in Oakland on his way back.

You may not know that Jim's dad is past president of the Seattle chapter of the Diablos Motorcycle Club. He's got that tattoo filled in. The Diablos first got big when the Hell's Angels got into organized crime. The Diablos MC became the prestigious club that was still individual outlaws, as long as that lasted. As president, Big Jim put up a lot of roving bikers that passed through Seattle, including Angels who were traveling, keeping away from the Oakland and Berdoo scenes, where even the Diablo chapters became drug rackets.

With his connections Jim clued into those scenes very well, with his first Chevy full of prime domestic marijuana. He was godsend to those guys. They couldn't control their supplies before Jim came. They couldn't control the docks, so they had no say in setting prices for stuff from overseas. Nobody they knew could cross the Mexican border without getting searched. They didn't really know about airports. Their only supplier was the mob.

Then came Jim with good dope from Humboldt County. Hippies who had moved north from Berkeley had got way into that country to cultivate their interests alone. You had to be hip to ever find them. They grew the first commercial grade homegrown. They wouldn't deal with the mob. They couldn't deal with the bikers.

My hip biker veteran friend Jim McKinney got to be a very important man. His friends the hippies expanded their fields. Jim never made another run himself, but Chevies and Oldsmobiles drove south every harvest.

Jim got a piece of the profits from both the growers and the sellers. The Angels would front him cash, and he would take a cut. From the balance he would make a price to the grower, and take a cut of that. He made lots of money every two month season. He paid our friends well to drive, and gave them cars.

Jim's whole success was the illusion of negotiation. He handed money back to the Angels, telling them he had beaten the growers down. They'd hand it back to Jim as an option on the next harvest. When Jim made his price to the growers he always allowed for "windfalls" he would lay on them later, thousands he'd say he gouged from the Angels.

But there's always someone to eliminate the middleman. The Angels accused him of cheating, and let the membership know he should be dead. One grower put out the word Jim was fixing the price, and the farmers lay in wait for him on the small roads. The mob saw him friendless and put out a contract, to disrupt the new market, to move in. Jim split the county to a small town, in another state, in a corner of it far from any interstates.

In two years times had changed and Jim came back. He did like the area. He died in bed soon after. A doctor has told me that happens. A paramedic said that he'd tried to rescue a Cambodian who died with equally little reason.

In those days no friend's death was sudden for me. I bet it was sudden to Jim, though. He had two quiet years to slow down. He had a day between his two heart attacks to realize. Alice's death was sudden to me, as real as Jim's own was to him.

After I wrecked my car I walked. The cops didn't know who to arrest when we woke up at the hospital and talked. They got a doctor to put me to sleep and let those guys out. I walked home logy and Alice still wasn't there this time though of course neither was the car.

She wasn't in the kitchen, she wasn't in the dinette, she wasn't in the bedroom. I was hurt. I still do hurt from the wrench on my shoulder when the car started and the shock to my back when I stopped it. Right then I couldn't stand. I couldn't sit down. I tried laying on our big bed. I couldn't stand the pain there and forced myself to ease down onto the floor beside it. Then I couldn't get up though I felt no improvement where I was. The phone was nearby but I couldn't dial it. My fingers had held my door key and opened the house but now they didn't move. I started bellowing for Alice. She didn't come.

Alice was my wife. Alice was a limnologist. Alice was a surface geologist, a hydrographer. She knew about lakes. Alice knew a lot. Alice was a surface geologist who didn't care to work for Shell. Alice came with me on walks in the Muir Woods and fishing off the leper island in San Francisco Bay.

The phone rang. That hurt. I hit it. All my strength was just enough to rattle the receiver in its cradle, and it rang again with an extra, painful, reverberation. Like when you kick a garbage can while it's still shaking. I

lifted myself all I could and hit it again. I fell back to the floor. All my weight was enough to knock the receiver off, to stop the ringing, which was all I wanted. My phone is my own. I call people with it. I answer calls I ask for.

I was busy screaming, "Alice!"

"Mr. Thornton?"

I heard them calling me on the phone but I kept shouting, "Alice!"

I heard, "Mr. Thornton. We have a bad connection." I got the receiver to talk.

It was the hospital I'd just come from, the desk that had received me at six. They had been trying to reach me all day.

Alice had been struck while getting the mail. They didn't tell me that. They just told me she died. Now I couldn't get my fingers off the phone, couldn't roll away from it, couldn't get up to walk somewhere. Alice couldn't do anything. The phone made that noise, I shouted and shook. That was my night.

There weren't any neighbors not at work to see the accident. The car never stopped. The paramedics, who were my friends, did their best, as did the Washington State Police.

The ambulance crew broke into my house after their shift. They cared for me and told me what I know about her passing.

I didn't do anything like I did when Jim died. Acting I think is matter of ceremony you perform when it's something you've felt before and you know what to do.

I owed little Jim a lot. I held the wake to pay him back, to pay his clients and partners and competitors. It was the thing to do. I owed him more afterwards for meeting Alice. After Alice died my debt to him was responsible for everything I had and lost in her. At the time, I owed him and simply paid back.

Jim left me everything. In the day he had, he had his bail bondsman's lawyer make out a blanket will. There were no debts. Everything was paid for in cash.

I turned it all back into cash and closed Jim's accounts. I did it the morning I heard he was dead. I wasn't working steady. I got the phone call, went to the lawyer, went to the bank, called a second-hand jobber, and I had all of Jim's substance in my jeans by three. Then I made a list for the party.

Jim hated funerals. I don't know anyone who went to his. The last funeral I attended I had to be there. I was pallbearer. I wasn't a friend of the family, I didn't know him. I was the right height. Every Sunday when I was in training in Texas it was an even chance if you were six foot two you would have to carry the coffin of a fellow Green Beret who had stood under a bomb in Vietnam. The unknown soldier I would carry was entitled to a military funeral, and I was obliged to help him in it. They were miserable and hot funerals. It was distressing to talk to the father and mother about the deceased.

What we held was a wake. I spent every cent on liquor. Then I got on the phone. I called everyone who loved Jim. I couldn't get his dad. I called and left messages at work for the girlfriend of one of the brothers at the Seattle Diablos. I called all the local divers.

David Winklie answered the phone before it rang. He's like that. He was a drinker before serving. We shared a six-pack once after a dive together, and he told me how he stopped drinking altogether once. It was right after he got overseas, and the effect lasted until New Year's after he was discharged. What had happened was he had a binge with a friend from his compound. The two were only off-duty for the night, but duty was very slack where they were in American territory. It was a supply and services depot. The perimeter was only there to protect the materiel and cars against the black market. So they felt safe staggering out past the guards. They got separated and slept in ditches. Dave woke up near a water buffalo's wallow. His friend's head was stuck by itself on one of the horns.

Dave said of course he'd be there. I called up Mouth and Allen and the rest of Jimmy's drivers. I called up all the country fuck-offs he used to party with. I called up Martin, and got him.

Then I got in the car. I called on the dope farmers. I invited each to the wake. Aging hippies like to drink. I got addresses from one and drove to Oakland. I talked to the Oakland Hell's Angels vice-president and his particular buddies. They promised solemnly the full attendance of all available brothers. The vice-president said he'd see to it personally the Berdoo Chapter would be pleased to send an honor guard.

It was all easy. Motorcycle goons will do anything if you talk about honor and ceremony and doing right. The growers still felt cheated by Jim and thought they'd get a little back in alcohol. Neither the bikers or the growers had any memory, it seemed, of the trouble they had put Jim to and the attempts they made on his life.

I was so pleased I went around and invited all the ordinary assholes too, the social acquaintances Jim had who irritated him in everyday life. I do wish I could have got the government and the mob. The wake was going to be quite a large function, just counting Jim's enemies. And of course all of Jim's friends were coming to mourn him properly.

I can't say looking at it that the wake was conducted for revenge. It wasn't like getting back at your little sister. Getting it together was a ceremony, organizing it was something to do. The inspiration to go through those motions was certainly revenge. We carried it on with exuberance, though. There was nothing mean in our conduct. I know it was constructive or Alice wouldn't have been attracted to it.

Alice watched me when I parked my truck near Lake Konocti. She watched me get out of the cab and let down the gate to set up the party. I tapped a keg and opened the cases of whisky. I took the twist-tie off the garbage bag the half kilo was in. I didn't know she was watching me.

Dave Winklie was with me. I'm surprised he didn't notice her. I thought he was the only other person. Konocti is a lonely park, and it was early Friday morning.

David and I took a bottle and sat. Alice tells me she started taking specimens again.

She said she saw us set up on Saturday morning and Sunday. She said Sunday we looked chewed up and happy. Monday morning she saw me all alone and left her jacket on me as I slept.

Friday was for the ordinary assholes. The party got swinging in the afternoon. All Jim's local friends were there early, since few of us worked. As the drinking got on, one by one there would be words and an old friend of Jim's would naturally take out one of the deceased's old everyday tormentors. That evening the farmers arrived from the country and got their clocks cleaned. All Saturday and Sunday Angels from the South and Diablos from the north arrived in pairs and threes, just fast enough to feed a steady brawling too vicious for the cops to bother with and too small for the county to feel obliged to do something about.

I fought drunk three days There's something wonderful about violence with no shrapnel and men to care for, with no money involved.

That was how I buried Jim. Alice liked me for it.

Alice woke me up Monday evening. She made me pick up around the truck. She drove me home, and stayed with me, and didn't leave.

Only someone who hated ambition as much as she loved me could have done what Alice accomplished in getting me out of California and up to apprentice in the shipyards at Bellingham. Alice stayed four years in the Alaska fisheries after getting her Master's Degree. She was between seasons looking at lakes when she saw me. When she told me after living with me half a year that it was worthwhile making what I knew was a good life, I knew that she knew that I understood her. I had to listen to her.

I loved to listen. Alice spoke clearly. She used her fingers to point to things. She told me that plants and animals are usually eaten alive, that the trash I would have left at Konocti was much part of the lakes she loved as the fish were. Once a door was jammed and I explained to her how any key is a crank in its special lock, turning the bolt. She, "What if the bolt were three feet long and you stood cranking it, hard at first, with less effort as it came along, until the door clicked toward you on the threshold, swung free in your easy grasp, and you stepped into the building open to do as you pleased?" She had a special quality.

When Alice died I had nothing to say or do in response to the situation.

A COWARD FOR ONE MINUTE

A story by Stephen T. Banko III, Room 213, 65 Court Street, Buffalo, NY 14202, (716) 847-7939

"It's better to be a coward for one minute, than dead for the rest of your life." —Irish Proverb

Duffy might have been the first grunt in history to get hospital time because he shit his pants. Then again, in the asshole of the world called Vietnam, maybe not.

But regardless of his place in the pecking order, Duffy felt very foolish. Surrounding him were grunts with every manner of wound from the common sucking chest to traumatic amputations. And yet here he was, legs suspended from crude slings and spread like a woman about to give birth, his inner legs oozing and scabrous and septic with a virulent infection. A strategically placed sheet did little to hide his plight from the jokers on the ward. One marvelously mobile wheelchair-bound GI was very fond of rolling himself over to the end of Duffy's bed and sticking his head under the sheets.

"Come on, guys," he'd shout into the cave between Duffy's legs, "line up for your passport pictures."

And Duffy, his ass hanging like some kind of hot house plant, would only smile and take it. But for him, it wasn't all fun and games. Scabby sores covered the length of Duffy's inner thighs and burned with a searing pain as the raging infection ate into his flesh. But the worst part was the fever it spawned. It was spiking around 103 or 104. That meant that most of the time, Duffy was febrile and delirious, sweating in a frenzy that soaked the sheets and bred the chills that swept over him during his few conscious moments. The nurses would watch his uncontrollable tremors for a few seconds before jabbing him with the spike of Demerol that would send him off on a tattered cloud of temporary, marginal peace.

It was just as well, Duffy thought in a more lucid moment. I couldn't hack it, being in here with all these wounded guys. I don't belong with them. I don't deserve it.

One afternoon, things got real bad. The fever was getting worse. The thick length of scab was reduced to slime, leaking gore and blood. The infection was oblivious to the assault of the antibiotics. The silver wheeled warrior made his way to the foot of Duffy's bed and sneaked a peak beneath the sheets.

"Oooh man, that's some horrible stuff in there, Duffy. You musta got some VC bacteria to be doing that your own bad self."

But Duffy couldn't hear him. His mind was suspended somewhere in the sequence of blood, death and fire that had been his life since his arrival in Vietnam. Mired in own semi-conscious limbo, he was visited alternately by the faces of the friends he'd seen die and the strangers he'd helped kill. One minute his mind echoed with the screaming moans of the wounded and next, it wallowed in the silence of the dead. Even unconscious, Duffy found no refuge from the war.

Through it all, the intravenous medicine leaked a drop at a time — like sand tumbling from an hourglass,

tolling time till the end of Duffy's tour of duty or his life, whichever came first.

The ward nurses had been taught early on that their smiles might be the most important treatments in their healer's bags. But they didn't have too many smiles when they came to treat Duffy. The usual sunshiny happiness of the round eyed women darkened to overcast gravity whenever they neared his bed.

Doctors ducked in occasionally, more to hear the latest jokes about the "shitty case" in the corner bed than to treat it. But in reality, there was little they could do except let the poisoning run its course. It — like everything about the war in Vietnam — was just a matter of time.

Duffy had just reached into the bloody stench of the punji pit to retrieve the body of some new guy who'd died before anybody even knew his name when he was snapped out of the nightmare by a sensation of coolness. He had no idea how long he'd been "away" this time. He only knew that the cool felt good. He blinked his way back into the present to see the familiar ceiling fan whirring overhead and the tent over the lower half of his body before believing that another prayer had gone unanswered. This wasn't just a nightmare. He really was in Vietnam.

There was a lot of activity swirling around him, much more than usual. As he came more into focus, he saw the nurses buzzing around him carrying crinkling bags that reminded him of sandbags.

"Hey L-T," he said, "what are you guys doing? Building a bunker?"

The petite, red-haired nurse hardly blinked and never stopped.

"Welcome back, Duffy. You've been gone a long time this stretch. We thought we'd build a little something to keep you with us a bit longer."

With a wry smile, she packed an ice bag between his legs. The other nurses were packing more under his arm pits while still others draped his feverish body in freezing towels.

"Oooh, L-T, does this mean were going steady?"

"Just steady that fever a bit, Duffy, and we'll all be happy."

"What for? So I can be conscious all the time? That's not much of a deal, Lieutenant."

Duffy was in and out of the ice for two days before the fever broke. They kept him in twenty or thirty minutes at a time, gave him a fifteen minute break, then packed him again. The ice helped break the fever and ten days of massive doses of antibiotics were finally getting the upper hand on the infection. Even the pain was ebbing from his legs.

The green-eyed lieutenant slipped the last ice pack from beneath his arm and smoothed his hair back from his clammy forehead.

"I think we finally beat it, Duffy."

"What exactly was 'it,' L-T, this bad 'it' that keeps kicking my pretty young butt?"

"Make you a deal. I'll tell you what 'it' was and you tell me how 'it' happened. The ward's been rife with rumor ever since you got here but nobody really knows what happened."

"It's a deal, Lieutenant. You first."

"You had the most incredible staph infection anyone on this ward has ever seen. The inner portions of both legs were covered with it. It looks like whatever it was got in through the leech bites and the scratches covering your legs. It caused a fever that spiked at about 105 degrees. That's when we had to put you on ice. It was pretty shaky there for a while. We didn't really know if we were going to get you back. If we knew more about what happened to you, we might have known more about how to treat the infection. But you weren't cooperating. Your turn, buddy. What happened?"

Duffy took a long, cool drink of the ice water on his night stand and looked around to make sure nobody else was listening.

"I took a dump in my pants, L-T."

"You kept saying that in your delirium. We didn't know what you were talking about then, either."

Duffy's embarrassment poured out of him as anger.

"It's pretty simple. I'm talking about crapping my pants, Lieutenant. Is that so hard to understand? I'm talking about being a coward for a minute. I'm talking about being so scared out there, I lost control. You know what I'm talking about yet?"

"I've been here for four stinking months and if I've learned anything, it's that nothing is simple. That infection wasn't simple. What it did to you wasn't simple. And from what I've heard about you, you're no coward. So let's cut the crap, okay?"

"Was that a pun, L-T? If it was, it wasn't very good. But I'm telling you the truth — I just lost it out there. I'm a lurp — you know, long range reconnaissance patrols? We work in six and eight man teams and get dropped off God-only-knows-where. We walk around for a while, check things out, then we get picked up a few days later at a pre-arranged landing zone."

"Well, we got dumped somewhere out by the Cambodian border, not far from the Song Be. That means the Be River. It was some heavy duty jungle, I tell you. Thicker than anything I'd ever seen. We had to rappel: you know, slide down ropes, just to get to the ground. When we get into an area, we hole up during the day and move a little at night, just like Luke the Gook. Well, we found a big ole bamboo bush and we crawled under it to wait for dark. We were there about half an hour, when the sarge gave me a little poke. Our bush was about fifteen meters off a big trail and the big trail was carrying a big load of VC. They went walking by like they were on a stroll in the park. I stopped counting at eighty-four and they went by for another five minutes or so. Well, somewhere after eighty-four, but long before B-I-N-G-O, I lost it. I couldn't help myself. I just lost control. There's six of us and a hundred or so bad guys and nothing between us but some bamboo poles. I just lost it. Tears, shakes, and before I knew it, there's shit running down my leg. I wasn't making any noise, but it didn't take long before the smell got real noticeable. Thank God, the column of VC was almost by us."

"It took about five more minutes and they were gone. They never gave us a look. But here I am, out on day one of a three day patrol, in hundred degree heat and I got shit lining my pants."

"Oh Duffy, how could you — I mean, I know how it could happen, but how could you walk around like that?"

"Well, what did you expect me to do? Call time out? Ask to get picked up because I messed my pants? The war's like show biz — it goes on, you know?"

"God, didn't it hurt?"

"Hell, yes, it hurt. It hurt bad for the first couple hours. I knew I was rubbing myself pretty raw. It happened to me once before — when I was about seven. Playing hockey out on a pond and I was too embarrassed to take a dump in the bushes. So I walked home with my pants full. But then I got to wash off right away. The good news is there ain't no mamma to whip your butt for messing your pants in the bush. The bad news is you're in the bush."

Somewhere in his tale, Duffy felt his hands covered with the warmth of the lieutenant's soft skin.

"What about Rockwitz?"

At the mention of the name, Duffy's eyes sunk back in his head. They went suddenly empty; black and flat as glass. He tried to slip his hand out of her grasp but she held tight.

"How'd you know that name, ma'am?"

"How do you think I know it? Every time you blacked out on us, you kept calling his name. Did Rockwitz help you?"

Duffy succeeded in taking back his hand.

"Sure did. Helped the whole team. Wasn't for Rockwitz, wouldn't none of us be here."

A glint of life returned to Duffy's dark eyes. His mouth curled slightly, threatening to break into a smile, but holding tight on the shadowy periphery of emotion. He gave her back his hand.

"Tell me about it. What happened to Rockwitz? Will he come to see you?"

"I expect I have a better chance of going to see him, L-T."

Duffy was slowly submerging in the stink and decay of that dark and bloody jungle. His eyes glazed over. He was afraid they'd tip off the pretty lieutenant to where he'd been and what he'd seen. He sneaked a peek into the warmth of her shining, green, eyes and knew at once there was no danger. She'd never even had nightmares about where he'd been. He was only vaguely aware of the sound of the voice and even less aware it was his own.

"We were about half way through the mission. We knew something big was going on because we spotted all those VC with their clean uniforms and new weapons and stuff. We also knew we were right in the middle of some deep doo-doo. But that's our job. We find 'em before they can get to our firebases. We get a fix on where they were heading, call in the zoomies in the jets and helicopters. Then just sit back and watch the fireworks."

"It was dusk on the third day and the sarge decided to take a chance moving before dark to get closer to a trail we thought they might be using. Rockwitz was on the point. Jefferson was next, then me, the sarge, Garcia and Monteith walking drag. Moving in the jungle was okay. It was already pretty dark in there but we could still make good time. But then we had to cross some open elephant grass — about two hundred meters worth — to get closer

to the river where we were going to set up. The sarge thought we should wait for a few minutes till it got darker. But Rocky wanted to move right away. So, we up and started across the clearing. We were about twenty-five meters from the edge of the jungle when we saw these three guys coming the other way. They must have surprised Rockwitz because both of the pointmen fired about the same time."

"Oh God," the L-T broke in. "They killed Rockwitz?"

Duffy's eyes softened a little and his hand squeezed hers this time.

"Hell no, Rocky killed them. Rock's one fast momma with his Thompson. He got them all, so we had to really make it for the river and some cover.

"Well, we got back into the jungle and slipped in by the river bank just as night fell. I figured everything was okay, even with my legs rubbed as raw as hamburger. I slipped down into the water to rinse some of the crap off me and cool the burning. Then I crept back up to Rocky's position and to see if he had some Vaseline or something to put between my legs. I couldn't see him in the dark but as soon as he tried to talk, I knew something was real wrong.

"He rattled—you know—like he was trying to clear his throat or something. I crawled over. He was trying to keep from coughing but he couldn't and every time he coughed, pink foam bubbled out of his mouth. I opened his shirt and there was blood all over his belly and chest. I eased him down by the river bank and went for Garcia, our doc. He came back with me, took one look Rocky and started working like hell. He pulled the field dressing off Rocky's belt and ripped open the plastic wrapper. Then he leaned over and said something in Rocky's ear. Garcia motioned me to put my hand over Rocky's mouth. Garcia squeezed on something and the blood squirted out of Rocky's mouth and shot through my fingers. It was a real mess.

"But Garcia used that plastic to seal up that hole and Rockwitz started breathing a lot easier. I asked him how Rocky was doing but he just crawled away. I knew something wasn't right."

Duffy stared out the window again, and the nurse knew his mind leaving his body again.

"Rocky'd moan a little when the pain got to be too much for him and I'd put my hand over his mouth and rock him till it went away. I wanted to sit with him all night but the sarge said we couldn't blow the mission because one guy got hurt. So I gave Rocky some of my bubble gum and Garcia gave him a whack of morphine and we went out to recon.

"We were out a couple hours, moving real smooth on a narrow trail when we picked up the movement. It wasn't much. Ole Luke the Gook surely does know how to move at night. But get enough of them on a trail at night and even they can't help making some noise. We were laying in behind some big banyans when they came down the trail heading away from the river. We figured they were the same guys made me mess my pants. We waited till they were a few hundred meters down the trail and called up some helicopter gunships and brought some artillery on their butts.

"We must have hurt them some because when we were moving back to our night position, we ran into three different patrols they had out looking for us. We dodged the first two, then our luck ran out. I was on the point and we were making pretty good time when I saw the bad guy right in the middle of the trail just ahead of me. He turned to look at me and I squeezed off three quick shots. Then we ducked into the brush. Took us another hour but we got back to the river about a little before dawn.

"Garcia — he looked real glad to see us. He said Rocky was getting worse and there were enemy patrols all over the place. Rocky's moaning almost gave them away a couple of times. I heard him and the sarge talking and they said we had six clicks to walk at first light to get to the pick-up zone for extraction. Humping six clicks with Rocky in a bad way was going to be a real bitch—no offense L-T."

"None taken." The lieutenant turned away from her patient and smiled.

Duffy was like most of the other boy-warriors in Vietnam. He could roam the jungles and patrol the rice paddies in search of enemy soldiers to kill but he wasn't quite yet comfortable cursing in front of a woman.

"The dawn came and we didn't waste any time. I had Rocky, so we were in the middle of the team. It was hot as hell and moving through the jungle was taking a big bite out of my butt. Then we got into a clearing of elephant grass and we tried to make some time. But Rocky just couldn't cut it. He was trying, but he was hurting too bad. I wound up carrying him and that was surely no day at the beach. We stopped in a little clump of trees to get a bearing on the pick-up point and the sarge figured we only had two clicks to go. I thought we just might make it.

"I took a big swig out of my canteen and gave Rocky another piece of bubble gum. He couldn't have any water because of the stomach wound and all, so his breath was enough to wilt the jungle. I hoisted him up on my shoulders and we started on the last leg of the march. The elephant grass was tearing me up. It was about four feet high and sharp as razors. I was already having a little problem with my crotch rash and then my arms got all ripped up in the grass. And sweet suffering Jesus, does that stuff itch!"

Duffy's arms were covered with a mass of angry, pus-filled scratches that crisscrossed his flesh like some diabolical connect-the-dots puzzle.

"We covered about five hundred meters before I needed some rest. Carrying Rocky in that heat was kicking my butt. But before I could get somebody's attention, the gooks did it for me. There was a big explosion about fifty meters in front of Jefferson—either a mortar or a rocket grenade—then we were in it up to our lips.

"We were in a fire storm of all kinds of shooting—mortars, rockets, machine guns, AKs. In the middle of grass, we had nowhere to hide. The bullets kept snapping and cracking all over the place. I covered Rocky with my body and prayed. After a few minutes there was a lull in the firing and I heard the sarge yelling for Jefferson's radio. But Jefferson yelled back the box took a couple of

rounds and wasn't working. That meant no comms with the choppers. So we had to get to the extraction point or we'd miss the ride home. I was one scared momma about that time, L-T.

"But sarge knew his stuff. We just got everybody together and started crawling toward the treeline. The grass was high enough that the gooks couldn't see us. They kept shooting but they were shooting blind. At first, we were doing all right. But it was just too tough, trying to pull and push and drag Rocky and keep down and out of the line of fire. I dragged him for a couple meters, but he started to bleed and I knew he was hurting real bad. But I just couldn't hack it anymore. So Garcia took over but he wasn't doing much better. He got so frustrated, he sort of sat up to get a better grip on Rockwitz and I saw his shoulder explode in a bubble burst of red. There was just no way we were going to make any time with Rocky not able to move himself.

"The sarge knew it and we all knew it. There was no way we were going to make it. It was all over. We couldn't get to the pick-up spot and we couldn't leave Rocky behind. So the sarge told us to make a circle around Rocky and Garcia. Then we'd just wait for the gooks to assault. We'd take as many of them as we could, but nobody had any false hopes about what was going to happen.

"You know, L-T, not one of those guys said a word. They just circled up and stacked their ammo. Even Garcia. He said he wasn't hurt so bad he couldn't take his place in the circle like everybody else. I helped him wrap his shoulder wound and he crawled out to take his place on the little perimeter. I couldn't believe it. I kept wondering: who are these guys? We hardly know each other. After the war, we'll never see each other again. We got nothing in common except the uniform. And yet, we're all ready to die for each other—to sacrifice ourselves rather than leave one of our wounded behind. And in that second, it didn't seem like such a bad deal to die with guys like these. I knew if I lived another hundred years, I'd never be with people like this ever again. I barely knew them, but I loved them more than I loved anything, ever, in my life.

"I finished with Garcia's wound and reached for my rifle. There was nothing left to do but wait for the big minute. I felt okay. I wasn't really scared anymore. Until I couldn't find my rifle. I laid it down to help Garcia and now it was gone. I felt this surge of panic—dying was one thing, but dying without firing a shot was something else. I looked over my shoulder to see if it was behind me.

"And there was Rocky. For the first time since he'd been shot, he looked happy. His chin was resting on the barrel of my M-16 but he had this calm, glazed over look on his face. And goddamn, L-T, if he wasn't full smiling when he pulled the trigger. And just like that, he saved us. We couldn't do nothing more for him. So he did it all for us. Gave us another chance to live. And we took it. Crawled like crazed fools through that grass and into the belly of the jungle. The gooks were still shooting but in the trees, we were pretty safe. Right on schedule, we heard the whacking of the helicopter coming in for the extraction.

Snatched us right out of the mouth of the dragon and here we are.

"Another team went out and brought Rocky's body back the next day."

Duffy was still staring into the cruel, terrible hell that the safe and sheltered have never seen. But his face softened and his eyes glimmered with a hint of the fire they'd lost.

"Hell of an army we got over here, L-T, one hell of an army."

When she didn't answer, Duffy snapped out of his trance and looked at the pretty nurse. This time it was her eyes pooling their sorrow, flat and cold.

Rock Star

*Memoir by Jim Morrison, 122 N 50 W, Orem, UT 84057,
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I've always been poked fun at because of my name. I thought it was a pretty good name but anyone that knows about the rock group The Doors immediately picks up on it. The recent movie about Jim Morrison and The Doors brought a new interest. People saying things like:

"Jim Morrison, huh? Did you used to sing with The Doors?"

People would remember me because they remembered someone else. They remembered the mysterious young man with his strange lyrics. What an incredible rock band! In my humble opinion (although the name similarity may have some influence):

Jim Morrison was The Doors.

How many really remember the other members of the band? I suppose only those who really thrived on knowing such things, but everyone who knows The Doors, remembers Jim Morrison. If you guessed the band members were, "John, Paul, George, Ringo, and Jim," then you're out of luck. Just the simple act of writing or telling someone my name can change the mood of a conversation immediately. Once people knew my name they could always remember who I was. I wasn't *the* Jim Morrison, but once a Morrison always a Morrison, and vice versa. And neither shall the twain meet—I suppose. I only know my grandfather had the name—and as far as anyone knows—I am the last surviving member of the family with the name of Jim Morrison. I don't remember my name being special as far back as elementary school. I guess those years were okay especially since The Doors didn't exist then. I was just an awkward kid with an ordinary Scottish name. Some kids didn't like me or my name. There were some who knew about my grandparents coming from Scotland. They didn't like the "scotch-kid" so I didn't always fit in. One of the more obnoxious ones shouted things like:

"Well, here comes that More-ASS-on kid!" "Scotch kids eat shit for dinner!" "Better be careful More-ASS-on or we'll tape your ass-hole shut with Scotch tape!"

Only trouble was I grew up in a hurry and soon had the height and strength to punch faces into tomato pulp.

The kid who made fun of me so unmercifully flipped me the bird once while in the seventh grade. I practically forced him to eat the whole thing including fingernail, knuckles, and part of his hand.

All I really wanted to do was work on cars. I became the mechanic. Always under the hood. Always *doing* something. Taking things apart and putting them together again. Always tinkering in the auto shop. Understanding how a V-8 worked was a piece of cake. First V-8 I ever rebuilt was a Ford ThunderBird engine. I still consider it the best engine built. Other guys would razz me about how the Chevy or MoPars somehow were better. I wasn't fooled because I knew a good engine when I saw it. There was nothing better than a Ford engine running quiet and strong. They don't make them like that anymore. Seems such a shame too.

Barry and I double-dated a lot. Seemed to be more fun that way and we still managed to get in our fair share of necking. Barry always had his date in the back while I drove. I always did the driving. I always made the machine cruise with rock n' roll cranked up and the top down. That's the way I wanted it. Sometimes we knew the girls were along just for the car and the beer but then it didn't matter. Time was running out on us anyway. I guess we didn't realize how short or terrible life would soon get. I tell you these things for a reason. Certain people, places, or things mark you for life. Like a branding iron. The iron is hot—the fire sears the flesh but something good can result when the trauma ends. Maybe this isn't such a good comparison but how would a steer be proud of the Flying Bar brand tattooed on its hind-end? Well, the brand serves a good purpose especially if the steer gets lost. I don't know if you understand what I'm trying to say but certain brands in life can affect you. Even something like your own name.

Maybe if my mother had survived my birth she would have told my dad she didn't want her son named after his grandfather. But it wasn't meant to be. I was branded with a name that only reminded people of someone else. Maybe that's why rebuilding cars was so much fun. I had evidence of something real. Something I could feel with my hands and piece together like a puzzle. I could make the car start—make it move like something alive. I guess I wasn't like some other guys. I never thought of a car in the feminine form. Nope—in a sense my car was almost mystical. How it would sit there waiting for me outside the high school and never once fail to start. At times when this beast was cruising through the night it seemed like it drove itself. I did a lot of cruising with rock music cranked on the radio. I often thought Steppenwolf was talking about cruising in the song about the magic carpet ride. But the cruising didn't last long.

I managed to hit the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, California about the time The Doors hit the radio airwaves lighting the night on fire. And long before Jim Morrison found eternity from an overdose so potent it could have killed three people. Later, I heard jeers and sneers about how there was no need to take Morrison to a mortuary for embalming. Surely there were enough drugs in his body to preserve him for a thousand years. Just put Mr. Mojo in the ground. I took it personal. My

connection with him seemed forever broken. Jim Morrison was elevated to martyrdom while I just shared his name. His death left me feeling ordinary. Just Jim Morrison, not *the* Jim Morrison. When I would make a collect call home to dad the operator no longer fantasized she had talked to *the* Jim Morrison. She just helped some guy with the same name. The drill instructors meeting us at the bus late that night didn't give a crap about my name. Maybe I was disappointed a little.

"Hey! I'm Jim Morrison—you know—like in The Doors!"

Somehow I didn't think that would impress these guys while standing on well-worn yellow foot-prints painted on black-top. Big, burly men dressed in uniforms and smoky-the-bear hats were cursing and screaming at us.

Most of the time I was just called Private Morrison. That's what my name patch said: MORRISON. Nobody special—just a guy who was following in his best friend's footsteps. Just someone who was thinking he really didn't belong here. Nobody seemed to care I had the same name as *the* Jim Morrison. I couldn't very well tell the drill instructor it was time for me to leave in order to make it to some concert in L.A. He would probably lean back on his heels and say:

"Oh? the private doesn't like our lovely accommodations? Well, fuck the private."

Then he would probably start screaming at me.

"Fuck you, private! *Fuck youuuuu!*"

I guess that wouldn't have been such a good idea even if my name was Jim Morrison. You had to be careful what you said or else you would find your mouth stuffed full of M-14 rifle barrel with your sweaty finger grasping the trigger while a screaming voice begged you to pull the trigger.

There were only three ways a person could get out of this place. The choices were actually quite simple. Your choices were to:

1) commit suicide, 2) freak out, or 3) endure to the end.

One thing became very clear though, if you wanted to commit suicide you better make sure you got it right the first time.

Our platoon had three drill instructors and you didn't dare call them DI. They would think the private was calling them a *Damned Idiot*. Then they would beat the crap out of the lowly private. The private learned very quickly he didn't use the word *you* in the presence of the Damn Idiots: They would say:

"Oh, the private is calling the drill instructor a ewe? Is the private calling the drill instructor a female sheep?"

Then they would beat the crap out of *you* (ewe).

And, of course, we all played the *queer* game. If a private didn't look straight ahead—if he flinched—the drill instructor would want to know if the private didn't like him. If the private said he liked the drill instructor, then the private was accused of being queer. If the private denied being queer then the drill instructor assumed the private didn't like him. And you guessed it—the private would get the crap beat out of *you* (ewe). Games—just silly, silly games. Drill instructors are sadistic. Two of our three

Damned Idiots were blatant sadists. They probably wouldn't have thought twice about killing us when they got bored of giving us hell.

The third drill instructor was different. He was a Latino named LeRoux who recently returned from duty in Vietnam. He was tough. Well, he made a lot of noise to that effect. However, his eyes never could lock very long when he was screaming at us. He would break the connection and look somewhere in the distance. Almost as if he were remembering something else. As if he were preoccupied. As if he was afraid of training us to be men. As if he was frightened to turn us into Marines. I understood later what he was feeling. He was suffering emotionally. Suffering from what he had seen and done when he was across the pond. Across the large pond in jungle paradise. Later I recalled his look—a stare like a VACANCY sign. Nobody home. Just lost in thought and no way of getting out.

Some of us eventually unloaded our gear in South Vietnam. I often wished the Damned Idiots were with us so we could have had a first-class royal butt-kicking time. So we could see how they liked having the barrel of an M-16 stuck in their mouth. I realized those men were doing a hard, dirty job and never got appreciated for their efforts at trying to turn us into gung-ho Marines. I also decided they failed at their job. They tried to prepare us for what was going to happen. They tried to tell us what it was going to be like. But there was no way of really preparing us. No way at all.

I managed to keep my interest in auto mechanics to myself. There was a real possibility that I would have ended up at some motor pool tuning up jeeps. So I kept mum while taking all the crap they could dish out and finally was issued a brand new M-16. Actually, I enjoyed the M-14 a lot more during training. The rifle felt sure in my hands. Felt like it could cruise. Doesn't make sense—I know. The M-16 was another story. I was able to take that thing apart blind-folded, yet, it felt alien, like a serpent waiting to bite. Again—doesn't make sense. The rifle jammed sometimes when it was fired. Alive one minute and dead the next. I was mystified and scared good because using that rifle was like playing russian roulette. I feared that I was going to be the one who lost the game. I can't begin to tell you how frightening it is to walk along knowing the rifle in your hand may not fire when you need it. Or, if you are able to fire it might just stop—dead and silent in your hands. I couldn't seem to get a replacement no matter how I tried.

"This is the most modern weapon in the world corporal and it better be taken care of. Keep it fucking clean, corporal. No dirt—no shit."

I could make auto engines come to life but when that rifle quit there were just thoughts of an impromptu judgment day. I cleaned it until my fingers hurt.

Some of the others in Echo company finally picked up on my name.

"Well, well! If it isn't Jim Morrison in person! Light my fire baby!"

There was one PFC who didn't particularly like me. His name was Patterson but everyone called him 'Crazy-dog.' He was the one who pegged me with the nick-name.

"Here comes Jim Morrison. Here comes the fucking Rock Star. Hey—Rock Star—we understand you're a back-door man!"

Others would laugh. I instantly became known as Rock Star. Somehow I didn't feel like a rock star. I didn't have long hair—didn't sing worth a damn—and I certainly didn't know any L.A. women. The name stuck like glue. Marines knew about Jim Morrison and The Doors but most remembered me only as the Rock Star. Sometimes a guy would want to look at my dog-tags just to make sure I was really Jim Morrison. They always seemed disappointed I wasn't *the* Jim Morrison. I should also tell you something else. The M-16 has a pretty good kick and most of the time you held it with both hands. During the constant firing at suspected enemy it would get blazing hot. Your hands and fingers would develop a good case of blisters and as soon as Charlie disappeared it wasn't unusual to see M-16's being dropped like the proverbial hot-potato. Our constant firing was known as 'rock n' roll.' Yes—we were going to rock and roll Charlie with our mock-rock guitar. I had the name of Rock Star with a different kind of guitar. However, there were times when I would have put 'Slow Hand' Clapton to shame with the rock n' roll I played with the M-16. And, I must admit, I played some pretty hard rock. I can only say this kind of rock n' roll was played mostly out of desperation rather than talent.

You can call me Rock Star if you like and it won't bother me and you can make all the comments you like about Jim Morrison. I suppose that's human nature but I find no-one wants to remember me for the kind of rock and roll I played in the jungle. Guess I can't blame them—if I had been killed no groupies or teen magazines would have mourned my passing. I wasn't the kind of rock star many people would have liked. No—I wasn't the kind of rock star most rock enthusiasts imagined.

Oh, I have all The Doors' albums and it seems only right. When I've got the stereo cranked up listening to The Doors I often remember the time I was the Rock Star.

I have to admit though, it's not much of a claim to fame.

VIETNAM NIRVANA: THE NINE STEPS

A story by Sean Connolly, XYZ Productions, 2727 Saint Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21218, (410) 889-5852.

1st

PC in the army—now who would've imagined that? Take another toke on the hash pipe and PC can imagine almost anything, but not me, myself, not good ole PC in the army, no sir! Ask any woman who knows PC and she'll say, PC's a lover boy, not a fighting man. Go ahead and ask; ask and you shall receive. They're out there, the women are, waiting to be asked, pining and full of juices and desire and thinking their insideout thoughts full of such cute onesuch no man can say or do anything about except to make them happy. And I've made them happy, thanked them, yes sir, thanked three of them in just one afternoon: two at once in absolute heaven and then one on one going on through the night long, thank you, Sweet Jesus! The tender tasty darlings need to be thanked, told that what they possess is the well of all happiness and beauty, yes sir, thank you ma'am, got your picture, too! Of course, the only problem gets to be that pretty soon they'll be thanking you by asking, pleading, demanding that you thank them more often, as if thanking them in the first place weren't enough.

Now it's all right to be polite, but like my mama said, a man *has to* find his happiness in ways only a woman can contribute to, not push and demand. A woman, like my mama said, will do something, give something to her man so he can thank her. And a man blind to the contribution of a woman is a fool. A man can't be worrying about what she thinks of him, he *has to* be telling her what she thinks about him by accepting her contribution without any questions asked. Now, say this woman makes more money and knows all there is to know about a splendid European city, he doesn't go around like Wesley McManus does moaning about love sickness or doting on whatever bookwormish ideas pop into his head, no sir, he thanks her and accepts her contribution without doubts, takes the joy into his heart, and thanks her again.

That's right, I'm sorry, but I *have to* criticize Wesley McManus on this one. Here he is a DJ on the army radio network living in Munich, the beer capital of the world, with a woman in hand, even if she is a little on the rotund side, Fräulein Frieda, who just happens to be the concierge at a small, very elegant hotel, and who has opened his eyes to all kinds of things, from the opera to the sniffy little restaurants tucked away in the back streets where the aristocrats dine. He could be on top of things and having the happiest time of his life, but instead, he's missing out on the opportunities she's offering him by contemplating the ifs, ands, buts, and ors of yesteryears. I'll tell you, he's the goofiest Yankee in the United States Army that I've ever met. He wants to give all this up to come fifty miles south to the Special Forces in Bad Tölz (where I *have to* be) and jump out of airplanes. What I wouldn't give to be in his shoes. Not that I'd be chasing Fräulein Frieda, no sir; but I would let her know that I'd surely thank her for her contribution, yes sir!

2nd

"Let me be the first to welcome you to Bad Tölz, my friend," I say strutting into Wesley McManus' office full of army forms, shaking his hand as warmly, as gladly, as gracefully as any Kentucky Colonel. "Yes sir, it's just about the stupidest, the most absurd thing you could have done," and he laughs at himself and blushes. I make a paper airplane from one of the forms and sail it through the small open window out into the Bavarian Alps. "Just so you can be an airborne trooper and wear the green beret, now isn't that just about the silliest... Now listen to me, my friend, you don't really want to be here, you want to go back to Munich where PC can make you into a very rich man. Yes sir, allow me to tell you exactly how—right after I take the morning dump. Now you wait..."

"But I'm not interested in becoming a very rich man, PC."

"You're too smart not to be rich," and I leave him sitting there behind his desk wearing one of his wiseguy smiles. Too smart and no worldly smarts turns a fine fellow into a smart ass. With nothing to do but carp at other people's lives. The man has got to get out and do things. Just think, with Frieda and him in Munich, PC could stash the hash at her little hotel and McManus could announce a code word over the army radio network and every GI in Germany would come to PC to get high. Not every GI! No Afros with their knives; no rednecks smashing down the doors at four in the morning, must be discreet. Only civilized people who enjoy life, who love life. Who love what a little bit of money can do for you! Get out and see the world! See Australia. China. Thailand. Europe. O Sweet Jesus, here I am in the middle of Europe and I'm imprisoned in a goddamned army uniform: Specialist Fourth Class PC at your service, sir. Damn, I smash my fist against the metal stalls in the latrine. Look at yourself in the mirror, boy! Your youth is slipping away. Twenty-five and what have you seen of Europe but the graffiti scratched across the inside of this door to a shitter in Flint Kaserne. Some huge poker spurting into a furry vagina; yeah, hate to admit it, but PC's *had to* pull the old poker a couple of times in the army. But not this weekend, no sir, the American College Girl is on her way. The European summer tours are just beginning. Girls from Iowa and Michigan and Georgia and Connecticut, I love Connecticut women. Love them, love them, love them all. Take Heather: used to sneak her into my private room at the Kappa Alpha house at the University of Georgia, my very own privacy, thanked her every other day, have a picture of her contribution right here in my little black book. Who could've been happier? Now, who would know if PC added some shavings of hashish to his morning cigarette, just a pinch as PC settles down on the throne. Wait, who's that? One, then another coming into the latrine.

"Hello, Troy, how have you been?" That's Bobby T's voice. Troy, who's Troy? Must be some sergeant.

"I wouldn't be looking like you're looking, Tumulty."

"I was concerned about you, that's all."

"The only concern you're going to get, faggot, is a fist in your mouth." That's Sergeant West, that sadistic

bastard back from Vietnam. Said his calling card was to cut off the penises of the dead Viet Cong and stuff them into their mouths.

"I didn't think you'd react this way, Troy. I'm no more a faggot than you are."

"Yeah, just forget what you think."

"I know that loneliness can be a terrible thing. I thought it was a humane gesture, that's all. You can feel awfully alienated in a place away from home..."

"Look, Tumulty, don't tell me about my life."

"I'm sorry. It's just that you don't have to feel ashamed about one night out of our lives. It's important to understand..." Some scuffling around! Something banging against the stalls!

"I'll rip your face off, Tumulty."

"Please," a muffled cry. Then a smack: a wet, dull slap!

"Son of a bitch. Keep it shut." Then some boots scraping across the floor, the door opening, water running in the sink. And look at this: there's no toilet paper in the dispenser. Now what am I going to do? I can't ask Bobby T for some toilet paper. He'd know I had heard it all. Damn! The army's got you screwed even when you're taking a dump!

3rd

"PC's not going to Vietnam, no way. No way! Let all the sadistic bastards go to Vietnam. Let them kill and maim! Put them on the levy to the 101st Airborne Division and let them all fly over to Vietnam by Christmas. Have a Happy New Year in Saigon, hot damn, think of all those Eurasian and Oriental women: feline beauties, petit little sphinxes, Sweet Jesus, you could probably carry them around impaled on the old poker, wear them tucked into your fatigues while you type up your forms, shoot your guns, talk on the phone, 'Excuse me, sir, excuse me, sergeant, I'm just thanking this Oriental beauty here, be with you in just a minute, hot damn,' damnation, what am I doing talking to this tree? Too stoned to see straight, too stoned to remember what I'm supposed to be doing, wait, that's right, got this bottle of bourbon in my hand to take over to Sergeant Major Jenkins' bungalow, make friends with the man. Got to test out what I'm going to say first, practice makes perfect. "Now look here, Mister Tree, you be Sergeant Major Jenkins and I'll be PC the lover boy, never a fighting man. I'm happy being a clerk with the Special Forces. Happy to learn how to jump out of perfectly good airplanes here in Bad Tölz, happiest man ever to sit behind a typewriter in the personnel office. Love to fill out forms, love to fill up all those little spaces with every letter in the alphabet. Why, I'm just a little tadpole wriggling around and zipping in and out and between all those tight spaces, yes sir, a tadpole is a frisky lad, happy as can be."

Damn, somebody might see me talking to this tree. Besides, it's getting dark. PC does not like the dark. Get going, boy. Over to those limestone bungalows where the army lifers live. Lifers in gray, squat limestone bungalows, what ugliness. Who would want to live in such ugliness but mean, sadistic, unhappy men who are in the army for

life, who hate life. Not PC, PC loves life. PC has always been a happy man. Why, some of my happiest days were at the University of Georgia. Not an unhappy moment, not even when Professor Dickinson tried to keep me from graduating by giving me a D. Now imagine that: what nerve! He actually tried to keep PC from graduating, from going on with life. The old booze did the trick, though. Made friends with the man. *Had to*. Not a close friend, but a friend nevertheless. We sat down and I said, Now, what is the difference between a C and a D? Let me ask you? Is there anything? Is there a C-and-a-half? Is there a C-and-three-quarters? A C-and-seven-eighths? No sir, there's no difference between a C and a D? Yes sir, even wrote him a thank you note.

Whoa, boy! Here I am in front of Sergeant Major Jenkins' bungalow, number seventeen. What did I *have* to do at seventeen? At seventeen I was nothing but a god in my mama's eye, the most handsome boy in all of Atlanta, Georgia, yes sir. Well, ring the bell, boy, what are you doing standing here holding a bottle of bourbon in your hand, wait, here he comes.

"Good evening, Sergeant Major. It's a fine, fine evening here in Bavaria, reminded me of some of the colder nights in Atlanta, and I got to thinking, yes, Sergeant Major, I got to thinking that you might like to share some of this good sipping bourbon from back home."

"Well, well, if it isn't the ghost from the personnel section."

"Now you see him, now you don't," I say hiding behind the bottle of bourbon, "har, har, you got me on that one, sergeant major."

"Well, come on in, I think you showed up at just the right time, for once."

"I did?"

"We were talking about needing someone like you," and he wraps his arm around my shoulder and shows me into the living room. "You've met Sergeant West. And this is Sergeant First Class Curry from Munich Finance. He'll be joining you in airborne training tomorrow. He's the man who'll be administering the levy to the 101st, and, we were just wondering who would be the best specialist to assist him when you rang the bell."

"You don't say. Now, if I'm the one who's helping to administer the levy, then I can actually make sure I'm not one of the ones who's going to be on it," and I slap my thigh and give it a laugh and shake their hands all around. *Had to*, the sadistic West, the sly sergeant major, and the slimeball Curry. Never saw such a slimeball. Like Dennis Massey was always shouting in his long drunken nights, The slime, the slime, the incredible slime. One hundred percent incredible slime, this Curry, his handshake made of glue.

"That sounds logical to me," says the sergeant major.

"Sounds like I'll be as happy as a tadpole in a summer pond," and they're sure happy to hear that.

4th

Mama, O Mama, why you? Why so early in your beautiful life? A life! A precious life, a life blessed by the Lord! So beautiful, so full of life! Life! You were life itself, Mama. The very breath, the joy, the happiness of a full life...

Damn him. Damn his simpering salesman's life. Damn his suitcase of toiletries and thick clammy handshake, his smothering plodding life. You were a rose, Mama. A rose smothered by his dotting shadow. Damn him. Damn stupid George and the cursed name he inflicted upon me, this lisping prissy pissy name, Perth.

Damn!

Slipping, stumbling down the cushy leaves on the bank of the ravine and skidding into a fallen tree. Damn, spilling the bourbon all over myself. Get up, the bottle's in the creek. Slobbering and crying all over myself, can barely see. But I remember you, Mama. O Mama, remember PC sobbing, running up the hill into your arms when the tramps chased me? The filthy bums weren't going to suck PC's penis for two quarters, no sir, they had to pay PC three quarters. Remember the train, Mama, remember me lying in the tracks as it roared over me? I didn't mean to scare you, Mama. Yes, you did weep for me, Mama.

Damn him, not even his, Mama. But another's who was slain in Berlin *after* the war by some drunken idiot soldier who had forgotten the password. Slain by a word, Mama! O Mama, slain father, both mocked by a tourist in your bed, a seedless tourist who took you and me away from a great and happy life. I was never unhappy with you, Mama. Never! We led a happy life. I've never been unhappy, Mama, never!

O Mama, didn't you think of me? Did you only think of him leaving me nothing, not even a parting prayer? Shit, now it's back to the damn army. If only it had of been him, Mama. I would have received a hardship discharge and I could have taken care of you, Mama. Now I have to go to the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, Mama. They won't fly me back, Mama, they won't fly me back. Forgive me, Mama, it's not because of you, they shipped us all out, every sadistic slimeball drunken bastard smart ass and me.

O Mama, I kiss this earth that harbors... this earth where you... I can't say it, Mama. I can't say it. I pray for your beautiful soul, Mama. I have a cloth of your dress, Mama. I will cherish it, Mama. O Mama...

I see your face rising in the early fog across the pond, Mama. A face as pure as the face of a god, Mama. That's where I'll be, Mama. A tadpole darting about in the pond, happy and frisky as can be. A tadpole for life, Mama. I promise, I promise, I'll always be happy. Always!

5th

"Damn! You mean you actually chose to come and live in Clarksville, Tennessee?"

"It's disgusting, I know," she sighs. She speaks a million miles a minute and fidgets like a little girl. "But it was the only place Alan could find a teaching job. Otherwise he might be in the army, too, PC."

"Alex," whines Alan in a baby's voice, "you know we tried everywhere."

"His brother, Marty, works here in the Forestry Service in Hopkinsville, Kentucky," she snickers. "The main street has a public outhouse."

"Come on, dear," talking his baby talk. "It wasn't an outhouse. You know you like living in the country, too. Kiss, kiss."

"I guess so," but she pouts. Maybe they're married, maybe not, but married men are exempt from the draft. It'll be our little secret. Just the three of us on a Sunday afternoon cuddled up in a cab we decided to share at the Clarksville bus station where we introduced ourselves; now it's Fort Campbell first, then on to Hopkinsville for this happy couple, frisky as a couple of tadpoles. "But, listen, PC, I just loved Marty's old wrecks. They're all around the farm house, old rusty cars and tractors, big hulks of gnarled steel, black pipes as long as cannons—I'll bet they were abandoned rocket ships from an earlier civilization," and she grabs my thigh. Not for the first time, either! Then she pouts again. "But all Alan wanted to do was look at the stars through his telescope. He didn't want to reassemble the rocket ships and fly away to the battle stations behind the black holes," and her eyes light up. She makes believe her hands are the sites on a gun and she maneuvers them around aiming, firing.

"You don't say. Tell me, though, what are these black holes?"

"Oh, don't you know about black holes?" asks Alan. He's all excited. "Sheckley and other writers contend they're remnants from highly advanced civilizations that once ruled the stars. Unfortunately, the only astronomic evidence we have..." and his hands are talking, his legs are talking, his whole body squirming and shaking out every little word. I just *have to* laugh.

"Excuse me, Alan," I say, "are you a science teacher?"

"Oh, no, English and the classics."

"The classics, now that's something, isn't it? Back then they were highly advanced, maybe not technologically, but they knew their stars, the constellations, why, it's fantastic. It's absolutely fantastic. There were no ifs, ands, or buts, they had their people, their gods, everything drawn out on the map of the stars. They actually saw their gods in the heavens. Now imagine that! I was reading this magazine back in Atlanta, I was in the attorney's office for the reading of my mama's will, and I saw how they had the gods in the stars, just..."

"Ahh, I'm sorry to hear about your mother," says Alex.

"Thank you."

"I really mean it," and she takes my hand and squeezes it and I squeeze back and she gives my thigh a warm pat, yes sir, we definitely have something going here.

"A little toke?" I whisper in her ear. She whispers to Alan.

"Not in the cab," he whispers.

"Please, please. We can sneak it. Shshshs," and she gives him wet loud smooches.

"All right, but we better be careful." We open the windows a crack and light up one of the filter cigarettes

I stuffed with a mix of tobacco and some of the finest marijuana grown in the rich, red soil of south Georgia, couldn't pass it up. Their lungs are heaving ho.

"Now, I just *have to* ask you this. Don't get offended. It's nothing personal, but I just *have to* ask because you two would be absolutely perfect Tadpoles. There I've said it without even asking. Have you ever heard of The Tadpoles?"

"The Tadpoles?" he asks.

"O, I want to be one. I want to be one. They sound so cute. I'll bet you're a Tadpole, aren't you, PC?"

"One of the first, the very first. A charter member," and we're laughing and giggling and tickling each other like three tots in a tub. Damn, before you know it the cab pulls up in front of a concrete billet in Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

"O, I know you'll come visit us, won't you, PC? You're so sweet. He can come visit us can't he, Alan?"

"Sure, sure, anytime. And bring some more of those tadpoles along when you do come by, PC."

6th

"This way, my friend," and we step out into the cold night for a little booster, Wes and PC, the two of us leaving the warm and dreary bar and its weeping and wailing juke box behind, "and you are my friend." I sling my arm around his shoulder and we shamble down the dingy little alley into my secret hideaway: a deserted tractor shack behind a redneck farm equipment store. "This should put us in orbit," and presto, I pluck a paper string bean out of the air and touch it to a dancing flame on the end of a wooden match. His eyes light up with a dreary hunger following the bright orange ember as it consumes about a third of the joint. Sergeant Wesley McManus, now imagine that, how did he talk the United States Army into promoting him? I hand the sarge the joint, three deep tokes, back and forth, who knew how many tokes Alex took into her healthy lungs the other night, always moaning, crying, Ayee, ayee, eye, eeeee, all night slathering around in our juices, a sticky tart glaze all over my face in the morning, yes sir, lathering it right up again until our wells ran dry, "Hot damn!" I *have to* laugh, "I'm so happy, my friend. Are you happy? Have you been happy all your life?" and he scowls at my happiness.

"You're being ridiculous. You can't be happy all your life, PC," and he's jealous of my happiness.

"But when PC lends you his little palace above the bar, the little love palace for Sergeant Wesley McManus and his Fräulein Frieda coming here to Clarksville, Tennessee, to offer her contribution, well, you'll be a happy man then, won't you, won't you?" and he blushes and laughs.

"Can we go see it?"

"Right this way, my friend," and we step out of the tin shack and head for the bare light bulb hanging from a rusty bent pipe above the door behind the bar. "This is the key," and I show him how to use it and we go up the stairs and into the love palace, a bedroom and makeshift bath as cozy and old as the floral wallpaper peeling off the walls.

"It's like a set to a Tennessee Williams play."

"Now don't you be shouting and stabbing each other and wrecking up the place."

"Yeah, desire gone sour. I don't know, PC. It's been so long. I wonder if our lives haven't..." and, sure enough, he's finding a way to be as unhappy as he can be. I'll just *have to* show him, *have to* point it out in the stars.

"Come here, my friend, I want to show you something. Turn off the light, that's right, now come and look at the stars. What do you see out there, my friend? Do you see any unhappiness? No sir, you can see these great constellations. You see the faces of the gods. You can even see the Tadpoles if you look a little hard," and he's grinning now.

"The Tadpoles?" and he's chuckling, laughing.

"That's right, my friend, The Tadpoles. They're an organization of people, a confederation, a charity, that's right, they're everybody's favorite charity. And do you know why? Because The Tadpoles are always singing and dancing in the streets. They are people like you and me who love life. Who do whatever we feel like doing every minute of our lives with nobody ever to bother us because we will bring joy and happiness into everybody's life. That's right, my friend. Don't laugh. Do you know why The Tadpoles will bring joy and happiness into people's lives? Because people are afraid to be happy. They are afraid to put their trust in their own lives. Can you imagine that! People actually get up in the morning and they don't even trust their own lives. Sure, they trust their clocks. They trust their radios. They trust their automobiles. They trust their schedules. They trust their jobs. They trust their cocktail hours. They trust their banks and their television sets and trust they can get a piece of ass every now and then. They even trust their pastor won't come preaching and moaning about giving up their creature comforts. The coach they trust will come through but that's it, my friend, they don't trust that their lives will give them any happiness. But The Tadpoles will. Yes sir, The Tadpoles will bring happiness into the lives..."

"The Tadpoles to the rescue," and he falls down in laughter across the bed.

"That's right, my friend, The Tadpoles will be a nonprofit charitable institution devoted to bringing happiness into everyone's lives. The Tadpoles are dancing in the streets, leaving flowers on people's doorstep, singing songs in the alleyways, leaving little poems in the mail boxes, thanking each other... Look at that! Someone's out there in the dark!"

"It's a Tadpole fallen from the stars," and he rolls off the bed onto the floor laughing so hard he's holding his sides.

"You crazy bastard, there's someone out there. If they catch us off base, sergeant or no sergeant, they'll put us into a rifle company and we'll be dead the moment we step into Vietnam."

"There's nobody out there, PC, nobody but good ole PC with an unhappy moment from his past."

"Damn you, Wesley McManus, all you do is mock, mock, mock," and I throw up the windows so hard the sash weights rattle like ghosts in an empty house. "Go look and listen for yourself," but all he does is sit there

with his wiseguy grin on his face. He starts laughing and I start laughing and we're listening to the wind picking up and blowing in the window until a hush settles, then a snow starting to fall like a prayer in the darkness. "My friend, it's time for another booster."

7th

"My friend," whispers Doctor Chen, nudging the pack of filter cigarettes across the marble top of the white wicker table, "these, of course, are the very best." What exquisite and delicate hands this man, this papasan, this worldly gentleman has! He pats the money I've set on the table and shuffles it up into his right hand and rubs his thumb across the top bill spreading all the money into a fan. "Eight hundred and seventy," he sighs and dismisses it in mid air. The bills flutter back to the tabletop and he sits back and shakes his head in mock despair. What flair he has! What cool arrogance! What a passionate love of gesture: the man is as elegant as the French who built this splendid Continental Hotel in downtown Saigon, yes, Doctor Chen, PC will soon learn what it takes. "Let's not waste Doctor Chen's valuable time, nor yours, PC. The international money exchange does not trifle with commodities in amounts less than one thousand. Have I made myself clear?"

"Very clear," and I give the sharp bastard a little bow, yes, very sharp. But your time will come, PC—soon, very soon. "I just want to make it perfectly clear that none of this American currency is buying bullets for the North Vietnamese."

"Money is not poetry, PC." I open the pack of cigarettes. Clever little devils, the Vietnamese: they steam open a pack of filter cigarettes, empty out the tobacco, load the paper tubes with the finest opiated buds in all of Indochina, and reseal it like it's never been opened. Yes sir, time to light one up. Poetry or not, this elegant little verse loses all rhyme and reason whenever PC fires up one of these Buddha Sticks; that's right, these are what the holy papasans smoke, the pure stuff, the vision of the all, the one, *the Buddha*, the very face of God! Now, what's this? The Buddha Stick is laced with a fine white powder and our sharp Oriental poet here notices my qualms. "A mere sedative, PC, a derivative of morphine. It quiets the nerves; takes the edge off, as you American GIs are so fond of saying."

"But isn't it addictive?"

"Yes, if you were to smoke a pack a day. But moderation in all things, PC," and he gives PC one of his French frowns, a little bit of contempt mixed with a little bit of envy. Very tasty these Buddha Sticks, very sweet, very smooth, turns the stomach like a piece of rhubarb pie: heaven never knew such a sour bliss. He nods and rises, slipping an envelope from underneath his jacket, exchanging it for the greenbacks. From greenbacks into the Vietnamese Piaster into Hong Kong into traveler's checks into Military Payment Certificates into PC's Pentagon Savings Account and wired to PC's checking account at the Bank of America on the Bien Hoa Airbase and back into greenbacks with a little bit of profit for all, yes sir, never greedy.

"Begging your pardon, sir, would you please," and the warm river of ease is now flowing through every vein, every vein, a river of hot oily stones, swimming through of river of hot oily stones with Kai Tai and every woman in PC's life, every..."

"Yes, yes?" the face of Doctor Chen, the face of Buddha, the all, the... "Please—please what? But, of course, Kai Tai is here to please you."

"A mere slip of the memory, my friend, a mere slip of the memory. Please explain what you mean about money and poetry?"

"Please correct me if I am wrong, my friend, but does not Western poetry sing the glories of the warrior and the passion of the lover? Money, I am most sorry to say, sings of neither. As you are so fond of saying in your wealthy country, money talks," and he smiles, "as it does in every country."

"Sings the glories of the warrior!"

"Yes, war is not for the prosaic," and he bows and evaporates into the light.

"Sings the passion of the lover!"

Now it is now as it is seconds, minutes, hours before or after Kai Tai opens the shutters to the tall windows and fills the rooms with light. She heats up thousands upon thousands of smooth black and white little stones in sandalwood oil and they cascade into the round brass tub to touch every memory of every woman in PC's life, every touch, every ache and loss drawn through every pore of every touch of every moment thanking every contribution, swimming in the rhythm of every touch of every contribution, of every..."

"PC take picture now?"

"Take picture now," of every woman and Kai Tai in PC's life swimming in a pond of stones, everyone a tadpole slipping and sliding in a pond of hot little stones, black and white, tadpoles wriggling out of every pore everywhere, out of Kai Tai's face, black stones in her eyes, white stones in her mouth, black stones in her vagina, white stones between her toes, black stones on her cheeks, black and white stones all over her face making a death mask, a death mask glistening in the afternoon light, the light of now and forever and yesterday and tomorrow bound up in the stones glistening all over us in the round brass tub, stones...

"PC take picture of Kai Tai in love stones?"

"PC take picture!"

"PC buy stereo for Kai Tai?"

"PC buy stereo for Kai Tai!"

"PC buy apartment and refrigerator for Kai Tai?"

"PC buy apartment and refrigerator for Kai Tai!"

"PC buy best everything?"

"PC buy best everything!"

"PC take picture dead VC?"

"PC take picture dead VC!"

"PC watch GI die?" and Kai Tai sinks beneath the stones and splays apart her knees, her thighs trembling under the stones as she raises up her contribution and opens wide for the camera.

"PC watch GI die and see the face of God!"

8th

Dogdamn!

Dogdamn, what was her name? Say dogdamn, forget goddamn. no more blasphemy! Dogdamn. screamed Bobby T the day he ran naked into the noonday sun in search of God to forgive him for supplying the wrong firing coordinates to the 101st artillery batteries, yes sir, slaughtered our own troops for five straight days, the pictures prove it. Dogdamn, I'm looking right at her contribution from three years ago and I can't remember her name. What's that? Flash and gone, another brain cell imploding in a black hole. PC does not like black holes, too many leeches, need a booster. Better not light up here in McManus' bar, Wesley's Bar and No Grill, Bobby T calls it. Who is this? I stand up and set my little picture book on the bar and look at it from a different angle. Dogdamn, looks like Bobby T screaming through his new beard. Got him locked up back there in the storeroom growing his beard, stark naked half the time, no use to PC, though, boasts he's a lover of the boys these days. Sure likes PC's picture show, can't get enough. Down in Bien Hoa City in Maya's Mansion he screams and sobs to see all the blow ups of all the dead blown to smithereens.

"What's this?" The greedy drunken face of Dennis Massey never asks, sees and takes he does, sees and takes my little name and picture book.

"Look here, my friend, let's not play with PC's..."

"I'm not your friend, you scumbag, you slimeball. Look at these pictures! Jesus Christ you're sick, they're fucking bloody gashes," and he can't see enough of them, the greedy blasphemous bastard. His eyes are on fire.

"Proof, my friend, proof that I thanked every woman in PC's life for her contribution," and he guffaws and falls back against the bar. I grab my black book and walk right out of the bar and into a black hole, can't see a dogdamned thing in the dark and I fall into a ditch. Dogdamn, I can't even see my hands in front of me. Where are my hands? There's something itching in them. They're coming out of my hands, they're itching me everywhere, they're not The Tadpoles, they're the leeches! They're leeches! Get away from me you filthy slimy leeches! You living scabs! You filthy slimy scabs all over me! Little filthy slimy hot tiny scabs all over me! "Help me, someone help me! I can't see! I can't find my hands! Can't..."

"Come on, PC. Over here. Reach up. Grab my hand."

"McManus! McManus, my friend, thank you. I fell in that dogdamned ditch. I couldn't find my hands. Can you..."

"PC, you better give up those heroin joints," and he wraps his slimy arm around my shoulder, the leeches jumping off into my face!

"Get off of me! Get off of me!"

"PC, you've got to pull yourself together."

"Together. Got to get there. Get the ropes," and I dive into the dirt and dust and wash my face in the dust, no more leeches, crawling through the dust, crawling to my hut, to PC's privacy palace, got to find the ropes, the little ropes, the little threads PC fanned out from the privacy palace like spider webs to find his way home in the pitch dark, can't see them, the threads hidden in the dust, little

tan threads, little guides back to PC's hut, there's one, homeward bound! Bound for PC's memories, PC's privacy palace covered with memories, with the proof of every woman's contribution to PC's life, dogdamn! What's this? The door, open the door, open the door and go in and sit down, fire up one of the Buddha Sticks, thank you, Doctor Chen. A year's supply right there on PC's field table next to PC's canvas director chair. Lights! Action! Now, up there on the wall on the right is Susan Malinda's contribution. Right next to Alex's. Almost the same, but, you see, Susan Malinda's bush has more fur, like the fur of a ferret, while Alex, she has... Dogdamn, there's someone sitting off to my left. And someone to his left cutting and clipping and taping something.

"Some gallery you've got here, PC." It's Sergeant West. Dogdamn, just when the big ease is about to settle in he's got to be barging in and ruining my privacy.

"Well, well, if it isn't Sergeant West, and Sergeant Curry back there, can't fool PC. I'd offer you some of this Buddha Stick but I know it's not your style, unbelievable stuff, though: dogdamn, you can see the face of God," and he laughs back there in his dark corner like a hyena feeding on a fresh death. "Yes sir, my contact, Doctor Chen, says the holy papasans smoke these Buddha Sticks, makes the doctor nervous when PC lights up. Loves the money, though, loves the money."

"That's why we've come, PC."

"You don't say. Have you got some American currency for PC to trade on the international money market?"

"Twenty thousand."

"Twenty thousand!"

"Twenty thousand in greenbacks. Twenty thousand every three weeks once we separate McManus from his bar over there."

"Unbelievable, you can actually see the face of God."

"We need a base of operations, PC. We'll turn McManus' little dive into the biggest nightclub in Vietnam. Shows every night, roulette and blackjack tables, the finest women, you'll be able to add a few to your gallery here, PC. All you..."

"Here's the face of God, PC," and Sergeant Curry's saliva is laughing in my face, his slimy hand locked around the back of my neck, the big ease settling in, the slime locked out, the word God spelled out in capital letters he's cut out from the photos of every woman's contribution in PC's entire life and taped onto a photo of a dead Viet Cong with his penis in his mouth. "Blow this one up and we'll put it in your picture show at Maya's mansion," and the man is petrified vomit in my face. He jacks my head down between my knees. He kneels down in front of me and wrenches back my neck. "Put these in next," photos of women and babies cut up into the disemboweled bodies of the dead Viet Cong, absolutely fantastic, the dead rearranged into death masks, the dark made into the light, the brilliance of the stars, a new race of gods shining on and on, and he shoves me back into the big ease and digs his teeth into my T shirt, tears at my nipples and says his prayer, "and there *will be* no more pain, PC, no more pain," and he melts back into a mirage, a liquid heat rising and rippling into an oily mirage in the dark.

"Listen up, PC," says Sergeant West, "you've got to help us take the bar from McManus."

"He's in his own world. He doesn't care."

"You put a pack of Buddha Sticks in his bunk and we'll see how much he doesn't care. We'll see to it he's busted down to private and the bar will be ours," and he pinches my cheeks, little nudges forcing me back into the big ease, the money and the photos there on my knees, now where did it all come from, what's been forgotten in the dark? What dark? There's no dark in PC's privacy palace, the oily light from PC's battery pack shining up the wooden slats of PC's little hut. Now, there's Alex and next to her glowing bush, flash and gone. What's that? Somebody singing outside, a little serenade. Wait, the oily light is eating through the walls, flash and gone, flash and gone, the place is on fire.

"The slime, the slime, the incredible slime," he's singing it, he's singing his firebug song, Dennis Massey, he's torching PC's privacy palace. Can't move, the nod coming on, the big ease falling into the nod, flames eating in at me, got to get beyond the nod, falling off the chair, rolling in the dust, the money a hive of fire, everything lost, rolling out through the embers, everything lost, Dennis Massey running back into McManus' bar, got to take it now, everything lost, *have to take the bar.*

9th

"And you say you witnessed this killing?"

"Yes sir, Major."

"You made no efforts to restrain this soldier?"

"There were others, yes sir, three others. Too much for one man like myself, three against one, they wanted him dead. You see, they found the Buddha Sticks, found them right in the bar," not now, dogdamn it, not the dogdamned leeches! "Sir, you have my word on it, a great evil, a..."

"Are you ill, specialist?"

"No sir. Just a rash, an itchy rash. You know what I mean, sir," giving the Judge Advocate a wink, "just something I picked up. Got a shot for it already."

"And the names the clerk is checking, this Sergeant First Class Curry and Sergeant McManus, these are the men who were the principals in last night's incident? Here on..."

"Yes sir, last night."

"Here, on the airbase, or off the airbase?"

"Here, sir."

"And did you pick up your rash here on the airbase?"

"Yes sir, dogdamn it, get off," the slimy filthy things swarming all over my arms. Must be the amphetamines.

"Soldier, restrain yourself or go on sick call."

"I'm sorry, sir. Do you mind if I smoke? All this has made me very nervous," and he waves his hand, sure. Just a toke, just a teensy toke of the pure dust to take the edge off, just a teensy-weensy toke, just a little bit of the dust in my filter cigarette. The clerk walks in and hands the major a manila folder. Just a toke, yes sir. "Yes sir, PC's not a fighting man, always a lover boy. Can't stand the sight of blood, not that there was any..."

"Trooper, you're wearing the uniform of the 101st Airborne Division and if you are not prepared to fight then you..."

"Yes sir, prepared to fight! You're absolutely right. I witnessed the fight, the killing," and the shaking's coming on, got to have more than a toke, just a couple tokes, waiting for the big ease to settle in...

"Soldier, if you witnessed this alleged homicide then you must have been aware that Sergeant First Class Curry had been court martialed for war crimes and reduced in rank to private."

"Yes sir, but he didn't eat any of those VC heads, no sir, he was just stirring them up in an old oil drum, their eyeballs staring off in a thousand different directions like the stars in the night sky, seen the picture, just stirring them up, no reason for McManus to strangle him dead in the bar, no sir, no sir," and the big ease is coming in like a summer day.

"Soldier, where were you last night: in an opium den?"

"No sir, The Tadpoles had gotten together before I went to the bar to exchange the novels of Henry Miller. Now, you take the *Tropic of Cancer*, every word is a celebration of life, the man loves life, not some sadistic bastard in the army, no sir, he..." and the Judge Advocate is looking at PC very strangely. He doesn't see what PC sees. He doesn't see the all in one and the one in all. He's excusing himself, going after the clerk to tell him to get the better of PC. But nobody gets the better of PC, no sir, got to leave this office, no other doors, just two windows in a dingy plywood office, air conditioners in both. No escape. Wait! What? Take out one of the air conditioners. That's it. They're just sitting there. Imagine that! Where's the plug? The plug, the plug, wait, leave the dogdamned plug alone. What's that? Dogdamn, the nod is coming on, the sit and nod—wait! Got to get past the nod. Past the nod and pull one of these bastards out of... Dogdamn, the air conditioner fell on the floor. Imagine that! It just fell on the floor. Wait, they're coming! Out the window. Out! Out! PC out the window and into the summer heat and light and running through the *Tropic of Cancer*. On to Australia! Wait! What is that? There in the dirt and dust, a shimmering glass. I walk over and fall to my knees and pick up the face of God in the dust. The absolute light surrounds me. The absolute all light in all light rises up beyond the livid dust. The absolute peace. The absolute peace and love, the absolute love of life in every life in every...

"Take this man to the hospital unit at Long Binh Jail."

"Yes sir."

POETRY by RENNY CHRISTOPHER**Passing Through the Tennis Courts on Campus**

I take a stutter-step,
half-halt.
A wire stretches across my path—
filament broken loose from a net.
I step carefully over
not disturbing it
keeping an eye out for more.

The tripwires
and boobytraps
in the stories of the men I've known
mark my landscape.
I have never walked point
on night patrol
never lain in ambush.
This is not a hostile country.

But their stories enfold me,
make my eyes and feet wary
of walking familiar ground.

My own wars have been different,
face to face.
The night the guy grabbed me,
started to pull me into the shadows,
the night the guy tried to get into
my car at a stoplight.
The morning my husband
shoved me into the wall.

It is easier to imagine innocent wires
to be booby traps
than to imagine men passing by
as the enemy.

This is not a hostile country.

Renny Christopher is a Contributing Editor to Viet Nam Generation.

POETRY by HORACE COLEMAN**In Ca Mau**

In Ca Mau the women
sweep the canal with their oars
on the way to the floating fruit market
bananas
pineapples
grapelets with husks stacked in slender sampans

The Americans in Ca Mau eat tin-skinned food
play prostitute roulette
clap
syph
rigid love with rifles under the bed

The people race bicycles on Sundays
children play soccer on the parade ground
pigs walk the streets alone but
GIs ride 6 to a fast jeep

In the forest of U Minh
500 pound bombs fall 5 miles
and shake the yellow palm-thatched huts
and the yellowed stucco houses
and the yellow tent O Club in Ca Mau

Soldiers hunt communist water buffalo
with quad .50s and infra-red
they scream howitzers at suspicious rice
but one bullet
makes a helicopter a shotgunned duck
one rocket trips the man-blind radar
off its legs and the Americans leave
and the women sweep after them

Notes for the Veteran's War Protest

Ralph: concerning plans for the local march,
the following:

1. Saw the weary demonstration in Washington,
the burning faces of our sad boy warriors
throwing their medals at the president.

2. Think we should emulate but not copy, so:
when the delegation arrives at the state capitol
first read the petition:

"We are not afraid to kill. We are sorry we murdered
our souls. We did as told but we learned how to say NO!
Stop it. Or we will stop you. Don't resist. You can't stop
the ghosts you made of us."

Next, have those who lost legs crawl forward and neatly
stack them. Then bowl the skull of your best killed buddy
down the aisle.

Finally, have the blind push the quadruplegics forward
(they will have knives in their teeth to give to the legislators
to use on themselves). We leave. If they don't use them we
come back.

Horace

PS. Save the instructions for your grandkids. They'll
come in handy.

Still Life with Dead Hippie
Kent State, May 4, 1970

It's all in the point of view.

Suppose you got your
 sophored out sophomore
 slumped on the sidewalk
 in the foreground.
 Never made it to the bar.
 His buddy's embarrassed
 & his girl's outraged.
 No fun tonight, Hon!

Or, maybe there's this feminist witch
 exercising her anger on
 this newly stricken MCP
 while the stunned bastard
 in bell bottoms looks for reasons.

It could be a pink-faced VC broad
 trying to grasp the life
 that's just flown from
 your unfavorable dumb son.
 And she has no right
 to cry out in plain sight,
 to be so full of pain.
 You have to blame her
 for the cluck's bad luck.

Of course what it was, was these
 dirty, rotten, vicious whore kids—
 standing around watching'
 the overarmed, undertrained
 National Guard about to go wild.
 And yeah, fools, some
 chunking rocks & slogans & curses.
 Full of dope, sex, books, & unAmerican
 antiwar ideas coming out of class,
 sitting on & smoking grass.
 Reminding you!
 that something's wrong
 & someone has to do something. So,
 it's their fault that
 it's not their fault.

Then we all find out
 there were no snipers
 or syphilitic call girl coeds
 recruiting for the communists &
 that terrified child was just
 a teenage runaway.
 Barely old enough to bleed
 but just the right age
 to understand the deed.

And did you ever notice
 how that statue
 down there in Columbus
 of the used car salesman
 toting those forged registrations
 past the Capitol building,
 looks just like Governor Rhodes?

I don't suppose I'll ever forget

the guy in the Vet Center who'd started dreaming
 about those hootches he used to crawl into
 in the dark and cut throats and the visits he gets
 when the President passes through town
 and the "mystery" babies
 people's old ladies kept having and
 the divorce papers they'd get after she'd moved,
 sold the house, and bought a new car and the way that
 peckerwood was almost too ashamed to say "Thanks"
 after I'd saved his life
 or the parties where everybody brought a fifth and
 nobody left till all the soldiers were dead
 and ol' Bear wanting to shoot the lieutenant
 (which wasn't a bad idea but he was
 too nice a kid to have to do the time)
 so I took it away from him or
 the night they brought the VC in
 (labor detail
 on their way to the Chieu Hoi Center
 for some R&R) and
 nobody told us they were coming
 so the bolts going back on the I6s
 sounded like a cricket convention
 as I scoped the skinny fuckers out real good
 and not one came up to my shoulder
 or had any real meat on him
 and I could have punched them all out real easy
 and they looked just like the hired help
 but they weren't scared and just kept
 watching me watching them until one laughed and
 put a V of fingers
 and then a thumb and forefinger to his mouth so
 I tossed them a canteen and some Say-Lems
 and we all smoked and
 I didn't even ask for the pack back

The Plot to Assassinate the Statue of Liberty

They were delinquents—acting too late.
Going after the old whore like brave young vandals,
acting the way you do when you're scared and angry,
breaking something no one will miss.

And she was always standing there
where they could see her.
Needing deodorant under at least one arm.
Doing as much harm as stinking could,
as much good as prayer would.
And wearing herself out just standing there,
wearing the same moldy green dress day after day.
And just standing there,
flaunting her diseased, contagious self—
ruined by that social illness of hers.

So why not go over to Liberty's Island
(they put her there to keep it from spreading)
why no go over there and blind her like justice is,
rob her like hope does?

What could she do but
whine what all failures mumble
 I should have been something
 I should have been something that meant something
 I should have stood for something
And not just stood there,
in that crappy dress,
looking like a big tired turd,
acting like she didn't know every body
has to flush their own shit.

You wonder why any body would have ever
paid good money for her or bothered to try
to bash her head in. Dumb kids, stealing an empty purse.
She never had nothing no way.
Dumb kids, trying to kill a corpse.
Let it whimper itself to death.

Horace Coleman currently lives in Long Beach. Viet Nam Generation plans to publish a book of his verse, and hopes that he will become a regular contributor to the journal.

A PEOPLE NOT STRONG: VIETNAMESE IMAGES OF THE INDOCHINA WAR

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I guess I had shuffled under the huge gate of rough-hewn logs that guarded entry to our Special Forces camp in the highlands of Cong Tum province along the Laotian frontier a hundred times before I noticed the words cut into coarse planks lashed together above my head. *Hruh Hong*, it announced. And though my thirty-some *so dang* strikers wore shoulder patches bearing a mad hornet, it was some time still before I had the gate inscription translated to me by one of my *supplétifs*: "maisô guêpe-lâ," he told me. *Hornet hive*. I suppose it made little enough difference to me under what emblem I should fight, but my Anglo-Saxon sense of degree was reassured when—at the orders of the new American commander—the scowling hornets disappeared to make way for another shoulder patch that sported a leaping and eminently more martial black panther, bounding through an arch of winged parachutes, lightening bolts, crossed rifles, and the rest of that stern panoply of war. But I did not forget the fascination of a people for insects, tiny creatures: fierce, strong, communal, indistinguishable, relentless, implacable.

"The Ants are a people not strong," says Proverbs, 30:25. "Yet they prepare their meat in the summer...The locusts have no king, yet go they forth by their bands; The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces." These "things which are little upon the earth...are exceeding wise" but do not appear to have imparted their wisdom to the West. The French, for instance, always thought of the Vietnamese—scornfully—as ants: *fourmis*. Jean Lartéguy's novels, long the public face of France's exasperated hopes toward the colony (a pregnant word in this context), have recourse to this image: the long columns of tiny, faceless, straining figures who dragged siege guns, rice bags, artillery rounds through the jungle in filiform legions. In his well-known *Centurions*, which begins, by the bye, comparing a column of French prisoners wending its way up out of the valley at Dien Bien Phu, to "caterpillars in solemn procession" (1) Lartéguy shows us a *bo-doi*, typical Vietnamese soldier:

This sad little man, floating like a ghost in his too-big fatigues...was droning on about Truth with the blank look of a prophet...the nightmare of ants. He was one of the antennas of the monstrous brain that wanted to change the world to a civilization of insects, locked in their certainty and their efficiency (36).

Lartéguy permits himself a number of tirades of the sort:

All these ants seemed featureless...on their faces could be read no expression at all, not even one of those elemental feelings that break through

the passivity of Asiatic features: fear, joy, hate, anger. Nothing. One single will pressed them all toward a common and mysterious goal...This frenzied activity by sexless **insects** seemed directed from a distance, as if, somewhere in this colony, some huge queen was to be found, a sort of monstrous central brain which served as the collective consciousness of these **ants**. (29)

The intervening text, furthermore, is larded with the same sort of insect-related vocabulary—as are others of his Indochina novels, notably *Les tambours de bronze* (*Bronze Drums*), set *mutatis mutandis* in Laos: *grouillement, grouiller, foisonner, fourmière, termitière, colonne, saper, ronger*. Lartéguy assembles here, of course, a whole subliminal machinery of racial stereotype (Edith Cresson calls Japanese *fourmis* last summer; subsequent flap) and even sexual, as one scene reveals in which a *bo-dois* speaks to the French prisoners, recounting how as a student in France he enjoyed the *jardin du Luxembourg* and in particular a young woman who danced there. Asked to loosen Captain Glatigny's ropes, however, the young Vietnamese turns away. Lartéguy notes:

He had become an **ant** once again and lurched off in the thick mud. The anthill wouldn't let him loose: he would never again see the Luxembourg Gardens in the spring, where girls with dancing hips and swirling skirts tote their schoolbooks ... (30).

The reeeeeeeeeeeal indictment: **insects** cannot share the earthy lubricity of pleasure-loving Europeans.

What is less clear is how the Vietnamese saw themselves, though scrutiny of Vietnamese stories, parables, and other accounts of their War, destined for public consumption—through translation—or otherwise, seems to suggest that the French metaphor was not without its parallel in the Vietnamese mind as well. A corpus of Vietnamese literature exists, didactic and hortatory without a doubt, but in which certain virtues are extolled and citizens urged to follow models of behavior (submersion of self, sacrifice, endurance, patience, formic indifference to pain) which limn a sort of moral model. Studying such art is not without its risks, as Mary McCarthy noted in *Hanoi*, speaking principally of "visual art":

...hortatory art has the troubling property of resembling all other hortatory art, which makes it difficult to distinguish, for instance fascist architecture from Stalinist architecture or socialist realist painting from Roman Catholic oleographs... North Vietnam is no exception to this rule (91).

The picture which emerges—courage in battle is touted though narration rarely enough describes actual combat—is one of resilience and patience rather than daring. Heroic qualities appear to

reside rather in silent, impersonal, and collective acts of submergence, endurance, and effacement: anonymous, done in the darkness, in the face of immense odds, but always tiny acts, tiny bites if you like.

Curiously enough, though I do not find the ant image in a superficial review of their writings, both Vo Nguyen Giap in his *Military Art of People's War* and Truong Nhu Tang in his *Viet Cong Memoir* speak less of what we would call combat and battle than of the elaborate behind-the-scenes network (Tang calls it tellingly a "web") wrought by insect-like battalions of "workers." "We march all day bent under the weight of our packs," cites Tang

In the heat and humidity we are forced to stop often to rest and get our breath back...we climb mountain faces...the group continues to march. We must have faith in our struggle and in our country to endure these tests of suffering and pain... (241).

Giap, for his part, recounts the ant-like labors of his troops around Dien Bien Phu, the ferrying of materiel, the digging of tunnels and moving of earth, the patience and bidding of time:

Our troops had to dig a vast network of trenches, from the neighboring hills to the plain, to encircle the central subsector and cut it off...(135)...these tactics demanded of us firmness and a spirit of resolution... (149) ...day and night hundreds of thousands of porters and young volunteers crossed passes and forded rivers...from the plains to the mountains, on roads and paths, on rivers and streams, everywhere there was the same animation... (159).

This is, as Tang allows, the travail of a "veritable army of workers" (241). Giap speaks of the "wonderful trenches," citing timeliness and patience, enormous numbers of workers freighting indescribably heavy loads, tunnel complexes like the famous one at Cu Chi, all insect-like of course.

Le Ly Hayslip, whose *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* is hardly socialist art, returns nonetheless to this image. Hayslip, whose gracious retrieval of Vietnamese folklore and folkways relies often on proverbs and legends, quotes her father's observation that "god's creatures had two basic ways to survive..."

...either by great speed and power like antelope and tigers; or by strength of numbers, like **insects**. Indeed we Vietnamese had a saying: *Con kien cong con vua* —by sticking together the tiny **ants** can carry the elephant. The American elephant could rage and stomp the Vietnamese anthill, but time and the weight of numbers guaranteed that it would eventually be the **ants**, not the elephant, who danced on the bones of the victims (222).

The **ant**, however, does not alone bear the metaphoric burden in such accounts. Other **insects**, laying claim to identical virtues of solidarity, diligence, persistence, and resilience furnish the *exemplum* for conduct, the rationale for victory, related with a pride that is hardly **ant-like**, be it noted. Ly Thu Ho, a woman author who has penned in French several memoirs of her war, recalls in a 1969 novel *Au milieu du carrefour (At the Crossroads)*, the labor gangs responsible for patching up after American bombing attacks:

The tasks were meticulously divided among the inhabitants...day and night this **swarm of bees** rebuilt cratered roads and destroyed bridges...all the crews of workers competed in ingenious ways to get the job done in the quickest time possible... (89).

She goes so far, in one lyrical passage, as to fuse the insect with its human counterpart, an odd and rare reference to mystical religion. It is Van, who speaks to Lang, for whom he has *sentiments* as they walk through the forest of the highlands near Da Lat:

Sometimes I think I am infinitely small inside a huge church where the nave is sparkling with stars and instead of a hymn...I hear the murmur of human voices mingling with the single shrill chirr of thousands of **cicadas** rubbing together their brittle, diaphanous wings. And in the midst of this fairyland there seems to rise up, louder and louder, a melodious chorus of our traditional songs... (155).

Humanity, smallness of stature, nature, religion, tradition, **insect**.

As if advocacy of insect-like values were not enough, as if fusion through the **insect-cantor** into some sort of national *gnosis* were not enough, we see on more than one occasion, the **ant** itself sustain human activity as nourishment: "We ate," relates Ho Phuong in an excerpt from his novel *La mer appelle (The Sea Calls)* "Roots and wild grass, snails and **red ants**." (180) "Come on," says Dinh the Scrounger; "It's vitamin C, huh?" "The soldiers take a few **ants** between their fingers and begin to chew..." the account goes on; "A bitter taste...a little bit tart." (175) "We washed it down with urine," remembers the narrator. "And to make matters worse," —as if matters get much worse than eating red ants and urine—he notes dispassionately, "even the urine tasted flat" (180).

Ha Noi, the *brain* of the immense colony, is—naturally enough—a *nest*, or so it appears in an unusual 1966 novel called *Front du ciel (Sky Front)* by one Nguyen Dinh Thi, the tale of North Vietnamese MIG pilots and the little seen air war from a Vietnamese viewpoint. "Along the crowded streets, houses pressed against one another," claims Thi, "like the individual *cells* in a **beehive**, built century upon century, around the tiny Lake of the Redeemed Sword. We are here, oh Ha Noi" (92). The aircraft buzzing in air furnish an occasion for predictable images of flying insects; all planes are known

as *Johnson* for reasons handily evident, but the F-105 is a *mouche verte*, with associated verbs like *piquer*, *siffler*, *bourdonner*. The genre is familiar enough, and we shan't be surprised to find our pilots on leave, discovering the suffering—and the determination—of the other front, the home front, though what might be foreseeable scenes of girl friends and lovers remain dispiritingly, well...pudic. One of the pilots, Luong, reflects on the presence of Americans in the South of his land. He has heard of *serveuses de thé*, *taxi girls*, *épouses à la semaine*, corrupted by decadent values of the outlanders. "It is not enough for them to sow death, destruction, and misery among us, but they have to go and soil the thing we hold most precious..."

Hundreds of thousands of informers, agents, swindlers, and spies...have swooped down on our South like a horde of **locusts**. They brought with them misery and those handfuls of paper they call dollars. They have driven thousands of girls to sell themselves... (120).

The **locust** is, of course, not a useful **insect**, nor one that teaches lessons. Likewise the **beetle**. So, such creatures can supply the metaphor for an enemy who shares appearance or characteristic with them. Just as the devouring Americans and their cohorts seem **locusts**, so the French, whom the Vietnamese see wearing helmets, become *scarabées*. This is Huu Mai in a story called *Le drapeau-repère (The Signal Flag)*: "Observing the enemy from under cover we see in his trench system the steel helmets—like great **beetles**—bobbing continuously" (15). Equally unpalatable as a model is the behavior of the *mouche* or **fly**. The Americans, in Tran Mai Nam's tale of war *De Hue au 17ième parallèle (From Hue to the 17th Parallel)*, "would sweep down on us like a swarm of **flies** whenever they heard a shot fired. How could that be? Weren't they afraid of death? But all the comrades who came in from the next village said the same thing: 'A swarm of flies'" (135). "How can they 'swarm like flies?' Why aren't they afraid to die?" wonders the *guérillero* Phong. "Is it because there are so many of them?" Turns out that the *Yankee* is not "afraid of death" because he is swaddled in body armor, cannot be killed by bullets. But Phong is determined: "All you gotta do is swat hard." And sure enough, in a carefully-crafted ambush, "the enemy dropped on us like a swarm, just as the comrades told us they would. But they were nothing but **flies** after all. All you gotta do is swat hard. Just like the other kind of **fly** these **flies** are afraid..." (154).

These stories are not shy about plumping a relentless and heavy-handed moral in the middle of things, virtually always the same, reflection of the abnegation of self to which a people is committed. Oanh Tan recounts the *Days and Nights of Con Co (Les jours et les nuits de Con Co)* in a collection called simply if tellingly *L'épreuve du feu (The Test of Fire)*. He notes that two young students, Sau and Soi, "should have been in classes at the university. But hatred for the ...aggressor has made us all abandon joyfully even the most promising of our individual plans. Our young people know that no plan shall come to anything if the country loses its freedom."

(32) In Nguyen Thi Van Anh's *Ces enfants et les histoires qui les concernent* (*These Children and the Stories about Them*) a young lover tells his girlfriend: "I'll be back in seven years with a glorious future and a career to look forward to. You'll always be in my heart. Then we'll have a home and live in peace" (75). A seven-year cycle of denial, followed by generation and work. The life of the insect. Kien, say the Vietnamese, "the ant,"—*tha lau cung day to*—"takes her time but fills her nest." To a culture of Europeans for whom strength is the ox—"strong as an ox"—the Vietnamese, who have oxen of course, say *kien kang*: "strong as an ant."

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SEMIOTIC AND AGONISTIC REASON IN *THMENH CHEY* 1

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It is possible to teach that which you do not know. —Joseph Jacoto

Alone of all the animals, man has aptly been called anthrôpos, since he examines that which he has seen. —Plato

But does he actually do it? —Anonymous

Thmenh Chey, a poor, orphaned child, decides to take revenge on the local capitalist. He easily outsmarts the merchant, who foists him on the king, whereupon he promptly outwits the entire court, and, albeit with more difficulty, a first batch of wily Chinese. Having been banned to the provinces, he outfoxes the locals, then the executioners who are supposed to put an end to his career. The Chinese come back, thinking as everybody does that Thmenh Chey has died, and that Cambodia is up for grabs. Chey, disguised as a bonze, totally outguesses them. Having saved his country, he then saves the king he had so often ridiculed, by seeming to give him his secret, thereby decisively weakening the mandarins. The tales of the exploits of Thmenh Chey, known to most Cambodians, are the subject of the following address, given in Phnom Penh by a Belgian to a Khmer audience.

Captatio benevolentiae, and other preliminaries

I am well aware how presumptuous it is for me to pretend to teach you anything at all about a Khmer literary text, when in addition to other handicaps (which can be summarized as an ignorance of Khmer history, and in particular the histories of institutions and mentalities, of literature and of Buddhism), I do not even know the language of the text. And, to make matters worse, I have chosen one of the founding texts of your culture, a text which all of you know well, which you quote incessantly, much more than we ever quote Hugo or Racine, or even the Bible.² By way of defense, I will only mention three things: on the one hand, *Thmenh Chey* (TC) is precisely a text which questions the validity of knowledge, of authority and of tradition. Also, a different angle, coming from another "tradition," often allows us to notice better certain aspects which too great a familiarity would tend

to obfuscate. Finally, my approach will largely be internal, immanent (not based on cultural, institutional or other con-texts), and will not rely on the detailed texture of the text (I will not propose a subtle stylistic analysis). I should add that I have read both the Monod translation,³ reissued by Cedoreck in 1985, and also a translation, as literal as possible, which a friend has been so kind as to do for me, starting from another version, which is currently used in schools in Cambodia. I will therefore occasionally underline some of the significant differences between those two versions. However, mine has not been the work of a philologist, an ethno-poetician or an "oralist": my aim has not been (nor could it have been) to compare all the versions⁴ which have been transcribed, and more or less rewritten, on the basis of decisions which were more or less technical, but always also more or less ideological. I don't know anything more about this problem than what Vandy Kaonn says in his *Réflexion sur la littérature khmère*.⁵ Of the version (or group of versions) entitled *A Chey* I have only read one brief extract, one episode, which was collected by Leclère in his *Cambodge. Contes, légendes et jatakas*.⁶ Nor shall I attempt a systematic comparison with comparable tales (featuring a wily character of modest origin, often an orphan, who outwits the rich and the powerful) such as are found in Cambodia itself (*Sophea Tonsai, A Lev*, and numerous tales in which a wife outwits her husband...⁷), in the Indo-Chinese cultural area (*Xieng-Meng* in Laos, *Si Thanoncai* in Central Thailand,⁸ *Sug khâm tu* in Northern Thailand,⁹ *Plaang Thooy* and other Khmu tales,¹⁰ *Trang Quynh, Trang Lon* and others in Viet Nam¹¹), or outside that area (I am thinking in particular of the *Roman de Renart*, and of *Till Uilenspieghel*,¹² both very much part of my (Belgian) culture, but also of the various legends/(hi)stories of bandits stealing from the rich and giving to the poor, such as Robin Hood, Twm Sion Cati, Mandrin...¹³). Even less will I try to find out who influenced whom, whether this whole corpus originates in India, in China or elsewhere, or whether it is autochthonous everywhere (in which case their similarities would be homologies, not a matter of sources and influences), or any combination of these extreme hypotheses.

In order to steer clear of the presumptuousness mentioned earlier, I will only formulate some proposals for reading, sketch some interpretive schemes, ask some questions to the text, hoping that the discussion which will follow will allow us to develop certain points, or to correct certain inflexions.¹⁴ First of all, I would like to explain a little why I changed the original title of this talk—the talk itself will provide a fuller explanation of the change. I had suggested something like "Practical and theoretical reason in *Thmenh Chey*." This now seems unsatisfactory to me because those terms almost automatically suggest Kant's concepts of theoretical and practical pure reason. Now, the least that can be said is that pure reason, whether theoretical or practical, only plays a role in our text by its absence, a real absence which is it must be said occasionally marked by a fictive, simulacral, purely rhetorical presence. On the other hand, we might have used the distinction drawn by the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins between practical and

symbolic reason.¹⁵ The former designates an activity which is entirely oriented towards the accomplishment of a goal or of a particular interest, towards acquiring some personal or group advantage (this arithmetic of means and ends clearly has nothing to do with Kantian ethics), while the latter represents the production of meaning, of culture (language and ideologies). It soon becomes apparent that TC (contrary to e.g. *A Lev*) only marginally strives to get rich, or to acquire actual power. His activity therefore essentially takes place in the realm of what Sahlins calls the symbolic, and which I prefer to call the semiotic—more precisely, it revolves around the question of who has power over that realm (hence the word "agonistic" which refers to that aspect of fighting).

Of females, women, strumpets and usurperesses

Before I move on to the main object of this talk, viz. the struggle for power of language, over language, through language, I should like to briefly mention two points, the one of a rather thematic nature, the other more narratological. The first point concerns the place of women in the narrative. A very modest place, in the M version, since only two or three women put in an appearance: essentially the mother (very briefly indeed), and the wife. The former, though she is not explicitly arraigned for her stupidity, contrary to *A Lev's* mother,¹⁶ is narratively defined by the fact that she gets tricked, which trick actually sets the whole story moving. She produces a prophetic dream, has a professional interpreter explain it to her, and fails to ask herself any questions when the hermeneut, though he has indeed understood the dream (not a major feat in this case), proffers a blatant misreading: TC will be a slave, not a great man. The dream will come true, however, but only after a number of tribulations which seem to prove the dishonest (or unscrupulously time-serving) *hora* right. After Thmenh Chey's birth, his mother no longer plays any part, except that she tries in vain to dissuade her son from seemingly accomplishing the false interpretation of the dream, when he wants to hire himself off as an indebted slave to the rich merchant, the *sethey* (whereas TC only wants to do this in order to wreak revenge on the *sethey*, hence to refute the false prediction). We should note that TC's father has disappeared without trace: even his absence doesn't deserve any mention. However, it could be argued that the *sethey* (and conceivably, also TC's later opponents) plays the part of a substitute, of a (bad) father figure. This role is particularly apparent when the *sethey* opposes a comparison (more-less, a lot-a little: a finite number) to the absolute superlative (infinity) of TC's desire for food/ for salary. It is possible, indeed required, to measure the value of TC's returning to the *sethey's* wife the shuttle she has lost: to a given (finite) job corresponds a given (finite) salary. We are bound to underline, however great our disapproval of the inequality of fortune between the *sethey* and TC's mother (again, this is a comparative, the ratio is a finite number), that TC has put to the *sethey's* wife a demand which was hardly reasonable, indeed limitless. Being a woman, she is not able to counter the inexperienced trickster, so it is left to the

sethey himself to, rather legitimately, set a law: enjoyment has to be limited. But then TC does not give him, and will not give anyone, the right to dictate any law whatsoever to him. It would not in my opinion be entirely legitimate to link this episode with Marx's conception that the proletariat, not having anything, is everything: the main difference is that here, in this early episode, everything is taking place within the realm of having, without any shift from having to being.¹⁷

After childhood, women disappear from TC's life, to reappear only once he has successfully undergone his trials with the *sethey*, the king and the Chinese scholars. The king then wants to give him as a reward (women as objects) one of the women of the palace (one of a series), as his maid or his concubine, but he refuses, and in this refusal shows once more his right to name (i.e. his right to the use of language in its power to institute): these are mere females, not women. He alone can find, or rather institute, constitute a woman. He finally meets her. Her name is Suos-Dey: Hello,¹⁸ and she is a woman marked with signs, a text-woman.¹⁹ She is the first woman who opposes him, who shows herself to be his match in a verbal joust of questions, of riddles (something which not a single man had managed!). What matters in the context of the purely subordinate function of women in the story, is that TC once married is in no way different, less of a solitary hero, than before²⁰—even though in another sense he is never alone (he clearly needs an audience, he is an actor). His last adventures do not involve his wife, and he is only seen with her when he is in articulo mortis. Women in this story are largely reduced to two interrelated roles, those of Mother Earth, of Magna Mater, who first delivers man into this world, then takes him back into her bosom. Between those two bosoms, man, and man alone, holds the stage, with his tribulations, his labors (his travails). Of course, this entails that the time before and after the performance belongs to women: a woman dreaming of the son she will have, a woman protecting the tomb, the memory of her husband—two women who are entirely preoccupied, defined by a man. On the other hand, TC has no more children than he has a father: we will come back to this when we deal with knowledge, and with the handing down of knowledge in our narrative.

All I have said, as mentioned, only concerns the M version. In the version used in Cambodia at present, and in that by Bitard, women appear more often, and there are a greater number of them. First, the *hora* is absent, and his wife usurps his role. To this first deception, arrogating to herself a power to interpret which only recognized professionals can have, she adds another, the one which in the M version was ascribed to the *hora*. Having interpreted correctly a dream similar to the one in M (but adding immediacy to totality in the enjoyment of desire) as forecasting that TC will be king (a grander, or simply more precise, prediction than in M²¹), she utters an interpretation which is the exact opposite of the meaning, with again a time dimension, absent from M: TC will remain a slave all his life. King becomes slave, immediately becomes forever: the contradiction is not the same in the two cases. The text moreover explicitly states, in a narratorial "intrusion", that this interpretation is the contrary of the true one.

Also, palace women play an important role in two additional sections, not present in M, and in a modified version of the final sequence. In all three cases, the women play an entirely negative role—more precisely, a scatological one. In the first section, TC talks about the anus of these women, probably to denounce their profession: they are courtesans, and as such live by their charms, their body. In the second sequence, the king orders his concubines to defecate at TC's house, and in the final sequence, the husbands who were ridiculed by TC when he was alive send their wives to his tomb, to desecrate it by their excretions. These are very gross episodes, but no more so than that of the bonze's face, or that of TC's "second face" (his bottom), present in M. They mostly stand out by their extreme, ferocious misogyny: the women appear as parasitic, nasty, totally devoid of autonomy: they are mere playthings to the king or to their husbands. And they have to face the consequences of the actions they were forced to carry out: those who obey are wrong, whereas, as we shall see, those who interpret (those who pervert orders) are right.

A nosegay of tales, or a novel?

These additional (interpolated?) episodes allow us to say something about the structure of **Thmenh Chey**, about the economy of the narrative. It goes without saying that the structure is episodic, picaresque,²² that the narrative is an entirely linear stringing together of episodes, of sequences which all share the same protagonist, TC—this is true even in the initial and final episodes, where TC is not physically present. The episodes are simply successive, without any anachrony (analepsis or prolepsis), or simultaneity. However, the structure is not as simple as that of **Sophea Tonsai**²³ for example: here the structure is not simply a matter of stringing, but also of steps.²⁴ The adventures encountered by TC are increasingly difficult and dangerous, and they take him further and further away from his birth place: hence a double stepping structure. There is some form of a loop at the end, for though the house where he dies is not the house where he was born, he again has a very limited field of operation—and has to rely on a woman. Within this stepping structure, a certain number of macro-sequences can be discerned, and there is some evolution from one macro-sequence to the next, as well as within each macro-sequence, from one meso-sequence to the next. Let us make this clearer: we can consider that the text, which in spite of its rather rigorous structure I would hesitate to call a novel, after the introductory sequence /dream+interpretation+shuttle/, starts with a macro-sequence /in the service of the *sethey*/, followed by a macro-sequence /in the service of the king/. There then occurs the first Chinese incursion, with its consequences for TC, then the second Chinese incursion, then TC's stay in China, then his return to Cambodia. Each of these six macro-sequences can be subdivided into generally three meso-sequences, which are themselves made up of one or more sequences. One example: the /*sethey*/ macro-sequence includes the meso-sequences /court/, /field/ and /house/—the latter two in inverse order in C. Each meso-sequence comprises in this case two contrary

sequences, and each meso-sequence constitutes a demotion, when compared to the one just before it.²⁵ The same holds in the other macro-sequences: they all start with a meso-sequence at the court, followed by removal/demotion, and often by worse removal/demotion. In the macro-sequence /in the service of the king/, we have: court—outside—not visible; in the macro-sequence / Chinese incursion 1/ we find: court—exile to the Tonle Sap—executioners—monastery. And so on.

So we encounter on the one hand a continuous progression from each macro-sequence to the next, a rise (in terms of the social rank of the adversary and of the difficulty of the trial): confrontation with the *sethey*—confrontation with the king—simple Chinese riddles—difficult Chinese riddles—confrontation with the Chinese king—(re)foundation/legitimation of Khmer monarchy. On the other hand, inside each macro-sequence, we have a regression, a descent, and it is at the lowest point that there is, each time, a recovery, viz. a return to the court, which leads to the starting of the next macro-sequence. This logic, another double (contradictory) stepping structure, would seem to echo the general scheme of Hegelian dialectic, as manifested, especially, in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, but I can't here pursue that intriguing homology.²⁶

What this rather rigorous structure does indicate, is that it is impossible to tamper with the macro- or meso-structures, or with their order, without jeopardizing the coherence of the narrative. But it is often possible to add, subtract, or invert the order of sequences, and the same applies, at a lower level, to functions and to indices/informants. This is indeed what a comparison between the two versions M and C will show. At the level of meso-sequences, there is only one difference: the inversion field—house in the first macro-sequence. At the level of sequences, we find three adjunctions: the two involving scatological females, and also, in the same macro-sequence, a /buffalo fight/ episode which clearly duplicates the cock fight, and could therefore be dropped.²⁷ But of course there are also differences inside sequences, some of them interesting. In general—not always—Version C is more explicit, gives more reasons, explanations, motivations, while at the same time it gives less development to transitions between episodes: a bizarre combination of late traits and of archaic traits. Moreover, some of the explanations are different (e.g. the king's reaction to the boat-elephant: in one case he laughs at the absurdity of the apparition, in the other he is reduced to silence by TC's "logical" explanation), or they are given in a different manner (narrator's intervention in C instead of TC's interior monologue, or dialogue). However, this decision to give more or fewer explanations, and to give them through the narrator or through a character (whether protagonist or walk-on, through dialogue or monologue), though it shows itself at the level of a sequence or a mere function, has implications for the entire narrative.²⁸ A narrative in which the narrator can enter the heads of his characters (version M) is very different (more "modern", in the XIXc sense ... though perhaps not more contemporary, "postmodern") from a narrative in which the narrator always has to "intrude" to make sure that the message

will come through (version C) - or from an entirely smooth narrative, in which the adventures simply come one after the other, without any explanation as to their meaning or sequentiality (this is essentially the case with *Sophea Tonsai*, a more "primitive", less unified and novel-like collection of stories than our two versions of TC²⁹).

Named, or nameless

I don't wish to go into a detailed narratological analysis, and will only add one more point, concerning characters. Thmenh Chey, or Thnenh Chey (or Dhnanjay), is the only one in the whole story to be named. We could even say that the story is nothing but the development of the meaning of that name—Chey means "victory"—as if this were an etiological narrative, aimed at providing the reason why he was given that name.³⁰ Though his wife is named in the episode of their meeting—their respective names constitute one of the riddles—she henceforth becomes TC's wife, no more no less. The other characters are never named, and are only identified by their social and/or professional function: the king, the *sethey*, the *hora*, the *samdech chauvea*, the *mohatlock*, the *amat...* Some of them are not even individualized: "four soothsayers", "the dignitaries", "the concubines". And yet, nomination is an essential symbolic operation in this text, as we shall see when we talk about TC as interpreter.

Names are not the only type of index or informant to be in short supply in this text. The story tells us nothing, or almost nothing, about time (and duration), or about the places in which the action unfolds. There is actually no description at all in the text, by which I mean that no descriptive element is autonomized. When things are named, or provided with one or two descriptive features, this is never done merely in order to establish a spatio-temporal, or a cultural frame for the action, but only because those details have an immediate narrative functionality, or a symbolic import. I will only mention one example, in version C. TC, confronted with four Chinese soothsayers (this is the second incursion) asks the king for four *mohatlocks*, four boxes of stylets, four square boards, four small jars. It seems obvious that this repeated figure does not correspond to any narrative necessity (the riddle would have worked just as well with any other number), and I don't think that this can be a reality effect,³¹ so it has to have symbolic value. Solange Thierry (*Op. cit.*: 86) talks about the importance of numbers in the definition of characters, even when they are not named, but her explanations don't seem entirely relevant here, since the four in TC are in no way differentiated. The presence of four soothsayers may be related to the fact that two had not done the job the first time, and perhaps TC responds with four times four (numbers, and mathematics, had played an important role in the first fight of riddles). There may be more to it, as four is a classic magical number, though I don't know whether that is the case in buddhist or "pre"-buddhist Khmer culture. At any rate, according to Chevalier and Gheerbrant's *Dictionnaire des symboles*, four, and sixteen, are sacred numbers in the *Vedic Hymns*, where they symbolize totality.³²

Never trust the lit critters

I now come to the main object of this talk: the motif of hermeneutics, of the constitution and decipherment of meaning, a motif which pervades the whole narrative. Indeed, the whole story is full of texts, of discourse, of reality constituted as discourse,³³ and these texts-within-the-text are obscure, ambiguous or enigmatic, hence call for interpretation, whether in words, in actions or in gestures, which interpretation is itself multiple, or contentious, at any rate never definitive.³⁴

As we have seen, the narrative opens on a scene of interpretation, a scene which could be considered (in the same way as, for instance the name of Thmenh-Thnenh-Thun Chey) as a matrix of the text, as an enveloped, implicated figure of what in developed, explicit form, will be the narrative as a whole. This founding scene, which comes before TC's birth, and in a sense determines his entire life, is very different from what will become the functioning of interpretation once TC himself enters the stage. Indeed, the text proposed for interpretation is a dream, a message coming from elsewhere, and it is the only dream in the entire narrative, and one of very few interventions from anything which can be called a "transcendence": unless I'm mistaken, the only other instances are a comparison, or rather an argument a fortiori (the *sethey* telling the king that TC would outwit the very Tevada), where the divine beings are therefore not actually present, and the passage in which TC wants to commit suicide, and is saved by the Tevada.³⁵ The message of the dream is actually quite clear: no-one needs a *hora*, a literary scholar or a psycho-analyst to understand that it predicts abundance, enjoyment, the accomplishment of desire: Freud's *Wunscherfüllung*, though the beneficiary is not the dreamer, but her son-to-be. To a very clearly encoded message, one which does not demand much interpretive work, can only correspond an obvious decoding, or else a blatant error dictated by ignorance, stupidity or dishonesty. This is exactly what happens: the professional hermeneut (or his wife, in version C) takes advantage of the ignorance, the stupidity or tendency to submit to authority of TC's mother to tell her, not just any old nonsense, but exactly the opposite of what the dream means. TC, instead of being destined for a life of grandeur, is destined to lead a very lowly life. Instead of endangering the social fabric through a dangerous upward mobility, he has to become one of the most exploited instruments of that social order. And the one who claims this, to use an anachronism, is an established ideologue—in other words, a "technician of practical knowledge" (Sartre), or a "watchdog" of the bourgeoisie (Nizan)—as opposed to an intellectual. He is thus the opposite of what we would see, ideally, as a true interpreter, a hermeneut. An interpreter is someone who allows himself to be confronted with the uncanny strangeness, the irreducible opaqueness of a text, to which he can only lend a conjectural meaning, a process which is not only unfinished *de facto*, but even *de jure*. Interpretation goes from uncertainty to an explicitation or a modification of that uncertainty, which is what TC will do, in his own highly idiosyncratic way. Indeed, if TC plays tricks on/with language, on the one hand he does

not do it *ex officio*, on someone's orders or for a salary, and on the other hand he is not trying to (fore)close a question, but rather to give it maximum aperture.

Variegated and versatile

Later on in the narrative, TC will be the interpreter par excellence, and though he is repeatedly confronted with counter-interpreters, these will never (after his earliest trial with the *sethey*) manage to outwit him: the match with his most successful adversary, Suos-Dey (his future wife), ends in a draw. But it is not enough to assert that TC is the master of interpretations, or the master of reversals, using against his adversary that adversary's strength, and his own weakness. It still remains to be seen how he does it, what tricks he uses, what are his strong and his weak points. Being both weak and dependent, he evidently models his response on his powerful adversary's challenge, on its form and its semantic field.

That is why his devices, and the sphere of activity in which he displays them, vary from macro-sequence to macro-sequence. In the initial, and initiatory, trial, confronted first with the *sethey's* wife, TC interprets "a lot" to mean a limitless, infinite number, compared to which any finite number is necessarily "little", hence too little. The merchant then intervenes, and transforms the open question into a closed, binary one: on one side there is a lot, on the other side, little, and TC allows himself to be trapped inside this alternative, in which "a lot" simply means "more than something else, which is little". After this defeat in the final leg of his first battle of interpretations, TC vows to take revenge: he does not ask himself whether the merchant was right, or had some rights. For TC, what matters is to gain the upper hand, to be cleverer: the true, the good, the just don't enter into his calculations. However I wish to stress again that his calculations are not of the lowest pragmatic kind: what matters for him is not to obtain titles, institutional power, or wealth. Though his behavior is not moral, not just, not truthful, it isn't opportunistic either³⁶—so what shall we call it? Could it be aesthetic? Or, so to speak, sporting (though hardly sportsmanlike, or cricket!). Or else sportive, playful, ludic? Or lawyerly? I shall leave that question open for the time being.

A merchant outbid: TC as literal fool³⁷

The trials in the first series, where TC confronts the *sethey*, who has become his master, all belong to the same type: the *sethey* gives his servant an order (follow me quickly, don't bother to pick up things which may fall out), which the latter interprets in a rigorously literal, or literalist, manner. When his master reproaches him for not having done what the order meant, TC retorts that he has carried them out to the letter. The interpreter is innocent of all error, of all misappropriation of meaning, it is the message itself that is guilty, because of its ambiguity, and hence also the sender of the message: the *sethey*.³⁸ But TC doesn't even mention this ambiguity, he pretends to be aware of only one meaning, and treats language as if it were entirely decontextualized, as if the

situation didn't usually disambiguate the message. Of course, "too bad if things fall out" could mean that it doesn't matter if everything falls out, that the *sethey* couldn't care less if there was nothing left in his betel set. But everyone knows that this is an improbable reading, a paradoxical one (against received opinion, *doxa*). Faced with this deft piece of sophistry, the *sethey* can't convict TC of error, willful or otherwise, he can't prove anything, since TC's version is possible, authorized by the form, by the words (if not by the co(n)text). So he thinks he can counter TC by next giving him an order which is the exact opposite of the first one, as though TC, when faced with a given task (carrying to court the *sethey's* betel set), only had one wile at his disposal—or as though, in natural languages, a double negation necessarily amounted to an affirmation. As though "Don't do the opposite of what I said," or more precisely "Do the opposite of what you have done, which was the opposite of what I had asked you to do," boiled down to "Do what I told you to do." But TC is quick to prove him wrong: after he has interpreted literally an implicit "(pick up) nothing," he interprets just as literally an explicit "pick up everything." He acts as though "everything" meant "everything in the universe, anything whatsoever," rather than "everything in the betel set," as the context makes obvious—so he fills the betel set with horse dung!³⁹ But TC has done nothing more than actualize a highly improbable possibility, which was however inscribed in the literal of the message, so the *sethey* again can't punish him.⁴⁰ Just as the first time, he is condemned to silence, as TC's other opponents will be, whereas TC is never at a loss for words. The merchant simply demotes the all too clever subordinate. The same scheme which I have outlined in the "court" meso-sequence is at work in the two following meso-sequences: looking after the garden/guarding the cows, delivering messages/being discreet. Likewise, in a final task, when TC is entrusted with a police investigation he does literally find the culprit: the stove, which caused the fire. Each time, TC decontextualizes the order he has received, and provides the most literal, most improbable, weakest interpretation—and he gives it more strength, in his exchange with the *sethey*, than the strongest interpretation possesses. TC is the master of the signifier and the signified, and the master of reversals: he gives strength to what is weak, and makes weak what was strong. It goes without saying that such reversals can have direct political implications (those who don't have power of any sort can, through their cunning, prevail over those in power⁴¹), but the text does not draw such a conclusion, and even invalidates it in a way. Indeed what happens here, as we shall see in the rest of the text, is not the weakening, much less the overthrow of the *sethey/courtier's* power: TC is only interested in defeating him symbolically, in humiliating him, in showing his own intellectual superiority. TC has more in common with a rebellious intellectual⁴² than with a revolutionary, or a putschist (moreover, he is always acting alone, against all others).

A king outranked: TC and metaphors

When he faces the king, TC acts in the same way, he shows himself to be the master of language, but the field in which his power operates is different, and so are his devices. On the one hand, the tasks he is forced to accomplish are no longer practical ones (economic or sycophantic): they are what I would call "*kratic*"⁴³ challenges, in which the king is putting at stake both his political and his symbolic power.⁴⁴ Contrary to the practical tasks set by the *sethey*, these challenges are in principle unfulfillable. On the other hand, the physical, geographical sphere of activity is different: we here leave the immediate vicinity where we had stayed with the *sethey*, to go to the forest, the lake, the wat outside the city, ... outside the *srok*.⁴⁵ In subsequent macro-sequences, we will go even further afield: first there is the incursion of the foreigners, then the trip to the region of the Great Lake, then to China, which to the teller must have been one of the ends of the known world. As for the devices used, I will mention two things only: first, the king constantly uses his political, or even police, power to prevent TC from taking up the gauntlet: by having him given an elephant which is too old, by forbidding people from giving him information, by requisitioning all horses, by forbidding people from selling or renting horses or cocks to TC... Thmenh Chey's, always victorious, retort rests on his symbolic power, or rather, his power to symbolize, to make symbols, to metaphorize. There is some paradox, even some scandal involved, since, as David Chandler shows, the power to name the real, to make symbols, to create meaning, was reserved to the king (and, in some special areas, to official specialists, like the *hora*), simple subjects being confined to silence or to a precoded answer. Now TC, faced with literal, and literally insoluble, challenges, will here again displace the locus of the debate; but instead of moving from a derived sense, from a dead metaphor to the letter, as he had done with the *sethey*, he here jumps in the opposite direction, from the letter to metaphoric creation. Whether it is the boat-elephant, the horse in the chess game,⁴⁶ or the cock-chick (or the calf-buffalo), what we have is the creation, or the unusual use, of a metaphor.

In the case of TC-cock, we can say that the king produces the initial (realized) metaphor: his courtiers are nothing but hens, weak, stupid (but productive?) animals, moreover of the female gender, and they are quite prepared to jump into the water in their extreme submissiveness and toadyism—in French, we would say that these hens (*poules*) in the water are "*poules mouillées*": chicken-hearted. There is also an implausible feature: since when have hens started laying eggs in the water? But this is quite consistent with the unlimited power of the king, who doesn't acknowledge that reality, even biological laws, can impose any limits on him. As for TC, he cannot be a hen: on a surface level because he doesn't have an egg, on a deeper level because he isn't a capon. Hence he transmetaphorizes, to the king and his hens he opposes a cock, a proud animal, and one which (not least in my native Wallonia) symbolizes, metaphorizes masculinity, power, the sun...⁴⁷ The king is metaphorically designated as a capon, an emasculated cock. As he has already

insulted the king and his courtiers, there is only one symbolic authority left for TC to debunk: Buddhism.⁴⁸ What he attacks, in this case as in all others, is not the doctrine, or this or that tenet in it, but the man who supports or represents the institution: his arguments are invariably *ad hominem*. In the case of the chief of the bonzes, as later in the case of the king of China, the insult concerns physical appearance. But in this case, there are other points of note. First, TC only insults the chief of the bonzes in order to win a wager against the mandarins, and to go back to court in spite of the king's express ban: the bonze is a lever, not a target. On the other hand, TC utters a sentence "The hair on my head is comparable to a peacock's tale. Your shaven head, master, is more attractive than my buttocks!" (M: 69), the literal meaning of which (physical description) the bonze understands perfectly. However, when the king summons him and demands that he should explain himself, TC alleges a metaphoric explanation: he was in fact alluding to their respective place with regard to the king, hence their social status., which also leads to an inversion of values. The peacock (TC) acquires a negative connotation, the buttocks (the chief of the bonzes) a positive one: clearly this is a paradoxical, forced interpretation.⁴⁹

Outlanders outthought: TC as patriotic cheat

I now come to a macro-sequence which seems crucial to me: the first encounter with the Chinese. I won't dwell on the historical, political allusiveness of these conflicts (of interpretation) with China, nor on TC's patriotism. What interests me is the way in which TC solves the first series of Chinese riddles, and what this tells us about the nature, and limitations, of his knowledge. An unobtrusive, but unique and I think decisive characteristic of this trial, is that TC has some time to prepare himself, that he is not taken by surprise. Another, equally unobtrusive, unique, and decisive characteristic, is that the riddle of the water melons can easily be solved: it is just a matter of knowing how many seeds there are in the various melons.⁵⁰ Rather than an enigma, this is a mere problem. Now, despite the apparently simple character of the trial, compared to those he has overcome and those he is to overcome, TC is in a panic, racking his brains without any result. Afraid that he is going to lose his reputation and his life, he decides to commit suicide. He will be saved by an expedient, a supplement: the Tevada / chance, and that same power will allow him to overhear a conversation between the Chinese mandarin and the "man with a nimble mind," which gives him the answer to the riddle, and also to the other three riddles.⁵¹ TC has cheated, but without meaning to. Why did he want to commit suicide, why did he have to cheat? Quite simply, because he does not know anything, doesn't have any positive knowledge and is incapable of embarking on any research: his competence is strictly a rhetorical one, in other words linguistic and psychological, a matter of lexis and pathos. He is never at a loss for an answer, and is frightfully good at entangling his interlocutor in his own fantasy, but those are his only skills.

This interpretation can also be derived from two other sequences, one before, the other after the one we have just considered. When the king defies TC to trick him (the sethey having just boasted that TC would trick the very Tevada), TC answers that he needs his book of lies. However, he has no such book, and doesn't derive his skill from any book: we are never told that he has had any master or teacher, or that he has read any book whatsoever. The only books which appear in the narrative are pseudo-Satra, covered with a crabby scrawl, which the Chinese soothsayers, not being the subtlest of interpreters, will be unable to read, or read into, around or away. And when TC, just before his death, entrusts his secret to the king, all they amount to is a few recipes, or perhaps food taboos. So what TC tells his king is not the secret of his success as an interpreter, but some pointless prattle. And yet... that is a new, and ultimate, trick of TC's, since everyone imagines that he has imparted some knowledge to the king: the knowledge which made him invulnerable. He hasn't imparted any substantive secret, only the form of the secret. As everyone believes this to be the case, it is as though it were true, and, according to our text, it is by virtue of this nonexistent secret, which is universally held to exist, "that follows the respectful fear we still have towards the king" (M: 97).⁵² This fear comes from a knowledge which everyone thinks TC has given the king: if TC has no biological son, the king is his symbolic son. But we, the readers of this last but one sequence of TC, know full well that TC has imparted no knowledge to the king, who is utterly clueless as to the significance of the "secret", and what is more, we know that TC has never had the slightest empirical or theoretical knowledge: not his any knowledge that can be taught in schools, by masters, any *mathèma*. His knowledge is a matter of know-how, knowing how to handle, how to manage, a skill by which he finds in the heart of every unfavorable situation the means by which he will get out of it. A skill by which the weak become strong, the strong weak, combined with an irrepressible desire always to come on top. Some classic concepts allow us to name, at least partially, this "knowledge" of TC's: rhetoric, sophistics, seduction (terms which are not necessarily pejorative), also imagination. You can also see it as coming within the realm of what Plato calls *poiètikè tekhnè*, practical knowledge whose aim is the manufacturing (not the acquisition: *ktètikè tekhnè*) of things, whether these things are artifacts, images, discourse, interpretations. But it is also something like the *aretè*, the *virtù* attributed since Aristotle (a.o. in the Italian Renaissance) to a good politician.⁵³ Except that TC, being fully confident in his universal capacity to get out of a tight spot and to lick the opposition, only thinks one stroke at a time: not only is he singularly lacking in positive knowledge or the ability to do research, but he is no planner, no Go player. Indeed the very fact that his response to a challenge, to an aggression on the part of the powerful, makes them hate and fear⁵⁴ him even more, hence challenge, aggress him all the more, forms the moving force of the diegesis. We could say, as the early Russian "formalists" would have, that a character such as TC had to be put together in order to motivate this development of the action.

Fishing for fishermen: TC as illegal legislator

After his first ambiguous exploit against the wily Chinese, who are not wily enough for him (especially when fate is on his side) TC is more than ever exposed to the king's fear cum hatred: someone who is so good at saving his throne might be equally good at seizing it.⁵⁵ The king sends him into internal exile, very far from his capital, in the region of the Great Lake (one of the two geographical details in the text), just as earlier he had sent him away from his palace, then his eyes.⁵⁶ The monarchy obviously only exercised limited control over those distant regions, just as communications with the center were limited. This being so, TC can easily claim that the king has appointed him "supreme leader of this region" (M: 76). He therefore sets about instituting some political order: finances, law (implicitly), surveying, naming—in that order.⁵⁷ We have to admit that he has pulled off his trick, since the names he has chosen are still in use nowadays. Of course, it is exactly the other way around, and the narrative here has an etiological function, as it does later on when it provides the origin of *noum banchcock* and of kites, or in version C, when it quite explicitly gives the origin of the Chinese in Cambodia. Also, it gives us an explanation of the origins of absolute monarchic power. **Thmenh Chey** is not an etiological narrative, but the etiological genre is one of the genres it shuffles together.

Punning on the meaning of one of the names he has invented, TC extorts huge taxes from the lake's fishermen, catching them in the net of his linguistic power. The fishermen complain to the king, TC claims that the legal, financial, administrative⁵⁸ order he has set up was all for the greater good of the kingdom. However, it seems obvious that, had this been the case, the king himself would have promulgated this order: the one instituted by TC was for his own personal use. This is perhaps the only time in the text when TC behaves as just another A Lev. If TC were really there as the king's representative, this would be a case of graft. David Chandler, in another article,⁵⁹ underlines the insurmountable dualism, in traditional Khmer society, between a rigorous, even rigid, but inapplicable, order based on Buddhism, and real everyday practice, which is entirely pragmatic and unrelated to those principles. It is a form of bricolage, as Lévi-Strauss would say, which ensures people's survival in the lacunae of the system: what is called, in economics as in art, the informal.⁶⁰

I have already mentioned two other moments of institution: when TC gives the king, and his descendants, the illegitimate legitimacy thanks to which they can continue to reign, and when the *sethey* teaches TC, who doesn't want to know, the law of exchange, the basis for the comparability of things of different types (a service: restoring the shuttle, and a salary: the rice cakes). Less explicitly, there is also the meso-sequence which shows TC "working" in the fields: by playing on the ambiguity of words /of boundaries, TC forces the *sethey* to lay down the boundary between agriculture and husbandry, between *chamcar* and pasture. But institution is also involved in the meeting between TC and Suos-Dey. They have chosen each other, after their verbal joust, without asking for anyone's opinion, bypassing Dadly, the vicar

and the mayor. TC however does subject himself, pro forma and after the event, to the whole pre-marital ritual, with all its categories of official intermediaries,⁶¹ who mostly appear in version C. This is more clearly an instance of the debunking of an institution, but TC's relationship (and that of the narrative as a whole) to the institutions which he founds or uses is always highly ambiguous. He exposes their illegitimacy, their weak points, their possible perversion,⁶² but at the same time he leaves them standing, however wobbly, and he occasionally leans on them, or buttresses them.

The meanings (if any) of meaning

Many other scenes and devices could be discussed, but as there isn't much time left I will simply analyze the main scene of interpretation, a double one: the second joust between TC and the Chinese. We could say, as a first approximation, that the first meso-sequence, in which the Chinese take the initiative, presents polysemy, the power of poly-interpretation, whereas the second one, initiated by TC, raises the question of asemy, of the boundary between sense and non-sense. However, we could also say that the first one raises the question of the power of ostension, of indiciality: pointing at things to define them—and of the limits of this power. But also of the power and limits of iconicity, of those signs which, in some manner, resemble the things they designate. And that the second meso-sequence deals with the limits of all semiology, of "sign-ness": can there be a sign where there is no intention?⁶³ Also, what is writing? But let us look at things in more detail. The first meso-sequence is divided in two. The first sequence, in turn, is divided in two: first TC has to respond to each Chinese riddle with a compatible counter-riddle - which presupposes that he always has at least some fore-understanding of the riddle which has been submitted to him, that he is aware of the field in which it operates. Only after this does the actual battle of interpretations start: each camp has to interpret the riddle of the other, knowing that the series of riddles forms a narrative string, a kind of story. The riddles, as I have already said, are either indicial or both indicial and iconic. Not a word is uttered, contrary to the first encounter (M: 74), where furthermore the things on which the riddles were based were physically present, not pointed at or represented.⁶⁴ The field in which the interpretations unfold, their isotopy, is that of cosmology, not of course an empirical or physico-mathematical cosmology, but a "metaphysical" and figurative one—whereas in the first encounter only purely terrestrial mathematics and sciences were involved. In fact, the story in this episode moves gradually from the limits of the visible cosmos (the sky) towards what for most pre-modern cosmologies constitutes the center: the earth, and the absolute point of view: man. The second sequence is even more silent, and like the first one it ends in a draw (M: 83). This time the gestures don't point towards the environs, but remain inside the bodies of the riddle setters; moreover, they are iconic rather than indicial. No interpretation is offered, and "the Chinese withdraw without saying a word," reduced to silence, the silence of powerlessness, as the *sethey* and the king had been so often, whereas like them,

and contrary to TC, they are officially empowered to speak. This gesturing will not however remain uninterpreted, but here TC alone will interpret for both sides of the dispute. He proffers for the whole string (a narrative made up of four interrelated riddles) three different interpretations, or rather three interpretations which move in different realms, or isotopies. To the chief of the bonzes, he talks about food, to the samdech chauvea about war, to the king about religion (or rather, about Buddhist "geography" and "history"). These three isotopies correspond to the three orders of Indo-European society according to Dumézil—or to the three types of citizens in Plato's *Politeia*: producers, warriors and philosophers/priests—can this be a coincidence? It is rather piquant that in this tripartition the bonze should find himself on the side of production... (or is it consumption?). This is however not unique to TC: in *Xien Meng* and *Sug khâm tu* too, bonzes are shown to be uncommonly fond of their food... and so are actual bonzes! Another point of interest in this multiplicity of interpretations is that TC, being a good sophist, fits his interpretations to his listeners, though being perverse he sees to it that each one is disturbing to its target. The listeners, sharing their interpretations, noticing that they are divergent, are as usual reduced to silence. They can't see that these interpretations in fact obey a very orderly polysemy, that they can easily be combined, are all not only possible, authorized by the text, but even "compossible."⁶⁵

In the second meso-sequence, TC has a riddle constructed (or rather, the precondition of his riddles: the writing in which they will purportedly be couched): this will be enough to rout the Chinese soothsayers, as they too are men of one interpretation only. What TC proposes to their shrewdness is very simply, a "crabby scrawl", senseless patterns "written" by crabs, but in a *mise en scène* which suggests that any schoolboy—any Khmer schoolboy at least—could read it without difficulty. Faced with this to them (and indeed to everyone) radically new writing, the Chinese find their act quite crabbed... These are people who either know or don't know, who either understand or don't understand, and in this case, clearly, they are in no position to know, or to understand, since this involuntary writing does no represent any object, any concept, anything preexisting.⁶⁶ In the face of non-sense, silence: TC on the contrary is hardly likely to be bothered by this non-sense, he is only stumped when faced with a perfectly univocal meaning (the watermelons). So he produces a whimsical, spurious interpretation (also quasi-unintelligible in version M—version C calls the crabbed writing "writing of Brahman-ism"⁶⁷), but the Chinese are completely hoodwinked.

There is no time left to talk about TC's other interpretive games, with his wife, his wife's parents, the mandarins, the Chinese king. Nor will I attempt to draw up a list, or a typology, of the rhetorical devices which TC uses, or the much shorter list of the devices which his opponents are able to use. Nor will I analyze TC's inventions, and show that, like his foundations, they are part of his interpretive activity. I will not indulge in the inevitable, delightful but fallacious game of application, of deciding what present-day character on the tragic

Khmer stage is like TC, like the king, like the mandarins, like the Chinese... everyone will have his list (and so of course, do I). On the other hand, many of the problems raised by the text, problems of juridicity, of legitimacy, of power, of resourcefulness, of conflicts and their modes of resolution... are still painfully open in Khmer society, and if *Thmenh Chey*—He who always has the last word does not in fact have the last word—the answer to these problems—it certainly does allow everyone, every Khmer to keep these questions open, alive. It also teaches us to be wary of last words - for TC's last word is always the next one, never the latest one.

To close this talk, without a conclusion, I will let someone speak who, in my tradition, has founded all technical discourse on literature, Aristotle, in his *Poetics* (59 a 4-8): "... the metaphorical is the most important by far. This alone cannot be acquired from someone else, and is an indication of genius. For to make metaphors well is to observe what is like."⁶⁸ And it is to see it where it is least evident, where crabs write, where elephants set sail, where kites cry out, where the pawns of chess come alive, where victories have teeth. Where the king's power resides in the place of a fish's scales.

Notes

1 This is the text of a lecture given in French under the auspices of the Ministry of Education of the State of Cambodia, in Phnom Penh, in June 1990. It was one of a series of about fifteen talks on literature, philosophy, and the methodology of literary criticism given at the Ministry, at the Research Institute or at the University of Phnom Penh in 1989-90, many of them with Elisabetta Cabassi. Perhaps I should add that these were as far as I know the first lectures on ideologically sensitive topics to be given by any Westerner in the State of Cambodia, that I was asked to give them, and that my freedom to talk as I liked on my own chosen topics was entirely unhampered. What you will read is an essentially unmodified translation of that talk, with its references to a certain context, and to a shared, French culture. I have added a few notes to the original text, including this one: this will be indicated by the abbreviation (AN). I wish to thank all the friends who made this lecture, and so many other things, possible, including Elisabetta Cabassi, Chum Nyrath, Ly Somony, Sann Lyda, Sar Kapun, Sun Hêng Mêng Chhchang, Yin Vantha, and many others. Ang Chouléan, who knows so much more about Khmer literature than I do, was also kind enough to come to my talk and give me a few comments. I would also like to thank three "local" friends: Peter Morris and Ben Kiernan for their practical help, and Dan Duffy for enticing me to translate my text. Finally, I wish to dedicate this to my many Khmer friends, in Cambodia and elsewhere: may they never be tricked again by the butchers of Choeng Ek, who may well have shared a few impostures with Thmenh Chey, but whose aims and methods otherwise make them "leftists in appearance, fascists in reality" (to borrow—the irony!—a Maoist turn of phrase).

2 In his *Contribution à l'histoire de la littérature khmère*, vol. I, p. 112, Khing Hoc Dy confirms that it is the best-known of all Khmer tales and legends. (AN)

3 To avoid boring repetitions, I will from now on call this the M version, while the version published in Cambodia will be the C version. I will also often shorten the protagonist's name as TC, the text as TC. There seem to be two other French translations, which I have not read: one by Aymonier, the other by Bitard. (I have now read Bitard's version, published in *France-Asie* 116-117 & 121-122, which largely coincides with M and/or C, and a summary by Guy Porée, in the special issue of *France-Asie*, 114-

115 "Présence du Cambodge", which contains an additional, fiercely misogynous, episode).

4 My friend Niem Darith has since given me a copy of the version which was used in schools in the UNBRO refugee camps... but as I can't read any Khmer...(AN)

5 My thanks to Vandy Kaonn for having given me a copy of his work.

6 Reissued by Cedoreck, 1984.

7 Some collections in French published in the early 70's by the Institut Bouddhique could still be found in Phnom Penh at Tuol Tum Pung market, and at the National Library, in the late 80's. There is also a remarkable collection of German translations, H. Nevermann's *Die Stadt der tausend Drachen* (1956). And collections in French by Pavie, Leclère, Monod, Martini and Bernard, Thierry, Khing Hoc Dy, all but one of them recently published or reissued. But next to nothing in English: there are two tiny collections put together by David Chandler, the first scholarly (*The Friends who tried to empty the sea: Eleven Cambodian Folk Stories*, 1976), the second for children (*Favourite Stories from Cambodia*, 1978—with 8 of the original 11 stories, and 4 additional ones), a story for children *Judge Rabbit and the Tree Spirit* (published by Children Book's Press in 1991), and another collection by Anthony Milne (*Mr. Basket Knife and other Khmer Folktales*, 1972) (AN)

8 The very name Thanonc(h)ai, or Dhananchaya (in a version edited by M.L.M. Bunnag which I was unable to locate) indicates that this is our Thnen Chey. In *A Kammu Story-listener's Tales*, Kristina Lindell also mentions a Pali cycle of Thanonchay Bandit (p.40). (AN)

9 See Viggo Brun: *Sug, the Trickster who fooled the Monk* (Curzon Press, Lund, 1976). This tale-cycle displays a number of striking similarities of motifs with TC, notably tricking a monk, and scatological episodes and language (both however much more prominent than in TC): a sequence in which Sug, despairing of solving riddles set by Bangkok people (every bit as dangerous as the Chinese!), tries to commit suicide by drowning, fails and overhears the Bangkok people explaining the riddle, one about seeds in watermelons as in TC (but in this case the smaller melon has more seeds); one in which he claims, to the king, that his power comes from books (whereas he is, like TC, illiterate), and, in a variant, crab writing. There is also the progression from easier to more difficult opponents, and the move from local to distant ones (but Sug doesn't visit them, they visit him). However, Sug is not in the least disinterested, and he has to rely much more on luck (or the "supernatural", when he understands the language of frogs). (AN)

10 See Kristina Lindell et al.: *A Kammu Story-Listener's Tales*, Curzon Press, Lund, 1977, especially tale 5, "Aay Caang Laak" (but also tales 1, 18-20). The introduction to tale 5 sketches many of the interconnections, but almost totally ignores the Khmer domain. (AN)

11 Also, quite a number of tales in what are euphemistically called (often, the better to eliminate them) "minorities". On these, see *Chants-Poèmes des monts et des eaux*, translated by Mircille Gansel (Paris, Sudestasic/UNESCO, 1986), in particular tales from the Rhadéc, Van Kieu, Katu, Mnong and Nung ethnic groups. Many of those groups speak languages of the Môn-Khmer family. Also, a Swedish study and collection, *A Kammu Story-Listener's Tales*, by Kristina Lindell, Jan-Ojvind Swahn and Damrong Tayanin (Curzon Press, Lund, 1977).

12 Coster-Wijsman's *Uilenspiegel-Verhalen in Indonesië* suggests similarities (or influences) in Indonesia (I have not read that book). (AN)

13 On which see the classic works of Eric Hobsbawm. (AN)

14 As I recall, the main question, coming from a professor of Khmer literature at the University of Phnom Penh, concerned the prevailing Marxist interpretation of the text, which I said seemed to me correct as far as it went, but a bit reductive, undialectical. (AN)

15 See his collection of essays *Culture and Practical Reason* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1976). The semiotic reason explored in Eco and Sebeok's *The Sign of Three* also comes to mind.

16 In the classic work which he co-authored with Evelyne Maspero, *Moeurs et coutumes des Khmers*, Guy Porée claims that "Sganarelle devenait alors un frère de ce filou de Thmen Chey, héros de nombreux contes, qui joue des tours pendables à chacun, à commencer par son père et sa mère." (p.254). My reason for quoting this is not that it dangerously trivializes our text (which it does), but that it seems to mix the fatherless Thmenh Chey up with A Lev. In "Personnages comiques des contes populaires" (*France-Asie* 114-115, p.460) the same Porée equates him with Arlequin, A Lev with Guignol, A Chak Smok with Pierrot ... the urge to assimilate, or, as Hanke has called it, the misery of comparing.

17 Another interpretive scheme could be used: TC's is the in(de)finite desire of primary narcissism, before the law of the father institutes a limited enjoyment. In a sense, TC is the "pervert" who always plays with the law, tricks it and pays lip service to it. Obviously, more could, and should be said in this connexion, but it is not my object—and I am, again, incompetent. For some suggestive views on the links between perversion and politics, see Rosolato et al.: *Le Désir et la perversion*. (AN)

18 Though this simple, everyday greeting actually means "prosperity, good fortune" (see Khing Hoc Dy: *Contribution à l'Histoire de la littérature khmère*, p.230). (AN)

19 See Khing Hoc Dy: "Notes sur le thème de la femme "marquée de signes" dans la littérature populaire khmère", *Cahiers de l'Asie du Sud-Est*, n°2, 1977, pp.15-43. (AN)

20 And his wife seems to become just another female, tamed by marriage. Given the Khmer belief in the infiniteness of woman's desire (oral communication from Judy Ledgerwood), it takes the infinite (or transfinite?) desire of TC to impose a law, a boundary on this dangerous creature. So in a sense this "etiological" episode founds the circumscription of women within the home, the domestication of that wild animal within the bounds of matrimony... or so men would like to think! (AN)

21 It would seem that in some versions TC does actually become king: this at any rate is what Judith Jacobs writes in the Thmenh Chey entry of the *Dictionary of Oriental Literatures* (vol.II, p.159). (AN)

22 This weak structure is something Aristotle has taught us to despise (see *Poetics*, 51b33-52a1, 59a17-59b1), and hard-core structuralists (but not Shklovskii or Barthes) would agree. Pierre Bitard considers that TC is in the same class as *Lazarillo de Tormes*, and quotes it at the start of his translation. (AN)

23 I was stating this on the basis of the quite loosely organized Institut Bouddhique version. To be fair, I should say that this version does have some minimal rules of succession, such as trick-counter-trick (attempted revenge)—second (counter-counter-) trick; also the fact that men first appear among the hare's beneficiaries in sequence 15, surely a progression of some sort, and the fact that sequences 24-26 involve rather more elaborate, semiotic, TC-like skills than the rest. I have since read another version, in a French anthology for children, Maurice Percheron's *Contes et légendes d'Indochine* (Nathan, 1955), which is more tightly organized. It has a frame explaining in what mythic space-time the story originates, and how its truth is established by the presence of Sophea's image on the Cambodian seal of justice, and the tales themselves move up from crocodile to tiger to man (with a clear explanation of why the hare was promoted to being a judge in men's affairs). However, this may be a rationalization, superimposed on a looser "original" structure. (AN)

24 Called by the Russian Formalists "staircase-like structure", one of the common forms of *zamedlenie*, or retardation. (AN)

25 This seems to outline a hierarchy between different classes of servants: we could on the basis of TC and other stories sketch

a description of Khmer society at the time when the stories were conceived ..., if, that is, we can be sure that they are "true" pictures of their society.

26 I am not suggesting that the anonymous Khmer tellers had read Hegel, nor even that Hegel knew about oral Khmer literature... but was there anything that Hegel didn't know?

27 Of course, reduplication of episodes can serve a narrative purpose: that of delaying, of creating suspense. In folk tales, as Shklovskit has shown (*O Teorii Prozy*, 1925) episodes are often triplicated, which can also, at the actantial level, show how brave, persistent, etc. the hero is. And the additional episode, at the level of informants, indicates that in the world of the text, there were buffalo fights as well as cock fights, and presumably, that they were more prestigious (since this comes *after* the cock fight). (AN)

28 In a text which remains essential, "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits" (English translation in *New Literary History* 6), Roland Barthes shows how the lower levels of description are integrated, fit into the higher levels. The mode of enunciation, of narration of the narrative is the highest level, unless that is we leave the narrative proper and see how it is integrated in other structures, discursive formations (genres) and social formations. See also, on this, Gérard Genette's *Figures III* (English translation as *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*). These, and other essential works in literary theory, can be read at the Research Institute and the Publishing House of the Ministry of Education, and at the University of Phnom Penh.

29 This has not prevented the author of the Institut d'Etudes Boudhiques translation of *Sophea Tonsai* (Histoires du Juge Lièvre), Pierre Midan, from calling it a "roman", a novel.

30 On this genre, a very common one in the Khmer tradition, see Solange Bernard: *Le Cambodge des contes*, pp.73-74, and chapters III, IV and V.

31 The phrase "effet de réel" was coined by Roland Barthes to designate the overabundant, narratively non-functional, or even dysfunctional, details of the realistic novel, whose function is to make the whole story look real. See the translation of that essay in Tzvetan Todorov ed., *French Literary Theory*.

32 According to Cirlot, four is "Symbolic of the earth, of terrestrial space, of the human situation, of the external, natural limits of the 'minimum' awareness, of totality and, finally, of rational organization. It is equated with the square and the cube, and the cross representing the four seasons and the points of the compass.(...) It is the number associated with tangible achievement and with the Elements." (*Dictionary of Symbols*, p.232-33). The Shambhala *Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* mentions quite a few Buddhist foursooms: Four certainties, Four famous mountains, Four foundations of mindfulness, Four immeasurables, Four noble truths, Four perfect exertions, Four stages of absorption and Four stages of formlessness (pp.109-10). In two essays on the Bayon (*France-Asie* vol.XII, pp.343 and 672, Henri Marchal and G. Coedes-Herzog underline the link between the number four, the points of the compass, and the country as a whole... could TC be suggesting that his fight against the Chinese is on behalf of the whole *srok khmaer*? Solange Thierry (*op.cit.*, p.134, writes: "Quant aux 4 directions (ou 4 directions + le centre, ou 8 directions), il s'agit là d'un thème associé au pouvoir souverain, qu'il soit divin, bouddhique ou royal." ... TC usurping the king's power, again?(AN)

33 The breakthroughs of structuralism, semiology and deconstruction have made us familiar with the idea that the real can be constituted, structured as text, or discourse—or indeed, in the more radical forms of these "theories," that the real is always already language. As an exemplary observer, François Wahl, put it: "Comme remarquait un jour Lacan, la simple présence d'objets dans une tombe est déjà une forme de discours."

34 This *différance* of interpretation of course extends to the present text. (AN)

35 These two mentions of the Tevada are absent from the C version, as is the adjective "prophetic" with which M describes the dream. Could this be a case of anti-religious censorship, before Buddhism became the state religion of Cambodia (Revised Constitution of 1 May 1989)?

36 Of course, in a sense, he is the essence of opportunism: he has the knack of seizing the opportunity, the *kairos*, the *deon*, of seeing in a flash, in every situation which presents itself, what course he has to follow to rout his adversary. However, his is not conventional opportunism, or careerism, which always aims at power, venality, or both. If TC doesn't embody utilitarian courtliness, this *ethos* is well represented in the text: the *sethey*, the mandarins, and in C the courtesans are all perfect sycophants. On the other hand, there isn't a single character in the narrative who represents truth, justice, morals: neither political nor religious power (whose clear interdependence is not thematized, as it goes without saying) represent anything other than tradition, the unquestioned, unconscious of itself locus of the good, of legitimacy in societies which are therefore called "traditional". Of course, such a tradition only derives its "naturalness" from the fact that no-one questions it, that its recognition goes without saying, without thinking: no-one can imagine that things might be different: other cultures, if known, and if considered as fully human, are simply different ontological entities—of course crocodiles don't fly! We can therefore consider that TC, by making this tradition visible, by proposing ludic, imaginative variations on the meaning of words and customs, establishes the conditions of dissolution of that tradition. What he puts in its place is not clearly defined by the text, but it would seem to be a more absolute monarchy (through weakening of what we call, in a highly dubious analogy, "feudalism"), no longer founded on tradition (a form of naturality), but on the transmission of a form of transcendence (the secret slipped into the king's ear). An empty transcendence, obviously, and one which can therefore be saturated, accomplished by all fears, all desires of subjects and courtiers.

37 This is type 1693 in Aarne-Thompson: *The Types of the folktale*, p.480. (AN)

38 This is the central mechanism which Claude Reichler has identified in his book *La Diabolie. La séduction, la renardie, l'écriture*: cunning is only possible because the duplicity which it wields is already at work in the law itself.

39 This dirty trick is also played by Xien Meng on his master, Guru Paramarta. (AN)

40 This places TC in the category of "archie Debunkers", which includes Derrida and Nietzsche (and de Man): see Paul de Man: *Allegories of reading*, pp.9-10. (AN)

41 I would like to add here something which I did not mention in the talk: Prime Minister Hun Sen was then often compared to Thmenh Chey — referring among others to his humble origins and the skill (and the twinkle in his eye) with which he dealt with kings and emperors. (AN)

42 Even though he has never gone to school, doesn't know anything—nothing but the powers, the spells of language. But who ever said that you had to go to school to be an intellectual, or that those who do often become intellectuals? Besides, intellectuals "proper" wouldn't often have TC's courage in the face of authority. (AN)

43 The greek word *kratos* means power, and can be found in the suffix of a number of words used in a great many languages: democracy, aristocracy, plutocracy, technocracy, bureaucracy, statoracy,... Another, quasi-synonymous, Greek word, *arkhé*, has given anarchy, monarchy (but also archbishop, archeology, archaic etc.). Dictatorship comes from latin, a rare exception in that field... and "*democradura*", a portmanteau word, is of recent Latin American (Argentinian) coinage (let us hope that it doesn't have any relevance in post-1993 Cambodia).

44 David Chandler, in a paper on the ritual aspects of the reign of king Ang Duong (also an important figure in the history of Khmer literature), shows that Cambodia was first and foremost

a theatre-state (a term borrowed from the anthropologist Clifford Geertz), in which the king essentially has to play the roles of mediator, master of names and of protocol.

45 As Solange Thierry shows (*op. cit.*), the forest (and the mountain), contrary to the *srok* (a word which can also designate a district, or the whole country. *Srok* Khmer), does not belong to humans: it is the realm of divine and demonic beings (more recently, of the Khmer Rouge). This is actually true in many other cultures. (AN)

46 A horse taken from the king's chessboard, a chick which routs the king's cock: TC not only answers the challenge, but his answer is itself a challenge, a challenge which the king is unable to answer. Indeed it is plausible, in this narrative space in which everything can be transformed into anything else—though there is no religious magic, only a magic of rhetoric, of signs—that the king's cock, through a combination of metaphor and metonymy, is the king himself, whereas the chick, through the same tropic transformation, is TC. The king-cock is thus ridiculed by the TC-cockerel.

47 This is probably one of the reasons why man, who is never sufficiently sure of his masculinity, his virility, invented cock fights. Likewise, bull fights... or beating one's wife. What man really manifests in all these cases is his barbarism.

48 Clerics victimised by tricksters or otherwise mocked are frequent in folk literature (Aarne-Thompson 1725-1849*), and in the region, one could think of A Lev, Xien Meng, Sug. (AN)

49 TC as interpreter often reminds us of the points or conceits of the mannerist poets of the 16th-17th c. in Europe, those scholarly euphuists, *précieux et précieuses*... that really takes the cake, when you think that TC never set foot in a school.

50 In version C, the logic of the answer is even clearer, since the series (1, 2, 3) of the seeds is congruent with the series of the sizes of the water melons: the smallest one has 1 seed, the middle one 2, the largest one 3.

51 These other riddles are more his line, since they are solved by a pun. However, they come within the purview of some basic metaphysical-mathematical problems: continuous/discontinuous, divisibility, and the link between real and representation.

52 This conclusion does not appear in version C, but the logic of transmission of power through transmission of an alleged knowledge is the same.

53 "Good" here not in a moral sense, but to designate a politician who by a combination of prudence and capacity to decide (also to decide quickly, in critical moments) carries out his task to the greatest advantage of the *res publica*.

54 I know that TC's feats also arouse admiration, but it is an admiration which, mixed as it is with hatred and fear (hatred because of fear) only serves to intensify those negative emotions. "In times past... in the kingdom of Tep Borey" it was not good to arouse the admiration of one's king... as for the present time...

55 Since the Renaissance at least, subtle connoisseurs have noticed how dangerous it is for a courtier to be *visibly* cleverer than the king. Vide Baltasar Gracian, indispensable complement of Machiavelli and Castiglione.

56 TC's demotions are at the same time banishments away from the centre of power. In the connotative geography of the text, the periphery is the bottom, the centre is the top - as is generally the case, and as is the case in present-day Cambodia. All movement therefore takes place along two axes, in a 2-D metaphorical space.

57 In many traditions, maybe in all, naming, of human beings but also of animals and things, at least things of nature, has been invested with great solemnity, with an aura of secrecy. This by virtue of a mimological semiology, for which the word resembles/must resemble that thing which it designates, or indeed is the thing itself. To know the name of a thing is tantamount to having power over it. In our tradition, which in spite of everything remains partly a biblical one, Genesis comes to mind, with the authorisation it seems to give us to do what we like with our environment—which is exactly what we have done. We could see the positive aspect of this phenomenon, as Hegel

does: "Through the name, the object as *being* is born out of the I. This is the first *creative* power which the spirit exercises. Adam gave all things a name. That is the right of majesty and first taking possession of all nature or the creation of the latter out of the spirit. Logos (is) reason, *essence* of things and discourse, *sake* (*Sache*) and *saying* (*Sage*), category." (*Jenaer Realphilosophie*, ed. by Johannes Hoffmeister, Felix Meiner, Hamburg—my translation). Existentialism, being less confident that reality gets anything out of it, has said: "The word is the murder of the thing." Mastery cadaverizes: what good is it to master things if through that mastery they cease to be?

58 The order in which those realms are listed is different from that in their first mention, which is not unimportant: the place of the law in that system is crucial. No less crucial is the difference in the place, and the weight, of finances. Another point which deserves mention is the total absence of education as an area of administration. In the founding work of the philosophical problematic in Europe, Plato's *Politeia*, education (albeit that of the *guards*, not of the population as a whole) is the touchstone of the whole construction of the ideal *polis* (a rather despotic, if not totalitarian one: education is brainwashing ... but of course it is an *enlightened* despotism).

59 "Songs at the Edge of the Forest: Perception of Order in Three Cambodian Texts", collected in the volume *Moral order and the Question of Change* (Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, New Haven, 1982).

60 This should be qualified: on the one hand no one could claim that Western societies, for instance, have ever functioned on the basis of Christian principles (or any of the numerous interpretations thereof ... that is, short of casuistry!), or on the basis of any other "grand récit". On the other hand, I don't think that dualism exhausts the whole of Cambodian behaviour: pre-Buddhist "superstitions" (as we call other people's, other times' religions) play an important role in everyday life.

61 Matchmakers, like the *hora* and the Chinese soothsayers, can be considered to belong to a more general category of professional interpreters (and intermediaries), whom TC reveals to be all useless, incompetent or malevolent.

62 Within the context of a "traditional" society, he weakens them simply by showing that they haven't always been there, that they are not natural (in the current lingo: that they are *constructed*), or founded by some supernatural being or event (such as the white elephants which choose the site of a city in some Khmer etiological tales). (AN)

63 A problem raised in Eco's *Trattato di Semiotica generale*. (AN)

64 We had in this first series a kind of mixed semiology (as in comic strips, film, etc.), with on the one hand words, on the other sign-things. In the last riddle of that series, the thing is not supposed to be unveiled or cut, but manufactured (and what has to be manufactured is a material representation).

65 We could bring into play Heidegger's distinction (in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*) between *mehrdeutig* and *vieldeutig*, or that of Derrida between polysemy and dissemination. TC is here very much on the side of *Mehrdeutigkeit*, of polysemy, of unity within multiplicity. But even that is too much for his one-track opponents.

66 Though we can't rule out that an ingenious mathematician à la Thom could establish the law of a crab's movement, or even of those of a group of *n* crabs on a given surface. But of course he would be looking for a law, a scientific, causal explanation, not for an understanding, a meaning.

67 I should add that for the Khmers their writing is not just something instrumental, but something unique and precious, and a major embodiment of what it is to be Khmer - and traditionally it was considered to be a gift from the gods (cf. Khing, *op.cit.* p.6). (AN)

68 Based on the translation by Richard Janko (Hackett publishing Company, Indianapolis, 1987). TC is not only good at *making* metaphors, also at *baring* them, *reviving* them, *literalizing* them. (AN)

POETRY by LENARD D. MOORE

A Hum in the Living Room

One morning Daddy, just home from Vietnam,
 came in the living room and sat in his chair.
 I sat waiting on the shabby stool,
 hair clippers in my hand.
 I turned the clippers on
 before handing it to him.
 It hummed like honeybees.
 He jerked back against the chair.
 It was the first time
 he'd heard it hum in a year.
 How terrible to see his face turn red,
 and hear him gasping.
 He gradually straightened up,
 asked me to hold my head still,
 and considered the part he wanted to cut.
 I turned around on the stool,
 frightened, squinting,
 dreading the next haircut.

Grandmother on the Porch

A month after Father left us in khakis,
 she came to visit us.
 Words were fewer than usual.
 All day she sat on the porch
 facing the thick field of wavering corn.
 When Mother went into the house to cook,
 she turned toward me.
 She whispered, "I keep thinking
 of your Daddy in Vietnam."
 I pushed my nine-year-old hands into my pockets
 and said, "Me, too. I want him
 to take me fishing again."
 She dabbed her eyes and said,
 "My son must have us on his mind."
 Mother came to the door and stood,
 with flour on her hands.
 "If Daddy can't be here," I said,
 "Why can't I be him?"
 Grandmother's eyes were a blank.

My Father Leaves for Vietnam

When my father let loose my mother
 from his outstretched arms,
 he stared into her eyes,
 as if wanting to see his pain.
 I had never seen him cry.
 His eyes dammed the water.
 I felt my mother's heart drumming in me.
 He looked down and
 whispered in my ear, "I'll be back,
 don't be afraid,"

then he turned away.
 He boarded the Greyhound.
 I held my mother's hand and looked
 at him climbing the steps.
 He sat and hung his hand out the window,
 I watched the bus fade.
 I have never understood why he had to go,
 although my mother cupped me in her arms,
 as if she still could reach my father.

What Was Said on the Porch

When I was nine
 my father stood
 on the wooden steps of our porch
 while the leaves of the maple
 at the roadside
 fell in whispers.
 He thoughtfully asked my great uncle
 to take care of Chicken.
 Father had always called Mother "Chicken."
 "Of course," Great Uncle said,
 "I'll look out for my niece"
 and glanced down at me.
 I wanted to answer *I'll take care
 of Mother*, but I knew my place.
 "I don't know what Vietnam will be like,"
 father told him, "I just don't know."
 Great uncle turned his gaze
 to the wind chimes that hung from the roof,
 hat tilted the way of the wind,
 and cigar burning red.
 Father's eyes were red from crying,
 his hands tucked in his pockets
 as a change of air moved
 between Great uncle and him.

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IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST: MIAs AND THE Body Politic

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The obsession to retrieve the remains of U.S. soldiers from Viet Nam points to a resurgence of a pattern of reifying the body politic during a crisis of political legitimation. The genuine and cross-cultural (one is tempted to use the term "ubiquitous") concern with proper disposal of the dead can be observed in as diverse phenomena as *Antigone* on the one hand, and, on the other, recent Native American victories in their protest against researchers' disrespectful appropriation of their ancestral remains. However, far from being a "universal" feature which operates similarly across the cultural board and around the world, care of the dead, and particularly in this case the war dead, consistently reflects and constitutes an instance of the dynamics of each culture.

In the context, therefore, of contemporary American politics, public phenomena such as the Rambo films, professional athlete Gary Gaetti's fixation on the MIA/POW issue, the fetishization of the presidents' bodies, and the anatomical tropes that creep into media discourse on domestic and foreign policy must be read with an eye toward our particular social situation. When an imperial power is embattled, when an economy threatens collapse, a wild scramble to salvage some kind of certainty ensues, and the physical body emerges as an icon to which ideological significance can be attached. National paranoia and a corollary self-aggrandizement both increase, and questions of boundary play themselves out on the fetishized body. The following discussion will touch not only upon the MIA phenomenon, but also upon other contemporary instances of physicalizing the body politic and separating national ideology from real bodies. I will note primarily the enormous publicity given to former president Reagan's health, and the way medico-physical language and imagery permeate the discourse of both foreign and domestic policy.

What appears to be a brief digression into a twentieth-century interpretation of medieval politics of the body and bodies politic will serve to outline the primary concept informing my discussion. Historically and culturally, the United States is far from medieval Europe. At that time, the very nascent concepts of nationalism and national leadership needed an ideology of the body to help these concepts appear "natural;" currently, the twilight of capitalism and nationalism demands an analogous ideology, though this time around it is reactively defensive rather than actively constructive. However, the way in which this medieval constellation of ideas comes to us makes it an appropriate template against which to consider recent events. Ernst Kantorowicz, an Eastern European Jew teaching at Berkeley during the 1940s and 1950s—and then dismissed for spearheading opposition to the compulsory loyalty oath—exhaustively explored this physicalizing of politics in his "study of medieval

political theology," *The King's Two Bodies*. An enormous compendium of anecdotes, images, and literary and historical detail, *The King's Two Bodies* examines the medieval and Renaissance notion of the complex and at times mystical conjunction of the ruler's natural body with his spiritual body—in other words, the body politic.

In the context of Kantorowicz's own experience as a Jew exiled from Europe during the expansion of the Third Reich, one hidden agenda in his project was to demystify the spiritually rationalized totalitarianism invested in national politics—a totalitarianism, that is, effected through conflating spiritual authority with the person of the head of state, and the integrity of the nation with racial and ideological "purity." This conflation could be said to have reached its modern apex in the symbolically charged person of Adolf Hitler, but was also resurfacing in Kantorowicz's adopted nation, the United States, in the anticommunist discourse dominating the postwar period. Kantorowicz speaks euphemistically of the German 1930s and the American 1950s as dominated by "the weirdest dogmas... in which political theologisms became genuine obsessions defying... the rudiments of human and political reason." (viii) Reconstructing medieval history in the light of mid twentieth-century concerns, Kantorowicz illuminates the times in which he wrote, and we in turn are not indulging in arbitrary anachronistic comparison to apply his analysis to the 1980s.

According to this Cold War text, the fiction of the King's Two Bodies as it operated in medieval legal and political life was a versatile concept which could be interpreted in wildly divergent ways, depending primarily—of course—on the interests of the state. At times the two bodies were conceived of as separable. Kantorowicz quotes Edmund Plowden, the Elizabethan lawyer, who articulates seemingly contradictory positions in the same text. On the one hand:

The King has in him two bodies, a Body natural and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of policy and government... and this body is utterly void of Infancy, and Old Age, and other natural defects and imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to... (9).

To illustrate this version of the concept, Kantorowicz cites the case in which peasants had to pay a fee on the natural death of the king even though his kingship was considered immortal; and also the case of the English Revolution, in which the Parliament could invoke the spiritual king's leadership in taking up arms against Charles, the King's natural incarnation.

On the other hand, sometimes these two are not so sharply distinguishable. The two kings could be conflated such that they were inseparable. Plowden also states:

[The King] has *not* a Body natural distinct and divided by itself from the Office and Dignity royal, but a Body natural and a Body politic *together indivisible*; and these two bodies are incorporated in one Person, and make one Body and not divers, that is the Body corporate in the Body natural, *et e contra* the Body natural in the Body corporate (9).

The perfection of the spiritual king redeemed any possible failing of the natural king—thus, for example, the infallibility and political omnipotence of children-kings.

We might look at a modern-day American instance of the bodying forth of a state in the person of its leader, and the corollary or contradictory situation in which the person of the leader comes to embody the state. We might observe that Johnson and Nixon were each forced to step down because their conduct was not worthy of the spiritual Presidency. Conversely, even Reagan's political enemies in government have played down his possible role in Contra-Gate because he has so *successfully identified his person with the office of President* that it is seriously feared that any condemnation of Reagan would lead to mass cynicism and public loss of faith in the Presidency itself. Another more humorous and bluntly physical comparison comes to mind: the public ridicule that followed Johnson's display of his appendectomy scar stands in neat juxtaposition with the noble cast of Reagan's highly touted drug test urinalysis. An acknowledgement of Presidential physicality is undignified in the first instance and morally praiseworthy in the second. Johnson and Nixon both served during periods of great public questioning of authority; the Reagan era, on the other hand, has been characterized on the whole by public passivity and increased state control of public institutions.

From these examples, as from Kantorowicz's examples of the English Revolution versus the omnipotence of children kings, one could speculate that increased conceptual slippage between the physical ruler and the body politic points toward the possibility for change—and conversely, the more the two are conjoined into one static and reified whole, the more literalized metaphors of the body politic become in the person of the ruler, the more intransigent the state's hegemonic rule. Again, consider the example of Hitler. Ernst Kantorowicz is not the only European to point with urgency to the dangers of over-investment in the person of a leader: much more recently, Jochen Schulte-Sasse has written of Reagan as a supreme icon and media invention of a national ideology; who "incorporates, more than any other [cultural icon], both the cultural politics of neoconservatism and the powerful effect of high technology on culture;" later in the article Schulte-Sasse draws parallels between the Hands Across America media event and Nazi rallies, reminding his readers that his personal history as "someone with a German background" dictates the gravity of his remarks. (146)

However, this literalizing—the body politic as the leader's body—is not always a simple equation. It can take the form of compensatory relationship: faith in the

strong person of the leader can salvage a threatened nation. For instance, while former President Reagan's defiant survival of an assassination attempt, intestinal and skin cancer, and the natural vicissitudes of the aging process pointed toward his virility and even immortality, the body politic itself was in extreme danger. Its fragile health hung on the thread that is Central America. The "Central America crisis," with its coverage in the papers constantly accompanied by diagrams and maps of the isthmus, arrows and dots pointing out the capital of Nicaragua, contra campsites in Honduras, etc., merged with the crisis in Reagan's health, complete with diagrams of the president's colon, arrows and dots highlighting the offending polyps. Although Reagan himself insisted after each trip to the hospital that he is now a person who "had cancer," the nation was not out of the woods yet. Continuing to play on the myth, solidified by the assassination attempt, of the double vulnerability and immortality of the ruler's body, the President projected and displaced his condition onto the international scene, continuing to warn us of the far more dangerous "cancer of communism" spreading from seemingly harmless and tiny Managua, the polyp that will kill two continents if not subjected to certain "operations." On conventional atlas maps, Central America even looks like a long and skinny crumpled-up gut connecting the two larger continents. Without its health intact, North and South America may become incontinent. The consumers of these media images were urged to show the same outpouring of concern for the welfare of the body politic as for Reagan's natural body—in fact, the one should follow from the other. If we think of these diagrams of Reagan's colon superimposed over a map of the nation, Che Guevara's observation that we who live in the States live "in the belly of the beast" takes on a grotesque allegorical materiality.

Indestructible repositories for our national faith, both Reagan and Bush have survived skirmishes with facial skin cancer, smiling and sporting band-aids in TV appearances and on front pages. Exaggerated publicity of these minor problems both distracts from and is exactly analogous to the covert and unpublicized activities supported by the U.S. in Central America; according to John Stockwell, the highest ranking officer to defect from the CIA and author of the CIA exposé *In Search of Enemies*, one form of torture used by the Contras was to peel the facial skin off of Nicaraguan peasants as their families were forced to watch.

It is of special interest to point out here that national health care improvements were among the most successful undertakings of the Sandinista government; hence, health care workers, hospitals and people delivering pharmaceuticals and supplies overland to remote areas were special targets of the counterinsurgency. The counter-revolutionaries' brutal and preemptive "operations" were designed to prevent isolated parts of the Nicaraguan population from realizing the health benefits of the revolution. As faith in the good health of our individual leaders becomes itself a fetish, attacks on the health of others—even our own children, our indigent and our elderly, in the form of educational, welfare, medicare and medicaid cutbacks—unavoidably

accompany anticommunist vigilance and increased military spending.

In a further linguistic displacement, military enterprises are described in medical terms. The "retaliatory" air attack against Libya was repeatedly referred to in the media as a "surgical strike," carefully aimed at excising only the undesirable elements of that country—Khadafi's 15-month-old daughter, for example. The precision and cleanliness we were meant to infer from the medical metaphor was both underscored and belied by TV coverage of wounded Libyan children and adults in hospital beds—as if, somehow, the U.S. armed forces had been the doctors rather than the disease, operating on them with our bombers "for their own good"—after all, here they are recuperating. More recently and even more dramatically, the Persian Gulf War was touted as a clean and again, 'surgical' war—a designer war for television, as it were. Not only, we were told, were there no Iraqi casualties to speak of (literally, that is: the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis killed were not spoken about in the mainstream media); but American troops were spoken of as if they were virtually in no danger because the sophistication of their long-distance radar weaponry put them out of the range of retaliation. However, months after the war's end, though we still hear precious little about Iraqi suffering, many articles have appeared attesting to the post-traumatic stress suffered by members of the U.S. military. In this case, there were not images of Baghdad's wounded available to the general public, and news on American suffering was delayed until it could be safely dehistoricized and repackaged as a quasi-natural aftereffect of the stressful but responsible business-as-usual of a team of world-class Hippocrateses.

Accompanying the conflation of the ruler's body with the nation is a kind of national autism; the objectifying of the body politic renders that state incapable of acknowledging other states. If the country is one threatened and monolithic organism, other countries can only be perceived as either inert resources for our further survival or hostile obstacles to that survival. The United States alienates itself from other nations on the planet as it declares itself an outlaw state willing, if necessary to "go it alone" (the phrase has been used both by the U.S. defending its attack on Libya and by South Africa defending its emergency measures in the face of increased international pressure to end apartheid). As State Department spokespeople issued these claims of self-sufficiency, an obsession with national boundaries and the physical integrity of the nation sets in. Replicating on the national level the anatomical ideology encouraged by the religious right, the U.S. is to be born again into a state of *virgo intacta*, impenetrable from without—witness the increasingly stringent immigration laws and the paramilitary role of border patrols and the INS. (In connection with this point, I'd like to mention John Borneman's *Journal of Popular Culture* article, tellingly entitled "Emigrés as Bullets/Immigration as Penetration," an analysis of the homophobia in popular discourse surrounding the U.S. reception of the 1980s wave of Cuban immigrants.) Accompanying the terror of contamination and/or sexual penetration from without is a fear of escape from within. It's okay to leave your heart

in San Francisco, but not your bones in Viet Nam—actually, in light of the AIDS epidemic, the former is no longer advisable either. Tourists are urged to spend their dollars on native soil rather than wasting them in ungrateful foreign nations. We are terrorized by the domestic press' accounts of terrorism against U.S. citizens foolhardy enough to leave their own shores. We could be taken hostage at any moment by foreigners characterized by a San Francisco television commentator as "creeps whose names I can't even pronounce." As long as there are Americans, or even *parts* of Americans abroad, the American nation is not "whole."

Aside from the preoccupation with the physical condition and retrieval of the bodies of the Challenger crew, which overlapped roughly with the release of *Rambo*, MIAs and KIAs in Viet Nam constitute the most dramatic version of this phenomenon. According to the government the numbers of missing personnel in Viet Nam are far less than in other American wars of this century. Captain Douglas Clarke has pointed out, in his book *The Missing Man: Politics and the MIA*, that the number of MIAs initially unaccounted for in Viet Nam was two thousand five hundred forty-six, or 5% of the fatalities, compared to eight thousand, four hundred six in Korea, or about 25% of all deaths, and almost *eighty* thousand in WWII, which comprised 22% of fatalities. By 1978, moreover, the number of Viet Nam war MIAs had been reduced to 282, an almost insignificant number in material terms (7-11). And yet the furor continues to resurface periodically, fueled by such media extravaganzas as *Rambo*. Public interest in the MIAs, from the popularity of *Rambo* to the ongoing grief and uncertainty of the families of the missing, makes them a symbolically charged group. This symbolism currently serves the dominant conservatism. According to this world view, the shame of Viet Nam is not that we initially intervened—it is that we didn't win. Viet Nam is unfinished business because there was no clear victory for the United States; the conflict can thus be seen as open-ended and unresolved. The MIA issue, especially the possibility that some of the men are still living captives who need rescue, offers the perfect opening for a re-engagement of public indignation and a chance to resettle the case. Bruce Franklin's book *MIA, or, Mythmaking in America* (which has come out as this article goes to press) details the history of the post-Viet Nam war MIA/POW obsession. He documents the U.S. government's initial complicity in fostering the belief in living MIAs, the role of the presidents (from Nixon through Bush) in supporting or appearing for campaign purposes to support the cause, and the subsequent estrangement of the government from the MIA/POW institutions (National League of Families, *et al.*) and movement it created, as the latter institutions and spin-off organizations came to feel that 'bureaucratic officials' in Washington were as obfuscatory and insensitive as the new Viet government, and as repeated diplomatic and military forays into Viet Nam failed to unearth or reveal any signs of Americans, living or dead. (It is a current point of interest that Franklin also documents Ross Perot's pivotal role in establishing and supporting these MIA/POW institutions.)

In addition to the obvious and predominant reason for the prominence of MIA publicity, there is also a further implication that it is sacrilege to allow American remains to rest in a Third World—and socialist—country. This is true not simply because Viet Nam is a Third World socialist country, and not simply because the remains are proof of valorous service and thus their return, under the guidelines of the Geneva Convention, constitutes a way of honoring and accounting for the dead; those 282 unaccounted-for, missing people haunt us, pointing to a dispersal rather than a concentration, a threatening lack of closure not just of the war as event, but of physical boundaries. Those hypothetical ungathered bodies call our own bodies into question, and in particular, our civic and communal body, the body politic. The MIAs become the invisible Kings whose spiritual bodies will be restored only through the restoration of their physical remains. Even more poignant and unsettling than the image of dead bodies is the far-fetched but gnawing possibility that some of the living MIAs have *chosen* to stay in Communist territory. If these men are not truly insane, like Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*, their possible existence threatens our sense of ideological certitude.

It has often been observed that the Viet Nam War was the first television war. Although the images were primarily those of disfigured Viet rather than American bodies, television coverage offered a somewhat palpable, if still highly mediated, sense of the horrors of war. These nightly scenes of carnage in American livingrooms fueled the public indignation that eventually led to our withdrawal from the conflict. But again, through the peculiar hyperreal medium of television, that sense of horror was displaced and alienated. Physical suffering was made *spectacle* for the American public; body parts on display *became* the war. Bodies became fetishes that symbolized the war. Now, the sight of those Viet bodies on television is gone, and the horrors of war become emblemized by the invocation of American bodies left in Viet Nam. The indignation aroused against the war by the sight of maimed Asian bodies is transmuted into indignation at having lost the war; the absent and imagined bodies of our countrymen stand in metonymically for that loss.

Pertinent here is Minnesota Twins' baseman Gary Gaetti and his obsession with the MIA/POW issue. It is no accident, I believe, that a professional athlete, whose sole use value in the public eye and exchange value is his mortal and ever-aging body and whose body, moreover, is on constant public display, should choose this phantom cause as the only charity to which he will devote his energy and time. American athletes are, like soldiers, simultaneously valued and devalued as bodies in the interest of someone else's economic gain—as cannon fodder and/or spectacle, who, when they sign on for the job, effectively relinquish their right to bodily privacy and self-determination; who can be "traded," "stationed," drug-tested, drugged, and then superficially run through quick-fix treatments to get off drugs and who are otherwise deprived of free choice and movement. Behind a flimsy screen of hero worship, they are fundamentally treated as slaves. The displacement of Gaetti's concern over his own body (fetishized as intact and healthy) onto the apocryphal bodies of "forgotten servicemen" (fetishized as fragmented

and ghostly) speaks poignantly to professional sports as an elaborately glamorized form of physical abuse, neglect and exploitation. The two versions of fetishization, of course, mirror each other. Where is the "real" body Gaetti yearns for? What inner battlefield is it strewn over? What kind of care would heal it?

The imagistic splitting and displacement go on, taking form in the "weirdest... dogmas" and "genuine obsessions defying... the rudiments of human and political reason," snowballing into violent scenarios which would be hypocritical were they not so clearly symptoms of national psychic dysfunction. Far from warning against war, the mental image of unreturned servicemen and their physical condition has come to justify continued war against others. (I have to mention that *Platoon*, the first in a new generation of Viet Nam films, *does* attempt to recoup the critical potential of these metaphors. The most powerfully assaultive image of the movie is that of the "heroic"—that is, dope-smoking and peace-loving—Sgt. Elias abandoned to the mercies of the Viet Cong, reaching up to the U.S. Army helicopter as it takes off without him. In this case the abandonment of the good soldier epitomizes *not* American failure to win a just war, but American military insensitivity and fear as the *core* of our involvement in Viet Nam in the first place. However, even this film, which acknowledges ambivalence on the part of the American military and valorizes the soldiers who doubt the ethics of their involvement, does not grant the humanity of the 'enemy.' The dramatic scene of Elias' martyrdom/apotheosis relies for its emotional power on the assumption and filmic depiction of the North Vietnamese as an entomological swarm beyond human appeal).

As each individual "set of remains" sporadically returned to us by the Viet government has been carefully and separately examined to ensure its singularity and authenticity, the United States has supported the proliferation, in El Salvador, of mass graves of death squad victims, mutilated and dismembered beyond recognition and differentiation, strategically placed on well-traveled paths for shock effect. A member of the SEALs, an elite Navy group, testifies in Al Santoli's oral history of the Viet Nam war that this technique was tried in out in Viet Nam:

Each impact you had in that area was to be interpreted in terms of its terrorist potential, terrifying the people... We were looking for the maximum impact of that experience... Sometimes we'd paint green on their face, which would mean that the frogmen had been there... the body would be dismembered... like an ear would be missing or... the PRUs would... cut the liver out and take a bite out of it... Finding a loved one with a green face and stabbed—in the middle of the road—was incredible terror (219-220).

Certain innovative "anti-personnel" weapons designed by American weaponsmakers are intended to maim rather than kill—for instance, the land mine that explodes at waist level and maims the genitals—because "research has shown" that it is more demoralizing to a

population to confront mutilation and dismemberment, whether in the living or dead, on a daily basis than to lose lives. In fact, according to Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, this technique has a long history in Euro-America. The strategy of Indian genocide was to surprise and kill noncombatants—women and children—in order to demoralize combatant forces, whose warriorship *per se* was usually far superior to the Europeans'; this demoralization, of course, facilitated the step toward complete genocide of the perceived enemy.

Schulte-Sasse points out quite rightly that the attack on Libya was "not primarily an act of foreign policy" but one of domestic policy, through its media status as mass spectacle. (125-126) Our government seems to be applying assiduously this finding that public display of unwhole bodies undermines a citizenry's morale. By bombarding us with media coverage of the MIAs and the body parts of the Challenger victims, by fostering and playing on an obsession with remnants and relics of the torn-apart bodies of its own citizens, the state, in the interest of protecting us, trains against its own people a psychological version of the military techniques developed and tested in Southeast Asia and continually perfected in Latin America and elsewhere. As other nations get physically terrorized by wholesale slaughter, our television and movie screen and newspapers become weapons trained against us. A few selected images of noble carnage, talked about but rarely shown, are multiplied over and over by disproportionate media attention. (For example, the case of the MIAs and the Challenger crew: tragic dismemberment is portrayed as self-sacrifice.)

It could certainly be argued that the two forms of terrorism cannot be considered equivalent, and that actual physical violence poses a terror far greater than media violence. However, one could conjecture that the results have proven almost the opposite of what one might expect; in the Third World countries terrorized by physical U.S. violence, there has in fact been an increasingly strong anti-American resolve and more willingness toward organized oppositional activity; in the United States, the state terrorism disseminated against its own people through the media does seem to sap the public of its critical powers. Moreover, intentional or not, there is a projection of this terrorism onto foreign agency, such that, somehow, Khadafi and assorted Communists—Viet, Cuban, or Russian—end up implicated not only in the attack on Libya [(i.e., the Libyans "deserved it")] but even, indirectly, in such unrelated incidents as the Challenger disaster. (There was a brief and apocryphal rumor that Soviet sabotage was behind the blowup.)

What is the purpose in a nation's government demoralizing its own people? As in a dysfunctional nuclear family, the urge to protect becomes the compulsion to kill spirit and liveliness. It seems clear that the prevailing national atmosphere, "(expressions) of an enfeebled neoconservative social policy" (Schulte-Sasse: 126), feeds a public paranoia that would justify a so-called strong defense. The development of this defense would require further experimentation with weaponry and terrorist techniques, and more living laboratories to replace Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos. The cycle of aggression and

objectification is re-engaged. The frogman terrorist I quoted earlier concedes as much pointblank:

About a third of the guys that were in my unit are still in. They go out on secret operations. And it's only conjecture, but I know enough about the way that group works and I was in Guatemala this summer (1978 or 9?) and I was noticing how the guerillas work down there. The SEALs go into... Central America and Latin American countries and do the training for right-wing guerrilla or terrorist units. I have to conclude that all of that in Vietnam was an advanced bootcamp to train operatives for other kinds of... activities that the United States runs all over the world (213).

Each instance of dismemberment and mutilation finds its analogue, comically or horrifically psychologized, in the American media's fetishizing of American bodies and American boundaries.

It seems bitterly appropriate that the nation that first sundered the atom at the cost of 40,000 Japanese and Korean lives is now itself obsessed, in a dazzling feat of paranoid self-projection, with guarding the intactness not only of the "nuclear" family but of its own concretized concept of "indivisible" nationhood—exclusive, impermeable, a closed and suffocating system. This beast has no birth canal: which way out of the belly?

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WHAT DO WE WANT?

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Thursday, 16 June 1966. It was one of those long hot evenings that presage the beginning of another sultry Mississippi summer. Some eleven days earlier, James Meredith, who had enrolled under federal escort at the University of Mississippi in 1962, was shot and wounded from ambush while attempting to march across the state to prove that black people no longer had anything to fear. As he was recuperating in a Memphis hospital, members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), all of whom had been involved in organizing activity and getting black people registered to vote, moved to continue the march he had started.

Although small in numbers when it resumed (perhaps 150 people, writes Cleveland Sellers), the marchers knew that they were headed for SNCC territory and would have little difficulty turning out persons to hear the Reverend King, Floyd McKissick, Willie Ricks (who was responsible for shortening the phrase "Black Power for Black People" to "Black Power" the rallying cry that had been used to gather folks in earlier organizing efforts) or Stokely Carmichael for the nightly mass meetings at the end of a day's trek.

When they reached Greenwood, where Stokely was well known because of his work during the Freedom Summer campaign of 1964, they began to put up their tents on the grounds of a local black school as before only to be stopped by the state police who argued that they could not do so without permission of the local school board.

Disobeying the police order, Carmichael walked over put his hand on a tent and was immediately arrested along with two others and taken directly to jail where he was incarcerated for six hours and released only moments before the rally began.

Meanwhile a crowd of perhaps as many as three thousand persons (the *New York Times* and several other sources estimated the crowd at 600) had begun to assemble in the city park. The dominant feeling exhibited by the gathered throng was one of anger at the arrests—only the latest example of a long train of abuses that had been visited upon the black people of the Delta since their involuntary immigration to the area during slavery times. That feeling was exacerbated by the fiery speeches of McKissick, King and Ricks who preceded Carmichael to the hastily improvised platform, the back of a flatbed truck.

As Stokely moved forward to speak, he was greeted by a huge roar from the crowd which he acknowledged by waving a clenched fist in the air. "This is the twenty-seventh time I have been arrested," he told them, "and I ain't going to jail no more! The only way we gonna stop them white men from whuppin' us is to take over. We been saying freedom for six years and we ain't got nothin'. What we gonna start saying now is Black Power!" The

suddenly unified mass shouted back "BLACK POWER!" whereupon Willie Ricks leaped up beside Carmichael and shouted to the crowd: "What do you want?" "BLACK POWER!" "What do you want?" "BLACK POWER!" "What do you want?" "BLACK POWER!! BLACK POWER!!! BLACK POWER!!!!"

The national response was galvanic. Here, at last, was something that both southern Blacks and those in the northern colonial enclaves, who previously had not been able to directly relate to the modern Civil Rights Movement with its focus on *de jure* segregation and public accommodations discrimination (mitigated somewhat by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965), could pursue as a remedy for their problems—*viz*, the acquisition of power. For what was clear by that time was that the problems of black people whether North or South of the Mason-Dixon were being recognized as increasingly more similar in character. They lacked the power to influence the events which affected their life chances in some very immediate and direct ways.

Well do I remember a special Sunday airing of the NBC news program *Meet The Press* shortly after Carmichael's pronouncement which featured twelve black leaders seated in two tiers responding to questions from assembled media representatives.

Well, also, do I remember McKissick's response to a question to define this new, potentially explosive term. For as James Foreman was later to write, "Black Power was not defined adequately at the time. If it had been, the government and its Negroes might not have been able to co-opt the term. Here, we in SNCC must assume some blame, for the term received no precise definition from us. We were stunned and overwhelmed by its immediate success. The most radical definition of Black Power that we could give at the time was 'power for black people.' Thus the door was left open for opportunists to define the term in any manner they chose."

What McKissick said, and his remarks may have compounded the confusion evident in the country at large about the meaning of the term given the far-reaching effect of the mass media, was "anyone who has been as far as the sixth grade knows what black is. And anyone who has been as far as the sixth grade knows what power is. The problem arises when the two words are put together meaning we want what others who have gone before us want."

But is this all there is to Black Power? Is there nothing more; something that can carry the meaning of the concept beyond the simplistic we want what others who have gone before us want? These questions are especially crucial in light not only of the historical experiences of black people in the United States but also the prevailing cultural myth that we are somehow a more humane people untainted by an exclusionist, exploitative society in which we have been coercively socialized to espouse a particular value orientation, know our proper place and stay in it, but yet who would run the world differently if only we were in charge.

Power, as I have defined the term for my students over the years, is the ability to shape reality. It is

something we all possess irrespective of the energy and effort we put into denying that we are powerless. Implicit in this definition, moreover, is the notion that resistance to the exertion of that power can be overcome, bypassed or redirected contingent upon the manner of presentation and the patience one exhibits in pursuit of the correct timing for the realization of one's desires, all other things being equal.

The amount of power one possesses, however, is relative. That is it is a function of the position (the most important variable in the game of power) one holds in a group, organization, society, whatever, to which one belongs and from which one secures identity and a sense of what is possible.

Power is comprised of material things like money and property, and immaterial items like knowledge and prestige which are parceled out in a manner that seeks to preserve the differential distribution of opportunity so as to sustain the position and privileges of those who established the initial hierarchical ordering from which they directly benefit (how effectively this is the case is debatable given the normalcy of change in life and certain social institutions created to effect the illusion of certainty in an otherwise ambiguous world). This differential distribution is reinforced by the presence of lexan doors and glass ceilings keyed to certain ascriptive characteristics (e.g. race, gender) over which the petitioners have little, if any, influence. One may look through both to the other side but we can transit these barriers only after we have been reconstructed in accordance with the criteria of those who guard the portals of admittance to the kingdom. That is only after we have been properly vetted to insure that we are not a threat to the status quo. Clearly the objective here is one of preventing the present from becoming the past.

And finally, power differs from authority in that the latter is a socially legitimized, purposeful expression of control whose continuance is based on carefully cultivating the faith of the governed to believe that those they have "elected to represent" them have their best interests in mind as they exercise their granted powers. For as Kenneth Clark observed in 1969, "those in power seldom give up more than is necessary to maintain control; for control is requisite to the orderly exercise of authority."

Accordingly, in the days after Greenwood, numerous efforts were mounted to discredit, transform or destroy the newly enunciated concept (which in actuality had a long history of usage in the black community having been employed in years past by politicians and writers alike) and those who advocated Black Power "by associating it with violence and by making the use of violence illegitimate and contrary to the 'American way,'" irrespective of H. Rap Brown's prescient observation that "Violence is as American as cherry pie!"

There was a series of "Black Power Conferences" wherein the admitted and easily evident revolutionary (writes Foreman, the "government [knew] that whites [had] power and blacks [did] not" thus, the "idea of poor black people united for power represented a major threat to white America") thrust was muted or redirected. Captive black politicians were trotted out before the public who contended that only by electing more Negroes

to extant political institutions could Black Power be realized. Even Richard Nixon, after his election, embraced Black Power provided it was redefined as black capitalism, the ultimate co-optation, to which many of us responded with the question—"In what way are we benefitted if all that is done is change the color of the capitalists who exploit us?" Clearly, and painfully, what we learned from all of this was the efficacy with which incumbency usurps.

And now, some 26 years later, where are we? Granted, the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts have increased the number of black publicly elected officials. Granted also is the fact that there are now more middle class African Americans embracing the consumerist mentality than was the case before. But the real truth of the matter is that there are now more poor black people, more despair, more hunger, more imprisonment, more alienation abroad in this land of the free and home of the brave than before as well. The structures that oppress us, the mechanisms that limit our opportunities are still very much in place. America is still very much confounded and befuddled with the problem of race even as it seeks ever more futilely to integrate (a euphemism for the continuance of white supremacy) among its huddled masses the dispossessed of Southeast Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, all of whom want what others before them want.

And so we are left with the question of where do we go from here. What do we do now?

In a sense, what I believe we must do is return to some of those issues we raised along Highway 51 in Mississippi, in Harlem, Chicago, Watts and elsewhere. These were the issues of value and consciousness, vectors of the psychological realm which we but briefly explored and set aside for the moment because we could see at the time that they were complex and could not be reconciled overnight. We have to go back to the realization I noted above that all of us have power and that we must willfully assume this power before we can renew the quest of shaping our own destinies.

First, we must identify the ways in which we resist change in ourselves and the institutions we embrace. Second, we must more effectively articulate our needs as we see them not as they *are seen for us by others*. Third, we must return to the building of independent institutions in much the same fashion we did in the 60s but with the benefit, this time, of what we have learned from our failures of the past. For if we have learned nothing else it is that for all of its so-called democratic rhetoric, the United States is a society that fears and loathes difference. All too often difference is transformed into deviance which is then isolated, corralled and contained lest it contaminate the status quo. This is the hallmark of a loss-prevention oriented society not a progressive organization addressing itself to the developmental potential of its citizens. And finally, in concert with others, we must take up the challenge of effecting a more viable economic democracy in America. Not only is the present system incapable of creating enough jobs for all of those who want to work (to say nothing of desirable employment which is a wholly different issue altogether) the continued emphasis on material development at the

expense of human resource development is both short-sighted and laden with revolutionary implications. For in the words of the old-time religion—Does not the devil find work for idle fingers?

What do you think?

VIET NAM AFTER THE 7TH PARTY CONGRESS

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The Features of Doi Moi

The "doi moi" (renovation) policy, which the Vietnamese Communist Party (CPVN) adopted at its 6th Congress in December 1986, essentially denounces political pluralism but accepts extensive pluralism in economic fields. This striking contrast or contradiction between political conservatism and economic pragmatism differs basically from Gorbachev's *perestroika*, while sharing common features with China's reform policy.

A review of the past four-and-a-half years' implementation of the doi moi policy confirms Vietnam's basic stand in favor of retaining one-party rule in order to maintain political stability which is necessary to sustain economic viability. Doi moi is primarily the practice of "democracy" in economic fields and only secondarily the gradual introduction of political democracy. The 7th Party Congress, held in June 1991, was significant in that the party reconfirmed the continuation of this policy and for the fact that it decided on a new central leadership which would ensure its more effective implementation.

Doi moi clearly made certain achievements in the face of serious economic and social problems. This paper does not intend to deal with all political, economic, diplomatic, and social developments in Vietnam since the introduction of the doi moi policy. The writer's comprehensive assessment of it has been attempted elsewhere and his conclusion alone may be repeated: No matter which aspect of Vietnamese life is examined, be it political, economic, or social, the doi moi policy as applied to it would today face a crisis of bankruptcy, had there not been economic assistance from the West.¹

This writer is not a specialist in Vietnam's military affairs, but in this paper he will attempt to analyze its current military situation primarily from the standpoint of foreign and defense policies after the 7th Party Congress, because such an approach is useful and effective in articulating the problems connected with those policies. In his analysis, the writer has mainly relied upon periodicals put out by the Vietnamese Communist Party, the Vietnamese People's Army and the Foreign Ministry. His own trips to Vietnam, once or twice a year, have also provided him with a useful opportunity to gather information and make firsthand observations.

Doi Moi in Foreign Relations

Since November 1989 the Institute of International Relations under the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry has begun to produce a publication, called *Quan He Quoc Te* (International Relations). It is a public relations exercise aimed at improving the Ministry's image. It introduces a variety of international affairs and comments on them. At the same time it is a sophisticated magazine filled with a wide variety of international events reporting and photographs. Examples are Prince Ayanomiya's marriage to Kiko Kawashima and the inclusion of a large picture of a Japanese popular singer, Miho Nakayama, on the back cover of the same issue. In this writer's analysis, the central party leadership and the government reached consensus in the fall of 1989 on a shift to an open-door foreign policy. It is interesting to note that the launching of this new publication was timed to follow on this decision.

The January 1990 issue of the magazine contained an interview with Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, entitled, "The World Change and Our New Thinking." In the interview, Thach said as follows:

We should not hold on to the thinking of forty years ago in coping with the current changes in the world. The role of the socialist countries is very important, but it is not just the socialist camp that determines the development of human society. We should not be prejudiced about the accomplishments of the capitalist system for the last two hundred years. The class of exploiters was not a monster in history. We should recognize that they also played a certain useful role in the history. Marxism would not have been born without a bourgeoisie. Socialism would not have come into being without capitalism, the system that exploits people. This is historical dialecticism.²

He dared to make these remarks which angered the conservatives because, in effect, he wanted to say the following:

Today production capability is highly developed and is making the world into an integrated market. We do and should possess the conditions that can make complete use of these highly developed production capabilities of the world. In accordance with Politburo Resolution No. 13, which is a resolution about external relations, we must make full use of the world market, in order to enhance, within a relatively lively short period, our own economy which has fallen twenty to twenty-five years behind the world economy.

In the interview Nguyen Co Thach explained the features of Politburo Resolution No. 13 as follows:

The main cause of the enormous changes in socialist countries does not lie in an imperialist conspiracy, but in the fact that the capitalist

camp has overcome the world economic crises of 1970-1980 [the oil crisis] by applying the fruits of scientific and technological learning to production, by strengthening productivity and production capability, and by expanding international economic cooperation. Meanwhile, socialist countries have indulged themselves in the autarchical economic system of their own making, thus both failing to improve the living conditions of the people and causing them disappointment. [Summary by the writer.

Thach argued here that "the overall serious crises being faced by socialist countries" was the fault of their own economic mismanagement and rigid political systems, and not that of imperialist interference. The conservative elements within the Party's Central Committee and the Government could not have voiced such flexible and realistic views. According to Thach, "The implementation of Resolution No. 13 involved a year-and-a-half-long struggle between the old and the new thinking of the direction of foreign policy."

During the trip to Hanoi that this writer made in November-December 1989, he learned that it was only early in early December that this foreign policy controversy had finally been resolved. The 7th Plenum of the Party's Central Committee, held in August 1989, had adopted a resolution on foreign policy which accorded with the demands of the conservative forces. This was, simply, a dogmatic reiteration of Lenin's theory of imperialism.³

Whenever this writer visits Hanoi, he always makes a point of holding discussions with high-ranking scholars at the Institute of Social Sciences of Vietnam, a think-tank of the Central Committee. When I visited Hanoi in November-December 1989, I questioned members of the institute as to why the 7th Plenum of the Central Committee had adopted such an obsolete resolution, and argued that it was nonsense for the Party to make such anticapitalist pronouncements while expecting economic aid from the West. To my surprise, they expressed full agreement with my view, and told me that they had in fact conveyed to the Politburo their criticism of this anachronistic resolution. The Politburo had in turn replied that they were considering revising their line on the international situation. The Politburo's Resolution No. 13 had thus come into being.

In a speech before the National Assembly in late 1989, Vo Chi Cong, Chair of the Council of State, explained the cause of the crises being faced by all the socialist countries, using much the same logic as had been used in Resolution No. 13.⁴ This same argument also ran through an article entitled, "Some Observations on the State of Socialist Countries in 1989," published in the December 1989 issue of *Quan He Quoc Te*. It should be noted that in the above-mentioned interview Foreign Minister Thach talked as if Resolution No. 13 had been a victory for all those who had favored the change. Apparently, however, it was the chorus of those middle-ranking party cadres and intellectuals, who had strongly criticized and condemned the views of the Central Committee and the Government that had actually led to the realistic Resolution No. 13.

The foreign policy line adopted by the 7th Party Congress reaffirmed the spirit of Resolution No. 13. Yet Foreign Minister Thach, a realist, lost his position in the Politburo and was not renominated by the National Assembly who had met after the Party Congress. One can speculate that there are two reasons for this. One is that Thach was known to be anti-China. The other is that he had antagonized the conservative elements within the military, who had supported his open-door diplomacy and had reduced the size of the army. They had anticipated a lifting of the embargo, but had been gravely disappointed. The disarmament issue will be dealt with again in the third section. Still another reason for Thach's being ousted as Foreign Minister by the National Assembly was his alleged nepotism. He is said to have given favorable treatment to his relatives by employing them in his ministry.

There is also a view that his ouster was due in part to his being anti-Japanese. This writer thinks that this idea is way off the mark. I record the following to support my view. To the best of my knowledge, the foreign minister had never attended any party organized by the Japanese Embassy in Hanoi until the fall of 1990, when Michio Watanabe called upon Party Secretary Nguyen Van Linh and Prime Minister Do Muoi. The Embassy arranged a reception for Watanabe but did not send Thach an invitation to it. They were surprised, therefore, when Thach himself expressed a wish to, and did indeed attend, the reception. As far as this writer knows, and as is widely believed, the foreign minister has an affinity with Japan, which is said to go back to the anti-French guerrilla war years when he became comrades with an ex-Japanese Army soldier who joined the Vietnamese Army and fought beside him.

Doi Moi in National Defense Strategy and Its Aftereffects

The boldest part of the doi moi policy that the Nguyen Van Linh government implemented during its four years concerned "strategic adjustments with regard to national defense," namely, disarmament. *Tap Chi Cong San*, the mouthpiece of the Party's Central Committee, explained the policy as follows:

Doi moi has been implemented in military fields according to the doi moi line adopted by the 6th Party Congress. The method adopted was the "adjustment" or "revision of national defense strategy." This was a measure intended to meet the new situation and new tasks and to conform with doi moi in other fields.⁵

This policy stemmed from Politburo Resolution No. 2 on the tasks for national defense. Only recently was it learned that the resolution was adopted in mid-1987.⁶ However, its full text remains unpublished. It was the communiqué of the 6th Plenum of the 6th Party Congress, adopted in March 1989, that the newspapers and magazines of the Communist Party first referred to as dealing with adjustments in national defense strategy. The communiqué highlighted the following as one of the

achievements made under doi moi during the past two years:

We have shifted to the work of political security and defense that can meet the new situation, by adjusting national defense strategy, restricting missions at each battle field, reducing the size of troops, trimming the standing forces, and strengthening the lineup for a people's war.⁷

Subsequently, the Party and the People's Army published fragmentary information on this policy in their official newspapers and magazines, on five different occasions. If such information is put together, the primary outcome of the past four years' adjustments in national defense strategy appears to be the restraint of armed conflict along the Chinese border and in the South China Sea, the withdrawal of troops from Cambodia, the reduction of regular troops, the scaling down of the defense budget, the relocation of armed forces on a national scale, and the strengthening of the militia and self-defense troops. By the end of 1990, the number of the regular troops had been reduced by 600,000 including 100,000 officers.⁸

1) The Aftereffect of the Disarmament

The extent of the reduction in the defense budget has not been made public. However, Defense Minister Le Duc Anh reminisced, after he had left office, about the formidable job of reducing the number of the regular troops, partly because of budget shortage. He said:

The job was by no means a simple one. It involved very many policy problems. It required enormous expenditure as well as enormous preparation. There was no allowance for a temporary increase in our defense budget to implement the reduction of troops. We had to reduce the size of the military and the defense budget in phases. Naturally, under these circumstances, the troops confronted great difficulties.⁹

Among the "great difficulties" which the troops confronted were the worsening of living conditions, caused by serious shortages of food and other daily supplies. The government cut the subsidy on everyday necessities, in order to ease the burden of the budget deficit. When the economy moved to a market economy, the military had to purchase food and other daily needs at market prices. This led to a reduction in caloric intake by the troops.¹⁰ The defense budget cut not only allowed living conditions of officers and soldiers to deteriorate, but made insufficient essential expenditure on the maintenance and repair of weapons and equipment as well as on military training.¹¹ These soldiers demobilized under the troop reduction plan also suffered from worsening living conditions. "Demobilized soldiers have now returned to a normal life and are enjoying a relaxed family life," said Defense Minister Anh, "but they are concerned about the difficulties that their families face and the safety of their fellow-soldiers serving in remote areas."¹²

Those who were demobilized and have already found employment are the fortunate few. Many others are unable to get jobs in conditions of fifteen to twenty percent unemployment. Opportunities for veterans to seek jobs in other socialist countries such as the Soviet Union and East European states as "exported labor" have now dried up due to the political turmoil and deteriorating economic conditions in those countries. Workers who had gone to the Middle East were obliged to return home at the outbreak of the Gulf War.

Disarmament is an inseparable part of the doi moi policy under the Nguyen Van Linh government, but its main aftereffect, as set out here, is its partial contribution to the prevalence of economic and social conditions which enable the conservatives to continue to hold sway.

These facts should not, however, imply that the Vietnamese People's Army tends to be conservative. *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, the organ of the People's Army, which publishes its Saturday edition in tabloid size and color, used every week to carry colored pictures of attractive women, Vietnamese and foreign. No criticism seems to have been made of them as being under the influence of decadent bourgeois culture. Nonetheless, since the 7th Party Congress in June 1991 the Saturday edition of the People's Army organ has stopped printing sexy pictures and photographs. This suggests that self-criticism may have been practiced within the military against excessive liberalism and democratization.

2) "Peaceful Evolution" and "Special Relationships" among the Indochinese Countries

As has been mentioned earlier, one of the main points of adjustment in Vietnam's national defense strategy was the withdrawal of troops stationed in Cambodia. This decision was made in mid-1987, and in May of the following year Politburo Resolution No. 13, resolving a shift to a more realistic foreign policy was promulgated. That month the government also planned to withdraw 50,000 troops from Cambodia, and, in January 1989, it publicized a further plan to withdraw all troops by the end of September. These moves by Vietnam were in accord with statements made by the Heng Samrin government.

In April 1998 Cambodia revised its constitution, changed the name of the country and its national flag, became a neutralist country, and adopted Buddhism as the state religion. In July 1989 the Cambodian parliament then declared the country permanently neutral, and pledged never to allow any foreign military organizations to establish military bases inside the country. The Heng Samrin government declaration of permanent neutrality has entailed the abandonment of the military alliance clauses within the Vietnamese-Cambodian Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, which had been concluded in January 1979. Specifically, it has meant the termination of the "strategic alliance" and the "all-out cooperative relationship" between the two countries.¹³ The newspapers and magazines of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the People's Army have since stopped referring to Vietnamese-Cambodian relations as "special relationships" and "all-out cooperative relationships," which had meant a military alliance.

although they still continue to refer to Vietnamese-Laoian relations in these terms. An interesting fact is that the People's Army publications apparently opposed the demise of these special terms in a variety of complicated ways.¹⁴

However, while the Communist Party organized grassroots discussions on the Draft of the New Political Platform, the mass media were reviving the argument in favor of strengthening vigilance against so-called "peaceful evolution." This, they claimed, was nothing other than the overthrow of socialism by lawful means, employed by imperialist forces. This argument was based on the suspicion that a conspiracy of "peaceful evolution" partly contributed to the heightening of political turmoil in the Soviet Union and East European countries. Vigilance against conspiracy of "peaceful evolution" in turn provided a basis for the argument which reinforced the importance of "special" and "all-out cooperative" relationships among the three Indochinese countries.

An example of this is an article that appeared in the February 1991 issue of *Quoc Phong Toan Dan*, the organ of the central organization of the People's Army. It was written by Pham Xuan Que of the Army's Central Committee on Foreign Relations. In his article entitled, "Relationships among Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in the New Circumstances," the author stated that, under these new conditions, the three countries maintained "voluntary and equal relations." It argued that they should abandon any hierarchical system and regain mutual respect for independence and noninterference in each other's internal affairs, that they should share their responsibilities according to their respective capabilities, and that they should attach importance to economic and cultural cooperation between them. However, the author also made the point that "in the field of the defense of the fatherland, our strategy for defense and security is still based on mutual assistance among the peoples and the armies of the three countries."

This article made great play of the fact that the high-level delegations of the three Indochinese parties met in Vientiane on December 2, 1990, and issued a joint press statement in which they "confirmed their commitment to strengthening close and friendly solidarity as well as an *all-out cooperative relationship*." [emphasis added] However, according to this article, there were apparently some who did not support "an all-out cooperative relationship" among the three countries. The author was critical of those few people who hoped that the relationship among the three countries would be downgraded to ordinary levels of international relations.¹⁵ It is not clear whether those "few people" were within the military or not. But the article suggests that there is a conflict in Vietnam today between the traditional (conservative) view and the view held by "new thinkers" regarding the nature of the relationships between the Indochinese states.

The view of the "new thinkers" here means those expressed in the Politburo Resolution No. 13 with regard to a revision of "external outlook." What should be noted is that *Nhan Dan*, the party's central organ, expressed the opinion at "an all-out cooperative relationship" among

the three countries, referred to in the above-mentioned joint press statement of the three party delegations, should only be applied to the relationship between Vietnam and Laos.¹⁶ It differed in this regard from Que's article. Since Vietnam has started to adjust its national defense strategy, *Nhan Dan's* line seems to be dominant within the Party's central leadership, and Que's argument therefore represents only the minority view.

3) Opposition to "New Thinking" Diplomacy

As was mentioned earlier, the argument which warned against "peaceful evolution" and "the unchanging nature of imperialism" emerged at the 7th Plenum of the Central Committee in August 1989. It then faded slightly as the "new thinking" foreign policy line, expressed in the Politburo's Resolution No. 13, began to prevail in the government and the Party after the fall of that year. However, a more conservative view seems to have revived with the deterioration of the situations in the Soviet Union and East Europe, and with the breakup of the Gulf crisis. This is because the United States in its foreign policy dealings gained a great deal of confidence in resolving the Gulf crisis, and this has added fuel to the fire of conservatism which permeates all segments of Vietnamese society. A view within the military which is worthy note is that "imperialists agitate for a plural party system as a means to promote 'peaceful evolution,' and that it is a conspiracy to turn the armed forces into the army of a bourgeoisie." Major General Nguyen Huy Hieu, for instance, contributed an article to the January 1991 issue of *Quoc Phong Toan Dan*. The Commander of Quyet Thank Army Corps, the general said the following in his article, "Show Allegiance to Uncle Ho's Work of Revolution and Ensure the Defense of the Socialist System:"

The nature of imperialism never changes. Imperialists only change means and styles as they see fit, in grasping new developments in the situation. They conspire to undertake "peaceful evolution" in all political, economic, cultural, and ideological fields, while at the same time maintaining military power as a means of intimidation. One of the enemy's fields for attack is the political and ideological field. They advocate a plural party system, agitating for an extreme form of democracy and depoliticization of the military. They advocate a plural party system, but their true intention is to push toward a bourgeois democracy and turn the armed forces into the army of a bourgeoisie.¹⁷

This view was shared not just by the conservatives in the military but even by Defense Minister Le Duc Anh, who was an advocate of the doi moi policy and a promoter of adjustments in national defense strategy.¹⁸ This trend represents an obstacle to the diplomacy of "new thinking," as symbolized in Resolution No. 13.

Prospects for Doi Moi

The doi moi policy has brought improvements in living conditions to some extent. But the introduction of a market economy is polarizing Vietnamese society into a small rich class and into the class of the masses who suffer from the soaring inflation. Meanwhile, graft and corruption prevail to a catastrophic extent among the higher echelons of the Party and the government. The masses have increasing repugnance for the Party's rule.

The Vietnamese leaders were subtle in their reaction to the coup d'état that occurred in the Soviet Union last August. Three months after the event took place, the media in Vietnam had not made any comment on it. However, it appears highly likely that the leadership and the media at heart welcomed the coup.

The Draft of the New Political Platform contained the wording that "Vietnam shall make a relentless effort to strengthen and develop traditional friendships and cooperative relationships with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries." However, the Political Platform adopted at the 7th Party Congress made no reference either to the Soviet Union or to China. It only stated that "Vietnam shall strengthen and develop traditional friendship and cooperative relationships with socialist countries and brotherly states in the Indochinese Peninsula."

Vietnam has normalized relations with China, but, in contrast with the enthusiasm with which the border trade is conducted, ordinary party members and intellectuals are, in general, cool about the new development, and remain vigilant against Chinese hegemony. As was demonstrated by the fact that the People's Army hastened to publish a Vietnamese-Chinese dictionary even before official normalization had taken place, it seems that the army has been more welcoming of the normalization than any one else in Vietnam. Le Duc Anh, who was Defense Minister and has been nominated as Head of State, is known to be pro-China.

The January 1991 issue of *Quan He Quoc Te*, the public relations magazine of the Foreign Ministry published an interesting article entitled, "The Formation of a New World Order," which turned out to have been translated from China's journal, *Studies in International Issues*. This suggests that the two countries now have similar outlooks on the post-Cold War international order.

As Vietnam can no longer depend upon Soviet assistance, it cannot help but lean toward China in both economic and military terms. Both China and Vietnam, who talk in the vein of "peaceful evolution," are watchful for "the unchanging nature of imperialism." (The Vietnamese expression of "Dien bien hoa binh" is copied from the Chinese "He ping yan bian" or peaceful evolution.)

In the words of a Vietnamese diplomat, "While we are dissatisfied with the selfishness of the big powers, we have to endure it to survive." Vietnam has little choice but to continue to maintain this attitude toward any big power, be it China or the United States.

Notes

- 1 Mio Tadashi, "Nishigawa no enjo nashi dewa Betonamu was hasan suru" (Under the prolonged embargo Vietnam's doi moi faces a bankruptcy), *Sekai Shuho* No. 62 (2 Jul 1991).
- 2 *Quan He Quoc Te*, Hanoi, No. 1 (Jan 1991).
- 3 *Nhan Dan* (29 Aug 1989): 1.
- 4 *Nhan Dan* (20 Dec 1989): 1, 4.
- 5 Editorial, *Tap Chi Cong San*, No. 12 (1989): 1.
- 6 *Quoc Phong Toan Dan*, No. 6 (1991): 40.
- 7 *Nhan Dan* (31 Mar 1989): 1.
- 8 *Nhan Dan* (28 Jan 1990): 1, 4.
- 9 *Quoc Phong Toan Dan*, No. 12 (1989): 16.
- 10 *Quoc Phong Toan Dan*, No. 7 (1989): 12-18.
- 11 *Nhan Dan* (12 Dec 1990).
- 12 *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* (22 Dec 1990): 2.
- 13 See Tadashi Mio, "Relations among the Three Indochinese Countries: A Decade of the Rise and Fall of 'Strategic Alliance,'" in Tadashi Mio, ed., *Indochina in Transition: Confrontation or Co-Prosperity* (Tokyo: Japan Institute of International Affairs) 1989: 57-79.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Quoc Phong Toan Dan*, No. 2 (1991): 74.
- 16 Editorial, *Nhan Dan* (5 Dec 1990): 1.
- 17 *Quoc Phong Toan Dan*, No. 1 (1991): 5.
- 18 *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* (22 Dec 1990): 2.

Why My DAUGHTER WON'T GROW UP IN PERKASIE

By W.D. Ehrhart, 6845 Anderson Street, Philadelphia, PA 19119

Bob Gillman glared at me, his face red with too many highballs and his eyes full of tears. What am I doing here, I thought. I should have known better.

I had lived in this town for the first seventeen years of my life. Then I joined the Marines and discovered the world was not what the people of Perkasio thought it was. The town looked different when I came back, but it wasn't.

I had wondered then how I could have missed it. These people had misled me. And they had done this not out of malice or greed or spite, but out of willful and studied ignorance. They believed everything they had taught me.

I drifted in and out of town after I got out of the Marines. My father was a Protestant minister, and my mother was a public school teacher. I'd come home for a month here, six weeks there, three or four months between semesters or travels, a succession of jobs and apartments.

My mother didn't understand what had happened to me, but she knew something had happened. My father didn't have a clue, but I worked at liking him, and we managed. I slowed down after awhile enough to understand that they were who they were, and I was not likely to teach them much by shouting.

I kept to myself when I was home, working in the front room of the third floor under the eaves. I had little contact with the people of Perkasio who had sent me off to kill and die and had thought it a fine thing. I could see soldiers burning their houses, raping their daughters, shooting their sons and husbands, their wives and

mothers, churning their tree-lined streets to rubble. But the people of Perkasio could not.

When I first came home, I tried to renew old friendships, but my peers were busy with college and families or trying to earn money to go to the East Rock Hill Tavern. They couldn't see it either.

Sometimes I would not come back for a year or more. I worked on an oil tanker. I drove a forklift, roofed houses, loafed in Miami, taught school. A new apartment building went up down by the covered bridge, and a traffic light was installed at 5th and Market, but the town never changes.

By the Twin Bridges over Branch Creek, I could sometimes see Jeff Allison, Max Harris and me chasing painted turtles through the lily pads at the east end of the island, but there was no going back to that. Max was dead, having survived more than two years in Vietnam to die one night while riding his motorcycle at high speed without a headlight or helmet. His name should have been on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, but it wasn't. Jeff, who had flunked second and fifth grade and had been written off as a dummy by the Pennridge School District, owned his own home and business in Fort Lauderdale.

Then I got married. My parents were very fond of my wife. After a year in Maryland, we moved to Newtown, thirty miles from Perkasio, then to Doylestown, only fifteen miles away. I always thought it a coincidence, a matter of jobs, but maybe it was a practical joke on me.

One day in 1985, I got a call from Don Davis. He'd known my older brothers, had been a classmate of one of them. He was the program director of the Perkasio Rotary Club. He'd heard I'd published a book, and wanted me to come and talk at the next monthly meeting.

"Have you read the book," I asked. He hadn't. "You ought to," I said.

"Hey," he said. "You're a hometown boy. You've accomplished something."

"What do you want me to talk about?" I asked.

"Anything you like," he said.

I thought of my mother.

One day I had been sitting in the living room watching the news with her. It was late 1979 or early 1980, during the first few months of the Iran hostage crisis. They were showing videos of the hostages and talking about the harsh conditions under which the hostages had to live.

"But think of what the Shah did to his own people," my mother had said. "And we supported it all those years."

"Okay," I told Don Davis.

In the twenty years since I'd joined the Marines, no one in Perkasio had ever asked me what I thought. I knew the audience would be filled with the fathers of kids I'd grown up with, people whose homes I'd been in and out of, men who attended my father's church and played golf with him.

"All of us here desire peace," I began. "Some of us have seen war first-hand. Others have lost loved ones to it. We want no part of it. If we sometimes appear belligerent, we must believe it is only a necessary response to the provocations of others. We are peacekeepers."

The audience stared at me.

"Thus we explain the invasion of Grenada," I said, "the U.S. Marines in Lebanon, U.S. soldiers in Honduras, our war against Nicaragua, our military aid to El Salvador, and our deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles to Europe."

I looked at Frank Grossinger, vice-president of Bucks County Bank & Trust Company, whose daughter I had launched on her college career, but he would not make eye-contact with me.

I spoke about the Vietnam war, describing the Vietnamese struggle for independence, the venality of the Saigon regime we'd invented, the killing reality of American troops in the ricefields and hamlets of Vietnam.

"But when the war finally ended," I said, "we were content to let it slip away, and then to reconstruct it as we would like it to have been."

From another room, I could hear the dull thump of a heavy object falling, followed by curses.

"Therein lies the tragedy of the Vietnam war: our failure to confront it. Thus, when the Russians shoot down a civilian airliner, we call it an act of barbarism, but when we bomb a civilian mental hospital, it's a mistake. When the Cubans send military advisors and medical personnel to Nicaragua, we call it Soviet expansionism, but when we send combat troops to Honduras, it's a training exercise. When the Russians send troops into neighboring Afghanistan, we call it an invasion, but when we invade a Caribbean island 1500 miles from our shores, it's a matter of national security."

The slow rustle of bodies. The clink of silverware and glass.

"How many more Vietnams will it take?" I said. "How many more times will we send our sons and brothers and fathers off to die in places like Lebanon and Grenada before we learn that the world will not conform to what we imagine? Even now, American warships—"

"Who do you think is keeping the Free World free?" shouted Art Fralich, the plumber, who lived just across the street from my parents. I looked at Mr. Fralich.

"What do you mean by the Free World?" I said. "Do you mean South Africa? Chile? How about Saudi Arabia, where they execute unmarried women for having sex? You mean like South Korea, where it's treason to organize a labor union? How about Zaire? There's a lovely place."

"What the hell do you know about it?" Wilson Scheller called out. He owned the hardware store. I looked at Don Davis, but he wasn't looking at me.

"Well, I've read a few books about it," I said.

"You believe everything you read?" said Mr. Scheller.

"I believe what I see. I've been to Nicaragua. I've been to Honduras. Where have you been? Plumsteadville?"

"Why don't you go to Russia if you don't like it here?" said John Sterner, who owned the drugstore.

"That's the only answer you've got?" I said. "That's the best you can do?"

"My boy died in Vietnam!" Bob Gillman shouted. "Your father would be ashamed of you."

David Gillman had become a helicopter pilot. His chopper had crashed and burned. What was sent back to Perkasio didn't fill a grocery bag, but Bob Gillman put it in the ground and put a headstone over it. He believed his son had died for a reason. It had kept him going for twenty

years. Without it, he would have to face his insatiable grief. He glared at me, his face red with whiskey and his eyes full of tears.

I looked at the other faces. Not a flicker of light in the room.

"I'm sorry about your son," I said. "My parents risked three sons in Vietnam. By the grace of God, they got all three of us back. I'm sorry you weren't so lucky. I don't think my father's ashamed of me. Why don't you ask him yourself?"

A few years later my father died. During the eulogy, Rev. Tom DeWitt, who had been my father's assistant pastor, noted that my father had always kept on his desk my first volume of poems, its spine facing anyone who entered the room. Its title is *A Generation of Peace*. A few years later, my mother died. I put the book in her casket. My mother and father are buried side by side at the top of Market Street, on the ridge overlooking the town. You can see the whole Branch Valley stretching away in three directions. You can see the school where my mother taught, and the creek where I used to play, and the steeple of my father's church.

POETRY BY DAVID CONNOLLY

Thoughts on a Monday Morning

Originally written after a memorial service for 59 troopers from the Second Squadron of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment who were killed in action or who died as a result of wounds received when ambushed by an entrenched, numerically superior force while on an operation in the Michelin Rubber Plantations, near the town of Dau Tieng, in what was called South Vietnam.

Cold, despite my blanket.
Lonely, amongst my friends.
Wondering, with the things I've done,
can I ever make amends?

Sickened by this needless waste.
Stoic, to those around.
Wondering, what will break me,
the next fight, or death, or sound?

Missing, those who love me.
Hoping, for the next month or so.
Wondering, how will I ever fit in,
with people who just don't know?

Terrified, by the death grins.
Afraid, I'll be one of the dead.
Wondering, why did I ever think,
it wouldn't be as bad as they said?

Used, by the rich of my country.
Duped, by those I looked up to.
Wondering, how can I tell those,
who blindly wave the red, white, and blue?

I hate every fucking one of you
who make dollars from our deaths.
I hate every fucking one of you
for my friends' dying breaths.

I hate every fucking one of you,
banker or corporation head.
I hate every fucking one of you
for so many, so young, and dead.

I hate every fucking one of you
with your pin-striped, dark blue suits.
I hate every fucking one of you
for all those empty boots.

All The Stars Do Not Spangle

With the fervency of youth
and the pumping vigor of early manhood
we pledged allegiance,
and never once questioned if it was due.

In classes, on teams,
in gangs, in platoons,
we were taught what we'd need to know
if ever honored to defend you.

We left to battle a people
of stone, earth, water, and war,
who were far, far too hardened
to ever yield.

The first of the war I saw
was an officer in a jeep,
shooting gleefully
at a farmer in his field.

20 July 69 On Ambush

Piercing the night, from the right
the RTO whispered, "Brothers,
an American is walking on the moon!"

We all looked up, then forward,
into some poor papasan's
thousand year old rice paddy,
pulverized by the planes
into round puddles of puppy shit.

Some dead serious, totally sane,
nineteen year old boonie-rat said,
"I don't see him out there."

Our Fourth LT

When that LT got wasted,
 just about cut in half,
 we spoke of him,
 had a toke for him,
 smilingly remembering
 when he told the general,
 "Sir, I have come to consider
 my primary mission
 in Vietnam to be
 to get my own young ass
 and those of my men
 the fuck out of here, alive.
 It just happened
 that this time
 the Army's mission
 and mine, coincided.

He had smartly snapped
 one beaut of a salute
 and spun on his heel.
 We thought when he faced us,
 with his shiny, new Silver Star,
 the wiseass would be smiling.

Christmas Standdown

They brought us in for the truce
 and we got drunk, on our ass drunk.

After shooting up the Christmas tree
 sent by my girl,
 and smoking a lot of Cambo dope,
 we dipped the LT,
 head first, into the pissier,
 blaming him, or rather, his uniform,
 because we were there,
 not home, opening presents,
 cuddling and copping a feel
 from our girl, under the tree.

We got a month's confinement each,
 for assaulting the person
 and the uniform of an officer,
 got called animals for what we did,
 (but it was OK to kill Vietnamese)
 and spent Christmas together,
 the three of us, in Long Binh Jail.

LT, you were KIA in June, at twenty one,
 trying to save one of us from death,
 I'm sorry for what I did to you.
 You didn't deserve that.
 But your uniform, for killing you
 and so many others, for nothing,
 it deserved worse.

One of My Best Friends

There was spilt on the neck
 of the offered canteen.
 He was a black guy,
 but I had eight empties.
 So I drank.

Months later,
 on an observation post,
 he engaged a probe.
 Only I lived
 to strip
 his dumb, dead, brave, black ass
 of what we really needed.

The shame
 for what
 he never knew I felt,
 was heavier than his ruck.

No Lie, GI

We had a deal, he and I,
 of no bullshit between us.
 If one of us got wounded,
 the other wouldn't lie.
 So when he got hit
 and he asked me,
 "How's my leg?"
 I looked him straight in the eye
 and told him, "It's fine."
 It looked fine to me,
 laying over there,
 looked as good as new.
 No Lie, GI.

In His Father's Footsteps

Having slapped a machete,
 then a rock, from his hand,
 I pushed the young boy
 at gunpoint
 toward the other villagers,
 away from the still form
 of his father.

Mere words were all I left
 with which he could fight.
 "Someday, GI, mebbe you die!"

The B-40 shrapnel
 that weeks later
 tore into me,
 hit no harder.

Letters From My Mom

She wrote that the jungle looked just lovely,
 was it as pretty as in the pictures?
 And my friends had such funny nicknames.
 And why were we all so thin and pale,
 isn't Vietnam hot and sunny?
 She hoped I was eating right
 and taking care of my teeth.
 And did we have to have so many guns?
 Someone might get hurt.
 My cousin got into the Marine Reserves
 and his training was *very, very hard*.
 And all her friends were asking her
 why no one smiled in the pictures I sent.

Reconciliation

*for Nguyen Ngoc Hung, once an infantryman
 in the People's Army of Vietnam*

hawser—a stout rope used to moor ships.

I stand, looking that way
 over the water
 and let go the hawser of hate,
 as heavy as the dead,
 in hand or in memory.

And across the pond
 stands someone much like me
 weary of the weight
 of old hate.

From each side
 we watch Kieu's ship,
 noting how her planks,
 mostly yellow,
 some blond, to tan, to ebony,
 fashioned by time,
 toil and tears,
 fit so cunningly.

And by and away sails
 the harried ship, Viet-Nam,
 able to take little notice
 of those in her wake.

Take my hand, Brother;
 we'll keep each other afloat.

**Corporal Thach
 First Confirmed NVA Kill**

I see you still;
 your shining, black hair,
 your high cheekbones
 and bared teeth,
 your glowing, searching eyes,
 testing each step
 as if it were your last.

You flinched
 as the angry hornets
 I let fly
 snapped you up
 then let you drop,
 a jumble of arms and legs
 and black and white scarf.

Your last reflex
 killed the man next to me
 but it's your death
 I remember.

There's no pride, no regret,
 no way I'll forget
 your death until mine.

**Anh Hung
 (Elder Brother Hung)
 who was once a PAVN Grunt**

I told him that I was wounded in our war.
 He said that made us brothers,
 for he also bore the mark of pain.

I asked was the pain worth winning the war?
 He only sees that too many, on both sides,
 have suffered, and still do.

I told him we tired of the death for no gain.
 He only knew war, his whole life, and accepted
 it as the buffalo does the plow.

I asked if he volunteered as I had done.
 He said he did, but would rather
 have taught children to read and write,
 than to fight and die.

David Connolly, 237 L Street # 1, South Boston, MA 02127

**"HOME IS WHERE YOU DIG IT"¹
(OBSERVATIONS ON LIFE AT THE
KHE SANH COMBAT BASE)**

Peter Brush, 8 Morrison Ave., Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Men who received orders to Vietnam had certain expectations of the place, based on their general life experiences and their training. We expected to work hard, to be bored, to experience excitement and danger. It was reasonable to anticipate the tropical climate, periods of thirst and dreary food, being dirty and tired and other aspects of a year-long camping trip. Everyone who participated in the siege of Khe Sanh likely had these expectations. I don't think these Marines expected that their problems would include dealing with rats, yet virtually everyone who wrote about Khe Sanh included descriptions of them.

In 1962, the Special Forces were the first at Khe Sanh, arriving by truck. Weapons specialist Frank Fowler made an observation about the place that would be repeated by others when he mentioned the rats. Noting the numbers present, he said,

One time we went into the village and bought some metal rat traps because it was so bad. We were using mosquito nets on our bunks to keep the rats off. I remember one night there was a big metal rat trap with teeth on it. And I remember the first rat we got. When [the trap] snapped it woke me up. And then the rat started dragging the thing off!²

Fowler was not to be envied his task of separating his live rat from the trap. A cornered rat will fight like a "cornered rat," and will attack its attacker.³

The Marines joined up with the Special Forces and their rats in 1966. Colonel Tom Horne presided over the transformation of the Army position into the Marine Corps Khe Sanh Combat Base. He recalled, "My memory of that place is waking up with fifteen or twenty rats on the bed with me!"³ In 1967, when the buildup of forces on both sides began in earnest, the Roman Catholic chaplain of 3/26 ran into the furry Khe Sanh Welcome Wagon on his first night when a rat lost its footing on the dirt ledge of his bunker, fell on his chest, and bounced to the floor with a squeal.⁴

Initially the US strategy for winning the war in Vietnam was merely one of attrition. In 1967, critics pointed out that attrition was an indication that the US was losing the initiative in Vietnam, and not a strategy in itself. Consequently, when the NVA began moving large numbers of troops into I Corps in the summer of 1967, General Westmoreland made plans to engage them in large numbers, to apply massive firepower in a decisive engagement, to allow the U.S. to finally bask in the warm light at the end of the tunnel.

Khe Sanh seemed like the place. Between twenty and forty thousand NVA surrounded five thousand Marines.⁵ Khe Sanh was in the mountainous area where North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and Laos came together. It was far from the heavily populated coastal plain and the South Vietnamese government was not particularly active. This would minimize coordination problems with the ARVN and allow the application of air and artillery assets with the least possible number of civilian casualties. Most important of all was the fact that the NVA seemed willing to fight at Khe Sanh.

In a sense both sides besieged each other. The Marines could only be supplied by air and could not have evacuated the base without sustaining unacceptable casualties. The NVA were trapped by their military and political goals (whatever they might have been) and by the greatest application of air power in history.

Even as late as December, 1967, Khe Sanh was considered relatively good duty, as those things went in Viet Nam. I requested transfer there from a nearby fire base because Khe Sanh's had a reputation for great physical beauty, few rocket and mortar attacks and relatively comfortable living conditions. Aesthetically, Khe Sanh had it all — mountains, valleys, streams, triple canopy jungle in several shades of green, elephants and tigers. The local population were mostly tribal Bru Montagnards rather than ethnic Vietnamese.

This good duty was more apparent than real, and at about 5:00 a.m. on the morning of 21 January, 1968, a reconnaissance team radioed that a flight of rockets had been launched from a nearby hill and would land on the combat base. This initial attack was small by later standards, consisting of about one hundred 82 mm mortar shells and sixty 122 mm rockets.⁷ But fifteen minutes after the attack began one rocket landed in the midst of the main ammunition storage area, with devastating results.

This dump contained eleven thousand units of ordnance that immediately began burning.⁸ Red-hot artillery and recoilless rifle rounds were hurled into nearby trenches. CS tear gas was ignited and filled the entire area with gas as thick as fog. About 10:00 a.m. the fire set off a large quantity of C-4 plastic explosive and other explosives. At the airstrip all the navigational aids were destroyed, several helicopters were damaged or destroyed, living quarters for the Marine air group were destroyed, the control tower was rendered inoperative, and the runway was cratered. All this on the first day of incoming rocket, artillery, and mortar attacks that would continue for the next 76 days.

The mess halls were immediately secured. In the atmosphere of flying metal it would not do for two hundred Marines to congregate in one place. C-rations were issued and the men took their meals in their bunkers. The rat population began to take off and Khe Sanh took on the look of "a shanty slum on the outskirts of Manila."⁹ Continuous aerial bombardment, shelling and digging and bulldozing of positions filled the air with red dust. Smoke filled the air, smoke from incoming, from diesel generators, from burning latrines, from burning ordnance, from trash fires. Water was restricted and few were able to bathe regularly. The monsoon rain served to

drive the rats inside the bunkers, where they "ran across the dirt floors, gnawing at shelves and boots and fingers, chittering in fear when the big guns fired and sometimes scratching faces as they raced across sleeping Marines in the dark bunkers."¹⁰

Time magazine reported that the

rats became frantic under fire. When incoming starts the rats race for the bunkers and wildly run up to the ceilings made of runway matting and logs. One sergeant killed thirty-four rats, establishing a base record.¹¹

Ernest Spencer described the rats at Khe Sanh in *Welcome to Vietnam, Macho Man*:

There were always rats at Khe Sanh. Not your stereotypical Asian variety of chopsticks-using rat. Khe Sanh rats are snarling suckers with big heads. Having evolved in a jungle environment, those rats are capable of fighting anything.

The rats began exerting themselves several breeding cycles into the siege. A rat jumps on my chest one night. On my back on my cot, I slap at him with my left hand while I try to shield my face with my right. He is grinning at me, I swear.

Rats love the sandbag walls. Since the walls are several layers thick, the rats have a lot of room for their quarters. You can hear them in there screaming, eating, fucking, and kicking each others' asses. Rats are nasty—they are always fighting.

Rats behave more logically during the siege than we do. They let their feelings out. You can hear them squeaking and going berserk during a barrage. Us macho men just sit there quietly and take it.¹²

The floors of our bunkers were constructed of wooden pallets over dirt, and invariably food fell between the pallet slats, providing feed for the rats. Trash cans were emptied into drums placed in each unit area, to be collected and hauled to the base dump. As the supply of food at the dump increased so too did the rat population, which then moved back into the base area.

Initially there were only mouse traps at Khe Sanh, but they served more to irritate than kill the rats. Rat traps were requisitioned from supply and given a priority after ammunition, C-rations, mail, and personnel.

As the incoming continued the men were restricted to their underground quarters unless they had reason to be above ground. At night the rats would climb into trash cans to eat scraps from the C-rations. With smooth metal sides these containers served as rat traps of sorts and in the morning the Marines would bludgeon them to death with tent poles, then throw them back in the trash.

Ray Stubbe notes in *Valley of Decision*:

Officially, base policy was to drown rats after killing them to kill the fleas which were infected with plague virus. The animals couldn't be

poisoned; local Bru children who helped fill sandbags and cleaned out the garbage dumps collected the rats, broke their legs, and put them in their pockets to take home. Later they would be eaten.¹³

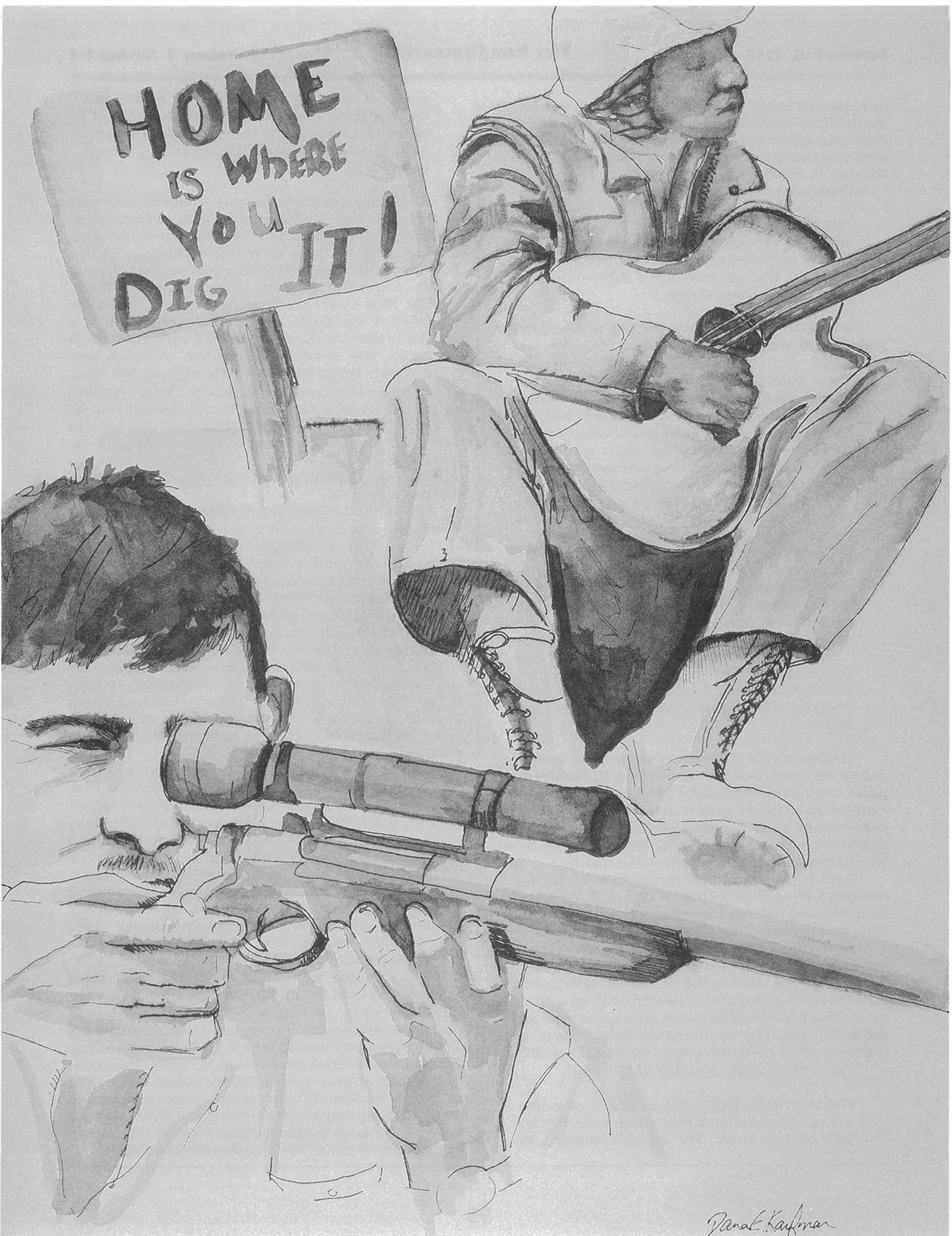
Eventually rat traps became available and were issued to each unit. My battery was allocated seven traps, which were baited with C-ration cheese or peanut butter. Morning after morning each trap yielded its victim, always seven full traps. After a few weeks we quit bothering with the traps, feeling that no progress was being made.

The NVA constructed trenches ever closer to the perimeter of Khe Sanh, eventually putting them in a position to snipe at the garbage detail carrying trash to the dump. This resulted in cessation of the garbage detail. Trash began to pile up throughout the base, spreading food for the rats everywhere. The rat problem in the bunkers got worse. At first the rats seemed content to remain beneath the pallets. With time they became bolder and ventured around the bunker whenever the lights were put out. Finally we were forced to leave the lights on continually in an attempt to keep the rats off our cots and stretchers.

Life at Khe Sanh settled into a routine. One night in March my roommate and I were lying in our small bunker, reading by candle light. About 10:00 p.m. Corporal Hawker put the candle out and settled into a casualty bag on top of his cot. Immediately he heard noises in front of him at ground level. Slowly, stealthily, Hawker grabbed a flashlight in one hand and an assault knife in the other. While he was getting into position to attack, the rat had silently climbed onto the cot, inches from Hawker's face. When the light snapped on, Hawker slashed empty air and the startled rat ran across his face. Terrified, Hawker zipped the casualty bag up completely, then began thrashing to get back out, afraid he had trapped the rat inside the bag. The rat escaped and I chuckled myself to sleep.

As the NVA battered the base supply problems became evident. Three C-ration meals per day were reduced to two. With only twelve different meals to choose from, meal time turned from a pleasant break in the daily routine into just another ordeal. Many of us quit bothering to heat our rations, concluding that the grease from roast beef and potatoes didn't taste worse than the gravy it would become if heated, only different. As stomachs shrank with the reduced rations it took more will power than many could muster to consume even two meals per day. Uneaten rations went into the trash, further increasing the rat population.

NVA incoming was not steady at Khe Sanh; some days saw less than two hundred rounds fired at the base while the daily record was 1,307.¹⁴ The humid environment was corrosive to ammunition, and regularly directives were received to turn in old small arms ammo for replacement with fresh stock. As the old bullets would be dumped at sea, some Marines loaded their M-16 magazines exclusively with tracers, venturing down to the trash dump to shoot rats. In the gloom of the monsoon it looked like laser beams emitting from the rifle barrels as the Marines honed their marksmanship skills.



HOME
IS WHERE
YOU
DIG IT!

Daniel Kaufman

One Recon Marine, David Doehrman, liberated several steaks from a locked freezer in the mess hall. He and his friends cooked them on camp stoves, gorging themselves, then settled down to sleep in their bunks. Doehrman's hand "dangled over the metal tray containing the remaining steaks, and he was bitten by a rat during the night." This incident caused Doehrman to be placed on medical hold to receive a series of rabies shots.¹⁵

Doehrman's incident perhaps explains the origin of a story that circulated at Khe Sanh, which claimed that some Marines were putting peanut butter on their toes and sticking their feet between the pallets, hoping to get bit. The rationale being a rat bite would cause one to be evacuated from the base to receive shots for rabies.

Knives, traps, and tent poles weren't the only weapons the Marines used against rats. Stubbe relates an incident when one gunnery sergeant became so incensed at a rat that kept paying him a visit that "one night he pulled out his .45-caliber pistol and shot the thing as it scurried above a poncho the gunny had hung across the ceiling. He killed the rat, but the hole in the poncho became a drain for rainwater...."¹⁶

One night, just as I was about to put out my lantern, I noticed a cat-sized rat nonchalantly wandering into my bunker, sniffing the ground. Amazed at the boldness of this rodent I grabbed the only weapon I could find close by. Cocking my arm, the I launched a jungle boot at the rat, hoping to knock him out of the bunker. Instead, the panicked rat ran right toward me, only turning when he realized that safety lay in exactly opposite direction.

Always the rats were big. Gustav Hasford describes them in *The Phantom Blooper*.

Every twenty meters I stoop down and tug at the barbed wire with det cord crimps to see if the wire has been cut. The tugging scares up bunker rats big enough to stand flat-footed and butt-fuck a six-by.¹⁷

If true, Hasford would be describing a serious rat problem. But rats cannot take on a two-and-one-half ton truck, are not as large as cats, and do not have large heads. The average cat weighs eleven pounds, while even a large Norway rat weighs less than two pounds.¹⁸

How many rats were there at Khe Sanh? Even though the Marines never attempted a census, estimates using certain assumptions can be made.

The lesser bandicoot (*Bandicota bengalensis*) is one species of rat common to southern Asia. Each female can produce a litter per month, with seven pups per litter, for a daily rate of increase of over eleven percent.¹⁹

The rats at Khe Sanh may or may not have been reproducing at their biological maximum (i.e., rats were being killed by Marines, but it is also likely they were also being driven into the base from without by aerial bombardment). There are approximately as many rats in the world as people, unevenly distributed.²⁰ If the rat population equaled the human population at Khe Sanh, and assuming the above optimum rate of increase, theoretically there could have been one hundred thousand rats by day 27 of the siege, one-half million rats on day 43, and over one million by day 50. Whatever their number,

the rats at Khe Sanh were like the rain and the shrapnel—always irritating, always present, always threatening.

But Westmoreland's plan for a Dien Bien Phu in reverse never happened. Various NVA regimental-sized attempts to mass for an attack on the base were broken up by artillery and aerial bombardment. Battalion and company-sized probes against the Marines' perimeter were beaten off. By March 9, Saigon reported that NVA strength around Khe Sanh had been reduced to 6,000 to 8,000 men.²¹ On April 9, for the first time in weeks, not one enemy shell crashed into the combat base.²²

The NVA departed from Khe Sanh; by April 15 the U.S. Command announced that the operation for the relief of the base had been concluded and all objectives had been secured. The siege was over. Westmoreland claimed the NVA lost between 10,000 and 15,000 men and hailed the confrontation as a great US victory.²³

Army units entered the base, the first to arrive by land in months. They stared at us in disbelief; some of the Marines wore beards, all needed haircuts, all were exhausted. Our clothes were filthy and we were unwashed. The 1st Cavalry had the attitude that they had "relieved" us, that they had "broken" the NVA siege. We largely ignored them.

The largest convoy I have ever seen in Vietnam formed up and we drove to Camp Carroll, the nearby firebase from which I had been sent to Khe Sanh five months previously. Khe Sanh was no longer a Garden of Eden. The aerial bombardment had turned the countryside into moonscape, everything had been destroyed. Not a tree was left standing. There were no shades of green.

NVA General Vo Nguyen Giap claimed that Khe Sanh was never very important to the NVA, only serving as a feint to draw US forces away from the populated areas during Tet. Giap considered Khe Sanh an NVA victory.²⁴

In June, 1968, it was announced that Khe Sanh was being abandoned. The Marines proceeded to dismantle the base, slashing sandbags, blowing up their fortified positions, filling in trenchlines with bulldozers, hauling away everything of possible use to the enemy. The last Marines left on July 6.²⁵

In their leaving, both sides turned the base over to the rats, whose population likely expanded still further now that the monsoon had ended, air and artillery strikes had ceased, and there was no human population to harass them. The rats were free to police the remaining ration scraps within the base and the huge quantity of body parts that must have lain without. And when this food supply was consumed they too would depart Khe Sanh.

Notes

¹ A homemade sign with these words on it was attached to a bunker at Khe Sanh during the siege.

² John Prados and Ray W. Stubbe, *Valley of Decision: The Siege of Khe Sanh* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.), 1991: 15.

³ Thomas Y. Canby, "The Rat: Lapdog of the Devil," *National Geographic* (July, 1977): 87.

⁴ Prados and Stubbe, *loc. cit.*: 54-55.

⁵ *Ibid.*: 148.

⁶ Robert Pisor, *The End of the Line: The Siege of Khe Sanh* (New York: Ballantine Books), 1982: 10, gives a figure of 20,000 NVA. Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York: Avon Books): 113, mentions 40,000 NVA. The figure of 5,000 Marines is from Pisor, *ibid.*: 9.

⁷ Prados, *loc. cit.*: 251.

⁸ *Ibid.*: 255.

⁹ Pisor, *loc. cit.*: 181.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 181.

¹¹ *Time*, February 16, 1968: 38.

¹² Ernest Spencer, *Welcome to Vietnam, Macho Man* (Corps Press) 1987: 110.

¹³ Prados, *loc. cit.*: 7.

¹⁴ Captain Moyers S. Shore II, USMC, *The Battle for Khe Sanh* (Washington, D. C., Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps) 1969: 121-122.

¹⁵ Prados, *loc. cit.*: 235.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 6.

¹⁷ Gustav Hasford, *The Phantom Bloopers* (New York: Bantam Books), 1990: 12.

¹⁸ Canby, *loc. cit.*: 87.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 68.

²⁰ "The Rat Explosion," *Atlas*, September, 1978: 58

²¹ Pisor, *loc. cit.*: 211.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*: 237.

²⁴ Oriana Fallaci, *Nothing and So Be It* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co.) 1972: 85-86, quoted in Pisor, *loc. cit.*: 241.

²⁵ Prados, *loc. cit.*: 448.

DOVES IN A HAWK'S NEST: VIET NAM AND THE AMERICAN PEACE MOVEMENT, 1965-75

By Charles Howlett, 93 Gladstone Avenue, West Islip, NY, 11795

At 5:20AM on November 9, 1965, a young member of the Catholic Worker group, Roger LaPorte, sat on the landing of the Swords into Ploughshares staircases opposite the United Nations building. Shivering slightly in the brisk autumn dawn, LaPorte poured gasoline from a two-gallon can over himself and ignited it. He died thirty hours later at Bellevue Hospital. Tom Cornell, a leading peace activist of the group, wrote of his death:

Roger was conscious and lucid for hours. He was not in pain; his nerve endings had been burned off. He spoke to the police and the ambulance attendants, saying, "I am a Catholic Worker. I am anti-war, all wars. I did this as a religious action... all the hatred in the world... I picked this hour so no one could stop me." He spoke to the doctors and to several priests and to a nun. He made his last confession, and received the anointing of the sick and dying.¹

Ironically, exactly twelve hours after LaPorte's immolation the lights went out in Manhattan in the greatest power failure in the history of the northeast. Though LaPorte's incident had been overshadowed by the events which took place later on in the day, the two events symbolized a greater darkness quickly befalling the nation—American military involvement in Viet Nam.

It is now seventeen years since the last U.S. combat troops departed Viet Nam. No single event in the nation's history has had such a dramatic impact. For well over ten years the American public was torn between allegiance to the flag and opposition to the war. Families were bitterly divided in debating the virtues of the war. In particular, fathers, many of them veterans, implored their sons to respect the Constitution and what it stood for. Sons, reluctant to be drafted to fight in war, questioned why; some went so far as to encourage their fathers to read Thomas Hardy's prophetic poem, "The Man He Killed."

"Had he and I but met
By some old ancient in,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!

"But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place

"I shot him dead because—
Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although

"Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat, if met where any bar is
Or help to half-a-crown."²

Heated passions and angry disagreement ran deep.

During the period when U.S. military involvement in Viet Nam and the opposition were both mounting, a great many things were happening at once in the United States: sharp and sudden changes between the races; the passage of progressive legislation that had been pending since the 1930s, followed by a frustrating failure to put it into effect and make it work; a new readiness to question the most accepted institutions and principles; a spontaneous movement among the young to change society, then to reject it; a heightening of passions on all sides to the point where charges of treason and of genocide were not only casually made but widely believed; a growing atmosphere of violence culminating in urban riots; street battles between police and protestors; the murders of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy; and, finally, distrust of government due to the Watergate scandal. All of these things played a part in public attitudes toward the war and, in varying degrees, were even consequences of the war. A history of that period must be a history of the passions it aroused and the manner in which they finally forced a deeply reluctant nation to recognize the fact of

the war, to face the doubts it had raised, and finally to reject it.³

The activities of those millions who expressed public opposition to Washington's involvement in the U.S.-Indochinese War are well worth remembering, for they succeeded through their efforts in affecting both the conduct of U.S. war policies and the national self-image itself. There is no need to doubt the abiding belief held by peace-seekers in the 1960s that victory on Washington's terms in Viet Nam would be worse for the U.S. and world peace than any foreseeable alternative. "Victory in a war such as the United States is waging in Vietnam would demean our country more than defeat," *The Nation* asserted in 1965. "That is the crux of the opposition."⁴

What about those millions who protested? Is it not time to examine objectively and comprehensively the impact of antiwar actions during the Viet Nam conflict? One point must be made clear from the start, however. The opponents of the war found it always difficult, and often impossible, to agree on the best way of opposing it. One reason for this dissension within dissension was that the war was actually a secondary issue to many of the organizations most active in trying to end it. The dozen or so minor socialist and revolutionary groups in the United States made no secret of their primary interest in bringing down capitalism. The civil rights organizations were more concerned with injustice at home than war abroad. "I am not looked upon as an equal citizen in everyday life," said a black activist named John Otis Durrall in December, 1966. "Why am I looked upon as an equal citizen when it comes time for me to report for induction?... I would feel just like the KKK over there. Denying those people freedom of choice, just like black people are denied freedom of choice in the U.S."⁵ Student groups were worried about the draft, and were especially prone to bruising ideological struggles on points of purely theoretical interest. Traditional peace organizations like SANE (Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy) and the Committee for Nonviolent Action were obsessed with being "responsible," which generally meant trying to come up with an alternative Viet Nam policy which might conceivably be accepted by those in power.⁶ From time to time all those groups could be coaxed into uneasy and temporary agreement on a single slogan or course of action, but most of the time they were pulling in their own directions for their own reasons.

The inevitable struggles over strategy and purpose were never fully resolved. Despite uneasy and temporary alliances, antiwar factions attacked each other more fiercely than they attacked the war itself. There remained throughout the war's duration a contest between the New Left and the Old Left for control of the antiwar movement. The Old Left, led principally by the Trotskyists, wanted to build a mass movement around the single issue of the war, while the Students for a Democratic Society, and the New Left in general, favored an attempt to create a broad radical movement which would emphasize other issues along with the war.⁷ In the end it would be the Trotskyists who proved to be the most tireless opponents of the war. Their ideological rigor set the terms of debate within the movement, and one reason the SDS, for instance, eventually declared itself Marxist-Leninist was that Old

Left groups like the Trotskyists took a hard revolutionary position. To prove its commitment, the New Left felt itself forced to do the same. One long-time "unrepentant radical," the late Sidney Lens had this observation: "The Trotskyists were by no means the dominant force... but they were vocal, disciplined, and they had outmaneuvered the communists and pacifists to assert a dominant position.... The Trotskyists boasted a younger and more vigorous membership, and their contribution to the movement was serious and sizable."⁸

Yet, despite such tactical and philosophical diversity, the antiwar movement survived. What enabled the movement to present an image of unanimity and consensus on the surface while below confusion and disagreement reigned supreme? The answer lies in the forces of coalitions formed throughout the years of antiwar protest. In fact, the most significant characteristic of the antiwar movement was its ability to coalesce and form new coalitions when confronted with varying situations. Unlike any previous peace movement in United States history, opposition to the Viet Nam war was based on a tenuous alliance between peace liberals critical of the immorality of Lyndon Johnson's cold war policies and radical pacifists and leftists who perceived a connection between the Indochina war and domestic injustice and racial poverty.

Several distinguishing features differentiated this peace movement from previous ones. First, forcible resistance represented the movement's loss of faith in the electoral wisdom of the United States public. It also illustrated the growing radicalization of the movement. Attempts to disrupt the war machinery were sometimes accompanied by violence. The surprising feature of this antiwar movement was not the erratic actions of a few, but that after years of frustration, the movement was still vital. Few American mass movements of such intensity have had such a history.

Second, the movement was unique in the history of American antiwar groups in the number of its activists. While comparable numbers of United States citizens opposed the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and World War I, never before were hundreds of thousands willing to take to the streets so urgently. Compared to the decade that preceded it, the 1960s and early 1970s were years of political turmoil and the antiwar movement was at the center along with the civil rights protests.

Third, the movement was also distinguished by its comprehensive nature. The protestors were as heterogeneous as American society. Small town demonstrations were likely to include housewives, business executives, doctors, dentists, ministers, and workers. Demonstrations in large cities added students, college professors, bohemians, clergy, teachers, veterans in uniform, and show-business celebrities. A number of retired generals spoke against the war as did even a handful of United States senators. The opponents of the war of 1812, on the contrary, were geographically centered almost entirely in New England; Mexican War opponents derived from abolitionist and Free Soil movements; and the opponents of World War I were chiefly from certain specific ethnic and politically radical groups.⁹

Finally, a point worth reiterating, while antiwar groups were traditionally suspicious of one another, they cooperated closely in this cause. At the movement's grassroots, antiwar groups from pacifists to liberals viewed collaboration with American communists as far less heinous than the actions of their government and the indolence of the American people. Pacifists and political moderates saw the presence of racial activists or anarchists in their ranks as a tactical handicap but regarded the cause of ending the war as worth the association.

Opposition to the war was tragically dramatized on March 16, 1965, shortly after President Johnson announced the bombing of North Viet Nam and major troop increases. That day 82-year-old Alice Herz, a survivor of the Nazi terror, set herself on fire in Detroit. She lingered in the hospital for ten days before dying. Eight months later, two other self-immolations occurred—Quaker Norman Morrison set himself afire before the Pentagon and his two-year-old daughter on November second, and Roger LaPorte followed him seven days later. The actions of the self-immolators prompted the distinguished peace leader A.J. Muste to comment sarcastically: "But ours is a society composed of people who somehow feel that... the deaths of hundreds, thousands, millions in war is... somehow normal, human, civilized.... Even more, this is a society in which people contemplate, for the most part calmly, the self-immolation of the whole of mankind in a nuclear holocaust."¹⁰

The self-immolations, Muste intoned, would have been open to criticism if they had occurred in a society which valued human life. But in 1965 more than just people were burning. "Great Society" or not, black anger against both racial injustice at home and war abroad burst into the open. Buildings and stores were systematically destroyed as millions of Americans perceived a connection between Washington's war in Indochina and its failure to overcome poverty and social injustice at home. In August 1965, the nation watched in horror as the black Watts community of Los Angeles destroyed millions of dollars worth of property. Quickly, civil rights leader Robert Parris (Moses), and pacifists David Dellinger and Staughton Lynd organized the Assembly of Unrepresented People in an effort to fuse together the civil rights and peace movements.¹¹ A symbiotic relationship was thus formed which emphasized social injustice as an outgrowth of war. This union led to the creation of the National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam; its headquarters was located in Madison, Wisconsin. The NCCEWV assisted local antiwar groups involving close to 100,000 people in demonstrating against the war during the October 15-16 "International Days of Protest"—less than a month before the immolations of Morrison and LaPorte. Some of the rallies consisted of draft card burning, now a federal felony due to recent congressional legislation.¹²

By the time of Morrison's and LaPorte's deaths, full-scale opposition to the war was well underway. On November 27 SANE, recharged by the war, sponsored a march on Washington for peace in Viet Nam. Two new groups, the pacifist Catholic Peace Fellowship and the interfaith Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, joined SANE's antiwar march. Publicized as "A Call to

Mobilize the Conscience of America," the action attracted an estimated crowd of 35,000 "moderate and respectable" war protestors. SANE-approved signs dominated the picket lines and read: "Stop the Bombings," "Respect 1954 Geneva Accords," "War Erodes the Great Society," and "Self-Determination—Vietnam for the Vietnamese." In this way it strove to moderate both the demonstration's tone and to preserve its general atmosphere of dignity and restraint.¹³

This period also witnessed vocal opposition to the war by some notable Americans. I.F. Stone, the respected journalist, called for an immediate withdrawal. Senator Ernest Gruening (D-Alaska), political theorist Hans Morgenthau, George F. Kennan, father of the United States containment policy, pediatrician Benjamin Spock, and retired Lt. General James Gavin either called for a ceasefire and negotiated settlement or urged the Johnson Administration to limit the United States military role in Viet Nam and turn the war over to the Vietnamese. What was so repulsive to these critics was the indiscriminate employment of bombings which killed innocent civilians as well as the view of those in power that government has a right to deceive its citizens.

Their respectable protest coincided with the antiwar "teach-ins" that swept through the nation's colleges and universities. Having supported Johnson in 1964 as the "peace candidate," many faculty members and students felt betrayed as he adopted the Viet Nam war policies of his opponent, Barry Goldwater. On March 24th an all-night teach-in at the University of Michigan attracted 3,000 participants. It touched off a series of teach-ins across the United States during the remainder of the year. "We are using our power to thwart and abort an indigenous social and political revolution," charged Professor William Appleman Williams at the University of Wisconsin. Speaking at the University of Oregon, Senator Wayne Morse predicted: "Twelve months from tonight there will be hundreds of thousands of American boys fighting in Southeast Asia—and tens of thousands of them will be coming home in coffins." At the University of Michigan, Arthur Waskow of the Institute for Policy Studies, condemning militarism and conscription, cited Jefferson on slavery: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is Just." Artists, writers, and intellectuals were in the forefront of the protest.¹⁴

The student antiwar movement that formed around the Viet Nam war, moreover, displayed some significant departures from previous antiwar student activism. It was prompted by neither internationalist nor pacifist sentiments, although its critique of American society contained many of their combined objectives. For instance, the movement that emerged was not as dependent on "parent groups" such as the Communist or Socialist Parties or the Fellowship of Reconciliation as were earlier movements like those of the thirties. A new group of young antiwar "antiheroes" led the movement as part of the incipient revolt against the older generation. The war became a vehicle for criticizing the society their parents had built. Noticeably, the 1960s marked the era of "obstructive demonstration" and a new tactical approach of "violence for violence" to counter warmaking attempts. Finally, unlike previous wars, the Viet Nam war did not

weaken student protest, but rather invigorated it. The antiwar movement among students in the 1960s had more significant political impact than any of the earlier student movements.¹⁵

The student antiwar movement which emerged in 1965 represented a marked departure from the respectability of passive nonresistance. The idea that students might become the "radical agency of change" characterized their new approach to society's problems. Violent acts in opposition to the United States war machine were regularly advocated by student leaders. Ironically, though opposed to war in principle, their violent tactics proved upsetting to mainstream U.S. peace groups seeking military disengagement. Traditional pacifist concerns—a commitment to principled nonviolence for meaningful social change and a condemnation of all wars and violence as destroyers of physical and spiritual life—were subsumed by the radical students' search for a common course upon which to build a mass movement on behalf of social reform.

The strategy of building coalitions against the war continued early in 1966. In February the Fifth Avenue Peace Parade Committee, organized by Muste, and the NCCEWV in New York brought out 5,000 pickets to oppose the presentation of a Freedom House Award to Lyndon Johnson. The following month between 20,000 and 25,000 marchers came together at its call to participate in another international protest action under the auspices of the National Committee. Led by a sizeable contingent of disillusioned American war veterans and Afro-Americans against the war, parade participants were a racially and politically mixed lot. At a rally in Central Park Mall, Muste, Viet Nam war veteran Donald Duncan, and writer Norman Mailer attacked Johnson's war. They were also harassed by hecklers and egg-throwers, of course.¹⁶

A month later, under CNVA sponsorship, Muste, veteran activists Barbara Deming, Brad Lyttle, and Karl Meyer, outspoken antiwar scientists William Davidson, and peace-movement novice Sherry Thurber, flew to Saigon to show the Vietnamese that some Americans opposed the war. The Americans held cordial meetings with the underground South Vietnamese peace movement, but were harassed by Vietnamese youth at public meetings. The peace contingent believed the harassment had been ordered by the South Vietnamese government, with the approval of the United States. Thus they returned home to eliminate the chance of further misunderstandings.¹⁷

Tax resistance also became a popular tool to oppose the war. In 1966, the federal telephone tax was raised, and in a rare moment of candor, the federal government admitted that the additional money would be used to help subsidize the war. Peacemakers, War Resisters League, CNVA, and other peace groups urged nonpayment of this tax. The IRS's discomfort with the burgeoning movement grew, and as the government's reprisals became more frequent, the need for legal information within the tax resistance community became manifest. In 1969 War Tax Resistance was formed. Under the leadership of Bob and Angie Calvert, it devoted itself to all the aspects and ramifications of conscientious tax refusal. WTR's first

press conference included Allen Ginsberg's reading of a tax resistance poem, and Pete Seeger's musical plea for peace.

One interesting tactic of tax resistance was for an individual to claim enough dependents on his or her form to prevent an employer from withholding any income taxes. Unfortunately, this tactic brought particularly strong counteraction by the government and a number of people were prosecuted and imprisoned, including a 64-year-old grandmother named Martha Tranquilli.

The popular singer Joan Baez symbolized her protest by establishing a small school in California's Carmel Valley, the Institute for the Study of Nonviolence.¹⁸ This unconventional school performed ballet exercises to Beatles records, discussed the works of Gandhi, Thoreau, and Marshall McLuhan, and conducted periods of total silence "for clearing your mind of personal hangups." While noteworthy from a physical and cerebral point of view, the nonconformity of Baez's school tended to attract numbers of young people identified as "hippies."

One of the most striking cultural characteristics of the antiwar protests was the number of hippies, schooled in matters of drugs, sex, and "natural" lifestyle, who were attracted to the peace cause. Thus during the hardening years of the sixties, many children had no respect for the parents' skills or wisdom and did not need their money. Generational conflict was beginning to replace social conflict as the critically divisive social issue. On one side stood a formidable youth culture which drew its strength from its own numbers. Like David Reisman's "other directed" types, this generation made their peers their ultimate authority.

Parents were devastated. They had seen enough human waste during the depression—but at least they could understand that tragedy. But how had they failed their own children? Was it, as some psychologists suggest, a function of the modern division of labor? Absence of the working father from the home was said to have left unresolved Oedipal conflict which was being transferred to society and, later, to the government. Or, the parents wondered, were they more directly to blame? Erik Erikson, the noted Harvard child psychologist, has said that one generation revives the repressions of the generation before it. Had the shackles of the Depression and war deprived the parents of a necessary adolescent rebellion which only now was finding its outlet in their children?

Whether it was a division of labor producing an Oedipal reaction based on generational repression or not, one thing was obvious: the sixties youth culture was determined to be seen and heard. By 1966 their appearance could not be ignored.

Representing the country's more recent bohemian subculture, the hippies shocked the nation's somewhat dour population with their dirty dungarees, long hair, less than acceptable vocabulary, use of mind-altering drugs, liberated sexual mores, and "acid" rock music. They argued for simplicity, communal life and peace. More often than not they would wear beads and raise their fingers in a V-shape and simply say—"Peace." Though they did add color to the peace movement, and in the process shake-up middle class America, their disdain for discipline and organization did not sit well with

dedicated peace activists. Their simplicity in matters of political action rendered them ineffective participants in the prolonged antiwar struggle. Historian David Farber has presented some interesting sociological observations in an article he wrote, "The Counterculture and the Anti-War Movement," that appears in the recently published book, *Give Peace a Chance*.

The emergence of pro-peace flower children coincided with the civil rights movement's opposition to the war. By 1966, the peace and civil rights movements had developed a mutually satisfying approach to both the war and racial injustice. The war itself caused the civil rights movement to shift from public accommodation to acquisition of the twin levers of power in American society: the vote and the job. During the war, despite the presence of black revolutionists, the organized movement capitalized on war protests to accentuate their dilemma through the positive employment of nonviolent techniques. Nonviolence became a "tactic" and a "way of life" in the modern civil rights struggle. Such a position arose because these activists were outnumbered and outgunned and because their refusal to retaliate when attacked won them necessary sympathizers. In terms of political strategy, civil rights nonviolent action ultimately became nonviolent revolution.

In January 1966, therefore, leaders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee declared their support for draft resisters and attacked President Johnson for violating international law overseas while neglecting to enforce civil rights ordinances at home. In June, Stokely Carmichael, the new leader of SNCC, led civil rights demonstrators in the streets of Atlanta, encouraging black youths to refuse military induction. Most importantly, Martin Luther King, Jr., the civil rights spiritual leader and 1964 Nobel Peace Prize recipient, accepted the job of co-chair of CALCAV and proceeded to dispute the war policy of the Johnson White House.¹⁹

Opposition to the war was also dramatically demonstrated by "The Fort Hood Three." James Johnson, a black American, Dennis Mora, a Puerto Rican, and David Samos of Lithuanian-Italian parentage announced to a stunned military that they would refuse their orders to report to Viet Nam. On June 30th, these three GIs arranged a press conference in New York, aided by the Fifth Avenue Peace Parade Committee, SNCC and CORE. Having made their announcement public, the draftees then pleaded with the peace movement to reach out to the other "trapped" and "helpless" enlisted men. The peace movement responded. Muste and Staughton Lynd were co-chairs of The Fort Hood Three Defense Committee. Though the three were not pacifists, their opposition to the war led peace leaders to rally to their side.

Pacifist support for their defense was due considerably to the three men's personal views. Johnson saw a direct relationship between the peace movement and the civil rights movement. "The South Vietnamese are fighting for representation, like we ourselves. The South Vietnamese just want a voice in the government, nothing else. Therefore the Negro in Vietnam is just helping to defeat what his black brother is fighting for in the United States." Mora would "not fight for the blood money of war industries" nor give his "life so that U.S.

corporations can claim as their property the people and resources of Vietnam." Samos relied on a comparison to the United States War for Independence. Though historically weak in terms of insight and background, Samos maintained that "We are telling them, we are instructing them by force... to live the way we want them to live.... I believe the war to be immoral, unjust, and illegal."²⁰

Despite the vigorous efforts of the Committee to halt their prosecutions, all three were tried and convicted: on September 9, Johnson and Samos were given maximum sentences of five years at Leavenworth and Mora a three year sentence. All of the men were given dishonorable discharges and forfeitures of their pay.²¹

By 1967 antiwar sentiment in the United States was at fever pitch. Muste, German pastor Martin Niemöller (aged 75), Anglican Bishop Ambrose Reeves (age 67), and Rabbi Abraham Feinberg (age 67 and serving a congregation in Toronto) spent ten days in North Viet Nam (January 9-19). In outright contradiction to statements from Washington denying American air attacks on the areas around Hanoi, Muste wrote from that city to the CNVA that no more than three or four blocks from his hotel in the center of town, there were civilian neighborhoods reduced to rubble. Based on what they were seeing, Muste directed Americans back home to convey a message to Washington: "For God's sake stop lying!... Let us stop this bombing practice or else say honestly to our government, to the world and to ourselves, 'We are trying to bomb hell out of the Vietnamese people'." On the heels of Muste's trip to Hanoi, furthermore, a group of trade unionists organized the National Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace, hoping to convince workers in defense plants of the war's immorality; the paycheck, however, was more gratifying personally than individual acts of conscience. By the summer heavyweight boxing champion Muhammed Ali was sentenced to five years in jail and a \$10,000 fine for refusing induction in a white man's war. During the same period, Army surgeon Captain Howard Levy made public his refusal to train combat first aid teams for action in Viet Nam. The respected Harvard liberal economist and former ambassador to India in the Kennedy Administration, John Kenneth Galbraith, published a little pamphlet which bluntly argued that "it is a reasonable, indeed an inescapable, assumption that we are in conflict not alone with the communists but with a strong sense of Vietnamese nationalism. If so, a further and massive conclusion follows. It is that we are in a war that we cannot win and, even more important, one we should not wish to win."²²

Equally devastating to the military effort was the rate of conscientious objection—four times higher than World War II—while levels of draft evasion, violations, exile to Canada or into the domestic underground reached record heights. Though many more boys volunteered for military service or accepted the draft without protest, unprecedented personal antiwar decisions became more and more commonplace. A University of Rochester student, Vincent Francis McGee, not only burned his draft card but sent the following missive to the President of the United States:

Enclosed you will find the remnants of that piece of paper symbolic of my former tacit approval and consent to the military program of these United States of America.... The actuality of this country's activity around the world and especially in Viet Nam has brought ever clearer into my convictions that men must build and not destroy, love and not hate. I am very much aware of the consequences of the deed done today [April 15, 1967], but find no other way in which to effectively protest what seems to be the decision of our government concerning the future. I cannot participate in this evil and must cry out against it.... I for one refuse to follow those who saw but were quiet in Germany before the War.... I consider this act not only nontreasonous but completely patriotic. Blind patriotism would be treason here for me. I chose to follow the words of the Pope at the United Nations, "War, never again." The only effective way to ensure this that I can see for myself personally is to sever every link with violence and war.²³

McGee was following the example of Tom Bell, one of the organizers of the Ithaca, New York "We Won't Go" group, the group which issued the call for the draft card burning on April 15, 1967. For Bell, effectiveness lay in actions such as draft card burning; it pushed an individual over a certain threshold.

There is a real agony for me in the dilemma presented by seeing this great opportunity for political organizing and action versus the likelihood that a lot of people are going to be hurt (including myself) by the action being taken.... I don't like national actions, but I do want to change America. I like a personal deep communication type of politics, but perhaps this is not really political. I don't want to manipulate anyone but I feel that it [is] essential for my own struggle and for the development of all of us as human beings that people change.²⁴

The commitment to personal liberty in a democratic society remained intact.

Fleeing to Canada became another visible manifestation of the preservation of democratic freedom. Alice Lynd, wife of war resister and former college professor Staughton Lynd, compiled a useful anthology recounting the inner feelings of antiwar activists. In *We Won't Go* Lynd discusses the reasons young U.S. men fled to Canada and includes their own personal statement. For Richard Paterak, a graduate of Marquette University, the "unavoidable conclusion was that we [U.S.] were being politically impractical, internationally as well as domestically, and, at the same time, immoral." He could not see "wasting a good portion of my life in jail due to commitment to revolution in the U.S., for I believe revolution in the U.S. will be provoked as much from without as from within." To David Taube, an Army reservist, the thought of killing "innocent Vietnamese" was a reality he could not live with: "Since living with

myself is important to me... I was about to go to jail. Although this wouldn't be as good as active rebellion for the antiwar cause, it would have at least made the U.S. feed and clothe me for five years.... Canada seemed to be nicer than a jail, however, so I chose to opt out of the struggle." For the British subject Petrokovsky, who had been living in the United States for the past ten years, "the draft and the Vietnam war were reasons for my leaving.... I am not a pacifist, but I do not like violence or killing." Petrokovsky's move to Canada was more an act of political resistance; it was a psycho-social form of liberation: "... if there is one thing I would like to say to people... it is that it is possible to act independently, that it feels good if you are strong enough to follow through on your act... it will be a better world."²⁵

The majority of immigrants to Canada were not pacifists. Their actions, though, bear out what Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist who survived the Nazi concentration camps, observed in *Man's Search for Meaning*: it is normal to react abnormally in an abnormal situation. Self-doubt, uncertainty, confusion, and a variety of ailments are common as confrontations approach. But some men never feel clearer in their lives. A release of energy and conquering of fear come to them when doing what they think is right. Times of inaction or compromise are usually hardest. It may make some difference to see oneself as a human being facing inhuman demands. Canada became their mirror of self-assurance.²⁶

These personal acts of conscience prompted more brief but spectacular coalitions such as the New Mobilization. The "Mobe" discovered the basis of coalition in opposition to the Viet Nam war when it organized massive marches in New York and San Francisco on April 15, 1967.²⁷ Originally called the Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, it was a loose coalition of groups which sought to bank the fires of military involvement. The two parades were a tremendous success. As usual, estimates of attendance varied according to the source; anywhere from 100,000 (police estimate) to 400,000 (Mobe estimate) turned out in New York and probably about 50,000 in San Francisco.

That spring and summer witnessed some of the worst racial riots in United States history. The black ghettos of Detroit and Newark burned. It appeared as if the real war zone lay in the urban United States. Angered by the war and racial injustice at home, four members of the Baltimore Interfaith Peace Mission provided a new tactic to the antiwar protest. Entering the Baltimore Customs House they poured a mixture of their own blood and duck blood on 1-A draft records being stored there. Their action requires no further commentary.²⁸

Perhaps the highlight of the year's antiwar activities occurred during the weekend of October 21-22, when approximately 100,000 Americans entered Washington, DC to protest the Viet Nam war. It was the largest antiwar protest in United States history. After a Saturday morning of speeches and song near the Lincoln Memorial, 35,000 protestors crossed the Potomac to the Pentagon, where they confronted close to 3,000 U.S. troops and federal marshals dispatched to protect the capital from American citizens for the first time since the depression-ridden 1932 Bonus March of World War I veterans. During that

hectic weekend, confrontations between the two opposing factions resulted in 47 injuries and 683 arrests. Though the Pentagon was saved, the White House kept intact, and the halls of Congress still clean, antiwar militants expressed more determination than ever to escalate their opposition from simple dissent to outright resistance.²⁹

The Johnson Administration, however, initiated its own attack. In an effort to discredit the peace movement by linking it to communism, Johnson prodded the Central Intelligence Agency to investigate the underpinnings of antiwar dissent. With Operation CHAOS in full swing in August 1967, surveillance of domestic dissidents was undertaken. According to the agency's report "International Connections of U.S. Peace Movement," some 7,200 Americans had been "bugged" by 1970, with a computer index to the names of an additional 300,000 individuals and groups. Yet with all this sophisticated equipment, CIA director Richard Helms admitted that communist control of domestic dissent was more myth than reality, much to Johnson's annoyance.³⁰

By early 1968, Johnson was losing political ground fast. Democratic contenders Eugene McCarthy (Minnesota) and Robert Kennedy (New York) began chipping away at Johnson's foreign policy. While Johnson attempted to hold them off, the NLF's Tet offensive destroyed the President's base of political power. The NLF's major attacks on thirty provincial cities, a month-long occupation of the city of Hue, and the attacks on the U.S. embassy in Saigon damaged Johnson's political stability. Though the NLF suffered heavy casualties, losing the military battle, they won a crushing political victory. Within a short period of time, on March 31, Lyndon Johnson announced he would not seek reelection. It signaled the end of Washington's desire to win the war militarily through the open-ended use of ground troops.

Still, the U.S. troops in Viet Nam kept marching through rice paddies while antiwar dissidents sang in protest. In the sixties a number of songs criticized the war. P.F. Sloane's "Eve of Destruction," Donovan's "The War Goes On," and Buffy Saint-Marie's "Universal Soldier" all made the Top Forty charts. Beatle John Lennon's simple chant "All we are saying is give peace a chance" was perhaps the most popular and frequently heard at antiwar moratoriums and rallies. Pete Seeger's "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy" and "Bring Them Home" were popular songs played at antiwar gatherings. The Asian conflict gave rise to a number of songs by more traditional composers. Eric Burden's "Sky Pilot" was a ringing condemnation of military chaplains who sent soldiers out to die, while Earth Opera's "American Eagle Tragedy" indicted the president as a king preoccupied with wealth while the "kingdom is rumbling." The nation, the song repeats, is falling as "the king" sends our "lovely boys to die in a foreign jungle war."³¹

It seemed as though antiwar songs became a popular medium of protest, apart from musical aesthetics. Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Fortunate Son" was a refusal of induction into the armed forces with "some folks... made to wave the flag... It ain't me, it ain't me." The Canadian rock group, the Guess Who, expressed in "American Woman," "I don't need your war machine, I

don't need your ghetto scene." Even black soul singers questioned the efficacy of the war. The Temptations' "Ball of Confusion" included a list of grievances against United States society, including "end the war," and Freda Payne's "Bring the Boys Home" was popular on soul and top forty stations. In 1970, Edwin Starr's "War" was the number one song in most major cities. The chorus repeated: "War... HUH! What is it good for? Absolutely nothing!"³²

During the first half of 1968 Americans really wondered whether or not the nation had reached its breaking point. Between April and September the country witnessed the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, violence on campus, the burning of draft boards, and political hippies (called Yippies and led by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin) who attempted to disrupt the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

Students at Columbia University showed their rebellion with a takeover. The Morningside campus on the upper west side of Manhattan buzzed with activity as student radicals rebelled against the university. During the week of April 23-30th, SDS and the Students Afro-American society (SAS) led 700 to 1,000 students in the seizure of five university buildings. The spark that set off the explosion was an SDS rally called to protest Columbia's relation to the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), the school's "racist policies," and the administration's placing of six SDS leaders—including Mark Rudd—on probation for violation of a rule against indoor demonstrations. After six days, with the aid of more than 1,000 policemen, the buildings were reoccupied. But the campus was in chaos. For the rest of the academic year education came to a standstill. The assassinations of King and Kennedy, particularly, angered civil rights and political liberals on campus.³³

While conflict on campus became a regular occurrence, many Catholic peace activists showed their disdain for the war by destroying draft boards. On May 17, 1968, a group of antiwar Catholics used a mixture of homemade "napalm" to burn Selective Service files in Catonsville, Maryland. The Catonsville Nine, which included the brother priests Daniel and Philip Berrigan, sparked a long series of draft board raids that did not end until 1972.³⁴ From coast to coast similar raids occurred in Boston, New York, Milwaukee, Chicago, Los Angeles, Evanston (IL), and San Jose (CA). Such actions prompted attention to corporate involvement in the war. Corporation office and factory raids followed much the same style as action against draft boards. In Washington, DC, a group of nine Catholics raided the offices of DOW Chemical Company and exposed official documents tying DOW directly to manufacturing napalm used in the war. Some months later, another group calling itself The Beaver 55 scrambled computer tapes at Dow's Midland, Michigan research center.

Throughout these years the Catholic Left resorted to other targets. The Media, Pennsylvania office of the FBI was raided by an anonymous group. Their expropriation of certain documents proved that the FBI was conducting covert and illegal surveillance of groups and individuals working for social change. Bomb casings at a York, Pennsylvania manufacturer were dismantled. At Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii, blood was poured on secret

documents concerning electronic warfare which was reducing the government's need for conscripts to continue the war.

Participants in the various raids based their rationale on several events in both religious and secular history. They cited the clearing of the moneychangers from the Temple by Jesus, and the Boston Tea Party preceding the American Revolution. They held that nothing short of civil disobedience and direct interference with the war machine would be effective. Their most commonly used phrase was, "some property has no right to exist." Draft records, computer tapes, surveillance files, industrial war research, and secret files used to further the war and stop the peace effort were put into the same category as the furnaces of Auschwitz and Dachau were used solely for the purpose of destroying life. In the words of one pacifist priest, "It was saner to burn papers rather than children."³⁵

Generally, the action communities resisted openly, destroying property and waiting for arrest. In many cases members of the news media were invited to view the event so that the group would receive as much publicity as possible. The trials which followed were often used as forums to discuss the war, raise the question of property rights, focus public attention on Viet Nam, and challenge the Judiciary to take legal responsibility where the Executive and Legislative would not. Those who went to jail considered incarceration as an essential part of their resistance.

In time the style of disobedience was replaced by covert activity. Raids were carried out by anonymous groups who either took responsibility at a later date, or, in certain instances, not at all. The move to covert action was considered a further step in their resistance. Rather than willingly go to jail, they preferred to make the government work for arrest and conviction; the intent was to demonstrate that personal and public inconvenience works both ways. If it was an inconvenience to be drafted, it was also an inconvenience to be prevented from implementing such policy. These hit-and-run raids (a tactic the Viet Cong had been using effectively against U.S. troops) were experiments with styles of resistance that held the line at destroying property rather than people. While the issue of property destruction did raise many eyebrows within pacifist circles, the question of property rights versus human rights was brought to the attention of millions of Americans in a very significant way. The draft board/corporation actions were important contributions to the strategy of war resistance at a time when many people felt powerless to stop the war machine.

Besides the strength and consistency of their objections to the war numerous Catholics joined the Catholic Peace Fellowship. CPF was founded in the summer of 1964 by the Berrigan brothers and three former *Catholic Worker* editors—Tom Cornell, James Forrest, and Martin J. Corbin. Its sponsors included Dorothy Day, John Deedy of *Commonweal*, Gordon Zahn, Thomas Merton, and Monsignor Paul Hanly Furfey. Formed in the spirit of Vatican II, which "turned the Church to the world," CPF became the only Catholic peace group that was institutionally connected to non-Catholics, namely the primarily Protestant, ecumenical

Fellowship of Reconciliation. CPF emphasized the pacifist traditions of the Catholic Church, participated in direct, nonviolent antiwar protests, organized study conferences, and counseled conscientious objectors. CPF's views were best summed up by one of its spiritual leaders, Dorothy Day, who said:

I speak today as one who is old, and who must endorse the courage of the young who themselves are willing to give up their freedom. I speak as one... whose whole lifetime has seen the cruelty and hysteria of war in the last half-century.... I wish to place myself beside A.J. Muste, to show my solidarity of purpose with these young men, and to point out that we, too, are breaking the law, committing civil disobedience.³⁶

Though the Johnson years were now at an end, the public did not rejoice over the choice of successors. Republican Richard Nixon, Democrat Hubert Humphrey, and independent Alabama governor George Wallace all gave the impression that the war should end, but on United States terms. What the Presidential choice boiled down to was the selection of a candidate most closely dissociated from the Johnson Administration. That distinction fell to Eisenhower's former vice-president, Richard M. Nixon, who promised to restore law and order and end the war by winning the peace.

But Nixon had no intention of ending United States military involvement until the South Vietnamese could hold their own militarily. Using Spiro Agnew, his vice-president, as a foil, Nixon sought to circumvent peace groups while pressing North Viet Nam to negotiate on U.S. terms. Adding to the peace movement's frustration was not only its failure to capture the Democratic Party nomination for Eugene McCarthy or explicit repudiation of the war that enabled Nixon to become president but also the wave of political persecutions, particularly of the Chicago 8 and the Black Panthers, which swept through the country. The possibility of another Joe McCarthy witch hunt led antiwar radicals to form a new coalition. By late summer 1969, it had created the New Mobilization Committee. Its trademark was "politics of confrontation."

Another coalition took shape that summer based largely upon the conjunction of political elements from the Kennedy-McCarthy campaigns. This was the Moratorium, whose tactic involved a kind of popular strike against business-as-usual for one day in October, to expand in duration each month as long as the war continued. This was a form of consensus politics to exert pressure through normal political channels, the creation of an expanding base of popular awareness and opposition. The Moratorium consisted of antiwar activists who were not inclined to pursue confrontation through radical measures.³⁷

The Moratorium, however, was faced with a critical choice of tactics. The New Mobe called for mass marches in Washington, DC and San Francisco at the same time as the Moratorium program. As usual issues of strategy and tactics plagued peace coalitions as radical and respectable antiwar activists debated the merits of their approaches. The issue between the Moratorium

"moderates" and the New Mobe "radicals" was, in the opinion of Sidney Lens, a simple one: "the Moratorium kids aren't all that conservative. The difference... between us is that in their thinking everything goes back to the ballot boxes. In our thinking, everything goes back to the streets." For Sam Brown of the Moratorium, however, it was a philosophical, even an intellectual question:

Was in fact the country on the verge of some sort of fundamental and radical change in terms of the way it is going to see itself over the next thirty years, and is the [Vietnam] war going to be the precipitant factor in creating that kind of change/ Or is the war aberrational and, therefore, the coalition of people *ad hoc*? And that largely depended on how you saw America....

If [my view] was right, then you needed to appeal to the decent, common, shared instincts of the American people. If we're in a pre-revolutionary state, then screw the great middle class... put together the coalition that over the next thirty years will change the country.

I always thought that a cynical notion because... it took the war as an issue and used it as an organizing tactic to complete some other agenda.

The peace movement constantly faced the unpleasant prospect that protests would be "a political disaster" and that broad community support against the war would break down in "a conflict between radicals and centrist critics of the war." In this particular case, Moratorium leaders realized that they could ill afford to lose the support of the left wing of the antiwar movement and thus agreed to cooperate with the March in the hope of averting either a fiasco or violence.³⁸

In Washington on November 15, 1969, between 250,000 and 500,000 war protesters marched down the streets of the nation's capital. Millions watched what seemed to be a cohesive coalition, little knowing that the platform and speakers' policy had been determined through frantic talks between staffs of organizations which were at the same time competing against each other for constituents within the antiwar movement. Once the March was over the coalition broke up. The Moratorium thus became an early casualty, suffering from competition among peace groups and from the rivalry of another coalition with fundamentally alternative tactics. Clearly the politics of coalition had not organized a vision of peace much beyond the curtailment of United States involvement in the Viet Nam war.³⁹

The antiwar movement lost momentum early in 1970 as the peace coalitions broke up after the March. Their diffusion was due immeasurably to a new Selective Service law passed by Congress. In November of 1969, the Nixon Administration set up a draft lottery system. It succeeded in separating the twin issues of opposition to the draft from opposition to the war. Almost all young Americans hated the draft, thus rapidly filling the ranks of peace groups; how many actually hated the war or mocked their country's military honor was another question. The masterstroke of the law was limiting all

men—students and nonstudents alike—to one year of draft vulnerability after their nineteenth birthday. If their lottery number was high enough they could forget all about it. Consequently with more than one-half of all students instantly freed from the possibility of going to Viet Nam, the antiwar movement lost its most immediately compelling issue. Such governmental action, though effective in the long run, was marred by a series of White House decisions regarding military moves in Southeast Asia. The domestic consequences proved to be tragic and irreparable.⁴⁰

On April 30, Nixon announced the invasion of Cambodia and the renewed bombing of North Viet Nam. Immediately, his actions touched off a roar of antiwar demonstrations on college campuses across the country. Perhaps none was more traumatic than when, on May 4, Ohio National Guardsmen were given the order to lock and load, aim, and fire; in the process thirteen students were shot down at Kent State University. Four died. The death of the four Kent State students during the protest prompted songwriter Neil Young to write "Ohio" with the refrain "Tin soldiers and Nixon's coming... this summer I hear the drumming... Four dead in Ohio. Four dead in Ohio." Close to 470 colleges and universities struck or closed down; antiwar demonstrations were reported on nearly 60 percent of the country's campuses. Unfortunately, peace leaders were never able to convert the high level of student unrest into a viable agency of policy change.⁴¹

The antiwar movement did receive an added boost in September 1970, when the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, a three-year-old organization, launched Operation RAW (Rapid American Withdrawal). Armed with toy guns and dressed in utilities with 782 gear—standard military equipment—VVAW troops re-enacted their battlefield experiences at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Four months later in Detroit the organization conducted a three-day "Winter Soldier Investigation" which focused on the Lt. William Calley/My Lai massacre. VVAW contributed to the antiwar movement by making middle-class America face the possibility that the war was forcing clean-cut young men to resort to drugs because of the purposelessness of their sacrifice. VVAW visibly demonstrated the erosion of morale and lack of respect for authority within the armed forces. This author vividly remembers a number of marines at his base, upon being discharged in San Diego, gathering in a circle and hollering "Fuck the corps." Disillusionment undoubtedly ran deep.⁴²

The failure of the United States-sponsored ARVN invasion of Laos in early 1971 led to further antiwar actions. In March a group of Madison Avenue advertisers started the "Help Unsell the War Campaign," in an effort to convert public opinion against the war; if Ivory Soap, Crest and Mustangs could be sold, why not sell out the war? On May 3, 1971, the radical May Day Collective attempted to blockade road entrances in Washington, DC by using stalled cars, garbage cans, broken fences, and even their own bodies. Nixon, a law and order man, imposed martial law and under the direction of the Justice Department, the police arrested over 12,000 people detaining them at RFK Stadium. It was the largest mass jailing in U.S. history.⁴³ Four years later a

Washington federal court ordered the government to pay \$10,000 to 1,200 of those arrested for violation of their civil rights.

Antiwar sentiment was also visibly aroused with the publication of *The Pentagon Papers*. Daniel Ellsberg, a Pentagon official, became deeply troubled by the war. Two years earlier, in the summer of 1969, Ellsberg attended a War Resisters' International Triennial conference at Haverford, Pennsylvania. While there a young draft resister named Randy Kehler, who was on his way to jail, had made a special impression on Ellsberg. When he returned from the conference he read Thoreau's "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" and proclaimed to his son, "This may be the most important essay I've ever read."⁴⁴ For someone whose specialties had been guerrilla warfare, counterinsurgency, nuclear planning, and crisis decision-making, this was quite a revelation. A few days later, Ellsberg, his son Robert, and a friend named Tony Russo copied military documents which showed that Viet Nam was a well-planned program of United States policy in Southeast Asia. When the documents were leaked to the press, millions of Americans felt betrayed.

Throughout 1972, though the war raged on and the Watergate crisis began to unfold, Nixon solidified his hold on the presidency with some impressive foreign policy coups. In February he visited the People's Republic of China, thereby ending over two decades of Sino-American distrust. In June he traveled to Moscow for the conclusion of the first phase of a strategic arms limitation agreement. Though his democratic challenger for the White House, George McGovern of South Dakota, tried to portray the upcoming November election as "the clearest choice in this century" between peace and war, Nixon won easily. Finally, after having reassured the Thieu government in Saigon of postwar protection the United States officially signed the Paris Peace accords on January 27, 1973. American military involvement in the Indochina war was now over. The war cost over 50,000 American lives.

The war's tragedies did produce one positive piece of congressional legislation: the War Powers Resolution of 1973. Specifically under the War Powers Resolution, the president must consult with Congress *before* introducing the armed forces "into hostilities or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances." Trying to control the Executive Branch's war-making powers, Congress passed the 1973 law requiring that American troops be allowed no more than ninety days on foreign soil. After that time the President must seek the Congress' permission to keep troops abroad. The purpose of this law was to prevent future Viet Nam wars, where civilian and military strategies were at cross purposes.⁴⁵

The antiwar demonstrations of the sixties and early seventies were unique in United States history. Even though they were less internationalist, more antimilitarist, more anti-imperialist, concentrating on reversing U.S. war policy in Asia, the size of the protests indicates how strong antiwar feeling actually was during this period. To the peace movement itself, the war was a dramatic exhibition of the threat of militarism in American life. This view sustained and pumped blood into the American tradition of dissent. Hence the draft-card burner, the

student obstructionist, the aider and abettor of those who violated the conscription laws, the youths who fled to Canada. How ironic that thousands of Americans whose ancestors fled Europe to escape the degradation of military conscription condemned U.S. citizens who migrated to Canada for similar reasons. Many of these dissenters, unlike previous generations, were emancipated from the notion of a "righteous" war. To them such a shibboleth was analogous to proposing to fly to the moon astride a broomstick. They no longer believed that the United States had been guiltless in causing earlier wars or in the methods it has used. A higher degree of sophistication with a consistent pattern of dissent characterized the Viet Nam war protesters.

Most importantly, the antiwar movement did not end the war. That was accomplished by the American people "withdrawing passive support for it." The movement historian Charles Chatfield argues, forced the issue in three ways. First, "it generated alternative sources of authority on Vietnam policy, clarifying the political and moral issues involved." Second, the antiwar movement "mobilized enough opposition to set parameters on war policy that were exceeded... only in violation of presidential accountability." Third, the movement "added to the social cost of the war by the very controversy it engendered." Despite the movement's multiplicity of leadership and organized constituencies, it was "organized independently where people lived and worked." Basically, "people themselves became disillusioned with the war and impelled to do something about it." The most remarkable achievement of the peace/antiwar movement was its ability to be flexible with local branches and individuals and to offer them a variety of options. According to Chatfield, "antiwar organizations, which were mostly centralized on the national level, were faced with the problem of mobilizing public sentiment, which was highly decentralized and even suspicious of organized protest." The movement's innovative forms of protest successfully brought together these diverse coalitions under one banner.⁴⁶

In June 1975, two years after U.S. military involvement ended, the FOR's organ of print, *Fellowship*, declared, "The war is over, the problem of war remains intact."⁴⁷ Yes, the war in Indochina officially came to an end when Thieu left Saigon on April 21, and the U.S. embassy closed its doors nine days later. But for the most part, like the war it opposed, the antiwar movement arose from obscure beginnings, held the nation's attention for a time, and then faded away. Afterward those who took part in it, like those who fought the war, found that the nation did not want to hear about their decade-long struggle to speak truth to power. One of those truths, and one of the most important lessons of the war, was that the U.S. citizens learned that they could be wrong—a profoundly maturing lesson for either an individual or a nation.

Another truth was that the problem of war remained unchanged. For veteran peace workers the struggle continued. It was time once again to respond to the spiraling arms race, nuclear war, environmental pollution, and social and economic injustice. The Viet Nam war experience strengthened U.S. peaceseekers' resolve to

turn swords into ploughshares. Their successful opposition to the Viet Nam war had forced the government to recognize its failure—it is impossible to say what would have happened if there had been no opposition and the U.S. government had been free to fight in any way it chose for as long as it liked. Because of what had happened and what might possibly happen again, peace activists were determined more than ever to say, "Just give peace a chance."⁴⁸

Notes

¹ Quoted in Michael Ferber & Staughton Lynd, *The Resistance* (Boston: Beacon Press) 1971: 26; *New York Times*, 11 Nov 1965: 3.

² Thomas Hardy, "The Man He Killed," in M.H. Abrams, et al., eds., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (New York: WW Norton) 1958.

³ Thomas Powers, *Vietnam: The War at Home* (Boston: G.K. Hall) 1984, presents an insightful overview of the domestic turmoil and strife. The introduction and Chapter 1 are most helpful. Other works to consult are: Mitchel K. Hall, *Because of Their Faith: CAL-CAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War* (New York: Columbia University Press) 1990; Mel Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press) 1988; and Mel Small and William D. Hoover, eds., *Give Peace a Chance: Essays from the Charles DeBenedetti Memorial Conference on the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press) 1992. One of the most ambitious and challenging programs to date was The Center for the Study of the Vietnam Generation. It was a network of scholars, writers, journalists, historians, sociologists, political scientists, religious clergy and others interested in studying how the events of the 1960s and early 1970s—among them the Viet Nam war, war protest, civil rights movement, women's movement, and Watergate--affect the actions and attitudes of the 60 million men and women who came of age during that time. [Editor's note: The Center for the Study of the Vietnam Generation was discontinued in 1988, when its founder, John Wheeler, decided to halt its work. The files of the Center were handed over to the Indochina Institute at George Mason University, and the organization ceased to exist. *Viet Nam Generation*, though it has no connection to the Center, was founded to continue a tradition of inquiry into the Viet Nam war era.]

⁴ There are a number of useful historical works and anthologies covering the peace movement and the Viet Nam war: Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press) 1980; Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press) 1990; Charles Chatfield, ed., *Peace Movements in America* (NY: Schocken Books) 1973; Thomas Powers, *Vietnam: The War at Home*; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1974* (NY: Holt, Reinhardt, Winston) 1984; Joseph R. Conlin, ed., *American Anti-War Movements* (Beverly Hills, CA: Glencoe Press) 1970; Staughton Lynd, ed., *Non-Violence in America: A Documentary History* (NY: Grove Press) 1985; Robert D. Schulzinger, ed., "The War in Vietnam and Its Legacy," special edition, *Peace and Change IX* (Summer 1983); John M. Carroll, "The Agony of Vietnam," in William W. MacDonald, et al., eds., *Conflict and Change: America 1939 to Present* (River City, CA: River City Publications) 1983; my AHA Pamphlet, co-author Glen Zeitzer, *The American Peace Movement: History and Historiography* (Washington, DC: American Historical Association) 1985, and, Charles Chatfield, *The American Peace Movement: Ideals and Activism* (New York: Twayne Publishers), 1992. De Benedetti's *An American Ordeal* was completed by historian Charles Chatfield upon the author's untimely death. It represents

the most comprehensive history of the Viet Nam antiwar movement.

⁵ Powers, *Vietnam: The War at Home*: 140.

⁶ Traditional Cold War peace organizations like SAND and CNVA are ably discussed in the following works: Robert A. Divine, *Blowing on the Wind: The Nuclear Test Ban Debate, 1954-1960* (NY: WW Norton) 1978; Milton Katz, "Peace, Politics & Protest: SANE and the American Peace Movement, 1957-1972" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, St. Louis University) 1973; and Neil Katz, "Radical Pacifism and the Contemporary American Peace Movement: The Committee for Nonviolent Action, 1957-1967" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Maryland) 1974.

⁷ Rising as a constellation of dissident intellectuals, disaffected students, and the culturally alienated, the New Left came upon the scene in 1962 in rebellion against corporate bureaucratic structures in government and education in favor of more direct and personal decision-making forms that it idealized in the phrase "participatory democracy" and that it tried to live in organizations like Students for a Democratic Society and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. It also felt a compelling need to reorder U.S. priorities so as to re-emphasize domestic problems and "force a cessation of the arms race." Consult "America and the New Era," June 1963, manifesto issued by Students for a Democratic Society, Box 29a, Social Protest Project, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley; "Port Huron Statement" (1962) and Tom Hayden, "Student Social Action: From Liberation to Community" (March 1962), Box 57, New Left Collection, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University. Helpful studies include Edward J. Bacciocco, Jr., *The New Left in America: Reform to Revolution, 1950 to 1970* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press) 1974; Irwin Unger, *The Movement: A History of the American New Left, 1959-1972* (NY: Dodd, Mead) 1974; and James Weinstein, *Ambiguous Legacy: The Left in American Politics* (NY: New Viewpoints) 1975.

⁸ Sidney Lens, *Unrepentant Radical* (Boston: Beacon Press) 1980: 318. See also Lens, "Why the Committees of Correspondence?" nd, Personal Box, Sidney Lens Papers, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, Chicago Historical Society.

⁹ Conlin, ed., *American Anti-War Movements*: 105-127.

¹⁰ Quoted in Jo Ann O. Robinson, *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A.J. Muste* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press) 1981: 202.

¹¹ See the following representative works: Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press) 1981; David J. Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: From "Solo" to Memphis* (NY: WW Norton) 1981; John Ricks, "De Lawd' Descends and is Crucified: Martin Luther King in Albany, Georgia," *Journal of Southwest Georgia History* (Fall 1984); Martin L. King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom* (NY: Mentor) 1958; Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954-1980* (NY: Holmes and Meier) 1981; August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (Urbana, IL: Univ. of IL Press) 1975; Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (Boston: Beacon Press) 1964.

¹² Jerry Rubin, et al., "October 15, 16—Days of International Protest," *Vietnam Day Committee News* 1:2 (Jul-Aug 1965): 1. The link between peace and social justice represented an outgrowth of the "modern" American peace movement that appeared during the First World War. Liberal pacifists, like Muste, argued that there could be no peace without justice at home. On this score see Charles Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice: Pacifism in America, 1914-1941* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press) 1971.

¹³ Milton S. Katz, "Peace Liberals and Vietnam: SANE and the Politics of 'Responsible' Protest," *Peace and Change IX*, no. 2/3 (Summer 1983): 21-4; Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (NY: Random House) 1974: 242-243.

- ¹⁴ Louis Mensahe and Ronald Radosh, eds., *Teach-ins: USA* (NY: Praeger) 1967, *passim*; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*: 37-8, 43-6, 140-41, 416-17.
- ¹⁵ Patti McGill Peterson, "Student Organizations and the Anti-War Movement in America," in Chatfield, ed., *Peace Movements in America*: 116-132; Howlett and Zeitler, *The American Peace Movement*: 37-38.
- ¹⁶ *New York Times*, 27 Mar 1966: 1.
- ¹⁷ *New York Times*, 21-22 April 1966; "The Saigon Project," A.J. Muste Papers, Box 43, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.
- ¹⁸ *New York Times*, 27 Feb 1966.
- ¹⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam," in Lillian Schlissel, ed., *Conscience in America: A Documentary History of Conscientious Objection in America, 1757-1967* (NY: E.P. Dutton) 1968: 426-433.
- ²⁰ Quoted in Alice Lynd, ed., *We Won't Go* (Boston: Beacon Press) 1968: 181-202.
- ²¹ Fort Hood Three, pamphlet, July 1966, Muste Papers, Box 43; *New York Post* 10 Oct 1966. Also consult, William King, editor, *A White Man's War: Race Issues and Vietnam* 1:2, special issue of *Vietnam Generation* (1989).
- ²² A.J. Muste, "Last Words," *Liberation* (Sep-Oct 1967): 52-7; Philip S. Foner, *American Labor and the Indochina War: Growth of Union Opposition* (NY: International Publishers) 1971: 48-59; John Kenneth Galbraith, *How to Get Out of Vietnam* (NY: New American Library) 1967: 22.
- ²³ Quoted in Don Lawson, *Ten Fighters for Peace* (NY: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard) 1971: 74, 87; see also Michael Useem, *Conscription, Protest and Social Conflict: The Life and Death of a Draft Resistance Movement* (NY: John Wiley) 1973; David M. Mantell, *True Americanism: Green Berets and War Resisters* (NY: Teachers College Press) 1974; Ferber and Lynd, eds., *The Resistance*, *passim*.
- ²⁴ Lynd, ed., *We Won't Go*: 206.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*: 109-119.
- ²⁶ For this observation it is worth examining Renée G. Kasinsky, *Refugees from Militarism: Draft-Age Americans in Canada* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books) 1976.
- ²⁷ "April 15 Demonstrations of Spring Mobilization Committee," 12 Feb 1967, SANE Mss, SCPC; *Washington Post*, 7 Apr 1967: 1; *New York Times*, 13 Apr 1967: 3; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*: 110; Norman Cousins, "Public Opinion and Vietnam," *Saturday Review*, 29 Apr 1967: 4.
- ²⁸ Daniel Berrigan, *No Bars to Manhood* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday) 1970: 23-5.
- ²⁹ "A Call to Resist," *New Republic* (7 Oct 1967); *New York Times*, 20 Oct 1967: 1; "Confront the Warmakers—October 21 & 22," *New Left Notes* (18 Sep 1967): 2. For a useful list of the major antiwar demonstrations of this period consult Irving Horowitz, *The Struggle is the Message: The Organization and Ideology of the Anti-War Movement* (Berkeley, CA: The Glendessary Press) 1970: 148-67; Jerome H. Skolnick, *The Politics of Protest* (NY: Ballantine Books) 1969: 25-78.
- ³⁰ Charles DeBenedetti, "A CIA Analysis of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement: October 1967," *Peace and Change* IX, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 31-41.
- ³¹ R. Serge Denisoff, ed., *Songs of Protest, War and Peace* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO) 1973; Terry Howard Anderson, "American Popular Music and the War in Vietnam," *Peace and Change* (forthcoming).
- ³² Denisoff, ed., *Songs of Protest, War and Peace*: 5-6.
- ³³ The Cox Commission Report, *Crisis at Columbia* (NY: Vintage Books) 1968, *passim*.
- ³⁴ Daniel Berrigan, *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine* (Boston: Beacon Press) 1970: *passim*.
- ³⁵ Quoted in Larry Gara, ed., *To Secure Peace and Liberty* (New York: War Resisters League) 1976: 102.
- ³⁶ Quoted in Nancy L. Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press) 1984: 163.
- ³⁷ Paul Hoffman, *Moratorium: An American Protest* (New York: Tower Publications) 1970, *passim*; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*: 249-300; DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform*: 185-7.
- ³⁸ Ken Hurwitz, *Marching Nowhere* (NY: WW Norton) 1971 and Sam Brown, "The Politics of Peace," *The Washington Monthly* II, no. 6 (Aug 1970): 24-46; Lens, *Unrepentant Radical*: 356; *New York Times*, 20 Oct, 18 and 30 Nov 1969.
- ³⁹ For a scholarly analysis of the dilemma of peace coalitions see Chatfield's introduction to his edited work, *Peace Movements in America*: xxvi-xxviii. Also consult Brabford Lyttle, *The Chicago Anti-Vietnam War Movement* (Chicago: Midwest Pacifist Center) 1988.
- ⁴⁰ Thomas Reeves and Karl Hess, *The End of the Draft* (NY: Random House) 1970, *passim*.
- ⁴¹ Denisoff, ed., *Songs of Protest, War and Peace*: 6; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*: 319-23; I.F. Stone, *The Killings at Kent State* (NY: Vintage) 1971; *New York Times*, 5 May 1970. See also Susie Erenrich, editor, *Kent and Jackson State: 1970-1990* 2:2, special issue of *Vietnam Generation* (1990).
- ⁴² VVAW History, Box 6, The State Historical Society of Wisconsin; David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt: The American Military Today* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday) 1975, chapter 1; Edward M. Opton, Jr. and Robert Duckless, "Mental Gymnastics on Mylai," *The New Republic* 162, no. 8 (21 Feb 1970): 14-16; Vietnam Veterans Against the War, *The Winter Soldier Investigations* (Boston: Beacon Press) 1972; John Kerry, "Vietnam Veterans Against the War," in David Thorne and George Butler, eds., *The New Soldier* (NY: Macmillan) 1971.
- ⁴³ *New York Times*, 4-6 May 1971.
- ⁴⁴ "On Daniel Ellsberg: Remembering the Pentagon Papers," in Gara, ed., *To Secure Peace and Liberty*: 105-6; Daniel Ellsberg, *Papers on the War* (NY: Simon & Schuster) 1982.
- ⁴⁵ Jacob K. Javits, "Who Decides on War?" *New York Times Magazine* (23 Oct 1973): 92 & ff; *Newsday*, 16 Sep 1983: 3.
- ⁴⁶ Chatfield, *The American Peace Movement*: 143-145.
- ⁴⁷ "At Last, At Last..." *Fellowship* 41, no. 6 (Jun 1975): 3.
- ⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the military-oriented assumptions of the cold war that led us into Viet Nam remain. Although the peace movement contributed to discrediting and eventually ending U.S. involvement in Viet Nam, despite their efforts they seem to have had little impact on the nature either of U.S. society or its approach to world affairs. For a retrospective analysis on the impact of the antiwar movement see, Michael Walzer, "The Peace Movement: What Was Won by Protest?" *New Republic* (10 Feb 1973): 25; James O'Brien, "The Anti-War Movement and the War," *Radical America* VIII (May-Jun 1974): 53-86; and Katz, "Peace Liberals and Vietnam": 21-39.

VIETNAM WAR REFOUGHT: KENT STATE, 1977

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The 1977 Kent State University gymnasium annex controversy, or "gym struggle," emerged when University plans to take up part of the site of the 1970 student-National Guard confrontation with a gymnasium annex became widely known. The effort to preserve the entire confrontation site was launched by a student-led group called the May 4th Coalition, in the face of the determination of the Kent State administration and Board of Trustees to construct the annex as planned. But the dimensions of the struggle—its origins, participants, scope, course and outcome—were much broader than its immediate goal might have implied. In fact, the May 4th Coalition sought to bring before the American public for its serious consideration, during the spring, summer and fall of 1977, some fundamental questions raised by the Viet Nam war and its accompanying domestic unrest.

The gym struggle of 1977 took place in the shadow of the Viet Nam war, the cause and symptom of so many contradictions and divisions within American society for most of a decade. The Viet Nam era, recalls journalist Thomas Powers, "was a terrible time that seemed to go on forever," a period during which polarization, frustration and anguish became the central facts in the lives "of an entire generation."¹ Many Americans had great difficulty accepting the reality of the massive destruction wreaked upon Viet Nam in the name of "freedom" (later, "credibility"), and resisted the emerging national realization that the Viet Nam war was not a "mistake" but a disastrous defeat. The legions of antiwar protesters who demonstrated from New York to California between the mid-1960s and the early 1970s had first told Americans that their country—one they liked to think of as the hope of the world, modern history's great democratic beacon and peacemaker—was oppressing a weak, less-developed people for little discernible reason. Later they insisted that America was not "fighting Communism" but obstructing a colonized people's long-term independence struggle, and in the end many antiwar leaders were to contend that America was fighting not to retain its "credibility" but to retain a small but valuable part of its empire. Many in the antiwar movement announced—some with the support of their parents—that they would leave the country or go to jail to avoid military service.

Some people were uncomfortable about the Viet Nam war for another reason. They were used to winning wars, going all-out for clear-cut victories. Why wasn't their government doing that in Viet Nam? Shipment upon shipment of troops and equipment went to Viet Nam as the American military commitment to the South Vietnamese government grew through the mid-1960s, with little subsequent evidence of any real strengthening of the precarious positions of the various regimes in Saigon. America's allies generally failed to help; indeed, some opposed the American position. All of this was very frustrating and, to a great degree, humiliating for many Americans.

Americans wanted America to be strong, decisive and magnanimous at the same time. "The war," observes Thomas Powers, "was one of those things that come along once in a generation and call entire societies into question, forcing people to choose between irreconcilables." Some adopted the perspective that enabled Socialist leader Norman Thomas to declare at an antiwar rally in late 1965 that he would "rather see America save her soul than her face" there.² But in the opinion of others, America was not choosing to display the military will and power necessary to win the war, even if victory required a war with China, or, as Curtis LeMay put it, bombing Viet Nam "back to the Stone Age," or that Viet Nam be destroyed in order to save it. Yet America's military power was unquestionably ruining land and killing people—many of them civilians—hardly the results one would have expected from an enterprise conducted by a generous, humane nation.

Thus, the nation experienced isolation and sometimes actual condemnation abroad and a degree of political and spiritual division and anguish at home unknown since the Civil War. The Viet Nam war was not one with which Americans could long comfortably have lived.

During the early stages of the war, antiwar demonstrators seemed, to most Americans, at best to be pacifists too cowardly to do their duty for their country and the Free World, and, at worst, to be unpatriotic, obstructing the war effort and/or taking the side of the enemy. One poll taken in December, 1966, and in July, 1967, revealed that 58 percent of the population could tolerate such rallies and marches if they stayed peaceful, but that fully 40 percent did not believe that Americans possessed even that freedom. Demonstrating, as Jerome Skolnick has pointed out, for such people, clearly meant something quite different than "writing to a congressman or speaking up at a town meeting."³

When it became clear, by early 1968, that the Johnson administration (and the Kennedy administration before it) had consistently lied to the American public about the roots and prospects of the war,⁴ that public had nowhere to go emotionally, torn as it was between a war it had come to hate, a government that had betrayed its trust and an antiwar movement which did not seem to love its country or wish it to succeed. The accompanying domestic violence exemplified by the assassinations of leaders from Malcolm X to Robert Kennedy, bloody urban riots and the shooting of black students (notably at South Carolina State College at Orangeburg in 1968) had almost become a normal aspect of American life by the end of the decade. The Kerner Commission warned of further explosions in a seriously divided country.

By 1968, enough Americans had expressed their opposition to the war by displaying support for Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy to knock the major proponent of continued fighting, President Johnson, out of the Presidential race. In November, Richard Nixon was elected to succeed Johnson, on a pledge to get the country (justly and honorably, of course) out of Southeast Asia. Nixon was also elected on a pledge to promote "law and order." He spoke, however, of bringing the country together again and a nation weary of war and division accepted the idea with relief:

It was as though in 1968 peace and national unity had been settled upon as the theme for the next four years, and any events that failed to carry out the theme were deprived of their significance and were invisible. Somehow an image had been fixed in place, which mere events could not easily dislodge.⁵

The violence perpetrated by the Ohio National Guard on the Kent State campus on May 4, 1970, occurred a year and a half after this mood settled over the country. A population irritated through much of 1969 by rebellious students who "seemed intent on prolonging the hated period of 'national division' out of sheer perversity"⁶ appreciated neither Richard Nixon's Cambodian invasion speech nor the campus explosions that followed it. The relaxed and reassuring language of the early Nixon administration had turned, by April, 1970, into the President's insistence that America must demonstrate its will and credibility to itself and the rest of the world, and that participants in the campus antiwar movement could be characterized as "bums." The speech threw the nation into a tailspin:

Instead of the expected return of the "known and familiar," the nation was experiencing a revival of the alien and weird. In fact, by now the alien and weird had prevailed for so many years that they had almost become the known and familiar.⁷

The violence at Kent State which left four students dead and nine wounded, one seriously, was not, of itself then, unusual. What was unusual were the circumstances in which the violence took place, the white, middle-class and student identities of the victims, and what was symbolized for the national consciousness by the blood spilled in the center of the campus of a previously obscure Midwestern state university. "Kent State" became the most obvious national symbol of the decade of the polarization, anger, guilt, bitterness, shame and confusion produced by America's tragic and disastrous adventure in Viet Nam.

For seven years after May 4, 1970, the nation lived with the knowledge that its ill-advised war in Southeast Asia had finally caused deaths at home. For seven years, it tried to forget about Kent State, living as best as it could with the broader knowledge (certain by April, 1975) that it had lost the war. Meanwhile, the question of accountability for the deaths at Kent State was pursued on state and national levels, primarily by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the United Methodist Church's Board of Church and Society. At the same time there emerged on the Kent State campus itself what Scott Bills and S.R. Thulin have called the "May 4th Movement,"⁸ a concerted attempt by students and occasionally by faculty members to keep the ideas, analyses, goals and memories of the antiwar movement and its dead in circulation. Since part of the memory of 1970 remained in the physical location of the Guard-student confrontation—in the land on which the two groups had skirmished and on which the blood of thirteen students was later shed—the wooded hill, the football practice field

and the parking lot in the middle of the Kent State campus because as much a symbol of antiwar resistance as the emerging tradition of holding annual commemorative rallies there.

Whether the Kent State administration did or did not think about the ramifications of all this when it decided during the early 1970s to build a gymnasium annex on part of the wooded hill and most of the practice field is open to speculation. What is certain is that, as soon as the plans became known in the fall of 1976, they aroused protest from several student groups concerned about appropriate commemoration of 1970. By May of 1977, when more general student awareness combined with a feeling of University insensitivity to other commemorative requests (such as canceling classes on May 4th or naming buildings after the four dead students), a remarkable degree of energy and resentment was ready and waiting to be galvanized into action.

The result was the formation of the May 4th Coalition, the group which attempted over a five-month period to preserve the entire site of the Kent State confrontation. Unfortunately, victory for the May 4th Coalition—retention of the May 4th site through relocation of the gymnasium annex—would almost certainly have required a change in prevailing national attitudes about the Viet Nam war and those who opposed it. The nature of those attitudes has already been detailed. The question is: What forces produced such attitudes and what obstacles did the Coalition face in 1977 while trying to combat them?

The antiwar movement of the 1960s had to break through a web of circumstances, beliefs and assumptions—some already detailed—in order to convince a majority of Americans that the war was mistaken or wrong. The Left wing of the movement may eventually have made private (and sometimes public) common cause with the National Liberation Front, the entity against whom the United States was actually fighting most of the time, but such identifications could rarely be publicly made because the "Viet Cong" were the "enemy." Therefore, the movement as a whole concentrated on persuading the public that its government was intervening wrongly and dangerously in a civil war or a war for national liberation, appealing to that part of the American tradition which put Americans on the side of the oppressed underdogs. Since the prevailing ideology taught Americans that war with Viet Nam must be endured to display American will and credibility to the world against Communist challenges, the movement had to persuade them that this was not, in fact, what was at stake in Vietnam—or that the deaths and destruction American military might was causing there was too high a price to pay to prove such things. The movement had to try to persuade the majority of Americans to stop thinking about national honor in the context of "winning" the war in Viet Nam—or, at least, to re-define it.

In these senses, the antiwar movement was an attempt to break through the hold of Cold War ideology on the majority of American minds. If the Viet Nam war can be seen in good part as an ideologically-based conflict growing only indirectly out of actual material circumstances, the antiwar movement can likewise be seen as an attempt on the ideological plane to change a

material situation. Borrowing from the political and social writings of the Italian Leftist Antonio Gramsci, the efforts of the antiwar movement can be characterized as a struggle to counter dominant class ideology ("ideological hegemony") by means of a "war of position," an extended series of challenges to prevailing thought and the presentation of alternative perceptions of reality.⁹

The question then becomes to what extent this war of position was perceived as such by either the belligerents or the public, to what extent it triumphed and to what extent its pressures brought about a change in war plans or a change in the perceptions of the world that had caused the war in the first place. This question is important because it seeks to discover the extent of counter-cultural penetration to be credited to this kind of struggle during the Viet Nam war era.

The evidence suggests that the gradual change of attitude toward the war on the part of influential media, politically influential intellectuals, mainstream political leaders from both parties, Wall Street corporate executives and even some Pentagon officials that filtered through to the public's consciousness between the fall of 1967 and the spring of 1968 was partly but not wholly brought about by the ideological challenge presented by the antiwar movement. The change was also produced by the progress (or lack of it) of the war itself and by a growing realization that further pursuit of an elusive victory in Viet Nam was likely to exact an unacceptable price in social and political terms potentially threatening to the rule in the nation of what might be called "corporate liberalism."¹⁰

The crisis created by the Viet Nam war can be viewed, in Gramscian terms, as a "crisis of the modern state," one which occurs when the dominating class is largely "stripped of its spiritual prestige and power...."¹¹ One might have thought that such a crisis of confidence would create ideal opportunities for the antiwar movement (and the Left in general) to gain a serious audience for its interpretations from intellectuals and the public. The erosion of public and academic confidence in official authority and ideas caused by the course of events in Viet Nam created only the possibility for such a presentation, however. A degree of success would certainly be achieved if the war and its nature could be "demystified" before the nation—if the nation could at least detach itself from Cold War myths and view the conflict clearly. The antiwar movement was to discover in the process of making this effort, though, just how pervasive and entrenched "corporate liberalism" was in American society.¹² Debate about the propriety of the Viet Nam war was taking place overwhelmingly within these boundaries.

The turning point reached on the war in the thinking of official Washington by 1968 was produced by several factors. One was the impact of the antiwar movement. Another was a general desire to withdraw from a chronic cycle of death and destruction which was failing to accomplish original war objectives while causing unprecedented division at home. Still another was the change of heart about the war by a substantial sector of the nation's elite. These people, from Wall Street investment bankers to politicians like Senator Robert Kennedy, came to feel that the United States had better

negotiate a settlement in Viet Nam and get out to fight more crucial battles elsewhere and maintain tranquillity at home. Therefore, it can be argued that the change in official Viet Nam policy from commitment and escalation to de-escalation and withdrawal constituted only a partial victory for those antiwar forces which had tried to get Americans to face and analyze what was going on in America's name in Viet Nam. Additionally, neither the language nor the procedure eventually used to withdraw lent themselves easily to challenges of corporate liberalism. Since both American tradition and dominant thought frowned upon—indeed forbade—defeat, words and a program had to be found which would redefine the war rather simply as something in which the country ought no longer to be involved. Then it could end its commitment with a minimal amount of revelations or humiliation.¹³

Richard Nixon was quite successful in these respects with his "Vietnamization" program. Changes were made in official policy, but only within the confines of continued tranquillity at home and a more selective pursuit of Cold War objectives abroad. The new policy was popular because it promised to reduce American physical involvement (allowing the burden of the war's unchanged objectives and casualties to be shifted to the nonwhite Vietnamese) without rejecting any of the culturally-dominant assumptions that had been used for most of a decade to persuade Americans that the war was necessary and justified.¹⁴ The Cold War was still alive. The nation still had to maintain its credibility in the face of Soviet and Chinese provocations—including provocations from "proxies" like the Hanoi-supported National Liberation Front. It still had obligations to itself and the Free World to maintain noncommunist regimes like South Viet Nam's and to contain communist aggression.

So Americans could feel pleased when the troops began to come home. So could influential "leaders." If Vietnamization worked, they would have extracted themselves from the Viet Nam morass with minimal ideological losses.

The Cambodian invasion speech of April 30, 1970, and its often-violent aftermath pulled the nation out of its induced complacency. Americans had thought the war was ending, that they would not have to think about it any more. They had also thought the campuses were going to settle down at last, and stop raising so many alien, uncomfortable questions. The sequence of events that began following Nixon's speech and ending May 4th with the thirteen casualties at Kent State threatened to eliminate that supposition. Not only did the speech thrust the war and all its complications back into the minds of the majority, but the violence at Kent State raised such controversial questions as the legitimacy of civil disobedience, the relative value of property versus human life, and the acceptable extent of civil liberties.

Many Americans seemed to be of the opinion, following the shootings, that those who had "rioted" in downtown Kent the night of May 1 and had burned down a World War II barracks on campus (which was being used as a ROTC building) on the night of May 2 (behavior supposedly linked in both cases to student antiwar sentiment) should have been prevented from holding an antiwar, anti-National Guard rally on the Kent State campus on May 4.

The fact that different groups of people were involved in varying, not constant degrees throughout the weekend, that the National Guard was already on its way to Kent when the ROTC building was set afire, that the cause of the fire was open to question, and that the May 4th rally itself was a peaceful extension of a May Day anti-Cambodian invasion demonstration until the Guardsmen tried to disperse the crowd all got lost in the whirlwind of media distortions and public turmoil that followed the shootings. Local, state and national officials seemed both to agree with and encourage the collective evaluation that a dozen store windows and a crumbling, oversized campus shed were more important and more worthy of public concern and protection than the right to peaceably assemble or the rights of four young Kent students to live.

The nation had not cared particularly about the shootings of black students at Orangeburg two years before. It cared equally little about the shootings at Jackson State ten days after the carnage of May 4th. But Kent State had, after all, involved materially comfortable white students and it involved a culturally unacceptable reaction to a war the nation was trying to forget. Therefore, the conjunction of limited traditional assumptions with a sort of collective war trauma suggested that "Kent State" was to remain a thorn in the nation's side.¹⁵

Until 1970, white students on middle-class campuses had been able to function with a degree of cultural and political freedom unknown in other settings around the country. Much of their behavior was neither understood nor approved of by other, more constricted Americans. When the shootings at Kent State occurred, some Americans were appalled to see that the repressive hand of the government had reached beyond its usual racial and occupational targets to new victims, but many more seemed pleased and reassured that the incident showed that no spoiled young intellectual upstart was beyond the reach of Richard Nixon's "law and order." Maybe President Johnson had lied to the nation about the war, but official judgment ought usually to be respected. Perhaps the invasion of Cambodia had not been a good idea, but rioting and burning down buildings to protect it were irresponsible, immoral, outrageous, and generally un-American activities.

The circumstances that produced "Kent State," 1970, arose from a maze of contradictions and long-term economic, political and ideological problems of national scope. Since there were no visible alternatives to such contradictions available, the nation tried to forget about Kent State as quickly as possible. It felt much of the same frustration, embarrassment, shame and confusion about the event that it did about the wider issue of the war. A national focus on Kent State would have brought back to the fore of the nation's consciousness all the questions of the Viet Nam era about the nature of American society, questions that really could not have been fully answered unless prevalent Viet Nam era assumptions were pushed aside.

The struggle of the May 4th Coalition during the spring, summer and fall of 1977 to preserve the physical location of the confrontation of 1970 was, thus, more than a student effort to preserve a site of some local interest or an environmental effort to question the land-

use philosophy of Kent State University. It was more than an effort to question the University's commitment to student involvement in University decision-making. It was, in a broader sense, a struggle to counter culturally-dominant versions of the history and nature of the Viet Nam war era. If one believed that the four students who died at Kent State should be honored as representatives of the conscience of the nation to purge the country of its guilt and its accumulation of officially-imposed assumptions, one made an effort to preserve the area of the shootings that year—or, at least, expressed sympathy with the struggle. If one believed that Viet Nam could have been retained for the Free World, that the Kent State casualties had been rioters who had deserved their fate, or even that the events of the day had been a tragedy ultimately the responsibility of no one, one saw no reason to honor anything connected with 1970, or to preserve either its physical or symbolic memory.

Both sides involved in the gym struggle of 1977 (and various groups and individuals caught in between) saw it as a larger quarrel than it might first have appeared to be. Individuals involved on both sides as partisans recognized what the significance might be of building—or not building—a structure on part of the Kent State battlefield of 1970. In this sense, the gym struggle was not only an attempt to keep a historic site clear, but an effort to raise once again the challenges to official reasoning about the wars abroad and at home during the Viet Nam era—official reasoning still largely accepted by the public even if largely abandoned by 1977 by significant portions of the media, the academic and even the political communities. The May 4th Coalition spent five months in 1977 waging what Gramsci would have called a "war of position," a battle to counter on a cultural and ideological front beliefs and assumptions imposed upon and then accepted by the American public concerning the Viet Nam war era through the agency of public diffusion. What, then, of the course of this struggle?

The May 4th Coalition was born during an all-night occupation of the Kent State University Administration Building on May 4-5, 1977. The occupation followed the seventh annual commemorative May 4th rally, during which several speakers had urged that the crowd do something tangible to protest the states plans of the Administration and the Board of Trustees to construct a gymnasium annex on part of the site of the 1970 confrontation. The University always insisted that the construction plans did not affect the integrity of the 1970 site because none of the casualties or fatalities had been standing on ground to be included in the annex. The Coalition insisted that technicality was not entirely true—Dean Kahler, when wounded, had been standing on a section of the football practice field scheduled to be included in the construction and Jeffrey Miller, when killed, had been standing in a roadway scheduled to become part of an access road for the annex. In addition to that, "the May 4th site," for the Coalition, was larger than the site as defined by the University; while the University spoke of the site as little more than Prentice parking lot, where most of the blood of 1970 had actually been shed, the Coalition's May 4th site included the

entire area on which the National Guard and Kent State students had skirmished: in this case, the Commons, the parking lot, the football practice field behind the current gym and the wooded hill behind Taylor Hall from which the Guard had fired. Whether the University really defined the site narrowly or did so during 1977 only to suit its own convenience—in rationalizing its construction plans, the gap between University and Coalition site definitions virtually guaranteed that the two sides would spend much of 1977 simply talking past each other.

The power of suggestion, at any rate, proved potent, as a number of participants in the rally ended up that evening in the Administration Building, refusing to leave until they had a meeting with KSU President Glenn Olds. Even after the meeting, however (which was civil but indecisive), the crowd was reluctant to leave and ultimately decided to remain in the building while it organized itself into a group to continue and coordinate opposition to the annex site, among other, lesser demands, like amnesty for building occupants.

For the next week or so, the group discussed the most appropriate and effective ways to save the May 4th site, as it defined it. Having come to a consensus as to what should and could be done—especially to make a powerful, nonviolent and effective public statement—the Coalition made its move on May 12th. After attempting in vain to convince the Board of Trustees to change its mind about the site location, Coalition members proceeded to the wooded hill in danger of destruction. There, they set up an indefinite sit-in and site expropriation with tents and other camping equipment, to last at least until such time as the Board of Trustees changed its mind and decided to build the annex elsewhere. They named the little settlement Tent City.

The Tent City period of the May 4th Coalition's life was its longest and most successful, lasting for slightly over two months. During this period, the Coalition worked from a physical base, and received its greatest sympathy from the media, local and national. Although a few area right-wingers wrote nasty letters to newspapers resuscitating old assertions of violence in 1970 from student and non-student rioters and threatening tax action against the University if it failed to take action to stop the most recent disruptions,¹⁶ most people in the area either failed to express opinions at all or somehow indicated some degree of understanding of the Coalition's position. Mostly, the public was silent, with columnists and editorial writers filling in the gap with combinations of real sympathy for the Coalition's position and more complicated expressions of desire that something be done to settle the annex question before the questions and general level of disruption raised by the controversy got too bothersome.¹⁷

The Glenn Olds administration was not, on the one hand, at all happy about the presence of about 70 tents and perhaps 200 men, women and children on KSU's Blanket Hill. Nor was it happy about the publicity being generated, especially by such veterans of 1970 as Alan Canfora (wounded in the wrist) and Greg Rambo (a Young Republican eyewitness to the shootings later radicalized by them). Less militant but just as radical were leaders like Nancy Grim, a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of KSU in

1977. This latter group may have been more interested than the militants in making sure that all views got aired at the nightly Coalition meetings at Tent City, but they were just as committed to a major acknowledgment by the University that the importance of 1970 needed to be honored (among other things) by leaving the May 4th site alone.

President Olds seems to have found, on the other hand, a certain charm, even quaintness, about Tent City, just as did area reporters who came there to do stories about it and its occupants. There also must have been some reassurance to Olds in the earnestness of the settlers' commitments to maintain the grass, their nightly town meetings, and their rule banning smoking, alcohol and drugs from the area. (One could also add, somewhat more cynically, that Olds could afford not to worry too much about the indefinite tenure of Tent City, since he planned to move to Alaska later in the summer to take up the Presidency of Alaska Methodist University.)¹⁸

During the two months of Tent City, the Coalition experienced its greatest unity and impact. Yet even then, it was becoming evident that its support was wide but not deep—and also that factions were appearing within it whose activities were to prove counterproductive to attaining its stated goals later in the summer. The factions ranged from militants who described the disruptions of 1970 with patent historical falsity as a "student-worker uprising," and who insisted that the University had deliberately chosen the annex site to literally "cover up" the area and memory of the shootings, to liberals hoping that an annex stupidly or insensitively planned could be relocated before any of the Coalition's (or outside) radical troublemakers got any further with their analyses and general pushiness. In between were a variety of socialists and anarchists (plus counter-culturalists) who more simply wanted the injustice of the war and the shootings acknowledged and the beauty of the hill preserved, though a number of them also believed that the University had planned the annex to cover part of the May 4th site deliberately. Militants like Canfora and Rambo have already been mentioned. Liberals included Dr. Dennis Carey, acting head of KSU's official 1970 memorial, the Center for Peaceful Change, and his wife, Marie. What might be called "moderates" included KSU students and alumni such as Bill Arthrell, Nancy Grim and Jonathan Smuck. Philosophical differences were often reflected in tactical struggles, as the emerging factions tried to outmaneuver each other in Coalition votes.¹⁹

The issue of Coalition support was just as serious. In the first place, education was carried out largely through media interviews. Coalition members such as Fatimah Abdullah wondered if grassroots (door-to-door) efforts would be more effective and democratic, but this seems never to have been tried. It is only fair to note, of course, that most current mainstream political campaigners also rely almost entirely on media interviews and advertising rather than personal campaigning to relay their messages to the public. That only emphasizes, however, the problem of superficial, if not sensational news being made available to the public as a substitute for more substantial information.

Tent City came to an end on July 12, 1977, as the result of a court order. While the University had sought a simple injunction ordering the Coalition to dismantle Tent City and vacate the site to allow annex construction to begin, the judge apparently felt that the Coalition's case merited a hearing. Therefore, the Coalition was ordered to vacate the area, but the judge also put the University under an order: to delay construction for ten days until a full hearing could be held before him.

This presented the Coalition with a dilemma. It tried to decide, at a mass meeting the night of the court decision, whether to accept the order to abandon Tent City and await the hearing or to insist on remaining there until physically removed by police. While a sizable minority felt that the Coalition should go along with the order and hope for the best at the hearing, the majority ultimately voted to resist the order and make a stand on the hill. For those people, retention of Tent City had clearly become more important than tactical considerations tied to the judge's possible future decisions.²⁰

Early on the morning of July 12, 193 people, including the entire Canfora family and the parents of 1970 fatality Sandy Scheuer, were peacefully led, dragged or carried down Blanket Hill to buses waiting to take them to the county jail for processing on contempt charges. While the arrests made national—even international—news and created a great deal of sympathy for the Coalition all the way to the White House, the fact was that Tent City was gone, the Coalition had lost its physical base and faced a very uncertain future. The fact that local Congressman John Seiberling, Senator Howard Metzenbaum and Jimmy Carter aide Midge Costanza expressed willingness to help the Coalition did not alter these realities.

The ten days passed, the hearing came and went and the judge decided that there was no legal obstacle preventing the KSU Board of Trustees from locating the annex as it saw fit. The Coalition's case was probably not helped by the fact that a number of members temporarily re-occupied the site during a rally held the weekend before the hearing; there would be a third site foray leading to a second mass arrest (of 62 people, in addition to about a dozen in jail through arrest warrants for the briefer action) the night before construction was due to begin.

Early on a sultry morning in late July, earthmovers arrived at the annex construction site. There was no one present to block them and few to observe; most Coalition members were either asleep or still in jail and were not even aware that construction had formally begun. The machines actually scraped turf unimpeded for several hours before a sudden court hearing on the Coalition's behalf engineered by William Kunstler at the federal level prompted a federal judge to issue an order delaying construction again. This decision was to lead to a series of negotiations, further hearings and appeals all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court that were to delay a real start of annex construction until mid-September.

One of the great ironies about the dominant rhetoric of the Coalition throughout late July, August and early September was that it credited the advances of the struggle to mass activity. Even a few of the young, radical lawyers working in the courts for the Coalition spoke this

way, apparently agreeing with the interpretation of the two Maoist groups which came to dominate the Coalition during this period, the Revolutionary Student Brigade (RSB) and the Communist Youth Organization (CYO). Yet it was not "mass activity"—on the part of the 200 or so people in the Coalition or the mass of the public to whom it never really spoke—that was responsible for the Coalition's successes during this period, but legal action by sympathetic lawyers and the efforts of local, state and federal politicians to negotiate in the Coalition's behalf.

The intervention, following the July 12 arrests, of White House aide Costanza could have been interpreted somewhat cynically as the effort of Jimmy Carter's White House to diffuse the controversy at Kent State before it spread. The related effort to save the site by placing it on the National Register of Historic Sites, endorsed by Costanza, was nevertheless real, as was the effort made by John Begala, Kent's state assemblyman, to get an agreement from the Board of Trustees to seek funds from the Ohio legislature to move the annex about 40 feet downhill from its original location (the so-called "rotation" proposal). Little as such liberals as Costanza and Begala may have liked the ultra-radical and increasingly anti-democratic turn of the Coalition during this period—not to speak of its original analysis of the war era—and perhaps because of the former problem, they understood the reasons for the group's formation, sympathized with them, and tried to obtain a compromise that would at least keep most of the 1970 site clear.

Alas, even these attempts were to fail. The site, it seemed, could not be placed on the National Register because it was under fifty years old. (One might have wondered, at the time, whether a waiver of this requirement was possible and, if it was not, why so much energy had been put into a useless effort.) The federal courts could find no Constitutional basis to support the Coalition's case against the University—whatever the moral strength of it, it was not reflected in existing law—and the main judge involved, Federal District Judge Thomas Lamros, could get neither the Coalition nor the Trustee negotiating team to agree to some kind of compromise. Neither could John Begala get anywhere with either side to even begin to try to obtain relocation funds from the Legislature. The Trustees insisted that the annex be constructed as planned and the Coalition team insisted that it be moved completely away from the May 4th site. The other option presented by Begala, remodeling the old KSU lab school to accommodate the needs of the annex, was attacked so violently by Coalition-supporting parents with children there that Begala was obliged to drop it quickly as a possibility.²¹

By mid-September, all avenues of appeal had been exhausted and all the Coalition had left was empty announcements about mass resistance being planned when and if construction machinery actually arrived. Even at the high point of the gym struggle, only 193 people—not thousands—had been willing to submit to peaceful and probably safe arrest, raising questions as to how many people could be expected for the more dangerous task of blocking construction machinery. In the end, in fact, no one did. One courageous member of KSU's student government buried herself in the earth to block

machinery already on the site from digging. (She was shortly pulled out after a close encounter with decapitation.) Perhaps a dozen people attempted to chase after the machinery as it came in the first full day of construction. Two or three dozen more watched helplessly on top of Blanket Hill as bulldozers ripped out trees to clear the site for the building. On that day of final defeat for the Coalition, neither the two largely imported Maoist groups nor most of the original campus Coalition leadership was actually present at the site to resist as they had long vowed they would. Neither were they busy on any door-to-door campaign, though some may have been working on leaflets announcing the next Coalition rally. But even if the Coalition had remained pragmatic and moderate, worked on intensive education and tried to work with such friends as John Begala, it would probably have lost its struggle: the revival of memory about the war and the shootings involved in its quest would still probably have proved too much for the public and a stubborn Board of Trustees. Judging from letters to editors during that period, the Coalition was drawing little sympathy by then.²²

It does not often take large numbers of people to start a movement, to conduct struggles. Sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset has written of a "critical mass," a human activist equivalent of the atomic phenomenon, which sets off events that only later involve large numbers of people. This is hardly a reassuring theory for those who contend that history is always made by the masses, but it seems to be supported by the facts. Most people at most times simply lack the time and energy to give sustained effort to political activity. Those who did have both time and energy are credited by Lipset in one of his studies of 1960s campus radicalism for first having raised important social issues and then having drawn large numbers of students, primarily involved in classes and social activities, at least temporarily into political life.

Thus, a pattern emerges from a study of the antiwar and New Left activity of the 1960s, the crisis of 1970 and the rise of the "May 4th Movement" at Kent State culminating in the May 4th Coalition-led gym struggle of 1977. Over a period of perhaps twelve years, relatively small groups of people brought issues to the attention of the majority.

Many 1960s antiwar activists came to believe that the Viet Nam war was not a mistake but a deliberate attempt by a loosely-knit but powerful coalition that controlled the U.S. to retain a small but highly-regarded part of its empire, fueled by Cold War ideology. It followed, then, that the real cause of the Kent State shootings had been the desire of the Nixon administration to suppress domestic objections to its Viet Nam policy so that it could have more of a chance of successfully retaining Viet Nam for the capitalist world.

Many in the antiwar and May 4th movements drew such conclusions; others did not. The antiwar movement of the 1960s was a broad and diverse coalition and many in it could agree that the war in Viet Nam was illegal and immoral without seeing it as a struggle to save Viet Nam for the capitalist world. For seven years after the Kent State shootings, many liberals, for instance, struggled for

accountability for the deaths and injuries of 1970, not because of the economic and political ramifications of the event perceived by radicals, but from a deep sense that human rights on that occasion had been denied.

Liberals and radicals came together in the May 4th Movement, and more particularly in the May 4th Coalition during the gym struggle of 1977, as they had during the 1960s to end the Viet Nam war. They shared the belief that there must be accountability for 1970 and that the May 4th site ought to remain intact as a historical reminder and as human memorial.

The small group of people which began the struggle against annex construction constituted a "critical mass" which organized and mobilized support to preserve the May 4th site. Different people had different reasons for joining both the critical mass and the Coalition, however. These reasons ranged from the broadly liberal belief that Kent State 1970 had been a tragedy and that the dead and injured should be memorialized to the radical belief that Kent State had been an example of suppression of opposition to imperialism. A good many radicals hoped that in the course of the struggle to save the site, the public would gradually see the ramifications of Viet Nam and Kent State for American society and would become ready both to accept and participate in radical action. There were also those apolitical and countercultural people primarily interested in anarchism and environmentalism who were opposed to the annex location because the site was beautiful and/or because the unresponsiveness of the Trustees symbolized for them the hierarchical and unaccountable nature of contemporary American society, though political Coalition members and nonanarchists also shared such concerns. Such varied attitudes toward Coalition goals were bound to affect the strategy and tactics of the "critical mass" as it tried to mobilize mass support for annex relocation.

The struggle that developed within the Coalition between moderates and militants was in part a disagreement over the tactics most appropriate for the mobilization of mass support and in part a struggle based on different goals. Until July 12, such differences presented no major problems for the Coalition, even the marathon arrest debate ending in a display of unity. Once removed from its physical and community base at Tent City, however, the Coalition was bound to encounter more trouble holding itself together. This problem was only exacerbated by the rise of the Coalition's Maoist bloc, the evident refusal of the public to be influenced by the calls from the White House, some politicians and the media for compromise, and by the sheer stubbornness of the Board of Trustees. (The degree of official response to the Coalition may have made the public wonder why the group increasingly proclaimed the existence of a closed system.) If the Coalition had only had to grapple with the problem of convincing the liberal community of the justice of its case, the gym struggle of 1977 might well have ended with annex relocation. But the Coalition was confronted with apathy and often hostility in the public which it lacked the means to overcome during the controversy.

Neither the antiwar movement nor the "May 4th Movement," the most important component of which was the May 4th Coalition of 1977, was successful in gaining

public acceptance of radical interpretations of the Viet Nam war or May 4, 1970. The antiwar movement did succeed in gaining a public support for a liberal interpretation of the war, however, a feat which the more narrowly-based Coalition was unable to match. Certainly if the Coalition was not going to persuade the public that the Kent State shootings needed to be memorialized by saving the site—even with the help of the media—it was not going to succeed even to the extent that the antiwar movement had. Yet the success of the antiwar movement on only a liberal level caused part of the Coalition's problems, just as the attempts of many of the leaders of 1977 to operate only on a radical level created serious difficulties for the Coalition.

The very traditions and intelligence that told the antiwar movement and some people in the May 4th Coalition at what levels they should speak to be comprehensible to the public worked against any basic emphases on radical analyses. The more these groups were able to communicate the existence of certain problems in comprehensible, everyday terms, the less likely it became that fundamental, thus-far largely alien and incomprehensible explanations would emerge. The very willingness of a number of influential liberals within the political, academic, and journalistic communities to respond, for instance, to the issue of the annex site in 1977, whether it was presented by Coalition moderates or militants, discouraged the acceptance of radical arguments made by the Coalition as a whole that the site decision was the result of a plot engineered by a closed, conspiracy-prone system to suppress memories and insult the dead.

Media figures, liberal academics, and some politicians had gained enough perspective on the Viet Nam era by 1977 to have some sympathy with the Coalition's position. It was the public that seemed unwilling to grapple with the issues of the Viet Nam war and Kent State 1970/1977. The three mechanisms by which public sentiment could be gauged—letters to editors, letters to legislators and polls—showed a consistent majority arrayed against the Coalition. The hostility became more obvious as the summer progressed, options narrowed and the Coalition moved left. Much of the public apparently felt threatened by the activities of the Coalition and also by the prospect of revival of painful and alien history which it wished to ignore or forget.

So as the public exercised its informal vote by pressure to leave the annex where it was, legislature and government seem to have decided that it would be too risky to try to circumvent the expressed will of the Trustees, and the Board got its annex where it wanted it. One could call this outcome an exercise in democracy, if the use of that term did not presuppose independent thought and evaluation as the necessary grounding for votes.

In 1977, the May 4th Coalition took advantage of the contradictions it encountered—the sympathy of liberals, the media, academicians, politicians and judicial figures—to successfully delay for almost two and a half months the onset of construction. The Coalition succeeded in these delaying tactics without being heard seriously by the public, however. Nor was the Coalition able to wage the

sort of successful war of position that would have gained public acceptance of the radical view of both the Viet Nam war and Kent State 1970, partly because the public only agreed with the liberal interpretation of the Vietnam War (and largely disagreed with the liberal interpretation of 1970) and partly because the common ground on which Coalition leaders and sympathetic liberals approached the public on the annex question was too superficial to lend itself to some kind of ideological breakthrough.

The May 4th Coalition lost its battle to preserve the site of the Guard-student confrontation at Kent State of May 4, 1970, essentially because it failed to make itself an efficient enough critical mass to engineer a successful challenge of culturally-dominant assumptions and assertions about what the Viet Nam war, the antiwar movement and Kent State meant to the nation. The group made a considerable effort to accomplish this, however, and a remarkable number of influential Americans responded to it on some level, even if the public at large did not. The Coalition needed to create a sympathetic counterculture to win its battle; the efforts to create one after 1970 and during the Tent City phase of the gym struggle were too small-scale to help in the end.

The Coalition did bring back before the public the issues of Viet Nam and Kent State 1970—even if that public failed to respond to the issues. It set an example of activism in the midst of the apathetic 1970s. The publicity it helped to generate for the uncompleted story of Kent State may well have influenced the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in its decision to order a new trial for *Kraus v. Rhodes*—one which ended in an out-of-court settlement in 1979, at least providing the May 4th families with compensation and an apology from the state. The energy and commitment of the Coalition's legal collective set an example for the May 4th Movement, even if its words and behaviors were often contradictory. And the experience gained during the course of the gym struggle by the more thoughtful men and women of the May 4th Coalition was bound to guide them later in other, broader struggles for social justice and change.

Notes

¹ Thomas Powers, *The War at Home: Vietnam and the American People, 1964-1968* (New York: Grossman) 1973: xviii, xix.

² *Ibid.*: 141.

³ New York Times, 28 Nov 1965, as quoted in Powers: 92.

⁴ *Harris Poll*, 20 Jun 1968, as cited in Jerome H. Skolnick, *The Politics of Protest* (New York: Simon and Schuster) 1969: 23. Skolnick's evaluation of the poll can be found on pages 22-23.

⁵ For varied recountings of official deceptions about Viet Nam, see Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage) 1972; David Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire* (New York: Random House) 1964; Townsend Hoopes, *The Limits of Intervention* (New York: David McKay) 1969; Thomas Powers, *op. cit.*; Herbert Y. Schandler, *The Unmaking of a President: Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam* (Princeton University Press) 1977; and Jonathan Schell, *The Time of Illusion* (New York: Vintage) 1975. Related revelations concerning the doctoring of Viet Nam war statistics by the Pentagon—despite the protests of the CIA—were made during Mike Wallace's *The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception* (CBS Reports, 23 Jan 1982).

⁶ Schell, *op. cit.*: 50.

⁷ *Ibid.*: 35.

⁸ *Ibid.*: 73.

⁹ See Thomas D. Matijasic and Scott Bills, "The People United: A Tentative Commentary on the Kent State Struggle, 1977," *Left Review* 2:1 (Fall, 1977): 10-35; and S.R. Thulin, "Introduction: May 4, 1980," in Scott Bills, ed., *Kent State: Ten Years After* (Kent, OH: Kent Left Studies Forum) 1980: 1-2. This booklet was a special issue of *Left Review* 4:2 (Spring, 1980).

¹⁰ Gramsci presents his conception of the "war of position" in "State and Civil Society," *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans., Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers) 1971: 238-239. Chantal Mouffe elaborates upon it in "Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci," in Chantal Mouffe, ed., *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan, Paul) 1979: 198. Gramsci observes in "The Modern Prince," *Selections...*: 184, that historical crises producing wars of position for the triumph of an alternative (socialist) ideology are by no means always economic and may emerge from a number of other circumstances. Carl Boggs, in *Gramsci's Marxism* (London: Pluto Press) 1976, gives a good summary of the conditions and processes Gramsci saw as necessary for the production of a "war of position" and the successful construction of a "counter-hegemonic" ideology and culture on pages 40-41, 60.

¹¹ Gramsci expresses the opinion, in "Americanism and Fordism," *Selections...*: 285-286, that American culture has had so little carryover from aspects of the European past (like feudalism), that there has been nothing to block the development of pervasive capitalist habits and ideology. Boggs, *op. cit.*, expands on this theory when he asserts (51) that liberalism and "corporate rationality" are so tied together in American minds and behavior that both are aspects of "Americanism." This has meant that class conflicts taking political forms in Europe are non-political in the United States: 52.

¹² Boggs, *op. cit.*, quoting Gramsci: 41; Gramsci, "State and Civil Society," *Selections...*: 275-276.

¹³ Boggs, *op. cit.*, quoting Gramsci: 40-41; Gramsci, "State and Civil Society," *Selections...*: 25.

¹⁴ Powers, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Gramsci describes the element of danger present in "a general crisis of the State" (applied in this study to Viet Nam), in which disorganization among classes and a struggle by the dominant class to regain its control over events are to be expected ("State and Civil Society," *Selections...*: 210-221). The dominant class, he says, normally reorganizes faster than its opponents, switches men and policies and regains its dominant role—albeit with some sacrifice. This was clearly the case in 1967 and 1968.

¹⁶ This idea emerges to some extent in J. Anthony Lukas, *Don't Shoot: We Are Your Children* (New York: Random House) 1971. For a more extensive exploration of the concept, see author's "The Legacy of 1970," in Bills, ed., *op. cit.*: 26-28.

¹⁷ Letter from Richard Larlham to Kent-Ravenna *Record-Courier* (13 Jun 1977).

¹⁸ See Kent-Ravenna *Record-Courier* (14, 17 Jun 1977).

¹⁹ See *Daily Kent Stater* (3 Jun 1977).

²⁰ This information was taken from interviews conducted by Miriam R. Jackson with Nancy Grim (13 Mar 1981); Dave Perusck (2 May 1981); Jonathan Smuck (7 Jan 1981) and Marie Carey (21 May 1981).

²¹ Interview conducted by Miriam R. Jackson with Fatimah Abdullah (Eve Rosen Morris), 18-19 Aug 1981.

²² Author's recollections of arguments. The author argued against immediate arrest. See *Chronicle of Higher Education*, (18 Jul 1977), for an account of the meeting. Also see Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1980. Chapter Four ("Organizational Crisis, 1965") has a helpful description of the "Old Guard" conflict with "Prairie Power." Chapter Six ("Inflating Rhetoric and Militancy")

has several examples of the ways in which Left-wing groups occasionally fail to distinguish between radicalism and militancy.

²³ For background on the site study and Costanza, author's interview with John Adams, 24 Nov 1981. On Ohio voters' attitudes, also see background from Adams interview. Analysis of judicial attitudes is drawn from author's interviews with Chris Stanley and Terry Gilbert (18 Aug 1981), Carter Dodge (18 Aug 1981) and David Luban (1 Nov 1981). As a matter of fact, the tiny Spartacus Youth League condemned the Coalition for having resorted to any kind of court action as a sellout to capitalists. Chris Stanley (interview) emphasized that the Coalition, not lawyers, should have been primary during the gym struggle, in terms of grassroots organizing work. Also see Akron *Beacon Journal*, Cleveland *Press*, Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, *Record-Courier*, 19 Aug 1977. For University School proposal, see *Record-Courier*, 23-25 Aug 1977; Akron *Beacon Journal*, Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, 25 Aug 1977. All interviews from author's dissertation, *We Shall Not Be Moved: A Study of the May 4th Coalition and the Kent State University Gymnasium Controversy of 1977* (Purdue University, 1982).

²⁴ A summary of this information was relayed to the author by an aide to Ohio State Representative Michael Stinziano during a visit to Kent in mid-August of 1977. Later letters to newspaper editors like the one from Joseph T. Gajdos to the *Record-Courier* (5 Oct 1977) contained similar amounts of hostility. Gajdos' letter was headlined, "Horsewhip Kent gym protesters."

²⁵ Lipset, *op. cit.*, especially pages xiv-xvi. Similar focusing on the role of what might be called (with apologies to David Halberstam) "the best and the brightest" appears in Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House) 1973, and Milton Viorst, *Fire in the Streets: America in the 1960s* (New York: Simon and Schuster) 1979.

POETRY by JAMES SCOFIELD

Nightmare

Khe Sanh
24 January 1968

A tear runs down the lamp shade
dropped
from the tip of his bayonet, I can see
canvas flapping, bodies rapping
man, oh man, some rout, some rout
to take home—tongues in gentlemen;
red white and blue, zippers up!
yes, yes, lights out.

Lost

For Christopher Ricks

As night moves off his splintered face, silence
lies on silence; the becoming light blinds him:
He hears canvas flapping—with no will to rise,
the sergeant's order
shrapnel in his throat,
he rests, recoilless on the balk, his eyes
on a seething Lamp aged to a stony violence.
On the sixth day of January, a canopy
of clouds building, dispersing above her;
snow nipped robins, their breasts pushed high
to the low winter sun—broke their thin song.
And she, his mother, raged at the spitting sky,
her son now a rhapsody of memory.
He hears a bird scratching for his worm, and knows
the skipping heart as his own; a liquid sound
like heaving slush, the harrowed brine of blood
foams from his black-purple head; something moves
his boots—and dogs drink from his chest; mud
and shadows splashing, he cries and he cries then goes.
The breath of cherry blossoms pink in the air,
she sits on her porch, her heart a space of stone,
consuming the civil nakedness of the flowers.
She seems a face without eyes or mouth; silence
lies on silence, as time granulates the hours.
The fallen are buried between the crib and the candle.

James Scofield, 3303 Pear St., SE, Olympia, WA 98501

STATES OF SHOCK

By David J. DeRose, *Theater Studies*, Yale, New Haven, CT 06520

Portions of this essay appear in DeRose's forthcoming book, *Sam Shepard* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), and are used with the permission of the publisher.

When it was announced a little over a year ago that a new Sam Shepard play, *States of Shock*, would be opening at New York City's American Place Theatre, critical circles began to buzz in anticipation. Shepard, while appearing as a leading man in several feature films over the last half dozen years, had not opened a new play since 1985. Anticipation grew even greater when it was announced that *States of Shock* would star John Malkovich, who first came to national attention playing the desert drifter, Lee, in Shepard's 1980 stage comedy, *True West*.

When *States of Shock* did open in May of 1991, critical and popular response was mixed. The play was not what audiences or reviewers anticipated from the Pulitzer prize winning playwright who had authored a string of five powerful family dramas between 1976 and 1985. The overwhelming consensus among critics and theatergoers was that the play seemed like a regression on Shepard's part, a throwback to his slap-dash experimentalism of the late 1960s. Even more perplexing to the public was the fact that the play was clearly written as a bitter outcry against America's involvement in the Persian Gulf. *New York Times* critic Frank Rich voiced the cynical, pseudo-cosmopolitan reaction of many New Yorkers when he patronizingly suggested that the play was written "with the earnest—one might even say quaint—conviction that the stage is still an effective platform for political dissent and mobilizing public opinion." Rich further suggested that Shepard must have been "hibernating since...the Vietnam era."

In one respect, Rich is right: *States of Shock* is undoubtedly a Viet Nam era play. But, perhaps if Rich had chosen to explore the "Viet Nam era" qualities of the play a bit further, rather than quickly criticize them as inappropriate to the chic and skeptical 1990s, he might have expressed the matter in a less narrow-minded, more precise fashion: *States of Shock* is an anti-war play written by a member of the Viet Nam generation from the cultural perspective of the Viet Nam war era. The style and politics of the play—rather than an unintentional regression on Shepard's part—seem quite consciously reminiscent of the drama of the Viet Nam era, as if to ask the obvious question that the media during the Gulf War either refused to ask or was not allowed to ask: namely, doesn't anybody here remember Viet Nam? Didn't we learn anything twenty years ago?

States of Shock condemns both the American government's military invasion of Iraq in February of 1991 and, more notably, the compliant and complacent reaction of the American public to that invasion and to the manner in which it was mass-marketed by our leaders. *States of Shock* is a play written in the style of

the Viet Nam era as a wake-up call to the Viet Nam generation which seemed so appallingly silent during the invasion of Iraq.

But *States of Shock* is more than an angry political tract; it is a fluid, dreamlike event of hypnotic, archetypal images, as full of visual poetry as it is of current politics. Reminiscent of Shepard's hallucinatory plays from the late 1960s, *States of Shock* is more concerned with expressing a highly personalized state of traumatized consciousness—what Shepard calls a "shock state"—than with telling a story. And the "shock state" Shepard chooses to express in *States of Shock* ties it even more closely to the Viet Nam generation and to the legacy of the post-Viet Nam era in America.

But, first let me backtrack a bit. Early in 1991, Sam Shepard was in New York City working with Joseph Chaikin on *The War in Heaven* (*Angel's Monologue*), a poetic monologue about an angel who dies on the day he is born and who, drifting aimlessly in the afterlife, has lost all sense of personal order and destiny. The quality of existence the angel recounts is best described in a letter Shepard wrote to Chaikin in October of 1983. In that letter, Shepard told Chaikin that he had been pondering the idea of being "lost," of "one's identity being shattered under severe personal circumstances—in a state of crisis where everything that I've previously identified with in myself suddenly falls away." Shepard suggested that one might call this traumatized condition a "shock state." He further proposed to focus not on the shock itself, but on the "resulting emptiness or aloneness"; that is, not on the trauma, but on the post-traumatic condition.

When Shepard and Chaikin joined forces in 1991 to rework *The War in Heaven* for its New York premiere, the political climate in the United States had added a new dimension to their collaboration. With American troops massed in the Persian Gulf, about to invade Iraq, the angel's voice took on a new political tone for both Chaikin and Shepard. The sense of personal loss and of emptiness was no longer a purely spiritual or metaphysical state, but one which spoke as well for all of postmodern, post-Viet Nam America, suddenly at war again. The result was not only a newly inspired reading of *The War in Heaven* on Chaikin's part, but a new play on Shepard's part, *States of Shock*, which opened only weeks after Chaikin's performances ended.

States of Shock is, on its most obvious level, a confrontation between a father-figure and a disinherited son. The father, played by John Malkovich and known only as the Colonel, is costumed in bits and pieces of historical uniforms, military decorations, and combat gear from various American wars. He is an amalgam of the archetypal military man: a firm believer in the noble myths of war which men like himself have served to perpetuate. Bored with peace, he is eager to see an America always at war; he regularly raises his glass in a toast to the enemy who has made the present (unnamed) war possible. "Without the enemy," he frequently proclaims, "we're nothing." The Colonel's companion, Stubbs, is the disabled veteran of that unnamed war. He is a Christ-like figure of frail martyrdom, unimposing and unheroic, who has been technologically resurrected after surviving a direct artillery hit. Their confrontation, enacted

before symbolic representatives of the American public, suggests a battle between those fathers who make war and those sons who must do battle; between the patriarchal, pre-Viet Nam myths of a righteous American military and the shattered, post-Viet Nam realities of young men killed and traumatized in a costly and paranoid war of expansionism. The gas masks and sirens which appear late in the play also make it clear that these two men represent George Bush's America, attempting to flex its global muscle in the Persian Gulf, and the unquestioning soldiers who participated in that lopsided war of rampant destruction. Fathers (and the governments they support and represent), Shepard seems to be saying, will always be struggling to perpetuate their own patriarchal myths; sons will always be called, unwittingly or unwillingly, to serve their fathers' unwholesome ends.

In *States of Shock*, the Colonel publicly claims that Stubbs is a war hero, a valiant soldier who attempted to save the life of the Colonel's son by putting his own body between that son and an incoming enemy missile. As the Colonel tells it, the missile went straight through Stubbs and killed his unfortunate son anyway. Stubbs, "the lucky one," has lived to tell the tale. The Colonel is particularly obsessed with having Stubbs recount for him the precise circumstances leading to the death of his son. He uses toy soldiers, plastic tanks and planes, as well as silverware and condiments from the restaurant booth at which he and Stubbs sit, to recreate the exact sequence of events. There is, in his intensity, an obsessive need to both objectify and validate his son's death, to set forth the facts in precise military terms which will clear his son of any wrong-doing by heroicizing Stubbs's battlefield gallantry and ignoring his ongoing tragedy.

Stubbs's recollection of events is somewhat different from the Colonel's attempted recreation. He is not interested in the events leading up to his life-altering trauma; he wants to discuss the trauma itself and the horrendous aftermath—the pain, the emotions, the personal ramifications, and the subsequent dissolution of the world as he once knew it. Partially paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair, Stubbs cautiously suggests that he is, in fact, the Colonel's son, and that he was running from battle, screaming his father's name, when he was struck down by friendly fire. In the words of the angel from *The War in Heaven*, Stubbs once felt he "had a mission," that he was "part of something." But all that disappeared in battle. Betrayed by the patriarchal myths which led him to war, fired upon and abandoned by his countrymen, Stubbs is ultimately denied his own identity by a father who will no longer acknowledge his kinship. "The best way," screams Stubbs in bitter irony, "is to kill all the sons!"—suggesting that from the onset of history fathers have fertilized the land with the blood of their sons.

Stubbs's war experience has left him, in his own words, "eighty per cent mutilated," dead and rotting from the inside out. He has also been left spiritually, emotionally and, quite literally, impotent. "My thing hangs like dead meat!" he screams repeatedly during the play, as if to overcome his father's desire (and the American public's) to silence him. Stubbs's physical and emotional mutilation

is graphically manifest in a wound which he regularly reveals to the audience and to the other characters on stage. If, as Shepard has said of his earliest plays, he started with a single image and created his play around that image, then *States of Shock* was undoubtedly created around the image of Stubbs, slumped sideways in his wheelchair, tugging his sweatshirt up around his neck to reveal a bulbous red scar, the size of a softball, through the middle of his chest. This startling image, usually accompanied in the play by a shrill blast on the whistle Stubbs wears around his neck, speaks simply and eloquently of the physical devastation and emotional havoc wreaked upon those who go to war, those who die, and those who return "mutilated" to the families which sent them off to fight. Stubbs is the image of inglorious war and its brutal aftermath, known to Shepard's generation—the Viet Nam generation—but carefully avoided by the media coverage of the Persian Gulf War. As if to remedy that myopic media coverage and to remind Americans of the physical and emotional reality behind the masculine myths of war, Stubbs frequently wheels himself to the front edge of the stage, pulls up his shirt, blasts on his whistle, and thrusts his wound in our faces.

Stubbs's wound is a classic Shepard manifestation of the postmodern condition, of the self unfixed from the world: it represents Stubbs's life, suddenly gutted of everything from which he gathered meaning and a sense of self. The trauma and betrayal of his war experience have torn through him like a missile, stripping him not just of his name, but of the very core of his being. As Shepard wrote in his 1983 letter to Chaikin, he explores a character in whom "everything which [he's] previously identified with [him]self suddenly falls away." Like the angel in *The War in Heaven*, adrift in the afterlife—and like so many members of the Viet Nam generation, whether traumatized veterans or disenfranchised patriots like Shepard—Stubbs finds himself adrift in an America that no longer exists for him.

The existence of Stubbs's America—that is, of the personal and cultural mythology of an America which Stubbs carried to war in his heart and mind—is an issue which surfaces several times in the play. Early in the action, Stubbs recounts how in battle he wanted to have a "feeling for home," for the familiar faces, objects, and places which held his life together. But, according to Stubbs, that "America had disappeared." Flashing back to the moment before the missile pierced his body, Stubbs tells himself to fix a picture of home in his mind; he attempts to fill his head with images of station wagons, cotton candy, Little Richard, the Mississippi River. "Don't slip into doubt," he yells aloud. But Stubbs obviously has slipped into doubt: America, home, and the personal mythological images he previously identified with himself and with the "imaginary homeland" have been literally and figuratively ripped from his being.

While a powerful and pertinent response to the Persian Gulf war, *States of Shock* obviously transcends the specific facts of that war, reaching a personal metaphysical plane, closer in poetic tone to the spiritual world of *The War in Heaven* than to a "political" play in any conventional sense. The images, like those of Shepard's best work, are both simple and at the same

time startling in their ability to carry profound meaning. The scenic elements, for instance, are minimal: the set is supposedly a "family restaurant" (as we are reminded repeatedly during the play), but it is more like the dreamscape of such a restaurant, consisting of a few isolated properties placed on a bare stage in front of a large white cyclorama. During moments of intense emotion, or extended descriptions of battle, that cyclorama is illuminated from behind with bursts of light, color, and the stylized images of war. Beyond the cyclorama, two percussionists underscore such moments with intense rhythmic drumming and the stylized sounds of a battle in progress.

One of the most singular visual images of the play is the presence on stage throughout the action of an elderly, seemingly affluent couple dressed from head to foot in white. They sit at a table, also white, waiting for a long overdue order of clam chowder. Detached and unaffected, they are anemic white America, watching unmoved as father and son debate the terrible cost of war. More a symbolic scenic element than actual customers in a restaurant, they are occasionally annoyed at the minor inconvenience which the war and its aftermath have caused them. They seem to take more interest in their missing clam chowder or in the shopping they could be doing than in the issues at hand. Only when the Colonel savagely beats Stubbs do they reveal shades of the desperate impotence and bitterness buried beneath their postures of indifference: as the beating progresses, the white man masturbates under a napkin while the white woman encourages the Colonel to act like a proper parent and strike again.

The only other character in the play is a black waitress named Glory Bee. Treated in a highly symbolic fashion, her name reflects her belief in America as the land of promise, while her status as a member of the serving class, as a woman, and as a person of color, all confirm the subservient role which such marginalized groups must play in the power games of authoritarian white men like the Colonel. It is Glory Bee, image of America's powerless majority, who must wait on the Colonel and Stubbs, who must clean up when they make their boyish messes, and who must become the sexual object for whom and over whom they eventually fight.

In spite of its often heavy-handed political symbolism and its uneven tone and tempo, *States of Shock's* striking imagery and theatrical energy suggest not so much a regression on Shepard's part as a rejuvenation of the impassioned (and sometimes reckless) theatrical genius who, in the 1960s, projected his inner emotional landscapes onto the stages of off-off-Broadway. And Shepard's inner landscapes are the landscapes of postmodern, post-Viet Nam America. To my immediate recollection, the phrase "Viet Nam war" has never appeared in one of Shepard's plays. Yet, Shepard does not have to write about the Viet Nam war in order to articulate the traumatic state of personal and national crisis which is the legacy of the Viet Nam era and which we now call postmodern America. When the war veteran Stubbs wheels himself to the edge of the stage, pulling his sweatshirt up around his neck to expose his gutted and empty self to us, all of Shepard's various traumatized

heroes from the 1960s and 1970s, in their various manifestations of personal crisis, are immediately recognizable as members of the Viet Nam generation.

I am not suggesting that *States of Shock* is a great play, or even a particularly good play. But I find it refreshing that Shepard, who seemed to be entombing himself in family dramas and naturalism, had the guts to take a risk, to use the theater as a political forum and write what one of his early critics once called "a disposable play" instead of another family masterpiece. Even if Frank Rich thinks it quaint, Shepard was one of the few members of the American theater community to take a stance on the Persian Gulf war. His reward was to be treated with absolutely no comprehension by the New York press.

Ziplocked

By Cynthia Fuchs

He's the one who gives his body as a weapon of the war,
And without him all this killing can't go on.
He's the universal soldier and he really is to blame.
His orders come from far away no more.
They come from here and there and you and me.
And brothers can't you see?
This is not the way we put the end to war.
—Buffy St. Marie

Told ya.
You shoulda killed me last year.
—Ice T

Universal Soldier may be the most hysterical Viet Nam war movie to hit mainstream screens yet. "Confused" doesn't begin to cover it. An angry and often overwrought critique of official war management, this is also conspicuous summertime trash entertainment, an action picture that can hardly wait to get from one flashy fireball explosion to the next. It borrows from disparate sources (from *Platoon* to *Robocop* to *Coming Home* to *The Wizard of Oz*) bravely, raucously, without a hint of grace or shame. History schmistory. This flick is some serious shit.

Featuring the massively mounted one-two punch of Jean-Claude Van Damme and Dolph Lundgren, *Universal Soldier* suggests—along with too many other popular films made in this country—that the United States' involvement in Viet Nam only incidentally affected Vietnamese people. (And honestly, what possible room could there be for anyone else in frames filled with those bulging pecs?) As exploitative hyperbole, this movie seems an apt follow-up to producer Mario Kassar's *Rambo* series: here the U.S. government continues to create and abandon its warriors in the service of a mighty national self-image.

Opening in "Vietnam, 1969," the movie works all available generic clichés, including the myopic notion that the war was about Americans killing Americans. If in

many fictional representations the war has become a catch-all metaphor for U.S. political battles or pervasive anxieties over gender and race, this version of it is so extreme that it threatens to expose the self-indulgent erection of heroic machismo committed by, say, Oliver Stone or Francis Ford Coppola or even John Milius. *Universal Soldier's* social angst is very upfront. It literalizes the war's emotional detritus as assorted physical traumas: this is nasty, over-the-top incoherence, played for visceral audience responses (as in, Ouch! Aarrggh!).

The initial handheld camera fast-trek through dark foliage leads to a stage-set village, carefully battered by flames and rain. Van Damme, as an Army private named Luc (his incorrigible accent is later "explained" by Cajun origins), comes upon a hideous massacre enacted by a U.S. sergeant gone mondo Section 8. Scott (Lundgren) has killed all his own men and now stands delirious (with the requisite human ear necklace to signal his insanity), about to execute two terrified locals.

Luc, who is short and only wants to "go home" (a mantra he repeats like Dorothy throughout the film), tries to talk Scott down, but ends up having to gut him with a very large knife. Scott, in turn, blows Luc away with a big gun, and they fall—in slow motion and separate frames—their bodies bullet-riddled and spurting blood. Predictable as such ejaculatory excess is, this pre-credits sequence is also rather extraordinary: the stars, after all, are dead before their names come up on the screen.

It gets worse. Or better, depending on your idiot-plot parameters. The military's recovery of the corpses is anything but routine. Indeed, the film offers a new theory about reported MIAs in Viet Nam. Scavenged and literally put on ice, these soldiers are resurrected 25 years later as "Unisols": hard, programmable, and virtually unkillable motherfuckers.

The problem of blame highlighted by Buffy St. Marie's protest song (which gives the film its title) becomes monumentally vexed here. If Scott is evil incarnate and Luc is the designated hero, they are also constructed warriors who twice "give their bodies as weapons," first in Viet Nam and then in the Unisol program.

That the bodies belong to the two top-seeded Schwarzenegger wannabes, who are paid megabucks for such activity, collapses arbitrary boundaries between machines and flesh, or performative and "actual" masculinity. Willingness to perform becomes a relative value. Predictably, the chief villains are stock, acted with verve: a conscienceless Army colonel (Ed O'Ross) and institutional medico-nerds perpetrate this horror (outside of regular government auspices).

Moral One: It's always the renegades, not the System, that screw up.

While the film's ad campaign asserts that "The future has a bad attitude," in fact the rest of this movie takes place in the "present day" U.S. Southwest. Clearly, science has nothing to do with this techno-wet-dream. At one point the head doc (Jerry Orbach, of all people) offers an unpersuasive explanation that the bodies have been "hyper-accelerated" to reverse death, the subsequent problem being that the steroid-enhanced Unisols run a little hot. So, whenever they are deployed (for instance, to take out black-masked terrorists holding hostages at

Hoover Dam), they must afterwards be packed in ice or else their brains overheat. (Brains?)

Granted, this plot is on lunatic overdrive. And granted, its clumsy turns are at least in part attributable to the fact that the central characters are, well, stiffs. Yet its cultural implications are not without interest. Consider, for instance, the film's vehement attack on amoral "science" (loosely described) and profit motives (see also, *Alien's* Company). Or the striking conflation of Viet Nam and Gulf War images: the Unisols wear Desert Storm fatigues in the American desert, even as they start having flashbacks to 1969 jungle scenes.

It's the "crazy vet" motif revisited with a vengeance, and more unnerving, rewritten as the next war. Memories of "Viet Nam" (that floating signifier) incite the guys to more effective aggression, and efforts to get their hands out from behind their figurative and muscular backs. In particular, Scott is sent by his commander to deal with a pesky news cameraman (weren't they somehow implicated in the U.S. defeat?). Caught too close to the operation (a mobile Unisol storage unit on 18 wheels), the reporter is executed by Scott, who has gotten to "like" what he does.

It goes on like this: the execution reminds Robo-Luc of Scott's murder of the Vietnamese locals. His military program snaps (save for his uncanny ability to kick ass with great sound effects) and his "identity" makes an appearance. He rescues the reporter's partner, a woman reporter (in a miniskirt, need I add) named Ronnie (Ally Walker).

Moral Two: A woman in danger increases moral stakes. See, for instance, the Rape of Kuwait.

Ronnie evokes, among other things, the *Terminator* plot, times seven. The project coordinators send their truck full of iced Unisols after the couple, which results in only one memorable moment (lifted from T2's references to Schwarzenegger's oversized unit). The naked, still somewhat robotic Luc instructs Ronnie to search him for "something hard" (a homing device): she makes appropriate faces. Other than this, though, the hetero relationship remains limp compared to the (relatively subtle) homoerotic tension/competition between the more often exposed and confrontational Big Guys.

In this pairing, Lundgren is the more compelling persona. While Scott maintains his mechanical demeanor for most of the film, he does assume a maniacal personal vendetta against Luc when his memory is also jolted back online. His "I'm a crazy vet" confessional occurs in a supermarket. Frustrated, without support or direction, he rages before a nonplused local audience, folks standing in front of the red meat case, wearing string ties and cowboy hats and rayon dresses, folks who labor and watch TV.

"Do you have any idea what it's like out there!?" Scott yells. "Bustin' heads...it's the only way to win this fuckin' war!" At this moment (conveniently) assaulted by a squad of deputies, he takes them all out with rapid single shots to their chests, Arnold-style. "See!" he screeches. "They're everywhere!"

If nothing else, Lundgren's clearly parodic performance suggests that the imaginative distance between Viet Nam and the pop cultural World remains immense, a distance perpetually reinforced by equations

of overkill with patriotic duty (here the Gulf War leaps to mind). It is with such hyperbole that the film, if it has a point, voices it. The best example of such convoluted insight comes from Orbach's mastermind doctor, who says the Unisols suffer from "regressive traumatic recall," or a kind of Post-Death Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (P'DPTSD).

The paradox of mass media spectacles about war (even if they are, as this one is, basically anti-war) is this: if both Scott and Luc are victims of systems and ideologies, they are also both thrilling as kickboxing bonecrunchers. Like Rambo or Robocop, they exact revenge for heinous violence through enacting more heinous violence. Scott ends up wearing *another* ear necklace stateside, plus grenade spoons in his hair and badges taken from various cops he has to kill along the way.

Moral Three: Paying money to watch such sublime machinations is the American Way.

The last sequence of the film is its most hysterical (if such a measurement could mean anything). Ronnie and Luc arrive at his parents' Louisiana farm, still tracked by the relentless Scott. The inevitable *mano-a-mano* climactic battle is a profoundly perverse restaging and continuation of the War (as Americans fighting Americans) for the audience of Luc's powerless, frightened, Grant-Woodish parents. The song that blasts over the final credits leaves no question as to *where* the war continues: Ice T's thrash metal wake up call, "Body Count's in the House."

THE MARGINS OF THE VIET NAM WAR

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The text of a presentation given at the 1992 Popular Culture Association conference in Louisville, KY.

When the war is defined its limits are set. This process involves the closure of a space which has the disadvantage of all such limitations and the tendency to approach that which is extremely regimented in temporal space. I am describing the historical method which is given that name because of the chronological certitude that defines it. But the frame of this panel, the title "Public Culture" which unites all the texts presented at this conference, distances itself from this historical topology I have described in order to avoid the excess of interpretation that such a classification implies.

However, definitions are often necessary, especially those involved in the teaching process. For as one wants to present a picture of the war to a class, s/he must decide how to reconcile and order the different representations of the conflict. This attempt at a pedagogical presentation is not only a recapitulation of the important facts of a chosen period which follows a well-developed thesis (this is the impression I have of a historical study), it is also a

juxtaposition of the various images of a conflict, whether they are literary, cinematographic, or otherwise. For if the war is often seen from a purely historical point of view, such as Viet Nam, which has been given a set beginning and end, a conflict can also be seen according to other criteria of representation. One of these alternate methods might be a reading of the Viet Nam war in terms of the social and cultural impact of that war on the collective memory. This would be a different approach, one which would involve the means of perception of the conflict which are not directly inspired by the events themselves. This distancing from historical facts which creates a different type of representation, is the major idea behind the research presented in the critical genre of "Public Culture."

My project on the Vietnam war is double and ambivalent; it implies limits, and thus it is related to the historical research; but it is also absorbed by the image of the Vietnam war outside of the direct perception of the history of the conflict. A good example of this type of indirect representation is the interpretation of Alasdair Spark of two films in the Alien series, presented in an article found in the November 1991 issue of *Viet Nam Generation*, entitled "Science Fiction: This Time It's War."¹ In this article he transposes, through the use of science fiction, the principal motifs of the representation of combat in the jungles of Viet Nam. Spark compares the invisible enemy in the jungle to the extra-terrestrial beings in the suffocating atmosphere of the space-ship (one is reminded of the virgin forest).

In order to reconcile these extra methods of studying the war and to show the possibility of an inter-relation of these different texts, I would like to compare them to what I will call the margins of the Viet Nam war. In other words, I am defining a margin as a limit and also that which is exterior to the object in question. I am interested in what happened before and after the war in terms of both the chronological and thematic history; by this I mean what was exterior to the historical system, and at the same time intrinsically attached to that system. The ambivalence of this marginal situation is due to the game of attraction and aversion that exists with regard to all that is "outside" of the center of representation (I am referring to Michel Foucault's idea on the archaeology of extremes, which he develops in his studies of the history of madness and sexuality, respectively). Foucault's method is important to this study because he is interested in the eccentric. In terms of the war, that would be what is considered marginal. It is through this vision that the center—that is to say the origin of the creation of the image—consisting of the extremes and the margin—that the mechanism of representation is most easily criticized. In this marginal context, the errors and the stance of the representation seem to become more easily revealed.

The scheme of perception of the war that I am proposing here takes the form of an opposition: on one side the historical vision with its strict limits without margins, and on the other side the possibility of an enlargement of the space of the war: all that is eccentric with regard to the history of the conflict, whether it is part of the imaginary or strictly chronological. The term "imaginary" in this historical context has the same

implications as the collective imaginary; by this I mean a type of social unconscious which is transposed from the historic register to an metaphorical register.

This imaginary perceived as a space of time would include the periods before and after the war which are often historically considered to be exterior to the war, although they are important for its interpretation. With regard to the Viet Nam war these margins are the preparation for the war, the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties. This period is also the end of another war, the French Indochina war. But this marginal period is also after the war, the continuation of Viet Nam which involves the transfer of the actual combat into U.S. society and culture.

By defining the Viet Nam war using these two limits, I am leaving an important margin open, i.e., the period of more than ten years before the war (from 1954, the date of the withdrawal of French troops from Indochina to 1965, the date of the massive American intervention); and almost twenty years between the end of the Viet Nam war and the beginning of the conflict in the Gulf. The absence of military events during this period is replaced by the fabrication of the war image. It is this moment of reflection and transition from one war to another that I am interested in; a no man's land that encircles the war but that exists only in representation.

In the interest of teaching the war, and presenting to the reader the limits of the conflict other than the dates of the beginning and end of the hostility, I would like to propose another definition: a definition whose limits are those of two famous quotes that announce the beginning and the end of the war. The first is that of General Westmoreland, one of the Commanders-in-Chief of the U.S. troops in Viet Nam, who said that the siege of Khe Sanh would not be another Dien Bien Phu. The General is referring to the end of the Indochina War which caused the French withdrawal from Indochina and forced the American intervention in Southeast Asia. The other famous quote is that of George Bush, who, during the first hours of Operation Desert Storm, assured the television viewers that this war would not be another Viet Nam.

Both quotes indicate the political need for a distancing from the preceding events which were both considered as failures. This affirmation of a distance with regard to the past is also the source of the construction of a new political movement: General Westmoreland revives the public's memory of Viet Nam with regard to the Indochina war, and President Bush has visions, even as early as the beginnings of the Gulf War, of a new world order. General Westmoreland, then President Bush use these indirect allusions to past wars to announce the reality of the existence of a conflict: these two sentences replace a declaration of war. The illusion of change could not have been achieved in these two cases if the cut had not been made with the past, especially since the military past symbolized the failure.

These two rhetorical limits are interesting because they do not respect history, by this I mean that they contradict the historical limits of the Viet Nam war. They underestimate the war as a reality in order to overestimate the war as imaginary. This definition recognizes what I have specified as the margins of the Viet Nam war: the

period of latency before the quote by General Westmoreland when the war had not yet started; and the period between the withdrawal of the troops in 1972-1973 and the beginning of the Gulf War which was signaled by the quote of President Bush.

Because the official discourse of the war ignores the chronological dates of the beginning and end of the war and utilizes the margins of the war as I have explained, these margins have an important status in the representation. Paradoxically, it is the undecidability of the margins of the war that affect the center and its ideology. Since these margins are undecidable, the politicians are able to choose their own vision of the conflict. The official rhetoric defines the war in terms of style:

Metaphorical thought, in itself, is neither good nor bad: it is simply commonplace and inescapable. Abstractions and enormously complex situations are routinely understood via metaphor.

This quote from an article by George Lakoff is taken from the November 1991 issue of *Viet Nam Generation* entitled "Metaphor and War: The Metaphor System Used to Justify War in the Gulf."² He shows that the political discourse on war functions as follows: the collective imaginary permits the analogy between myth and politics because of their common interest in all that is erratic, and thus undecidable. The metaphor allows the real war to be transformed into an imaginary one—what Lakoff calls a "metaphorical definition"—in other words, the transposition of the conflict onto the ontological register. A concrete example of this metaphor is the "State-as-person-system" which gives politics a human face: the political discourse is a metaphor for the body, the economy represents health, and the loss of a territory is akin to the loss of a limb.

This metaphorization, which involves the transposition of a political problem onto a human one may be seen as a means of understanding the war itself. With regard to the Viet Nam war, the imaginary may be described as follows: it focuses on man rather than on the machines of war or the narrative. Furthermore, it shows the importance of human activity other than the activities of war: survival and perception, whether it be that of the soldier or the journalist who views the event.

The representation of the Viet Nam war gives the impression of a subjective point of view presented by a witness who was present during the action. This subjectivity is perpetuated through the figure of the warrior and the journalist in *Dispatches*, by Michael Herr.³ Even though the narrative is incomprehensible, we can begin to understand the story through the discourses of these characters. In this story these witnesses of the war are necessary so that the reader may accept the truth of the narrative: "Patrol went up the mountain. One man came back. He died before he could tell us what happened."⁴ Michael Herr insists that he did not understand the story until the end of his stay in Viet Nam: this end signifies the end of the story for the reader, which implies that the story cannot be understood until

the reader has understood the other witnesses of the war and their personal stories (these stories comprise Michael Herr's book).

The conflict in the Gulf is marked entirely by experiences of past wars, in this way the imaginary of the Viet Nam war is closed. The imaginary of the Gulf (which can be best portrayed by the techniques of media representation and communication) takes its form from the idea of repetition and simulation. A good example of the form it takes is the direct image which is televised even though the viewer does not know the origin and often the context of such images. The subjectification has disappeared from the representation of the Gulf war.

The reports on the Gulf conflict move without transition from the direct image to the simulation of the event; the viewer often cannot distinguish between the reality of the war and the reconstitution. The images taken from the combat planes are good examples of the ambiguity of representation; these "real" images filmed before and during the action have, paradoxically, the characteristics of video game images because of their unreal and prefabricated construction. Artifice has become the key to understanding the images of the Gulf war. This artificiality has replaced the subjective narrative. The non-subjective war shows how military perception and mediatic perception merge together; the lens of the camera and the view-finder of the weapon become one. This technique of perception negates the human aspect because the weaponry is automatic; by this I mean that the soldier has no other function than to control the initial mechanism after which s/he is reduced to the status of a spectator. Once the bomb is dropped, since the image is direct, it cannot be stopped.

Because of the spectacular representation of the Gulf war with its direct images, the Viet Nam war is over. The technique used in the Gulf war replaced that of the Viet Nam war. The force of the direct image used in the Gulf war replaced the narrative which symbolized the Viet Nam war. This change in the perception of war was the catalyst which signaled the passage from one war to another.

Following these same lines of focalization from the history of the war to its representation, it is possible to define the end of the French Indochina war as being the moment of the beginning of the U.S. war in Viet Nam. The novelty of the representation of the American war with its intensification of actual images replaced the old-fashioned images of the Indochina war, which did not have the intimacy of the Viet Nam war images, nor their immediacy.

The passage from the Indochina war to the Viet Nam war with regard to the representation of the imaginary occurred in France through the vision of those who had experienced the two conflicts. One of the authors who observed these conflicts was Jean Lartéguy, who wrote *Yellow Fever*,⁵ in which he described the wars in Southeast Asia. The comparison between these two wars revealed important differences, especially in terms of the equipment of the armies. Most importantly, it revealed that the Indochina war, which had been vivid in the collective memory, was being assimilated into the Viet Nam war. Pierre Schoendoerffer shows this effect in the parallel between the novel *La 317ème section*⁶ and the

documentary *The Anderson Platoon*, which he filmed later with the U.S. Army during the Viet Nam war. Schoendoerffer makes indirect references to his preceding works, in which he shows parallels with the Indochina war by exploring the fate of a combat section in the Viet Nam war. The comparison forgets the divergences and permits the passage from one war to another.

Between these wars is a period of latency which starts in 1954 and finishes at the moment of the massive American intervention in the middle of the sixties. This period is crucial for the image of the French Indochina war (the moment of its construction) as well as for the American war in Viet Nam. The American version of this period between the two wars is simplified by the representative suggested by Graham Greene in *The Quiet American*,⁷ in which spy stories comprise the principle action. By reducing this period to a spy story he has denied the war completely.

The Viet Nam war, born of this ambiance of the Cold War, a situation which had become non-existent if not impossible, had reason to become prominent with regard to the apparent lack of action before the war. The comparison of the margins of the war of 1954-1965, both French and U.S., present a contradiction. This fundamental opposition between a definition of this period as either warlike or pacifist, or rather to consider one as the continuation of the other or vice-versa, is important to the understanding of the war itself.

In order to return to and finish with the problematic of the teaching of the war, this example of the interpretation of the Viet Nam war which follows many perspectives, such as that of the French war and the U.S. war, and also the Gulf conflict, shows the possibility of presenting the war in terms of different forms of representation rather than a strict chronological treatment of the event. Teaching the war does not mean merely teaching the history of the events, even though there should be some respect for the chronology. In order to understand the war, one must understand what I have called the imaginary of the war. The study of margins is one of the ways to mitigate the ambivalence in the interpretation of the conflicts because of the relationship the margins have with both the chronology and the imaginary of these conflicts.

Notes

¹ Alasdair Spark, "Science Fiction: This Time It's War," *Vietnam Generation* (Nov 1991): 29-30.

² George Lakoff, "Metaphor and War," *Vietnam Generation* (Nov 1991): 32-39.

³ Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York: Avalon) 1978.

⁴ *Ibid.*: 4-5.

⁵ Jean Lartéguy, *Yellow Fever*, translated from the French by Xan Fielding (New York: Dutton) 1965.

⁶ Pierre Schoendoerffer, *La 317ème section* (Paris: la Table ronde) 1962.

⁷ Graham, Greene, *The Quiet American* (New York: Viking Press) 1955.

VIET NAM WAR STUDIES: A CULTURAL MATERIALIST APPROACH

by Tony Williams, Dept. of Cinema and Photography, Southern Illinois Univ., Carbondale.

Albert Auster and Leonard Quart, *How the War was Remembered: Hollywood and Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1988).

John Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg, Eds. *The Vietnam War and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

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Philip D. Beidler, *Re-Writing America: Vietnam Authors in Their Generation* (Athens, Ga: The University of Georgia Press, 1991).

Over the past decade abundant historical, political, literary, and cultural approaches to the growing field of Viet Nam war studies have appeared. The rich material already available provides both a secure foundation and stimulus for future work in the nineties. Naturally alert to status quo threats within any growing movement, academia's conservative nature will examine this terrain seeking to recuperate any discourse for "balanced," a-historical self-referential purposes. Thus, while certain works (Kovic, Ehrhart, Emerson) appear too dangerously implicated in "unacceptable" areas of emotional rage, historical relevance and realist structure, others appear ideal candidates for inclusion within certain non-referential discourses associated with deconstruction and postmodernism. Recognition of these dangers should afford no excuse to entirely condemn these recent movements. In many instances they have correctly questioned premises behind ideologically induced "correct" judgments. In *Screen/Play: Derrida and Film Theory*, Peter Brunette and David Wills highlight the often-neglected, political components in later Derrida. N. Bradley Christie's 1988 doctoral dissertation, *Another War and Postmodern Memory: Remembering Vietnam* offers significant insights into a discourse that does not, per se, have to be a-historical or non-realistic.

However, in an era of increasing reaction, many English departments see Tim O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato* as ideal material for stressing authorial self-referentiality above the historical associations resulting in its origination. Similarly, certain Film departments eagerly seize on *The Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now* as new candidates for insertion within the romantic terrain of the now questionable "auteur theory." With a new generation of students, the products of Reaganite/Bush-Thatcherite/Major discourses, cheering each manufactured jingoism surrounding the Falklands, Grenada, and Gulf, it is essential to find critically pedagogic methods, raising consciousness towards complexities buried beneath any particular discourse.

Noting the strength of conservative discourse within their particular geographical and educational areas, both Raymond Williams and Edward Said were aware of departmental isolation. In his retirement lectures, delivered within an institution noteworthy for its low number of working class students and high number of suicides, Williams stressed the necessity of moving beyond academic boundaries, viewing a wider context, and constructing a cultural materialist project—"the analysis of all forms of signification, including quite centrally writing, within the actual means and conditions of their production" ["Crisis in English Studies," *Writing in Society* (London: Verso) 1984: 210]. Arguing for the necessity of any *oppositional* critical consciousness, Edward Said also stressed moving beyond traditional boundaries to utilize a number of disciplines when dealing with any question of representation. Since representation embodies itself within the language, culture, institutions, and politics of any representer, "then we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is *eo ipso* implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many other things than the "truth," which is itself a representation. What this must lead us to methodologically is to view representations (or misrepresentations—the distinction is at best a matter of degree) as inhabiting a common field of play defined for them, not by some inherent common subject matter alone, but by some common history, tradition, universe of discourse" [*Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon) 1978: 272-273]. Finding a place within such an area which no one scholar can create, each researcher finds a place and then makes a contribution with full knowledge of a complex area, often shifting into new configurations. Such a multidisciplinary field offers a scope far beyond the capacity of any individual discipline.

Understanding the nature of these different terrains aids us towards recognizing and combating the present malaise discerned by Rowe and Berg.

"What the cultural reception of the Vietnam War has made manifestly clear is that American ideology is itself an extraordinarily canny artist, capable of accommodating the most vigorous criticism and for that very reason powerfully resistant to social and political changes"(x).

Any isolated institutional discipline is clearly incapable of dealing with these contemporary dangers. A multidisciplinary technique and knowledge appears the most valuable tool for any oppositional criticism today.

Auster and Quart wrote the first late 80s full-length study of Hollywood representations. The work does have its uses. It has much to say within a particular representational discourse, mainly based on content analysis. But its very premises force one to interrogate the whole area far more deeply and with the aid of different methodologies. While the authors strive to make the reader aware of the changing discursive terrain, their very project appears impoverished and founders from lack of considering relevant tolls of signifying techniques, narratological structures, subject-positioning, and the whole multidisciplinary arsenal of cultural studies. In an era benefiting from the application of several critical tools necessitating precise concentration, the whole survey approach certainly appears very old-fashioned. As a first

step towards leading the reader to understand such intrinsic "lack" the work is sufficient. But the book points towards the necessity of using more rigorous critical strategies in any approach concerning representations of the Viet Nam war.

Many typographical errors mar the work. From the many citable instances the following are notable: "Terry Souther" (26) for Terry Southern; "Frank Hammer" (28) for Frank Hamer in *Bonnie and Clyde*; and "E.M. Forester" for E.M. Forster (63). Better proof-reading is a must for any new edition. The authors misquote Kurtz's lines from *Apocalypse Now* (68).

Are the remaining survivors at the end of Samuel Fuller's *The Steel Helmet* in any condition to "go off to continue the battle" (13). They are all physically and mentally exhausted. (The authors really need to consider this film both in the context of Fuller's other work as well as relevant studies of PTSD.) Gene Evan's Sgt. Zack uncannily exhibits that "two thousand yard stare" ignored in most war representations up to Viet Nam. As an ex-combat infantryman, Fuller attempted inserting as much of his own war experiences into his films as possible unless censorship forces intervened. In 1962, his attempt to show "friendly fire" decimating American troops in *Merrill's Marauders* failed. However, even without these extra-textual references, the authors are clearly oblivious to what is actually happening in the film. They want it to fit neatly into their rigid thesis. By ignoring the particular nature of Fuller's work they make the climax of *The Steel Helmet* fit into the type of dogmatic neo-formalist conclusion David Bordwell makes of the concluding scene of Anthony Mann's *Winchester 73* (1950) in "Happily Ever After, Part Two," [*The Velvet Light Trap*, 19 (1982): 4]. Both films end with emotionally exhausted heroes, whose performances visually contradict the usual banal discourse of Hollywood's happy ending. The authors really needed to undertake a rigorous examination recognizing the film's textual tensions, a procedure that their survey format would not allow.

The same problem affects their other interpretations. While Fuller's *China Gate* may appear to contain a "gross cartoonlike plot" and hover "perilously close to the sophistication of a Steve Canyon comic-strip adventure" (13) much more occurs in this film than the reductive Cold War discourse Auster and Quart believe the text contains. They do not consider the visual implications of Fuller's formal devices, both comic-strip and documentary, often disrupting the manifest premises of the Cold War plot. At least *Cahiers du Cinema's* Luc Moullet did in 1959. The authors totally misunderstood Fuller's complex intentions in using Nat King Cole as the mercenary Goldie. Far from being a "patronizing image... the embodiment of what a tolerant, nonracist society will produce: a sexless, smiling, black cold warrior, eternally singing and cleaning his gun," Goldie is an ideological victim, echoing Griff's paranoid racist projections displaced on to "lying commies," both victim and victimizer, foreshadowing the insane black Ku Klux Klan fanatic in *Shock Corridor*. While the authors recognize incongruities concerning white actors playing Eurasians, Fuller's use of Angie Dickinson and Lee Van Cleef is certainly not totally "orientalist." Resisting the easy

temptation towards condescending amusement, the authors could have seen both characters as fulfilling key narrative structures. As with *Run of the Arrow*, the foreign landscape in *China Gate* represents a battleground for American tensions over national identity. These American actors echo white society's split tensions and the difficulties involving any easy resolution inherent within identification with either the West or Soviet Union. Fuller's characters are all "split subjects." More than any other contemporary director, he identified the fissures beneath a supposedly complacent decade, representing it within both visual style and characterization. His works deserve analytic examination for their deliberate techniques of political and ideological fragmentation. Unfortunately, Auster and Quart's inability to explore Fuller's deliberate use of contradictions extends to their other examinations of Viet Nam war films. As Fuller wrote to his audience at the climax of *Run of the Arrow*, we all have to write the real end of the story. While noting the dangers inherent in any close reading one wishes that the authors had attended more to the textual mechanism's actual complexity in style, narrative, and performance.

Is *The Deer Hunter* really built upon "an uncritical identification with Michael and his friends?" (63). Even without knowing the alternative readings of Robin Wood (*Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*) or Susan Jeffords (*The Remasculinization of America*) and critical work in gender, one confronts a film demanding better critical methodologies than the authors use. Surely there are places where Cimino undercuts any attempt at the "working-class superman—capable of bringing some order to the war's madness and some form of reconciliation at home" (65) within the film?

Despite an interesting discussion of *Apocalypse Now* and the Reaganite revisionist MIA sub-genre, much of *How The War Was Remembered* is extremely unsatisfactory, begging questions needing more culturally materialist critical tools. In comparison with Steve Fore's 1986 doctoral dissertation, "The Perils of Patriotism," it leaves much to be desired.

The Vietnam War and American Culture fills much of this critical desire. Revising and extending the Spring 1986 *Cultural Critique* issue, it is a very important work fully aware of the essential multi-disciplinary nature surrounding any involvement in Vietnam studies. Aware of the very necessity of cultural criticism and the danger of avoiding solipsistic literary critical tendencies, the editors eloquently argue their case.

The cultural criticism we offer in this volume is in many respects at odds with literary criticism, even when literary criticism is genuinely comparative, culturally diverse, and multidisciplinary. Cultural criticism can be effective only when it focuses on the relations among those cultural media that have political significance in both their production and their reception. Finally, cultural criticism cannot contribute significantly to *cultural politics* until it investigates carefully the ways in which apparently discrete media work in more profoundly coordinated ways - both for purposes

of social control and potentially in the interests of a more just society (x).

This collection is indispensable reading for anyone working within the diverse fields of Viet Nam studies today. Stimulating, imaginative, and concise, it offers valuable suggestions for new developments and critical interventions within both academic and public discourses. In a worthy introduction, the editors insist on linking the normally discrete discourses surrounding film, literature, and history in a project involving teachers interrogating their own educational practices. As they remark, "there can be no 'accurate' treatment of what Viet Nam means for American culture until these very teachers reconsider the material practices that have shaped curricula, instruction, and research projects in our universities for decades before and after the Vietnam War" (15). To take this project seriously thus involves a process of struggle no less strategic within the institution as well as outside it.

The first section—"The Vietnam War and History"—begins with Noam Chomsky's "Visions of Righteousness." Although marginalized and excluded from mainstream publications, Chomsky continues to act as an inspiration to all oppositional scholars. He continues his role as one of those rare voices of conscience within American academia. His essay contains a stimulating analysis of all those historical, geographical, and academic discourses which still attempt political misrepresentations today. It is essential reading for all engaged in historical, literary and cinematic approaches to Viet Nam. Stephen Vlastos's "Revisionist Vietnam History," is one of the new essays within this collection—a concise examination of those post-1975 discourses associated with Nixon and Lewy which gained hegemonic dominance in popular 1980s representations. Reprinted from the original *Cultural Critique* issue, Carol Lynn Mither's "Missing in Action: Women Warriors in Vietnam" represents one of the earlier essays focusing on the often-excluded depiction of the female presence within Viet Nam. All these essays are appropriately historically grounded and concisely written.

Part Two's section—"The Vietnam War and Mass Media"—begins with Claudia Springer's perceptive essay on "Military Propaganda: Defense Department Films from World War II and Vietnam" illustrating both continuities and differences within historically bound representational strategies. Rick Berg's "Losing Vietnam: Covering the War in An Age of Technology" usefully surveys all the different fictional and documentary strategies engaged in "speaking Vietnam." Concluding with the alternative fictional representations of Hallie Gerima's *Ashes and Embers* (1982) and Haskell Wexler's *Latino* (1985), Berg notes that "The vet is returned not merely to the history of historians but to a class of history spoken by the oppressors, a counter-memory lost to the dominant discourse" (143). These suggest techniques for any counter-representational strategies. John Carlos Rowe's "Eyewitness: Documentary Styles in the American Representations of Vietnam" is an expertly researched article, interrogating realist discourses and the textuality of history. In its area, it does everything which Auster and Quart do not. Fully aware of issues concerning formal devices, imagery, and audience

recognition, he raises key questions of interpretation inextricably associated with historical and discursive issues.

The final part contains three essays examining the Vietnam War and Popular Media. In "Remembering Vietnam," Michael Clark investigates the strategic issue of popular memory beginning with Walter Benjamin's important axiom from "Theses on the Philosophy of History," particularly relevant today: "Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious."

Examining film and television images of Vietnam veterans, he notes stereotypical devices ideologically separating them from family and community discourses. "They relegate the specific, concrete contradictions involved in being a veteran at a particular moment in history to the realm of private experience and personal memory, and they divorce that realm entirely from the forms of social interactions that are represented as permanent and useful." (185) TV movies such as *Memorial Day* (1984) and fictional representations by Robert Stone (*A Flag for Sunrise*) and Phillip Caputo (*Del Corso's Gallery*) present historically based issues in the forms of individual moral dilemmas, seeking to disavow Viet Nam from any engagement with American society, in a simplistic form of separation between public and private realms of knowledge. These necessitate the importance of deconstructive readings as well as the relevant fragmentary textual mechanisms contained in Jayne Anne Phillip's *Machine Dreams* (1984). Her work "internalizes Vietnam within American society as a dislocation in the usual mechanisms of order and significance rather than as a threat from the outside, and representing those ideological mechanisms as a literary machinery of personal desire and family continuity dramatizes the constructed nature of both memory and history" (194). We certainly note a positive use of deconstruction, as opposed to its usual operations associated with the Yale school. However, whether we can apply it to *Indian Country*, with its heavy indebtedness to the originally male *bildungsroman* discourse, is another matter.

Any cultural examination of Viet Nam remains incomplete without raising issues of gender representation. Susan Jeffords's new essay, "Tattoos, Scars, Diaries, and Writing Masculinity" acutely interrogates Larry Heinemann's *Paco's Story*. She notes that other textual techniques undermine supposedly alternative images of dislocating victimized male voices, especially the ghosts.

The self-critique placed within the novel is recuperated by the acceptance the ghosts offer Paco and those he represents. In these terms, the masculine point of view separates itself from masculinity proper, viewing its failures and shortcomings, at the same time that it maintains its own stability, anchored in a gender system. Thus the appearance of self-examination is in

fact a mechanism for a more general confirmation of the structures and operations of the masculine point of view that underlies U.S. gender systems (217).

Hence, historically governed masculine perspectives concerning war experience really distract attention from *Paco's Story's* attempt at confronting traditional gender patterns.

David James contributes a useful essay on "The Vietnam War and American Music." The collection concludes with three poems by W.D. Ehrhart, "Responsibility," "Parade Rest," and "The Invasion of Grenada," whose imagery forms a fitting conclusion to this volume.

Better arranged than its initial *Cultural Critique* appearance with some new material, *The Vietnam War and American Culture* is a stimulating work whose implications extend to many educational approaches towards Vietnam. It is imaginative, provoking, and highly relevant as a critical and pedagogical tool.

America Rediscovered also contains several essays using various approaches to film, literature, theater, and poetry. Several of the offerings originally appeared in The Popular Culture Association's Vietnam Panels. Like Philip D. Beidler's *Rewriting America*, the work focuses on Vietnam's intersections with the above realms of interpretations. While many writers have expanded their original papers, others appear not to have developed their panel presentations. The final result is not cohesive, the weaker essays strongly contrasting with their more developed neighbors.

Gilman and Smith divide their anthology into three sections—"Text," "Vietnam and American Culture: Looking Glass Texts," and "Genre Overviews." After an editorial introduction, the first essay by Philip Beidler outlines the thesis of his recent book. Michael Bellamy's "Carnival and Carnage: Falling Like Rock Stars and Second Lieutenants" presents interesting insights into David Carradine's neglected 1981 film *Americana*. He views Carradine's attempts to repair the broken-down carousel as offering a Bakhtinian carnivalesque alternative to a post-Vietnam fragmented American society. With his references to Hawthorne, Herr, *The Ugly American* and *Apocalypse Now*, Bellamy provides revealing insights into the imaginative structures motivating this highly unusual film. Noting the confusions endemic within any social understanding of gender, Milton Bates contrasts *Coming Home* with Donald Pfarrer's novel *Neverlight* within the context of a turbulent period challenging conventional thought patterns. He is incisive concerning *In Country's* flaws.

Like *The Big Chill*, then *In Country* disposes of the sixties tensions between the sexes by reaffirming, albeit with a dose of conscious irony, a version of the feminine mystique. Though both allude to sexual conflict and imply a connection with the Vietnam War, they are framed in such a way as to preclude serious engagement with the conflict. *In Country's* chief strength, its

convincing representation of a particular character's point of view, remains its chief weakness (28-29).

Whether *Neverlight* provides a convincing alternative still remains an open question. Despite Bates's championship in the light of the feminist axiom combining the personal and political, the work may contain too much of the former and little of the latter. In any case, further debate is needed here.

Influenced by Foucault, Donald Rignalda criticizes the discursive associations surrounding "truth" and "fact" in "Unlearning to Remember Vietnam." Hailing Herr as Foucault's archaeologist, he suggests, "Perhaps the Vietnam War was simply too monstrous for import. Perhaps it simply is too chaotic" (72). However, there is a great danger in moving too far away from history. Using such techniques often leaves the door open for conservative historical erasure strategies. Rignalda does not move towards such a conclusive direction. Instead, he argues for recognizing the complex issues beneath verisimilitude techniques. As his final passage suggestively states, "But once we unlearn to *simplistically* remember Vietnam according to the old untroubling geometry, it means altogether too much" [73/ *italics* mine]. We must, of course, remember the value of "truth" and "fact," especially in the light of a recent revisionist review essay in *The Journal of American Culture*, 14.4. 80-81. 83 validating the Gulf intervention and the contemporary relevance of America's role as the "City on the Hill." We must not hand the enemy too many weapons.

Philip K. Jason's "Vision and Tradition in Vietnam War Fiction" opposes Heinemann/O'Brien and Hasford's new literary mixture of fictional strategies to the old past narrative modes of Del Vecchio/Webb/Huggett. Lorrie Smith takes a similar position in "Disarming the War Story," noting the tendency of certain realist techniques to convey the "erotic allure of battle," (91) applauding the innovative devices within *Going After Cacciato*, *Dispatches*, *Paco's Story*, *Meditations in Green*, and Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*. Marilyn Durham's "Narrative Strategies in Vietnam War Fiction" and David J. De Rose's "A Dual Perspective: First Person Narrative in Vietnam Film and Drama" also question realism's validity in depicting a fragmented post-Vietnam America.

All the above approaches are interesting. But do we have, necessarily, to abandon realism particularly when the form can lend itself to radical dislocating strategies? George Eliot, Mikhail Bakhtin and James Jones do present these alternative strategies. Also, as several critics (Jeffords, Melling) show, even supposedly oppositional works such as *Paco's Story*, *The Short Timers*, *Going After Cacciato*, and *Dispatches* do contain conservative elements within supposedly progressive anti-realist techniques. Discussion needs to focus on the specific validity of any formal technique within fiction.

Three suggestive essays conclude this section. Cynthia J. Fuchs's "Vietnam and Sexual Violence: The Movie" examines *Full Metal Jacket's* innovative triple collapse of Otherness onto enemy onto Woman. J.T.

Hansen's "Vocabularies of Experience" interrogates the limitations of certain literary techniques to engage active reader participation while H. Palmer Hall's "The Helicopter and The Punji Stick: Central Symbols of the Vietnam War" provides a basic taxonomic classification of these central images.

Part II—"Looking Glass Texts"—begins with Robert E. Bourdette's "Rereading *The Deer Hunter*." Michael Cimino's *Deliberate American Epic* noting the film's ritual and metaphoric devices. However, it is an archetypal "lit crit" essay avoiding the racist implications within the notorious Russian roulette sequence in favor of metaphorical interpretation. In "Style in *Dispatches*: Heteroglossia and Michael Herr's Break with Conventional Journalism," Matthew C. Stewart argues that Herr's Bakhtinian "multivocal" text allows him to undermine journalistic discourse and speak on behalf of disaffected grunts. This is an interpretation deserving comparison with W.D. Ehrhart's more scathing approach contained in *In The Shadow of Vietnam* (1991). Robert M. Slabey and Catherine Calloway examine *Going After Cacciato*, the latter regarding it as a postmodernist work designed to "reject any over-simplifications of the Vietnam war's inconsistencies and discrepancies" (222).

The remaining essays provide several launching pads for future investigation. David Everett Whillock examines *Apocalypse Now* using Levi-Strauss' structuralist methodologies and also attempts to define the various components of a Vietnam War Film Genre. The volume reprints W.D. Ehrhart's essay, "Soldier Poets of the Vietnam War" from the 1987 *Virginia Quarterly Review*—an eloquent argument for considering this usually neglected corpus, while Vicente F. Gotera analyses Yusef Komunyakaa's *Dien Cai Dau*. William Palmer's argument that *Platoon's* nihilistic battle scenes undermine Stone's realistic discourses clashes with Claudia Springer's 1988 *Genre* article which suggests that any war movie's spectacular battle scenes really undermine critical comprehension.

America Reconsidered is a useful collection. However, all the different contributions really need framing against a better introduction which would more suitably suggest the necessary cultural studies perspective towards which they could individually donate. The Rowe/Berg collection provides an important model here.

According to *Viet Nam Generation* 4.1-2 (1992): 5 Michael Bibby is calling for a special issue, *The Viet Nam War and Postmodernity*. This is especially welcome as the term needs specific examination in regard to what it denotes and how it is relevant to Viet Nam studies. Although one does not wish to label the entire movement as "The Myth of Postmodernism: The Bourgeois Intelligentsia in the Age of Reagan" as Andrew Britton did in his provocative assault in *cineACTION!* 13/14 (Summer 1988): 3-17, one is certainly aware that some of its tenets are recuperable by that very ideology Rowe and Berg define in their collection. It is possibly too early to tell whether postmodernism is a negative movement or one capable of providing potential discourses capable of undermining rigid gender, ideology and power structures. However, the movement does need further interrogation.

Philip D. Beidler detects a postmodern current in the writers he scrutinizes in *Re-Writing America: Vietnam Authors in Their Generation*. Following his 1985 work, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam*, Beidler argues that Viet Nam war authors have done much to re-energize American creative writing, leading it out of a poststructuralist impasse of texts as endless critiques of language, representation, and authority. Approaching the fictional constructions of O'Brien, Caputo, Robert Olen Butler, James Webb, Winston Groom and Heinemann; David Rabe's drama, the poetry of John Balaban, W.D. Ehrhart, David Huddle, Yusef Komunyakaa, Walter McDonald, and Bruce Weigl; and the journalistic literature of witness such as Gloria Emerson, Frances Fitzgerald, Robert Stone, and Michael Herr, Beidler regards them as applying "many of the hard-won lessons of literary sense-making learned in initial works attempting to come to terms explicitly with Vietnam" (2). Beidler's investigation therefore concerns a re-writing of the American experience, believing that "Vietnam authors in their generation have carried their crucial enactment of that mythic self-critique into the very center of our national literature and consciousness at large" (xiii).

Within its perspective, this book is extremely interesting and suggestive. Well-written and informative, noting the boundaries of postmodern experience, the work contains much of value. One cannot argue with the findings within its particular context. However, the context does need to be far broader covering issues of history, politics, ideology and gender. The exact nature of postmodernism needs closer definition. Beidler's work unfortunately falls into the tendency of neglecting the cultural and historical significance of Viet Nam and its people. The country, again, forms the background for a particular American experience—this time of a cultural revisionist project of re-writing. While this is informative, counter-arguments such as those of Philip Melling in *Vietnam in American Literature* concerning historical retreat and self-referential escapism also need considering. Wholesale "imaginative reshaping" (12) also has its dangers.

What is suggested here is an art *at once* of the possible and of the newly plausible—a ground of genuinely new creation that in the same moment returns us to ourselves in enlarged dimensions of insight, in various forms, it is an idea that runs through the pronouncements of various major writers studied here in this text. Tim O'Brien, for instance, has described 'the central theme of the novel' as 'how we use our imagination to deal with situations around us, not just to cope with them psychologically but, more importantly, to deal with them philosophically and morally'... (305).

Laudable enough. But one is tempted to ask for the presence of other culturally materialist dimensions of thought or one risks inserting Viet Nam within the

conservative terrain of New Criticism.

The dangers are certainly present in his description of *Going After Cacciato's* textual significance.

For the enterprise, albeit in the new vein of postmodern 'magical' realism, is very much Melville's own, and on the same scale: to devise a grammatology, a linguistic rendering of felt experience that might project it imaginatively into new dimensions of knowledge, meaning, and value. Indeed, in *Going After Cacciato*, we are confronted with the prospect of a new imaginative fiction of the American experience of Vietnam that would propose ultimately to reify itself *precisely through imagination* into nothing less than redemptory cultural fact" (20).

The definition is very problematic. Imagination can be "escape from," not "escape to." It provides a comforting retreat. While conservatism batters us in everyday life how easy it would be just to create in literary imagination, whether as authors or readers. While certain new literary techniques operate, one asks whether we can entirely remove the historical, political, and realistic significance of Viet Nam entirely and move into a comfortable, non-activist world of imagination? Did the authors he examine ever intend this? While it is a mistake to regard Melville's *Moby Dick* as merely about a whale, it is also a fatal error to regard the work as totally devoid of questions concerning its contemporary historical, cultural, and gender questions as critics such as Richard Slotkin show. Something else, in addition to the imagination, is necessary.

While Beidler subjects Caputo's works to an intense examination of their narrative structures he is disturbingly unaware of the pernicious gender mechanisms in *Indian Country*. He regards the climax as optimistic!

The secret of *Indian Country*, at once the burden of Starkman's historicity and the possible promise of his *mythic liberation from history* will be the newest vision of an old Indian wisdom, the acceptance of a world, like that imagined in the text itself, that will always be at once a place and an exile, here and other" (51/italics mine).

Again, we see the return of Leslie A. Fiedler's vanishing American reinscribed to prop up failed American masculinity paralleling Oliver Stone's *The Doors* (1991). There are so many areas begging questions in an analysis solely confined to the text and devoid of so many perspectives that a cultural materialist project could bring to it. *Indian Country* ideologically restores Viet Nam literature to myth, disavowing the conflict's historical reverberations so that it fits into a typical literature class situation. One returns with relief to Lorrie Smith's discerning interrogation of Caputo in *America Reconsidered*, 89-91.

Beidler is certainly aware of the Vietnamese character but he views it in terms of a peculiar American agony, an agony undergoing literary reinscription (55). A writer, such as Robert Olen Butler, engages in a mode "essentially

that of neorealism, closely symbolic, often with an almost Hawthornian exactitude of design, economy, and psychological penetration, with the effect often of something like a postmodern morality play" (56). Again, the terms need precise definition. There is often a tendency to hide behind literary definitions instead of looking beyond them towards a necessary cultural perspective, one involving Viet Nam (its people, its culture) as well as America.

The Rabe plays form his most interesting examination if only because the language and issues involved (family, culture, race and gender) have relevant connections with the "world outside" the text, have indelible associations within the text, and can not suffer postmodern erasure. However, Beidler's other critical definitions remain questionable. Obviously preferring the new postmodernist mode, he regards James Webb's project as inextricably related to his choice of formal technique—"the basically conservative and revisionary nature, indeed almost perversely anachronistic choice of fictional mode" (69). Again, another provocative statement! Does realism *per se* have to be "conservative" and "anachronistic" determining a particular political stance? The mode is capable of many inflexions and variations as writers as diverse as James Jones and W.D. Ehrhart show. His bias against realism appears in a sweeping judgment regarding James Jones and Norman Mailer as "operating within the dynamics of the traditional novel of combat" (74). They certainly used the mode. But Beidler does not consider the alternative elements they individually brought into the form. Certainly, they are far removed from the contemporary abuses of realism seen in *Saigon Commando* and *M.I.A. Hunter*.

Beidler is on firmer ground with poetry since he has an excellent sense of poetic techniques and devices resulting in his understanding how Viet Nam war poetry breaks with past traditions to articulate the conflict's emotional horror. His analysis of Balaban, Kommunyakaa and Weigl are very informative. But his understanding of Ehrhart's work raises problems. He describes Ehrhart as "the rude, angry soldier poet, early on attempting to find a voice, and the spiritually chastened culture hero whose odyssey out of memory toward imaginative sense making becomes the quest for new myth and better" (158). The first part of the sentence does besit a poet whom Beidler describes as earlier "championing a 'Vietnam' literature when there was virtually no one, so it seemed, in the United States who possibly cared to read it or hear about it" (310). It is also true that he has a significance of which "conventional criticism will never provide an adequate account." But the same may be true of recent "conventional" postmodernist terms. Ehrhart's significance stems well beyond searching for "new myth and better" as his recent collection, *Just For Laughs*, reveals. He articulates historical relevance in all his work, the past warning the present, a dimension certainly irreducible to the mythic.

The whole thesis of Beidler's work is American re-writing of Viet Nam. It contains much interesting argument in its thesis. But the perspective is limited. His work should represent the last in its type. In addition to leading

towards an interrogation of certain recent critical techniques used to "read" and "write" Viet Nam, attention should now go to Viet Nam itself. All the above works deal with various responses to Viet Nam. But Viet Nam still remains as a shadowy "structured absence" determining American responses, but with the very foundations leading to those responses relatively unexcavated. Certain works have appeared over the past decade. More are needed. The recently announced Red River Press anthologies should help fill this gap, to contribute towards a critically oppositional cultural materialist project that should never be totally American in orientation.

POETRY by Rod McQUEARY

instinct —for a friend

the huey crew
made a routine hop
fast in and out
to get some local folks

the old viet
shuffles up
his flickering eyes
crooked gold-glint smile
tries to hide his fear

his last sin
fatal mistake
was to stumble
mar the polish on
a cold-eyed door-gunner's
spit shined boot

it was over in three
heart beats
they were up and gone
out of sight of the little
clearing
before
the old man's
struggling body parts
accepted death
and lay back
relaxed

White Wall

There ought to be another wall
 White, bright, pretty
 In a grove of trees
 with picnic tables,
 dance floor, and a
 Viet Vet ragtime band.
 A happy place where
 Folks could go to laugh
 and dance and argue
 Football teams and candidates.
 On the White Wall, there would be
 A tremendous list of those
 Who didn't die.
 Behind each name,
 a little heart... for a fulfilling marriage
 a little happy face... for a
 well-adjusted child,
 a little diploma... for a valuable education,
 a rewarding life.

Everyone is welcome here,
 To cool drinks, rummy games,
 To meet interesting people who
 Talk, laugh, have fun, wander off.
 Live.
 To celebrate our survivorhood.
 Not mourn our stolen martyrdom.

There are some who will
 Have to be shown
 The White Wall.
 Taken to their own name
 and told
 "There, by God, is proof."

something—
 For Life

If life were just one April day,
 And I should wake, mid-afternoon,
 To feel the sunshine on my shirt,
 Warm scattered raindrops wet my cheek,
 I'd marvel with my newborn eyes
 At the beauty I had never seen.

If life should be one April day,
 I'll not pine for a morning, lost,
 Nor mourn some stolen martyrdom.

But hand in hand, my love and I
 will lift one cup for fallen friends,
 Then, our business done,
 We'll laugh till wrinkles frame our eyes.

And in these final precious hours,
 We'll celebrate the eveningtime.

for nothing for paw-tay

a sunday evening phone call
 to a brother-in-law
 i ask about an old story
 he half told once

we took two dusters to the
 cambodian border
 or maybe farther
 he said

to a fire base on top a hill
 assigned to shoot
 russian resupply choppers

they had been taking
 rockets mortars
 all day
 all night for two weeks

when the resupply hueys
 would come in
 these soldiers would
 scream and jump
 scream and jump
 hang from the skids
 the pilot would
 wiggle and spin his ship
 and shake them off
 they would fall
 and curse and sob

i was there two days
 a long time he said

how many russian copters
 did they get i ask

none
 they
 could never get
 the clearance
 to shoot

Rod McQueary, HC 60, Ruby Valley, Nevada, 89833, 702-779-2257, contributed poems to Viet Nam Generation 4:1-2. He is a leading Cowboy Poet, and appears frequently at Gatherings and in John Dofflemeyer's Dry Creek Review, PO 51, Lemon Cove, CA 93244. Dofflemeyer will soon publish Blood Trail, a collection of McQueary and fellow cowboy vet Bill Jones, Jr.

TEACHING

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL: RAISING THE NEXT GENERATION ON THE VIET NAM WAR¹

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The past fifteen years have seen a plethora of courses, texts, and classroom materials developed to meet demands for teaching about the Viet Nam war in America's schools. The popularity of this subject is evident to anyone who has been at all active in secondary and post-secondary education. Fascination with the war has spawned a thriving cottage industry in developing new approaches to presenting a complex and controversial topic. Most major textbook publishers have one or more books on the war that can serve as college texts.² At the secondary level, too, the war has been written into history survey texts, albeit in a manner that creates more frustration than understanding.³ As courses on the war have become more widespread, teachers with practical experience in developing and successfully teaching such courses in college and high school often appear at conferences, in particular the Popular Culture Association's annual meeting, to discuss resources and teaching approaches. There is, in short, no dearth of material on America's role in the war for competent college and high school teachers to fashion into successful courses.

Such is not the case, however, for those who teach younger students in elementary and junior high classrooms. For teachers in these classrooms, merely finding resources that are appropriate to the age and abilities of their students is a challenge. To date, most curriculum writers seem to have assumed that younger students either are not interested in the war or are not intellectually able to deal with the complex issues that the Viet Nam war raised.

As Bill McCloud found in 1987, Oklahoma junior high students were indeed fascinated by the Viet Nam war, but they also received little exposure to the war in their social studies courses. As he noted, students "seem to be saying that they know the war is the skeleton in America's family closet, and that they think they are now old enough to be let in on the secret."⁴ Although McCloud's diligence and unique approach to teaching about the war remedied that situation for Pryor, Oklahoma, students, there has not been a concerted effort to address the war throughout America's elementary and junior high schools. By the time students reach high school in some states, their American history requirement is completed. If they are enrolled in a U.S. history survey course, time constraints, teachers' interests, and political considerations sometimes relegate Viet Nam to a day or two at the end of the year.

Many high school students, though, do not even review their sketchy knowledge of our nation's history acquired in elementary and junior high school. The

current fad in the nebulous field called "social studies" seems to be world history. World history courses often approach their subject matter from a spatial or temporal framework; however, events that encompass more than a single time period or geographical area are often considered too difficult for students to comprehend and, perhaps, for teachers to teach. If students receive little or no exposure to the Viet Nam war in their elementary, junior high, or high school classrooms, they are ill-prepared for college courses that suddenly introduce a new panorama of facts, impressions, and thought-provoking interpretations to their limited vision of the past. And, sad to say, it is still possible to complete a university education at many schools without ever having taken a U.S. history course, much less a course in Asian history that includes Indochina's recent past. In short, there is far too little history taught, and far too little Viet Nam in that history.

To fully comprehend the lack of attention paid to the war and its impact on Indochinese and Americans, it is necessary to examine some of the books that elementary and junior high students frequently use when they study the war and assess their value for both teachers and students. While many of these texts are lacking in one way or another, this essay was not written merely to lay blame on authors and publishers but also to suggest some avenues that might be taken to improve the education our elementary and junior high school students receive about the war. In the end, what we teach younger students about the Viet Nam war will determine to a large degree how the next generation interprets this wrenching experience.

For those who have studied history at a more advanced level, the complexities of our nation's past are evident. When it comes to history, there is no such thing as a simple explanation or a reliable formula. "Facts," where such things are available, are subject to vastly different interpretations as to their validity and importance. History is, in short, the constant reassessment of a body of knowledge whose parameters increase with each new study, each document discovered, and each interpretation that provokes reasoned thought.

Such comprehension, however, is not apparently encouraged in younger students. Their view of the Viet Nam war is shaped by books containing simplistic statements that do more to mislead students than to inform them.⁵ One of the most popular books on the war, Edward F. Dolan's *America After Vietnam: Legacies of A Hated War*, contains an unsophisticated explanation for why our involvement in Indochina made this a "hated" war.⁶ According to the author, the war divided Americans into two camps: "On the one side were all the people who supported the nation's participation in the fighting; on the other were those who not only opposed the U.S. role in Vietnam but also hated the thought of any war."⁷ As most adult readers are aware, choices made to support or oppose the war were far more complex and sophisticated than Dolan simplistically portrays. His judgment that the war be "dumbed down" into such black and white terms is reminiscent of the good/bad characterizations that children are exposed to in Saturday morning television cartoons. He ignores the numerous public opinion surveys

as well as less rigorous empirical evidence that suggests that Viet Nam was only one of a host of issues that divided Americans during the tumultuous 1960s. Adult students of history find this simple dichotomy amusing if not insulting. For young people, however, who often tend to view their world—and consequently their history—in more black and white terms, such a division between support and opposition can quickly become transformed into good versus evil, an “us versus them” split that does little to educate students about the complexity of the Viet Nam war nor adequately prepares them to cope in a world where there are few such finely drawn absolutes.

A second deficiency is evident in the approach that writers take to explaining why the U.S. involved itself in Indochina's affairs. While the debate over the nation's involvement in Indochina shows no signs of abating among apologists, pundits, and historians, the issue seems to have been resolved by a number of textbook authors who write for a younger audience. They credit the United States with the basest of intentions in their crusade to staunch the spread of communism in South Viet Nam. This largely negative view of American involvement usually takes the guise of portraying one side as lofty idealists and the other as men of evil intentions, ruled by their immoral natures. Given the current interest in political correctness, it is to be expected that these two divergent sides are usually taken by the North Vietnamese (the good guys) and the Americans and their South Vietnamese allies (the ones in the black hats.) The Vietnamese who was “first in the hearts of his countrymen,” to borrow an appellation from American history, is usually Ho Chi Minh. Whatever our views of “the George Washington of his country,” they are likely to have been shaped by what we as adults know of the man's career. Ruthless dictator or kindly uncle? Choice of the Vietnamese people or tool of Moscow who rose to power in a vacuum of opportunity? Our adult knowledge of history allows us to base our judgment of this controversial man on informed opinion, and to assess Ho Chi Minh in more sophisticated terms.

This luxury is not afforded younger students. To them, Ho Chi Minh is variously described in American children's books as “the greatest Vietnamese leader of the twentieth century,” or “Vietnam's most revered hero.”⁸ Likened to George Washington, an interesting comparison since Ho, like George, has been raised to a mythic status that would probably surprise and perhaps dismay both. Ho Chi Minh is popularly acclaimed as the one Vietnamese that all sides, communist and noncommunist, north and south, rallied around as their leader. In fact, like George Washington, Ho has had large portions of his resume rewritten to reflect the mythic status he has achieved. Like Washington, who likely told a lie now and then and probably didn't chop down a cherry tree, Ho's failings have been glossed over by textbook writers anxious to preserve a saintly image of Viet Nam's national leader. Sidney Lens, writer of a popular young reader's book on the war, describes a man unknown to many Vietnamese in 1945 as “the Communist fighter who had gained great prestige because of his role in the struggle for independence during the 1930s.”⁹ Conspicuously absent from most accounts of Ho's life are his ruthless suppression of

opposition during the 1940s and abortive land reform efforts in the 1950s, both of which Ho Chi Minh himself expressed regrets for in later years.

If one side must be elevated, so the other must be lowered, and children's textbook authors do a marvelous job of portraying the Americans as representatives of an evil, immoral nation bent on conquering and colonizing a poor, prostrate Third World nation. A representative example of this is the treatment accorded the My Lai massacre and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

In many textbooks My Lai is portrayed as a typical occurrence, something that American soldiers did on a regular basis. Even Ha Noi's historians have largely abandoned such a radical and baseless position. As Sidney Lens described it, “War breeds atrocity, but seldom, if ever, before had there been an American perpetrated atrocity like the massacre.” In the next sentence Lens notes that incidents such as My Lai demonstrate the links between the war, violence, and a predilection toward “lying and cheating among leadership” in government and American business that produced a climate after the war in which “yuppies” would count success as a goal, with little or no concern for moral or ethical standards.¹⁰ Although the My Lai massacre should be studied and remembered for the horrible lessons it teaches, Lens conveniently forgets other, far greater atrocities perpetrated by both Americans in our numerous wars and by the Vietnamese, Khmer, and Lao communists against their countrymen. He also stretches the reader's imagination—and his authorial credibility—by linking what went on in My Lai with what goes on in the boardroom. Granted that some older Americans may not like yuppies, but insider trading scandals pale beside something like My Lai. To link the two in the same paragraph is a travesty.

Likewise, Henry Kissinger is usually not given a sympathetic portrayal in textbooks designed for elementary and junior high readers. Many older readers have their own beliefs about the erstwhile and ubiquitous secretary, but whatever one's politics we must admit that few humans are comprised completely of evil or, as the nursery rhyme goes, sugar and spice and everything nice. That basic fact of human nature apparently escaped some textbook writers. If Ho Chi Minh is the mythical hero, Kissinger is the representation of evil incarnate, the man who, Lens argues, “abandoned his beliefs, allowing hundreds of thousands of Americans, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and others to be maimed and killed needlessly so that so-called great power could save face.”¹¹ Interestingly enough, Lens, Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler, and other writers who are quick to condemn American officials for lack of foresight are silent on the genocide perpetrated on Cambodians by the Khmer Rouge. As one junior high school student asked me after a class presentation several months ago, was Kissinger responsible for Pol Pot's excesses, too? I shudder to think that the leap of logic made by this lone, dazed student is being made in other classrooms across the country. No matter what we as adults may feel about the personalities who populated the war's landscape, we as teachers owe it to our students to present them with facts and train them to interpret facts. To do anything less, to rely

instead on timeworn characterizations and outdated rhetorical shrieking, does a disservice to students' formative intellects and our skills as professional educators.

Finally, one of the most disappointing aspects of texts for younger students in the chauvinism inherent in their content. Americans' continued cultural isolationism when it comes to any sort of comprehensive understanding of other nations' history, religions, and literature is evident in many areas of the school curriculum, but it is especially distressing with the subject of the Viet Nam war is presented. The war may have been a clash of ideologies and a contest of national wills, but it was also one of the most striking examples of the violent and unsuccessful intermingling of two very dissimilar cultures. The Vietnamese were not "small Americans," and our lack of understanding, during the 1960s and today, of Vietnamese culture is perpetuated in the textbooks we are foisting off on unsuspecting children. In many instances, Viet Nam is conspicuously absent from the Viet Nam war. Sidney Lens, for example, deals with Viet Nam's history from its origins to the 1920s in three sentences; the period from the 1920s to 1964 receives only ten pages. Needless to say readers should have a bit more background on Viet Nam's rich and complicated past to place America's intervention in its proper perspective. Edward Dolan, while he does a masterful job of explaining the legacies of the war for Americans, notes that the five legacies he chooses "have been bequeathed especially to the United States. Others of a quite different sort have been left to Vietnam." He does not, however, detail or explain what the war's legacies were for the Vietnamese, nor does he explain that some of America's troubles in Indochina were the result of cultural ignorance. All of the major texts are remarkably silent concerning another of the war's legacies: the Cambodian genocide. For the Indochinese, it seems, and for young American students, the war ended in April 1975. When the Americans went home, so it seems, peace came to Indochina. Have we, as our textbook writers suggest, so quickly forgotten one of this century's greatest tragedies?

It does little good to criticize what is currently available unless one also suggests possible ways to improve what these captive consumers learn in their elementary and junior high school classrooms about U.S. involvement in Indochina. Although there are few standout sources and there is much to bemoan regarding major deficiencies in both content and approach, some contain useful material.¹² Edward Dolan's *America After Vietnam* does a very competent and sensitive job with the war's American legacies: troubled veterans, Agent Orange, the MIA/POW issue, and refugee resettlement. Dolan, however, does not focus on the war itself, nor does he deal with Viet Nam itself as a cultural and geographical entity. Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler's *Vietnam: Why We Fought* contains superb illustrations and does attempt to leave students with a basic understanding of Vietnamese history. It does not, however, contain much information about Indochina's trials and tribulations after April 1975. As in so many instances, the authors' interest and historical coverage seem to drop off after 1973 when most U.S. troops were gone. The only competent general

treatment of the war for this age group is Margot C.J. Mabie's *Vietnam There and Here*. Despite its evenhandedness, it has some deficiencies. Like her fellow authors, Mabie is not a specialist, something quite evident from her willingness to rely upon such dichotomies as "hawks" and "doves" to explain the contrasting positions many Americans took regarding the war.

As should be now be evident, although there are glimmers of hope in several current textbooks, none in and of itself is competent to meet the task of educating the next generation about the war in Indochina. Although many useful texts exist for high school and college students, there is a glaring gap when it comes to similarly sound books for younger students. There is also a need for either a single text or a series of volumes written for this age group that address the Vietnamese, Lao, Khmer, and Hmong cultures. In this regard we are far behind Australia, the location of another large refugee population. Phillip Institute of Technology and Vietnamese Language and Culture Publications in Victoria, Australia, have issued a multivolume set of Vietnamese folk tales, legends, and stories rendered both in English and Vietnamese and in bilingual editions.¹³ Although they cannot replace a textbook, they can, when used by the imaginative instructor, serve as a way to introduce students to some of the basic elements of Vietnamese and Indochinese culture while also introducing a needed cultural element into the course. Such an approach also helps students to realize that cultures other than their own can produce great art and literature and a history that merits study. Finally, there is also an enormous need for videos and educational documentaries appropriate to this age group. Many high school and college instructors are familiar with the *Vietnam: A History* (PBS) and *Ten Thousand Day War* series. We are also aware, though, that the content and language used in these productions makes them largely unsuitable for young students. I am not suggesting that Walt Disney do a Viet Nam war film, but certainly there are filmmakers who could produce a competent script and engaging scenes to portray the war for young viewers.

There are numerous other ways that we might improve the education that U.S. students receive about the Viet Nam war. New texts and appropriate movies are only part of the problem, however. We also need a new approach, a new outlook that allows young students to be treated like their older peers. They, like their high school and college counterparts, should be presented with all sides of the war and at the same time be given the critical thinking and analytic skills appropriate to their age group so that they may make informed judgments about the war. This is particularly important for this generation. We as teachers have a marvelous but frightening task here. This will be the first generation raised in a world no longer beset by the Cold War. We face the challenge in this new era of peace to create a curriculum that can both remind students who will grow up in more peaceful times what war is about and the costs attached to it and also recreate for them the climate that existed during the divisive war in Southeast Asia which shaped their parents' generation. I'd say we have our work cut out for us.

Notes

¹ This essay is a revised version of a paper presented at the American/Popular Culture Conference, Louisville, KY, March 1992. The author appreciates comments by Elizabeth Kahn, Kali Tal, and Dan Duffy and Joe Dunn's suggestions about additional sources that aided in revising this essay.

² George Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 2nd edition (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1986), deals with the period of American involvement. George D. Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990) is one of the better new texts for college-level courses; it is written from a balanced perspective and attempts to treat the war as an American and Vietnamese experience, though it treats the whole of Viet Nam's history up to the 1930s in only fifteen pages. Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991) and James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam, 1945-1990* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991) are two recent texts that focus on the First Indochina War as well as the Second Indochina War and America's involvement. Thomas Whittemore's *The Vietnam War: A Text for Students* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridgeport Press, 1988) is directed toward the secondary school audience. More ambitious and challenging are Robert McMahon's *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War* (Lexington, MA: DC Heath and Co., 1990) and Thomas D. Boettcher's *Vietnam: The Valor and the Sorrow* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985). Both find ready audiences among students for their stimulating writing and comprehensive coverage. Perhaps the best short treatment for college-level readers is *Vietnam: Nation in Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), written by Viet Nam specialist William Duiker. This is one of the few texts that treats the history and culture of Indochina in more than a cursory fashion.

³ For a brief, provocative discussion of some of these books' failings, see David M. Berman, "In Cold Blood: Vietnam in Textbooks," *Viet Nam Generation* 1:1 (Winter 1989): 61-80.

⁴ Bill McCloud, *What Should We Tell Our Children About Vietnam?* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press) 1989: xiv-xvi.

⁵ A good example of this tendency is the well-written but extremely misleading *Charlie Pippin* by Candy Boyd Dawson (New York: Macmillan) 1987. Like many children's books the story has a happy ending, but as an explanation of the war itself the book fails abysmally.

⁶ An admittedly unscientific survey of 37 elementary and junior high school classrooms and libraries found Dolan's book in 23 schools.

⁷ Edward F. Dolan, *America After Vietnam: Legacies of a Hated War* (New York: Franklin Watts) 1989: 13, 21.

⁸ Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler, *Vietnam: Why We Fought: An Illustrated History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf) 1990: 20; and, Margot C.J. Mabie, *Vietnam There and Here* (New York: Henry Holt & Company) 1985.

⁹ Sidney Lens, *Vietnam: A War on Two Fronts* (New York: Dutton) 1990: 6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 102.

¹¹ *Ibid.*: 103.

¹² A list of popular Viet Nam war books written for elementary and junior high age students is contained at the end of this essay.

¹³ Among the most accessible and interesting of these volumes are *My Village*, by Lang Toi, *Five Vietnamese Folk Tales, Selected Vietnamese Folk Tales, Old Stories from Vietnam*, and *Folk Tales from Indochina*, by Tran My-Van. All volumes are superbly illustrated, extremely readable, and present a side of Indochinese culture rarely included in American volumes on the war.

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BOOK REVIEWS

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Notebook of a Sixties Lawyer, An Unrepentant Memoir and Selected Writings, by Michael Steven Smith
Smyrna Press, Brooklyn, New York, 1992, \$24.95, \$9.95.

Reviewed by Barbara Tischler, Columbia University

Do we really need more books about the 1960s? Haven't all the major voices, from *TIME* magazine to the academic experts and Hollywood film makers, spoken the definitive "word" on this important period in our history? If we believe the gospel of film dramatizations and TV documentaries, we need see no more. But if the intellectual and moral upheavals of the 1960s taught us anything, it was to question eternal truths and find room in our canons for voices that have not yet had their say.

The appearance of Michael Steven Smith's *Notebook of a Sixties Lawyer, An Unrepentant Memoir and Selected Writings* is timely. We have seen the first round of "big books by big men about big movements," and it's clearly time to look at the 1960s from a more local, community, and grassroots perspective. Smith writes from his personal point of view as a 1960s activist, an attorney in Detroit and later New York who devoted his energies to draft counseling and providing legal help to many who protested injustice. Smith was a member of the Socialist Workers Party who never lost his commitment to the ideals and goals of the Party, in spite of his expulsion. Smyrna Press publisher Dan Georgakas writes in the Introduction that, "Without masking any of his frustrations and disappointments, Smith never turns sour. He believes the old fights were worth undertaking and that future struggles are inevitable. Indeed, his objective in publishing this material is less to offer data to historians of the past than to speak directly to activists of the future" (xvii).

Smith recounts his own history in a disarmingly honest and straightforward style. No young revolutionary, he joined ROTC (rhymes with "hotsy" or "totsy") in the early 1960s at the University of Wisconsin because his father advised him that, as an officer, at least he would have a bed. If he did not enter this military organization as an antimilitarist, Smith emerged from it firmly committed to avoiding personal contact with military life. As things turned out, he helped many others to avoid such contact and helped to safeguard the rights of many men and women in uniform as well. Some of his stories of military mishaps are hilarious, and readers will smile along with Smith as he reveals that he was removed from his campus branch of ROTC for referring to the entire operation as "Mickey Mouse."

Smith offers numerous pieces reprinted from diverse sources. The section on "Rights of Citizen Soldiers" is

especially relevant to *Viet Nam Generation* readers, opening with a short tribute to the antiwar work of Leonard Boudin, who represented the soldiers at Fort Jackson, near the "good army town" of Columbia, South Carolina. Smith describes in detail the obstacles to obtaining "military justice," from the conditions of the stockade to the hostile attitude of military lawyers toward the civilian attorneys who saw their mission as protecting the right of citizen soldiers to speak their minds. His description of this peculiar brand of justice is especially revealing: "Those forced to endure the idiocy of Army life are permitted no bail, no indictment by grand jury, no impartial judge, no jury of their peers, no due process—all supposedly guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. Moreover, some military laws are so vague (what does 'conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman' mean?) as to be Kafkaesque" (79).

In winning the right of expression for protesting GIs at Fort Jackson, Smith sees a victory for all of those soldiers who, "standing firm on their democratic rights, were able to draw wide support both within and outside the Army. Uniting on opposition to the war made it possible to weld both black and white GIs together in an effective organization. . . . The Army, in its heavy-handed attempt to liquidate organized anti-war sentiment, did not calculate that the effort would rebound, as it did, and thrust anti-war sentiment up to a new level. Herein lies perhaps the biggest contribution the Fort Jackson 8 made: drawing attention to the sentiment existing and growing inside of the Army, they helped re-orient the antiwar movement toward recognizing the potential of a new key component: the new breed of soldier, the antiwar GI" (76).

Smith discusses the valuable work of opposition groups inside the military, such as GIs United Against the War in Viet Nam, along with the organizing work on and around military bases of the Socialist Workers Party and other groups. The GI antiwar newspapers, coffee houses, rap sessions, and political organizing made it possible for an individual GI to take a stand and hope to find others to support and stand with him or her. These organizations and vehicles for protest and expression battled the alienation of the individual citizen soldier as much as they helped GIs to struggle against the overwhelming war itself.

No small outcome of the victory at Fort Jackson was the issuance of Guidance on Dissent, an Army directive that counseled base commanders to adopt a more relaxed position on GI protest and dissent. In spite of the efforts of the Pentagon to crush the GI antiwar movement, its strength and numbers grew until there could be no more war on traditional terms.

Sections of *Notebook of a Sixties Lawyer* reveal a lot about political life in and near the Socialist Workers Party. For readers not familiar with the efforts of government to suppress dissenting political groups, Smith's discussions of wiretaps, surveillance, and the use of informants are revealing. He reminds us that the days of local red squads and a national network of FBI counterintelligence agents are not long past and may not have faded from our current political scene at all.

Notebook of a Sixties Lawyer is about freedom and self-expression. Smith was eventually expelled from the Socialist Workers Party. He has found an eloquent voice in this collection, retaining his passion for justice and willingness to fight for a just cause. In discussing the importance of the story of an active but unsung 1960s personality, Alan Wald notes in a thoughtful Afterward that

Smith's memoir shows that his is the story not merely of a person radicalized by an organization, but of a person radicalized by the injustices of a society. His subsequent decision to join a socialist organization was seen as a means of acting upon and enriching existing values and commitments. . . . The moment of Trotskyism's greatest influence of the 1960s has now entered history as part of the larger legacy of the left out of which new generations of socialist activists, along with surviving veterans of the past, will have to create new instruments for social transformation under continually changing conditions (229)

Lawyers like Mike Smith remind us that we will have to struggle to maintain our right to self-expression but that it is a right worth protecting.

Allan Gurganus, *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All*

John Irving, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*

Reviewed by Renny Christopher, Literature Board, University of California at Santa Cruz

Allan Gurganus' *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All* (1989) is a book about a different war, the U.S. Civil War, and John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany* is a book set almost entirely in New Hampshire, but both of them are infused by the spirit of America's war in Viet Nam.

Gurganus' novel purports to be an oral history of Lucy Marsden, a woman 99 years old in 1984, and, as the title proclaims, the oldest Confederate widow. Her husband, "Captain" Marsden (he was really a teenaged private, but time and Southern myth promoted him to Captain as he got older) fought for the Confederacy, lost his closest friend in a stupid incident with a sniper, witnessed up close the death of a young Union soldier he had shot, and eventually walked home to find his family's plantation burned to the ground and his mother severely burned in that fire, and abandoned by the ex-slaves. "Cap" marries Lucy when he is 50 and she is 17.

The story of their marriage is the story of a family suffering from Marsden's untreated PTSD. The novel seems to be informed by a very contemporary sense of what it's like to be a veteran's wife—Gurganus might have done his research by reading Patience Mason and Aphrodite Matsakis. Cap stockpiles guns under their bed (all possible symbolism intended), drinks, neglects and abuses his wife and family, endlessly retells his war stories, is much more in love with Ned, his war-dead

friend, than with his wife, and eventually is responsible for a devastating accident to one of the children.

Like a Viet Nam veteran in a rap group, Cap's therapy is talk; his first talk-partner is Ned's mother, who forces him to tell her everything. After that he keeps talking, but the talk is never therapeutic enough to exorcise his demons.

Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All is an example of the way that we now tend to look at our own Civil War refracted back through our more recent war. Ken Burns' TV series had touches of that, and *Dances With Wolves* has a lot of it. Like *Dances, Confederate Widow* has a totally ahistorical scene about surgeons operating to save a soldier's leg, rather than amputating it. Lucy says some very contemporary-sounding things about Cap's war experience: "He'd walked the whole way home from war. When oh when would he finally get here?" "Kept gallivanting off, jawing with other vets about the happy bloody olden times. I felt every inch the vet of the vet." And later, her supposed listener, the person taping her oral history, is "a veteran of the veteran's veteran."

Gurganus is a Navy veteran, who served on an aircraft carrier during the Viet Nam war. His novel is a sort of uncomfortable balance between being an oblique Viet Nam War novel, and an imaginative tour through his ancestral history. As he tells in an essay in *The Iowa Review*, he first conceived of the book when he was in the Navy, killing time in a library in San Diego, and found in old census records that his Southern family had owned slaves in the eighteenth century.

Confederate Widow is an interesting book in many ways, but it has problems, not the least of which is that, at 718 pages, it is too long by about half. Lucy is supposed to be a garrulous old woman, but the length of the book is wearing on even a dedicated reader. It is also marked by annoying historical inaccuracies: Morgan horses aren't 5-gaited, as Gurganus makes them, and he introduces Quarter horses before the breed was developed. Much worse, he has slave ships operating long after the outlawing of the slave trade in 1809.

But perhaps the worst weaknesses of the book lie in Gurganus' construction of race and gender. One of the major characters is Castalia, one of the Marsden family's former slaves. Gurganus imagines her story in fanciful and mythic ways, but she never really feels believable—not that she's a stereotype; rather, Gurganus goes so far to keep her from being one that he seems to create her out of whole cloth. And Lucy is not believable as a woman of her generation. She's always ambivalent about sex with Cap, which is believable, but she talks about it much too explicitly, as she does about homoerotic interludes with her childhood best friend and with Castalia. The problem is not that the events wouldn't happen, but rather that it's unbelievable that a Southern woman born in 1885 would talk about them so freely. Even one as garrulous as Lucy.

John Irving's novel is also long, 543 pages, perhaps too long for some readers, but I have always been an admirer of Irving's, so I'm willing to follow him for that length, and I especially love this novel. While it is only obliquely "about" the war, nonetheless I find it one of the most moving war novels I've read.

It is narrated by John Wheelwright, descendant of a patrician family in the small New Hampshire town of Gravesend (a stand-in for Exeter). John's best friend was Owen Meany, son of the family that ran a local, unsuccessful, granite quarry. Owen's main peculiarities are his voice—a "permanent scream"—and his sense of destiny. As a child he has a vision of his own gravestone, including the date of his death. Owen is a martyr; the text repeatedly sets him up as a Christ figure.

The narrative moves between John's reminiscences of his childhood and youth with Owen, and his current life in Canada, where he has gone, not as a draft dodger, but to renounce his American citizenship out of protest. In the narrative present, in the scenes in Canada, it becomes clear that he is a maladjusted man, suffering from some sort of PTSD, although he is not a veteran himself. The scenes set in the narrative past drive toward revelation of the event that will ultimately explain both Owen's and John's fates.

The novel explores issues of class—the Wheelwright family semi-adopts the working-class Owen and makes it possible for him, a brilliant student, to attend Gravesend Academy, where, of course, he gets into trouble. And it is Owen who ends up in the Army, John protected by his deferments first as a college student, then a graduate student. It also deals with issues of faith and unbelief, of war and absurdity.

As usual with Irving, the novel contains some brilliant moments of cultural observation. My favorite is the Madonna-like rock star whose videos always use news footage of the war in Viet Nam.

I do have two reservations about the novel, but both are closely connected to the ending, and I don't want to give it away. One concerns the ultimate explanation for Owen's voice, which is simply dumb and wrong; the other concerns a poor boy who is crazy and violent, and an unfortunate stereotype. But those are my only reservations.

Although Owen's fate is directly connected with the war, he never leaves the U.S. Usually I'm angered by novels and films that make the war be about America vs. itself, rather than about the war as fought in a country called Viet Nam, but this novel doesn't purport to be *about the war*; rather, it is about America and Americans, and *American involvement in the war*, which is a different subject. As such, it's a great book, and instead of telling you any more about it, I recommend that you read it.

James Lee Burke, *The Neon Rain* (New York: Pocket Books) 1987, 281 pages, \$4.95; *Heaven's Prisoners* (New York: Pocket) 1988, 274 pages, \$4.95; *Black Cherry Blues* (New York: Avon) 1989, 326 pages, \$4.95; *A Morning for Flamingos* (New York: Avon) 1990, 319 pages, \$4.95.

Charles Durden, *The Fifth Law of Hawkins* (New York: TOR) 1990, 538 pages, \$4.99..

Gustav Hasford, *A Gypsy Good Time* (New York: Washington Square Press) 1992, 177 pages, \$8.00.

Sharyn McCrumb, *If Ever I Return, Pretty Peggy-O* (New York: Ballantine) 1990, 263 pages, \$4.99.

Carsten Stroud, *Sniper's Moon* (New York: Bantam) 199, 415 pages, \$5.99.

Reviewed by Kali Tal

Two of my favorite writers of Viet Nam war literature recently published new novels: Gustav Hasford's *Gypsy Good Time* came out this year, and Charles Durden's *The Fifth Law of Hawkins* was published in 1990 and issued in paperback in 1991. Both Hasford and Durden were correspondents in Viet Nam. Hasford was a combat correspondent who served with the First Marine Division in 1968, and Durden was a freelancer in 1966-67.

Durden's Viet Nam war novel was titled *No Bugles No Drums* (New York: Avon) and appeared in 1976—a fairly early contribution to the genre. The first-person narrative is dictated by Pvt. Jamie "Hawk" Hawkins, drafted into the Army and sent off with his unit to guard the "Song My Swine Project"—a pig farm outside Da Nang. *No Bugles* is a revision of both the John Wayne myth and Twain's *Huck Finn*. Self-conscious and darkly humorous, Durden paints an absurd picture of the war, foreshadowing Hawk's decision to walk out on the whole enterprise (light out for the territories) with an opening salvo directed at Wayne himself. Told that he and his unit are headed for Viet Nam, Hawk notes: "I also wondered, just for a moment, what would happen if we all went back to bed. No way. We'd all seen too many John Wayne movies. Jesus, what he coulda done for the anti-war movement if he'd spent only half his time hockin' up that drawl to say fine things like 'Fuck you, Cap'n. If these little Jap bastards want this island so bad, they can have it. I'm hitchin' me a ride back to the fleet.' With that he throws down his flamethrower'n wades into the surf. Fat chance." Hawk himself eventually does exactly what he wishes Wayne had done: "I told everybody the war was over, that I was goin' home. Nobody started arguin' with me till I got to Danang. The farther away I got from the fightin', the harder it was to make people believe the war was finished" (285). His friends dead and his life shattered, Hawk takes his discharge and tells the Army "to go fuck themselves, because about the only thing subject Hawkins had left was his unshakeable bad attitude." (287)

Hasford's *Short Timers*, (New York: Bantam) published in 1979, shares many of *No Bugles*' features. Like Hawk, Hasford's first person narrator is also a man with a sense of humor; in fact, he is named for it—Joker.

Hasford's humor is perhaps even more macabre than Durden's, and it incorporates similar images, reveling in the contradiction between the mass market culture of the U.S. and the reality of life during wartime. Both use as their refrain advertising slogans, and it's hard to imagine that Hasford was not speaking directly to Durden when he chose for his motto, the phrase "Things go better with Coke,"—doubtless an answer to Durden's slogan (quoted with permission of Pepsico, Inc.), "You've Got a Lot to Live and Pepsi's Got a Lot to Give." Both employ the device of a "John Wayne" character—the best friend of the narrator—who does not survive the war. In Hasford's case this is, literally, Cowboy, whose need to adhere to the wartime "script" ("Marines never abandon their dead or wounded") is the cause of his death. Joker breaks this mythic cycle graphically—he puts a bullet through Cowboy's head, putting him out of his misery as one would kill a beloved, but now rabid dog. For Durden, this character is "The Boy Ranger," killed in a foolish heroic gesture which Hawk both understands and rejects, and which motivates his decision to walk out on the war altogether.

I've always seen these two books as being closely related, both in style and content. The author's new books, too, seem to run in parallel. Both are "detective" novels: Hasford's *A Gypsy Good Time* is the first-person narrative of Dowdy Lewis, Jr., hardboiled, gun-toting Viet Nam vet bounty hunter and book dealer (an occupation which may or may not inspire amusement among those who remember Hasford's arrest for allegedly stealing approximately 10,000 library books from L.A. area libraries) who gets mixed up with the usual leggy redhead with a mysterious secret; Durden's *Fifth Law of Hawkins* sees the return of narrator Jamie Hawkins, whose trip to the territories has apparently landed him in jail on a marijuana charge in Mexico. He is rescued by Juliet, a leggy strawberry blonde with a mysterious secret. Both Hasford and Durden retain their apparently truly unshakeable bad attitudes, even in novels written more than twenty years after their war, Durden going so far as to conclude his book with the revelation that the Fifth and Final Law of Hawkins is: "Fuck 'em if they can't take a joke." While *Short Timers* and *No Bugles* move their narrators from innocence to experience in a revision of the tradition of the *bildungsroman*, *Gypsy Good Time* and *The Fifth Law* are curiously static. The protagonists are jaded and cynical and essentially hopeless at the beginning, and their disillusion is merely confirmed at the end. When you're right, you're right.

In their earlier novels, women played very little part in the plot, appearing as incidental and enabling characters, facilitators of the story. The focus was on the relationship between the protagonist and his "best friend." In both novels, the homoerotic nature of the relationship is explicitly defined. In *Short Timers* it is negatively defined by the text's constant homophobic references and the fantasy that Cowboy and Joker spin out, in which Joker will fuck Cowboy's sister. (The fact that Cowboy tells Joker, right before his death, that he *has* no sister underlines the erotic bond between the two men.) In Durden's book, the erotic attraction between Hawk and

the Boy Ranger is noted by the narrator himself, when he asks a prostitute if he can take a picture of her back to his friend and she asks Hawk if he is in love with the Boy Ranger. Hawk answers, "Prob'ly. But that ain't acceptable" (167). In both books the body of the love object (which, in homoerotic attractions, is also the body of the sell) is violently penetrated: the gunshot which explodes Cowboy's head is graphically described, as is the shrapnel blast which severs the Boy Ranger's head from his body, and the death of the loved one signals the spiritual death of the protagonist.

Fifth Law and *Gypsy Good Time* feature protagonists who already (dis?)embody that state of death-in-life. Such protagonists haunt the genre of detective fiction, and it is no accident that both Durden and Hasford have chosen to adopt its conventions. For the detective novel is a novel of the man alone, quite frequently depending upon the death of the masculine partner (as in *The Maltese Falcon*) for the development of the plot, just as it depends upon the body of the feminine "other" to carry the story to its conclusion. Female characters appear to be as integral to detective fiction as they are incidental in war stories. As far as I can tell, most detective stories are inscribed on the female body, the "body in the bed," which is either sexualized or slaughtered, or both.

Now I am a voracious reader, and my reading list is pretty eclectic, but I have never been able to develop any kind of affection for detective stories. I have found them a very male headspace, and not a comfortable place for me to hang out. (I realize that there is a large body of detective fiction by women, including the Agatha Christie novels which I read in my adolescence. I don't like that stuff much either, but for a whole set of other reasons I'm not going to go into here.) I consider this a shortcoming on my part, and not a problem with the genre, because I figure I should be able to get my mind around anything. So I thought I'd take another stab at appreciating this literature by using the new books by two of my favorite authors as an entry point. So I went to the bookstore and rooted around and came up with an essentially random, but probably representative selection of detective novels which feature Viet Nam veterans as major characters. In addition to the Durden and Hasford books, I uncovered a whole series by James Lee Burke which features Viet Nam veteran Dave Robicheaux, detective turned PI, and is set in New Orleans and the surrounding territory; and Carsten Stroud's *Sniper's Moon*, set in New York City, and featuring several Viet Nam veteran characters, most notable among them Detective Frank Keogh, whose skills as a sniper in the war seem to have transferred with little trouble to the streets of the city. I have also included in this discussion Sharyn McCrumb's best-seller, *If Ever I Return Pretty Peggy-O*, which is interesting both because it is a detective story dealing with the Viet Nam war, and because it is by a woman writer.

I purchased four of the Burke books; I was able to make my way through the first two, and bogged down in the middle of the third. The first of them, *The Neon Rain*, begins over the body of a young white woman thrown from a hotel room window. It continues over the body of a drowned black woman which Robicheaux fishes out of

the bayou. Robicheaux, a Cajun whose distinctive marking consists of a white streak in his black hair, "like a skunk," finds himself the target of Columbian drug runners for reasons which it will take the rest of the book for the reader to uncover, and which, of course, are linked to the bodies of the dead women. The live woman is a blue-eyed blonde Robicheaux meets by accident, while he's engaged in macho PI heroics. On his first date with her, the two of them are almost killed by the Bad Guys, sparking Robicheaux's first Viet Nam-related memory of slaughter, which will become a running theme throughout the book. Robicheaux has a brother, too, whom he refers to as his "father's misplaced seed." The brother, Jimmie, is a guy who walks on the dark side of the law and seems rather ham-handedly to represent the "other side" of Robicheaux. Jimmie is mixed up with the local "mob," who are, of course, Italian, and through his naivete and stupidity, he winds up almost but not quite dead. Robicheaux also has a partner named Cletus, who turns out to be a crook, and whom he sends packing by the end of the novel. The sequels to *The Neon Rain*—*Heaven's Prisoners*, *Black Cherry Blues*, and *A Morning for Flamingos*—demonstrate that Robicheaux has been given all of these personal connections so that they can be severed, one by one, as devices to further a plot which seems endlessly repetitive: just when things seem to be getting better, they are bound to get worse. Married to the saintly blonde he meets in *The Neon Rain*, Robicheaux acquires a mysterious child as the result of a fortuitous plane crash, creating an instant nuclear family. The acquisition of the kid, however, signals the imminent demise of the wife, who is murdered in what can only be described as a Phoenix-style assassination in the middle of the night. This is the event which triggers Robicheaux's inevitable fall off the wagon, the climb back onto which is the a corollary to his newly restored faith that things are just as bad as they seem. All of this takes place in picturesque New Orleans and its surroundings like some strange local color narrative, complete with sensuous descriptions of beignets and crawfish tails. By the middle of the third book in the series, I was so bored I didn't care how bad it was for Robicheaux. Burke regularly receives rave reviews from just about everybody, including his peers, who in 1989 awarded him the Edgar for the best crime novel of 1989. What *did* become clear to me was Burke's insistence that for Robicheaux, Viet Nam and the U.S. are exactly the same. Check out this passage from *The Neon Rain*:

Then Bobby Joe locked his powerful arms around my neck and took me over the rim again, his body trembling rigidly with a cruel and murderous energy, and I knew that all my past fears of being shotgunned by a psychotic, of being shanked by an addict, of stepping on a Claymore mine in Vietnam, were just the foolish preoccupations of youth; that my real nemesis had always been a redneck lover who would hold me upside down against his chest while my soul slipped through a green, watery porcelain hole in the earth, down through the depths of the Mekong River, where

floated the bodies of other fatigue-clad men and whole families of civilians, their faces still filled with disbelief and the shock of an artillery burst, and farther still to the mossy base of an offshore oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico, where my father waited for me in his hardhat, coveralls, and steeltipped drilling boots after having drowned there twenty years ago (56).

There's no indication that Burke is himself a Viet Nam war vet. Back cover notes say only that he grew up on the Gulf Coast and that he teaches writing and literature at Wichita State. I get the feeling that Robicheaux's vet status was the result of Burke's assumption that he could use readers' stereotypes of veterans to flesh out his character, and to provide an "explanation" for Robicheaux's attitude. (I come to this conclusion based on some real screamers in the text. For instance, Robicheaux hears the men who are coming to kill him and narrates, "...my heart sank with a terrible knowledge that I had experienced only once before, and that was when I had heard the *klatch* of the mine under my foot in Vietnam" (125). There never was any mention of injury to Robicheaux's legs—much less the traumatic amputation that stepping on such a mine is certain to cause—and so this statement simply sounds silly.)

Carsten Stroud, author of *Sniper's Moon*, is also not explicitly named as a Viet Nam vet, though one would assume that it would lend an air of authenticity, if he were a vet, to announce it in this context. He has, however, clearly read Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, since he baldly appropriates one of Herr's centerpieces:

There was an old line from the war. How can you shoot women and children? Easy, was the answer.

You just don't lead them as much (241).

Amazing how this refrain, penned by a journalist, and later incorporated into the film script of *Full Metal Jacket* (script by Michael Herr, based on the Hasford novel, *The Short-Timers*) has become "an old line from the war." Stroud's novel also begins over the body of a woman, in this case Frank Keogh's mother, Madeleine, who is bizarrely electrocuted when she dives into her swimming pool, naked, at night, as her husband stands by (impotently?) with an erection. Police sniper Keogh is haunted by his mother's death, which turns out, of course, to be linked to the later murder of his lover, Myra, soon after he has sex with her and departs her apartment. The sheer perversity of Stroud's connection between sex and violence is highlighted by both the senior Keogh's seemingly coincidental erection at the moment of his wife's demise and the fact that Myra's murderer is dressed in a rubber body suit which the murderer describes as a "total-body condom" (173) when he violently penetrates/stabs her as she stands naked before him. His remark, "I kill myself. I really do," displaces her as the victim in this scenario. (Cynthia Fuchs says this reminds her of Holden Caulfield's refrain, "It kills me. It really does.") The Good Guys in *Sniper's Moon* are hardcore

combat vets who still kill people for a living. The Bad Guys are all psychiatrists and mental health workers who seem to be trying to convince the vets that they suffer from PTSD (weakness), and need "help." The psychiatrists are homosexuals and fools, who are duped by a psychotic killer who both poses as a Viet Nam combat veteran (he was really a REMF) and as a veteran's counselor. It's hard to imagine a more perfect example of male hysteria.

Since I'm not a regular reader of detective novels, I've no idea if this is an extraordinarily twisted text, or just police-business as usual, but the manner in which Stroud weaves the pop culture mythology of a rehabilitated Viet Nam veteran-hero into his story is truly striking. Stroud's vet is completely recuperated, and not even a bit of a victim. PTSD is dismissed as nonsense, a distraction invented by non-vet Yuppies to take their minds off their own Viet Guilt. In the end, the Real Men unite and pass judgement upon the psychotic who attempted to pass as one of them, murdering him as one might shoot a rabid dog. But even this rather outrageous gesture is rendered essentially uninteresting, since the final sentences of the book focus not on the "necessity" that "good men" commit crimes, but on the absolution of Keogh senior of guilt or complicity in the death of his wife.

I wish I could say that it's only the guys who bore me to tears, but Sharyn McCrumb's *If Ever I Return Pretty Peggy-O* was simply one of the most insipid volumes I've suffered through in I don't remember how long. Spencer Arrowood is a small town policeman and Peggy Muryan is a famous folksinger (beautiful, rich, "liberated" and antiwar) returning home to settle down for a while in his small town. Spencer's brother Cal was killed in Vietnam in 1966 (twenty years before the story takes place), and Peggy Muryan's ex-boyfriend and ex-singing partner, Travis, was also killed there. The plot revolves around a burgeoning love affair between Peggy and Spencer, and a gradually revealed plot against Peggy carried out by some mysterious person who may or may not be Travis returned from the dead. "Letters home" from Travis punctuate the text, and his descriptions of the atrocities he committed in Viet Nam are paralleled by similar attacks on Peggy. Certainly the most attractive character in the novel is the dead Travis, and McCrumb's prose is liveliest when she is penning his letters. A subplot involves police officer and Viet Nam vet Joe LeDonne's relationship with feral vet Roger Gabriel, who turns out not to be the killer—male bonding seems to be the point here—and secretary Martha's finally successful attempt to snag the elusive LeDonne for her own. Meanwhile, it seems the whole town is preparing for the twentieth reunion of the high school class to which all the major characters seemingly belonged. The villain turns out to be a psychotic high school student who accidentally found Travis' letters and decided to act out his fantasies about the war. The kid breaks into Peggy's house to rape and then murder her, but Peggy has a .45 and "captures" the kid. Spencer arrives to rescue her just in time to see Peggy blow the kid away in cold blood:

Spencer stared at her. "But you didn't have to kill him. You could have waited for help. He was a kid!"

"He was a vicious bastard, and a killer, and he broke into my house. Do you think a Tennessee jury will convict me of anything for shooting him? Me—a poor helpless woman?"

"But it wasn't self-defense," he whispered. "You murdered him."

Her smile was bitter. "Prove it, Sheriff" (256).

In a weird reversal, the peacenik folksinger becomes the grunt executing prisoners, while Spencer looks on in horror—like the appalled American public. But the message is very confused, because, as Peggy notes, she won't be prosecuted because she's a *woman*. However, she's obviously able to kill because she's a *feminist*. And of course there's now no hope of any romantic relationship between Peggy and Spencer. Spencer winds up alone with LeDonne, confessing that his brother Cal had committed atrocities in Viet Nam and had, in fact, mailed home a severed ear in his last letter. But never fear, healing waits around the corner as LeDonne and Spencer set off together to visit the Viet Nam Memorial Wall in Washington, DC.

My strongest reaction to these books was impatience. "So what?" I kept thinking. Despite the twists and turns of plot, it seemed like nothing happened. I can understand Durden's and Hasford's attraction to the genre—its static nature underlines the state of being "frozen" in the traumatic moment. What I can't understand is why people find these stories interesting reading. The repetitive masculine discovery of "self" over the dead bodies of female characters left me profoundly unmoved, and, in fact, became so predictable that I simply assumed that every female who showed up was a socn-to-be-body, either in this book, or its sequel. The killers were invariably "psychotics" who "passed" for normal until their deep flaws were uncovered by the persistence and intelligence of the detective. The detectives were invariably deeply ambivalent men who were never going to find peace. Such formulae indicate that these books are fulfilling a fantasy, like romances, perhaps. But unlike romances they are not hopeful. Rather, they are rationalizations for the refusal to change, arguments for stasis. When I finished the last one, all I could think of were Walter Cronkite's words: "Things are more like they are now than they ever have been before."

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Sixties Generations is a multimedia, interdisciplinary conference. We are looking for proposals for presentations, papers, panels, and workshops in the arts, the humanities, and the sciences. Our emphasis is on exploring the diversity and complexity of American and international cultures during the 1960s, in terms of their continuing influence on contemporary U.S. culture.

Please send 1-2 page proposals and abstracts to: *Vietnam Generation*
2921 Terrace Drive, Chevy Chase, MD 20815
(301) 608-0622; FAX (301) 608-0761.

Deadline for proposals is December 1, 1992.

Suggested topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

ALCATRAZ • ALGERIAN REVOLUTION • ALTAMONT • ALTERNATIVE CULTURE • AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT • AMERICAN SERVICEMEN'S UNION • ANARCHISM • ANTIWAR MOVEMENT • ARTISTS AND WRITERS OF THE SIXTIES • ATTICA • BERKELEY FREE SPEECH MOVEMENT • BLACK MUSLIM MOVEMENT • BLACK PANTHER PARTY • BLACK POWER • BLACK WOMEN IN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT • CATHOLIC LEFT • CATHOLIC WORKER • CCMV • CÉSAR CHAVEZ • CHE GUEVARA • CHICAGO DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION 1968 • CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT • COINTELPRO • COMINTERN • COMMITTEE OF CONCERNED ASIAN SCHOLARS • COMMUNES • COUNTERCINEMA • COUNTERCULTURE IN EUROPE • CUBAN REVOLUTION • DIGGERS • DRUG CULTURE • DRUM • ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT • EXPERIMENTAL THEATER • FIDEL CASTRO • FOLK MUSIC • FORT HOOD 3 • FORT JACKSON 8 • FREE SCHOOLS • GAY AND LESBIAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS • GI COFFEEHOUSES • GI MOVEMENT • GUERRILLA THEATER • GULF OF TONKIN INCIDENT • HAIGHT ASHBURY • HELLS ANGELS • INVASION OF CAMBODIA • KENT & JACKSON STATE • LA RAZA • LABOR & THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT • LABOR DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT • LIBERATION THEOLOGY • LONG BINH JAIL UPRISING • LSD • MALCOLM X • MARCH ON WASHINGTON • MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. • MAY DAY DEMONSTRATIONS • MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY • MIDWEST INSTITUTE • MOBE • MORATORIUM • MY LAI MASSACRE • NEW LEFT • NIXON CAMPAIGN • NONVIOLENT ACTION • OBSCENITY TRIALS • OLYMPICS • PAN-AFRICANISM • PARIS '68 • PATRICE LUMUMBA • PENTAGON PAPERS • POLITICIZATION OF STREET GANGS • PRAGUE '68 • PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT • RADICAL SCIENCE • RAMPARTS MAGAZINE • REDSTOCKINGS • ROCK & ROLL • SAN FRANCISCO MIME TROUPE • SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER • SOUTHERN STUDENT ORGANIZING COMMITTEE • STUDENT MOVEMENT • TET OFFENSIVE • THE CHICAGO 8 • THIRD WORLD LIBERATION MOVEMENTS • THIRD WORLD NEWSREEL & NEW YORK NEWSREEL • UNDERGROUND PRESS • URBAN INSURRECTIONS • VETS FOR PEACE • VIET NAM WAR • VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR • WASHINGTON, DC IN THE 1960s • WATERGATE • WINTER SOLDIER INVESTIGATION • WOMEN STRIKE FOR PEACE • WOODSTOCK • WOUNDED KNEE • YIPPIES • YOUNG LORDS ORGANIZATION

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